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# **Writing Fighting: Critical Cognitive Approaches to the Language of Killing in War**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the ways in which soldiers use language to report and structure their experiences of conflict. In particular, it examines autobiographical descriptions of acts of killing from wars across the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Beginning with the application of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008) to a clause-level Critical Discourse Analysis of lexicogrammar (cf. Hart, 2013; 2014; 2018), it shows that diverse stylistic strategies construe force and causality in a number of ways. In doing so, the study also reinforces the importance of narrative context and background knowledge in the interpretation of individual clauses. Considering the applicability and limitations of Cognitive Grammar to discourse-level analysis (following Pincombe, 2014), the thesis presents a novel approach to the representation of the perception of intentionality in language. It argues that inferred intentions can function as reference points (Langacker, 2008; Harrison, 2017), marking continuity or deviation from mind-modelled (Stockwell, 2009) norms associated with the perception of an agent across discourse. In addition, the thesis calls into question the specificity with which analysts define and distinguish between social and linguistic agency, and conducts a reader-response study, finding that readers' perceptions of agents' intentionality differ from their assessments of responsibility. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Cognitive Grammar can effectively account for the ideological construal of killing in soldiers' writings, and that the adaptation of the model to consider the perception of intentionality promises further novel developments in the critical and stylistic analysis of discourse from a cognitive perspective.



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.1: Overview

This thesis is the first linguistic study of soldiers' war writings. Focusing on first-person descriptions of acts of killing, it explores how language is employed by soldiers to represent violent acts for civilian readers. While the language of war in political and news discourse has been analysed extensively (cf. Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Lakoff, 1991; Butt et al., 2004; Seaton, 2005; Robinson et al., 2010; Seo, 2013), writings produced by soldiers themselves, in the form of diaries, letters, and memoirs, have been largely ignored as sources for linguistic research. Thorne (2006), for example, examines the 'language of war', from military naming conventions to propaganda to media coverage, but does not discuss the ways in which soldiers themselves construct discursive representations of their experiences. Although some research exists which situates soldiers' writings within historical and social contexts (Carden-Coyne, 2009; McLoughlin, 2009), Roper (2005) has observed that existing academic commentary on soldiers' writings about their own experiences 'has little to say [...] about how such experiences were assimilated mentally or contained within writing' (345). While Benke and Wodak (2003) examine the discursive structure of veterans' experiences in oral interviews, the written form of soldiers' personal accounts have not yet been explored in terms of their stylistic features. This thesis therefore contributes to the extensive critical literature on the ideological construction of war and violence both through the investigation of an understudied genre, and the evaluation and development of its analytical methods.

Soldiers' accounts of their personal experiences of war are highly ideologically charged, and descriptions of acts of violence will always be prone to politicised representation and interpretation. Consider the following quote from a letter, written home from the front lines in May 1916 by teacher turned officer, Capt. Theodore Wilson:

All those picturesque phrases of war writers – such as “he flung the remnants of his Guard against the enemy,” “a magnificent charge won the day and the victorious troops, etc. etc.,” are dangerous because they show nothing of the individual horror, nothing of the fine personalities smashed suddenly into red beastliness, nothing of the sick fear that is tearing at the hearts of brave boys who ought to be laughing at home – a thing infinitely more terrible than physical agony. It isn't death we fear so much as the long-drawn expectation of it – the sight of other fine fellows ripped horribly out of existence by “reeking shard,” as a great War-journalist says who spoke (God forgive him) of “a fine killing” in some battle or other.’ (in Housman, 1930: 299-300)

Wilson expresses his frustration at the failure of war journalists' language to capture the experience of conflict at the level of personal experience. In the examples he cites, individual soldiers never simply act upon their enemy. Instead, they are presented as instruments controlled by officers, ('he flung *his guard*'), rendered absent through nominalisations which draw attention to the action, as opposed to the actor ('a fine *killing*'), or grouped together in a single mass, already evaluated ideologically ('a *magnificent charge*'). That Wilson expresses such frustration at the failure of these passages to communicate a personal experience of conflict highlights the value in understanding the ways in which language is able to represent and renegotiate the events it purports to describe. In choosing which of these aspects to emphasise or minimise in their descriptions, writers describing the experience of war can drastically alter the reader's perception of a conflict, as well as those who take part in the fighting.

Of course, the language employed by soldiers themselves also necessarily adopts ideological positions in the description of their actions, and the primary aim of this thesis is to examine these texts critically, asking how narrators present themselves as agents of the act of killing. In doing so, the self-reflexive approach aims to evaluate existing and emerging trends in critical and stylistic analyses of actions and events in language, developing a sophisticated model of agency which breaks the concept into its constituent elements for thorough analysis. Beginning with the close reading of individual clauses, the thesis gradually introduces the issues and methods relating to critical and stylistic analysis, eventually working towards the consideration of discourse structure and social context in linguistic meaning. According to Hewitson (2010), wars 'are at once individual and collective, heroic and anonymous, voluntary and mechanical events' (310), and the critical analysis performed throughout this research aims to capture the range of perceptual and ideological responses to killing in war. While this work is performed in relation to acts of violence in war writing, the model of analysis offered is applicable beyond this genre.

## **1.2: Texts and Contexts**

The narratives examined in this thesis have been collected from a number of sources. As this thesis is interested in the language of ordinary soldiers, published work by literary figures who were involved in wars of the twentieth century have not been included amongst the primary material. Instead, personal papers of soldiers from the First and Second World Wars from the archives of the Imperial War Museum are examined, alongside several published collections of autobiographical writing from 'everyday' soldiers (Purdom, 1930; Housman, 1930), as well as several book-length memoirs by soldiers of more recent conflicts (Lukowiak, 1999; Martin and Sasser, 2010;

McCurley and Maurer, 2013). In conducting research for *The Great War and Modern Memory* (2013), Paul Fussell also explored the archives of the Imperial War Museum, where he found that:

There were little notebooks still stiff with the mud of the Somme or Ypres. There were field orders, platoon rosters, copies of letters from boy lieutenants to the parents of the dead, mangled identity disks, their string dark with the sweat of some hopeful boy killed violently a half-century before [...] Confronted with such an abundance, I knew I would have to impose strict limits on my curiosity (368)

Similarly, in examining the archives for this project, access to sources at the Imperial War Museum was requested based on archival notes which indicated that the authors described first-hand experiences of killing during conflict. It is important to note, however, that not all soldiers feel that acts of killing are the focus of their military identities (cf. Taylor, 2013: 106). Accordingly, in selecting archival material for analysis, only texts which directly discussed acts of killing were included in the final study. Although this thesis limits its corpus to texts which discuss such acts explicitly, they nonetheless represent a range of ideological positions regarding killing in war. In total, 25 narratives are examined, providing an initial indication of stylistic trends across the genre. These texts are discussed individually in relation to a range of clause-level and discourse-level stylistic features, and general patterns emerge with regards to their construals of violence. Given the size of the corpus, these features are presented as promising indicators for future research into the genre of war writing. More concretely, these studies offer the development of a range of clausal and narrative level approaches to analysis, through which agency and responsibility can be discussed, and which can be applied to both literary and non-literary discourse studies in future research.

Critically analysing veterans' construals of their military experiences is particularly challenging, owing to the unique social authority claimed of these

individuals over their experiences. As Harari (2009) has observed, the process of presenting and discussing military experience in an academic context necessarily opens the text up to questioning; a process which is sometimes seen as challenging the soldiers' experiences:

some scholars take it upon themselves to bring the voices of the dead or marginalized flesh-witness into the academic conference hall, the university seminar room, or the TV studio, and tell people: "this is the real truth about war."

Yet even this gesture is highly problematic. By bringing the flesh-witness into the conference hall the sympathetic scholar brings the witness into a hostile environment which immediately begins to question, twist, and destroy the flesh-witness narrative and its authority. No matter what the personal opinions of the people at the conference hall or the TV studio, the rules and atmosphere of the place swiftly cancel the flesh-witness, leaving behind "nothing more than words," as Andre Maillet might have said. (223-4)

In focusing on the stylistic choices soldiers make in representing violence, the aim of this research is not to claim that individuals are misrepresenting their experiences for ideological purposes. Rather, it aims to model and examine the inherent subjectivity of both reporting experience and inferring meaning from text. Throughout this thesis, the social power of soldiers' positions as veterans is considered in terms of the power dynamic between reader and author, and the accessibility of knowledge through language. Indeed, as the discussion of this project unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that an account of meaning which concerns itself with 'nothing more than words' misrepresents the process of understanding which makes up the act of reading about war and the act of killing. My interest in these military memoirs is the challenge to social norms that their contents provide, and the tensions they place on the ability to effectively share in an experience transformed into language. Although primarily concerned with framing its discussion in terms of the critical and stylistic issues

associated with the representation of war, the thesis also engages with existing academic literature from a military historical perspective. As well as providing context to the research surrounding war writing, these sources also often provide evidence of the importance attributed to language by non-linguist researchers.

### **1.3: Linguistic Framework**

While the precise theoretical framework of the account of language, grammar, and discourse employed throughout this thesis will be outlined in greater detail throughout Chapter 2, it is worth stating its nature broadly from the outset. This research is primarily conducted through the application of cognitivist approaches to language, as developed in Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008; 2009) and Cognitive Poetics (Stockwell, 2009; Harrison et al., 2014; Harrison, 2017), as well as in Critical Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran, 2003; Hart and Lukeš, 2007; Hart, 2013; 2014; 2018; van Dijk, 2014; 2017). This thesis contributes to this literature by demonstrating the value of Cognitive Grammar in the analysis of acts of violence, and the perception of agency across discourse.

In adopting cognitive and critical approaches to language, this thesis also attends to the challenges and limitations associated with these frameworks. O'Halloran (2003), for example, observes that specialist readers interested in the text as an object of analysis do not always reflect the ways in which every-day readers engage with and interpret the same texts. Hence, inference and the perception of intentionality and responsibility are discussed in close relation to practical, reader-oriented studies (3.5; 7.5) which situate the consequent close readings in relation to the interpretative practices of non-specialist readers. Likewise, stylistics has a long and rich history of interest in the representation of experience in language. From Simpson's (2003) engagement with

ideation to Stockwell's (2009) concept of mind-modelling, linguistic researchers who prioritise the discussion of language choices and their literary effects provide a valuable framework when transitioning from single-clause analyses to the discussion of their broader narrative contexts, as well as readers' perceptions. According to Wales (2014), stylistic analysis must be 'scrupulously systematic and explicit and therefore transparent and retrievable, so that other people can understand how an interpretation has been reached' (34). Likewise, Hart (2018) describes how a 'commitment to triangulation' (400) in Critical Discourse Analysis supports the interpretations of the individual analyst through additional data and experimentation.

Across both critical and stylistic analysis, methodologies differ for textual analysis with regards to the prominence of text-external features. For instance, van Dijk (2006; 2009; 2014) has proposed a cognitivist model of Critical Discourse Analysis which aims to triangulate the relationship between discourse, cognition, and society as inextricable from one another, and CDA more generally closely associates language with institutional practices (cf. Montgomery, 1995; Fairclough, 2001). By contrast, Jeffries argues that while these approaches demonstrate the importance of socio-political context in analysis, they require 'specific tools of analysis' (2010: 6) in order to relate these observations of function more precisely to linguistic form, and 'Critical Stylistics' views the text as the primary interest of its commentary (cf. Ch. 2.2.2). However, as cognitive approaches to language and discourse analysis necessarily treat language as a subset of everyday cognition, the background knowledge of the individual reader is viewed as key to interpreting and inferring meaning (Langacker, 2008: 463; van Dijk, 2014). Thus, while this thesis is primarily interested in the language of violence, language itself is viewed throughout as a socio-cognitive phenomenon, and understanding the social factors which affect perception is an essential dimension of its analysis and discussion. In particular, the importance of readers' personal background

knowledge regarding causality, intentionality, and responsibility for actions is developed over the course of the analysis, which is continually revised through a reflexive discussion at the end of each chapter.

#### **1.4: CDA and Social Change**

While stylistic analysis is often conceived with the aim of producing literary commentary on a text, or working through a particular linguistic issue, Hart (2014) has noted that Critical Discourse Analysis 'aims at achieving social change' (2). That is, it performs its critical analysis with the aim of uncovering the means by which language construes ideologically charged perspectives, or uses the recognition of inequalities in discourse to make commentary relating to broader institutional issues, such as sexism or racism. Fairclough (2009) goes further, suggesting that CDA should 'contribute to addressing the social 'wrongs' of the day [...] by analysing their sources and causes, resistance to them and possibilities of overcoming them' (163). War writings concerned with acts of violence contain social 'wrongs', the language of which often construes the actors and victims involved in differing degrees of focus according to the ideological frame of the narration. While the act of killing is clearly an example of a 'social wrong', its context within warfare can challenge the straightforward evaluation of its morality: in times of war, and self-defence, harming or killing another person may be considered by some actors and readers to be acceptable.

In the majority of cases, Critical Discourse Analysis takes as its subject language produced by or in support of ideological and political values which conflict with those of the researcher. In doing so, it aims to uncover how the language of this opposition conceals its ideological purpose. Analysing the language of Adolf Eichmann's defence at

the Nuremberg Trials, Schwelien (1961) describes how an analysis of his speech can reveal 'hidden' truths:

Eichmann does not suspect that exactly where he is - stubbornly or cannily-shrewdly, lying or covering and cloaking - trying to turn the truth of the events and of his deeds into its opposite, he actually lets the whole truth surface. Not that what he is saying is of importance for posterity, but how he says it, for as pure language mirrors truth in thought, in the jargon of violence, dark inhumanity is reflected relentlessly even where it is supposed to remain hidden. (Schwelien 1961: 6, trans. Segev, 2013: 52)

In developing an understanding of the relationship between language and ideology, through the analysis of fascist and racist discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis often approaches language in terms of what it conceals. Indeed, Butt et al. (2004) go so far as to describe language as the 'first covert operation of war'. However, many soldiers are upfront about their experiences in combat, and Bourke (1999) has extensively sourced testimony from soldiers who describe their role in conflict as enjoyable or pleasurable. In other words, a critical approach to the language of war writing which aims to uncover the concealed beliefs of the author or narrator fails to consider all the ways in which war is described, and how the actions of individuals involved in conflict are construed. By choosing to primarily examine the writings of soldiers from periods in which their involvement in war has been largely celebrated, this thesis deliberately challenges the way in which critical linguistic research approaches the relationship between language and ideology, even when it remains focused on descriptions of violence.

In other words, one of the purposes of this research, and the reason for choosing such a morally complex focus within the texts examined, is to ensure that the critical comments produced in its reading are equally applicable to a range of ideological positions. In describing the act of killing, narrators express pleasure, regret, fear, and exhilaration, and the analysis of the linguistic construal of experience must be able to

account for each of these responses equally. To begin this project with an expectation that language will only operate covertly, then, would be a misrepresentation of the corpus. As a result, while language can be used to conceal violence in order to exert or perpetuate a position of power or privilege, the present analysis aims to consider a variety of social and ideological positions, including those where acts of violence during wartime might be openly discussed, and even celebrated, by some authors and readers.

From the outset, then, war writing is viewed as existing within and producing a nexus of ideologically charged socio-political concepts. While this research is interested in the representation of agency and ways in which language contributes to readers' perceptions of actors as morally responsible for acts of violence, it remains open to the capacity for soldiers to present their experiences in a number of ideological directions. As a result, the stylistic effects of individuals' construals in the representation of actors are considered on a case by case basis, and in relation to the evaluative stance outlined by the narrators themselves, as well as the affective evaluations of non-specialist readers. This, in turn, allows for a closer examination of the individual features which comprise the perception of agency, as readers are in turn asked to produce evaluations of causality, intentionality, responsibility, and praise/blameworthiness associated with given actions.

## **1.5: Thesis Structure**

The structure of this thesis can be broken into thirds, representing analytical and methodological developments in the research, each composed of two chapters. The first third (Chapters 2 and 3) focuses on individual clauses, and the construal of force and causality in language. Situating the linguistic framework of this study in relation to Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014) and its models of transitivity and ergativity (2.2), the first chapter of this thesis is concerned with setting

out the role of cognitive approaches to critical and stylistic close readings. The cognitivist approach is introduced with an overview of cognitive linguistics and the Canonical Event Model and action chains as representative of the conceptualisation of force and motion in events in Cognitive Grammar (2.3.1). Following this, the concepts of granularity (2.3.2) and perspective (2.3.3) are introduced as additional dimensions of construal, demonstrating the versatility of Cognitive Grammar's approach to event construal. Likewise, an introduction to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (2.3.4) examines an alternative means of analysing soldiers' language choices, and Werth's (1993; cf. Browse, in press 2018) notion of 'Common Ground' (2.3.5) sets out a preliminary terminology for the discussion of readers' applications of background knowledge and context to the understanding of meaning, before the compatibility of functional and cognitivist approaches to grammar and discourse is outlined explicitly (2.4). Throughout this chapter, these terms are introduced with reference to primary war writing sources, in order to elicit an initial discussion of key stylistic features (2.5).

Having introduced the linguistic framework of the project, Chapter 3 examines the existing literature on critical approaches to the language of war and killing, examining the limitations of these studies as overly reliant on the interpretations of individual, specialist readers (3.2). Coupled with discussion of readers' abilities to infer causal connections unspecified within the source text (3.3), and objections of the narrator's construal based on competing knowledge or beliefs (3.4), the chapter reports a reader-response study (3.5) in order to support the critical analysis of a highly segmented description of the acts involved in killing an enemy soldier. The study shows (3.5.2) that while an explicit causal connection between the narrator and the act of injuring the enemy soldier is absent from the text, readers are readily able to infer it. Participants' responses provide qualitative feedback on the effects of the author's stylistic choices, which serve as the basis for an alternative analysis (3.5.3). In addition,

they also demonstrate how the interpretation of meaning within individual clauses relies on broader narrative context and personal background knowledge (3.5.4).

Following on from these findings, the next third (Chapters 4 and 5) moves to configure the critical and cognitive analysis of action in relation to discourse. Chapter 4 examines the role of narrative in the construction and perception of identity. In doing so, narratological research (4.2) is examined in relation to the approach to discourse in Cognitive Grammar (4.3.1) and Critical Discourse Analysis (4.3.2), introducing the present limitations in the application of Cognitive Grammar beyond clause-level analysis (Pincombe, 2014). However, examining the perceived relationship between narrative and identity in research on war writing (4.4) highlights the ethical risks of an overextended view of narrative as necessarily constructing experience (Strawson, 2004; 4.5). In considering the possibility of non-narrative experiences, and trauma in particular (4.6), the chapter concludes by acknowledging the limitations of the relationship between narrative structure and selfhood.

While Chapter 4 includes illustrative examples throughout, Chapter 5 produces an extended analysis of the only two memoirs presently published by drone pilots. The instability of identity is a prominent theme throughout these texts, from the question of their authorship (5.2) to the analysis of their language. As drone pilots operate at a physical distance from the battlefield, this chapter shows that their construal of psychological (5.3.1) and physical (5.3.2) proximity to the acts of violence they commit is in constant negotiation with societal expectations regarding the experience of warfare. Likewise, the pilots' agency over the act of killing is complicated by technological and bureaucratic systems (5.4), as well their own metaphors (5.5) and event models (5.6). Although this chapter provides new insights into the emerging language of drone

warfare (5.7), it also reaffirms the limitations of Cognitive Grammar in manageably analysing longer passages of discourse.

Examining this issue further, the final two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) set out a novel model of stylistic analysis which aims to more closely connect the clausal analysis afforded by Cognitive Grammar with the overall structure of the discourse in which it appears. Beginning with a theoretical discussion of intentionality, as historically defined in language and literature (6.2), Chapter 6 argues that the perception of intentionality is integral to understanding differences in the potential meaning of clauses (6.3). The chapter demonstrates (6.4) the effects of explicit and inferred intentions in individual clauses (6.4.1), complex sentences (6.4.2), and across discourse (6.4.3; 6.5). With this conceptual work done, the chapter returns to the analysis of war writing in terms of actors' intentions (6.6), and demonstrates how the perception of goals and beliefs contribute to the critical analysis of these texts (6.7). The chapter ends (6.8) with a reiteration that this approach affords novel modes of analysis for critical and literary purposes, and that work remains to be done in its application to other genres of discourse.

In the final chapter, the perception of intentionality is discussed in relation to agency, and considered alongside responsibility and praise/blameworthiness as constituent features which affect its perception (7.2). A further reader response study (7.4) shows that while intentionality and responsibility are often judged similarly, the two are assessed independently when readers are given an act of war time violence to evaluate explicitly (7.5.1). The variety in readers' responses indicates the importance of background and cultural knowledge to readers' interpretative activities. Following a review of the study (7.5.2) readers' responses are once again used to inform a critical

analysis of the text (7.6), where the distinction between intentionality, responsibility, and praise/blameworthiness allows for greater depth in the discussion of the text's style.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides a reflective summary of the analyses and methods produced throughout the thesis (8.1), and presents its key findings in three fields. Firstly (8.2), it examines common trends in the stylistic features observed across the examined war writings. It discusses how granularity (8.2.1), action chains (8.2.2) and disnarration (8.2.3; cf. Prince, 1988) are employed by multiple authors to construe their experiences of violence. While the first two sections in particular relate the value of adopting Cognitive Grammar as the linguistic framework for this analysis, each section also demonstrates how the features in question are employed to support a number of ideological positions regarding the morality of killing in war. This chapter also reflects on the contribution of the research to Critical Discourse Analysis (8.3), with particular reference to its experimental reader-response methods (8.3.1), and its caution in the conflation of linguistic and social agency (8.3.2). As a final series of findings, the chapter reaffirms the value of Cognitive Grammar in the analysis of force (8.4.1), as well as the potential for its model of intentionality in bridging the gap between clausal and discourse analysis (8.4.2). Lastly, the chapter also provides recommendations for future directions in associated research, both in terms of the analysis of war writing (8.5.1), and the future development of Cognitive Grammar in discourse analysis (8.5.2).

# Chapter 2: Events, Action, and Causation in Linguistics and Cognition

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## 2.1: Introduction

This chapter begins the study of the language of violence in war writing by considering the subject in its most straightforward sense: the single clauses in which an activity relating to killing or wounding is described. Croft (1998) describes the prototypical event in language as ‘a volitional agent acting on his or her own bring[ing] about a complete change of state to a patient, so that the patient cannot change any further in the relevant semantic dimension’ (89). In its most direct construal, one individual killing another constitutes this kind of event, which is ‘the most completely individuated from the causal network’ (ibid). In other words, an analysis of acts of violence performed by volitional agents can be isolated linguistically, and examined at the clausal level, in order to understand how event participants are represented with regard to this agentive relationship. As will be shown by the practical examples throughout this chapter, however, the language employed in these texts is not always so straightforward, and terminology is introduced to explain how these alternative representations function. The end of the chapter (2.5) reflects on these findings, as well as the benefits and limitations of isolated clause-level analysis, and establishes the basis for a broader reader response study in Chapter 3.

In order to discuss the representation of events in language, the chapter begins with the discussion of several prominent approaches to linguistics employed in stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, while at the same time examining the ways in which

these linguistic frameworks have been used to form conclusions about the ideological functions of language. Firstly (2.2), the concepts of ideation and transitivity from Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1979; 2014) are introduced as linguistic tools, as well as formative resources for CDA from its origins (Fowler and Kress, 1979) to the present day. Following discussion of the application and limitations of SFL, Cognitive Grammar is introduced (Langacker, 1987; 1999; 2008) as an alternative approach to clause-level stylistic analysis while maintaining an emphasis on the social and functional dimensions of language and meaning, alongside parallel cognitivist approaches (2.3). With reference to practical examples of descriptions of violence in military memoir throughout, the chapter examines the value of concepts such as force dynamics, granularity, and shared knowledge for practical textual criticism. These features are presented as a stylistic ‘toolkit’ (Wales, 2014), designed to facilitate the discussion of the reader’s overall impression of a text.

In the analysis of actions and their causes, the discussion throughout this chapter necessarily employs the term ‘agency’, both as a linguistic and social concept (cf. van Leeuwen, 1997: 32), the two of which are often conflated or confused. For linguistic purposes, ‘agency’ refers to the grammatical position of participant in an action designated as the (intentional) causer of the act, but the term has broader associations, relating to the ‘socioculturally mediated capacity to act’ (Ahearn, 2001: 112). While language allows the speaker to configure almost any variation of subject and object to draw the reader’s attention towards or away from different possible visible sources of causation, their perception of events in the world provides parameters to these construals. As John Keegan notes of the experience of individual soldiers in conflict, ‘it is a function of the impersonality of modern war that the soldier is coerced [...] by vast, unlocalised forces, against which he may rail, but at which he cannot strike back and to

which he must ultimately submit' (1976: 324), prompting Bourke (1999) to describe 'myths of agency' (358) in soldiers' descriptions of their roles and experiences in conflict.

Writing about one's experiences of conflict provides the authors of these texts with the opportunity to produce a representation of events according to a balance of personal agency and force they either perceive and report objectively, or deliberately construct for the reader. What a soldier might be able to report about their experiences in conflict may not represent an understanding of all the factors that influenced a decision. Indeed, the concept of 'construal' as employed in Cognitive Grammar introduced in this chapter (2.3.1) emphasises the inherent perspectivisation of language, which always requires the selection of a viewpoint from which to describe an observed or performed event. In order to contextualise this approach, this chapter begins by outlining the ways in which functional models of transitivity (2.2.1) have traditionally been adapted to discuss the critical and stylistic effects of language choices in various forms of literary and non-fiction discourse (2.2.2). After reflecting on the limitations of a functionalist approach, Cognitive Grammar is introduced, with key terms for the analysis of agency, causation, and force from the perspective of Cognitive Grammar being introduced through practical examples from primary texts (2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.2). In addition, further cognitive approaches to meaning in language, such as blending in metaphor (2.3.4) and Werth's (1993) notion of Common Ground (2.3.5) are introduced. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the relationship between cognitivist and functionalist approaches to language (2.4), before outlining initial observations regarding the language of killing in war writing, and outlining the next stages of the research (2.5).

## 2.2: Functionalist Perspectives

While the present research project focuses on the way in which events are structured and represented linguistically, ‘events’ do not exist in the world *a priori*, as the sensory information through which we experience the world is fluid, and always fluctuating. Rather, the act of perception is the identification of culturally significant ‘breakpoints’ in the fluency of action (Hard, Reccia, and Tversky, 2011), and the paronymic organisation of constituent events in order to make sense of ongoing activity at a number of levels simultaneously (Zacks and Tversky, 2001; Zacks and Swallow, 2007; Tversky, Zacks and Hard, 2008). To talk of a linguistic event, then, is to describe an observation about the world which has passed through the perceptual processes by which actions and events are ordered, and represented in language in a form which aims to communicate the perceived level of activity.

Historically, Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse analysis have employed Systemic Functional Linguistics (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014) as the framework through which language and grammar are discussed. While SFL is a detailed and wide ranging framework, Halliday delineates three ‘metafunctions, which represent the basic functions of language. The ‘textual’ metafunction refers to the grammatical structure of a text, the ‘interpersonal’ metafunction describes the pragmatic interactions between discourse participants, while the ‘ideational’ metafunction represents the fact that language selectively represents and conveys perspectivised descriptions of events and ideas. It is the ideational metafunction which receives the majority of attention in the application of SFL to critical analysis, as this accounts for the way in which experiences which take place or are perceived in the world – both physically, in a sense externally to the individual, and in their own private mental life – are translated into linguistic

manifestations. This section examines the methods developed to examine the ideational metafunction, and reviews its application across critical and stylistic analyses.

### **2.2.1: Transitivity and the Ideational Metafunction**

While SFL is concerned with the development of a functional theory of language in a broad sense, it is the ideational metafunction of linguistic representation which is most pertinent to the present study. In particular, SFL focuses on transitivity as the system through which language functions to represent the world. As Halliday has put it, transitivity is ‘the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his [*sic*] experiences of the process of the external world, and of the internal world of his consciousness’ (1971: 359, my emphasis). In placing emphasis on the speaker’s ‘experience of the process of the external world’, Halliday establishes transitivity as a model not only for the grammatical organisation of clauses, but one which can analyse clauses and their perspectives on the events they describe with regards to the subjectivity of the speaker, leading him to refer to transitivity as ‘the clause in its ideational aspect’ (ibid). The act of speaking or writing about experiences in the world organises and separates them into discrete units, and hierarchies of causality foreground the relationships between certain participants in actions and their consequences, while omitting or downplaying others.

Transitivity orders processes according to the kinds of activity being performed. At the most basic level, processes are divided into material, mental (doing and happening), behavioural (sensing), and relational (being and having) processes (Halliday, 2014: 224-300). These labels are linguistic and descriptive: rather than delineating different events in the world, they refer instead to the perspective from which the event is framed in language. For instance, an explosion could be reported in terms of a mental process of perception (‘I heard a loud bang’), orienting the reader to the event from the point of view of the first person narrator. In its stylistic and critical

application, transitivity analysis operates through frequency, identifying patterns of positioning within lexicogrammatical categories (e.g. Simpson, 1993: 90-91; Hart, 2014: 23-25). When a participant within the discourse is shown to be absent from or highly present in an agentive function, they can be described as having lesser or greater agency and control over the actions and events which occur respectively. Observing the frequency with which participants appear in different transitivity roles, performing or having different kinds of processes performed upon them, is often used to establish a 'transitivity profile'. This profile is then taken to be indicative of the way in which a participant is generally perceived in terms of personal agency, as well as the 'mind style' (Leech and Short, 1981) of the narrator who provides the reader's perspective.

The discussion of transitivity is not exclusive to functionalist linguistics. Fillmore (1970) examines the distinction between 'break' and 'hit' verbs, showing that semantically similar verbs can have distinct argument realisations, leading to the development of Theta Theory in generative grammars (cf. Haiden, 2005). For example, while 'the window broke' can be passivized, as the verb 'broke' selects for a DP object, '\*the fence hit' is an ungrammatical construction, as 'hit' instead selects instead for a DP location. With Theta Theory, the context of an utterance is not factored into its meaning. Rather, interest lies exclusively in the parameters of syntactic possibility. In terms of its applicability to stylistic analysis, theta criteria may be a useful means of expressing the consequences of certain word choices when expressing a given event, such as describing how an intransitive verb such as 'ran', which assigns only an agent, elicits distinct theta criteria to a transitive (e.g. 'Adam chased me', which requires both an agent and theme. However, developing such an analysis to produce stylistic commentary leads to functionalism, because as well as describing the specific linguistic phenomena in question, a study of a word or phrase's effect on the reader is necessarily concerned with the social, communicative purpose and impact of the language choices

made. To extend an analysis of language beyond the observation of the capacity lexical semantics, and toward a meaningful commentary on the function of a given utterance, it is necessary to move beyond a generative study of context-free clauses, and instead consider the functionality of an utterance as an essential dimension of meaning.

The value of the transitive model for the present analysis is its classification of different kinds of process, which alters the functional category of the actor through further subdivision. For example, in a passage of his memoir in which he recalls being involved in a firing squad for the execution of attempted deserters, Quinton (1929) describes the scene as follows:

“At your target, take aim”.

Twelve rifles *came up* to the aiming position.

Fire!

I just had time to *see* that helpless figure *shudder* & then *hang very still*, when

“About turn!”

We again *stood* facing the hedge.

Quinton, (1929: 23, my emphases)

In the events described in this extract (italicised), the transitive processes employed by the narrator shift the reader’s engagement both with the events themselves and the agents who perform them. In the clauses in which the narrator is positioned as agent (‘I’ and ‘we’), the processes described are mental and relational respectively, and the narrator simply observes the behavioural motion of the dying individual, before standing motionless. Prior to the act of killing itself, the description presents the rifles themselves in the category of actor in relation to the material process of ‘coming up’. In other words, this construal presents the motion of the rifles from a perspective which avoids presenting Quinton himself as an agentive force associated with their movement. Finally, the moment in which the guns are fired and the act of killing itself takes place is

presented even less straightforwardly. Throughout the extract the descriptive clauses are broken up by the direct speech of a disembodied speaker, in which imperatives imply the activity which takes place. The context of the utterance makes the intended actors of each instruction clear. However, the shift to free indirect discourse for 'fire!' produces an ambiguity: serving both to describe the utterance of the order, and also as an onomatopoeic description of the act itself. While the reader is able to interpret the passage quoted above as a series of events in which the narrator was involved in an act of violence, the transitive structure of the descriptive clauses serve to diminish the agency associated with the narrator himself.

As well as transitivity, SFL includes an alternative model of clausal analysis known as 'ergativity', which can be employed concurrently with transitivity. Halliday (2014; 332-355) argues that an analysis which focuses on a clause's in/transitive structure ('The man laughed' vs. 'The man laughed at the clown') is primarily concerned with the *extension* of a clause's meaning, whereby the transitive form provides additional information about the same basic activity as described in the intransitive construal. Ergativity, on the other hand, shifts attention to *causation*. For instance, the sentences 'The bear startled' and 'The mouse startled the bear' convey the same event, but with the introduction of a new actor who is shown to cause this process. While transitivity is suited to instances in which additional clauses introduce new goals and objects upon and toward which processes occur, ergativity accounts for examples in which the addition of new clauses supplements the agentive position, providing further information about where a process originated, as opposed to where it was directed. A consideration of both transitive and ergative structures will help to clarify precisely how the language of the text organises the representation of Actors, Goals, and the central Process to which they relate. In the case of texts concerned with violent acts, the determination of responsibility for Processes can have significant ideological

consequences. SFL's capacity to discuss a passage in both ergative and transitive terms allows for the analysis to consider both the represented extent of an action, as well as the clarity of the text's representation of Initiator-Actors, who take the ergative position of causing the initial Process.

### **2.2.2: SFL in Critical and Literary Analysis**

The Systemic Functional approach has been used extensively to discuss language in broader contexts, including critical and literary-linguistic analysis, and is integral to the evolution of both stylistics and critical-linguistic practices. Halliday himself demonstrates how transitivity can be used to discuss literary style in his analysis of the William Golding novel *The Inheritors*, where he argues that patterns of transitivity express 'the linguistic representation of experience' (1971: 359). In comparable contemporary analysis, both literature (Simpson and Canning, 2014; Darani, 2014) and non-fictional texts (e.g. Seo, 2013; Li, 2010) are approached in terms of internal patterns of transitivity. In particular, there is a rich history of critical linguistic engagement with transitivity as an analytical tool, extending back to Fowler and Kress's (1979) conception of Critical Linguistics, and continuing into present day Critical Discourse Studies. For these theorists, SFL and transitivity analysis is seen as a means by which to 'uncover' the hidden power structures within the social dynamic of a given piece of discourse (Fairclough, 2001; Butt et al., 2004). For example, if one character in a narrative is regularly presented as the agent of material actions, whilst another performs primarily mental acts, this can demonstrate that the first actor has been construed as having a greater ability to affect change in the world. Oftentimes, this analysis is coupled with an interest in a particular sociological agenda. For instance, Mills (1995) employs transitivity as part of a broader feminist critique of literature and everyday discourses such as advertising, in order to demonstrate a societal imbalance of agency across

gender lines. In essence, transitivity analysis allows for the study of language and characterisation in agentive terms, where the nature of the act and the social status of the actor and subject are the focus of analysis.

In order to demonstrate how transitivity analysis can enable the critical interpretation of war writing, the following extract from the autobiography of Henry de Man (1920: 198-9) describes an act of violence performed by the author, to which the reader may have an emotional response. For the ease of analysis, a number has been assigned before each clause within the extract:

[1] I secured a direct hit on an enemy encampment, [2] saw bodies or parts of bodies go up in the air, and [3] heard the desperate yelling of the wounded or runaways. (1920: 198-9)

The first clause [1] of this passage demonstrates a material action, in which the first person narrator (de Man) acts upon a direct grammatical object. However, de Man's semantic choices focus on a level of granularity which emphasises that the mortar strike was on an 'encampment'. When humans are introduced as grammatical objects within the narrative, [2] and [3], the governing process is mental, and de Man is thus positioned as a witness to their sounds and motions, while his involvement in causing these actions is implied through the narrative proximity to the earlier material act. From a classic critical perspective, then, we might conclude that de Man's account evades a certain level of direct involvement with the act of violence described within the passage.

A problem arises with this interpretation, however, when the sentence immediately following this extract is also considered. As de Man goes on to write:

I had to confess to myself that it was one of the happiest moments of my life.  
(199)

To read de Man's language exclusively with an eye to accounting for a rendering absent of the self as agent to avoid blame would be reductive, as de Man openly relates the experience of happiness to witnessing what might typically be considered traumatic or troubling events. That said, de Man's use of the verb 'confess' suggests shame in his happiness, and it could be argued that the transitive structure of the preceding passage reflects this stance by avoiding a direct description. Nonetheless, the idea of a combat veteran describing and evaluating their experience of war – even as a perpetrator of violence – in a positive light cannot be dismissed, as several war historians (Hynes, 1997; Bourke, 1999; Jones, 2006) have written at length regarding soldiers' positive emotions in relation to performing and witnessing violence. Indeed, critical discourse analysts have often been critiqued (Widdowson, 1998; Lev, 2003) for the role that the researcher's personal ideology may play in the interpretation of the source material. Likewise, Halliday's claim that the transitivity profile of select passages of *The Inheritors* produces a 'world-view' (1971: 348) which correlates with the experiences of the Neanderthal protagonist has been called into question by Fish (1979). These criticisms will be explored further in the following chapter (3.2.1). For now, it serves best to consider what the SFL approach can meaningfully contribute to linguistically focused critical and literary analysis:

A Hallidayan transitivity analysis throws into relief the core semantic framework of a text, and is often useful on narrative texts; it answers certain fundamental questions we might have about a narrative: which characters are, in this narrative, prominently occupying which of a very limited set of participant roles (most basically the "doer" roles - such as Actor, Sensor, or Sayer - and the "done-to" roles - such as Goal or Addressee); and which of the four basic processes mainly occur. (Toolan, 2009: 236)

Of course, Halliday is not the only source for functionalist approaches to language used in critical and literary research. Van Leeuwen (1997) produces a detailed

taxonomy of 'social actors', organising the various relations between actors and subjects in discourse into a stratification based on the implicit social order. Importantly, van Leeuwen describes his approach as 'sociosemantic', as 'sociological agency is not always realised by linguistic agency, by the grammatical role of "Agent"' (1997: 32). Unlike Halliday's argument that all aspects of experience can be encoded in language, van Leeuwen's social actor analysis takes into account not only the grammatical structure of the clause, but the broader sociological conventions associated with individual word choices in accounting for the ascription and perception of agency. Accordingly, even when a participant in a process is not positioned as an actor, social actor analysis considers the semantic connotations of the language chosen to represent them, with categories such as 'impersonalisation' being 'wellnigh impermeable to human agency' (60). Van Leeuwen's own analysis focuses on the discourse of racism, but its application to the power dynamics of language and society has the capacity to extend to other modes and themes of discourse. In discourse concerning military conflict, the way in which narrators choose to refer to themselves and their opponents can affect the reader's perception of each party's capacity for agency, and even their humanity.

More recently, Jeffries (2010; 2014) has developed the term 'Critical Stylistics' in response to developments in Critical Discourse Analysis, which she argues is designed to 'bring the text back into discussions of discourse meaning' (2014: 410). Critical Stylistics therefore aims to produce 'a method of finding the ideology in any text, whether or not you agree with it' (ibid), viewing Critical Discourse Analysis as ideologically-driven and lacking 'some of linguistics' hard-won credibility by giving up on all attempts at objectivity' (408). However, as Jeffries' discussion of action representation remains firmly rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics, which she describes as 'the most productive' (2010: 49) approach for stylistically-oriented approaches Critical Discourse Analysis, it is unclear how Critical Stylistics differs methodologically from earlier

approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis in order to support its objective aims. Moreover, CDA has received other criticisms not addressed by Jeffries' stylistically-oriented adaptation. Namely, that its analysis can be selective in its discussion of primary material (Widdowson, 1998), lacking in a systematic process of analysis (Stubbs, 1997; cf. Breeze, 2013), or at risk of critiquing others for stylistic features it employs itself, such as passivisation and nominalisation (Billig, 2008). Not only do these challenges persist in Critical Stylistics, but similar questions can also be asked of cognitive approaches to CDA, and the implications of these criticisms for this thesis will be addressed in Chapter 3.2.

### **2.3: Cognitive Perspectives**

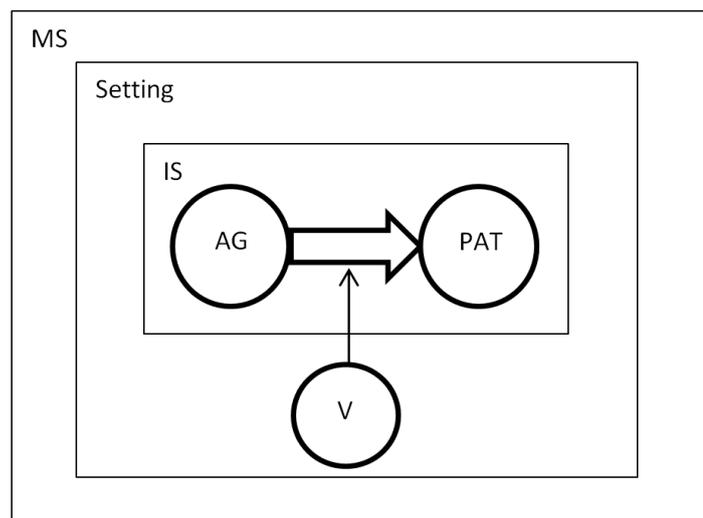
Distinct from the functional approach to grammar is Cognitive Linguistics. Based on a similar notion that language is part of a larger system of cognition and interaction with the world, the diverse approaches to Cognitive Linguistics generally hold that language is based on the perceptual processes which govern general cognition (cf. Lee, 2001). As with functional linguistics, cognitively oriented perspectives on language have been adapted to provide critical commentary on a range of texts and media, although this approach is comparatively recent. While Van Dijk (1998) examines ideology in language in relation to mental models and social cognition, O'Halloran (2003: 21) notes an absence of cognitively-oriented approaches to critical discourse studies five years later. In the field of discourse analysis relating to war, Lakoff (1992) discusses metaphor in rhetoric around the Gulf War from a cognitive perspective, although the primary focus of this analysis is the role of metaphor in reports *about* war, as opposed to the experiences of those involved directly. Since this time, however, the 'cognitive turn' in stylistics has seen rapid expansion in the application of these

associated methods in the analysis of literary fiction (Culpepper and Semino, 2002; Stockwell, 2002 and 2009; Gavins and Steen, 2003; Zunshine, 2006; Gavins, 2007; Dancygier, 2011; Harrison et al., 2014; Harrison, 2017; Giovanelli and Harrison, in press, 2018). Although an ongoing project to synthesise cognitive research, Cognitive Linguistics, and literary analysis, cognitive poetics has already begun to demonstrate the broad range of applications for cognitive linguistic models in understanding the ways in which meaning is produced in the interpretation of literary discourse.

In addition, following O'Halloran (2003), cognitive approaches to CDA have been advanced by Hart (2008; 2011a; 2011b; 2014; 2015; 2018, see also Hart and Lukeš, 2007), who argues that Cognitive Grammar's symbolic models of events can be used to critically analyse the construal of force and perspective, with particular reference to the representation of protests, riots, and immigration in media discourses. Van Dijk (2014) also explores the relationship between discourse, cognition, and demonstrating the imbalanced relationship between social actors in newspaper reports of protests. Similarly to Cognitive Poetics, then, Critical Discourse Analysis has begun to adapt Cognitive Grammar and related cognitive linguistic models for the purpose of examining ideology and power dynamics within discourse. There is still much work to be done, however, in extending the applicability of Cognitive Linguistics' extensive range of descriptive models to critical commentary, and in assessing its value in relation to the analysis functional grammar models already afford. The discussion below therefore examines key terms from Cognitive Grammar and associated approaches to language in relation to the primary texts of this thesis, in order to demonstrate the applicability and present limitations of a cognitively-oriented approach to language and discourse.

### 2.3.1: Event Models and Action Chains

Cognitive Grammar seeks to explain the structure of grammar and meaning in terms of symbolic prototypes. In the case of event construal, Langacker's notion of the prototypical event is realised in the Canonical Event Model (*Fig. 2.1*). As in SFL, the distinction is made between the grammatical subject and object, here termed the agent, or trajector (the participant who acts) and patient, or landmark (who/what is acted upon). These are considered archetypal roles, along with 'instrument' (used by an agent to act on a patient), 'experiencer' (to describe the subject of mental processes), and 'zero' ('conceptually minimal and nondistinct... participants who merely exist' (2008: 356)). Building on these archetypal units, Langacker hypothesises a 'canonical event model' – the archetypal model for the representation of a process as being caused by an agent acting upon a patient, as shown in the diagram below. Such a model also contains the immediate scope (IS), being the 'onstage' context relevant to the act and actors being construed; the maximal scope (MS), the greater context, such as its impact at a later date; and the position of a viewer (V) external to the process:



*Fig. 2.1:* The Canonical Event Model, e.g. 'John hit Sally'

As the figure above shows, Cognitive Grammar's treatment of grammar as symbolic divorces its typological categories from specific grammatical features. For instance, the grammatical subject and the CG agent will not always be parallel, as when a process is presented in the passive, the subject may well be the patient. The conceptual roles modelled in Cognitive Grammar demonstrate causal associations between the actor and patient, while their construal within the lexicogrammar also affects focal prominence. 'John hit Sally', for instance, has distinct morphosyntactic units which directly correspond to each section of the Canonical Event Model's conceptualisation of the action in question. A passivized construal of the same event ('Sally was hit by John') reverses the grammatical role of each participant while still describing the same event. For the cognitive model of grammar, the capacity for the construal to alter in terms of prominence, with attention now primarily on the patient as opposed to the agent, demonstrates the lexicogrammatical continuum through which meaning is constructed (Evans and Green, 2006: 478). The way in which an author constructs a clause grammatically, then, significantly affects the ways in which the reader perceives the described events in terms of focal prominence. Hence, as Croft (1998) observes, 'the assignment of grammatical relations to participants is determined by the way the world is, that is, our real-world knowledge of specific circumstances. But to a considerable degree, it is up to the speaker's construal of the event' (89). Outlining the ways in which language performs these functions – what is shown to be the actor upon what, and in what ways they act – demonstrates the naturally close relationship between the stylistic analysis of linguistic choice and the Cognitive Grammar concept of construal.

In other words, the Canonical Event Model represents a kind of gestalt cognitive schema (Schank and Abelson, 1977), serving as a prototype by which language users can

set expectations for the direction of force and motion in a typical English clause. The Canonical Event Model represents the frame around which events are typically organised. A construal may differ from this model in terms of perspective, transitivity, or the absence/presence of an agent or patient, but such a deviation is *notable*.

Beyond the Canonical Event Model, Cognitive Grammar also categorises several further semantic roles: instrument, experiencer, mover, absolute, and theme. However, Dowty (1991) argues that only notions of ‘proto-agent’ and ‘proto-patient’ are required, demarcating prototypical sources and sinks of energy, with more specific categories representing scalar positions of relative agentive or patient-like features. This thesis is primarily concerned with agent and patient roles, as the kinds of physical actions involved in acts of killing require the conceptualisation of force, prototypically from a causer, and sunk into or passed through a patient.

Langacker goes on (2008: 373-378) to discuss strategies for event representation being either agentive (with grammatical focus on the cause of the act) or thematic (typically emphasising the experiencer or sensor, for example), and concludes that English is strongly agentive, prototypically organising processes linguistically in terms of causation and agency, with grammatical emphasis on the agent as the trajector. However, some construals segment events into smaller, distinct event models, where the causal connection between one agent and patient is less obvious than in other more direct descriptions. Describing an experience of shooting an enemy soldier, for example, Turner (n.d.) writes that , ‘I fired carefully – the figure fell’ (49). This construal keeps grammatically distinct two processes where a causal connection is otherwise straightforward. When introducing the difference between an agent and a theme (an experiencer/instrument/patient), Langacker observes that:

‘A typical agentic process thus has the conceptual layering shown in diagram [below]. At its core is a conceptually autonomous thematic process, which can often be expressed independently (e.g. *It broke*). This core supports the notion of agentivity, which – being conceptually dependent – is usually not expressed in isolation (*\*He caused*). Together they constitute a higher-level event conception that is itself autonomous (*He broke it*)’ (2008: 372).

While the dependence of ‘caused’ makes its use in an intransitive construction ungrammatical, ‘fired’ *can* be used intransitively, meaning that the ‘higher-level event concept’ is broken down into its component processes, although the relationship between the two is implied through their proximity in the narrative order. The diagram below shows both the typical agentic process, where the processes are directly linked, and how these components are separated but otherwise unchanged in their manifestation in the memoir. In this model, as elsewhere in Langacker’s style, a double arrow denotes a transfer of energy from one participant to another – an acting upon – while a single arrow indicates an objectless process (in this case, the figure does not *act* on anything by falling).

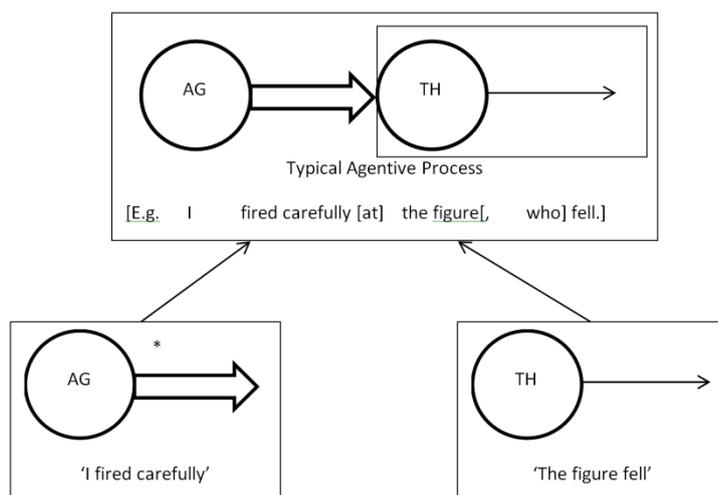


Fig. 2.2: Dissecting the agentic process in ‘I fired carefully – the figure fell’

The figure above marks two force states. In the first, the bold arrow demonstrates a transfer of force from the first person narrator, while the smaller arrow shows that ‘the

figure' is conceptualised as enacting a change of state through the fall to the ground, but that the force associated with this motion is not directed towards a particular patient or landmark. Consequently, the first person narrator is labelled as an 'agent', while 'the figure' is described as a 'mover'. As this example shows, different construals can affect the 'level' at which events are construed, with consequences for the perception of causality and the transfer of force. Termed 'granularity', or 'specificity', the role of this phenomenon in critical analysis is examined in further detail below (2.3.2).

The asterisk in *Fig 2.2* indicates a representation of agency which requires further explanation: Langacker claims, and the example above shows, that a thematic process such as 'the figure fell' can be construed 'without reference to an agent or agentive causation' (2008: 371). However, an agentive process 'incorporates a thematic process, without which it is conceptually incoherent' (*ibid*), meaning clauses such as '\*he caused' appear to be incomplete construals of events they attempt to describe. Yet at first glance, 'I fired' appears not to have an associated thematic process. *Fig 2.2* hypothesises an interpretation of the two clauses as causally connected to one another, in which case the figure who falls serves as the goal at which the act of firing is directed. Although it may not always be possible to know if a reader will infer such a connection between clauses, the ordering of the clauses without breaks between them and the flow of the action chain follows what Langacker describes as a 'natural path' (372) of ordering. With the first person narrator as both the first word and agent in the first of these processes, their agentive role and its implied effect on the fallen figure remains prominent in this construal, despite the initial separation of the two clauses.

Langacker (1999: 46) also shows how language choices can be used to put emphasis on any aspect of an action chain with the following examples, where

emboldened annotations indicate the foregrounding of an agent [AG], patient [PAT], and instrument [INST] in the construal, alongside the subject (s) and object (o):

(a) Sam sliced the salami with a sharp knife.

[**AG**(s) – **INST** – **PAT**(o)]

(b) The knife easily sliced the salami.

[AG – **INST**(s) – **PAT**(o)]

(c) The salami slices easily.

[AG – INST – **PAT**(s)]

Here, as with the earlier example of ‘I fired carefully’, it is possible to represent the action chain without reference to the instrument:

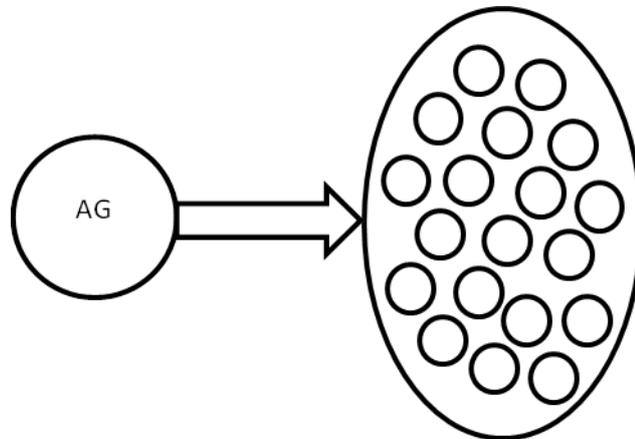
(d) Sam sliced the salami

[**AG**(s) – INST – **PAT**(o)]

and that the absence of this component in the chain has a minimal effect on its construal in relation to the transfer of force, as the concepts of ‘slicing’ and ‘firing’ schematically require the use of a tool in order to be performed at all. Thus, while the explicit textual foregrounding of the instrument is a choice made available in English, its absence or presence here has little impact on the reader’s model of the events described.

Moreover, the landmark of ‘fired’ is prepositional, and when something is fired *at*, the construal of the individual clause only describes the *intention* to transfer force to the described landmark. Without further context, therefore, it remains possible for the narrator to have missed his mark, and for the energy described in the act of firing to have been transferred to an alternative, unintended and conceptually absent landmark. Another example, ‘I fired into the grey mass’ (Quinton, 1929) shows how easily the explicit transfer of force in an otherwise canonical event model can be obscured, as the

agent, while positioned as a trajector directing force towards a landmark, never explicitly interacts with a single landmark as part of the overall mass count noun ‘mass’:



*Fig. 2.3: Multiple landmarks - 'I fired into the grey mass of humanity'*

Quinton goes on to describe ‘blaz[ing] away into that oncoming mass of humanity’, which operates similarly to the diagram above, as force is transferred by an agent towards a mass noun. As stated previously, however, it differs from ‘fired’ in that the semantic content of ‘blazed away’ suggests a repeated action. Hence, not only does the phrase produce multiple simulations of the force transfer process, but this repetition leads to an inference of intention, specifically regarding a desire to produce a given effect – in this instance, to wound.

These examples can be contrasted with the direct transfer of force in descriptions such as ‘I had shot him’ (Hyder, 2009: 175). No instrument mediates the agentive relationship here, as shooting is conceptualised as being done directly *by* an agent *to* the theme, and it may be of significance that such a description appears only *after* a metonymic description of acting upon a German helmet, ‘I put two shots through it’ (174), a ditransitive which explicitly extends the action chain once again. Bourke (1999) describes how ‘the long-distant and indirect character of ‘area attacking weapons’ such as shrapnel, bombs, and gas meant that while people could regularly be seen dying,

it was rarer to actually see them being killed' (xviii), a technological development with potential parallels in grammatical event representation. That is, a level of disconnect exists between the performance and consequences of a violent act – causality is fundamentally, and sometimes irrecoverably, interrupted, consciously or otherwise.

Moving beyond individual clauses, Cognitive Grammar also conceptualises the transfer of force across a number of trajectors. Visualised in terms of a 'knock on' effect, related transfers of force are associated conceptually through an 'action chain' (Langacker, 2008: 355). Action chains have already been examined in Cognitive Poetics, as Stockwell (2009: 183-189) describes how modulating between the construal of longer and shorter chains of actions can affect the perception of narrative pacing, and the transition between agent, mover, and patient roles produces 'texture' with regards to the perceived agency of the characters described. Likewise, Harrison (2017: 31-45) examines how the extended construal of a detailed action chain can 'lose sight of the bigger picture' (45), with the reader's attention instead focused on small-scale activities (Cf. 2.3.2 below). In this thesis, understanding the perceived causes of actions is an essential element of the analysis (e.g. Ch. 3.5; 5.4; 7.5). Moreover, action chains indicate the ways in which Cognitive Grammar is presently able to expand its analysis across larger units of discourse than individual clauses, and Chapter 4.3.1 will examine the applicability and limitations of this approach in greater detail.

The experience of war is often understood as disjointed and chaotic, and Leed (1979) describes it as an 'autonomous event comprehensible only to those who could no longer see themselves, even in combination, as authors of their own acts' (38). However, Bourke (1999) suggests that soldiers who describe killing employ 'myths of agency' – a desire to 'assert their own individuality and sense of personal responsibility even within the disorder of combat' (358). Likewise, Todd (2014) has suggested that the linguistic

construal of agency serves a function in the therapeutic context, moving the narrator away from the 'reduced social status of the object position' (281) by working towards a tellable construal of events in which the narrator can position themselves agentively. However, positioning oneself as the agent of an act of killing – a position prototypically associated with volition and responsibility for the act which occurs – often places the narrator in a position of social taboo and moral uncertainty. Cognitive Grammar's model of events and the transfer of force can be used to observe precisely how the agency of the narrator manifests in passages which traverse the performance of violence, often taking instead an agentive position in relation to a mass of objects, or produce a causal chain. As a result, the narrator is positioned as an agent, without recourse to a direct construal of the individual as the producer of violent force against another, specifiable, individual.

### **2.3.2: Granularity and Prominence**

As well giving the reader a spatial and temporal position in relation to a described event, the construal of narration also affects the detail with which events can be perceived at all. The concept of 'granularity', or specificity (Langacker, 2008: 55) models the way in which alternative construals of an event in language may alter the reader's perspective. In cognitive scientific research, Vallacher and Wegner (1987) and Zacks and Tversky (2001), for example, have shown how individuals' perceptions of events shift according to the 'prepotent identity' associated with the activity. For instance, a series of small-scale activities ('selecting a tea bag, boiling water, pouring the water into a mug, etc.') are perceived – and can be construed linguistically – according to a higher order of activity ('making a cup of tea'), evoking an image schema which infers the vast majority of these constituent events without explicit consideration. Likewise, if the overall goal of such activity is uncertain or unrelatable, a highly granular

description may be preferable. As well as actions, granularity also affects the description of objects and persons. In the passage discussed in 2.3.1, Turner's description of 'the figure' represents a low granularity, as the reader is given almost no information about the individual. As the following discussion will show, descriptions of violence in war writing employ both extremes of granularity in their descriptions.

While the discussion of language and events thus far has considered the structure of clausal construals of events, segmentation as explored in cognitive science also refers to the perceiver's capacity to alternate between different 'levels' of understanding, according to the context of observation. Talmy (2016) refers to 'macro-event nesting', which describes how certain event representations can contain 'nested' actions of a lower level. For instance, the phrase 'Could you reach me that box down off the shelf?' entails other required movements towards the box, the gripping of fingers, and consequently passing the box to the initial speaker, in order to complete the request. While everyday actions may evoke scripts which allow discourse participants to interpret comparable 'micro-level' events of which the acts described are comprised, this will not always be the case. For example, in a diary entry for July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1917, W.C.H. Johnson writes:

In camp at Rumbo. Saw German white officer killed at Linguala yesterday .  
Bush covered with empty cartridge cases. *Gold coast regiment did fine work.*

While the context of the entry suggests that Johnson is describing 'work' related to combat, it is impossible to infer precisely what is entailed by 'fine work'. Consequently, this low granularity can also be used to conceal the specifics of a given process of action by abstracting to an extent whereby the events which comprise the description cannot be construed.

The relationship between levels of granularity and the rhetorical effects of language has been summarised by Quintillian. Discussing reports of war, he observes that condensing a series of events and experiences into a single utterance does not necessarily exclude them from consideration, although the absence of detail may have stylistic and affective consequences:

To say “the city was stormed” is to embrace everything implicit in such a disaster, but this brief communique, as it were, does not touch the emotions. If you expand everything which was implicit in the one word, there will come into view flames racing through houses and temples, the crash of falling roofs, the single sound made up of many cries, the blind flight of some, others clinging to their dear ones in their last embrace, shrieks of children and women, the old men whom an unkind fate has allowed to live to see this day... “Sack of a city” does, as I said, comprise all these things; but to state the whole is less than to state all the parts (trans. McLoughlin, 2014: 52-53)

In other words, the higher order description of events entails the conceptualisation of constituent events through the schematisation of knowledge. Although the images Quintillian describes are not offered explicitly in the initial example clause, they can be inferred by the reader through their existing knowledge of the process of storming a city.

Langacker (1990) hypothesises a similar scenario:

Typically, a conceived event comprises an intricate web of interactions involving numerous entities with the potential to be construed as participants, yet only a few of these interactions and participants are made explicit, and fewer still are rendered prominent [...] Floyd’s little sister, Andrea, has been teasing him mercilessly all morning. Angry and desirous of revenge, Floyd picks up a hammer, swings it, and shatters Andrea’s favourite drinking glass. The shards fly in all directions; one of them hits Andrea on the arm, drawing blood. Hearing the commotion, their mother comes in and asks what happened. In response, Andrea utters these immortal words: *Floyd broke the glass.* (214)

Equally, Grunbaum (2007) suggests that a description may be distorted if the emphasis is placed on substantially lower order events than would strictly be meaningful in the context of the process being described: 'if the narration takes the form of a detailed description of a body and its movement, then we are pushed towards an understanding of the narrated scene that falls apart in purposeless observational fragments' (302-303). For instance, an account of the process of walking to the shops which explicitly considered the movement of each tendon within the legs of the walker loses sight of the overarching act. Scarry (1985) has considered this more explicitly in relation to accounts of violence, describing how the vocabulary of injury 'may recede further and further from view by being tucked into successively smaller units... distanc[ing] the injury by a continual act of extension, as though it were the umbrella on an ever-extending shaft' (77). By focusing further on the minutiae of a given event, Scarry and Grunbaum argue that high granularity descriptions can mean that the reader's impression of the overarching act is lost within a plethora of detail. Likewise, as H. Porter Abbott has put it, 'narrative can fail not for a lack of causality, but because there is too much of it' (2010: 15), and the relationship between actors and their actions may be obscured in a high granularity description of events. For an analysis interested in the critical function of a text's language, high and low granularity in the description of an action or event can be viewed as a valuable starting point for understanding how and where the language of the passage draws the reader's attention.

While the concept of granularity is closely associated with the construal of events (Langacker, 2008: 55), the notion that lexicogrammatical structures afford prominence to particular aspects of the world under description can also be used to describe the ways in which language draws the reader's attention towards and away from other concepts. The idea of a 'Figure', which the reader actively attends to, is set against the backdrop of the 'Ground', the context taken for granted. As dynamic

categories, Langacker uses the notions of Figure and Ground as the basis for describing information and perspectives as foregrounded or backgrounded (2008: 58). The construal of events, then, is the selection of causes and agents to be configured within the Figure and Ground of the described activities, foregrounding or backgrounding particular agents and actions as required.

### **2.3.3: Perspective and Deixis**

With the above discussion outlining the functions of prominence, specificity, and focus, it remains to consider the role of perspective as a dimension of construal in Cognitive Grammar (cf. Langacker, 2008: 53). In the outline of the Canonical Event Model given in *Fig. 2.1*, the viewing arrangement was marked with a 'v', outside of the act itself, indicating a third person perspective. These visualisations represent the position of the reader in relation to the acts and actors associated with the construal in question, and can vary according to the information provided. Prepositions ('above', 'below', 'beside', etc.) can provide more specific information about the spatial position of the viewing arrangement, while temporal markers ('yesterday', 'tomorrow', 'in an hour') ground the reader's perspective in time. Each of these prepositions encodes a relative position in space and/or time from which the scene is viewed, known as deixis.

In stylistics, deixis is analysed in terms of the choice inherent in positioning the reader in a particular perspectival relationship with actors and events. Short (1996) refers to the reader's perspective 'within' the text as the 'deictic centre' – the physical and temporal anchor back to which prepositions indicating relative positions refer – and examines the implications of deictic choices in readers' perceptions. The term 'deixis' has been applied and extended in its meaning in Cognitive Poetics, as Stockwell (2002) describes deixis broadly as 'taking a cognitive stance within the mentally-constructed world of the text' (46), referring not only to physical and temporal stances, but also

socially-oriented perspectives. Additionally, Deictic Shift Theory (Duchan, Bruder, and Hewitt, 1995) suggests that perspective can shift across conceptual domains within discourse, and the notion of ‘popping’ and ‘pushing’ between layers of narrative space has been integrated into Text World Theory and expanded further (cf. Gavins, 2007). Deixis allows for an understanding of the ways in which construals position the reader in relation to physical, temporal, and social positions within a discourse. Just as an analysis of the granularity of a construal can demonstrate the ways in which language foregrounds or backgrounds particular features of a scene for the readers’ attention, so too can a model of the readers’ deictic position help to show how an author’s language choices affect the possibility of readers perceiving actors and events from particular relative positions.

As the texts analysed for this thesis are all first-person autobiographical narratives, the reader’s physical position within the text is bound to the perspective of the first-person narrator. With the notable exception of drone pilots, discussed further below (5.3), physical deixis is therefore limited to the narrator’s location. However, Stockwell also argues that language encodes ‘relational deixis’, through ‘expressions that encode social viewpoint and relative situations of authors, narrators, characters, and readers’ (2002: 46), drawing parallels between the roles of physical and social proximity or distance. How a narrator chooses to describe the relationship between two individuals (e.g. choosing between the descriptions ‘the two men’, ‘the two brothers’, and ‘the criminal and the policeman’) affects the reader’s orientation to the participants and events of the discourse. As relational deictic markers determine the emotional proximity between the reader’s deictic centre and other participants, the language employed by soldiers to describe their enemy combatants has the potential to significantly affect a reader’s affective response to the acts and individuals described.

As well as indicating the narrator's relationship to other characters, relational deixis can also provide evidence to support the interpretation and evaluation of narrative mind-styles. For example, the negative shading when Turner describes firing at 'the figure', as opposed to some alternative and more specific construal of the individual, marks a relational distance from the narrator's target, and foregrounds uncertainty. As a result, the reader's impression of whether or not the narrator truly shot *at* a person is complicated. The analysis of drone pilots' language in Chapter 5 examines the role of perspective in construal in further detail (5.3), and explores how the distinction between spatial and relational deixis is not always rigid, as some of the pilots' language choices encode both spatial and social relationships within the same utterance.

#### **2.3.4: Metaphor in Cognition**

While the discussion so far has focused on the construal of events in relation to the Canonical Event Model, soldiers' descriptions of killing are not always so direct. In *The Body in Pain*, Scarry (1985) observes the capacity for inventive metaphorical language with regards to the description of violence, producing a taxonomy of the means by which a direct violent relationship between actor and patient may be subverted linguistically (80-81). Under the broad category of 'redescription', many of the examples Scarry provides involve metaphorical construals of violence. Because metaphor often conceals the precise nature of the acts being described, the construals examined throughout this thesis are predominantly non-metaphorical. Nonetheless, the relationship between metaphor and ideology is readily observable, and understanding how cognitive approaches to metaphor have been applied to critical analyses will allow for the discussion of such language when relevant. As Grossman (1996) puts it:

Most soldiers do not "kill", instead the enemy was knocked over, wasted, greased, taken out, and mopped up. The enemy is hosed, zapped, probed, and fired on. The enemy's humanity is denied, and he becomes a strange beast called a Kraut, Jap, Reb, Yank, dink, slant, or slope (93).

Given the ease with which metaphor can be deployed in everyday language, CDA has often been concerned with the role of metaphor in conferring ideology (e.g. Goatly, 2007; Hart, 2008; 2011b; Underhill, 2011; Musolff, 2012; Ana et al., 2017). Considering these examples through the framework of conceptual metaphor theory further demonstrates the applicability of Cognitive Linguistics to the critical analysis of war writing, and provides further evidence of the kinds of discursive strategies and ideological stances adopted by these authors for consideration in relation to the analysis of other stylistic features.

One of the key terms associated with the cognitive approach to metaphor is 'conceptual blending' (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002), which Turner (1998) has described as 'a fundamental instrument of the everyday mind' (93). Closely related to Langacker's notion of the conceptual substrate (2008: 463), conceptual blending represents the capacity for individuals to map competing components of knowledge to produce a synthetic blend of information. The kinds of metaphor employed in these texts are typically 'single scope networks' (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 126-131) in which a 'framing input' (e.g. hunting rabbits) is mapped to a 'focus input' (killing enemy soldiers), in order to compress and draw attention to particular aspects of the focus input. Such networks are particularly powerful rhetorically, as Fauconnier and Turner note that 'one feels that what is experienced in the blend was there all along and, therefore, that the insight captured is indeed some reliable discovery about the focus input' (ibid: 129), while Lakoff and Johnson (1980) write that 'the acceptance of the metaphor, which forces us to focus *only* on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being *true*' (157). The

importance of blending as a means of integrating and selecting from meanings associated with multiple inputs extends beyond metaphor (cf. Fauconnier, 1997: 149-185), and Turner (2008) has suggested that all narrative interpretation is the result of blending activity. As with the affect of granularity on the perception of detail (2.3.2), the selection of metaphors and inputs affects the perspectivisation of an event. When actions are described euphemistically, their content is blended and therefore partially erased, as the construal requires the reader to infer the constituent activities. Thus, although metaphor is not the primary focus of the linguistic analysis in this thesis, understanding its role in the development of cognitive approaches to stylistics and linguistics in general provides additional context to the overarching framework which governs the model of language adopted in this research.

Firstly, as Scarry notes, violence can be described as ‘the extension or continuation of something else that is in itself benign’ (1985: 77). In narrating the retaking of an occupied trench, for example, Worsley (1930) relates that ‘Some half-dozen weary and comatose Germans *were quietly and expeditiously removed from the active list, and the Company Headquarters was regained in safety.*’ (in Purdom, 1930: 109, my emphases). As well as the passive construction of the actions which reduce the prominence of the actors in this example, the metaphors around which the action is constructed draw upon semantic cues which trivialise and erase the violent nature of the events. In the first instance, the act of removing the names of German soldiers from a list of active combatants stands in for the violent acts performed during the narrative. In the second clause, the attention is focused on an overarching goal of regaining Company Headquarters, an act which contains within it implicit acts of violence, but whose focus draws the reader toward a justification for the injuring which occurs. Such discourse compares to contemporary military focus on peacekeeping, where operations

are presented publicly in terms of the moral value of their outcomes (Chouliaraki, 2014; cf. Ch 5.3).

Other metaphors reframe violence in more mundane terms. For instance, 'They got a bit back last week I believe in that Neave Chapelle affair *with interest*' (Chennell, 1915: 25). This example differs from the typical metaphors of cost highlighted by Scarry (1985: 75-77), which typically focus on the concept of violence as a necessary price paid by the actors or nation in exchange for some other concept (e.g. peace or safety). The metaphor of interest instead focuses on the enemy combatants, and suggests a contract typically involving two parties who knowingly and consensually agree to a series of activities, outcomes, and payments. In other words, as well as construing the enemy combatants as participants in a consensual act, the framing input of interest draws attention to the possibility that the enemy soldiers expected, consented to, and deserved to be acted upon violently. Not only do mundane semantic fields allow for a description of the most unknowable aspects of war within a relatable frame of experience, then, but such frames can simultaneously serve to present an ideological position and justification for violence without further explication. For example, when the enemy is 'mown down like corn before the scythe' (Turner, n.d: 46), not only does the metaphor invoke banal and familiar imagery, but perennial and necessary activity, as the process of being mown down is essential to the purpose of growing corn at all. Moreover, Scarry has specifically acknowledged the semantic field of vegetation as a common theme in the redescription of violence, focusing instead on the fact that 'vegetable tissue, though alive, is perceived to be immune to pain; thus the inflicting of damage can be done without permitting the entry of the reality of suffering into the description' (66). Not only can metaphor produce alternative construals of violence, then, but it can serve to obscure the fact that violence is being described at all.

Throughout her discussion of metaphor and redescription, Scarry is primarily concerned with the ways in which language may 'back away from injuring' (66). As per earlier observations (2.2.2), it is important to consider that not all narrators of military experience aim to obfuscate their violent activities. In descriptions which compare the performance of violence in war to hunting, for example, while enemy combatants are construed as non-human prey, the emphasis of the new semantic field remains violent, and often celebratory. This is clearly the case for Hill (1915) who writes that, 'It was developing into the finest game the world can give, a man hunt. You would hear a cry "There go some, Come on, boys", and off you would go after them shouting as you went. It was very much like going after rabbits'. Mapping violence to the context of hunting could serve several functions at once, as it dehumanises those against whom violence is performed, redistributes the power dynamic of the context in which the act takes place, and reframes the events in relation to a semantic field of sport and pleasure. Facing the notion of pleasure in relation to violence once again, we must ask to what extent the metaphor could be said to *conceal* violence from the reader. While Hill clearly acknowledges that he performs violent acts, and construes himself as an agent exerting force upon his enemies, the metaphors he employs reframe the social dynamics of the scene, as enemy soldiers are described as sub-human vermin, the extermination of whom is both praiseworthy and enjoyable to perform.

In the examples of metaphor found in the corpus of texts examined in this thesis, metaphors seem primarily to function as a way of mapping violence to the mundane. By relating these acts to everyday processes such as filing paperwork, or paying a bill, the transgressive acts of violence is normalised through the conceptual blend with ordinary, uninteresting framing inputs. Alternatively, mapping to activities such as hunting frames killing in relation to sport and enjoyment, as well as the dehumanisation of the

enemy, and an imbalance of risk between the writer (the hunter) and the enemy combatants (the hunted animals).

Metaphor is not easily isolated from other elements of language and meaning. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 170-234) show, the language of actions and events is rich with symbolic imagery, and the spatial symbolism associated with Cognitive Grammar is closely related to the metaphorical operations of everyday language. Furthermore, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) argue that the perception of cause and effect itself is fundamentally a process of conceptual blending (75-87), established through the integration of separate observations into a single linear explanation of otherwise segmented events. Although the analysis of metaphor remains peripheral to this thesis, the cognitive models used to explain it contribute to the overall cognitivist impression of the ways in which readers understand the relationships between actions in discourse. This will be particularly important for Chapter 3, which examines the role of inference in interpretation, as well as the discussion of sustained impressions of actors over larger spans of discourse in Chapter 6.

### **2.3.5: Common Ground and Shared Knowledge**

As well as clausal structure and metaphor affecting readers' perspectives on actors and their actions, the social and cultural associations of words and phrases are influenced by previous experience and usage. According to Bakhtin, 'all words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context in which it has lived its socially charged life' (1981: 293). Though this quotation implies that the 'taste' of a word is somehow inherent to the word itself, the metaphor of tasting also aptly suggests an interaction between the word and its reader. For cognitivist approaches to language, this 'taste' is elicited by the reader's prior knowledge and

previous usages with which a word or phrase is associated, as well as its context. For instance, Werth (1993) describes the concept of ‘Common Ground’ in communication between two or more participants, which Browse (in press, 2018) has described as ‘a bank of propositions, built up through the discourse, which participants accept to be true’. In order for a communicative act to succeed, both speaker and listener must agree on certain conditions which either describe aspects of the world or the relationship between things within it. In Critical Discourse Analysis, ‘background knowledge’ (Fairclough, 2010: 31) refers more specifically to the ideological assumptions which precede discourse, while the definition employed in this thesis extends further to discourse participants’ general knowledge of the world, as well as their ideological beliefs. Agreement between participants in relation to this knowledge is dynamic, and the process of communicating allows speaking participants to negotiate, establishing propositions and construals from which to develop their perspective. For Cognitive Grammar, this notion relates to the ‘conceptual substrate’ which underpins discourse (Langacker, 2008: 463; cf. Ch. 6.2), and refers to the shared knowledge employed by discourse participants to make sense in the process of communication.

The process of comparing a unit of language to previous instances also has social implications: depending on the person, different words or phrases will have different ideological meanings, affecting the way in which discourse participants can relate and share knowledge. Van Dijk (2009) describes this process in terms of ‘event models’ which schematise knowledge involved in the production and interpretation of actions and events in discourse, and which have ‘a *social* basis, because they instantiate socially shared knowledge and possibly also group ideologies’ (79). For van Dijk, there is an inherent and interdependent relationship not only between discourse and cognition, but also society and the social conventions which govern language and behaviour. Moreover, van Dijk suggests that language users ‘may have *different interpretations of*

events, and at the same time, different interpretations of the same discourse. This implies that the *influence* of discourse on the minds of recipients may also be different' (ibid). While language users require an overlap in understanding in order to communicate, this conceptualisation of event models allows for the fact that participants can disagree with or resist aspects of the common ground established through discourse, with each drawing on existing knowledge or beliefs. As Hart puts it, the choice of construal made by an author in positioning a reader's perspective on an event is 'likely to be responsible for reproducing ideologically vested representations of events in the minds of many ordinary readers' (2011: 422). While readers may resist a construal of events as presented within a text, the persuasive power of discourse lies in the capacity for readers to adopt a construal, or reinforce existing ideas.

The mental work of the reader goes beyond accepting or rejecting the construals afforded by an author: the process of 'mind reading' (Zunshine, 2007), which Stockwell and Mahlberg (2015) term a more active process of 'mind-modelling', describes how readers develop a psychology of individual characters within a narrative, and has been of particular significance to recent research in Cognitive Poetics (e.g. Nuttall, 2015; Browse, 2018; Harrison, 2018; Nuttall, 2018). Instead of simply seeing characters in discourse as literary artifice, readers often interpret and respond to these fictions as though the characters have mental states which exist beyond their textual description. Through the 'principle of minimal departure' (Ryan, 1980), we assume that – unless explicitly specified – other agents identified as performing mental activities operate similarly to ourselves, and therefore that their reasons for acting can be compared to our own. Mind-modelling demonstrates the centrality of prototypical schemata to cognition, and its application in Cognitive Poetics reveals how authors can play upon readers' assumption for literary effect.

Although primarily developed in relation to fictional characters, readers of autobiographic fiction must still mind-model the participants within the discourse, situating their actions and states within a prototypical model of mental activity. As this thesis moves on to discuss the inference of goals and intentions in Chapters 6 and 7, an understanding of readers as predisposed to infer certain kinds of mental activity within human agents will be essential in discussing the possible reasons – and the possibility of reasons – associated with different actors and actions. The process of mind-modelling represents a key concept in the understanding of cognition employed throughout this thesis: that readers can and will employ prototypical schemas and pre-existing knowledge in order to make sense of both events and participants in discourse.

Taking into account the role of Common Ground and mind-modelling in the understanding of discourse, the cognitive approach to language advanced in this thesis sees communication as a transactional process in which the author offers a construal, and readers perform situated perceptual work in interpreting meaning. In the context of military memoir, discourse is governed not only by the process of sharing knowledge with the reader, but also in maintaining an established social authority in which certain experiences and knowledge regarding conflict are unknowable to civilian reader.

According to Harari (2010):

In order to prove that they themselves understand the experience of war and have the authority to speak of it, soldiers need to describe the experience of war in shocking detail. Yet they simultaneously remind the audience that these descriptions cannot transmit knowledge, because experience cannot be conveyed through words. (69).

At the level of functional communication, Harari's claim that descriptions of war cannot transmit knowledge is clearly wrong: in order for any meaningful discursive activity to occur, participants must be able to engage with the meanings construed within the

soldiers' discourse in order for any interaction to occur. For communication to function, language requires that both speaker/writer and listener/reader share some Common Ground in terms of knowledge and reference, but the conceit of civilian interaction with war writing requires explicit limits to the knowledge shared through discourse.

Accordingly, Browse (in press, 2018) distinguishes between the Common Ground and the 'Idealised Common Ground', identified by readers resisting the knowledge or construals imparted by the author recognised as being 'the-world-according-to-the-speaker' (ibid) which overlaps with, but is not identical to, the actual Common Ground of communication. In acknowledging that there are experiences that cannot be shared effectively with an audience through language, Harari identifies a general Idealised Common Ground in military discourse where the majority of readers' perspectives will be at odds with those presented in the text. Although war writing is unusual in that it often explicitly aims to maintain this conceptual juxtaposition between the knowledge accessible to military authors and civilian readers (cf. Ch. 5.3), these texts nevertheless include methods by which experiences of conflict are shared through language.

Although the experience of killing will be alien to the majority of a war story's readers, highly granular construals (2.3.2) can often produce common experiential grounds for its description. Warsop (1965), for example, describes how he 'squeezed the trigger at the first one then the other indistinct figures' (15) during conflict. Through the segmentation of activity, the act of firing a gun at another person is construed in terms of a more easily understood bodily action, while the taboo and 'unknowable' act of killing is not described directly. Viewed in this light, an act such as 'squeezing the trigger' construes the events which occurred in terms more relatable to readers without comparable combat experience, while simultaneously maintaining a distance between the civilian reader and the act of killing itself to preserve the established social dynamic between those who have experienced combat and those who have not. As Langacker

(2008) puts it, 'we often direct attention to a perceptually salient entity as a point of reference to help find some other entity which would be hard to locate' (83). In this case, the text employs simple physical actions to allow the reader to understand the more complex and distant activity of killing, without compromising the privileged position of the author as the sole participant capable of fully understanding the experiences described. As this study continues to consider these texts beyond the individual clause, this near-paradoxical process of conveying information about events, whilst simultaneously denying the reader an authoritative relationship with the knowledge conveyed, will be borne in mind as a defining feature of soldiers' autobiographical war writings.

## **2.4: Discussion – A Cognitive-Functional Approach**

At first glance, it may appear that the linguistic frameworks above are fundamentally incompatible with one another. While this may be the case for generative grammar, which treats grammar in abstraction from its communicative function altogether, SFL and Cognitive Grammar – and indeed functional and cognitive approaches to language more broadly – overlap in some cases with regards to their focus. Simpson (2003), for instance, describes transitivity as being 'how speakers encode in language their *mental picture of reality* and how they account for their experience of the world around them' (82, my emphasis). While Halliday himself does not refer to mental images associated with language, the role of the 'world-view' (1971: 348) in affecting transitivity choices throughout *The Inheritors* appears to serve a similar function. Harrison (2017) suggests that the role of Cognitive Grammar in stylistics is to support, rather than replace, existing linguistic frameworks (7), and the development of a

framework designed to discuss texts in terms of the mental operations inherent to interpretation demonstrate one of its clearest advantages in this respect.

Indeed, Stockwell (2002) has argued that SFL remains ‘a usable grammar without contradicting cognitive principles’ and, while not explicitly concerned with the conceptual representation of language in the mind, is nonetheless ‘cognitively sympathetic’ (70). Melrose (2005) goes further, examining how SFL may be used to reconcile linguistic and neurological accounts of language. In the most recent iteration of his *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2014), Halliday’s discussion of transitivity and ideation is directly comparable to the terminology of Cognitive Linguistics, explaining the transitivity system in relation to the psychology of children’s psychological development, and demonstrating the difference between material and mental processes in relation to their role in ‘construing’ inner and outer experiences (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 214). Gavins (2007) employs SFL’s model of transitivity analysis in the advancement of Text World Theory (e.g. 61-64; 70-71) to discuss the configuration of perspective in relation to the conceptual structure of discourse. As such, the development of cognitivist approaches to language does not represent an abandonment of functionalist principles. In *Cognitive Grammar* itself, Langacker has addressed the issue even more directly, writing that:

It is not a matter of choosing between a cognitive and social-interactive [model of language] – for either to be viable, it has to incorporate the other. Social interaction depends upon cognition. It is not carried out by empty heads, but by sentient creatures who apprehend the circumstances, assess the mental state of the other party, and act accordingly (2009: 153)

With this in mind, rather than asking which model to adopt for the duration of this study, it becomes more productive to ask in what ways each model can contribute to the other analytically. For instance, SFL’s system of categorising processes subdivides

the category of material actions into the ‘intentional’ and ‘superventional’ (Simpson, 2003: 83) to distinguish between the kinds of actions performed purposefully and those which are not. By contrast, Langacker’s canonical event model has no function for distinguishing between such processes, instead referring to the archetypal agent as ‘a person who volitionally carries out physical activity’ (1991: 210). Chapters 6 and 7 return to this issue by making the case for the development of an account of intentionality in Cognitive Grammar. While this represents one area in which CG might be expanded in terms of its modelling of processes in language, Cognitive Grammar’s emphasis on the transfer of force between Agent and Patient draws attention to the role of causality in language more intuitively than ergativity. For now, it suffices to say that functional and cognitively oriented approaches to language and grammar can meaningfully interact. Particularly, when the analysis is concerned with the development of critical commentary, the ability to move effectively between a discussion of cognitive processes and social contexts will become an invaluable means of strengthening one’s conclusions.

## **2.5: Critical Consequences for Event Representation**

The aim of this chapter has been to outline a series of linguistic tools and a cognitively-oriented framework for the purpose of advancing the present critical and stylistic analysis, with a particular emphasis on the construal of force, causality, and agency. The process of doing so has also allowed for the comparison of functionalist and cognitivist approaches to language, as well as a discussion of the applications of both frameworks to previous literary and critical discourse research. Demonstration of the effects of these features has also allowed for the introduction of primary texts, and an opportunity to produce some preliminary analyses of their most interesting linguistic features and their stylistic effects.

Coates and Wade (2007) have suggested a number of discursive operations that can be performed in the process of describing violence linguistically: language can be used to 'conceal violence, obscure and mitigate offenders' responsibility, conceal victims' resistance, and blame and pathologize victims' (513). Although both the functional and cognitive analyses above have demonstrated the ability to discuss agency in discourse, Cognitive Grammar was shown to afford greater critical detail with respect to concepts such as causality and the transfer of force. Equally, however, language 'can be used to expose violence, clarify offenders' responsibility, elucidate and honor victims' resistance, and contest the blaming and pathologizing of victims' (ibid). Although the relationship between responsibility and lexicogrammar will not be discussed fully until later (Chapter 7), Cognitive Grammar's conceptual framework facilitates not only the discussion of agentive absence, but also presence. Additionally, as several of the texts explored so far have shown, language can be used to embrace violence, as some soldiers have no difficulty in publicly claiming responsibility for such acts through construals of action which place the narrator at the causal head of an action chain (cf. Bourke, 1999). It is important, therefore, to ensure that the analysis of stylistic features is not tied too closely to a single ideological position, both in the narrator's intentions and the reader's impressions, and addressing this challenge will be the focus of Chapter 3.

This chapter has established a relationship between functional and cognitive approaches to grammar, expressing a methodological preference for the latter. At the same time, theories of grammatical structure of actions and events have been set against a history of Critical Discourse Analysis and stylistics, and the methods and issues of these fields have been outlined and preliminarily addressed. Moving into the next chapter, these discussion points will be brought into a more sustained critical reading of a single text, designed to address the challenges proposed for critical analysis. In addition to refining the kind of analysis hypothesised throughout this chapter,

producing a close reading based on a number of participants' responses will allow further reflection on evidence of readers' responses to clauses in which causal connections are inferred, as opposed to expressed directly.

# Chapter 3: Inference, Interpretation, and Ideology

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## 3.1: From Theory to Practice

While Chapter 2 employed practical examples of descriptions of violence in military memoir in order to introduce the stylistic features and analytical methods which frame this thesis, its primary focus was in establishing a Cognitive Linguistic framework through which to discuss these texts. As a result, many of these examples were treated as singular clauses or small units of language divorced from the broader context of the narrative in which they were originally produced. However, as elements of the cognitive approach such as the conceptual substrate show, the process of reading always employs context and previous usage in order to make sense of a given unit of language or described event. This is most clearly the case in passages where the act of killing itself is segmented into a more granular description (cf. Ch. 2.3.1), and the reader is required to infer the activity which connects one action (pulling a trigger) with another (a man falling). In interpreting such descriptions, the reader relies on their schematised knowledge of activity to infer a causal relationship not described directly.

Of course, one challenge to the critical discussion of these texts is a lack of external evidence to corroborate the author's report of events. Labov (2003) demonstrates the perceived value in relating the language choices of narrators to the notion of 'what really happened':

In the great majority of cases, the only information available on the nature of the reported events is in the narrative itself: there is no independent evidence on what actually happened. At first glance it might seem that the original events cannot be recovered, and that the narrative has to be considered as an entity in itself, disjoined from the

real world. Nevertheless, there are good reasons why the effort should be made to reconstruct the original events from the narrative evidence. Inferences about the original events will lead us to *greater insights* on how the narrator transforms reality in reporting it to others. Re-tracing these transformations *tells us more about the character of the narrators*, the norms that govern the assignment of praise or blame, and in more serious cases, the narrator's *complicity in the events themselves* (64, my emphases)

This rhetoric of revealing 'insights' about the state of the world through language is often repeated in CDA, especially building from SFL, where the ideational metafunction of a linguistic choice is often weighed against other possible ways of describing the same event (e.g. Butt et al., 2004; Li, 2011), in order to demonstrate the ideological effects of the original construal. Rather than 'reconstructing' previously unknown or uncertain facts about a given representation of a violent act, the aim of this chapter is to explore the linguistic inferences readers rely on in interpreting events, and how these cognitive processes affect the perception of ideologically-charged construals. Determining whether or not these inferences more or less accurately represent events as they were is not the aim of the investigation. Rather, I seek to show that an inferential model of causation in language more accurately represents the process by which causation is perceived, and responsibility for a given action is conferred, along with praise and/or blame.

Describing the history of war writing, Sarah McLoughlin has suggested that for many soldiers, the process of representing their experience of war in language 'somehow controls it: imposing at least verbal order on the chaos makes it seem more comprehensible' (2010: 19). Interpreting this as a process of controlling and making sense of experience for the individual, McLoughlin's claim is less a comment on the nature of the experience of war, and more an observation on the fundamentals of language. In order to represent an experience linguistically, the structure of a clause

and the attribution of agents, and often themes, necessitates a causal and temporal order of participants and events. This in turn applies to narratives, where it has been argued that the ordering of events into a tellable story does not simply rely on linearity, but also causality (Chatman, 1978: 45). The consequences of organising multiple events into narrative structure for the representation of identity will be the subject of Chapter 4. For now, the analysis is focused on sentence-level perceptions of causality, moving towards their position in a narrative more broadly, and understanding how readers infer causal connections when the language of the text is implicit.

A key issue for Critical Discourse Analysis is determining how and when readers are able to produce inferences, and when the construal renders an actor or activity absent from interpretation. While the work so far has established methods by which to describe the functional effects of language choices, the present chapter is also concerned with the way in which these ideological functions are determined. In a further review of literature from stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis dealing specifically with analyses of military writing (3.2.1), I examine how the reading practices employed by critically-minded language specialists differ from the way in which everyday readers engage with texts, and the consequences for the production of critical interpretation (3.2.2). With a view to reconciling this difference in order to establish the discussion of stylistic function throughout this thesis in terms of everyday engagement with the language of these texts, I turn once more to Cognitive Linguistics in order to outline how readers are able to infer causal connections absent from the source material (3.3), as well as produce readings which resist the ideological frame presented by the narrator (3.4). This having been done, I describe a short qualitative study performed in order to compare my own reading practices with non-specialist readers (3.5). These findings are discussed in terms of clause level reconstrual of implied activity (3.5.2), and the application of wider contextual knowledge (3.5.3) to inform readers' evaluative

judgements of events and participants. The study produces findings which call into question readers' engagement with acts of violence as the primary reportable event of the narrative (3.5.4). The resulting discussion (3.6) paves the way for an expanded discussion of the interconnections between clausal and narrative analysis in future chapters.

### **3.2: Critical Approaches to War Writing**

While the genre of soldiers' diaries and memoirs has been generally neglected in terms of critical linguistic analysis, some existing literature has investigated the discursive methods employed by combat veterans to represent their identities and experiences. Benke and Wodak (2003) have analysed the language of Austrian Wehrmacht veterans, who were interviewed conversationally about their role in the Second World War. After building a typology of linguistic features employed by participants following a functionalist approach to critical discourse analysis, the authors conclude that 'material processes are lacking' (133) from their interviewees' accounts of their actions, and therefore that 'there is not one consistent image of a perpetrator to be found' (ibid) in the language the veterans use to describe themselves. In other words, the soldiers interviewed for the study minimalised the grammatical positioning of themselves as agents in material processes which implied action towards another participant, and either sought to downplay the significance of their actions or to place responsibility for them elsewhere.

Benke and Wodak's findings have been paralleled more recently, as Grassiani (2011) explores the discursive practices of Israeli soldiers in interviews about acts of violence performed in combat, and observes a 'sense of 'accepting passivity' or lack of agency when they spoke about their presence and activities' (95). Again, analysing the

transcriptions of her interviews through an SFL framework she concludes that ‘distance is taken from the suffering that is witnessed and responsibility is evaded or replaced’ (ibid). Similarly, Robinson (2011) provides a close reading of the memoir of Ken Lukowiak, a British soldier who fought in the Falklands, and who infamously killed an Argentinian soldier after the ceasefire had been declared. From the stylistic choices Lukowiak makes, Robinson concludes that ‘firing the shot that killed the soldier is described *without any consciousness of his own agency*’ (583, emphasis mine). Once again, the segmentation of the act of killing into smaller-scale events, and the subsequent distance between the actor (Lukowiak) and the final patient (‘the figure in grey’) is portrayed as evidence that the narrator is unaware of the moral consequences of his actions.

### **3.2.1: Problems and Limitations**

Taking these three studies together, there are several questions to be raised regarding their methods, and the ways in which their critical conclusions are reached. Firstly, there seems to be a tendency to conflate *linguistic agency* with *practical agency*. As Neilsen (1999) notes, agency is a ‘disputed and ambiguous term’, either taking a broad and vague social meaning, or ‘vanish[ing] into linguistic systems’ (45). In other words, if an actor in a given clause is not described as performing an act at a particular level of granularity directly (in these instances, killing a person), then the extrapolated conclusion is that they are not consciously performing this kind of act at all. For Grassiani, ‘agency’ seems to be co-referential, and a lack of linguistic agency is directly associated with a lack of practical agency. Van Leeuwen (1997), however, has argued that ‘there is no neat fit between sociological and linguistic categories, and if [CDA] ties itself in too closely to specific linguistic operations or categories, many relevant instances of agency may be overlooked’ (32-33). In linguistic terms, these readings

ignore the reader's capacity to infer meanings and perceive transfers of force when the precise nature of the interaction is underspecified in the language of the text. As was discussed in the preceding chapter (2.3.2), much has been made in the psychology of event perception about the ability of readers to read between the gaps and join the dots in incomplete events, in order to arrive at an understanding based on a logical inference of causal principles. This point will be examined further below (3.4), in order to assess the applicability of this research to linguistic representations of events more specifically.

Secondly, these readings all seem to feed into a pre-conceived notion from each author about what it means to perform violence on another human being. For Benke and Wodak (2003) and Grassiani (2011), this problem is compounded by the fact that they elicited these narratives through interviews, in which they themselves posed the questions which framed the discourse space in which their participants responded. In each of the above papers, acts of violence are presented as unspeakable, and a deviation from the most direct possible representation of events is justification for classifying the author as avoiding any notion of responsibility. In actual fact, many war writers are able to write plainly about their experiences and actions. In beginning a letter home to his mother in 1916, Julian Grenfell notoriously wrote, 'I *adore* War... I have never been so well or so happy'. Grenfell then goes on to describe how he shot several German soldiers (in Housman, 1930 [2003]: 177-118, emphasis original), describing his actions directly, with a positive emotional evaluation of the scene. Similarly, Bourke (1999) concludes her study of face-to-face killing in 20<sup>th</sup> century conflict by observing that soldiers continue to construe themselves as responsible agents during times of war, in order to '[give] meaning to the warring enterprise and their lives' (369-370). Constructing a view of war writing as simply aiming to subvert personal agency, then, fails to account for the fact that many soldiers actively seek to provide a construal of events in which they are positioned agentively. Protevi (2013) has gone as far as to

suggest that many soldiers are 'irresponsible in taking responsibility, in taking upon themselves moral agency, when practical agency lies elsewhere' (135). The function of the stylistic features employed by soldiers to narrate their experiences and construe or obfuscate their visibility as participants capable of agency must be considered on a case by case basis.

Butt et al. (2004), who describe grammar as conceived in SFL as the 'first covert operation of war', have received a similar critique of their analysis of post-9/11 military speeches, as Bar-Lev (2007) notes that their methods appear to rely upon their ideological biases for the extrapolation of findings. Similar criticisms have frequently been levelled against Critical Discourse Analysis more generally: as Sharrock and Anderson have bluntly put it, critical linguists 'look in the wrong place for something, then complain that they can't find it, and suggest that it is being concealed from them' (1981: 289). Although ideological bias will always manifest in the methods or analysis of an individual, work can be done to mitigate the impact of this on the research's findings. Hart (2018) advocates a 'commitment to triangulation' (400), wherein the subjectivity of the researcher as reader can be offset by supporting individual readings with alternative data, as well as novel experimental methodologies. In addition, the reach of CDA is enriched by the expansion of the kinds of texts it examines, including those from more left-wing sources. For instance, Walker et al. (2016) worked with the UK's Green Party to engage voters with environmental issues, demonstrating that the party's present use of modal verbs detracts from their perceived ability to tackle the issue directly. Such analysis moves beyond the conventional criticism of right-wing discourse, while maintaining CDA's commitment to produce social change (Ch. 1.4). By expanding its methods to incorporate the perspectives of additional readers, as well as analysing a greater range of texts and ideological positions, CDA can begin to mitigate the critique of its subjectivity.

### 3.2.2: Specialist vs. 'Natural' Reading

As well as relying on preconceived notions of violence, specialist readers such as academics with a critical interest in a text may focus on different aspects of a text's language than a regular reader, according to their specialist interest. In the studies cited above, the researchers' interpretations of their source material's language is based solely upon their own reflective practices, and while Benke and Wodak (2003) reference a lack of material processes, their commentary on the *effect* of this stylistic choice remains an interpretative act. In other words, without reference to the interpretative practices of non-specialists, readers with expert knowledge in mind about the relationship between language's structures and functions may be prone to overemphasising the effect of these functions in conventional reading. As Widdowson (1998) has observed, critical discourse analysts themselves 'are socially constructed to see things the way they do, and this, on their own account, renders them incapable of conducting any detached analysis at all. All they can do is to interpret other discourses on their own terms' (148). The readings which CDA produces are themselves open to the same kinds of analytical scrutiny as they perform, which Widdowson goes on to argue reveal a foregrounding of linguistic data which conforms to the researcher's pre-existing ideological expectations (144-146). More broadly, Sorsoli (2007) emphasises that the ideological subjectivity affects not only the process of interpretation, but the construction of the environment in which research questions are posed at all: 'as researchers, we hear stories in a chamber that holds the echoes of our own stories, our research questions, and the stories we have heard others tell' (320). In selecting texts based on their attention to acts of violence, for example, this thesis engages with a specific subset of war writings, and their relationship to the style of the genre more broadly remains to be investigated further. Billig (2008) summarises the issue succinctly: 'How can we be sure that our use

of language is not marked, even corrupted, by those ideological factors we seek to identify in others?' (783).

Similarly, O'Halloran has noted that 'there is little awareness in [Critical Discourse Analysis] that the meanings a critical discourse analyst generates may well be in line with the high degree of effort they invest in analysis' (2003: 159). Not only is the process of close reading affected by the researcher's internalised biases, but the researcher often engages with their chosen primary material in order to engage in 'reading against' its primary message, meaning that their interpretative engagement with the text differs from an ordinary reader who more frequently 'reads with' the text without aiming to actively produce a critical reading (Janks, 1997: 330-331). Likewise, Stockwell (2009) observes that the evolution of literary criticism as an academic exercise has led to a divergence from the reading activities of 'natural readers' to an 'untraversable extent' (10). In both literary and critical analysis, then, there is a recognition that a researcher's textual interpretations arise from a radically different reading processes to those performed by everyday 'lay readers'. Not only does this challenge the validity of the methods by which critical interpretations of the ideological function of texts is often produced, but also leads to questioning the analyst's understanding of implicit causal connections. For example, the previous chapter (2.3.1) claimed that readers will readily infer a causal relationship in the form of an action chain between the agent of 'I fired' and the experiencer in 'the figure fell', to conclude that the narrator shot the figure and caused him to fall. In order to produce a critical reading of a narrative sequence which focuses on the interpretation of events not explicitly described within the text itself, the method by which reading and interpretative practices are collected and considered must extend beyond the individual specialist reader.

To support these readings, it becomes crucial to consider the ways in which non-specialist lay readers engage with the text, and the role of stylistic features in relation to their understanding of the events described. O'Halloran (2003) develops such a model within the 'Idealised Reader framework' (167-222). Distinct from Stockwell's (2002) notion of the 'idealised reader', which refers to 'all of the possible readings available' (43), O'Halloran instead models the interpretative practices of non-critical readers who are 'largely unfamiliar with the events being referred to', and 'reading for gist and so something akin to minimum effort' (170). As readers' attention to discourse details can vary, O'Halloran notes (172) that the absence of a direct description of a process in a text does not necessarily correspond with its absence in the reader's perception. However, owing to the need to consider the interpretations of readers who read 'for the gist', the Idealised Reader Framework seeks to define the kinds of absences which are and are not likely to be generated as inferences. The following section reviews literature from both cognitive science and linguistics on the generation of inference, and the consequences for the critical analysis and discussion of readers' possible interpretations.

### **3.3: Reading Between the Lines: Interpreting Absence**

So far, this chapter has discussed how traditional approaches to critical analysis have been criticised for generalising the reading experience of the specialist researcher to represent all readers. This in turn complicates the extent to which these methods can effectively comment on stylistic features such as gapped events. However, cognitive research on inference generation knowledge more generally provides the cognitivist approach to language with a distinct perspective from which to discuss the issue. 'Filling in the blanks' is a common process in the day-to-day process of interpreting language. As Kranjec et al. (2012) have put it, 'thinking about causal relations, even

when none are warranted, is arguably our most overarching conceptual bias... the tendency to construe two events as causally related is particularly powerful for humans' (12). Psychological research on event structure perception in language and experience (Zacks and Tversky, 2001; Hard et al., 2006; Hard et al., 2011) shows that the understanding of everyday events relies on the observation of 'breakpoints' between actions which conform to recognisable scripts of activity. In Michotte's (1963) famous study, participants readily inferred intentional activity in their descriptions of the animated path of a ball, viewed as colliding with a second ball. According to Michotte, participants directly perceived this causation, rather than relying on 'causal reasoning' to deduce the agent (Pederson and Bohnermeyer, 2011), ultimately constructing a report of the event which emphasises the activity with the greatest perceived significance ('hitting' as opposed to 'stopping'). While Fauconnier and Turner (2002) disagree with this conclusion, arguing instead that the perception of causality is a conceptual blend resulting from everyday experiences, they too emphasise the significance of causality in cognition and perception, suggesting that 'we cannot fail to perform this blend, and we cannot see beyond it' (78). Additionally, Black and Bern (1981) provide evidence to suggest that causally related events in narratives are more easily remembered. In day to day life, our brains are adept at inferring both motion and the causal relationship between participants, even when the events themselves are highly segmented, and the participants in question are little more than abstract shapes.

Accounting for inference is inherent to the study of language and reasoning. E.M. Forster provides a classic example (1927) of the difference between the 'story' (the king died and then the queen died) and the 'plot' (the king died and then the queen died of grief), arguing that the addition of causality in the latter creates narrativity because the reader infers a causal connection between the two events. Chatman (1978), however, has argued that while this is true in relation to the explicit content of the

example, 'our minds inveterately seek structure, and they will provide it if necessary' (45), suggesting that some readers will infer a causal connection between the two events in the former example. This is also prompted by the pragmatic context in which the clauses appear: the utterances will have been produced together *for a reason*. Unless prompted otherwise, the reader naturally gravitates toward the assumption that there must be some causal connection between the two deaths as the most straightforward explanation as to what makes them tellable in such close proximity to one another. As Wales (2011) explains, 'in the construction and interpretation of narratives, inference is absolutely necessary. Without the taking for granted of facts, details, and cultural knowledge, a story would be exceedingly tedious to read' (226). That said, while the tendency to infer a relationship between such events seems natural, the process of implicature is not easily demonstrated through a single reading of a text. The problem thus remains that the relationship between the reading practices of the individual, unless compared directly to a larger sample size, may not reflect the typical means by which the text is interpreted in terms of its construal of causality, or indeed any aspect of specificity.

Returning to clause-level considerations of causality, the linguistic construal of an event in a clause requires the organisation of participants into a relationship governed by the direction of motion or force. In the process of selecting the level of detail at which to report an event (cf. Ch. 2.3.2), a speaker leaves out information which the listener must infer in order to interpret the meaning of the overall construal. For example, when Ivar Campbell (in Housman, 1930: 59-61) witnesses the deliberate killing of an enemy soldier, he writes:

Then, as a rabbit in the early morning comes out to crop grass, a German stepped over the enemy trench – the only living thing in sight. "I'll take him,"

says the man next to me. And like a rabbit the German falls. And again  
complete silence and desolation (60)

When discussing 'gaps' in description for their stylistic effect, Simpson and Canning (2014) have noted the difficulty in framing their analysis in terms of transitivity, as a transitivity profile designed to compare the descriptions of actions across the discourse 'would struggle grammatically to locate the 'action' of the (non-)event under scrutiny' (293). Considered in terms of the cognitive modelling of force transferral, the German soldier is construed as the source of the energy which begins the act of falling, as the grammar of the passage does not directly connect the soldier to the earlier speaker. However, the earlier hypothetical modal (*I'll take him*) construes an event model which positions the speaker as agent and the German soldier as the goal of a single event process. Although also couched in metaphorical language which downplays the moral significance of the action, the clause provides contextual information which aids the reader's interpretation of the gap between the utterance and the falling of the German soldier.

Within the Idealised Reader framework, O'Halloran distinguishes between different kinds of causal inference, and the probability of their being inferred by a non-critical reader reading 'for the gist'. He observes in particular that causal antecedent inferences ('what caused this?') are more likely to be inferred by idealised readers than causal consequent inferences ('what did this cause?'). Likewise, 'connecting' inferences which make sense of the relationship between events are more readily processed than 'elaborative' inferences, which provide further information non-essential to making sense of the scene under description (2003: 190). Additionally, the concept of 'cognitive economy' (191) refers to the ease with which relationships are inferred, indicating that abstract associations with high-level goals are less easily inferred than immediate consequences. As a framework, O'Halloran's Idealised Reader provides a valuable starting point for

understanding the *likelihood* of any one absence or mystification within a text being overcome through inference by non-critical readers. Nonetheless, additional studies with specific readers will work to challenge or support these assumptions on a case by case basis.

Further research on readers' abilities to infer actions and causal relationships that have not been directly presented comes from work on visual narratives (Cohn and Wittenberg, 2015), where instead of an illustration of an event, readers were presented with a jagged action symbol, framed by the setup to and consequences of the event. Here, provided that the narrative sequence was not scrambled, readers were readily able to infer the kind of actions which fill these gaps in the narrative. This approach builds on the 'situation model' (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983), which refers to the reader's ability to model what a text is 'about' in their minds, with a greater scope than may be provided by textual cues, and bears comparison with Schema Theory (Schank and Abelson, 1995) and mental models for understanding inference (Johnson-Laird, 1983). Given the interest in early cognitive research in understanding the role of inference in processing meaning, Cognitive Grammar conceives of a conceptual substrate (Langacker, 2008; Ch. 2.3.5), which represents the relationship between previous experiences, both of language and experiences in the world, and the present speech act in order to demonstrate how these inform the process of understanding. In other words, the role of background knowledge in inferring meaning is inherent to the system of knowledge upon which Cognitive Grammar is founded.

Scarry (1985), in discussing the language of violence, has observed the tendency of descriptions to leave absent a direct description of the act of violence: "The written and spoken record of war over many centuries certifies the ease with which human powers of description break down in the presence of battle, the speed with which they

back away from injuring' (66), and psychotherapist Martha Bragin has come to a similar conclusion, observing that 'extremely violent events are *processed differently* by the brain, causing them to be segregated, fragmented, and outside of the narrative of meaning.' (2010: 319, my emphasis). In other words, a focus on the description of higher-order events renders absent the micro-level detail about the kinds of processes which make up these larger-scale activities: if the reader is told that the narrator 'helped to win the war', precisely what is involved in such an act is not detailed, and the reader is required instead to infer the ways in which the narrator 'helped', drawing from context or prior knowledge. As Abbott (2015) suggests of 'permanent narrative gaps' in fiction, 'readers may imagine a host of different narrative connections lurking in a permanent gap, but none of these can *ever* be converted to a certainty' (109). Although Abbott restricts his observations to fictional texts, the same is the case in factual discourse where the author is no longer able to clarify or expand upon their phrasing. As was noted in the discussion of low granularity (2.3.2), when Johnson (1917) describes the Gold Coast regiment performing 'fine work', exactly what this work was, or which aspects of it the author evaluated as 'good', can only be inferred.

Regardless of where the line is drawn on the necessary perception of more fine grained events, the fact remains that the reader's attention to these high or low granularity construals is enabled or prevented by the framing within the language choices of the author. Moreover, shifts in modern discourse now often frame warfare in humanitarian terms, as both soldiers and policies frame the act of killing in relation to its consequent social benefits (Chouliaraki, 2014; cf. Ch. 5.5). In these terms, the construal of force leaves the wounded party absent from the scope of reference entirely, and the kinds of events that might constitute the described act are rethought under a new and distinct semantic field of reference. As Hart (2013) states, then, the objective of a cognitive approach to CDA is 'to demonstrate the conceptual import of ideological

language choices and to identify the particular parameters along which ideological differences in text and conceptualisation can occur' (404). The demonstrable manipulation of event representation afforded by the processes of construal provides ample evidence of the success of Cognitive Linguistics in detailing the nuances of force and motion in language.

### **3.4: Resistant Reading and Reconstrual**

As well as forming conclusions about causal connections which are not made explicit in the source text, readers are also capable of rejecting propositions advanced by the narrative, based on their own background knowledge. Browse (in press, 2018), has adopted the term 'reconstrual' to account for the fact that readers' interpretations are not fixed to the construals offered to them by the source text: rather, readers may reject this construal, offering instead their own, even contradictory, organisation of actors and events. Just as the language of a given phrase construes a mode of perceiving the event, and the causal relationship between its participants, 'reconstrual' refers to the reader's active reinterpretation of an event presented to them, rewording it in such a way as to reconfigure the force dynamic relationship between the original agent and patient. Browse applies the concept of reconstrual to resistant readers of political rhetoric, showing that while a speech might present a certain state of events in one way, readers will actively draw upon their wider knowledge to counter or correct this construal.

Communication is more than just the presentation of one ideology to an uninvolved audience; it involves the reconciliation of concepts in a Common Ground, and these reconstruals can be used to demonstrate a communicative failure on behalf of the original speaker, whose construal fails to appeal to the listener's understanding of the facts or events in question. Alternatively, as O'Halloran (2003: 234) has noted,

readers who are familiar with the subject matter may identify causal connections unspecified within the source text. In this way, Browse observes that ‘in addition to simply rejecting the knowledge incremented into the Common Ground... audience members can choose to reject the construal placed upon it’ (ibid). Performing Critical Discourse Analysis often relies on the process of reconstrual to demonstrate the ideological bias of the original text, which Fairclough (2013) argues serves to ‘identify the causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could (in the right conditions) contribute to righting or mitigating them’ (8). For instance, when Reisigl and Wodak (2001) suggest that absences ‘enable speakers to conjure away responsible, involved actors (whether victims or perpetrators), or to keep them in the semantic background’ (58), analysing a passage in order to demonstrate which actors have been rendered absent is a process of resistant reconstrual.

In resisting the ideological frame afforded by a text, readers and listeners employ knowledge and personal perspectives that challenge or contradict the original construal they are presented with. For example, it is possible to respond to a narrative such as the following: ‘I’ll take him,’ says the man next to me. And like a rabbit the German fell’ (Campbell, in Housman, 1930 [2002]: 60) by reconstruing the events described into an expression such as ‘the man next to me shot the German soldier, who fell like a rabbit’. This second construal contains the same semantic information as the first, but the inclusion of the verb ‘shot’ represents a direct transfer of energy from the man to the German soldier. Alternatively, reconstrual can include additional information, such as whether or not the German soldier posed a threat to the narrator. Similarly, readers may respond directly to the ideological connotations of a narrator’s construal. In his memoir of combat in Singapore during the Second World War, for example, Carpenter (n.d.) describes the Japanese soldiers he watches bombing a nearby ship as ‘yellow scum’ (35), a phrase which immediately appears to be explicitly ideologically charged owing to

its derogatory nature. Drawing upon pre-existing knowledge and beliefs, readers may parse the meaning of Carpenter's language without agreeing with its ideological sentiment. While all of these new construals still refer to the same act or individuals as the original texts, reconstructing them from new perspectives demonstrates a reader's awareness of positions other than those presented to them in the source material.

While the process of reconstrual demonstrates the capacity of readers to resist an ideological perspective with a presented discourse, the resulting reconstruals of redescription are still the products of perspective-taking, and therefore subjective. As academic and non-specialist readers will each draw on a wide range of background knowledge in the process of attributing prominence to and interpreting linguistic information, this chapter seeks to examine the responses of a range of readers to an individual text. By demonstrating the breadth of these interpretations, the study below aims to show the importance of individual background knowledge, while at the same time producing evidence to support a critical claim regarding the general ability of readers to infer a key causal relationship within the text. Whether or not the narrator is understood as the responsible agent – especially of such a narratively significant act – is central to the way in which readers will understand their overall character. The study hypothesises that the process of reconstrual in order to simplify the force dynamic relationship between the narrator and the individual who is harmed is not only possible, but highly probable as the most straightforward interpretative practice available in understanding the meaning of a passage. Moreover, because reconstrual is a discursive act which follows from interpretation, it can be observed and compared with the language of the source text. Although these may seem like common sense remarks, producing these responses directly allows for a more concrete discussion of the ways in which readers choose to reconstrue and evaluate an act of wartime violence, and they

ways in which stylistic choices in event representation do or do not influence the perception of agency.

### **3.5: A Reader-Response Study of Event (Re)Construal**

So far, the ideological and academic biases which inform researcher readings have been identified as potential issues for critical interpretation. Given the possibility that non-specialist readers will be less attentive to specific stylistic features in the interpretation of meaning (O'Halloran, 2003), the study below aims to produce 'natural' readings of one of the primary texts this thesis is concerned with. The study aims to determine to what extent lay readers' engagement with and reaction to these texts differs from a specialist reader. In order to determine whether or not readers perceive a causal relationship between two segmented events, the study asked readers to reconstrue the events of the narrative in their own words (3.5.2). Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to make evaluative comments on the story as it progressed (3.5.3), the findings of which prompt a critical reflection on both the style of the source text, and the perspectives and methods adopted for this research.

#### **3.5.1: Methodology**

This study adapts Short and van Peer's 'online written introspection' (1989) method, which asked readers being presented with a text for the first time to record their reactions to a text they are reading for the first time, as they do so. In their paper, the authors selected a poem neither had read before, and read through it line by line, making note of any themes or linguistic features that caught their attention, as well as more general impressions of the text. This allowed for a comparative study of their reading processes, and consequently an assessment of the similarities and differences

between their readings in terms of attention and interpretation, noting how readers responded and attributed meaning and significance to particular linguistic features. Necessary adjustments were made, however, in order to reflect the particular aims of this study. Firstly, as the aim of this research is to consider the interpretative practices of readers without a specialist interest in the language of the text, readers were recruited through university wide emails to staff and students, calling for 'volunteers to take part in a short online reading study investigating how readers respond to short narratives of violence in a military context' (see Appendix A). The language of this call for volunteers, as well as the participant information sheet referred to the potentially disturbing content of the study in relation to 'violence', as opposed to 'killing', or any other construal which would predispose the participants to be mindful of a given causal relationship within the text. The study was conducted online through a Google Forms questionnaire, and participants were required to complete a multiple choice consent form demonstrating an understanding of the ways in which their data would be stored, used and reported. In addition, the information section asked participants whether they studied or worked in the School of English. In the end, 10 participants were recruited: 5 members of staff and 5 students with an equal gender split, and a mean age of 41.2.

The study asked participants to respond to a 1500 word extract from the Private Papers of D Evans (1991, see Appendix A), a British soldier from the Second World War whose memoir is held publicly in the Imperial War Museum. This extract was selected for its concise, self-contained nature, as the narrative could be broken into seven sections, broadly corresponding to Labov and Waletzky's (1967) framework of narrative structure. Beginning with an orientation of the setting, the narrative moves to describe the complication of conflict, and builds to the act of killing, the resolution of victory in battle, followed by an evaluation by the narrator of his own actions. This ensured that participants would be able to focus on the content of the narrative, and allowed for the

text to be presented in manageable and meaningful sections of 150-250 words each. For example, Section 5, in which the narrator describes identifying and firing at an enemy soldier, was presented as follows. Below each question (in bold), readers were given an expanding text box to provide answers of any length:

I saw one of the enemy soldiers slip from behind one tree to another, nearer one. As the two were almost in line with us he hadn't been seen by anyone else. Realising that he must be standing upright and sideways on so as to be hidden, I reckoned that, though the centre of the trunk was thick enough to stop a bullet, the edges would certainly let one through and, as the tree was not too broad, I would stand a chance of getting the man behind it. My Sten, with its low-powered pistol ammunition, stood little chance of this so I grabbed Frank's rifle, aimed at a point about a third in from the edge of the trunk and fired: the man pitched forward to lie on his face. All this took far less time than it takes to tell.

**Please summarise the events of this section in your own words:**

**Use this space to write any further thoughts or feelings you may have about this extract:**

Similarly to extracts in other memoirs discussed earlier (2.4.1; 3.3), Evans' description of the act of violence construes the moment the enemy soldier was shot in segmented terms ('[I] fired: the man pitched forward'), without an explicit transfer of force from the narrator to the victim. *Fig. 3.1* below models this segmentation of force in this extract, and compares it to the language of Lukowiak's memoir, which Robinson (2011) described as being 'without any consciousness of his own agency' (583). Though they differ in terms of transitivity, both descriptions segment the act of killing into lower level events to the extent that the original source agent is not directly connected by a direct transfer of force to the one upon whom violence is inflicted.

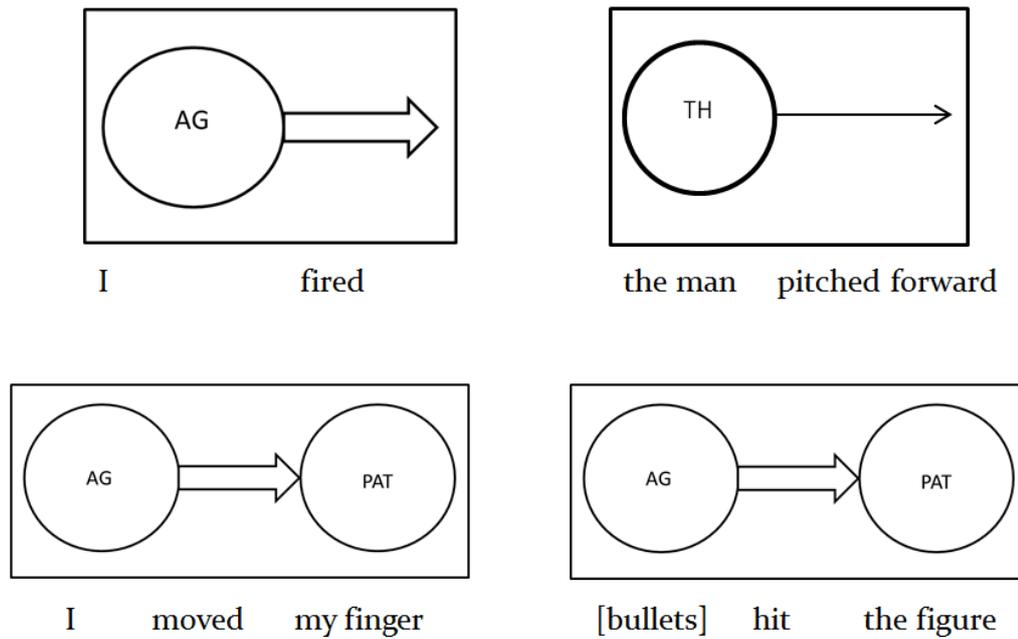


Fig. 3.1: Comparison of reader response extract (top), and Lukowiak passage (bottom)

Given this highly granular style, it is tempting to follow Robinson's conclusion and assert that the language of Evans' memoir functions to obfuscate his role as an actor in the events described. Moreover, the inference of agency in both cases is causal consequent, but also refers to an immediate goal, the Idealised Reader framework provides hypotheses which would support indications of both inference and absence in readers' interpretations (O'Halloran, 2003: 190-191). In order to determine whether or not the inference of the narrator's agentic relationship with the segmented landmark was common, participants in this study were asked to summarise the events of each section of the extract in their own words. Providing an answer was compulsory at each stage of the reading, before participants were allowed to view the next section of the extract. In completing this question, participants reconstructed the events of each section according to their interpretation of events. Accordingly, it was possible to observe when participants had drawn a direct causal relationship between the narrator and the enemy soldier, and had felt that such a construal accurately reflected the information presented

in the passage. In section 3.5.2 below, the answers to this question are discussed in relation to the directness of the transfer of force, and modelled visually to provide a comparison between the source text and reader reconstrual.

In order to cue all participants to produce their own reconstrual of events, without drawing particular attention to the narrator's act of killing, the reading task was separated into two sections: a compulsory redescription of the events of the present section of text in their own words, and an option to record any thoughts or feelings about the text that felt significant to them. By asking participants to perform two tasks across the length of the text, some attention was drawn away from the act of redescription as a task. Additionally, producing such responses across all extracts helped to normalise the response process prior to the key passage in section 5, in which they redescribed the act of violence performed by the narrator. Allowing readers to complete this process online gave them the freedom to move back and forth between the passages at will with no time constraints on the completion of the task, as well as providing unlimited digital space in which to record their redescriptions and reflections. These qualitative responses are discussed in section 3.5.3, where readers' impressions of the text are discussed in critical and stylistic terms. In combining these observations with their redescription of events, lay reader impressions of the narrator's language and the events described in the extract – provided both consciously and unconsciously – are incorporated into the analysis.

### **3.5.2: Initial Findings**

As mentioned above, the passage of the source text describing the performance of violence segmented the event into discrete intransitive segments. Overwhelmingly, however, participants described this section of the narrative in terms of a single,

transitive act, symbolising a direct transfer of force from an identifiable agent (the narrator) to an identified source (the other soldier):

**R1:** 'The soldier who has seen him shoots him with another soldier's rifle'

**R3:** 'The narrator kills a man behind a tree'

**R4:** 'The narrator borrows Frank's rifle to kill an enemy soldier hidden behind a tree'

**R5:** 'The narrator killed him with a carefully aimed rifle shot'

**R6:** '[He] shot the hiding soldier'

**R7:** 'He used someone else's gun and shot accurately where he needed to, killing the soldier behind the tree'

**R9:** 'The writer recounts his ingenuity in finding a way to kill one of the enemy'

**R10:** 'I saw a man hiding behind the tree, so I shot him with my friend's better gun'

What these readers present in their redescription is an agentive relationship construed within the canonical model of event representation, and their ability to assign such roles after being prompted to accurately redescribe the scene shows that they must perceive a similar causal relationship within the source text, despite the segmented descriptive choices of the author. The reconstrual of this inference in these terms by all readers, despite being causal consequent, may indicate that the inference is more connecting than elaborative (O'Halloran, 2003: 190). In other words, understanding that Evans causes the man to pitch forward – and that this itself is euphemistic for an act of violence upon the enemy soldier – is central to understanding the narrative more broadly.

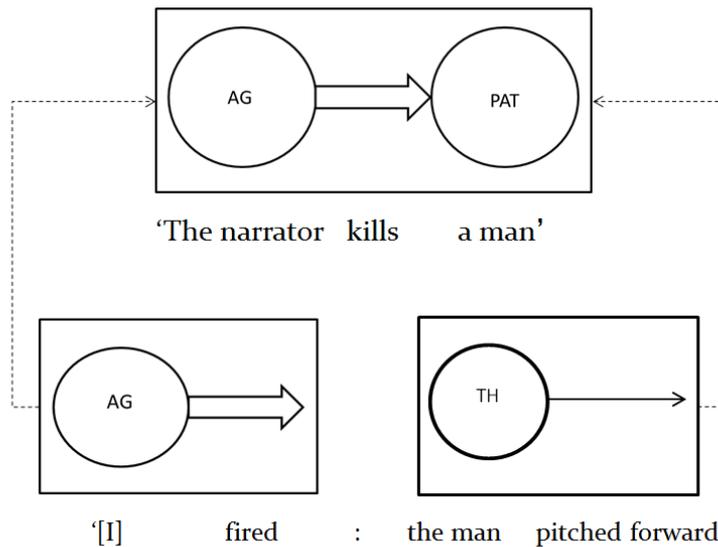


Fig. 3.2: Event models for original construal (below), and reader reconstruction (above)

Additionally, each of the above redescriptions is assumed to be canonical in terms of intentional agentic action. While it is possible for 'shooting' or 'killing' to be construed as unintentional acts, these are typically marked as such. For readers who did not reconstruct the causal relationship in its simplest form, there were still strong indications that the readers perceived an agentic relationship between the shooting of the rifle, and the falling down of the enemy soldier:

**R8:** 'he borrowed a friends rifle and shot, *he was successful* and the enemy fell'

Here, although the acts of shooting and falling are still described separately from one another, the inclusion of a state of 'success' draws an explicit causal connection between the two. Likewise, R2 employs the euphemistic phrase 'drop' in place of 'shoot' or 'kill', but in doing so still construes a direct transfer of force from the narrator to the enemy soldier, also reinforcing the narrator's agency in performing the act by marking success:

**R2:** 'he calculates how to 'drop' the enemy, which he succeeds doing'

Additionally, having made the methodological decision to recruit participants from across the university, it is worth discussing here participants' use of metalinguistic comment on the text. While several readers used quotations from the source text in order to demonstrate more precisely where they had felt certain emotional reactions (R3 gives an example they describe as a 'rhetorical flourish'), only one participant made comments specifically about a stylistic feature of the passage. Responding to Section 2, R10 wrote:

**R10:** 'The passivisation of the last sentence struck me. Killed by whom? It's not like he just happened to have died, the officers were the ones doing the killing'

R10 identifies passivisation as a linguistic feature within the text, and goes on to reconstrue the event in such a way as to emphasise the absence of an identifiable agent, before suggesting a construal in which 'the officers' are assigned this role, in a turn that strongly resembles CDA's functionalist close reading methods. Of the ten participants, R10 was the only one who either studies or works in the School of English at the University of Sheffield, and is specifically an English Language and Linguistics PhD candidate, though does not have any experience with Critical Discourse Analysis. Although it would be unreasonable to draw strong conclusions about the influence of specialist knowledge on the reading process from such a small sample of appropriately trained readers, R10's passing use of linguistic terminology in greater detail than any other participant does suggest that a broad spectrum of readers will yield the most wide-ranging results, and therefore help demonstrate which features a greater number of readers are likely to find significant in their reading. For future research, maintaining an awareness of participants' background may be a useful supplement to the analysis of their responses, and it may be worth actively controlling for specialist knowledge among a larger sample size.

To summarise these findings, while the language of the text deviates from canonical and direct event modelling, readers are still able to readily construe this relationship between actor and patient, and often do so in the most direct possible sense. Where this does not occur, readers nonetheless demonstrated marked recognition of a closer causal link than is specified in the source material, either through a reduction in the length of the action chain, or an attribution of ‘success’ to the original agent. In other words, though it may seem from a critical perspective that these segmentations function to reduce agency between the narrator and the individual he harms, readers are nonetheless able to recover this sense of accountability. That having been said, I now examine participants affective responses to the passage. By more closely considering participants’ emotional and free-form responses to the text, we may gain further insight into the functional effects of the text’s language. After all, it remains possible that while readers construe an agentive relationship in the description of violence, the language choices therein may afford a ‘feeling’ of distance.

### 3.5.3: Qualitative Responses to Stylistic Choices

Although reporting any evaluative comments participants may have had for each section was optional, many readers chose to report their affective responses to the events described. As these readers are predominantly unfamiliar with technical linguistic terminology, their responses provide a more impressionistic basis from which to develop a precise stylistic account of the reported effects. For example, the following responses come from Section 4, where the narrator describes witnessing violence performed by his fellow soldiers, where Rio commented on the passivisation of killing (3.5.2). Emphases are my own:

**R1:** ‘This one made me feel sad because it brings home the *impersonal* and violent nature of war’

**R2:** 'But still the action sounds *mechanical*, as if the soldier himself is *just part of a bigger machine*'

**R3:** For all the graphic parts [...] it feels *oddly emotionless*. Kind of like there is no moral stance being taken here beyond a very simple binary us and them'

**R9:** 'The story is told with *utter absence of empathy* for the enemy'

Although these readers did not make metalinguistic comments about the stylistic structure of the extract, their comments suggest a shared perception of emotional distance in the description. In particular, the comment by R2 indicates that agency is removed from the narrator, who is instead 'part of a bigger machine'. Similarly, R4 reports surprise at their own lack of an emotional response:

**R4:** This is by far the most graphic passage so far. *I am shocked that I'm not shocked at all*. I feel that the horror of war has been normalised. It seems that this kind of thing is seen almost daily on TV and films, and its hard not to read this as a similar *fictional piece*. I was almost jubilant that Les got the German before he managed to kill any of 'our lot'. I think the 'Nazi bad, Allies good' simplistic WW2 narrative runs deep within our culture

Following the earlier discussion of the importance of cultural knowledge to the process of inference (3.3), R4's response demonstrates the role of personal background information in the interpretation of the text as a whole. In comparing Evans' narrative to works of fiction, R4 identified oversimplified representations of wartime experiences, and employs the primary text to challenge and revise their cultural expectations. While the reader is emotionally unaffected by Evans' construal, then, this reaction in itself appears to prompt a critical evaluation of the readers' beliefs. Other comments demonstrate indirectly the fact that readers were not shocked by the content of the passage. The entirety of R5's reflective response for Section 4, for instance, is as follows:

**R5:** The enemy troops appear to be poorly lead. Surely. A spandau machine gun (MG42) was a crewed served weapon. It wouldn't be used in a frontal attack of this type

That R5's attention is turned to the technical details of the scene, as opposed to its emotive content, suggests that this reader is more concerned with the factual accuracy of the narrative than its emotive content. Moreover, the modal evaluation that the Spandau machine gun 'wouldn't be used in a frontal attack of this type' indicates a resistance to the validity of the construal itself, as the reader draws on their own military experience and knowledge to produce a different context model for their relationship to the text than other readers are able to call upon.

In general, the fact that readers can be so indifferent to a description of such a controversial act – and even be surprised at their own apathy – demonstrates the significance of comparing specialist and non-specialist readers' interests in the same text. Though participants made few metalinguistic comments in their reflections, comments that the action felt 'mechanical' or 'scientific' support a critical reading of the author's stylistic choices as emotionally distant from the content of the narrative. In addition, readers made direct comparisons between the style of each Section, the consequences of which are discussed further below (3.6). In the example responses below, emphasis has been added to comparative, evaluative, and stylistic judgements:

**R1:** This text has *not evoked as much feeling in me* as the others, I'm not sure why!

**R3:** It's very rational in the sense that is a presentation of a sequence of events and the thought processes he has about them. Again, there seems *very little emotion*

**R4:** Again, action packed. Part of me felt triumphant that the narrator got one up on 'jerry', another part of me feels I shouldn't approve of killing and glorifying war

**R8:** The soldier is putting thought into how to kill the enemy *in a sort of scientific way* and is successful

As with the passivized extract in Section 4, readers indicated an emotional distance from the actions performed, both for themselves and in terms of the text's style. Accordingly, while readers may be able to infer a causal connection between highly granular acts which segment transfers of force, a common trend in the responses to this study suggests that such construals are viewed as mechanical, or emotionally distant. As has been noted throughout this chapter, however, readers have the capacity to respond to the same text in a variety of contrasting ways. Indeed, R4 even reports feeling 'triumphant' before reflecting on the context of the passage. Further to this, two participants' responses were pithy or humorous:

**R5:** 'Nathan Bedford Forrest "do unto them as they would do unto you, But do it fur'ststest"'

**R10:** 'I bet the other man thought he was so sneaky and cunning sneaking around behind the trees. And then he died.'

The diversity of readers' responses to the same source text, both in terms of their reconstrual of events and their qualitative assessments, supports the suggestion that Critical Discourse Analysis should consult additional perspectives to triangulate its critical interpretations (Widdowson, 1998; O'Halloran, 2003; Hart, 2018). In demonstrating that most readers can readily recover the direct causal relationship between segmented actors and events in this highly granular description of violence, this study limits the extent to which Evans' style could be described as rendering absent his agency in the act of killing. Instead, readers viewed his description as mechanical, prompting self-reflection on their own emotional reaction to his actions. In this sense, while Evans' description could still be described as 'breaking down' and 'backing away

from' the act of injuring itself (Scarry, 1985), doing so encourages the reader to respond more critically to their own beliefs about killing in war.

### 3.5.4: Unexpected Findings

While the initial aim of this study was to challenge a perceived bias in existing critical commentary with regards to individual stylistic features, additional findings suggest further variety in readers' responses. As the texts explored throughout this thesis were collected in order to facilitate an analysis of the narration of violence in war writing, the moment in which Evans describes the act of shooting the enemy soldier (Section 5) was foregrounded in my own reading as the most significant moment within the narrative. However, the graph below represents the average word count for participants' responses to each section. While there is little correlation between the length of the descriptive and reflective response in relation to one another, Section 5 contains the shortest average word count in response to both questions. Additionally, the inclusion of reflective responses to each section was not compulsory, and four participants chose to write nothing, although two provided reflections relating to all other sections.

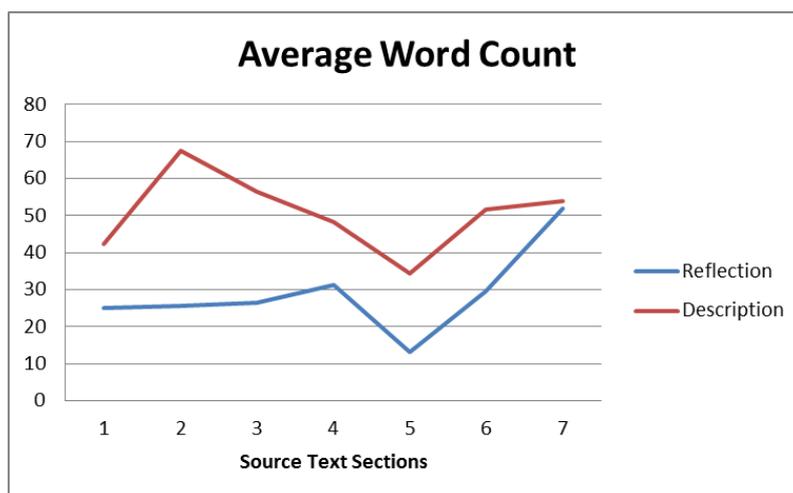
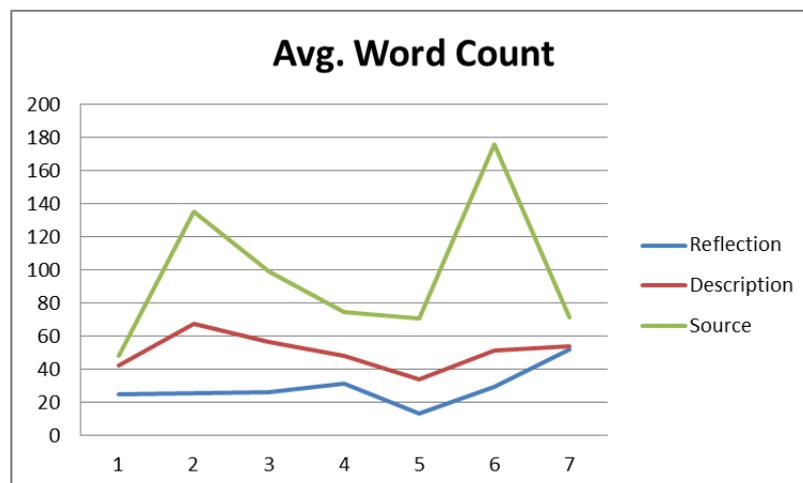


Fig. 3.3: Average word count of readers' reflective and descriptive responses

One explanation for this modulation may be that, in the design of the material's presentation, participants were provided with a shorter section of text than in other parts of the study. As the graph below shows, Section 5 was one of the shortest extracts shown to readers (actual word counts for the sections have been halved, for visual clarity), but only six words shorter than the previous passage, which received more extensive commentary, and forty words longer than Section 1. Furthermore, while sections 2 and 6 were considerably longer than the others, this is not reflected in the average word count of readers' responses in either the reflective or descriptive exercise. While there is a small increase in the length of descriptive responses to these passages, moderate variation of around 200 words between the length of extracts, then, does not seem to significantly affect the rate and length of readers' qualitative reflections. Moreover, Section 4 was closely concerned with descriptions of violence. These actions were witnessed, not performed, and Section 4 shows an average word count for redescription, alongside an increased word count for evaluation.



*Fig. 3.4:* Average response length, including length of source passage per section

It would be unfounded, therefore, to immediately conclude that shorter responses to the text directly correlate to a disinterest in its content. Norrick (2005)

proposes a 'dark side' to tellability in narrative: just as an event can fall below the threshold of tellability, leading the reader or listener to ask Labov's famous 'so what?' (2013), events can also be *too* tellable, and their taboo nature means that readers are less likely to comment lightly on their contents. Accordingly, while some readers appear to have been desensitised to the witnessing of violence (3.5.3), making judgements on those who perform it *during* the telling of their story may remain impolite. Fig. 3.4 shows that the average length of responses increased in section 6, where participants were able to produce extensive evaluative judgements of Evans's own evaluation of his actions, agreeing or disagreeing with his assessment of whether he *should* have killed the enemy soldier. This may be because Evans himself reflects on the morality of his actions in this section, cuing participants to provide their own evaluations, whether they agree or disagree. Alternatively it may reflect part of a pragmatic response process, where readers wait until the end of the narrative before presenting their own thoughts more thoroughly. In fact, of the seven participants who chose to leave an evaluative comment for this final section, six discussed the act of killing described in Section 5 directly, while the other chose to engage primarily in challenging Evans' evaluation, which itself reflected predominantly on the killing of the enemy soldier.

But this theory alone does not account for change in length of readers' affective responses. The many quotations from reflective responses above show that participants felt apathetic about the emotional impact of the passage, often to their own surprise. As R4 put it, 'I am shocked that I'm not shocked at all'. One reason for this may be the cautious way in which participants were informed about the content of the material prior to reading. To ensure that participants consented to reading the potentially disturbing content of the study, the information sheet which preceded the consent form warned that the text would contain 'scenes of graphic military violence'. It may be, therefore, that some readers anticipated a bloodier text, and consequently found the

text itself not to be as graphic as expected. Alternatively, as R4 reflects, however ‘the horror of war has been normalised’. Fictional and factual acts of violence are inextricable from modern news and media, and readers may simply consider killing in war time to be culturally expected or even acceptable.

In response to stylistic research which involves the study of actual readers’ responses to texts, Myers (2009) comments that ‘they pose a problem, or maybe an opportunity, for stylistic analysis, because these readers do not necessarily address the concerns of literary stylistics, even when they are talking about *language, literature, and style.*’ (338, emphases in original). Recognising the potential for a disparity between the interests and focuses of specialist and non-specialist readers with regards to the language of this text, the present study embraces these differences in order to ensure that the critical close readings performed throughout this thesis are closely connected to the interpretative practices of everyday readers. This in turn has worked to justify the hesitancy expressed earlier in this chapter in connecting a lack of explicit description of causality to a perceived absence of causal relationships between discourse participants (3.2.1), as lay-readers consistently re-construe these passages in such a way as to indicate their understanding of a direct causal relationship between the narrator and the individual who has been hurt. In addition, the affective responses from individual participants have provided novel insights into the ways in which readers approach and evaluate these texts and the actors and events they describe.

In some cases, participants mentioned biographical information which they felt was pertinent to their interpretative process in their final evaluation, when prompted to reflect on the study and the text overall. R4, for example, explained that:

**R4:** 'as the daughter of a soldier (who has certainly killed people) this has made me think about my dad and the horrendous affect [sic] of military service on his mental health. In war there are no victors'

While R5 offered an explanation for what they perceived to be a reserved reaction to the text:

**R5:** Having spent a year as a casualty officer, a year doing neurosurgery and more than 25 years as a coroner, I'm afraid that the nature of fatal injuries, and survivors' reactions to them doesn't upset me as much as perhaps it should. When you see a 25 year old woman who has, quite literally, blown her head off with a shotgun, it gives you a certain perspective.

As participants were not asked to supply this information when evaluating their responses to the text, the fact that they do so willingly indicates that these readers perceive these experiences to be significant to their own interpretative practices.

Ingulsrud and Allen (2009) have critiqued the general use of the term 'lay reader' in Critical Discourse Analysis, arguing that 'it is impossible to ascertain how exactly a lay reader reads' (81). Given the breadth of experiences brought to this text by the readers in this study, the division between specialist and non-specialist readers is relatively arbitrary, as each reader draws upon personal experiences from unique aspects of their lives to inform their interpretations. Just as the soldiers who write about performing acts of violence are diverse in their evaluations of their own activities, so each reader brings with them a wealth of experience, beliefs, and ideological perspectives. Had this study sampled military veterans or pacifists as its readers, for example, no doubt the responses produced would be radically different. That said, focusing in this study on readers without an academic expertise in linguistic analysis resulted in the production of evidence for a variety of emotional responses to stylistic effects elicited by particular linguistic stimuli, such as passivisation. Such comments from non-linguists provide a

valuable grounding for critical close readings, in order to ensure that the analysis conforms to observed reading practices. Similarly, it must be remembered that all of these participants engaged with the text in the context of a research study which, while performed at their leisure and at their own pace, may not reflect their everyday reading practices. Nonetheless, comparing the interpretative practices of language specialists to those of other readers only improves the range of data used to support these critical analyses, the findings of which may be used as a starting point for further research, drawing upon a larger cohort of readers to confirm or challenge these general interpretations.

### **3.6: Conclusions**

This chapter has examined the way in which conclusions are drawn from linguistic data in critical close readings, through a practical study to support the readings of this thesis. In particular, it has focused on the ways in which causal connections between highly granular construals of action are inferred by non-specialist readers. Using Cognitive Grammar's Canonical Event Model to visualise the causal structure of events in the source text, and Browse's (in press, 2018) approach to resistant reading and reconstrual for the analysis of events, it has shown that readers are capable of reconstruing the events described in terms of a higher granularity. As a result, the study limits the extent to which event segmentation can be described critically as a linguistic tool for the mystification of causation and action. Likewise, this chapter has demonstrated the reductive nature of direct parallelisms between linguistic and practical agency, showing instead that readers are capable of inferring agentive relationships left absent from the source text. Just as the perception of everyday experiences as conforming to our expectations of cause and effect requires the blending

of experiences and concepts (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002), so the interpretation of events in discourse requires the inference of higher or lower granularities, connecting gaps and filling in generalisations where necessary. As well as deconstructing preconceptions, however, the qualitative responses given by readers presented a new, empirical basis from which to examine the stylistic effects of the narrator's language. Thus, while Evans' highly granular construal does not mask the causal connection between the initial agent and more distant patient, it contributes to a sense of emotional distance, or mechanisation.

While these developments have been valuable for clause-level analysis, the focus of this discussion has been limited. In these opening chapters, linguistic events have been examined in isolation from their broader context, and the reader response survey above begins to demonstrate the limits of such an approach. In providing evaluative commentary on Evans' narrative, participants in this study referred to actions from across the text, as well as informative experiences from their own lives. As Hart (2013) has also noted, 'conceptualisations of an event, of course, are not based on single sentences within the text. Rather, we gain an 'impression' of the events described based on the common threads that permeate the text as a whole' (418). The following chapters will connect these clause-level linguistic observations to macro-scale narratological research: what is the relationship between individual events and the narrative structures that connect them? From a cognitive perspective, how do these structures allow us to make sense of ourselves and, by extension, make sense of others? The notion that readers hold a sustained conceptualisation of a character's identity has been discussed briefly (3.4), but the process through which identity is constructed and perceived in narrative will now be examined in greater detail.

Just as the boundaries of an 'event' are a construct of human perception, 'what it means to be an 'agent' does not appear to be a stable, universal property of events in the world. What people see and believe to be an agent is constructed in context' (Fausey et al., 2010: 1). As readers' responses to Evans' narrative show, the evaluation of individual actions draws upon contextual knowledge, both of the style of the narrative more broadly (3.5.3) and their own personal experiences (3.5.4). When reading a clause as part of a larger narrative, readers may draw on this extended narrative context as a factor in the perception of agency, and the character of the narrator across the text. Understanding the contexts which affect the perception of agency and identity therefore requires that the scope of analysis be broadened to consider the narrative structures in which the construal appears, and the relationship between the act and the representation of the actor more generally.

# Chapter 4: Situating Events in Narrative Contexts

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## 4.1: Identity and Narrative – Preliminary Definitions

Following the conclusion that the process of reading and interpreting at the clausal level within discourse relies on the context of the narrative, this chapter serves to introduce narrative research – its terminologies and philosophies – into critical analysis. This approach echoes Herman's (2002) explanation of the relationship between individual actions and narrative structures. Actions, he argues, 'should be characterized not as prefabricated building blocks of story-worlds, but rather as construction materials that have to be fashioned – custom-fit – in a manner directed by the kind of narrative being told.' (2002: 73). In this view, it makes no sense to talk about the specific linguistic representation of an event outside of its narrative context. Rather, the study of a specific action as represented in language requires a more holistic consideration of its narrative context. Moreover, the importance of the act of constructing a narrative of experience is well documented in the discourse on war (cf. Nordstrom, 1997; Bourke, 1999; 2006; McLoughlin, 2009). As O'Brien (1990) explains:

In any war story, but especially a true one, it's difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way. The angles of vision are skewed. [...] And then afterward, when you go to tell about it, there is always that surreal seemingness, which makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard and exact truth as it seemed. (175-176)

Narrative structure affords the narrator the opportunity to construe events in a sequence which makes experiences intelligible to themselves, and communicable to others. The aim of this chapter, then, is to define the limits of this relationship between

narrative, and experience, and to relate these concepts to the function of discourse in Cognitive Grammar, in order to relate this discussion to the clause-level analyses of previous chapters.

After outlining a broad definition of narrative and its relationship with actions and events as considered thus far (4.1.2), the chapter begins by outlining the approach to identity taken throughout this chapter and the remainder of this thesis, which builds upon Dennett and Ricouer's models to suggest that narrative informs and is informed by broader conceptions of selfhood (4.2). Following this, I introduce narratology's 'cognitive turn' (Herman, 2013b: online) and the role of narrative in making sense of the world to directly relate this narrative-level research to the cognitive linguistic focus of the previous chapters (4.3), situating Langacker's approach to discourse (2008: 458-498) in relation to cognitive narratology. With these functions of narrative outlined, the chapter then considers the way in which the role of narrative in sense-making has also been discussed by researchers primarily interested in war writing, without a specific linguistic or narratological focus (4.4). Identifying the fallacies in the naïve position advanced by many of these researchers paves the way for a discussion of Strawson's (2004) critique of the implicit 'Strong Narrativity', prompting a definition of the parameters of narrative's role as a tool for sense-making (4.5). By considering the relationship between trauma and narrative (4.6), this chapter advances the 'Narrative Self Shaping Hypothesis' (Hutto, 2016) as a practical definition of the role of narrative in cognitive activity and critical inquiry.

Many narrative theorists have proposed their own precise definition of narrative, and these typically differ with regards to the minimum number of events required to constitute a narrative. For instance, Genette (1982 [1997]) argues that a narrative can be a representation of a single event, while others (Prince, 1982; Bal, 1985; Labov, 2013)

emphasise that narrative is defined by the temporal, sequential relationship between at least two distinct events. Moreover, Hühn (2013) has distinguished between different subcategories of events in language. Event I describes events which simply 'happen' within a narrative, while Event II is defined by the presence of 'relevance, unexpectedness, and unusualness'. In general, narratology takes Event II descriptions as the focus of its analysis, as 'unexpected' and 'unusual' events often indicate narrative significance, as disruptions to the reader's expectations traditionally justify the telling of the story in the first instance (cf. Labov, 2013). In Cognitive Grammar terms, Event I can be compared to the concept of 'Ground', the background setting against which the 'Figure' of the unexpected Event II is described and made significant (Langacker, 2008: 58). Even before considering the social contexts in which readers in the previous chapter's study interpreted the narrative show to them (Ch. 3.5.4), understanding the ways events are perceived as meaningful requires the consideration of context beyond the individual clause, as events are compared to other occurrences across the text.

In his review of narratological literature, Richardson (2000) identifies four distinct approaches to the concept and definition of narrative: temporal, causal, minimal, and transactional. Of these, temporal and causal represent two competing views of which features most essentially define narrative. More recently, Popova (2015) has expanded the argument for the causal definition, drawing parallels between narrative and every-day processes of perception. As was shown in the previous chapter (3.5), the reader's need to create a causal connection between events is an important part of the interpretative act. According to Herman, however, this is only one of narrative's possible functions, as stories can be used to 'segment the stream of experience, posit (but also question) causal relations among events, bring what happens into relation with what was expected to happen, develop protocols for sequencing actions, and distribute ways of knowing across space and time.' (Herman, 2013: 251).

Events do more than simply function as the building blocks of narrative – narrative is fundamentally *an exploration of* events, typically structured in relation to one another.

Indeed, for narrative theorists the relationship between individual events and their overarching narrative structure is so close, that it makes little sense to discuss events without reference to narrative more generally. This is exemplified by Labov's (2006) notion of 'narrative pre-construction'. In essence, Labov argues that in order to produce a narrative – spoken or written – the narrator must first go through a series of premeditated 'cognitive operations' (38), working backwards from the most reportable event which serves as the focus of the story, in order to find a setting or abstract which requires minimal introduction. Likewise, Toolan suggests that a view of narrative in which the teller simply uses the overarching structure to frame isolated events 'ignor[es] the possibility of a reverse order of impulses, namely that, guided by the prior awareness of the tellability-requirement, our evaluations shape our plots' (2001: 154). From this position, the idea of examining a sentence requires a synthesis with the discursive context in which it appears. The implications of this stance are important from a critical discourse perspective, as a top-down approach situates each individual, sentence-level construal within the broader ideological aims of the narrative, from the moment of production. Essentially, the view being taken here is that narrative, defined as a means of constructing an account of actions and events in a causally connected in a temporal relationship, is a way in which meaning is 'in some sense as much *made as found*' (Freeman, 1993: 30, *emphases original*). Situating events within their narrative context, then, is more than just an exercise in extended analysis. Rather, 'narrative has the function of *giving* explanations of actions and events' (Teichert, 2004: 183, *my emphasis*), and this top down view of the relationship between narratives and their component events, and their expression, makes the consideration of their relationship essential.

Herman (2013a) also provides an overview of the relationship between traditional and cognitive narratological analysis. In doing so, he also distinguishes between a separate axis of analysis: ‘worlding the story’, which describes an interest in the ways in which readers come to understand the internal workings of a narrative’s world, and ‘storying the world’, or the role of narrative as a means of organising and communicating one’s experiences linguistically. Although Herman notes that many research projects will move between each of these positions in the course of their analysis, these methodological poles provide a useful outline of the distinct aims of potential narratively-focused studies:

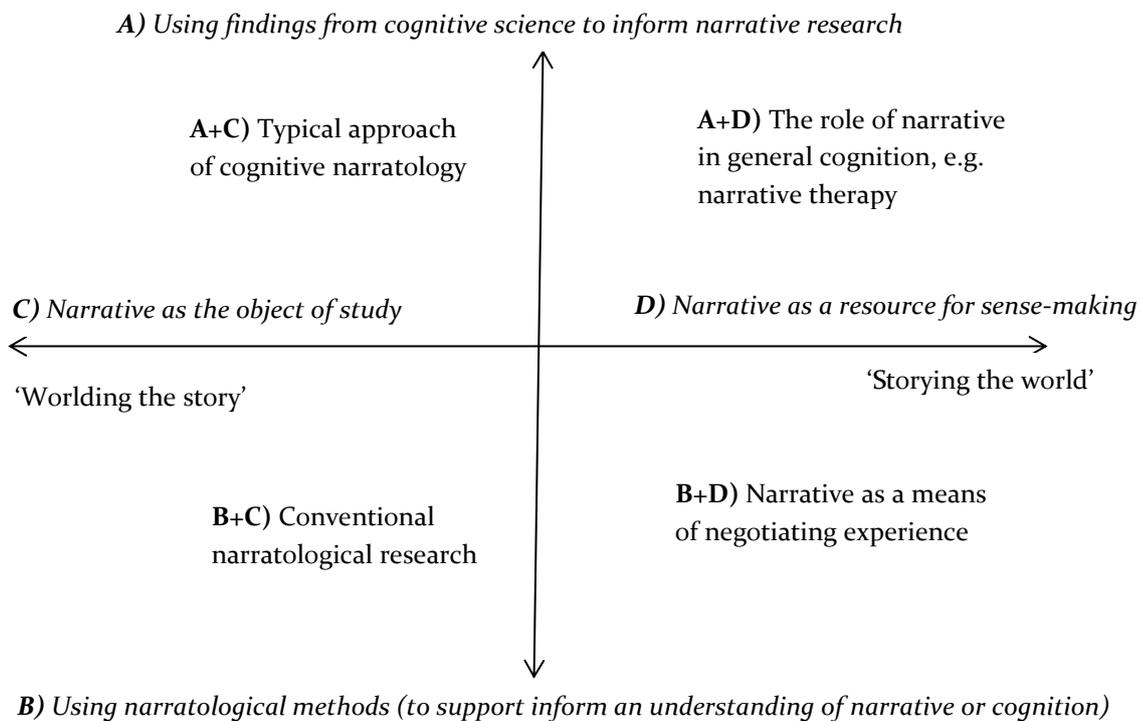


Fig. 4.1: Intersections of narratology and cognitive research (cf. Herman, 2013a: 1-8)

As the diagram above shows, the relationship between cognitive and narrative research is multivalent, allowing the researcher to approach the texts in question with regard to a variety of aims. While this chapter is primarily concerned with the role of narrative in ‘storying the world’, the process of considering the stylistic effect of language choices

upon a reader's impression of a text necessarily involves considering the way in which narrative contributes to 'worlding the story'. As a result, while the working definition of narrative minimally includes the occurrence of at least two events, the discussion of this chapter will soon broaden to consider the wider context and implications of meaning making and narrative structure associated with practical examples concerned with experiences of conflict.

## **4.2: The Storytelling Self**

Authoring a memoir is a process of producing a narrative order to a selection of experiences and actions from one's life, which presents an interpretation of the events which occurred and the identity of the experiencer. As Herman (2013a) has noted, narrative can be viewed as an 'instrument of the mind' (227), which allows the teller to organise and make sense of their experiences after the fact, share knowledge, and examine the folk-psychological reasons behind the actions performed by oneself or others. Given the ubiquitous role of narrative's retrospective organisation for many thinkers, some theorists have described this as the fundamental means of sense-making regarding everyday experience. Bruner (1987), for example, defines life as being 'constructed by human beings through active ratiocination, by the same kind of ratiocination through which we construct narratives' (13), while Schank and Abelson (1995) suggest that 'when it comes to language, all our knowledge is contained in stories and the mechanisms to construct them and retrieve them' (2). Gallacher (2007) also draws a close connection between narrative and memory, suggesting that,

'To form a self-narrative, one needs to do more than simply remember life events. One needs to reflectively consider them, deliberate on their meaning, and decide how they fit together semantically. A life event is not meaningful

in itself; rather *it depends on a narrative structure that lends it context and sees in it significance that goes beyond the event itself.*' (210-1, my emphasis).

Interestingly, in asking research participants to evaluate their own narratives, Marsh and Tversky (2004) found that while 61% of participants labelled their own stories as distorted by exaggeration or omission, only 42% described them as inaccurate. The process of structuring a narrative of personal experience, then, is often a selection of events and perspectives which contribute to a preferred construal of the self, even at the expense of factual accuracy. Hence, why a critical analysis of such texts values the consideration of additional context, as the ability to compare descriptions to the events as they occurred can reveal ideologically-charged redescriptions.

So far, the analysis in this thesis has been concerned with readers' conceptualisations of the transfer of force relating to events at the clausal level. However, as Chapter 3 concluded, the observations produced in such a reading are divorced from the narrative context that surrounds all but the most abstract of linguistic examples. When events are construed as part of a larger narrative or discursive unit, the construal itself is affected by its context, both in terms of its production and interpretation. In order to bridge the gap between the study of clauses and larger units of discourse, this chapter is primarily concerned with the relationship between narrative and identity. As autobiographical military memoirs are predominantly concerned with recording the actions and experiences of the first person narrator, both individual action descriptions and large-scale narrative structures can be discussed in terms of their role in negotiating a coherent identity of the narrator across the text.

Exploring how narrative relates to the concept of selfhood, Daniel Dennett has described identity in terms of a 'narrative centre of gravity' (1992), a metaphor which presents 'self' as an intangible concept affected by its ongoing performance. Dennett builds his case gradually, imagining first a machine which can produce a convincing –

but entirely fictional – biography. As Dennett posits a machine which gradually looks and acts more in accordance with this biography than before, he presents discussion of self as ‘an abstraction one uses as part of a theoretical apparatus to understand, predict, and make sense of, the behaviour of some very complicated things’ (8). In this view, narrative and selfhood are related through a network: no one story necessarily provides a complete sense of an identity, but contributes to the way in which the individuals involved in the narrative are perceived and understood. In the case of military memoir, for instance, the narratives produced by individual soldiers work in tandem with the reader’s more general understanding of the wars in which they were involved, in order to make sense of the individuals and experiences they describe. Moreover, the stories we tell about ourselves work with and against one another to produce a narrative identity which can at times contradict or conflict with itself. Hence, Fludernik’s (2007) conclusion that:

We do not merely tell stories about our recent experience in which we try to make ourselves look good; we also narrate and retell our lives *to ourselves*. In order to create continuity between past and present, in order to lend meaning to the experiences that we have undergone, we construct a story of our life (262)

While Dennett’s and Fludernik’s approaches focus on the centrality of narratives told by and about ourselves to the construction of our own identities, this isolationist attitude requires expansion to account for the social aspects of the self, where the sense of an individual’s identity is both perceived and constructed by others around them. Hence Ricoeur’s (1991; cf. Teichert, 2004) position that narrative self is a participatory, public self that we can influence, but not fully control. For Ricoeur, the self is more than a tool wielded by the individual in order to make sense of their own actions and experiences, because the narrative dimension of our lives extends beyond ourselves. While an individual might choose to present facts about themselves in such a

way as to construe one impression of their character, others may resist these narratives, countering them with new narrative organisations, which in turn affect the public impression of the narrated individual's character and are open to further negotiation. This is most obviously the case for individuals who live in the public eye, and whose actions are often reported on and discussed at length by parties other than themselves, but the same can be said of all of us. The stories told about us by other members of our social circles demonstrate this, as do archival practices in which records and documents provide evidence of our past actions, against which the stories we tell and are told can be weighed for authenticity. Thus, as Wallen (2009) puts it, 'our narratives of identity are not strictly our own. Who we are is always also now produced by archival machines [...] Our identities are woven for us, and the archive is the loom' (269). Even in its narrative form, identity and selfhood is not exclusively constructed by the individual, but is instead borne out of the relationship between their own narratives, and those of others, even archival processes which can be traced and reconstrued into narrative. Put simply, the process of telling about oneself and the narrative construction of public-facing identity is not simply reflexive. Others can tell about us, and we can feature in narratives about other things, hence Dennett's metaphor of a narrative 'centre of gravity' remains a useful visualisation of the interaction between self and society.

In short, there is a common connection between the structure of narrative and the sense of identity. In telling a story, narrators can include facts learned after the fact, re-order events for dramatic effect, and adopt perspectives (hypothetical and otherwise) beyond those they perceived during the experience. Lambrou (2014), for example, demonstrates that the inclusion of facts learned after the original experience affects the way in which individuals structure their reports of events stylistically. As R.J. Campbell writes of a 1918 retreat in which he was involved, 'It's much better on TV or at the cinema. The battles there look far more realistic' (1977: 78). The process of situating

personal experience in its historical context relates to the concept of granularity (2.3.2), as the narration of events involves the selection of the level of detail at which they are described, in both physical and social terms. In this sense, the act of narrating affords an opportunity to engage in sense-making through the construal of causal relationships across levels of abstraction, which the reader is open to accept or challenge in their reading.

### **4.3: Narrative for Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Having now defined narrative for the purposes of this thesis, and contextualised it in terms of the previous sentence-level analyses, it remains to consider the stylistic methods for the effective study of concepts as broad as ‘narrative’ and ‘identity’, as opposed to the more precise features of clausal analysis. Ryan, in critiquing cognitive approaches to narratology, observes that theories which make strong claims about the relationship between narrative, identity, and the mind ‘treat narrative as an unanalysed whole, rather than attributing the effects they claim for storytelling to specific constituents of narrative’ (2010: 483), in which the category of narrative itself – as opposed to its constituent components – possesses some faculty of perceptual scaffolding. However, approaching narrative in terms of its linguistic constituents, cognitive models of language at the clausal and narrative levels can be employed in tandem to facilitate further investigation into how larger units of discourse establish and maintain overarching conceptual themes and structures.

#### **4.3.1: Cognitive Grammar and Discourse**

Outlining the conceptual model of Cognitive Grammar, Langacker (2008) introduces the role of discourse as the ‘second phase’ (viii) in the development of the model, acknowledging its central role in determining linguistic structures. Establishing

a relationship between discourse and smaller units of language, Langacker outlines the various units of language which form the basis of his linguistic inquiry, from single words 'to multiword constructions, to full nominals and clauses, and finally to complex sentences. The next level is discourse, where any number of sentences are connected to form a coherent linguistic production' (457). While this definition allows for the discussion of a few short, hypothetical examples of conversational discourse, Langacker's detailed focus on the minutiae of linguistic utterances prevents the discussion of longer examples, such as whole narratives, factual or literary. In fact, the difficulty in extending such an analysis to whole texts prompts Pincombe (2014) to question the applicability of Cognitive Grammar as a tool for stylistic research, suggesting that 'it would be wonderful to have a whole short-story diagrammed this way. But who would do it? And who would read it?' (174). So far, Cognitive Grammar has typically been employed for the analysis of short passages of text, and Harrison (2017: 25-27) acknowledges that the 'scalability' of Cognitive Grammar to narrative structures remains a topic of ongoing research.

The functionalist model of transitivity analysis (Halliday, 1971; Simpson, 2003; cf. Ch. 2.2.1) provides an indication of how clause-level analysis might be adapted to the analysis of discourse by selecting the specific stylistic feature of transitivity as a singular focus across a narrative, and establishing a profile of the agents and identities construed in doing so. In its most basic sense, the process involves identifying the frequency with which social actors are assigned an agentive or passive grammatical role, which informs the analysis of the overall perception of the actor's construal within the discourse. Segmenting actions into semantic categories such as 'material' and 'mental' provides further nuance, specifying the ways in which actors are seen to interact with the world, and the discrete semantic classification of types of activity allows transitivity profiling to clearly distinguish between different kinds of action and actor in a longitudinal study of

activity over the course of a narrative, or comparatively between texts. According to Hart (2014), attending to the differences in the transitivity profiles of social actors will 'not only reflect alternative ideologies but serve to construct institutional identities' (30). While these findings can then be supported with closer consideration of other stylistic features within the language of a text, transitivity profiling provides a short-hand indication of the linguistic construction of actors' identities with regards to their capacity for agency.

As the application of cognitivist approaches to the construal of force and motion in descriptions of action for literary and critical purposes remains in relative infancy, greater time is necessarily devoted in their analysis to outlining the operation of individual acts, as opposed to large-scale comparative exercises across a number of actors or texts. However, Stockwell (2009) employs the notion of action chaining to discuss the stylistic 'texture' of an extract from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (185-190). In particular, Stockwell's reading focuses on the dynamic interaction between two participants in the narrative (Gandalf and the Balrog), in order to demonstrate how the continued switch between the two as agent and patient in descriptions of action provides narrative tension. By sustaining his analysis over the course of several paragraphs of narration, Stockwell is able to demonstrate how the profile of Gandalf shifts from the agent associated with strength and defiant experiencer roles, to a weaker character who staggers and falls, acting upon nothing. As a result, the reading transitions from the explication of the dynamic operation of individual actions to begin to establish the development of the character's narrative identity, affirming Cognitive Grammar's applicability to the study of discourse and identity in passages of narrative. Likewise, recent analyses have shown how action chains and the cognitive modelling of force can be used in the study of poetry (Giovanelli, 2014; Yuan, 2014). In each case,

however, Cognitive Grammar continues to be applied to shorter texts, with the scaling of the model to book-length narrative an ongoing project (Harrison, 2017).

In order to bridge the gap more effectively between clausal and textual analysis for practical purposes, it still remains for Cognitive Grammar to identify levels of meaning which afford the selection of primary material comparable to transitivity. Once equipped with the capacity to discuss extended units of discourse, a stylistic examination of a text grounded in Cognitive Grammar will more closely relate the process of construal associated with singular moments with the narrative to the reader's overall engagement with and interpretation of the text. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter 6, which argues that the reader's recognition of a profile of interconnected intentions across a character's actions can be used to make the connection between sentences and narratives. For now, these reviews of stylistic approaches to narrative and other extended modes of discourse demonstrate that analytical tools developed in functional and cognitivist linguistics have the capacity to inform the discussion of the ways in which identity may be constructed and presented within narrative.

#### **4.3.2: Critical Applications of Narrative Research**

Additionally, the study of narrative structure brings with it its own terminology, which might be meaningfully applied to the study of military memoir. In describing the events leading up to or shortly following an act of violence, many soldiers not only describe the events which *did* occur, but those which *could* have occurred had they acted differently, a phenomenon which Prince (1988) terms 'disnarration'. Warsop (1965), for instance, precedes a description of the moment in which he kills an enemy sniper with the observation that 'if we stayed in the trench we should have been shot from above like rats in a trap' (15), while Evans (1991), following the discovery of the

solider he wounded, puts it more bluntly: 'if I hadn't shot him, he would have taken the greatest pleasure in shooting me' (64). By explicitly positing the other possible outcomes of the events described, the narrators justify and expand upon the significance of their original actions. In terms of both transitivity and the perceived cause and direction of force, by focusing on what could have happened, these narratives make manifest a kind of agency which, though it never occurred, had the potential to occur to the extent that the possibility of it influenced other events and actions. As a result, despite the fact that each narrator's enemy is not construed as having exerted force upon the narrator, the reader is readily positioned to understand how such force could be enacted without the narrator's pre-emptive action. In that sense, Warsop and Evans' disnarration serves as the cause of their decision to perform violence, reducing their agentive role and providing a moral justification for their actions in the form of self-preservation.

Not only can disnarration be employed to justify a specific act of violence, but the narrator's world view more generally. In an evaluative passage which accompanies the diaries and a memoir submitted to the Imperial War Museum, Latchford (1999) argues that those opposed to the idea of war and killing lack perspective:

But I often wonder now why the Anti-war people do not do a little killing. [...] *If I felt so strongly about Peace instead of being divided about its merits I would like a chance with twenty others to kill a War-maker. One gun would get him – it would be no worse than taking a machine gun with a company of infantry.*' (63, my emphases)

The role allocation (van Leeuwen, 1997: 42-46) of the victim as a 'War-maker' provides a semantic frame which serves to justify Latchford's intent to commit an act of violence, while the disnarrated comparison to the image of 'taking a machine gun' grounds the abstract act of killing in relation to Latchford's own experiences. Instead of justifying an

individual violent action by employing the context in which it occurred, Latchford instead prefaces his memoir with a demonstration of his overarching ideological perspective.

As well as narratological terms for specific passages of narrative, the overarching organisation of events into a narrative order can be examined in terms of its effect on the ideological impression of the text. Especially for memoirs which aim to represent a progression through a series of lived experiences, events are presented in a linear chronology. However, the significance of a particular event in terms of its tellability, and the theme of the narrative in general, may displace the order in which information is presented to the reader from the order in which events actually occurred. For example, in the structure of news articles Bell (1991) observes that 'perceived news value overturns temporal sequence and imposes an order completely at odds with the linear narrative point' (153, cf. Toolan, 2001: 207). Essentially, the 'pre-construction' of narrative allows the teller to configure the sequence of events into an alternative order, where the presentation of information which only became known to the teller after the fact earlier in a narrative, for instance, may allow the reader to make greater sense of events, or experience a particular response, such as dramatic irony. Hence, narrative structure has been described as producing a 'double arrow of time' (Mishler, 2006), where clock/chronological time can contrast with narrative/experiential time. Likewise, Ricoeur's notion of 'historical time' and 'human time' (1980) make an effective distinction between the way things occur in the world, and the ways they *can* be organised into a narrative structure. As Evans (1991) writes at the end of his account of combat, 'All this took far less time than it takes to tell' (65). When a great number of tellable narrative events occur within a short space of historical time, the highly granular construal of the narrative gives prominences to a number of actions which occurred in quick succession.

Equally, the pacing of a narrative may pass over periods of time as originally experienced. Consider, for instance, the temporal transition in the following passage, underlined, in which Carpenter describes an assault on a Japanese patrol during the Second World War:

I made motions to the others to prime their grenades and as soon as the patrol was within range to throw them and run like hell back to the boat, as we ran three explosions were heard followed by screams of agony [...] Those grenades had done their job well. (Carpenter, n.d.: 29)

Sequentially speaking, this passage lacks a description of an event integral to the progression of the narrative as presented to the reader: namely, that grenades are thrown by Carpenter and his allies. However, the non-verbal reporting of Carpenter's intention precedes this, and the reader can readily understand what has happened, even though a direct description is left out of the passage. Much as individual clauses may selectively focalise dimensions of activity which render absent particular events, the process of connecting these actions together in a narrative affords a further level at which selective stylistic choices are made in the act of construal. The order in which events are presented in narrative thus presents an angle of critical inquiry into the effects of the selection on the ideological interpretation of the scene(s) described. Similarly to the concept of granularity (Ch. 2.3.2), the time and detail dedicated to a narrative moment may affect focalisation, drawing the reader's attention to or away from certain kinds of activity.

#### **4.4: Perspectives on Narrative from War Studies**

So far, narrative has been examined in terms of its interest to researchers primarily concerned with the study of language. However, given its ubiquity and claims that it represents the primary structure of meaning by which humans make sense of the

world more generally, narrative often plays a key role in other qualitative fields of study. Indeed, war writings have been studied in their own right, as well as in the context of military history more generally, and war theorists themselves have often reflected on the role of narrative in making sense of language. In many cases, these researchers have made strong claims about the significance of narrative in the processing of experiences of violence and war. Bourke (1999), for instance, concludes her study of close-combat violence by observing that 'there is no 'experience' independent of the ordered mechanisms of grammar, plot, and genre and this is never more the case than when attempting to 'speak' the ultimate transgression – killing another human being' (369). In line with theorists such as Bruner (1987) and Fludernik (2007) discussed earlier in this chapter (4.2), Bourke privileges a view of the relationship between language and experience where processes of sense-making and linguistic organisation are inextricable from one another. Indeed, Bourke (2006) affirms this position, writing that 'the very act of narrating changes and formulates the 'experience'. Men 'really did' kill: but from the moment of killing, the event entered into imagination and language, to be interpreted, elaborated, restructured.' (34). Likewise, McLoughlin's suggestion that language 'impos[es] verbal order on the chaos' of war (2010: 19) implies that the experience of conflict is incomplete without being construed within a narrative order. In his review of Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Campbell (2005) suggests that for Fussell, literary tropes 'represent the primary manner in which his mind makes meaning' (268), and which inform his study as he writes that 'the further personal materials move from the form of the daily diary, the closer they approach the figurative and the fictional' (2013: 336). Sneddon and Guddall (2013: online) also place emphasis on the role of narrative structure as a means of making sense of personal experience of conflict:

Rather than seeing this type of memoir in terms of its factual accuracy, we should see it as a representation resulting not simply from manipulations and ideological distortions, but from narrative strategies of sense-making. Reading war memoirs narratively means disentangling a process of interpretation whereby the chaos of lived experience is transformed into orderly storylines.

In other words, researchers writing about the relationship between narrative and the experience of conflict tend to describe the construction of narrative as the initial act of sense-making itself. However, given that many soldiers never share their experiences in a narrative form, an argument which erases the sense-making activities of soldiers who choose not to repeat or record their experiences in narrative form requires closer reflection. Accordingly, the following subchapters will critique this position in relation to philosophical critiques of this attitude towards narrative and identity (4.5), as well as introduce the concept of trauma as a factor in the relationship between experience and narrative (4.6).

In addition to considering narrative as a tool for sense-making, researchers interested in war writing have also reflected on the stylistic and literary effects of novel features of the genre. Hynes (1997) coins the term 'battlefield gothic' to describe how straightforward descriptions of scenes of combat, 'emptied of abstractions' (27) can nonetheless appear uncanny: 'flat and uninflected; but *realism* somehow doesn't seem quite the right word for such grotesque occasions' (26). Thus, descriptive passages fitting the 'battlefield gothic' seem to go beyond the ideational metafunction, almost producing the opposite effect, where the great sharing of detail leads to a less knowable or recognisable experience for the lay reader to relate to. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, however, this outcome is perhaps less surprising: the more detailed the author's description of their experience of combat, the further from the Common Ground the scene strays, leaving the reader less able to either associate with the

descriptions themselves, or employ their own schematised knowledge of conflict to make sense of the scene. Similarly, McLoughlin (2011) observes the challenge of balancing a detailed representation of events with the need to make the description relatable and sensible to an external reader: 'the difficult question raised by presence in warfare concerns the usefulness of representation, an ongoing issue that becomes particularly acute in the midst of killing and dying' (48). As the quotation from O'Brien (1990) at the beginning of this chapter makes clear, setting down in words what takes place in war is not a straightforward process of relating what happened, but instead one which necessitates perspective taking, and active decisions must be made in selecting the details to be described, as well as the way in which they are structured linguistically.

The challenge of conveying the experience of war and the distinction between civilian and military life raises further challenges with regards to the relationship between war and narrative. Leed (1979) has argued that war is an uncontrolled time beyond conventional social boundaries, which leads Chouliaraki to observe that war is 'so discontinuous with soldiers' out-of-war lives that it makes it hard for them to hold together a sense of themselves as enduring and developing through life' (2016: 62). Leed's continued emphasis on the liminality and spectacle of military experience, as well as the potential psychic break of trauma (37-38), actively resists the notion of narrative and identity as contiguous throughout life. John Keegan has also commented on the disjointed nature of experience, comparing ground soldiers to commanders positioned away from the battlefield, when he writes that:

battle, for [the soldier] takes place in a wildly unstable physical and emotional environment; he may spend much of his time in combat as a mildly apprehensive spectator, granted, by some freak of events, a comparatively danger-free grandstand view of others fighting; then he may suddenly be able to see nothing but the clods on which he has flung himself

for safety, there to crouch – he cannot anticipate – for minutes or hours (1976: 47)

For Keegan and Leed, war makes a continuous and singular identity impossible through ‘an environment that reversed the normal relationship between actor and action’ (Leed, 1979: 38). When soldiers cannot identify a causal origin of their actions, either through taking orders or reacting to the environment and combatants which act upon them, narrative’s structural requirements are not met. As a result, when Chouliaraki (2014) suggests that military memoir as a genre organises these experiential fragments in order to ‘produce a sense of self that invests their war experience with meaning’ (603), the resulting ‘self’ is not necessarily an integration of the military into the everyday. Rather, these memoirs typically discuss the time frame of the war in question, which serves as a boundary to the narrative identity produced within: the story and the self begin at the outbreak of war and end at its closure, with the consequent return to civilian life rarely documented in any substantial detail.

#### **4.5: Objections to ‘Strong’ Narrativity**

In both narrative theory and studies of the experience of war, the construction of narrative has been presented as a central process in making sense of experience. Despite differing definitions of narrative, the research discussed above has generally contributed to the notion, either explicitly or implicitly, that narrative is ‘the fundamental instrument of thought’ (Turner, 1996: 4) or at least one of the most important ways in which individuals make sense of the world. However, Strawson (2004) has notably objected to this position, arguing that it is possible to make sense of one’s identity without recourse to narrative. The following discussion outlines Strawson’s argument in greater detail (4.5.1), objecting to his claim that narrative structure can be circumvented altogether. As a result of this, the explication of an alternative approach

to the relationship between narrative and identity (4.5.2) draws on the concept of Common Ground (Werth, 1993; Browse, in press 2018; cf. Ch. 2.3.4) to situate narrative as the primary means by which most individuals make sense of experience.

#### 4.5.1: Strawsonian Objections

Strawson separates his argument that narrative theorists overstate the role of narrative in the mental conception of selfhood into two distinct theses: the ‘psychological Narrativity thesis’, which argues that *all* humans use stories as the primary means of making sense of the world and of themselves; and the ‘ethical Narrativity thesis’, often implicit within the presentation of the psychological thesis, which states that a narrative view of one’s life is good, and something to aspire towards, ‘essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood’ (Strawson, 2004: 428). Firstly, Strawson attacks the notion that *all* people make sense of their lives as a single, coherent narrative structure, arguing that people who do have this approach are precisely those likely to study, and therefore advocate, the role of narrativity in identity. As a counterpoint to a narrative sense of self, Strawson offers the ‘episodic’. Put simply, Strawson believes it is possible to segment one’s life in such a way that different episodes are not connected into a single sense of selfhood. Although we are aware that the events experienced and actions performed in these previous episodes of our lives are attributable to our present selves, there is no sense that the self as currently understood is formed from these experiences.

As Leed (1979) and Keegan’s (1976) emphasis on the fragmented nature of military experience suggests, the notion of ‘episodicity’ – the perception of a period of one’s life as compartmentalised from the present sense of self – is readily applicable to the genre of military memoir. Hynes (1997) has claimed that ‘war narratives aren’t like autobiography’, because ‘military service is a kind of exile from one’s own *real* life’ (1997: 8,

my emphasis). For Hynes, at least, this separation between 'real' and 'military' life demonstrates the kind of divorce between periods of one's life indicated by Strawson. However, while the divorce between different episodes of one's life challenges the notion that narrativity can always be claimed as the primary means by which identity is constructed overall, the claim does not refute the role of narrative as a sense-making structure with regards to the internal logic of individual episodes. Although recognised as distinct from other aspects of one's self, the experiences which comprise an episode must be ordered to some extent according to temporal and causal connections, in order to be recognised as a coherent unit at all. So, while Strawson casts doubt on narrative as an exclusive means of making sense of a life, the fundamental mechanics of narrativity remain at the centre of the linguistic relation of experience at the level of individual events.

Though the above has suggested that Strawson's notion of the episodic still relies on a minimalist understanding of narrative form, this position requires further clarification. In order to answer to similar concerns voiced by Ryan's (2010) critique of the role of cognition in narratology, theorists who hold strong positions on the relationship between narrative and identity believe in 'the innate possession of a narrative faculty... that allows us to have a self' (2010: 483). The view expounded here is of narrative as a composite, made up of smaller processes including causal connectivity, temporal ordering, and focalisation which allow us to select the elements of experience we wish to present as meaningful. Rather than being a cognitive faculty in its own right, narrative is the sum of the processes which organise lower-level events, and the result of our way of reasoning, given our chronolinear perceptions. In the construction of autobiographical narratives, some of the associated features of narrativity may help to make events communicable, but it is possible for reporting and tellability to conflict with regards to how the author chooses to describe their experiences. After all, life is

not bound to the same conventions as storytelling, as dramatic twists, satisfying resolutions, or explanations do not always occur. Compared to a purely fictional narrative, where all detail can be selected for a functional role (cf. Lamarque, 2007), stories relating actual events are constrained by their association with reality, and a tension can arise between the most tellable and most accurate ways to report events. For Peter Goldie, this artificial parallel in the structure of fictional and non-fictional narratives affects our understanding of events, both how they occurred and why:

there is a danger here, in autobiographical narratives, of a *prejudicial reconstruction of what happened, seeking to explain what happened, to find agency and internal meaningfulness, precisely where it is not to be found, even though what happened was no doubt caused, and caused by you.* The demands of narrativity on us as external narrators looking back on our past, seems to drag us towards thinking of our past thoughts, feelings, and deliberations as more determinate than they in fact were, and as reflective on an agency of which at the time we seemed quite bereft [...] It is as though we cannot bear the thought that there is no narrative explanation available of what happened in a way that provides internal meaningfulness. (Goldie, 2012: 148, my emphasis)

As was noted previously (Ch. 3.3), Fauconnier and Turner (2002) suggest that the observation of cause and effect is a conceptual blend, and the process of construing events in discourse requires the selection of a subjective perspective. Accordingly, it becomes impossible to know to what extent the events described in the texts analysed across this thesis are narrative constructions: either through lexicogrammatical constraints or in order to suit a particular perception of the narrator's character. Indeed, in asking research participants to evaluate their own narratives, Marsh and Tversky (2004) found that while 61% labelled their own stories as distorted by exaggeration or omission, only 42% described them as inaccurate. Just as the setting down of an event within a single clause requires a construal of force dynamics, so narrative requires the representation of a relationship between the events, objects, and contexts. In the

context of violence, where causality and the ability to perceive responsibility in activity are essential, the narrative organisation necessitates drawing relationships between experiences, either through grammatical construal, or textual proximity. Outside of the context of war, soldiers may wish to explain *why* they acted the way they did, and in doing so create a greater sense of agency or volition than ever existed at the time.

#### **4.5.2: Reframing Narrativity**

In short, there are reasonable doubts to be raised in relation to a stance which takes narrative as the exclusive means by which we make sense of the world. The approaches to the narrative self outlined thus far, and which Strawson and Ryan call upon most frequently in their criticisms, can generally be categorised as ‘Strong Narrativity’. That is, these hypotheses take a narrative perspective on selfhood to be the defining means by which one can make sense of one’s experiences. For researchers working in the field of narratology, the temptation to adopt such a position is readily apparent: if narrative is the exclusive means by which individuals organise and make sense of their experiences, then the study of narrative is essential to understanding phenomenology and cognition. In breaking this position down into the psychological and ethical narrativity theses, however, Strawson demonstrates that maintaining a Strong Narrativist position across all experience erases the complexity of a sense of selfhood which can at times appear inconsistent across the span of a lifetime. Nonetheless, narrative structure remains a significant means by which to organise and communicate ideas and experiences, and the rejection of Strong Narrativity requires a new account of the ways in which narrative organises and affects the perception of experience.

One such proposal for an alternative definition of narrative’s role in sense-making and everyday identity construal is Hutto’s (2016) Narrative Self Shaping

Hypothesis. Put simply, the Narrative Self Shaping Hypothesis (NSSH) attempts to reconcile criticisms of Strong Narrativism with a continuing view of narrative as the primary means by which the majority of people organise and make sense of their experiences. According to Hutto, a 'modestly construed' form of NSSH argues that 'personal narratives are among the main instruments that individuals regularly use to engage in projects of defining themselves in important respects' (2016: 26). Like Strong Narrativism, then, NSSH makes claims about the effectiveness and primariness of narrative as a means of making sense of experience for *most* people. It differs, however, in its acceptance of the idea that there may be individuals for whom the construction of a narrative does not emerge as a part of the sensemaking process. Although Strawson positions himself as one such individual, his primary claim is to acknowledge that not all *lives* are compatible with a narrative structure. Instead, while 'episodes' of life may be distinct from one another, the internal consistency within an episode is a smaller narrative of an identity made meaningful in relation to a select period of the narrator's life. The practical value of this 'softer' claim is readily demonstrable in the context of traumatic experiences, where the formation of a narrative is often seen as a challenging end to a process of working through an experience. Nordstrom (1997) has been keen to emphasise the distinction between the experience of producing a narrative, and the experience a narrative reports:

While all narrative is experience, not all experience is narrative. This sounds like a simple truism, but too often the two terms are relegated to a single process: the event which occurs, and which we recognise in thought, speech, and action. A strong philosophical tradition justifies the fusion of the two processes. Researchers need to believe that when they ask an informant what her or his experiences, are, the ensuing narrative will convey the nature of that experience. Narrative is experience. But it is not the experience of that which it narrates. (20)

This distinction between the original experience, the identity of the individual, and the narrative form of both, is expressed in the phrasing of name ‘self *shaping*’. Rather than viewing the self as entirely construed through narratives by and about the individual in question, NSSH allows for the view that identity is *altered* by these narratives, but at the same time persisting beyond them. After all, we exist as part of nebulous social networks, in which we are talked about by others. Additionally, autobiographical narratives must also withstand the possible authentication of the facts they relate. While it is obviously possible to lie about one’s actions or experiences, in order for such fictions to enter into others’ conceptualisations of ourselves and be confused for fact, they have to relate to the semantic domains with which we are associated. If, for example, you are aware that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1066, and that humans do not live for more than a hundred years or so, you would be highly unlikely to believe me if I claimed to have fought in the Battle of Hastings. No matter how this claim is construed, it would be unlikely to become part of your conception of my identity, although pragmatically your impression of me may be affected by the effort to make such a claim. Thus, when we create stories about ourselves, or when stories are created about us, they ‘shape’ a perception of self from an existing framework of possible perceptions.

In other words, the relationship between narrative and identity relies on the ‘common ground’ (Werth, 1993, Browse, 2018) discussed earlier, and the ‘maximal scope’ of Langacker’s (2008) model of discourse in *Cognitive Grammar* (cf. Ch. 2.3.5), where an understanding of a given event, actor, or object is based on the mutual understanding of all participants in the communicative process. In telling and reading stories, authors and readers build upon existing knowledge and scripts of action, shaping their understanding with each usage, the influence of which may fluctuate according to existing knowledge.

While the NSSH is predominantly concerned with addressing the issues surrounding the psychological narrativity thesis, it remains to explore the issues raised by the ethical narrativity thesis: the notion that a narrative construction of the self is good, and even ideal. While Strawson (2004) argues that this is mostly implicit within Strong Narrativist claims, the claim has been argued explicitly. For instance, McIntyre (1984) claims that ‘the unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest’ (219) which Schechtman (2011) interprets as the idea that ‘to lead a life is to search for and aim towards the good’ (396) while Rudd (2012) views ‘ethical self-evaluation’ as something which ‘*must* take a narrative form’ (7). Essentially, Rudd and McIntyre claim that the process of recognising and evaluating oneself ethically – either in positive or negative terms – requires a recognition of oneself as a continued actor, whose actions can be plotted across time in a narrative form. While the ability to refer to a single sense of self diachronically appears at first glance to be a useful definition of moral virtue, the study of soldiers’ war writings provides a practical demonstration of the limits of its applicability. With the exception of the short story ‘A Nightmare’ (Hyder, 1930, cf. Ch. 7.6), the descriptions of violence discussed throughout this thesis are accompanied with little directly evaluative language. Although these authors have each been able to construe a representation of events within a narrative structure, the act of narrating itself appears in some cases to be divorced from any moral self-evaluation.

Moreover, the ethical narrativity thesis, that narrative facilitates a conceptualisation of selfhood in a “quest’ for its good’ (Rudd, 2012: 2), is readily problematized by these texts. Soldiers writing about their experiences have control over the events they choose to describe, and Bourke (1999) has shown extensively that some soldiers choose to write about the pleasure they take in the act of killing, knowingly violating social norms in the process. By contrast, the Narrative Self Shaping hypothesis asserts that ‘narrative understanding of reasons is an important basis for and

natural means of *certain forms* of self-understanding' (Hutto, 2016: 40, my emphasis) without suggesting that such processes are required in order to produce a complete or ethical account of oneself. NSSH gives primacy to narrative as a tool for sense-making, but with parameters to its ubiquity which allow for exceptions such as episodic approaches to self, or the disruptive nature of trauma. Whilst identities can change over time, or according to social setting, narrative produces a sense of self in relation to one or more episodes of experience. As a result, even when the narrator sees themselves primarily in episodic terms, narrative remains the primary means by which the experience within that individual episode is structured.

#### **4.6: Narrative and Trauma**

While the predominant interest in narrative's sense-making capacity has been concerned with every day perceptions, narrative has also been studied in relation to the processing of traumatic experiences (Pennebaker, 2000; Robinett, 2007). Although the role of trauma in conflict has been alluded to throughout this chapter, a full discussion was delayed in order to situate its relationship with identity and language in context with the challenges to Strong Narrativity. Not all soldiers describe the experience of killing as traumatising, and the pre-emptive categorisation of their narratives within a folk-psychological framework, where no professional diagnosis is available, would be reductive to the broader aims of the research. Indeed, according to Kleinreesink (2014: 329), only 28% of soldiers publishing memoirs publicly do so with the explicit aim of writing as a self-help process, where 'for individually deployed soldiers writing is used as a tool to deal with deployment experiences as a substitute for sharing them in a group that has gone through the same experiences' (330). In other words, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all military memoir can be thought of as having been written

for the same purpose. Contributors to the BBC's 'World War II People's War' archive and the Imperial War Museum collections, for example, often explain that they have produced their accounts as a matter of historical record, 'so that anyone interested would have all the facts available to them' (Bowpitt, 2004: online). That said, given the topic of interest to this research project, these narratives do all describe stressful and difficult moments in the authors' lives, and the relationship between narration and trauma does need to be considered, with the caveat that it cannot be used to account for all authorial relationships with violent actions, or indeed all military memoirs. With this in mind, the present discussion considers the relationship between narrativity and trauma, and the impact of the relationship between the two on our previous theorisation of the narrative self.

The narrative theorists discussed throughout this chapter (4.2; 4.4) have been keen to explain how our everyday perceptual processes operate through a narrative framework, and traumatic experiences can be framed within this view. Comparable to Hühn's (2013) distinction between Event I and Event II (4.1), Bruner uses the concept of 'canonicity and breach' (1990: 39-40) to argue that stories are typically only told when our prototypical expectations of experience are subverted. Hence, the traumatic experiences are highly tellable as breaches of expected experience, although as Norrick (2005) has shown, this may lead them to become too shocking or personal to conventionally narrate. That said, there is clear neurocognitive evidence to suggest that there is something special about trauma, and the way our minds process it. Working with soldiers suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, psychiatrist Martha Bragin asserts that 'extremely violent events are processed differently by the brain, causing them to be segregated, fragmented, and *outside of the narrative of meaning*.' (Bragin, 2010: 319, my emphasis; cf. Siegel, 1999; Schore, 2003). Although what Bragin means precisely by 'the narrative of meaning' is unspecified, this close association between the

two terms demonstrates the ubiquity across various academic disciplines of the assumption that stories and their structure, in which events are linked and causes are identified and assigned, is *the way* in which we produce meaning.

This research indicates that narrative may not always be the primary means by which traumatic experiences come to be configured in memory. Nonetheless, when narratives of trauma *are* produced, they provide informative resources for narrative analysis. Lambrou (2014) builds a highly structuralist account, based on Labov and Waletzky's (1967) structuralist framework of oral narrative, but with a stylistic interest in understanding how narrative structure differs depending on the teller's location, with regards to temporal distance from the events being described. What Lambrou finds is that stories told years after the fact incorporate factual information and perspectives unavailable to the teller at the time of the original story, which Lambrou suggests may be a 'coping strategy' (49). In fact, this development of a singular narrative of the experience correlates with the findings of van der Kolk and Fisler (1995), who demonstrate that, as time passes, survivors of traumatic experiences rely increasingly on narrative reports above specific sensory memories as the means by which they understand their own experiences. Being able to incorporate external perspectives is more than a coping mechanism, but an integral part of the way in which our experiences are integrated into our understanding of the wider world. In the case of memories of geopolitical conflict, the great number of historical documents and publications between the time of fighting and the time of writing mean that events which may have been unknown or uncertain at the time can instead be situated within an established chronology of the war at a macro scale.

While these views of narrative and its relationship to trauma are useful, their focus on the value of narrative as a coping strategy moves toward the ethical narrativity

thesis and the notion that a narrative organisation of experience is the most desirable form, to which Strawson's objections have already been noted. Trauma has traditionally been conceptualised as an unnarratable experience (LeCapra, 1994; 2001; Caruth, 1995), and Nordstrom (1997) lays out a clear argument against limiting our understanding of the self to that which can be made sense of in narrative terms (cf. 4.5.2). Similarly, Uehara et al. (2001) provide compelling discussion of the concept of 'antinarrative' in the face of atrocity, which relates 'time without sequence, telling without meditation, and speaking about oneself without being able to reflect on oneself' (Frank, 1995: 98). In short, there are times when forming experience into simple temporal and causal order is simply impossible, either because the narrator does not fully understand how or why things came to be, or because they find it too difficult to commit this to explicit expression. In either case, the possibility of trauma serves as a reminder that narrative cannot be considered the only means by which sense-making occurs.

The challenge of trauma to language's capacity to represent experience presents a possible limitation to the linguistic frameworks which inform this project, as Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) assert that 'there is no facet of human experience which cannot be transformed into meaning', and describe the ideational metafunction of language (cf. 2.2.1) as 'a theory of human experience' (30). Particularly in the context of trauma and the experiences of war and violence, it is clear that the process of transforming experience into language is a difficult and sometimes impossible process. To that end, it is important to consider the limits of language as a means of communicating and conceptualising experience, and the resistance an individual might feel when it fails. While Cognitive Grammar is interested in the ways language construes understandings of events, its notion of the common ground in communication, and Browse's (2018) study of resistant reading in transferring these linguistic notions to ideological analysis, can provide a framework for understanding how language is *misunderstood*, and

recognising when and how communication *fails* because of an unreconciled experiential or schematic difference between the participants in the act of communicating. By contrast, the Systemic Functional approach, as per Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), sees the transformation of experience into language applicable in all scenarios, and it is unclear how traumatic experiences are configured within the ideational metafunction.

Cognitivist models of language from grammar to narrative offer the possibility of accounting for scenarios in which the failure of communication may occur, either because of the content – or the context – of the utterance. As a result, the moments in war writings when the narrator’s ability to describe or evaluate a scene breaks down can be readily configured within the communicative function of common ground, and the conceptual substrate of discourse. As veteran of the Second World War Eric Patience writes in his account of his role in the D-day landings, ‘as we waited for the order to move forward, *please don’t ask how I felt because I could not tell you*’ (Patience, 2003: online, my emphasis). Breaking the pace of the narrative in order to address his reader directly, Patience’s plea not to ask him to express his emotions suggests a social pressure to manifest experience in language, and the anticipation of which aspects of his experience are most tellable, and expected to be reported in his narrative. In cases where the ability to share experience ultimately breaks down, acknowledging the limits of discourse, communication, and narrative is as important to a linguistic model as effective language use. In practical terms, this requires modelling language as an *attempt* to communicate an event or experience, wherein any number of limitations could prevent a common understanding from being realised.

Additionally, conceptual metaphors provide a means of communicating beliefs associated with an identity, without recourse to narrative structure. For example, Fauconnier and Turner (2002), examine how conceptual metaphors contribute to the

construction and extension of an identity (251-253), while Lakoff and Johnson (1999) examine a range of metaphors associated with selfhood (267-289). Blended inputs, such as 'I am a rock', can express propositions which advance the perception of the self or another character, without the construal of events associated with the described individual. Although it would make no sense to ask 'what happened' in response to this statement, it nevertheless conveys to the reader certain information about the first person narrator, therefore contributing to an understanding of their identity through acceptance or rejection with the assertion. Consequently, while narrative serves as a means through which experience and identity may be construed in language, not all linguistic constructions which contribute to the understanding of experience and identity are narrative.

While the trauma theorists above are primarily concerned with demonstrating the limitations of narrative in representing extraordinary experiences, recent research has begun to return to narrative, and explore the instances in which it *can* be a useful medium for coping with trauma. In essence, 'second wave' trauma theorists argue that textual analysis should move away from moments which the narrator does not articulate directly, and look again at the way in which the text itself is used to attempt to articulate and reflect on the traumatic experience. Pederson (2014) argues that 'critics seeking to engage trauma in literature should turn their focus from gaps in the text to the text itself (338), and Shaw (2004) has demonstrated the importance of narrative frameworks to the process of meaning making in relation to both fictional and non-fictional violence. Far from suggesting that all trauma is communicable, these theorists' arguments support an approach which favours a recognition that while some experiences will simply be untellable, these are far from the only instances which can be classified as traumatic, or worthy of the attention of trauma theory. Moreover, this new direction for trauma

theory fits well with the capacity for stylistic analysis to draw attention to the effects of specific linguistic features with the text.

## 4.7: Conclusions

This chapter has explored how philosophical assumptions regarding the relationship between narrativity and selfhood necessarily underpin much of narratology, but also how these ideas spread outward to broader discussions of event construal in language. In configuring this top-down approach, it becomes clear that narrative is more than a structure in which otherwise isolated events appear, but a dimension of stylistic production essential to making sense of the components. As Brockmeier (2015) puts it:

In making sense of ourselves we do not start with events, experiences, memories, or what we take to be facts of our lives as a "given" and then construe narratives around them; any more than we start with a pure sensory or bodily given, which we then go on to represent conceptually. We start with a story, or more precisely, with a number of stories, or fragments or traces of stories because we are born into, grow up, and live in the midst of a world of narratives that - a point noted before - for the most part are not our own. In this world, an event, experience, memory, or a fact can only be understood as a segment cut out of a narrative web, a web that would exist even without my actively being involved in weaving it. (180-181).

Brockmeier's position here differs from the claims of Strong Narrativity, although it does make strong claims about the universality of narrative as a sense-making process, a position which has been questioned in this chapter. Nonetheless, Brockmeier's point that our stories exist as part of a social 'web' to which we contribute - but which we can never hope to control entirely - marks an essential parameter to discussions on the self-construal of identity in narrative. Individuals do not only tell stories about themselves, after all, but stories can be told about them by others, and are always situated within the

readers' pre-existing knowledge of associated concepts, such as event models (van Dijk, 2009; Ch. 2.3.5). Rather than existing in isolation, narrativity is always connected to social practices, which influence and structure the ways in which we think, talk, and write about ourselves.

In addition, the discussion of narrative and its role in sense-making has been connected to literature concerned with war writing. In particular, a review of this work from a narratological perspective indicates that much of this research is positioned within a naïve Strong Narrativist approach to narrative and its relationship with identity, which undermining the applicability of their discussions of these texts *in terms* of their narrative structure. In relating this military research to work on the philosophy and structure of narrative, there is meaningful work to be done in marrying military and narrative studies more closely. Narrative as a system of causal and temporal organisation is often seen in both fields as an essential means of making sense both of our own experiences, and relating to the experiences of others. Understanding the limits of such claims, however, is equally important to ensuring that the discussion of narrative and sense-making more closely reflects actual perceptual processes.

Throughout this chapter, the discussion of narrative and the perception of identity across discourse has been continually related back to Cognitive Grammar, and the model of event representation employed in Chapters 2 and 3. As recent research has acknowledged (Pincombe, 2014; Langacker, 2014; Harrison, 2017), scaling Cognitive Grammar's detail-oriented model to the discussion of larger units of discourse remains an ongoing challenge. Contributing to the development of this will be at the forefront of the following chapters, which seek to investigate how actions are perceived across narrative, working through these theoretical challenges via practical analyses of war writings. Beginning with the discussion of two book-length autobiographical narratives

in Chapter 5, the analysis is accompanied by a reflection on the limitations of present applications of Cognitive Grammar to literature. Consequently, Chapters 6 and 7 expand and revise the ways in which actions can be conceptualised across larger discourses, and in relation to the reader's perception of actors' identities.

# Chapter 5: Author(is)ing Violence in Two Memoirs of Drone Warfare

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## 5.1: Flesh-witnessing in Drone Warfare

Participation in war, in the form in which it has been considered so far, is the extreme disruption of everyday life, and the discussion of episodic identity in the previous chapter (4.5.2) indicated that many soldiers view their time at war as a departure from their everyday sense of self. As Sam Hynes summarises, 'autobiographies narrate continuous lives; but a war narrative concerns a separate life that, however vividly it remains in the memory, is not continuous with the life the teller lives as he writes' (1997: 8). Until the late twentieth century, taking a direct role in conflict – be it as an infantry soldier or bomber pilot – required a degree of geographical disruption: soldiers have been required to 'go to' war, and even those means of waging war which create an extended distance between the one who performs an act of violence and the one who suffers from it, such as aerial bombing or long-range mortar fire, still disrupt the soldier's everyday experiences, and place them at risk of retaliatory injury. However, the advent of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as 'drones', has allowed for soldiers directly involved in the performance of violence to operate from air bases on the other side of the world to those affected directly by the violence of conflict. More than being physically and psychologically disorientating, drone warfare's distances challenge another fundamental concept of warfare. Most soldiers are understood to have unique and authoritative knowledge about the horrors of war by virtue of having been there. Harari (2010) has termed this 'flesh-witnessing', a phrase derived from a quotation attributed to a French soldier of the First World War: 'the man who has not

understood with his flesh cannot talk to you about it' (in Hynes, 1997: 2). Alternatively, as Evans puts it:

It is virtually impossible to convey the atmosphere of battle to anyone who had not had the experience. Even the most lurid film cannot do this as the spectator – comfortably seated with perhaps an ice-cream in hand – knows he is safe and that the 'good guys' will win in the end. (1991: 90).

In other words, the privileging of the physical experience of combat is part of the dominant 'ideological-discursive formation' (Fairclough, 2010: 30) of war writing. The ongoing reliance on the authority of flesh-witnessing across texts concerned with warfare helps to 'win the appearance for them as non-ideological 'common sense'' (ibid). That drone pilots operate at a distance of thousands of kilometres from the battlefield, however, calls into question their ability to describe their accounts of war as flesh-witnessing. Providing a narrative account of the experience of drone pilots, then, requires negotiating the predominant ideological-discursive formations inherent to the genre of war writing in order to produce an account of military experience that does not rely on flesh-witnessing to support its authenticity.

According to van Dijk, 'language users not only construe mental models of the events or situations they talk, write, read, or hear about, but also of the very communicative situation in which they ongoingly participate' (2017: 31), which he labels the 'context model'. Similarly, Langacker (2008) describes the 'current discourse space' as 'everything presumed to be shared by the speaker and hearer as the basis for communication at a given moment' (466), including the context in which discourse participants communicate. Given the ubiquity of the flesh-witness authority for soldiers as an ideological-discursive formation which mitigates the questioning of their experience by non-combatants, the discourse space involved in engaging with autobiographical writing evokes a context model which positions the soldier as an

authority with access to a kind of knowledge which remains unknowable to the reader even in the act of telling about it. For drone pilots, this context model is challenged by the unfamiliarity of their experiences, which cannot be grounded in the same flesh-witness authority as traditional ground troops.

The aim of this chapter is to explore these novel challenges in the representation of military experience, through the presentation of conflict in the memoirs of drone pilots: *Predator: The Remote Control Air War over Iraq and Afghanistan: A Pilot's Story*, by Matthew Martin and Charles Sasser (2010, hereafter *Predator*), and *Hunter Killer: Inside the Lethal World of Drone Warfare* by T. Mark McCurley and Kevin Maurer (2016, hereafter *Hunter Killer*). As Daggett (2015) has argued, by not physically going to war, the experience of the drone pilot 'cannot be located along the hierarchy of militarised masculinities that helps to render killing in war morally intelligible' (362). By staying out of danger, drone pilots not only risk ethical challenges to their role in conflict, but this deviation from the context model of the veteran as a flesh-witness calls into question the authenticity of their wartime experiences. Putting into narrative the perspective of a drone pilot, then, is the renegotiation of the relationship between soldier, distance, and the authority to speak as a veteran of conflict. Taking this as its starting point, this chapter explores the way language is employed to deal with this issue, both at the level of individual clauses, and in terms of the narrative structure of the texts more broadly.

Herman (2002) characterises narrative as 'a discourse genre and a cognitive style that relies fundamentally on perspective taking' (303), and the analytical aim of this chapter is to unpack how these perspectives are structured linguistically, how they affect the perception of the personal identities of the pilots they describe, and the relationship between the language of drone pilots and the memoirs of more conventional ground soldiers explored so far. For instance, as was shown in the previous chapter (4.3.2), the

use of disnarration is a common strategy in military memoir, and allows soldiers to imagine alternative outcomes to events, and justify their actions as leading to the best of these possible worlds in terms of the violence that could have been inflicted upon them. In *Hunter Killer*, however, disnarration is actively shown to fail, as McCurley is unable to hypothesise a course of events other than the one which took place:

Because we are not face-to-face and our lives are not in danger, *we can't tell ourselves it was either us or them. It was never us, and they had no chance.* There was coldness to the way we killed, but it never lacked humanity: at the end of the day, the pilots and sensor operators took the images home (McCurley and Maurer, 2016: 135, emphasis mine)

This passage is typical of the discursive relationship between drone pilots and more conventional military memoir, as McCurley and Maurer continue to enact established context model markers such as disnarration even when they explicitly no longer apply to the situation at hand. Moreover, the passage suggests that McCurley has been exposed to harm. As the one who 'took the images home', the authors argue that the pilot is exposed to an emotional injury.

Whether or not a phenomenological distinction exists between the flesh-witnessing of ground troops and the eye-witnessing of civilians, and possibly drone pilots, the social status afforded to the soldier who has 'gone to war' demonstrates the way value and authenticity is assigned to the experience of conflict. Outside of this traditional narrative, the drone pilot must either develop linguistic strategies by which to replicate the 'flesh-witness' status, or find an alternative rhetorical position from which to authenticate their war story. As the following chapter shows, both *Predator* and *Hunter Killer* employ stylistic features which serve to position the pilots within physical and psychological proximity to the acts of violence with which they are associated. For *Predator* in particular, however, proximity comes with complications, as

the strikes described within the book lead to the deaths of innocent civilians, including children. As such, the discussion of proximity which serves as this chapter's analytical focus will be framed in terms of the paradoxes it entails. The readings below examine these differences and similarities further, concluding with observations of the ways in which the narrative construction of identity and agency in these memoirs does begin to differ from established practices, and the implications of this for future writings on the subject of military drones.

Having introduced the concept of authenticity as a central theme of this chapter's analysis, the question of authorship is addressed (5.2). With this position established, the analysis turns again to the language of the text, dealing first with the representation of psychological distance and proximity through metaphor (5.3), before examining the representation of physical space through deixis (5.4), and the event models construed in the description of violent actions (5.5). Following this, the chapter examines the ways in which both memoirs attempt to establish alternative ideological-discursive frameworks. First, violent acts are reconstrued in terms of their peacekeeping goals (5.6). Second, the narrative construction of enemy combatants (5.7) suggests a discursive technique which allows drone pilots to position themselves in close emotional proximity to the consequences of conflict.

## **5.2: Questions of Authorship**

In the case of both *Predator* and *Hunter Killer*, although they each pertain to the military experience of a single soldier, their front covers indicate that the memoir has been written 'with' a second writer. McCurley addresses this in the 'Acknowledgements' section of *Hunter Killer*: explaining that he contacted co-author Kevin Maurer to 'feel out the market' for *Hunter Killer*, and that Maurer taught him 'how to write the way

publishers wanted' (346), while Maurer himself has affirmed (personal correspondence, see Appendix B) that McCurley wrote the first draft, and Maurer 'revised it from there'. In other words, the finished version of *Hunter Killer* is not simply a narrative of McCurley's military experiences in the narrative form of his choosing, but a product of unknown revisions in order to appeal to a commercial market. In the case of *Predator*, the role of the secondary author is even more significant, as the book was written by Charles Sasser after taking notes from interviews with Matthew Martin, along with the addition of his own research (personal correspondence, see Appendix B). Sasser is a professional writer, with over 60 books to his name, and 29 years of military experience as a ground soldier himself (ibid). To that end, the extent to which both of these texts can be called 'autobiographical' is initially uncertain, as it is impossible for the reader to know which elements of the narrative were composed by the pilots themselves, and which were edited by their co-authors in preparing each book for commercial publication. According to Sasser himself, the process of co-authoring *Predator* involved 'tak[ing] extensive notes, but not always on the minor details other than the subject's interaction with whatever his mission might be' (personal correspondence), with no indication of what might constitute a 'minor detail'. As a result, it is unclear to what extent the ideology associated with particular constructions, such as the comparison between the narrator and God (Martin and Sasser, 2010: 3) are metaphors Martin would employ to describe his own beliefs and experiences, or chosen by Sasser to make his story as entertaining and commercially successful as possible.

Despite this initial uncertainty with regards to the precise authorship of these memoirs, they remain valuable resources for the study of the discursive practices involved in the representation of military action. As Foucault notes, 'the task of criticism is not to bring out the work's relationships with the author, but rather to analyse the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of

its internal relationships' (1986: 102). With this aim in mind, Foucault works to replace the discussion of an 'author', instead focusing on the concept of the 'author function'. Rather than the straightforward identification of an individual as the author of a given text, the author function is instead 'the result of a complex operation that constructs a certain being of reason we call "author"' (213). In other words, the author is a product of the interaction between the reader and the author function within the text; an interaction that shifts and changes depending on the kind of text being read, as well as the socio-cultural context in which it is received. Foucault develops his approach in relation to literary and scientific texts, where the 'death of the author' (Barthes, 1977) in the former and scientific method in the latter render the question of authorship irrelevant to the content of the text. The notion that the identity of the author is or could be irrelevant to autobiographical writing seems initially problematic. However, Foucault goes on to suggest that in first person fiction, 'neither the first-person pronoun nor the present indicative refers exactly to the writer or to the moment in which he writes but, rather, to *an alter ego whose distance from the author varies*' (215). Extrapolating this approach to autobiographical writing, it makes sense to consider the subject of the writing at some distance from the author themselves, as the process of transforming experience into narrative will inevitably require a focalisation which influences the perception of both events and individuals involved. However, the genre of memoir evokes a tacit social understanding that these narratives refer as closely as possible to the lives and views of their narrating subject.

On the subject of uncertain origins of narrative content, and its relationship to truth, Vice (2014) examines literary hoaxes, where memoirs purporting to tell true accounts have later been revealed as fictional. She argues that 'the clear presence of intertextuality' can help to determine whether an author's representation of events elides with other, external influences, from 'recall through the prism of later reading, to

the deceptive substitution of research, and the adoption of others' memories, for experience' (30). Although it is not the aim of this discussion to suggest that these memoirs are deceptive, given that Sasser claims to have supplemented interviews with Matthew Martin with his own research, an authentic reproduction of the drone pilot's experience is inextricable from the additional research and external perspective of the second author. Moreover, as Sasser himself has 29 years of military experience, the possibility must be taken into account that Sasser has drawn upon his own experience to infer Martin's reactions, creating a hybridised first-person narrator borne of both drone pilots' and ground troops' perspectives.

To summarise the position taken in this chapter on the question of joint authorship of these memoir, then, the authorship of these memoirs will be treated in terms of a function which 'does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects – positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals' (Foucault, 1969 [2014]: 225). Whether a given detail is produced by the drone pilots themselves or their co-authors, it nevertheless constitutes an element of an authorised narrative of the subject's experiences. Likewise, if a description has been altered to produce writing 'the way publishers wanted', the author function of McCurley-Maurer-publisher has produced and authorised this collectively and consensually. Moreover, the value of these memoirs for this thesis is not their factual accuracy *per se*, but rather the linguistic strategies chosen to represent experience, and the ways in which this language and the overall narrative contribute to the soldier author's public identity. Weist (2013) observes a similar function in the memoirs of veterans of the Second World War, asserting:

These veterans were not merely telling stories. They knew that their stories would be published, thereby creating a large audience and providing a means for story preservation. They shared stories that will remain unchanged, even

after they are gone. This knowledge certainly factored into what they decided to share, as it was important to construct a story that established an image of their experiences and themselves by which they wanted to be remembered. (94)

As the present chapter develops, I will explore the attribution of responsibility for acts of violence resultant from UAV military engagement as emergent from a group of participating individuals. Given the parallel challenges presented by both authorship of these texts and the moral and legal responsibility for the acts they represent, it may perhaps be less productive to think of these texts on the level of renegotiating the role of the individual. Instead, they present an approach which challenges fundamental preconceptions about the self as a part of an emergent assemblage of moving parts – both in the process of writing and fighting.

### **5.3: Deixis and the Drone**

Although these sections discuss the concept of proximity and distance, Chamayou (2015) notes the problematic nature of these terms in relation to drone warfare. As drone pilots are physically distant from war, yet have constant access to high definition camera footage and reports from support staff, ‘it is now possible to be both close and distant, according to dimensions that are unequal and combine a pragmatic co-presence’ (116), and Riza (2014: 270) has noted that existing research has produced conflicting results in determining whether such technology enhances or makes distant the experience of killing. Moreover, this physical distance from the battlefield makes drone pilots themselves immune to injury or death during conflict, creating both a psychological distance from their targets, and an ethical challenge to their role in war (Coeckelberg, 2013). Accordingly, this section reviews the ways in which *Predator* and *Hunter Killer* construe their affective relationship with war and

enemy combatants (5.3.1), as well as the perception of their spatial position (5.3.2). As was discussed earlier (2.3.3), perspective is one of the key features of construal in Cognitive Grammar, and the application of deixis to Cognitive Poetics provides a useful framework through which to discuss the positioning of the reader within the space of the discourse.

### 5.3.1: Psychological Proximity

Despite the challenges this chapter faces with regards to the authorship of its primary sources, the issues raised in the fundamental theory of drone warfare demonstrate the necessity of their inclusion. In exploring the language of drone warfare, the aim is both to unpick the changes that this reassessment brings about, but also to uncover the persisting similarities: what modes of expression might a drone pilot and a soldier fighting in close proximity have in common, when it comes to articulating violent actions and events? Ultimately, this text still functions as a representation of Martin's experience of conflict as a drone pilot. The complication of the author function challenges the authenticity of this representation on a surface level, but Martin's involvement makes it the authoritative account. In McCurley's 'Author's Note' at the beginning of *Hunter Killer*, he writes that 'I have strived to accurately portray events as they occurred, but the fog of war may have clouded how I perceived actions or remembered details' (xiii). As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the very process of representing events in language is necessarily one of selection and focalisation, and perhaps embellishment. After all, readers of these texts have no access to any external authority, able to verify that the events relayed took place exactly as they are described, if at all. Fundamentally, the concern of this thesis is with the *language of the text* and accounting for the functions of particular stylistic choice in the reader's perception of events, not the assessment of veracity.

So far this chapter has outlined the conceptual issues which frame much of the contemporary discourse on and around drone warfare. Now, an initial analysis of the primary texts examines how the language employed by the pilots themselves corresponds with these ideas, beginning with their metaphors. As mainstream coverage of drone pilots' experiences has tapped into the shocking nature of this kind of language, and Pilkington (2015) draws attention to this by quoting drone operator Michael Haas in the title of his article, 'ever step on ants and never give it another thought?'. A similar metaphor appears at the very beginning of *Predator*, where the opening scene describes 'perfect conditions for cockroaches and vermin to crawl out of the gutter' (1). This semantic field appears later on, and is extended:

Captain Bobby Rangler the Okie had come up with the idea. Johnny Rico in the movie *Starship Troopers* always wanted to kill "bugs," giant insect-like invaders. My 46th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron therefore became known as "the Johnny Rico Squadron." (198)

In drawing parallels between their military experiences and *Starship Troopers* (1997), there seems to be little sense of the satire of the film's representation of conflict, and the fascist attitude of the humans toward the 'bugs' (King, 1998; Strzelczyk, 2008; Crim, 2010). Rather, the metaphors encoded within this passage (ENEMIES ARE INSECTS, KILLING IS CLEANING, WAR IS ADVENTURE, SELF AS HERO) provide conceptual frames which complement and extend the perceived identities of the pilots and their enemies (cf. Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 251-253; Ch. 2.3.4; 4.6). Moreover, the character of the pilots themselves is framed in the ideological role of the 'hero' of the film, providing a moral justification for the act of killing, as well as blending their experiences with soldiers who fight in close-quarters ground conflict. The design of *Predator's* cover produces a similar association with science fiction action films, as it uses the same font as its namesake, *Predator* (1987), invoking imagery of the near-invincible predatory threat (see *Fig. 5.1*).



Fig. 5.1: The title fonts of *Predator* (2010, left) and *Predator* (1987, right)

While these images and redescriptions serve to distance the pilot from those affected by their actions, this strategy can also be inverted. In *Hunter Killer*, for instance, a religious semantic field redescribes the violence performed, and those acted upon:

The gravity of what I'd done overtook my emotions. My mind and body struggled to cope. I had just taken the one thing from two men that I could never return, no matter how hard I tried. I had ended their existence. Worse, I had *removed one of God's creatures* from His world.

What *greater sin* could I have committed? (McCurley with Maurer, 2016: 135, my emphases)

In this description, McCurley does not simply construe himself as acting against the individuals he kills, but against God. Although this construal could be described as drawing attention away from the act of violence through metaphor (whether the description of the victim as a creature of God is elevating or degrading is surprisingly ambiguous), the rhetorical question goes on to frame McCurley as a sinner responsible for his actions. Just as with the narrative accounts of ground troops, it remains essential to keep an open mind as to the ways in which these authors describe their actions. As will be argued below (5.6), however, drawing attention to the devastating nature of the consequences of their strikes can be as important an aspect of drone memoirs as linguistic strategies that might disguise them.

Shortly after the description of McCurley's kill as a sin, a second redescription frames the same events according to an entirely different theme: 'we'd bagged a big target that would set enemy operations back. It was big news for the 17<sup>th</sup> and the

Predator community in general. We were quickly making our mark as an effective counterterrorism tool' (136). In providing multiple redescriptions of the same events, the reflections of *Hunter Killer* signal the versatility of meanings that arise from the process of making sense of these acts: as killings, sins, and the demonstration of effective tools. Likewise, *Predator's* relational deictic metaphors (Stockwell, 2002) produce a shifting relationship with those affected by the acts of violence it describes. While it describes them as 'cockroaches and other vermin' (1) from the beginning, and Martin himself is compared to 'God hurling thunderbolts from afar' (3), this position is not straightforwardly maintained. In responding to the criticism that drone pilots experience war as comparable to a computer game (Coker, 2013; Stahl, 2013), the reader is informed that 'those who would call this a Nintendo game had never sat in my seat. Those were real people down there. Real people with real lives' (55). Even though other pilots have described drone operation as 'like a video game. It can get a little bloodthirsty. But it's fucking cool' (in Singer, 2009: 308-9), Martin and Sasser's evocation of flesh-witness authority is designed to anticipate and counter the criticisms of *Predator's* reader, who does not share Marin's experiences.

Moreover, when *Predator* describes the process of targeting an individual referred to as 'Rocket Man', the narrator's evaluation is reversed: 'the man wasn't *really* a human being. He was so far away and only a high-tech image on a screen' (43-44, emphasis original). Here, the spatial deixis marker of Rocket Man being 'far away' does not position the narrator in Afghanistan, as with the earlier example, orienting the reader to instead view him through 'a screen' at the Air Force base, focalising the instrument which otherwise produces the effect of proximity. According to Chouliaraki, 'if looking through the screen immerses spectators in suffering as authentic reality, as social theory tells us, looking *at* the screen reminds them of the reality of the medium that disseminates suffering as spectacle and fiction' (2014: 37-8). In this case, the

focalisation of the construal reinforces this distance from violence, with Martin consequently absent from the battlefield, too. The destabilised identity politics of drone warfare thus leads to shifting positions throughout *Predator* and *Hunter Killer* on the relationship between pilots and those affected by the strikes they carry out. On the one hand, they must be clear to make sure that they are seen to be involved in war in a way which authenticates and legitimises their experiences: in the absence of physical proximity to conflict, this is realised in this passage through an emotional investment in the scene (hence 'sin', and 'real people'). On the other hand, both must make the ideological case that performing these acts of violence was the correct course of action. The next section will explore this paradox in greater detail, with emphasis on the way both memoirs treat the issue of physical proximity to war.

These representations of targeted individuals, and the phenomenon of killing from a distance, bear comparison with existing research on the attitudes of Israeli snipers to their experiences 'precision warfare'. As Bar and Ben-Ari (2005) observe in their interviews with Israeli soldiers, these soldiers are also likely to shift continually between de/humanising labels for targeted individuals (133-4). In other words, the kinds of imagery these soldiers choose to associate with their enemies is flexible, and the semantic fields around which their enemies identities are constructed can be inverted, resulting in a change in the reader's ability to empathise with them. The flexibility of drone pilots' imagery in their construals of killing, then, indicate a broader trend in unstable identities across discourse. As the pilots work to at once insist upon their presence in war, yet deny or obscure any immoral activity, the language of killing accommodates a range of ideological positions simultaneously.

### 5.3.2: Physical Proximity

As the previous two quotations from *Predator* suggest, these metaphorical and relational deictic descriptions are intimately related to the issues of physical distance to the target that characterises drone warfare. In both instances, the ability to relate to Martin's perspective is directly associated with his position, either as flesh-witness or as long-distance operator. That both of these memoirs are concerned with this tension is evident from their opening lines. Although Martin and McCurley begin their books at a point where they operated drones from Nevada, the language employed to describe their experiences allows them to frame their actions – and indeed themselves – in closer proximity to the wars with which they are engaged. *Hunter Killer* takes the direct rhetorical strategy of arguing that McCurley is 'still an operator. A fighter' (xi). Meanwhile, the very opening lines of *Predator* include spatial deictic markers to just such an effect:

*From ten thousand feet in the sky I peered down upon a large multiwinged building, a technical college taken over by insurgents in the heart of Baghdad. It was after midnight. Streets were unlighted or poorly lighted. Perfect conditions for cockroaches and other vermin to venture out of the gutters. Using an infrared sensor to register heat signatures I picked out machine-gun and rocket-propelled-grenade (RPG) fire coming from top windows of the college. [...] I carried a pair of Hellfire missiles beneath my wings, but my task was not to engage with the enemy directly (Martin and Sasser, 2010: 1, my emphases)*

Deictically speaking, this opening positions Martin himself not only in Iraq and directly above the battlefield, but his embodiment elides with the drone itself. The description reads as though Martin is physically present in Afghanistan, with the narrative perspectivisation orienting the reader to a first person narrator looking down on the battlefield. In addition, the sensory perceptions described require the reader to associate Martin closely with the drone itself, as he describes experiencing the

battlefield through the drone's sensors, which allows him to perceive and react to heat signatures, bypassing the poor visibility he describes earlier on. From the very beginning of the narrative, Martin leaves no doubt as to his physical relationship with the battlefield: he is present, looking down on Baghdad, witnessing war. On the very next page, Martin describes the aftermath of a lethal drone strike in which he played a supporting role:

My first ten minutes at the controls of the MQ-1, otherwise aptly known as Predator, and I had already been in on a kill.

Then I remembered that Trish had asked me to pick up a gallon of milk on the way home. (2)

The deictic shift (Segal, 1995) in the transition from the first paragraph of this extract to the second – from an act of killing in an Afghan battlefield to running errands in Nevada in the space of a sentence – requires the reader to drastically reconfigure their spatial position within the narrative. Such a dramatic transition epitomises the paradoxical structure of the drone operator's experience, simultaneously in Iraq and Nevada, performing the violent and mundane. Notably, this deictic shift appears on the reverse jacket of the book, although with the references to killing notably made absent through ellipses, foregrounding the dual-perspective of civilian and combat experience for prospective readers and buyers. While the lengthy first-hand narrative is undoubtedly a valuable starting point for asking how drone pilots might configure themselves in language, its agenda as a published work should not go without consideration.

Similarly, McCurley and Maurer draw attention to the paradoxical relationship between the pilot and their proximity to conflict:

One of the biggest misconceptions surrounding the RPA community is that the aircraft allows us some distance from the killing, since we're thousands of

miles away. The opposite is true. We are too close. We know too much, and when it is time to shoot, we can zoom in until our target fills the screen (2016: 135)

Because the technology of drone warfare allows the pilot a detailed view of their target, knowledge of the individual takes the place of physical proximity as the incommunicable essence of military experience. In the process, this substitution legitimises McCurley's experience within the framework of conventional flesh-witnessing, by framing the pilot as 'too close', with a proximity that implies an emotional risk in and of itself. By contrast, *Predator* continues to place great emphasis on the rhetorical importance of physical proximity to conflict, and the text is filled throughout with hyperbolic assertions of Martin's closeness to violence:

I was actually in pursuit of Osama bin Laden! How much *closer* than that could one get to the war? (55)

I was about to get even *closer* to the war. (136)

I was no longer a spectator *from 7,500 miles away*. You couldn't get much *closer* than this. (162)

*Predator* spends much of the first half of the book making a similar argument, that despite a physical distance from the fighting, he retains an emotional involvement, and comparable position as flesh-witness, where 'I couldn't have been more involved if I had actually been inside the plane' (107). In Part II, however, Martin is transferred to Ali Air Base in Iraq, and the rhetoric immediately shifts (162). Once it becomes possible to argue that Martin's experiences *are* authenticated by physical proximity to conflict, this strategy is adopted, suggesting that alternative modes of understanding the experience of drone pilots remain unstable, and any opportunity to account for experience within an existing framework of knowledge is adopted as soon as possible.

The significance of a soldier's perceived physical proximity to conflict can be observed in readers' responses to the study in Chapter 3. In Section 6 of the extract, in which Evans approached the body of the soldier he killed, readers noted an increased empathy for the narrator. As R<sub>4</sub> puts it, 'I warmed to the narrator as the harsh reality of war hits him'. Likewise, R<sub>1</sub> describes how 'I said that the last passage didn't evoke much emotion, but now that I have seen the other side of the story, it has made me reflect more on the last passage and brings home the reality of war. The people you shoot from far away are real people, with real lives, not just 'the enemy', employing phrasing almost identical to that used by Martin and Sasser (cf. 5.3.1). The language of *Predator*, then, closely mimics the thought processes in which civilian readers come to empathise with other soldiers, thereby drawing an implicit parallel between their experiences of combat.

The opening paragraphs of Part III represent another physical movement, this time to Balad Air Base, Iraq, and are accompanied by an immediate thematic shift:

The base was being attacked and overrun. Enemy troops charged toward the POC and GCS trailers. Pilots, sensors, mission coordinators – everybody became a rifleman. We grabbed Kevlar helmets and M16A2 rifles and merged with security forces, maintainers, services, and anyone else available to form combat elements. (185)

The conceptual blend (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; cf. Ch. 2.3.4) that takes place in the statement 'everyone became a rifleman' produces a functional transformation of Martin's military role: he becomes a frontline soldier, and his experience of combat becomes up close, personal, and categorically authentic. As Martin enters combat, the description of events continues to foreground distal deictic elements of the scene, drawing attention to the closeness of the enemy soldier:

I suddenly spotted an enemy soldier charging out of the undergrowth into a clearing of low sparse grass, *so near I could see the determined look on his face.*

He wore a black turban and combat boots. Our eyes met. He opened up with a burst of automatic 7.62mm from his AK.

The mujahidin *filled my sights*. I aimed for center of mass while his assault rifle continued to chatter and spit flame on full automatic. I squeezed my trigger three times, just as I had been trained. The guy stopped dead in his tracks, looked around as though confused, and then tumbled to the ground, apparently lifeless. (187, my emphases)

Here, the sentential structure of events is comparable to descriptions of violence discussed already in Chapters 2 and 3, where the segmentation of events means that Martin is described as acting directly on ‘the trigger’, and the causal connection between this and the enemy soldier ‘tumb[ing] to the ground’ is inferred by the reader. What happens next, however, is highly atypical for most comparable reports of combat:

The “enemy” I shot got up from the ground and dusted himself off. Others, both “friendly” and “enemy”, stood up out of ditches and brush to congregate around the instructor. (186)

Although the scene is revealed to be a training exercise, this is not made apparent in the initial description. Much like the revelation in the opening scene that Martin must buy milk when he goes home (2), the withholding of information from the reader plays on the context models of war writing. The relational deixis used to describe actors and components of the scene, firing ‘7.62mm [bullets]’, rather than ‘blanks’, and referring to the soldier in training first as ‘an enemy soldier’, then more specifically as a ‘mujahidin’ – or guerrilla fighter – gives the reader the impression that Martin is at risk of injury. Moreover, thus far *Predator* has been a factual account of Martin’s experiences, and the sudden unreliability of the narrator’s initial report is an unexpected shift in the style of the narrative. In order to make sense of this new information in the context that has already been developed, the reader is required to perform ‘world repair’ (Gavins, 2007: 141) regarding the way they frame the scene, revisiting the impression of a soldier actively attempting to kill Martin, and instead substituting a training partner. That the

reader is given the information required for this repair demonstrates that the aim of the passage was not to deceive the reader for an extended period: rather, the delay of this information creates a temporary false impression of the scene which exaggerates the danger Martin is faced with in order to produce a sense of risk. Given that the drone pilot's invulnerability during combat not only separates their experiences from more conventional military engagement, but has been noted as an ethical concern regarding long-distance warfare more generally (Rae, 2014), this construal suggests to the reader that Martin is in a position where he could conceivably come to harm. In other words, *Predator* continually frames Martin's actions as a drone pilot in relation to the conventional flesh-witnessing of ground troops, asserting a similarity – and therefore authority – in his experience of conflict. Notably, Martin's co-author Sasser has 13 years of experience as a Green Beret, meaning that the authorship of *Predator* consists of both drone and ground warfare veterans.

#### **5.4: The Dispersion of Responsibility**

Returning analytical attention to the specific clauses in which acts of violence are described in memoirs of drone warfare, there is a direct comparison to be made between the protocol by which a drone strike is authorised and carried out, known as the 'kill chain' (Currier, online; see *Fig. 5.2*), and the conceptual archetype of force transference in Cognitive Grammar, which Langacker refers to as an 'action chain': 'An action chain is a series of forceful interactions, each involving the transmission of energy from one participant to the next. In principle, an action chain can be of any length.' (Langacker, 2008: 355-6, cf. Ch. 2.3.1). Langacker visualises an extended action chain through the billiard-ball model, wherein the spatial movement of objects causes a transfer of force, beginning with one agent, passing the force through several other

participants in the action chain (either agents themselves, or inanimate instruments), leading to a final transfer of force which alters the state of a patient.

By comparison, the concept of a ‘kill chain’ denotes the strategic and bureaucratic stages through which a drone strike is authorised, and the command is given to a drone pilot to carry out the attack. Fig. 5.2 below, taken from a Pentagon presentation on the authorisation of military force (Currier, online) demonstrates the stages of approval a proposed action must undergo before authorisation to act is given.

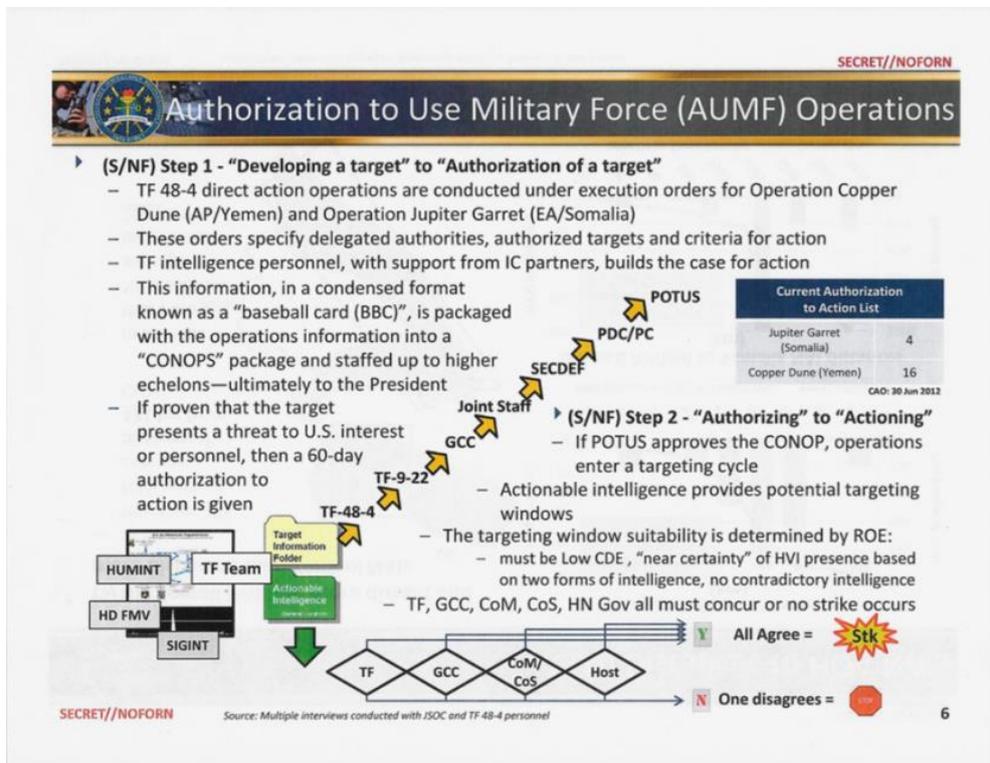


Fig. 5.2: The ‘kill chain’ in the authorisation of a drone strike (from Currier, 2015)

In addition to the individuals who approve the action, Rules of Engagement (RoE) are referred to in order to determine if and when an appropriate time becomes apparent. Unlike the firing of a rifle, the decision to perform an act of violence using a drone is not and cannot be made by an individual. Rather, it is the consequence of a long chain of approval from military, political, and legal authorities, before the command is relayed

back to the pilot to act. In short, the kill chain represents the transfer of responsibility and authorisation comparable to the model of force interaction within action chaining. Authorisation for a drone strike is systematically produced through a network of participants, with a chain of command ultimately leading to the President authorising the pilot to initialise a strike. Noticeably from this presentation, it is hard to identify precisely where this chain begins: a series of intelligence workers ‘build a case’ for the strike.

Thus, the kill chain is less an abstract concept, but directly pertinent to the way in which Martin conceptualises the structure of action in his memoir. In the final scene of the book, he writes that ‘*Rules of engagement permitted an air strike during a hostile troops-in-contact. I spun up a Papa missile as I circled wide to avoid other air traffic while I dropped altitude to 6,500 feet. In the meantime, the ground battle captain authorized me to kill the sniper position*’ (305, my emphases). In this instance, Martin is explicitly enabled to act by two forces (see Fig. 5.3 below): his own knowledge of the rules of engagement, and the authority of the ground battle captain. Comparable to Evans’ narrative in Chapter 3.5, the construal of Martin’s actions in this passage is highly granular. Rather than firing a missile, he presses a trigger, and watches as the missile comes into focus through a perceptual process, as opposed to a direct material action. Particularly interesting is the fact that permission and authorisation are given *to* Martin, thus construing earlier actors in the action chain. His actions are first authorized by a ground captain, and the placement of the statement regarding rules of engagement implies that this was an informing factor in the decision-making process. Lastly, the fact that this strike does violence to an individual location is minimised, as the transfer of force is instead construed as moving from Martin to a location (‘the sniper position’). Martin only reports in retrospect and through the account of another that he ‘later learned that a team of army trooper found what was left of three men in the wreckage

on the roof, along with an RPG launcher and several rifles' (306), a description which, rather than emphasising the violence of previous events, functions primarily as justification and closure.

In visualisation of this passage below (*Fig. 5.3*), the 'air strike' is first introduced as nominalised theme, permitted by the abstract 'rules of engagement'. This clause cues a script for the process of an air strike, in which a fighter pilot fires a missile towards a target, and the conceptual relationship between this and the following clause is highlighted by the dashed arrows and boxes. Further boxes around each process represent the temporal deictic shift between the abstract theory regulating conflict ('during...') and Martin's present tense experiences ('In the meantime...'). By introducing the concept of an air strike in scripted, procedural terms, the process is abstracted from Martin's personal agency, as the construal indicates that the events should or would occur *regardless* of the actor in the permitted setting. In addition, the reporting clause of the ground captain's authorisation of Martin's actions serves to create an additional and more direct force acting upon Martin, and serving as the head of the clause's action chain. Accordingly, Martin takes both an agentive and thematic role within the action chain, his actions being positioned as the product of the authoritative forces which act upon him and dictate his actions through schematised operational procedures:

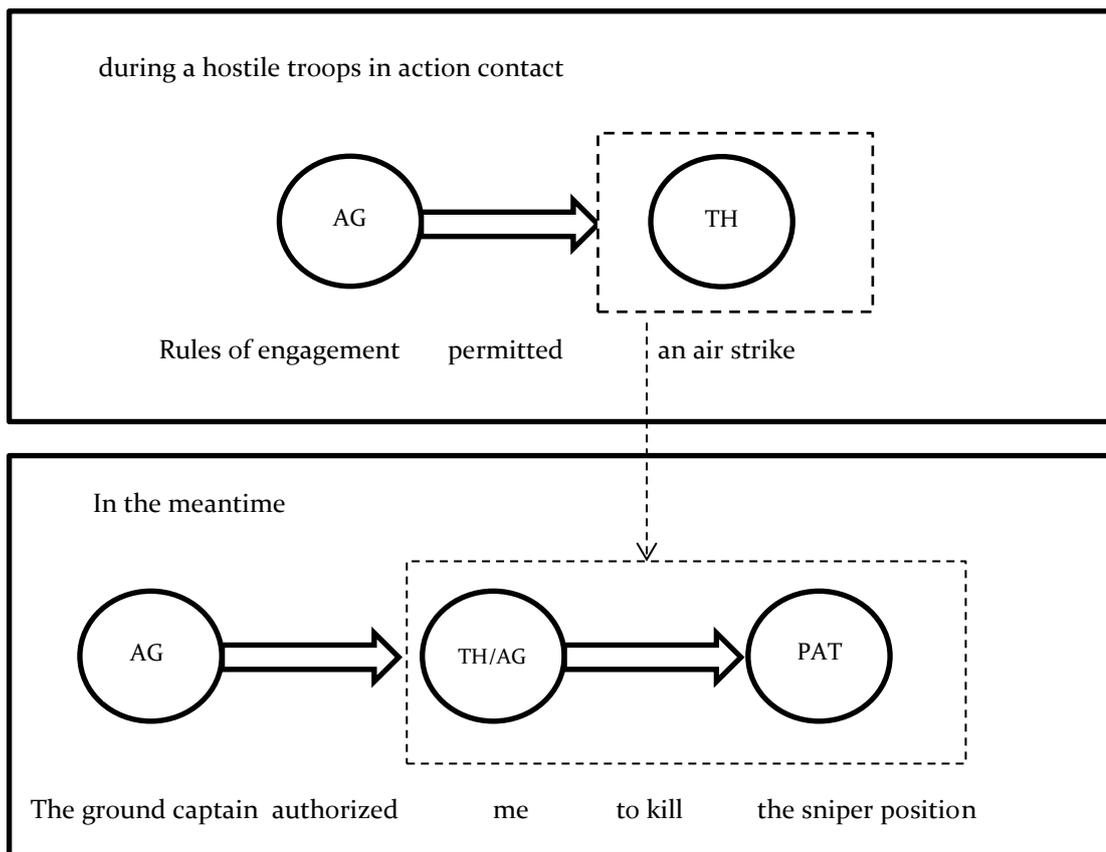


Fig. 5.3: A visualisation of the action/kill chain in ‘rules of engagement permitted...’

While this example demonstrates how responsibility for authorising an act of violence can be displaced, and the pilot positioned as both agent and landmark within an action chain, acted upon in order to continue an order, an earlier passage in which Martin observes another pilot leads to the following statement: ‘The responsibility for the shot could be spread among a number of people in the chain – pilot, sensor, JTAC, ground commander. That meant no single one of us could be held to blame’ (212). Up until this point, the analysis produced in the representation of event models and action chains has been predicated in part on the identification of a responsible agent. What this scene and its evaluation shows, however, is that modern conflict’s networks of constant communication can produce situations in which the actor is not alone, but one of an extensive network of participants in an action chain. In the representation of force

dynamics for ground troops' writings so far, the first person 'I' has been a sufficient locus for agency, and implicitly encompassing the range of possible actors who could be considered responsible for the actions performed. But the deliberate frustration of this identification of agency and responsibility produces a straightforward critique of such an approach to warfare. As Sifton (2012) explains, 'Drones foreshadow the idea that brutality could become detached from humanity, and yield violence that is, as it were, unconscious' (15).

These concerns parallel the kinds of questions raised by Hannah Arendt with regards to the overwhelming bureaucracy of totalitarianism, with the sheer vastness of the system leading to a dispersed 'rule by Nobody' (1969: 13), where no single individual can be pinpointed as the responsible source of the unethical action. In the case of drone warfare, as Kennedy (2006) puts it, 'violence and injury have lost their author and their judge as soldiers, humanitarians, and statesman have come to assess the legitimacy of violence in a common legal and bureaucratic vernacular' (169). Although drone warfare as yet is not autonomous, and requires a network of active decisions before an engagement (cf. Fig. 5.2), the ease with which the pilot can be positioned *within* an action chain, as opposed to *at the head of* one, represents a loss of agency and accountability on the part of the individual. As a result, Protevi (2013) argues that 'the practical agent of the act of killing is not the individual person or subject, but the *emergent assemblage of military unit and non-subjective reflex*' (2013: 130, my emphasis). In other words, it no longer makes sense to consider the individual as an agent, when they are functionally simply an aspect of a much more complex mechanism of action. With accountability now removed from any one individual, the participants within a sprawling bureaucratic system become 'thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is.' (Arendt, in Shaw and Akhter, 2014: 229). In *Predator*, this relationship with authority seems to persist:

simply because it has been decided by the kill chain that the attack should proceed, Martin is assured that it is right to do so.

However, Protevi notes that even in the case of a complex assemblage of individuals being responsible for a given act, individual soldiers seemingly cannot help but perceive a sense of personal agency: 'Even when a sense of agency is absent during the rage-induced or reflex-controlled act of killing, however, a sense of moral responsibility can be produced *by a retrospective identification of action and ownership*' (2013: 132, my emphasis). Alongside the 'myth of agency' reported by Bourke (1999), Protevi's observations support the argument that narrative structure allows soldiers to organise their experiences after the fact, and create and construe causal relationships which may not have been clear at the time of acting (King, 2000; Lambrou, 2014; Brockmeier, 2015). Similarly to the paradox of drone pilots' proximity to conflict (5.3), the sense of agency is a constant negotiation of a position of authoritative presence, at the risk of being held accountable for morally questionable actions.

Verhagen (2007) discusses the conceptual difference between nominal and verbal construals (54-5) in perspectivisation, where certain construals foreground the process, as opposed to the actor. While the passages examined here are more complex than the individual words and clauses discussed by Verhagen, the overall focus of the texts could be argued to draw attention to the *action* over the *actor*. In a sense, many of the texts explored throughout this thesis employ some means of transferring attention away from a construal which positions the narrator as the agent transferring direct force to the victim of an act of violence, typically by acting instead upon an instrument, or otherwise extending the causal chain. In the case of drone warfare, this goes beyond individual stylistic features, as the focus of the narrative more generally is more concerned with the novelty of the event processes described than other forms of military

memoir. From this perspective, then, the narrator is no longer simply construed at a distance from the final physical transfer of force to the enemy combatant, but *no longer a focal point within the chain at all*. While much research exists debating the ethics of drone warfare (Sharkey, 2010; Rae, 2014; McDonald, 2017), the emphasis is rarely on the role of the individual pilot. Instead, the physical agent is framed within the complex chain of command outlined above in Fig. 5.2, itself explored within the socio-political context of international conflict. Where the process of producing a critical analysis of a ground soldier's writing can eventually lead to the discussion of the narrator as the agentive source of an act of violence, the very structure of drone warfare appears to erode this agency from the outset.

Although the concept of responsibility in the analysis above has been tied to the construal of causality in relation to action chains, the concept in general extends beyond the identification of any single stylistic feature (cf. van Leeuwen, 1997). Rather, these features cue background knowledge associated with social scripts of what individual actors can and cannot be held accountable for, influenced by focalisation around actors, objects, instruments, and indeed the chain of action itself. The concept of agency and its precise relationship with lexicogrammatical construal will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 7. For now, it is enough to observe that general academic and political discourse around drone warfare reframes the debate regarding responsibility away from the individual soldier, focusing instead on the socio-political institutions and ideologies which govern the context of their operations, and that the language employed in the memoirs of pilots themselves conforms to these broader discursive expectations.

## 5.5: Meta-irony: Keeping Peace by Fighting Wars

So far, this chapter has primarily discussed the language of these memoirs in terms of their inability to escape the ideological-discursive formation of flesh-witness authority. However, other rhetorical strategies appear across the genre of autobiographical war writing, which can be aligned with the drone pilots' engagement in conflict. Chouliaraki (2014) argues that contemporary discourse produced by soldiers about their role in the military makes a meta-ironic shift away from the modernist futility of the First and Second World Wars (Cobley, 1996) toward a reasoning in which their function is described less in terms of the violence it produces, but instead in terms of the longer-term humanitarian goals they intend to produce. *Hunter Killer*, for instance, describes McCurley's disappointment at the possibility of operating a UAV without engaging directly in combat:

Most of the guys here will finish their two-year tour without firing once in combat,' he [McCurley's instructor] said.

My heart sank.

I'd signed up to *make an impact* on the war effort. I wanted to *do something productive to keep Americans safe*. Just watching a blacked-out hut in the middle of the night didn't exactly fit that bill. Shooting was why I wanted to be a fighter pilot in the first place. *It wasn't like I wanted to kill people. But it felt like we were being productive if we destroyed something.*

(McCurley and Maurer, 2016: 53, my emphases)

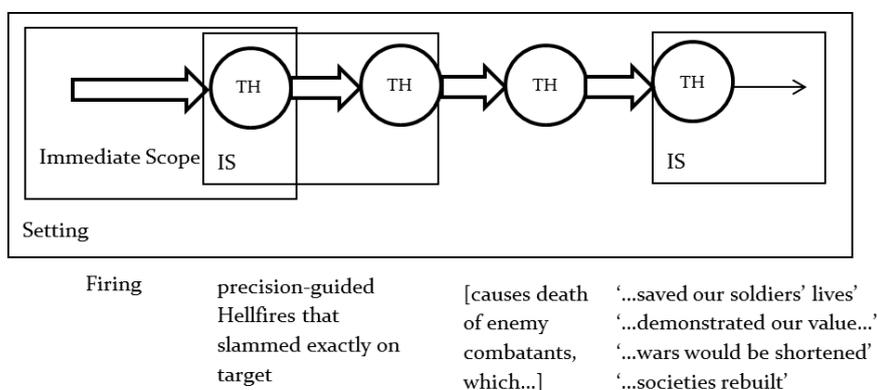
McCurley describes his aims as a participant in conflict in these humanitarian (if nationalistically limited) terms, 'doing something productive to *keep Americans safe*'. Conceptually, this construal not only changes the kind of action being performed, as violence becomes protection, but it changes the point of view such that attention is shifted to 'Americans' as the object acted upon, as opposed to those McCurley is actively

fighting against. *Predator* employs comparable strategies for making sense of the consequences of drone violence when he reflects that:

Flying the Predator, firing precision-guided Hellfires that slammed exactly on-target almost every time, contained moral meaning that might not be apparent at first. *It saved our soldiers' lives* and, compared to the carpet-bombing of World War II that wiped out entire cities, *demonstrated our value of human life and our efforts to do whatever possible to avoid taking it*. If we who operated battle machines did our jobs properly, *wars would be shortened and fractured societies rebuilt more quickly and securely*.

(Martin and Sasser, 2010: 219, my emphases)

From a cognitive perspective, the framing of the consequences of Martin's actions shifts in this passage away from prototypical expectations of the outcomes of performing an act of violence. Instead, Martin and Sasser reframe the immediate scope – the ‘onstage region’ (Langacker, 2008: 63) to which the reader attends – away from the immediate transfer of force, instead foregrounding the possibility of more distant but more peaceful outcomes. This passage is represented in *Fig. 5.4*, which also shows how the initial agent of the act of ‘firing’ is left absent from this construal, and moreover that each subsequent participant is construed as a thematic, non-agentive causer of the subsequent action. Agency and violence are both backgrounded, with prominence instead afforded to abstract and long-term goals.



*Fig. 5.4:* Scopes of causation in the firing of a Hellfire missile

Within Scarry's typology of descriptions of violence, the passage above constitutes an act of redescription through omission (1985: 72-4), as prominence is instead afforded to the possible consequences of the act of killing. In addition, the nominalisation of the action renders the initial agent who causes the act of firing absent from the initial clause, although the implied causal role of violence is reflected in the hypothesised action chain inferred from the context of the setting. Given that the study performed earlier (Ch. 3.5) indicates that readers are often able to infer the role of grammatically absent agents from context, it is noteworthy that the passage works to produce a series of positively evaluated outcomes to the initial action. In this sense, the act is presented as a utilitarian decision, with a rhetorical emphasis on the positive effects for a greater number of individuals than are harmed directly by the individual strikes. Similarly to the narrowing down of possible actions through disnarration (4.3.2), the extended coordinate clauses present a number of ways in which the negative impact of killing is outweighed by long-term, abstract benefits. This effect is complemented by the favourable comparison to carpet-bombing techniques, with Martin and Sasser establishing a binary choice between the two methods of attack as viable courses of action. While it is of course understandable that individual soldiers would want to find ways to construe their actions positively, to do so whilst erasing the act of killing itself does little to assuage the public perception of drone pilots as emotionally distant from the conflicts in which they engage (Royakkers and van Est, 2010; Strawser, 2013; Daggett, 2015).

## **5.6: The Narrative Construction of Others**

Up to this point, this reading has been concerned with the way the language of *Predator* and *Hunter Killer* has constructed and situated the author-pilots. However, the

technological and historical distinction between these soldiers and those of the World Wars discussed elsewhere in this thesis requires the examination of a further function of their narratives: namely, the narrative construction of the identity of their enemies.

Unlike the soldiers of the World Wars whose writings have been explored, the notion that these pilots are acting against armed combatants is less readily understood. As one First World War veteran describes it:

the enemy – like the inhabitants of Mars – only existed by inference: one assumed their existence from evidence of their acts. *To think of them in the personal instead of the abstract had been difficult.* (Stainton, n.d.: 22, my emphasis)

In the examples of ground combat discussed throughout this thesis, enemy combatants are often described in simple terms, such as ‘the man’, or even more broadly as just ‘the figure’. Simpson (2003) describes ‘negative shading’ as the foregrounding of the psychological and perceptual uncertainty of the narrator, and abstract nominals such as ‘the figure’ create a psychological distance from the injured individual by establishing uncertainty about their character within the discourse. By contrast, *Hunter Killer* and *Predator* are able to draw upon reports and long-term observations of individual combatants to construct narrative identities for those who they go on to kill. In particular, the first man killed by Martin is dubbed ‘Rocket Man’, and described for the reader in great detail:

Like a rat, he slithered through the slums of Sadr City armed with 100mm supersonic rockets equipped with 5-pound high-explosive warheads, killing and maiming GIs, marines, and Iraqi bystanders (49)

As was discussed in the previous chapter (4.3.2), disnarration allows soldiers in close proximity combat to justify violence through reference to alternative outcomes which involve injury to themselves. For the drone pilot, while combat involves no risk to

themselves, passages such as the above serve as a reminder of the harm inflicted upon others, and which the drone pilot is construed as either working to prevent or avenge.

Žižek (2002, online) examines how the process of 'schematising' involves the performative distinction between the enemy and oneself, and 'provid[es] it with the concrete features which will make it into an appropriate target of hate and struggle'. In *Predator*, the assignation of the epithet 'Rocket Man' performs this function, and the representation of reports and observations of his activities over time lead to the conclusion that 'Rocket Man *deserved* to be killed if anyone did' (52, emphasis original). In moving closer to Rocket Man psychologically, by constructing an identity through a profile of his actions and beliefs, *Predator* presents a legitimate target. However, this kind of engagement is not just reserved for soldiers Martin feels justified in killing. After having been transferred to a commanding role within the drone team, Martin witnesses (but does not directly operate) a drone strike in which two children are killed, having entered the target zone after the missile was fired. What follows is an extraordinarily candid account, where many details of these two individuals are inferred by the narrator:

The Predator crew spun up the plane's Hellfires, set up an attack run, and fired a Special K, sending the missile on its way with a twenty-three-second time of flight.

Everything looked perfect until...

Two kids on a bicycle unexpectedly appeared on the screen approaching the truck and the insurgents. Both were boys. One *appeared to be* about ten or eleven, the other – *possibly a younger brother* – was balanced on the handlebars. *Tooling along on a summer day laughing and talking.* (211, my emphases)

The perceptual processes that go into this description indicate that some of these details are perceptions associated with Martin's understanding of the situation, while the

choice of words to describe their observable actions, 'tooling along' and 'laughing and talking' reinforce the inferences already made within the description. Moreover, the passage goes on to describe a comparable image from Martin's childhood, in which he is positioned as a child with 'no idea of impending danger', further empathising with the children in the present narrative. Throughout these memoirs, distance and proximity are dynamic in terms of the deictic relationship between the narrator and the conflict zone, and emphasising the innocence of these boys parallels the efforts made elsewhere in *Predator* to emphasise Martin's emotional closeness to violence. Indeed, the emotion of regret itself implies personal agency and the capacity to have acted otherwise (Frith, 2013; cf. Ch. 7.6). Moreover, by presenting their deaths in an overtly shocking manner, the reader is able to align their own reaction with Martin's regret. Thus, while still at a physical distance from the battlefield and unable to be harmed physically, the notion that Martin can be subject to *emotional* harm is an important part of the process of legitimising drone warfare, and humanising its operatives.

In presenting the reader with an estimation of the innocent mental life of the victims of drone strikes, their deaths are made more emotionally impactful. From a narrative perspective, then, the development of drone technology's detailed surveillance equipment has allowed these texts to present a more detailed image of the harmed individuals. In some cases, such as Martin's continued engagement with 'Rocket Man', this familiarity serves to justify the pilot's activity, with the victim of the attack represented as a threat. Alternatively, the ability to represent the personality of innocent victims shows humility: in facing up to these failures, Martin's reaction produces a sympathetic vulnerability, and the project of drone warfare is presented as self-effacingly human.

## **5.7: Conclusions: Language and the Justification of Drone Warfare**

According to Leed (1979), 'war experience is nothing if not the transgression of boundaries' (21). In the texts discussed in earlier chapters, which primarily deal with infantrymen of the First and Second World Wars, these transgressions are primarily socio-political, as well as moral, as peace-time attitudes and practices are suspended. For the drone pilot, however, the transgression of boundaries of space and identity challenges not only the pilot's identification with the traditional image of the warrior as an individual who puts themselves in danger (French, 2005). This chapter has explored how existing narratives of drone pilots are constantly concerned with the ways in which their experiences relate to established metanarratives of the conventional experience of war. Military identity has been discussed as fundamentally related to the ability to produce a flesh-witness narrative, and in the case of drone warfare where pilots' proximity to danger and conflict is distinct from more prototypical engagements, their narratives work to relate to conventional expectations of flesh-witnessing, as opposed to developing novel accounts of warfare.

### **5.7.1: Authority, Identity, and Discourse**

The position of the drone pilot is discursively uncertain, moving at once from the distance of thousands of kilometres which draws in the reader, to the close proximity and high-definition images which authenticate their experiences as flesh-witnesses of conflict. When it comes to acts of violence, these paradoxes remain in play, as too great a distance appears cold and inhuman, while appearing too close to an act of violence risks inviting questions of moral responsibility both pilots seem to expressly avoid. More than in any of the other stories explored throughout this thesis, these soldiers must actively work to establish their identities in the eyes of their readers, and

to justify the acts they perform. What this produces, linguistically speaking, is a constantly shifting focalisation – from soldier to screen to sky to soil – distributing the pilot’s experience simultaneously across several locations. In neither book are these paradoxes resolved.

What is presented, however, is the beginning of a conceptual shift, relying at first on the understanding of the value of physical risk and proximity to conflict, in which emotional closeness to those acted upon is foregrounded. In these narratives, physical proximity and wounding is replaced with an empathy which brings the narrator into a social and emotional proximity to the victims of drone attacks. From a critical perspective, however, this rhetoric aims to present an equivalency between emotional and physical proximity which does not convert to an ethical attitude towards violence during war. Despite how they might feel, the drone pilot is abstracted from risk of harm, and sets a disconcerting precedent for the future of warfare.

Communicating the experience of drone warfare remains elusive long after the occurrence of the events. Towards its conclusion, *Predator* encapsulates this frustration:

Some people would look at me strangely. “Let me get this right,” they might say, and I knew what was coming. “You’re out there on the air force base killing innocent people on the other side of the world while they can’t shoot back at you?”

I tried to contain my temper, I truly tried. Not always successfully. Sometimes I broke down my answer to a few simple words. “You have no idea what you’re talking about.” (Martin and Sasser, 2010: 263)

This response bears strong comparison to the conventional context model of flesh-witnessing as indicative of a soldier’s authority and identity, and understanding the drone pilot is restricted once again to those who have first-hand experience. In the end, the discursive reimagining of military experience in these memoirs is incomplete; the

new bridging of civilian and military life through long-distance warfare has not allowed Martin or McCurley any greater communicative ease than any other soldier. This is further demonstrated by instances in which the authors rely on conventional refutations of non-flesh-witness experience, emphasising their own proximity to war by contrast: 'War wasn't fair... anyone who thought it was *hadn't been there*' (Martin and Sasser, 2010: 286, my emphasis). While this rhetoric positions Martin within established conventions of military experience, the deictic reference of 'there' cannot be exclusively physical for the drone pilot. Phrases such as these demonstrate that drone warfare has not yet produced its own rhetorical means of justifying and privileging the knowledge and experiences of its authors. Instead, it continues to rely on context models and frames of reference established by combatants able to call on their physical positioning as a differentiation from 'anyone who thought it was [fair]'.

The narrative life of the drone pilot, then, is one of contradictions. Although this may seem at first incompatible with the discussion of narrative identity across the previous chapter, Brockmeier (2015) observes that recent research on the subject (De Fina, Schriffin, and Bamberg, 2006; Hyvärinen, Hydén, Saareneimo and Tamboukou, 2010) produced 'no contours of a coherent and continuous self, but quite the contrary: an unstable scenario of tensions, contradictions, struggle, and negotiations' (180). As Strawson (2004) has shown (Ch. 4.5.1), it is possible to live a non-narrative life, but rather than dissociating linear episodes of experience, these memoirs show concomitant life experiences that cannot be reconciled with one another. Instead of the typical 'break' between war and home lives, drone pilots produce an identity which at once draws upon both of these aspects, in an as yet unresolved tension between their own experiences and the expectations of military memoir. From a narratological point of view, the drone pilot's presence in two places at once challenges the conventions for organising experiences: discrete, contrasting notions of being 'at war' and 'at home' are

no longer applicable, and the failure of both memoirs to replace these concepts indicates an ongoing fragility to drone pilots' warrior identities.

Additionally, while this chapter has viewed drone technology as an emergent and novel means of warfare requiring a reassessment of conventional strategies of sense-making in war for its operators, this view is not universal. Carvin (2015) argues that academic approaches to drone warfare often become distracted by the 'newness' of the technology, and fail to consider the historical precedents in military innovation for the evolution of greater distance between the aggressor and the victim of a given act of violence. For example, when Ivar Campbell witnesses heavy artillery shelling in France in 1917, he describes how

You perceive, too, in imagination, men infinitely small, running, affrightened rabbits, from the upheaval of the shells, nerve-racked, deafened; clinging to the earth, hiding and whimpering "O God, O God!" You perceive, too, other men, sweaty, brown, infinitely small also, moving guns, feeding the belching monster, grimly, quietly pleased. (in Housman, 1930 [2002]: 60)

Much like *Predator* and *Hunter Killer*, the mechanised state of warfare reduces the agency of the soldiers involved in operating the artillery gun. In construing the weapon itself as a 'belching monster', responsibility for the violence it inflicts is transferred away from the operators. As Singer (2010) puts it, 'each new technology from the bow and arrow to the bomber plane has moved soldiers further and further from their foes' (395), and much has been written on technology and distance in the context of war beyond drone warfare (cf. Adey, Whitehead, and Williams, 2013), including the study of distance on the experience of killing in Israeli snipers discussed above (Bar and Ben-Ari, 2005), which begins to factor this increase in both physical and psychological distance into the discursive construal of experience. However, Carvin's claim overlooks the fact that drone warfare is not simply a development of a physical and technological distance, but

a form of military engagement which simultaneously brings the operator into closer contact with those they act against than they would ever otherwise have, unless they were physically in the conflict zone. Simultaneously receiving criticism for their impersonal function as 'cubicle warriors' (Royakkers and van Est, 2010), yet suffering rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at rates equal to or greater than ground troops (Riza, 2014), the phenomenology of drone warfare contains a paradox unparalleled in other modes of conflict.

### **5.7.2: Drone Warfare in Society and Culture**

It is also important to bear in mind that this chapter has only been concerned with two memoirs of drone warfare. These represent the sum total of commercially available autobiographical literature on the subject and so, while limited in their perspective, give the best available indication of the possible future directions for this emerging niche of military memoir. As Rothstein (2015) points out, however, 'just as we cannot treat the drone technology itself as a singular and unique system, we cannot treat any particular idea of drones as singular' (107), and the same is true for the process of reading the stories of the pilots who operate them. In their infancy, the linguistic strategies for negotiating a warrior identity for drone pilots should still be examined on a case-by-case basis, and the aim of this chapter has simply been to indicate the directions in which these early narratives seem to point for future discursive development. In recent years, however, drone technology has become more prominent within everyday culture, and public awareness of its military applications has increased. For instance, *Eye in the Sky* (2016) follows a fictional debate between members of military staff and political figures over whether to launch a drone strike likely to produce civilian casualties. At the close of the film, General Benson, an officer who eventually orders the strike from a Whitehall office, speaks the following line which

closes his argument on the morality of his decision: 'Never tell a soldier that he does not know the cost of war'. The quotation was cited in press coverage of the film, and described by director Gavin Hood as a 'winning line' (Hasan, 2016: online). Once again, the quotation relies on the convention of the VIOLENCE AS COST metaphor (Scarry, 1985: 74), and a stern imperative which employs double deixis (Herman, 2002) through the absence of an explicit addressee, thereby instructing both the homodiegetic discourse participant, and the film's viewer, that they do not possess the requisite flesh-witness experience of war to effectively critique the decision.

As of today, then, the language of drone warfare continues to rely on the rhetorical strategies of authenticity produced in ground combat, producing paradoxes of proximity when describing the pilots' relationship with the acts of violence they commit. While they remain comparable to the war writings of infantry soldiers in this sense, their relationship with the concept of agency is complicated by the nature of the technology and operational procedures they employ. Where the question of responsibility is concerned, modelling the construal of acts of violence from the perspective of Cognitive Grammar allows for a precise discussion of the ways in which action chains are formed, and the transfer of force distributed within these passages. However, the notion of 'responsibility' itself remains abstract. This will be the focus of the remaining chapters, where the term is considered more closely in relation to the linguistic notion of agency and its role in cognition.

# Chapter 6: Modelling Intentionality in Cognitive Grammar

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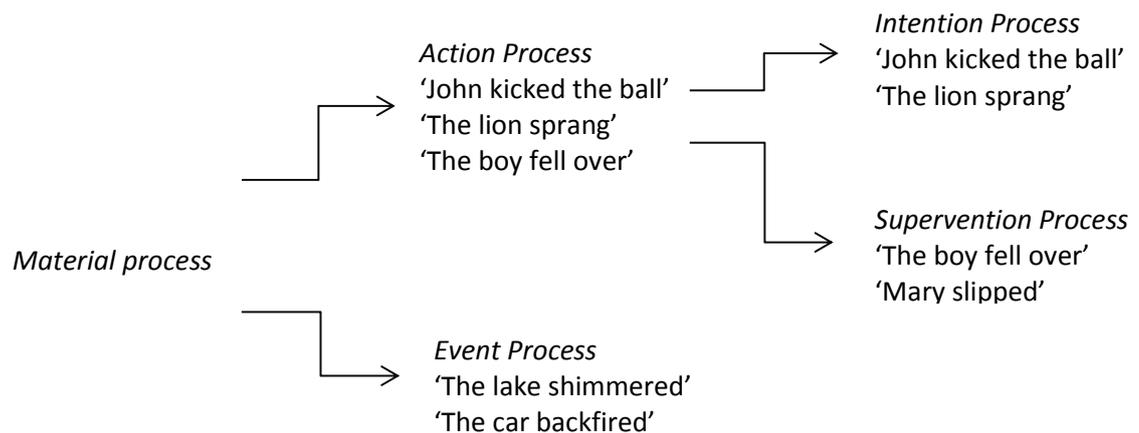
## 6.1: Introduction to Intentions

Throughout this thesis, the critical analysis of violence has necessarily been concerned with the attribution of responsibility for action. So far, the analytical focus on the transfer of force and the construal of action has primarily focused on the perception of causality. While this has facilitated a discussion of the kinds of acts soldiers have been shown to perform, the attribution of causality does not equate to the attribution of responsibility, much less explicitly subjective concepts such as praise or blame. As Shaver and Drown have put it, ‘causality is dichotomous; responsibility is variable. It is a judgement made about a stimulus person *by a perceiver* who takes several different dimensions into account’ (1986: 703, emphasis in original). As well as the direct causal relationship between an actor and the outcomes of their actions, the perception of responsibility requires a recognition of the actor’s capacity to act intentionally. In many cases, and for acts of violence in particular, whether or not the agent *intended* to perform a particular action or *intended* its outcome may substantially affect their responsibility from a moral or legal standpoint. While the ‘billiard-ball model’ (Langacker, 2008: 355) of force and motion employed so far has been useful for the conceptualisation of direct and physical causal relationships between event participants in language, neither this approach nor the Canonical Event Model (Ch. 2.3.1) consider the role an actor’s intentions may play in the social perception of an action. This chapter aims to develop such an account within the framework of Cognitive Grammar in order to extend the critical discussion of actions in language beyond causality.

Intentionality is therefore inherent to the social concept of agency: ownership of an action requires the capacity to perform it for some purpose. Bandura (2006) lists intentionality – defined as the capacity to ‘form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realising them’ (164) – as one of the core properties of human agency. A closer examination of the linguistic construal of intentionality is therefore required in order to understand how this dimension of action can affect readers’ ideological assessments. Much as the perception of an agent’s responsibility is affected by more than the language of a discourse, a reader’s sense of intentionality cannot be attributed exclusively to the construal presented in the text. Rather, it is part of the process of reading and experiencing the text by a reader, which makes a cognitive model ideally situated in accounting for the processes which influence the perception of intentional action in language. This capacity to infer intentionality from action has been described as ‘a hallmark of the human cognitive apparatus’ (Behrend and Scofield, 2006: 291), allowing us to interact with other individuals on the understanding that their minds operate in a manner comparable to our own, and thus that they can act based upon the same kinds of private motivations that might drive our own actions. Much like the inference of causality in Chapter 3 was concerned with readers’ ability to perceive descriptions of events in terms of scripts and preconceived expectations, so the perception of intentionality in discourse is a question of identifying agents as mentally comparable to our own decision-making selves. This situates the studying of intentionality within the context of ‘mind-modelling’ (Stockwell, 2009), and this relationship to cognitive poetics provides a useful link between clause-level analysis, and need to produce readings concerned with the overall effect of a text and its language.

While intentionality is not an exclusively linguistic concept, it is the construal of events and their perspectivisation in language which informs judgements regarding whether a described action was performed for a reason, and consequently whether or

not the agent of the act should be considered responsible for it. In Systemic Functional Linguistics, as per Fig. 6.1 below, the subdivision of material process verbs readily distinguishes between the kinds of activity that have the capacity to be performed intentionally (intention processes), those which can only be carried out unintentionally (supervention processes), and clauses which position inanimate objects as agents (event processes) (cf. Ch. 2.5).



(Adapted from Simpson (2003: 83))

Fig. 6.1: Modelling intentional and superventional processes in SFL

This model demonstrates the functional difference between intentional and superventional acts, although Simpson remarks that 'these subdivisions should be regarded more as handy approximations than as strictly delineated categories' (83). Nonetheless, the process of actively differentiating between intentional and superventional actions in Systemic Functional Linguistics demonstrates the stylistic significance in distinguishing between actions which connote intentionality, and those which do not. However, although these subdivisions help to distinguish between the kinds of material process being construed semantically, the process of identifying intentional and superventional processes relies on the interpretation of the analyst. As was shown earlier (cf. Ch. 3.5.4), non-specialist readers can differ substantially from researchers in their focus interpreting a text. As a result, the categorisation of processes

reveals little about the way in which intentionality is perceived in language, only that it is perceived.

While Cognitive Grammar's model of verb processes deals in detail with explicit directions of force and the causal relationship between grammatical participants as part of a 'highly selective' (Langacker, 2014: xiv) and fine grained clausal analysis, it does not include a representation of the linguistic function – and therefore the conceptual effect – of an agent's intentionality. There is no explicit distinction in the Canonical Event Model (Langacker, 2008: 357) between actions performed intentionally, and those events performed by agents without the capacity for underlying goals, desires, or motivation (cf. Popova, 2014: 2). Rather, Cognitive Grammar takes volitional action as prototypical to the agent role (Langacker, 1991: 210), and uses the intentional mental activity of the experiencer role to describe experiencers as 'actor-like' (2008: 392). While this is an adequate model for the majority of processes performed by agents with the capacity for intentional action, taking intentionality as prototypical means that Langacker's development of canonical events fails to demonstrate how acts performed unintentionally might differ conceptually, or the possibility of ambiguity in determining whether or not an action was performed for some reason. Given the wide-ranging social implications behind the distinction between un/intentional acts, it is important to understand how these forms of action can be distinguished conceptually.

Accordingly, this chapter begins with a definition of intentionality, and a review of the different roles intentionality has played in stylistics, literary criticism, and cognitive science (6.2). This review is followed by an exploration of the role of various linguistic features in affecting readers' judgements of intentionality in language (6.3), demonstrating how individual words through to narrative context affect the perception of purpose. To account for this in further detail, the chapter then attends to Cognitive Grammar (6.4) in order to explain how the perception of intentionality can be modelled

in relation to the Canonical Event Model, and to the conceptual substrate, which represents the implicit domains of knowledge involved in the interpretation of linguistic meaning and context (Langacker, 2008: 463). While these sections employ practical examples throughout, 6.5 returns to two passages analysed earlier in terms of the perception of causality (3.2), in order to situate the present work in relation to earlier methods. As the discussion up to this point has primarily dealt with clause-level events, the role of intentionality in connecting this kind of close reading with narrative analysis is outlined (6.6) and applied (6.7). In evaluating the developments made in this chapter, the conclusion (6.8) outlines the value and nature of a complementary empirical study of judgements of intentionality, responsibility, and blame in lay readers, which forms the basis of the next stage of investigation.

## **6.2: Three Kinds of Intentionality**

Before beginning, it is important to clarify the meaning of ‘intentionality’ within the context of this chapter and its analytical goals. Between philosophy and literary criticism, concepts of intentionality which overlap yet differ from the concerns of this chapter are part of long discussed and debated terminology, beginning with an overview of the role of intentions in the understanding of minds generally (6.2.1). In particular, this section distinguishes between the assignation of intentions to the author of a text (authorial intent, 6.2.2), and the assumption that actors described within a clause generally have the capacity to intend (character intentions, 6.2.3). While the significance of authors’ intentions in stylistic analysis has been famously called into question (Wimsatt and Beardley, 1946), this chapter argues that understanding the minds and intentions of characters in discourse is indicative of the cognitive processes

which govern the perception of meaning and reference to character identities across discourse more generally.

### **6.2.1: The Intentional Stance**

First of all, Dennett (1987) has described the ‘intentional stance’ as a way of inferring and predicting behaviours based on observations we make about our own mental lives. Unlike the ‘physical’ and ‘design’ stances, where the observer forms hypotheses based on the physicality or function of the actor in question, the intentional stance describes the process in which the observer:

treat[s] the object whose behavior is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs. A little practical reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in many —but not all — instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; that is what you predict the agent will do. (Dennett, 1987: 17)

To perceive an intention is to recognise a common ground between the self and the observed actor, attributing to them the same capacity for rationality as could be employed to describe the decisions which account for one’s own actions. Tomasello (1999a: 15) describes intentionality as ‘understanding others as intentional (or mental) agents (like the self)’. In other words, intentionality describes the presence of *purpose* behind the performance of a given action or agent. In literary and linguistic fields, however, it is necessary to subdivide intentionality into several related but distinct categories.

### **6.2.2: Authorial Intent**

Most famously in relation to the study of language and literature, ‘authorial intent’ describes the process of interpreting a text according to the perceived intentions of the author (Wales, 2014: 230). Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) established the ‘intentional fallacy’ as a flaw in criticism which draws upon an understanding of the author’s aims in writing a text in order to frame its analysis, as these intentions are ultimately unknowable to the reader, leading Roland Barthes to describe the ‘death of the author’ (1977) in critical and literary practice. Instead, the concept of the implied author (Booth, 1961) serves as a ‘streamlined version of the author, an actual or purported subset of the real author’s capacities, traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other properties that play an active role in the construction of the particular text’ (Phelan, 2005: 45). In other words, while the implied author is simply a ‘construct formed by the reader on the basis of his or her reading of the work’ (Schmid, 2013: online), it serves to demonstrate that the process of engaging with a text involves the recognition of an author who writes intentionally. In doing so, the reader constructs an impression of these intentions from textual or paratextual evidence which may or may not reflect the intentions of the actual author. Even in autobiographical writings, such as the memoirs analysed in this thesis, the identification of authorial intent can only be associated with an implied author.

Although authorial intent is not the focus of this chapter’s engagement with intentionality, it demonstrates several of the central themes of cognitive interest in the topic. As Wimsatt and Beardsley note, the text ‘is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it’ (470). This sentiment echoes the concept of Common Ground (Ch. 2.3.5), where the discourse exists independently of readers’ and authors’ intentions and inferences. As a result, the process of identifying and ascribing intentions to the act of writing is an engagement with this text, dislocated from the author, whose private mental life remains unknown.

Nevertheless, the propensity for early critics and everyday readers to consider the intentional state of the author in the process of reading demonstrates the centrality of minds to interpretation, and the ease with which inferences can be made about the decision making processes of others, fallacious or otherwise. Likewise, just as readers can assign intent to the actions of an author, communication requires that authors recognise their audience, or implied reader, as a volitional agent with the capacity to act with intent. In other words, both speaker and hearer need to recognise the capacity of the other to think about and relate to the world in a broadly similar way to themselves, in order to communicate meaningfully, but without recourse to rely on this capacity to explain the content of the discourse.

### **6.2.3: Character Intentionality**

As well as attributing intentions to the authors of texts, the process of reading narratives involving human agents also involves the interpretation of the capacity for characters within the narrative to act intentionally. For Herman (2013a), the ability to relate actions in narrative according to overarching intentions of characters is essential to understanding narrative, as stories are ‘rooted in an overall cognitive preference to read events as actions - that is, to construe events or happenings in a storyworld as goal-directed actions that unfold in a larger context of prior, conditioning actions and reactions’ (237). Just as implied authors are ascribed intentions in the process of writing, so too are the actors in discourse prototypically considered to act in relation to their aims and beliefs. Palmer (2004) refers to ‘intermentality’ to describe the basic reaction to language as an artefact constructed by an author with an imagined mind, and extends this sort of reasoning about other minds to readers’ reactions to characters within a text, as well as the writers who produce them. Zunshine (2006) takes it further,

introducing Theory of Mind as ‘the default way by which we construct and navigate our social environment’ as well as construct explanations for the activities of fictional characters. As Stockwell (2009) explains, however, “Theory of Mind’ is not a ‘theory’ about minds but is a descriptive term aimed at accounting for human psychological distinctiveness’ (140), and he introduces the term ‘mind-modelling’ for the specific process of interacting with minds in a literary setting. Put simply, communication through discourse ‘is crucially dependent on recognizing others like oneself’ (Verhagen, 2007: 60), and recognising the capacity for intentional actions within discourse is simply an extension of this recognition of intentionality within the author/reader.

Essentially, this understanding of discourse participants as reliant on similar and relatable cognitive and perceptual processes underpins the notion of ‘Common Ground’ (Werth, 1993; Browse, in press 2018; Ch. 2.4.4) where both speaker and listener must agree on various propositions within the discourse in order to communicate. In the process of telling a story, it is often essential to recognise whether or not a significant event was performed intentionally or not, in order to accurately respond to the proposed tellability (Labov, 2013) of the story. As with the earlier discussion of construal, explicit descriptions of character intentions can be subject to resistant reading: the narrator proposes viewing an agent as acting for certain reasons, and the reader will choose to accept or reject this evaluation according to their own background knowledge and perspective. Unlike authorial intent, the perception of intentionality in relation to actors within discourse relies on the linguistic construal of information afforded by the text. Although, as will be shown throughout this chapter and the next, text-external background knowledge also influences these perceptions.

Stockwell (2002) describes process of modelling the minds of characters and other discourse participants as operating on a ‘principle on minimal departure’ (cf. Ryan, 1980), where ‘unless the text tells us otherwise, we assume an identity with the

actual world' (96). Just as we draw upon prototypical schemata to complete our understanding of aspects of a discourse world unspecified by the text, such as the basic anatomy of a human character or the applicability of the laws of gravity, so too do we imagine that the characters we engage with have the capacity to act intentionally, and that their actions may be the result of any number of intersecting beliefs, aims, and desires. This view aligns with literature on the developmental psychology behind infants' recognition of intentionality in others (Tomasello, 1999b; Sodian, 2011; Meltzoff and Gopnik, 1993), although Prinz (2012) has recently suggested that the understanding of agency and intentionality *begins* with the observation of others, before we are able to recognise these qualities within ourselves. Likewise, Yuyan and Baillargeon (2005) demonstrate that infants default to assign goals to both human and nonhuman agents. Although psychological research presently offers competing theories regarding the origins of the perception of intentions, this does not pose a concern for the understanding of the concept as applied in this thesis, as both positions consider intentionality to be a cognitive process developed through the development of social schemata.

### **6.3: Locating Intent in Language**

Functionally, the assignation of intentionality to agents in discourse contributes to judgements of responsibility for the performance of an action. At its simplest, individual lexical items can alter the perception of intentionality. Consider the following examples:

- a) The wind knocked down the tree.
- b) The lumberjack knocked down the tree.

Each example involves the same act (a tree is knocked over), and the only difference between a) and b) is the semantic connotation of the grammatical subject. Yet this change alone is enough to demonstrate the impact of intentionality: a typical adult reader knows that the wind does not have a mental state comparable to their own, and are therefore unlikely to draw the conclusion that the wind *intentionally* knocked down the tree. Though its force can be explained with reference to meteorological patterns, the wind as an agent cannot reasonably be said to be acting deliberately for any reason. By contrast, when a human being – whose job involves the deliberate felling of trees – is positioned as the actor as in b), the frame of the event shifts, as the schemata employed to understand the agent now includes a Theory of Mind, and therefore the capacity to have knocked down the tree *for some reason*. This distinction has been essential to the study of intentionality in philosophical terms, and is summed up neatly by Anscombe (1957), who defines intentional actions as those ‘to which a certain sense of the question ‘Why?’ is given application’ (9). However, it is also possible for the lumberjack to act unintentionally, with the same outcome:

c) The lumberjack crashed the car, which knocked down the tree.

Here, the verb ‘crashed’ indicates a non-volitional action on behalf of the agent, as the agent itself is still *capable* of volitional action. However, the information present in the verb ‘crashed’ indicates that the act was not intentional. Hence the importance of the definition of intentionality in this chapter as the *capacity* to act purposefully. Although intentional actors such as the lumberjack may still perform unintended actions, the accidental nature of the knocking down of the tree is only evidenced by the additional information supplied in the verb ‘crashed’. Understanding the process described in these clauses in terms of volition thus requires weighing semantic information from multiple sources in relation to the same concept.

Strickland et al. (2014) also demonstrate that order of mention does not affect readers' perceptions of intentionality where both participants are construed as grammatical agents, as in the sentence 'John and Susan exchanged books', although Hart (2018) has shown that word order does affect the perception of the associated concepts of blame and aggression. Elsewhere, Astington (1999) shows that adverbs can assign or deny intentionality (e.g. 'he did so *skilfully/accidentally*'), while Halliday (1970) demonstrates that prepositional content, as in, 'the window was broken *by a storm*' and 'the window was broken *with a hammer*' provides the reader with the semantic knowledge required to infer with reasonable certainty whether or not the breaking of the window was un/intentional. Beyond specific grammatical markers, Knobe (2003) argues that the blameworthiness of an action fundamentally affects intentionality judgements: in otherwise equally presented scenarios, participants are more likely to assign intentionality to an actor that they perceive to have performed a morally negative action, and withhold intentionality from the agent of a morally positive action until further information is presented. Following this, Hindriks (2008) identifies a 'praise-blame asymmetry', in thinking about normative reasons which typically motivate an agent 'blocks praise, but not blame' (56). Likewise, Corrigan (2001) shows that 'goodness of the thematic role' – whether or not the object of an action is perceived to have something positive happen to them – affect readers' perceptions of who caused an event more than evaluations associated with the verb in question. In other words, readers draw upon background knowledge they associate with the various lexical items which compose a clause, in order to assess the intentionality of the described action.

Following this view of intentionality as informed by a composite of inputs, Guglielmo and Malle (2010) offer an alternative account to the Knobe Effect, with particular reference to how judgements of responsibility relate to the morality of the act, and an absence of skill, such as comparing a 'lucky' shot that kills with a lucky strike of a

ball. They demonstrate that the act of killing with a gun relies on more basic actions, such as pulling a trigger, and argue that in these scenarios, judgements of competency are as important to the evaluation process as perceptions of intentionality. Moreover, the process of assessing the intentionality of an action relies on the perceiver's extant knowledge of the skill required to perform the act, where an increase in requisite skill leads to a decreased likelihood to assess the act as deliberate. While an actor perceived to be skilled *could* perform a basic action unintentionally, an actor perceived to be unskilled *could not* intentionally perform a complex task. Likewise, Nakamura (2018) asserts that harmful actions are judged as intentional based on the perceived probability of positive and negative human behaviours. While linguistic features provide cues for such assessments, readers' background knowledge provides the reference points against which construed activities can be compared, in order to make such probabilistic judgements.

In this review of the literature, it becomes apparent that intentionality cannot be analysed through any one lexicogrammatical feature. Rather, both word order and semantics can be shown to influence readers' judgements of whether or not a described action was performed intentionally. Moving forward, both this and the following chapter work to expand this discussion beyond clause-level examples, situating judgements of intention in discourse, as much as in grammar. As Herman (2013a) has put it, 'narratives scaffold ascriptions of reasons for acting that are central to many engagements with the minds of persons' (74). In other words, we are no longer strictly concerned with 'breaking down' actions into their constituent parts, as this will not yield a meaningful discussion of the intentions associated with them. Instead, it becomes more meaningful to consider incorporating a discussion of action and intention into the context of the narrative in which they appear. This is the end-goal of this portion of the

thesis: to construct a means by which to critically explore linguistic events within their narrative context, without losing sight of one or other end of this spectrum.

Additionally, this approach is based strongly on a model of cognition which views the process of understanding other minds as an exercise in simulation (Tomasello, 1999b: 66-70). Recent innovations in cognitive science have begun to consider a model which instead favours enaction through a participatory sensemaking process (De Jaeger and Di Paolo, 2008). Moreover, this approach is beginning to receive attention as a means of accounting for readers' engagement with narratives (Popova, 2015). While this work has demonstrated the capacity of enactive cognition to account for sensorimotor perceptual processes, the application of enaction to complex, interpersonal frameworks of knowledge is presently in its infancy. Consequently, this chapter remains concerned with framing the discussion of intentionality in terms of a cognitive model which takes the process of understanding and interacting with other minds to involve mentalistic simulations, both of the events described in discourse and the minds, fictional or otherwise, which perform them.

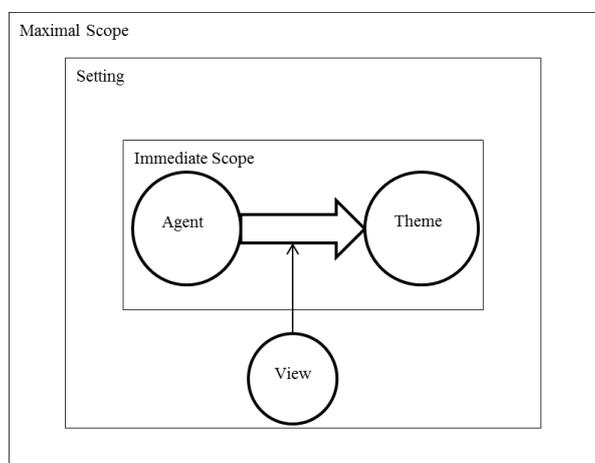
## **6.4: Intentional Action in Cognitive Grammar**

As has been discussed in previous chapters (2.4; 2.5), Cognitive Grammar provides an intricate means of discussing and investigating the conceptual structure of language. Langacker (1987) defines Cognitive Grammar as a model of language in which 'grammatical structures do not constitute an autonomous formal system or level of representation: they are claimed instead to be inherently symbolic, providing structuring and conventional symbolization of conceptual content.' (1-2). For the purposes of this chapter, the discussion will simply focus on what this means for the conceptualisation of events, which CG approaches via the Canonical Event Model (see

Fig. 6.2 below), which functions as an archetypal conceptualisation of how events are structured.

### 6.4.1: Intentional Actors in Canonical Events

As can be seen in the diagram below, the relationships between agents and objects they interact with (in CG, the ‘theme’) of given events and actions are clearly demarcated in relation to a transfer of force, represented by the large arrow. In its most straightforward iteration of a sentence comprised of an agent, theme, and force viewed from a third person perspective (e.g. ‘The boy laughed at the dog’), the model visualises the clearly expressed relationship between each component. In instances where these relationships are less explicit, such as a passivized sentence (‘The dog was laughed at’), the agent role can be omitted or visualised less prominently, in order to represent the fact that the construal gives no attention to the actor in question.



Adapted from Langacker (2008: 356)

Fig. 6.2: The Canonical Event Model

While this model of event representation evidently succeeds in conceptualising the relationship between participants in terms of the transfer of force and perceived causality, it does not distinguish between acts performed purposefully, and those with no guiding intentions. Returning to the sample sentences a), b), and c) above with

regards to the Canonical Event Model, each sentence can be modelled almost identically: each has an actor and an object, as well as a clear transfer of force from one to the other. However, it would be erroneous to describe all three as conceptually identical: in the case of a) and c), it makes no sense to ask *why* such events occurred, as they cannot have been intentional: wind cannot act volitionally, and sneezing is not (usually) a deliberate act. And while b) could describe the same event as c), it is not clear whether the act is performed intentionally or not. Two further examples demonstrate the impact intentional/superventional agents have on the interpretation of an event:

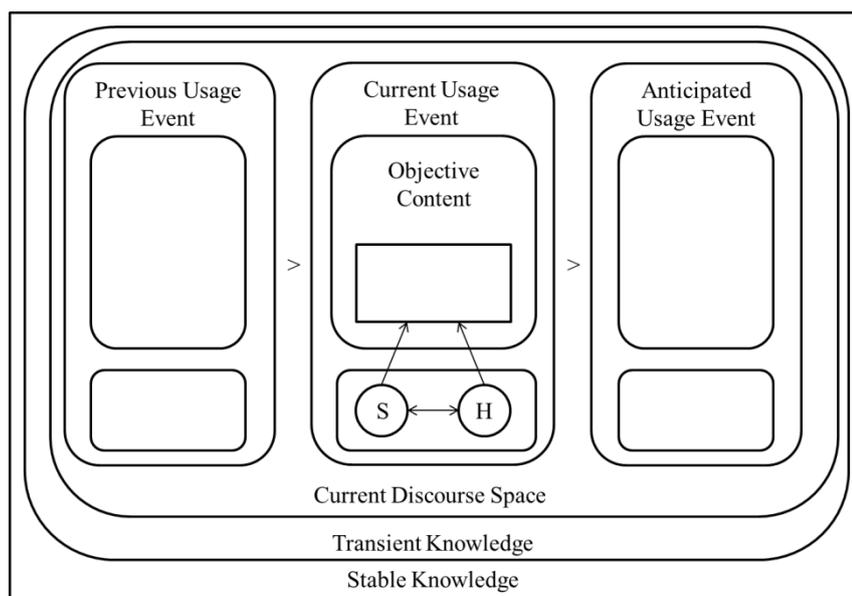
- d) The fire killed John.
- e) The firing squad killed John.

Both d) and e) can be modelled as canonical events within the CG model, where an agent acts on or towards a theme, and force is transferred or motion enacted regardless of the agent's intentions. Langacker himself describes the archetypal agent as 'a person who *volitionally* carries out physical activity' (1991: 210, my emphasis), in which case only e) could be properly considered a canonical event. But Langacker gives no account of what conceptual change occurs if this archetype is subverted: in the case of d), an agent still acts upon a theme in a way that remains unchanged in the Canonical Event Model's representation of the event, irrespective of whether the agent has the capacity to act intentionally. In other words, the identification of the grammatical agent of an event as being able to act for some purpose influences the reader's interpretation of the event, but in a way not made explicit in the Canonical Event Model.

Although intentionality itself is not associated with a single grammatical feature, there are demonstrable instances in which isolated grammatical variations appear to influence readers' perceptions of agentive intentionality. As Langacker has put it, 'it is ultimately as pointless to analyse grammatical units without reference to their semantic

value as to write a dictionary which omits the meanings of its lexical items' (1991: 1). As such, while this chapter acknowledges that grammatical structure is not the exclusive means by which intentionality can be construed or inferred, modelling the relationship between the two will enrich the scope of Cognitive Grammar's capacity for textual commentary. In the process of developing such a model, this chapter demonstrates the broader relationship between grammar, semantics, and narrative form as it relates to the understanding of intentionality.

As van Leeuwen (1997) observes of social agency, not all aspects of understanding evoked in relation to a given word or phrase can be located at a specific point in the text itself, and Cognitive Grammar is well equipped to account for the role of background knowledge and previous language use in the act of interpretation. Langacker (2008) describes the totality of external knowledge that readers bring to the text as the 'conceptual substrate'. 'Substrate' is a term borrowed metaphorically from chemistry to refer to the base substance on which organisms live and grow, and the conceptual substrate refers to everything the reader understands from their previous interactions with language and the world around them (marked in *Fig. 6.3* under 'Previous Usage Event'), and which comes to bear on their understanding of the utterances at hand. Through continued interaction and usage, meaning is altered or stabilised in association with particular linguistic and grammatical features. In the case of intentionality, the repeated use of particular words or phrases across discourse leads to an association with a level of capacity for intentional action.



Adapted from Langacker (2008: 466)

Fig. 6.3: The Conceptual Substrate

The diagram above outlines the conceptual substrate in relation to discourse, and demonstrates how the speaker, 'S', and hearer, 'H', both draw on related usage events in order to form comparable understandings of the events S is describing. Without comparable knowledge of the objective content, communication is meaningless. Although Langacker's model indicates that speakers and hearers employ the same frames of reference in conceptualising the content of the discourse, Browse (in press, 2018) has questioned the directness of this connection, arguing instead that discourse participants communicate in relation an 'idealised common ground' of the knowledge and beliefs of other participants, with which the actual common ground may have varying degrees of overlap.

In order to demonstrate the relationship between intentions and the description of actions more directly, the diagram below (Fig. 6.4), represents a clause from Stainton (n.d), which appears as part of a passage in which the narrator describes killing an enemy sniper. The area consisting of solid lines represents the clause which appears in the source text ('I squeezed the trigger'), modelled as a Canonical Event Model, while

the dotted boxes represent hypothesised intentions for the initial action. As 'I' represents a first-person adult human narrator, they can reasonably be considered an actor with the capacity to intend. Taken in isolation, it may not be clear in many cases what the intention behind an act might be, as there may be any number of reasons the described act is performed (kicking a ball, picking up a glass). In these cases, while the exact intentions which cause the agent to perform the act remain unknown or uncertain, the *capacity* for the agent to act volitionally is in accordance with Langacker's definition of an actor (1991: 236) and actor-like qualities (2008: 392). This tendency to ascribe intentionality where none are made explicit is part of everyday perceptual processes, and the intentionality bias (Rosset, 2008; Strickland et al., 2014) indicates that in speeded conditions, adult readers will assign an intentional cause to ambiguous actions, even if the kind of action in question (e.g. hitting someone with a car) is typically performed unintentionally. Hence, as will be discussed in later examples (6.5), modelling the potential for intentionality action does not always require the identification of a specific intention.

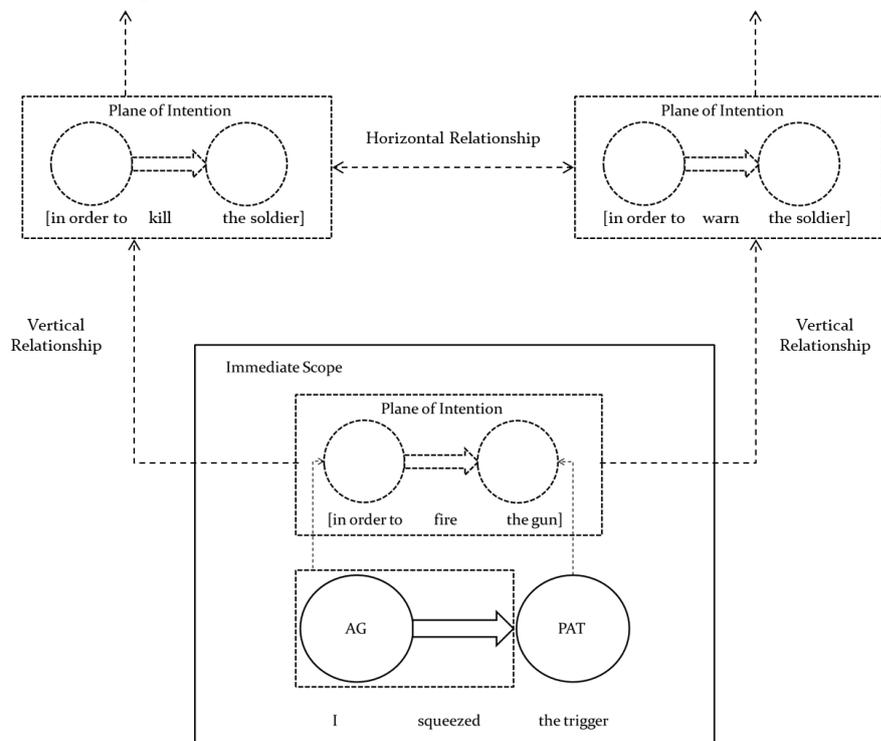


Fig. 6.4: Planes of intention in relation to a canonical event

In the case of ‘squeezing the trigger’, knowledge of the scripts associated with the act identify it as a granular aspect of the process of firing a gun. Hence, the dashed box and arrow extending from the initial construal in *Fig. 6.4* represent the fact that both the identification of the narrator as a human agent and the act of squeezing probabilistically construe an intention, while the patient ‘trigger’ gives the context for an event model associated with intending to fire a gun. The initial intention of squeezing the trigger in order to fire the gun is positioned within the immediate scope of construal, as understanding the relationship between the action and this intention is important to the immediate interpretation of the text. The intention associated with the act described in the source text has been given the label ‘plane of intention’ to show that while this particular relationship is not construed explicitly, its structure represents how a perceived goal associated with the initial action might itself be construed. Given that this is a direct and instantaneous consequence of pulling the trigger, no other alternative intentions at this level are offered. Beyond the immediate scope, however, is the further question of *why* the narrator intended to fire the gun at all.

As van Dijk (1975) puts it, actions take place ‘under the “scope” of a global intention and purpose controlling the local intentions and purposes’ (281), meaning that intentions and goals themselves can be construed as part of an ongoing, larger network of intentions which may account for a series of actions. Similarly, Plaks and Robinson (2015) distinguish between ‘proximal’ and ‘distal’ intentions, referring to the proximity of the goal to the granularity of the event performed. Moving further ‘up’ a series of intentions in a vertical relationship indicates a more distal and abstract intent, which may persist over a greater deal of time or number of activities. These can in turn be extended further: the narrator may intend to kill the enemy sniper, for instance, *in order* to win the battle, *in order* to win the war, *in order* to return home. As the intentions

related to an action become further abstracted along this vertical plane, they refer to longer-term goals, and may serve as a unifying intention to explain a series of actions across a narrative. Equally, however, they become harder to verify as reasonable representations of the intentions associated with the initial action without further supporting evidence, in the form of either additional actions which support the interpretation, or an explicit statement of intent within the discourse.

In contrast to the vertical relationship between intentions of greater or lesser abstraction, possible explanations for an action may have a 'horizontal relationship', as represented by the dual suggestions that the narrator of the initial clause intends to fire his gun to either kill or warn the enemy sniper. Horizontally related intentions can be supported or challenged independently of one another, and in some cases co-occur: the narrator may wish to simultaneously warn the enemy sniper to leave the location and alert his allies to his location, for instance. Without broader context to support one intention over another, or prior knowledge on behalf of the reader to produce a script of expected activity, any number of horizontally related intentions could be considered a plausible explanation for an agent's actions. Furthermore, just as the structure of events around Langacker's Canonical Event Model can deviate from the straightforward transfer of energy from one participant to another, it is also possible for the conceptual structure of intentions to deviate from the archetypal form. As well as prototypical transfers of force from agent to goal, intentions may equally be movements to or from a location, internal changes of state, or any other possible variation within the event category. Unlike an action chain (cf. Ch. 2.3.1; 5.4), there is no direct causative connection between an action and the intentions which drive it, as intentions may be unrealised or fail to come about, or be the kinds of abstract goals that do not have a force-related representation.

Although there are an infinite number of possible reasons for performing any given action, making sense of an action does not require considering the reasons for its performance from all angles. Indeed, as Anscombe observes, to suggest that each action we perform and observe is actively considered in terms of each constituent reason for the act would be ‘quite absurd’ (1957: 80). The majority of possible explanations for action are often instead eliminated quickly with reference to the context in which the act takes place, ‘thus usefully constraining our interpretative domain and enabling us to start considering endlessly nuanced choices *within that domain*’ (Zunshine, 2006: 14, emphasis original). Similarly to the principle of minimal departure (Ryan, 1985), schematised knowledge may lead the reader to a ‘path of least resistance’ in interpreting action: an intention or cause most readily inferred from broader knowledge of its context. This interpretation of an actor’s intentions may later be revealed to be false, but these cognitive shortcuts allow the reader to form explanatory models of activity which remain open to revision in the course of reading. In the context of literary texts, moreover, Stockwell (2002: 95) has argued that ambiguity in literature provides grounds for readers to map their own feelings and experiences to the events and characters described. The ability to interpret the actions of literary characters without the prescription of a single, definitive intention behind the act allows for much literary discussion, both academically and informally. In both cases, readers are shown not only to have the capacity to extend their understanding of a text beyond the features presented to them explicitly in its language, but that doing so is part of the everyday process of engaging with literature, and narratives more generally.

That readers’ knowledge of the intentions which govern action can develop according to the information present demonstrates the versatility of an analysis of intentionality: actions across a text can be grouped thematically through their association with a given order of intention. Much like the role of granularity (2.3.2) in

describing the level at which construal attends to events, a reader can shift the specificity of the intentions they are interested in, in order to talk intelligibly about a character in the context of a densely described single narrative instance, as well as their development over the course of an entire narrative. In Chapter 5, for instance, the analysis of *Predator* and *Hunter Killer* necessarily moved from understanding how the drone pilots' actions were construed within specific narrative instances to their relationship with the broader context in which the identity of the drone pilot was constructed throughout the book. In much the same way, profiling the expression or inference of agents' intentions can serve as the foundation for a unified understanding of their character across a series of events and scenarios. As this chapter goes on to argue below (6.7), the narrative organisation of descriptions of actions may significantly influence the reader's understanding of the reasons for actions. For now, it is enough to consider the variation in intentionality across comparable sentence-level examples, in order to produce a strong theoretical groundwork for the later expansion to narrative.

#### **6.4.2: Intentions across Clauses**

The previous example was designed to model intentional processes associated with an event in relative isolation. Of course, the process of engaging with discourse is not merely the sequential process of interpreting one sentence at a time. As the following example demonstrates, as more information is revealed to the reader in the course of reading, possible interpretations of character intentions narrow down, and patterns of activity can be recognised. In describing his experiences during the First World War, for instance, A.C. Warsop (1965) writes, similarly to Stainton, that:

f) [I] very carefully squeezed the trigger (15)

First of all, the adjective phrase 'very carefully' connotes an intentional action. Although it could be the case that Warsop misses his shot or wounds the wrong person, thereby

producing unintended consequences, the act of squeezing the trigger itself is intentional. Taken in isolation there is no additional information to suggest that any one reason for acting would be the correct one. Despite the absence of a specific intention, the first-person narrator is recognisable as an autonomous agent capable of acting for some purpose. Thus, even though the reader cannot know precisely why the narrator acts from the information provided in this sentence alone, it remains possible – even prototypical – to consider the agent as performing goal-directed activity.

Once the analysis moves beyond the clause, however, it becomes clear that the broader discourse provides context which affects the scope of probable intentions. Warsop describes how ‘I thought I saw two men behind some bushes twenty five yards in front. By now I was thoroughly frightened but I did draw my rifle, check my sights to twenty five yards’ (ibid), before carefully pulling the trigger. Taken as part of a script of activity, these actions support an interpretation of Warsop’s actions as granular components of a larger goal of hitting the enemy soldiers with his rifle. An interpretation of his intentions which suggests that he squeezes the trigger in order to hit these men is also supported by the prepositional phrase which immediately follows clause f), where Warsop describes how he squeezed the trigger ‘at the first one then the other indistinct figures’. In other words, narrative context and grammatical structure limit the reasonable interpretation of the narrator’s intentions: while we cannot say for sure why Warsop fired *at* the figures (to kill, to wound, to warn), there is a direct causal connection between them which Warsop describes as deliberate, via an act assumed prototypically to have been performed for *some* reason.

Of course, this example appears in a larger narrative context, in which specific goals behind the performance of the action may be deduced. In some narratives, it may even be the case that the intentions which govern an action are stated explicitly. For instance, Heavens (1916) describes how ‘the first line of our infantry jumped in [to the

trench] *with the intention of capturing it, retiring and leaving it empty*'. Even though the narrator provides the reader with a direct presentation of goals relating to the initial action of jumping into the trench, a resistant reader may be inclined to infer further intentions vertically related to those construed by Heavens, and otherwise rendered absent, such as an intention to harm enemy soldiers in the process of 'leaving [the trench] empty'. As with the discussion of resistant reading in relation to shared knowledge and construal (2.3.5), it is possible for a reader to reject a narrator's explanation of character intentions, instead substituting their own preferred account according to their own knowledge or ideology, whether providing an alternative intention behind the act, or rejecting its intentionality altogether. Mentions of intent within discourse thus serve to profile (Langacker, 2008: 68) a particular perspective on a character's goals and motivations.

Although narrators rarely state the intentions behind actions explicitly as Heavens does, their evaluative comments provide evidence of their reasoning. In the case of Warsop, before describing firing his gun, he describes how he believed 'there was only one thing to do – if we stayed in our trench, we should have been shot from above like rats in a trap' (1965: 15). Even here, Warsop evades a direct representation of an act of violence in which he is positioned as the source of a transfer of energy to the enemy soldier. By employing disnarration (4.3.2), he is able to establish a propositional logic which the reader can follow to infer the 'one thing to do' without stating it explicitly, whilst simultaneously reminding the reader of the risk of harm to himself should he choose not to act. A reasonable series of vertically related intentions to be inferred from this passage, then, could be that Warsop squeezes the trigger in order to fire his gun, in order to disable the enemy sniper, in order not to be harmed. This kind of intention exists in a vertical relationship with the more immediate goal of squeezing the trigger to

hit the men, which is construed here as an activity which *allows* Warsop to not be harmed.

Additionally, the negative shading (Simpson, 2003) which precedes the act of firing the gun (*'I thought I saw two men...'*) both foregrounds Warsop's intention to fire at two individuals, while simultaneously casting a degree of doubt on their presence. Likewise, although Warsop suggests that the events which took place require accepting that his assessment of events is accurate, in order to explain their outcome (*'how I escaped I shall never know unless I got them first'* (16, my emphasis), he continually foregrounds his perceptual processes, providing the opportunity to reconstrue the scene in a way which avoids positioning Warsop as a violent actor altogether. Again, it may not be the case that the reader of the narrative in which this sentence appears acknowledges all of these inferred intentions as the reason for squeezing the trigger. The text itself may foreground a particular intention, while the reader may draw upon cultural knowledge to parse probable scripts of activity and associated goals. The role of intentionality set out here is a network of *possible explanations* readers might infer in accounting for action, and making sense of the decisions and actions made by characters during the course of a narrative. Abbott (2015) describes narrative as the *'perceptible tracks on the surface of a universe of possibility'* (104), meaning much of the knowledge we infer about the world of a text is not explicitly stated. Instead, readers employ probabilistic knowledge to fill these gaps. In the majority of cases, the direct intentions behind a character's actions are not marked explicitly within the text. Recognising that characters have the capacity to act intentionally, and using this knowledge to begin theorising as to what those intentions may be, means that readers employ the kinds of Theory of Mind processing which takes place throughout reading to conceptualise the goals, beliefs, and motivations which might precede the performance of a given act.

### 6.4.3: Intentionality as Gradation

Although the discussion so far has been primarily concerned with identifying the capacity for intentional action and its significance in interpretation, it is clear that our conceptualisation of agents with the potential to act volitionally does not preclude the same agents from performing unintentional acts. In the lumberjack example (6.3), this information was carried by the verb ‘crashed’, which connotes a loss of control. This example alone implies a binary transition from intentional to unintentional activity. However, not all agents are equally likely to elicit an assessment of their actions as intentional in otherwise identical clauses. For instance, consider the following examples:

g) The soldier killed the man.

h) The child killed the man.

Here, both agents have the capacity to act volitionally, as per the Canonical Event Model. Though we attribute the *potential* for intention to the agents of both sentences, it seems incorrect to ascribe equal potential to both, assuming that the reader knows that soldiers are likely to be conscious of actions that lead to the death of another, but a child (though capable of acting volitionally) might be more likely presumed to have caused an unintentional death. So, simply because an agent *can* be associated with intentional actions does not necessarily mean that they are *always* acting intentionally, or that one interpretation is always favoured over another without context.

Judgements of intentionality are thus the product of socio-cognitive factors affected by prior knowledge individual readers bring to the text. However, these judgements are also dynamic, capable of being revised in an ongoing assessment of actors and actions as the discourse continues. Just as in the discussion of ‘world repair’ (Gavins, 2007) in the previous chapter (5.5), when the reader of *Predator* was deceived

into believing that a training exercise was an authentic experience of combat, so the presence of intentions can cause a reader to revisit their understanding of an event, or indeed an entire text. The following examples introduce an extract of a memoir (Hill, 1915) gradually, examining how the introduction of new information requires the reassessment of probable goals and intentions. Hill (1915) describes how, after a battle, German soldiers ‘ran towards us with their hands above their heads crying, ‘Mercy, Kamarad’’. Following this, he narrates how:

i) We gave them mercy

In isolation, this clause appears to refer to an act of kindness from a first person plural group of actors to an unknown number of individuals. While the act of giving mercy can have semantic associations with killing, this is rarely its primary meaning in isolation from a broader context. However, a construal of the account which contextualises the intentions behind Hill’s actions will narrow the reader’s perception:

j) We gave them mercy, the same mercy they would have given us.

Here, Hill employs the modal verb ‘would’ to elicit the construal of a disnarrated reciprocal action by the enemy soldiers. As with earlier examples of similar narrative acts (4.3.2; 5.1; 6.4.2), Hill’s disnarration construes his actions in relation to other, anticipated actions. Accordingly, while the act of ‘giving mercy’ is as yet undefined, Hill’s volitional decision to act in this way is presented to the reader as a pre-emptive response to other possible agents, and the possible reasons for acting are now foregrounded. As a result, by the point at which Hill makes explicit the metaphorical nature of his construal of his own actions thus far, the reader has already been presented with his reasoning for intentionally performing an act of violence:

k) We gave them mercy, the same mercy they would have given us. It sounds impossible to shoot a man in cold blood but in an affair like this, morality seems changed.

With these additional clauses, the meaning of the previous sentence is finally made explicit: 'mercy' is no longer a straightforward description of the acts which took place, but a sarcastic reconstrual of events. Hill's metaphor of killing as mercy delays the perception of his actions as violence. Such foregrounding of the rationalisation behind his action affords Hill the opportunity to remark that the killing was 'in cold blood', a detail which, if presented earlier, may affect the reader's perception of the justification for killing. Likewise, the potential surprise in revealing the specific details of his actions supports his observation that 'morality seems changed'. In this short passage, Hill's stylistic choices serve to prime readers with a perceived justification for an act he acknowledges as morally ambiguous, perhaps leading to a less critical interpretation than alternative construals in which the killing 'in cold blood' is presented first, to be justified after the initial description.

In paying close attention to the attribution of intention, this research can begin to make sense of a novel dimension of a text's stylistic function. From a critical perspective, this emphasises the power of the author over the reader's response to a given series of events. Although earlier chapters have discussed the extent to which readers can resist the construal presented to them by a text in terms of causality (2.4.3; 3.4), the fact remains that the text delineates the possibilities and probabilities of explanation. By foregrounding or backgrounding contextual information, the narrator draws attention toward particular inferences. In cases where the reader has no personal experience of the events described, or any further evidence from which to infer the causes of the events or the intentions of the actors described, the possibility of an effective reconstrual of events is diminished. Given that examples i) through k) have no further context, the aim of this reading cannot be to uncover any 'original' or 'authentic' intention behind a given action. As the reader has no access to additional evidence to support the validity of either construal, each claim remains equally valid. Instead, it

serves to demonstrate how the linguistic frame provided by an event's description affects not only the construal of a single event, but potentially their schematic understanding of the narrator more generally. Modelling the relationship between event structure, cognition, and our understanding of intentional activity allows the critical interpretation to comment on the ways in which readers are compelled to make sense of actions and characters within the narrative.

## 6.5: From Causation to Responsibility, through Intention

The reader response study from Chapter 3 demonstrates that readers are able to infer a closer causal relationship between event participants that is explicitly relayed in the source text. This section returns to the passage analysed in that study, in order to provide an explanation for this phenomenon in terms of the perception of intentionality to demonstrate the relationship between intentions (or rather, our capacity and tendency to perceive and assign them), and the perceptual process of identifying causal relationships within narrative acts. Referring back to the review of existing literature in the critical study of military memoir from a linguistic perspective (3.2), scholars commenting on the language of these texts have typically associated a lack of direct linguistic agency within a given text with an absence of *practical* agency – a dissociation between the actor and the act. Hart (2013) has demonstrated that Cognitive Grammar's focus on the force within events is adept at accounting for the representation of agency in newspaper discourse on acts of violence. This discussion of intentionality, however, aims to examine more closely how the perception of agency itself is arrived at. Hence, this section returns to two texts discussed earlier (Ch. 3.2), and which were initially analysed in terms of the inference of a causal relationship between the narrators and

actions from which they are distanced. The opportunity to return to these clauses serves to demonstrate the alternative focus of intentionality in moving beyond causality.

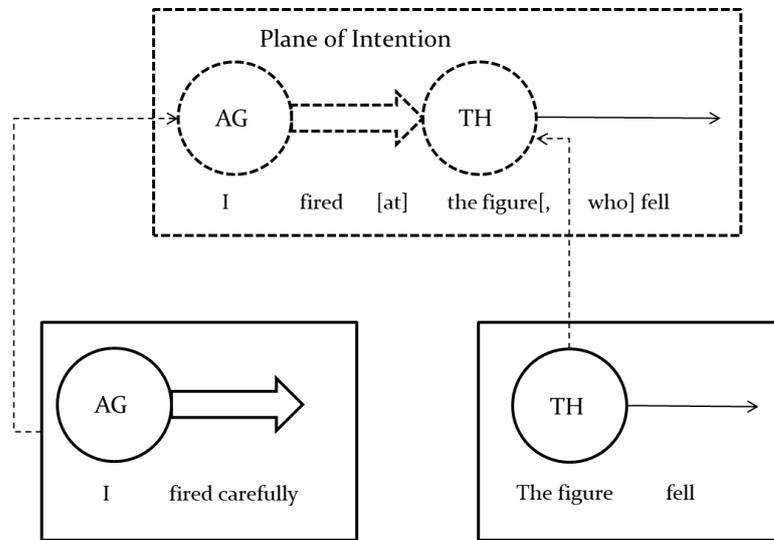
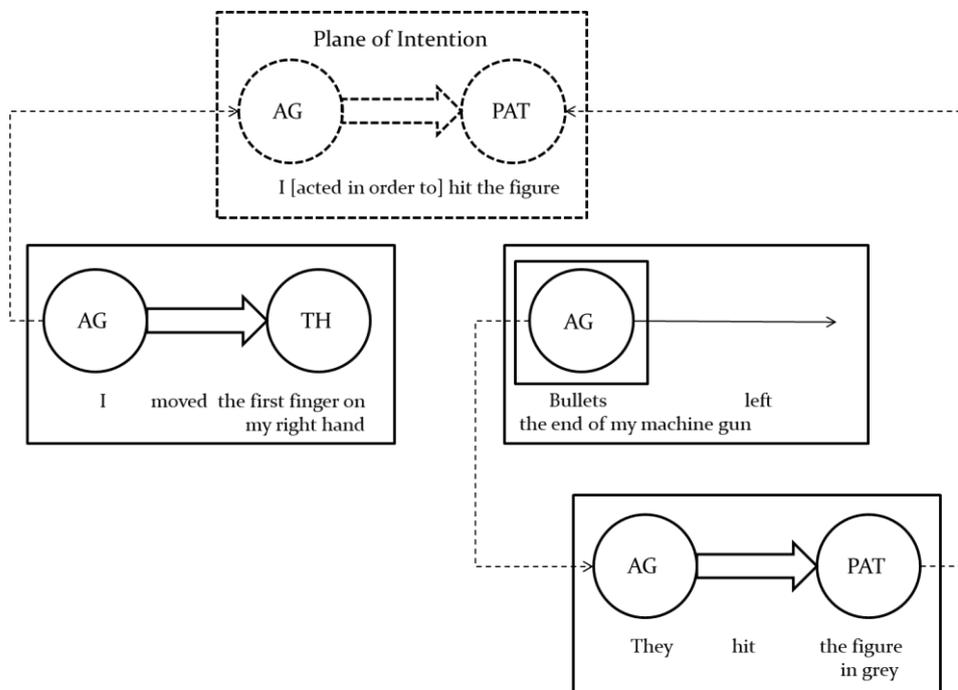


Fig. 6.5: 'I fired carefully. The figure fell.' (Turner, n.d: 49)

According to Langacker, an agentive process without a theme is 'conceptually incoherent' (2008: 371). As was explained earlier (2.3.2), actions such as these can be accounted for in terms of an unrealised theme made explicit through context. In this case, interpreting the act of 'firing' relies on the reader's implicit understanding that an instrument – the narrator's rifle – must be fired. Even so, the acts of firing the rifle and the figure falling down have no explicit causal connection within the discourse. However, it seems illogical to think of the two events as disconnected from one another: given their proximity, an intuitive reading might conclude that the act of firing carefully causes the figure to fall, in line with conceptual knowledge regarding what it means to fire a rifle. The dotted arrow and outline at the top of Fig. 6.5 represents the fact that first person singular 'I' connotes an agent that the reader can reasonably be expected to identify as being able to act intentionally. This observation is supported by the presence of the adjective 'carefully', which explicitly denotes an intentional action. While it is possible that the narrator fired his gun for any number of possible reasons (as per 6.4.1), the proximity of the action to the description of the figure falling is taken here as

indicative of a causal relation between the two. As a result, the reading offered in *Fig. 6.5* represents an interpretation of this construal in which the narrator is perceived as acting in order to cause the falling of the figure, despite the segmentation of these two processes within the text. In identifying actors as operating intentionally, readers are able to infer causal relationships between events in discourse which are not made explicit. The example below examines a similar fragmentation of causality, showing how the relationship between the initial actor and final patient of an action chain can be reconstructed into a single intention, even when the two participants are separated by a greater distance within the text.



*Fig. 6.6:* 'I moved the finger on my right hand. Bullets left the end of my machine gun. They hit the figure in grey.' (Lukowiak, qtd. in Robinson (2011: 583))

*Fig. 6.6* returns to Lukowiak's construal of an act of killing (3.2), which Robinson (2011) describes as being 'without any consciousness of his own agency' (583). Robinson's description is puzzling, as in order to describe the scene at all, Lukowiak has drawn a causal connection between himself and the other soldier. Nonetheless, it is also possible to see how the impression of Lukowiak's agency in relation to the act of killing is reduced through his construal of events through the extension of the action chain. As

the diagram shows, the actor with the capacity to act intentionally ('I', Lukowiak), is placed at a distance from the final act of violence ('They [bullets] hit the figure') through an extended action chain. The intermediary grammatical agent 'bullets' *lacks* knowledge from the conceptual substrate that affords intentionality, but 'I' can be archetypally modelled as a human agent with the capacity to act volitionally. Hence, although no specific intention is given in the text itself, the dashed box in this diagram represents a prototypical model of an intention, based upon the knowledge afforded by the causal process of the action chain. By placing 'I' at the head of this action chain, it remains possible to demonstrate a relationship between the agentive head and the final theme, given that the head of the chain *causes* the process which results in the final transfer of force.

Moreover, the narrative context in which this extract appears provides further indication that Lukowiak acts deliberately in attacking the figure, as he writes: 'crouched in the trench was a figure in grey. I saw him. He saw me. He held a rifle' (ibid). In the relation of these perceptual processes and existential descriptors, the figure's threatening status is foregrounded in advance of Lukowiak's action, justifying the violent response as reasonable self-defence, as per passages of disnarration which hypothesises the potential harm to the narrator of inaction (4.3.2). If the head of the chain can be thought of as acting intentionally, then, it can be thought of as doing so in order to achieve some goal relating to the energy sink within the action chain. Hence, in the plane of intention outlined in *Fig. 6.6*, 'I' is suggested to be acting intentionally towards 'the figure in grey'.

That said, Lukowiak's lexical choices also mark a possible *reduction* in the perception of intentional action. By framing the action performed by the narrator as 'moved', Lukowiak introduces the possibility of interpreting his action as superventional motion. As per Guglielmo and Malle (2010), even if the context makes such a reading

seem improbable, the construal of Lukowiak's action as an unskilled movement of his own body draws attention to the possibility of a non-agentive interpretation. Likewise, the verbs used to describe the later sections of the action chain, 'left' and 'hit', describe equally simple motions. Accordingly, while Robinson's claim that the passage shows no consciousness of Lukowiak's agency must contend with the presence of the first person pronoun which begins the action chain, a reading which focuses on the intentionality of the sequence can also recognise the rhetorical distance placed between Lukowiak and the act of injuring – even acknowledging his physical role in the causal chain – while maintaining a critical discussion of the displacement of responsibility in the author's broad and ambiguous semantic evocations.

Intentionality places emphasis on the reader's ability to identify actors' capacity to act volitionally as central to their interpretations of these descriptions of violence. What the reader is presented with in these extracts are action chains with an agent who has the capacity to act volitionally at their head. Hence, no matter how minimally any notion of agency or responsibility is expressed, its *potential* remains as an interpretative function within the text. While the precise intentions of the actors are not made explicit, probabilistic inference suggests that both narrators act *for some reason*, which may be inferred from context on a case-by-case basis. In both the examples examined above, the agents at the head of the actions chains retain the potential to act intentionally, which allows the reader to recover a causal relationship between the initial agent and the final state of violence. In this case, to describe such passages as entirely lacking in agency is an oversimplification, where agency can more accurately be described as reduced, or minimalised, terms which recognise the recoverability of an association between the initial agent and the final act framed by the possibility for intentional action. Moreover, the analysis remains limited in its use by virtue of being confined to only a few short clauses. The remainder of this chapter will discuss how a

cognitively-oriented critical analysis not only requires narrative context, but that profiling intentionality can be used as the avenue by which detailed clausal analysis is organised into a manageable way of uniting close reading and overarching narrative themes.

## 6.6: Situating Intentionality within Discourse

According to Langacker, 'grammar is shaped by discourse' (2008: 457), and the final chapters of *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* endeavour to demonstrate this relationship. More recently, however, Langacker himself has acknowledged that 'there are limits to what CG can offer literature' (2014: xiv) at present, as Cognitive Grammar's methods necessarily require extensive close-reading and elaborate diagrams, as *Figs. 5 and 6* demonstrate (cf. also Ch. 4.3.1). His previous comments on the relationship between the different 'levels' of analysis provide an indication as to why connecting sentence and narrative-level analyses might be seen as a challenge for Cognitive Grammar:

Structures at a given [linguistic] level have to be characterised in relation to constitutive elements of the *proper sort*. There is no point describing a chapter directly in terms of phrases, or a complex sentence in terms of words. It is not just that skipping levels yields an incomplete description – it actually makes the descriptive task far more difficult. (Langacker, 2008: 480, my emphasis)

Langacker is keen to establish that grammar is affected and influenced by the discursive context in which a given utterance is situated (cf. 2008: 457) but the analytical processes often demonstrated through Cognitive Grammar require such a fine-grained approach that larger units of narrative are often unwieldy. Moreover, while he suggests that the transition to discursive analysis should employ the 'proper sort' of 'levels' of attention, it is not made clear exactly what these levels are. 'Skipping' directly from a discussion of

individual events to large-scale narrative, as we have seen, cannot account for much of the nuance of identity development. Historian Louis Mink has observed a similar disparity, arguing that:

there is something incompatible about our concept of “event” and our concept of “narrative”, which might be put as follows: the concept of event is primarily linked to the conceptual structure of science... but in this conceptual structure it is purged of all narrative connections, and refers to something that can be identified and described without any necessary reference to its location in some process of development – a process which only narrative can represent. Therefore, to speak of a “narrative of events” is almost a contradiction in terms.

(Mink, 1978: 146-147)

Mink’s observation is based upon the belief that an analysis of events can be meaningfully isolated from their ‘narrative connections’. As has been shown repeatedly both throughout this chapter and the thesis more broadly, however, efforts to model the cognitive connections which govern the perceptions of causality and intentionality associated with a given action or event eventually require the consideration of the clause within a broader spectrum of activity.

This thinking can be applied to the problem at hand, as the analysis of ‘events’ is comparable to the analysis of individual clauses and sentences in language. The CG approach to isolated sentences (including the examples used in this chapter) is adept at investigating and explaining clausal structures, but the development of a narrative analysis from this lacks an essential understanding of exactly what it is that binds these sentences together to form a narrative. As constitutive elements of linguistic structure, narratives and sentences are simply too far from one another in terms of scope to be linked directly. However, the need to contextualise the perception of intentionality beyond the clausal level is highly intuitive. Van Dijk (1975) examines the role of action in structuring narrative, and suggests that in categorising whether or not events are performed intentionally, ‘the notion of an “action sentence” is not strictly decidable

without the specification of the context of the whole *action discourse*. In action discourses we may be able to interpret or infer that a given action was intentional' (282, emphasis original). As the examples above have suggested (6.3), considering the intentionality of individual acts in isolation does not reflect the process by which readers come to develop knowledge of the actors within the discourse.

In Cognitive Grammar, the notion of 'reference points' (Langacker, 2008: 83-88; Harrison, 2017: 20-22; 49-69) provide an account of how individual events within narrative can be conceptualised in relation to ongoing observations across a text. Essentially, as the discourse develops, salient information is construed which allows the reader to conceptualise target actions and objects in relation to these established concepts. For example, prepositional phrases such as 'over there', 'towards the path', and 'behind the shelf' guide the reader's attention, and can be built upon with further reference points to provide a more salient and granular construal of an object's position in relation to these reference points. Given that references connect construals and propositions from across discourse, van Vliet (2009) has proposed that the Reference Point Model can be employed to trace the information associated with actors across a text, including background information about characters' lives and beliefs (455-456).

While reference points are typically discussed in terms of explicit construals within the text, the model of intentionality advanced in this chapter can be used to argue that readers' inferences also produce reference points, against which the perception of characters develops across discourse. Making intentionality the focus of a sustained analysis gives grounds for connecting clausal analysis with narrative structure without requiring the extensive modelling of each clause within the discourse. Instead, the process requires a thematic selection, based on the kind of agent(s) being investigated. Returning to the Warsop (1965) extract above (6.4.2), it is possible to map

each of the actions the narrator performs leading up to and including the firing of his rifle (shown in bold) according to an intention (italicised):

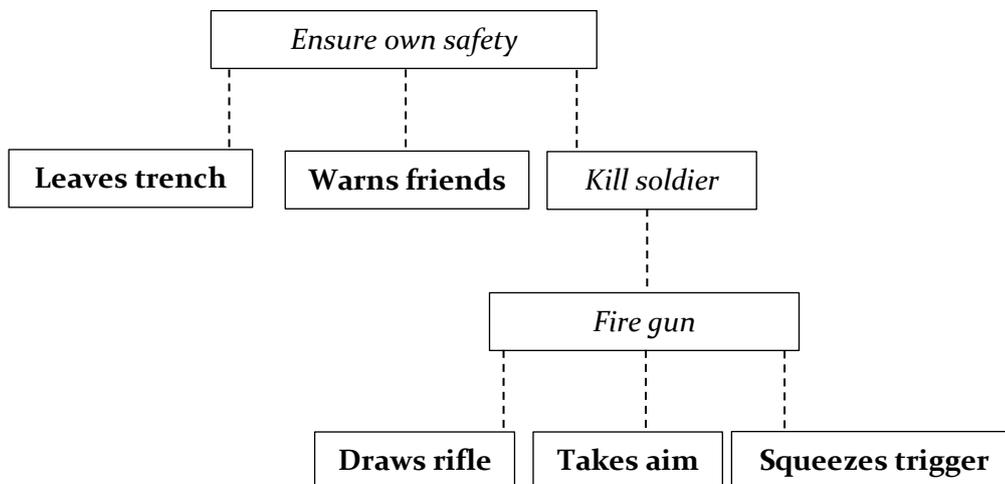


Fig. 6.7: Connecting intentions hierarchically across discourse

Mapped in this way, Fig. 6.7 shows that prior to the act of killing, Warsop's immediate actions and concerns were with risks to his life and his friends. Following the disnarrated clause (cf. 6.4.2) in which he describes the danger of not acting, the highly granular description of the acts which constitute the firing of his gun are subsumed within an overall concern with personal safety, justifying the act of killing as part of an ongoing process of self-defence. In other words, the descriptions of these earlier activities produce intentions which function as reference points when evaluating the decision-making associated with the act of killing. Moreover, this extract simply represents the intentions and associated actions of the narrator over the span of a short paragraph, and it remains possible to continue to extend the network of intentions associated with the actions and construals of Warsop's narrative across broader sections of the text. Shortly after this scene, for instance, he describes how 'there was a flash in the sky. I realised with a shock I had been badly hit. My right arm jumped up on its own and flopped down. It felt as though my left arm and part of my chest had been blown away' (16), before passing out and waking in hospital several days later. Although

Warsop is primarily divorced from the agentive role throughout this passage, and does not perform any intentional actions, there is a clear thematic relationship with his earlier foregrounded overarching goal of ensuring his own safety, which serves as the overarching explicit intention behind each of his earlier actions.

The point is, as Pincombe (2014) has observed, drawing upon all aspects of a Cognitive Grammar analysis in approaching units of discourse beyond several clauses quickly becomes unweildy. Moreover, examining event structure exclusively at the micro level of individual clauses risks treating events as ‘prefabricated building blocks’, while the discussion of narrative structure across Chapter 4 has argued instead that events are ‘custom fit’ in their construal to suit macro-level narrative goals (Herman, 2002: 73). Connecting individual events with the possible intentions which relate them, however, provides a means to discuss detailed features of discourse in relation to these overarching character and discourse goals. In turn, these agents can be tracked across the narrative, as their actions work towards achieving – or perhaps wrestle with competing –goals, beliefs, desires, and motivations, inferred by the reader from the narrative context.

## **6.7: Intentionality and the Act of Killing**

Given that agents have the potential to be motivated by a number of intentions across a narrative, this section aims to expand on the examples which take into account narrative context (6.4.2). In this instance, the intentions associated with the narrator shift over the course of the examined discourse. Taking the perception of this shift into account, the analysis presented shows how recognising character intentions at a number of levels simultaneously can affect the critical judgement of the events described.

On a day filled with greens, blues and gold, suggesting that the whole landscape was a joint production by Corot and Constable we were furtively

moving from cover to cover to avoid the attentions of snipers and a solitary machine-gun. My young companion, named Milligan, newly recruited, was a rosy-faced lad full of fun whom I had to reprove for his lack of caution; we crouched together in a warm grassy hollow. As I lay, the sun caressing the nape of my neck, my thoughts strayed to happier days among sweet-smelling hay, and I fervently hoped we might be held up for some time.

Milligan nudged me; ahead an officer was waving us cautiously forward, with a quick dash I made for another point of cover and looked back. Milligan, cheerfully grinning, was scrambling to his feet when a burst of fire knocked him backward.

I crawled back. He was dead.

In the past, deaths had saddened, sickened, or had merely left me unaffected; Milligan's death roused me to a pitch of fury. This mere kid, so full of life, so happy – blasted into eternity in the high noon of his existence.

The bastards. The utter bastards!

The enemy machine-gunners had been cleverly hidden at the foot of a slight bluff. We had no Lewis gunners that day but rifle fire was making their position uncomfortable. A figure was seen to scramble up and poise momentarily unbalanced whilst silhouetted against the sky; rifles cracked, I fired carefully – the figure fell. I felt savagely exultant.

Poor little Milligan!

When things quietened we moved forward. I climbed the bluff. Spread-eagled and face-down was a young German, younger than Milligan. His helmet had rolled off, his scalp was close-cropped, his uniform looked absurdly big, his hands clutched grass where he had clawed the earth in his last moment of agony, and his childish face was distorted with pain.

Poor kid! And it was such a beautiful day. (48-49)

The clauses from this passage in which the narrator directly describes performing a violent act ('I fired carefully – the figure fell') were discussed earlier (2.4.1) to demonstrate the ways in which construal may segment force, and distance the agent from the act of violence in the surface reading. Now, however, the passage is considered in terms of intentionality and context, and how the intentions associated with the act of killing are presented across a unit of discourse, rather than within an isolated clause. The fact that the act of firing is modified with the adverb 'carefully' gives an unequivocal

instance of an intentional action: the reader is *primed* to consider Turner as an intentional agent, drawing attention to the fact that the action is performed deliberately. Unlike the earlier example from Warsop (1965), however, in which the act of squeezing the trigger was foregrounded as the 'careful' act, Turner describes himself as carefully firing his gun. Although the landmark of this action is not construed, the reader can infer that Turner fires with an intent to do harm to the enemy combatant.

In examining the causative roots of the act of killing, however, the narrative also presents a case of 'emotion as cause' (Sánchez-García, 2007: 219), in which the reader draws upon earlier textual knowledge of emotional frames to infer a causal connection between the emotional state and the character's action. In the case of this passage, Turner's evaluative statements ('roused me to a pitch of fury', 'the utter bastards') indicate an angered emotional state which is construed as acting upon the narrator, and the continued reference to 'poor Milligan' provides a frame in which an intention to avenge can be readily inferred. This moves this kind of analysis away from the simple observation of events in text, and towards a more holistic analysis of the factors which may influence interpretation.

With the context of Milligan's death acting *upon* the narrator, the reader is introduced to new motivations, moving vertically along the plane of intention. Turner intends to harm the enemy soldier, because he has been 'roused [...] to a pitch of fury'. As such, Turner's motivation could be construed as enacting revenge in response to this death. The fact that he immediately returns to reflect on the death of his friend ('Poor little Milligan!') suggests a direct association between the two. Connecting the transfer of force in emotional effect of Milligan's death to its influence on Turner, and to the narrator's construal that this fury causes Turner to act, then Turner himself is no longer the head of the action chain. Rather, the enemy soldiers set into motion a chain of events which cause Turner to wish to harm them. Turner's act of violence, then, is

construed as a justified retaliation *caused by* the group the victim was associated with. In his evaluative statements, Turner produces explicit language ('utter bastards', etc.), and notes that he felt 'savagely exultant' after firing on the soldier. Here, causality and intentionality are interwoven, as the construal of force in this passage which positions the enemy soldiers as the head of the action chain which results in Turner's act of violence affords an intentional construal of the act itself, as part of an ongoing process of emotional wounding and justified self-defence.

This construal of an individual act of violence within a broader transactive frame can be seen in other examples of war writing, such as the earlier discussion of the metaphor of interest repayment (Ch. 2.3.4). More overtly, Sheldon (1987) recalls that 'it is my job as an Englishman and as a member of the good old Sheldon family to *return the blows* of those who create evil' (24, my emphasis). Once again, the violence of the narrator is construed as retaliatory, as Sheldon construes hypothetical 'blows' as the source of the transfer of violent force, making the enemy combatants the initial, responsible actors. More to the point, these individual acts are presented in relation to these broader reference points: acts of killing in war are not presented in isolation, but as part of an ongoing exchange of violent acts, contextualising and justifying the narrator's participation.

## **6.8: Conclusions**

This chapter has modelled the perception of actors' intentions in Cognitive Grammar's model of events, and demonstrated how the identification of goal-directed activity can be employed to connect actions across an analysis of larger units of discourse. Building upon existing elements of Cognitive Grammar, such as the conceptual substrate, it has shown that the differentiation between intentional and

superventional actions can be accounted for relatively straightforwardly, and contribute to the understanding of meaning in relation to discursive and social input beyond the clause in question. In the study of events in language, intentionality offers a way to produce a focused yet manageable transition from sentence-level to discourse-level analysis in Cognitive Grammar, in order to fully contextualise the operation and perception of intentions within discourse. This work has gone beyond simply providing Cognitive Grammar with an equivalent to SFL's distinction between intentional and superventional actions, instead positing a framework in which goals can both persist and develop across a text, as part of a network of probabilistic inferences.

Identifying characters' intentions is a process of mapping activity to a network of contextual information and pre-existing knowledge which informs readers' constructions of a narrative world and the minds which inhabit and affect it. In the analyses of war writings presented in this chapter, the role of intentionality in a cognitive approach extends far beyond the individual clause, working as a network which connects individual construals of events to overarching narrative and discursive functions. Further application of this mode of analysis in critical and literary readings will help to advance Cognitive Grammar's position in stylistic analysis beyond the close examination of individual clauses. By developing a network for the thematic association of clauses, the analysis of intentions as reference points provides a means by which to analyse characters and actions across large units of text.

In comparison to the discussion of inference in Chapter 3, the process of describing an act or actor as prototypically intentional has so far relied on the individual subjective judgements of a specialist reader, an issue already raised as potentially unrepresentative of everyday reading practices (Ch. 3.5.3; 6.1). In critiquing the interpretation of lexical items as having a set semantic value to the reader regardless of

context, O'Halloran (2003) suggests that this compositional approach 'produced a strategic inference to suit a particular line which is likely to be at odds with [...] non-analysts' (162). In other words, researchers with a specialist interest in language may infer meanings associated with lexical items that are not always apparent to non-specialist readers. In the analysis of intentionality for the purpose of critical commentary, the risks of relying exclusively on specialist interpretations of meaning are twofold. First, that the specific intentions associated with an act or actor may not represent non-specialist interpretation. Unless the activity described elicits a very select number of scripted sequences which accompany it, such as in the case of squeezing a trigger, the above examples have not aimed to account for all possible interpretations of intention.

The aim in this chapter, therefore, has been to represent the judgement of intentions as a process of probabilistic mind-modelling, with the possible impressions of intention likely varying from reader to reader. As a result, the examples given above are primarily impressionistic, with the analysis itself less concerned with these intentions *per se*, instead being focused on the unifying capacity for an agent to be acting intentionally. Second, and more importantly, is the possibility that non-specialist readers may disagree with my interpretation of a given action as intentional in the first instance. This will be examined thoroughly in the next chapter, where the impressions of non-specialist readers with regards to the scalar intentionality of given actions support the analysis of a short autobiographical narrative. Supplementing theoretical accounts with reader-response data will help to more precisely pinpoint the effects of various lexical and grammatical structures in the attribution of agency, or the potential for agency, both in isolated texts and larger narratives. Testing the possibility of degrees of agency will further explain the ways in which readers and listeners respond to varying levels of potential volition. Further sustained analyses of protracted narratives with a

focus on the function of linguistic agency will also help to outline exactly how the relationship between agency within an isolated clause and knowledge of character motivations and desires across a text can come together to form readers' responses.

In examining the intentions of actors within discourse, the discussion of this chapter has often come close to discussing the concept of responsibility, as well as the judgements of praise and or blame for an action. While modelling intentionality highlights an important dimension of the process of conferring such judgements, the concepts of intentionality and responsibility are not direct parallels of one another, and the assignation of praise or blame represents a social judgement more than a cognitive process of interpretation. Accordingly, as the following chapter develops, attention will also be paid to how and when these judgements are made, and what factors may be in play as they differ between readers.

# Chapter 7: Attributing Intentionality and Responsibility in Language

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## 7.1: Narrative Intentions and Assigning Responsibility

The previous chapter outlined the ways Cognitive Grammar can model the concept of intentionality, and the way in which actors' intentions figure within an understanding of their activities across a narrative. As was noted (6.7), however, describing the perception of intentionality requires a judgement on behalf of the researcher/reader comparable to the discussion of causality in Chapters 2 and 3. As a result, this chapter reports a reader response study of a short autobiographical narrative (Hyder, 1930 [2009]) to ensure that the critical discussion of intentionality in the language of the text being examined is grounded in the perceptions of non-specialist readers (cf. O'Halloran, 2003). Moreover, as Labov (2004) has observed, 'narratives that centre on conflict, violence, sickness and death are normally concerned with the assignment of *responsibility* for these events' (37, my emphasis), and the concept of responsibility as perceived by readers is defined and explored in relation to the perception and inference of character intentions. The reader response study in this chapter therefore builds upon the theoretical work of Chapter 6, examining how non-specialist readers perceive intentionality and responsibility for an act of violence in war time reported autobiographically. Readers' responses to this text and their perception of the responsibility of the narrator for the act of killing then form the basis of a stylistic analysis, concerned with the linguistic choices which impact readers' judgements of responsibility, as well as their perceptions of intentions and the overall significance of individual actions with the context of the narrative.

Attributing responsibility often serves as the implicit basis of much Critical Discourse Analysis. Existing research concerning the role of language choices in the perception of responsibility has examined everyday language use (Dreyfus, 2017) and discourses surrounding violence, either domestic (Clark, 1992), civil (Hart, 2013; 2018), or military (Butt et al., 2004; Finlay, 2018), each analysed with regards to the portrayal and accountability of violent actors. Even outside of academia, Bayoumi (2018: online) describes how passivisation in media reports surrounding the killing of Palestinian protesters by Israeli soldiers ‘works not only to buffer Israel from criticism but also and more fundamentally to shield Israel from accountability’. Identifying agency in language for the purpose of critical analysis, then, is combined with a process of recognising the construal or absence of responsibility for the actions performed.

Reflecting back on a phrase discussed earlier in this thesis (2.3.1; 5.4), Bourke’s ‘myth of agency’ regarding soldiers’ efforts to position themselves as in control of their actions has both grammatical and social connotations. In Chapters 2 and 3, the concept of agency was closely tied to the notion of the agent in grammar, and the reader’s direct observation of force transferral and causality through the positioning of the narrator as the grammatical agent of a verb with semantic connotations of force. Moreover, folk-psychological models of agency (Pacherie, 2010; 2013) typically relate agency to the conscious intention to perform an action. However, events can be caused accidentally and without intent, and the perception of agency may therefore only require the *capacity* for intentionality within a character or narrator’s described actions (cf. Ahearn, 2001). Chapter 6 tentatively explored the ways in which Cognitive Grammar may represent the hierarchical and concomitant mapping of a character’s goals and aims in the contextualisation of a described action, and synthesising existing theories of intentionality with narrative analysis in the context of critical analysis. With this

framework established, the present chapter moves to expand this framework with greater reference to the judgements made by lay readers.

Following the value of the reader response study of Chapter 3 in challenging preconceived expectations in the response of everyday, non-specialist readers to memoirs of military conflict, it is equally important to ensure that the intentions discussed critically are not the result of a specialist reading of the text. To that end, this chapter revolves around a reader response study, designed to explore how readers' judgements of intentionality and responsibility are brought to task, and how contextual information, such as narrative structure and the war-time environment in which the described actions take place, may affect these judgements. O'Halloran (2005a) observes that active reflection on intentionality and responsibility is part of an active, critically minded analysis of a text: 'In critical analysis of implied causal relations in hard news, our reading can be guided by certain questions: *who was responsible for an action?*, *what was their goal?*, *what were the results of an action?* And so on. But that is an analysis, a procedure which requires much effort' (341). O'Halloran goes on to compare this to the "non-critical reader' who is not expending as much effort' (ibid), once again distinguishing between the close-reading practices of the engaged reader, and the interpretative experiences of readers who, while attentive enough to comprehend the meaning of the text in question, do not engage critically with its ideological perspective. Indeed, while Chapter 6 was concerned with developing the means to describe intentions within a Cognitive Grammar framework of action, such a model does not distinguish between specialist and lay readings. Accordingly, this chapter is concerned with the development of this distinction through a study of lay reader attitudes towards intentionality and responsibility.

In the case of assessing the perception of responsibility, a review of recent cognitive scientific research suggests that ‘our introspection is a very unreliable method for uncovering the cognitive basis of our actions’ (Frith, 2013: 141). Indeed, the findings of the reader response study in Chapter 3 support this hypothesis, as readers demonstrated a variety of affective responses to the same passage (3.5). The aim of this final chapter, then, is to combine the effective methodology of reader response-based analysis with a critical interest in the representation of intentionality, and its relationship with responsibility and the conferral of praise and blame.

## **7.2: Intentionality, Responsibility, and Blame**

Much like the perception of causality, perceiving intentionality is an inferential activity which serves as a ‘hallmark of human cognitive apparatus’ (Behrend and Scofield, 2006: 290) and allows readers to group actions and events according to theories of *why* events occur, in relation to the ongoing goals and plans of intentional actors. According to Plaks and Robinson (2015), ‘people generally hold that there is a positive relationship between the degree of intentionality of an act and the actor’s degree of moral responsibility (Pizzaro et al., 2003; Reeder, 2009; Guglielmo and Malle, 2011; Laurin and Plaks, 2014)’. Likewise, Cushman et al. (2013) show that from the age of 4-8, children begin to produce moral evaluations of actions based on the actor’s intentions, as opposed to the consequences of the act itself. As the process of deducing responsibility typically relies on perceiving intentionality, the two concepts are often treated interchangeably under the umbrella term ‘agency’, which contains the perception of intent, forethought, and self-reflection, as well as the identification of an agent as causally associated with the act (Bandura, 2006).

This conflation of intentionality, causality, and responsibility has also occurred in linguistic analysis, and particularly in Critical Discourse Analysis, which is explicitly occupied with ‘critically analys[ing] those in power, those who are responsible’ (van Dijk, 1991: 4). Elsewhere, for example, van Dijk (1975) has described how ‘we are only responsible for those doings (and their consequences) which are *within our control* and which we *intended* to bring about’ (279, my emphases). While intended actions represent a large portion of the actions for which we are often perceived to be responsible, it is also possible to be legally and morally held accountable for unintended consequences of non-volitional actions. Meanwhile, Hart (2013) suggests that the symmetrical action schemas of reciprocal verbs when reporting police violence ‘has the capacity to mitigate, and thus legitimate, social actions by presenting *responsibility for them* as shared’ (118-119, my emphasis). Hart (2018) returns to this example to explain how alternative event-frames ‘serve to apportion blame and responsibility for violent encounters in different ways’ (9). While it may be the case in Hart’s example that both participants *are* construed as equally responsible, responsibility, intentionality, and blame are examined separately in this chapter in order to discuss how they might be affected individually by language and context.

As Ahearn (2001) observes of the concept of agency in both social and linguistically oriented research, ‘scholars often fail to recognize that the particular ways in which they conceive of agency have implications for the understanding of personhood, causality, action, and intention’ (112) and so this chapter begins with an active distinction between intentionality and responsibility, their relationship with the general concept of agency, and their role in the conferral of praise and blame. In a framework of human agency which takes intentionality as a definitive aspect, acting with intent can generally be seen as a prerequisite for the ascription of agency, which itself supports the observation of responsibility. Indeed, Knobe (2003a) demonstrates

that the perception of intentionality is not simply a predictive tool for anticipating the observed actor's future behaviour, but one closely linked with the process of conferring a moral judgement on the assessed activity. In particular, Knobe describes how 'moral valence' – whether the act described is deemed praise- or blameworthy – serves as an indicator of participants' willingness to define the actor as having acted intentionally.

In bringing this research together, it becomes clear that modelling a linear, hierarchical relationship between the various aspects of agency associated with responsibility and intent is untenable. While Bandura (2006) defines intentionality as one of the four constituents of human agency, supported by the findings of Cushman et al. (2013), further research has suggested that the reader's willingness to praise or blame an actor affects their recognition of the intentionality of the action in the first instance (Knobe, 2003; Hindricks, 2008). As Coates and Tognazzini (2013) suggest, the process of conferring blame can be imagined as involving 'a robust blaming context – one that seems clearly to involve blame *somewhere*, even if we aren't sure where – and then take each candidate mental state or activity one by one to see whether it can perform the tasks that blame performs' (7, emphasis original), including beliefs, desires, emotions, and other dispositions. In other words, blameworthiness affects the perception of the act as intentional, which in turn affects the capacity to view an agent as responsible, and therefore blameworthy. The precise relationship between the perception of intentionality, responsibility, and blame is subject to ongoing research, and resolving this apparent feedback loop (see *Fig. 7.1*) is beyond the scope of the present chapter. While it remains uncertain which of these features 'comes first' in the evaluation of action, it suffices for now to recognise their interdependence as elements of meaning affected by linguistic construal and background knowledge.

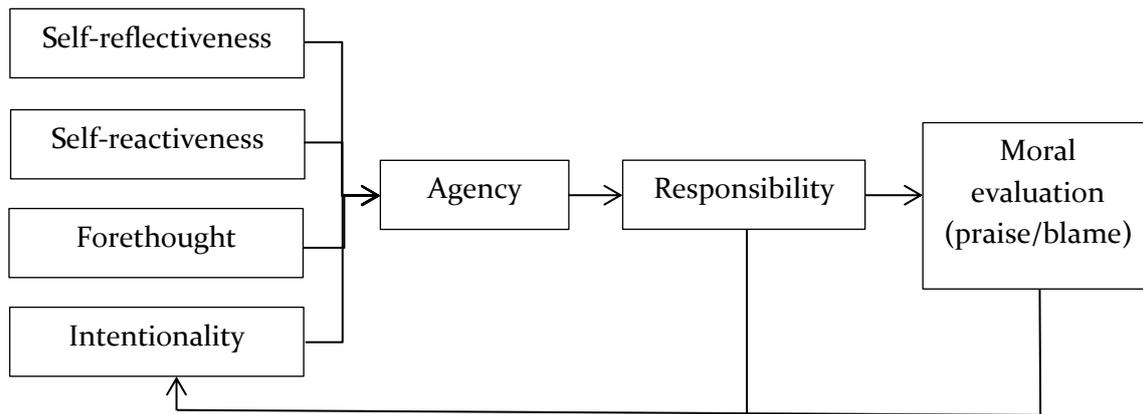


Fig. 7.1: The ‘feedback loop’ of intentionality and agency

According to Monroe et al. (2012), judgements of morality broadly involve the violation of social norms, often reduced to intent+harm+suffering as the basis for eliciting blame (179; cf. Cushman, 2008). Although Monroe et al. explore instances in which non-harmful acts can lead to blame, the performance of physical harm remains the exemplary model of a blameworthy action, situating the acts of violence in military memoir within the field of understanding blame. As will be discussed below (7.5.2), however, readers do not straightforwardly confer blame upon soldiers performing acts of violence, even when there is a clear intent and a suffering victim. In other words, while the model above provides a useful abstraction of the various mechanisms which interact to produce a moral evaluation and perception of an actor’s intentionality and responsibility, the final decision to blame the violent actor is affected by broader factors, readily modelled within a cognitive account of language and narrative. While philosophical literature on the subject of killing in war (McMahan, 2002; 2009) debates the accountability of the individual from ethical and legal perspectives, this chapter is designed to reflect on the ways in which non-specialist readers – that is, readers not engaging with the text from a perspective of academic or analytical interest in the first instance (cf. 3.2.2) – engage in the process of forming ideological judgements about the

actors and acts described. Accordingly, a series of studies were designed to investigate how readers perceived intentionality and responsibility individually across a series of different lexicogrammatical instances, as well as their evaluation of an example of violence in military autobiographical writing.

### **7.3: ‘A Nightmare’, by Alan F. Hyder**

In this study, participants were asked to read and respond to a short autobiographical narrative of a soldier’s experience of conflict and killing, ‘A Nightmare’ by Alan F. Hyder (in Purdom, 1930 [2009]: 167-175, see Appendix C). There are several reasons for choosing this text in particular as the focus for this study. First, as a self-contained short (2300 words) story, it is possible to present this text to participants in full, as opposed to the selection of the passage for the study in Chapter 3, meaning that aside from the selection for the text itself, no modifications have been made to the text which may draw readers’ attention towards or away from particular themes or responses to the text. In his introduction to the collection in which ‘A Nightmare’ appears, Brown (2009) describes the authors of these stories as ‘straightforwardly writing about what they knew, about what they saw, about what they experienced [...] untouched by any modish cult or trend in the literary circles of the time’ (6). Hyder tells the story in accessible, non-specialist language, and its brevity and clarity provide a clear focus in terms of the narrative’s thematic content.

Secondly, the narrative focuses on a controversial killing, and the narrator himself presents conflicting reflections on his own actions, both justifying the act as well as regretting it. This leaves the final decision regarding whether or not the act can be described as praise or blameworthy to the reader, inasmuch as any naturally collected narrative of such a taboo experience can be beyond producing its own ideological

reading. Hyder's most reportable event is 'Crack! Clang! I put two shots through it', which can be represented in CG terms as reframing the discourse away from the shooting of a person, and instead towards the shooting of a hat. Hyder goes on to later reconstrue the act more straightforwardly ('I had shot him'), drawing attention back to the act of killing later in the narrative, as he stands over the body of the soldier and reflects on the consequences of his actions. In other words, a reader who attends to the basic premise of the narrative *must* understand that the narrator has killed an enemy soldier in order to make sense of the text. If narrative context affects judgements of intentionality and/or responsibility, this example stands as a complete narrative, and its contents can consequently be examined in order to further investigate how this may be achieved. While 'A Nightmare' is a complete narrative, it is short enough that readers can be presented with the entire story as part of a small-scale study, making the analysis itself less selective in its discussion of the material.

#### **7.4: Methodology**

Similarly to the reader response study in Chapter 3, participants for this study were recruited through the student and staff volunteer mailing lists for the University of Sheffield to complete a questionnaire available through Google Forms. Nine respondents with English as their first language (F=5, M=4) with a mean age of 32.6 completed the participant information sheet (see Appendix C), accurately completed the multiple-choice consent form, and submitted answers for the study. An additional participant was automatically excluded from participating in the study for failing to accurately complete the multiple-choice consent form at the beginning of the questionnaire, and their data was not collected. Participants were staff and students from across the university, none of whom were members of the School of English.

Unlike the reader response study in Chapter 3, which asked questions of readers as the narrative progressed, Study 4 was designed to provide an uninterrupted engagement with the text with questions saved until the entire story had been read, in order to more closely resemble the experience of 'natural' reading. However, it is also necessary to assert whether each participant identified the act of violence as the most reportable event within the narrative. Following Labov's (2013) identification of the most reportable event as the one around which the story is built, in order to explain and/or evaluate (24), participants were asked what they felt to be the most important event in 'A Nightmare'. As per the summary following each section of the reading in Chapter 3, this question requires the reader to summarise the most reportable events of the narrative succinctly, reconstruing in their own words according to the causal relationships they perceive to be significant. As 'reportable', and particularly 'tellable', are specialist terms from narrative theory which may not be meaningful to lay readers, the study instead frames this question in terms of identifying the most 'important' event of the story. Not only is the act of killing the most taboo event of the story, but its significance is also foregrounded as the thematic focus of the narrative in the narrator's own evaluative statements. In instances where readers identified an alternative event or act within the narrative as the 'most important', these are discussed on a case-by-case basis (7.5.2), to consider other possible focal points within the text, and their effect on the assignation of responsibility. Importantly, the notion of responsibility is distinguished from the assignation of praise or blame, as participants were asked to make this judgement in a separate question, which included the option to assign neither. As it involves the killing of another human being in a time of war, and also in self-defence, the moral evaluation of Hyder's actions requires the assessment of the significance of several competing social factors. As the discussion of resistant reading

(2.3.5) has shown, readers can form vastly different opinions of an author and their actions, according to their pre-existing ideologies.

Finally, participants were asked to voluntarily leave additional feedback on the study, providing an opportunity to justify their judgement, and provided with a digital form to write and much or as little as they like. As per the evaluative comments in the reader response study of Chapter 3, this allows readers to leave additional reflections that might not have been considered in the other questions, but which they felt affected their responses and would like to be recorded. Because of the open nature of this question, it is possible for responses to vary significantly. This allows the concluding discussion to evaluate the social factors which readers themselves perceive to have affected the process of interpretation.

## **7.5: Results**

This section discusses the results of the study, both in terms of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered. Beginning with a summary of participant responses and unexpected findings (7.5.1), it goes on to reflect on the implications of distinguishing between intentionality, responsibility, and blame, within a cognitive model of language and discourse (7.5.2). Following this review of the methodological practice and assumptions within the study, the findings are used to inform a stylistic account of 'A Nightmare's' construals, and readers' responses. While summaries of the data discussed are present within the text, a full list of the study's questions and participants' responses is located in Appendix C.

### 7.5.1: Narrative Interpretation

In responding to the questions presented about ‘A Nightmare’, participants in this study produced a number of unexpected results. For five of the study’s participants, the self-identified most important event of the narrative was the act of killing. For others, however, this was not the case, as participants drew attention to the scene which surrounds the act of killing. In one instance, a reader determined that the most important event was in fact the German artillery barrage which required the narrator to hide in the bunker in the first place. In other words, this reader’s interpretation of the prompt led to an emphasis on the primary causal event in the action chain which resulted in the events of the narrative.

**R1:** The german raid and artillery strike, as this lead to the german soldier entering the bunker

**R2:** The discovery that the man he shot was not a threat to him but was close to death and trying to find safety

**R4:** the protagonist waiting in the pillbox, hearing the sound of someone approaching and feeling afraid and not knowing what to do

**R5:** Sparrer came back with the chisel, and some rum and hot tea. From the point of view of the other man, who went on to survive the war, that was important

This variability in readers’ responses may stem from the use of the word ‘important’ in place of ‘reportable’. Labov (2013) defines the most reportable event in a narrative as being the one which ‘has the greatest effect on the lives and life chances of the participants’ (23). The process of telling stories about these kinds of events involves providing a causal origin of the important event in order to explain how and why it occurred. This process appears to have lead R<sub>1</sub> to the conclusion that the initial artillery strike is the most ‘important’ event, as it leads to the other events occurring in the first

place. Alternatively, according to Ricoeur, 'the meaning of an important event exceeds, overcomes, transcends the social conditions of its production and may be re-enacted in new social contexts. Its importance is its durable relevance and, in some cases, its omni-temporal relevance' (1981: 208). In other words, the feeling of nervousness and anticipation may simply be more relatable to non-combatant readers than the act of killing itself. Equally, some readers focused on Sparrer, the narrator's friend who comes to find him after the killing, providing him with rum and a route back to the trenches. For these readers, it could be that relief is significant – the 'important' event is the one that signals safety, and the end to the titular nightmare. Moreover, while these responses problematise the dataset for the discussion of praise and blame, they provide valuable information for the understanding of stylistic foregrounding, realised in the close reading below.

While this divergence affects the final number of participants who identified the act of killing as the most important event to which the later questions relating to the narrative refer, it remains interesting to note that *none* of the participants made a judgement of blame for the narrator's actions. Indeed, even those readers who identified an alternative aggressive act, such as the artillery barrage of the German army, as the most important event chose to remain neutral in their assessment. When prompted for an explanation, participants indicated that the context of war mitigated their willingness to assign a straightforward judgement for the actions described (cf. 7.5.2 below). However, judgements of intentionality for the narrator's killing of the soldier were consistently high among the sample, with four of five readers identifying the event as the most important of the narrative also grading the narrator's intentionality as 10, with one grading of 6. On the other hand, responsibility was more varied, with one score at both extremes of 10 and 1, one of 7, and two participants

grading a responsibility of 8. The table below shows all participant responses to these questions, with answers relating to the narrator’s act of violence marked with an asterisk:

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Intentionality</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Praise/Blame?</b>
R1	8	9	Neither
R2	10	8	Neither
R3*	10	8	Neither
R4	10	7	Neither
R5	8	10	Praise
R6*	10	7	Neither
R7*	10	10	Praise
R8*	10	1	Neither
R9*	6	8	Neither

*Fig. 7.2: Participant responses to ‘A Nightmare’ questions*

Overall, participants demonstrated a wide range of responses to the tasks involved in this study. From the identification of a variety of ‘most important’ events, through to contrasting assessments of responsibility, the responses here suggest that while intentionality, responsibility, and praise/blame are closely related concepts, participants will not always correlate these observations predictably. In particular, readers’ attitudes towards praising or blaming the soldier appear to vary independently of their assessments of intentionality and responsibility. In the following discussion, these findings will be considered in relation to readers’ qualitative comments, in order to further make sense of the ways in which such judgements are produced.

## 7.5.2: Discussion and Critical Consequences

The data collected for this study support the initial hypothesis (7.2) that while the perception of intentionality often correlates with judgements of responsibility, this is not always the case. Consequently, an explanation of readers' processing of activity which conflates the two does not represent the ways in which readers form such judgements. Instead, the findings presented above broadly align with Cushman's (2008) theory that two processes factor into moral judgements: 'one triggered by harmful consequences [...] and another triggered by analysis of the mental states underlying action' (378). In other words, readers' assessments of responsibility *can* be informed by their modelling of agents' intentional states, but may be affected – either instead or simultaneously – by schematic knowledge of an action's consequences. That participants in this study produced such varied scores for violent actions with ambiguous intentionality also reveals that uncertainty under speeded conditions does not produce a 'default' judgement of intentionality or responsibility. Instead, these judgements rely on each individuals' background knowledge, and the event models which contribute to their understanding of an activity (a single clause) or a context in which the action takes place (war as mitigation of responsibility or not).

As well as demonstrating the distinction in assessing intentionality and responsibility for acts of violence in war, Study 4 also supports the need to consider the act of conferring blame as a social dimension of interpretation, interdependently connected to the cognitive perception of intent. Labov (1997; 2013) treats praise and blame as evaluations produced by the narrator and communicated to the readers through narrative. However, the act of resistant reading (2.3.5) shows that readers are equally able to reject a narrator's interpretation, producing evaluative assessments which go against the narrator's position. For instance, when Hill (1915) writes that the

Battle of Loos was 'developing into the finest game the world can give, a man hunt [...] it was very much like hunting rabbits', the social deixis and metaphorical framing of the text provides a perspective on the perpetration of violence which the reader might accept or resist, depending upon the relationship between the metaphorical mapping and their personal ideology. As Malle et al. (2014) conclude, conferring blame has a cognitive as well as social dimension, as it relies on the observation of norm violation associated with predicted or accepted frames of behaviour.

In the case of 'A Nightmare', the image schemas and knowledge associated with the context of war allowed readers to draw a number of competing conclusions about the act of killing that would be morally untenable in most circumstances. Recognising Hyder as both an intentional and, in most cases, responsible actor, it is interesting to note that none of the participants in this study would describe his killing of the enemy soldier as blameworthy. A partial explanation for these answers may lie in the social conditions of the exercise: participants were performing in a highly self-reflective environment, and may have been more self-aware than usual. Knowing that their answers are being recorded for research purposes, participants may express greater leniency than they otherwise would. Further explanatory evidence, however, comes from the participants themselves. When prompted to optionally leave any additional thoughts regarding the narrative or the questions in general, several readers chose to explain that war is a mitigating circumstance for assessing the act of killing, as several participants explained in their optional reflections at the end of the study. In each case, the reader identified the narrator's killing of the enemy soldier as the most important event of the story, and their scores for intentionality (I) and responsibility (R) are presented next to their respective comments:

**R3:** ‘The fact that it happens in a war zone makes a difference’ (I=10, R=8)

**R6:** ‘Defending oneself in a time of war does carry responsibility, but not as much as it does in peacetime. The soldiers are responsible for protecting their country and neutralizing the enemy’ (I=10, R=7)

**R7:** ‘The blame is on the related governments in that particular story, for if it weren’t for the greeds of government war might be a scarcity, and good people wouldn’t find themselves in such situations’ (I=10, R=1)

Evidently, external factors influence reader judgements, and it is worth considering the ways in which the narrative structure of the text functions in relation to the reader’s construal of the act of violence, and their evaluation of the primary actor. In the same way that Harari (2010) describes the power dynamic between discourse participants who have flesh-witness experience of war and those who do not (1.2; 5.1), the pragmatic context extends to affect reader judgements of responsibility. In the case of R7 in particular, their ideological position that governments are to blame for war in general strongly affects their judgement of the narrator’s responsibility for the act of killing. What the process of completing this form represents, then, is the politicised, performative act of judgement elicited for social purposes. Rather than problematising the findings, this reveals more about the social nature of responsibility, situated within an ongoing discourse framed by personal ideology.

The pragmatic effect of the survey structure was alluded to elsewhere in readers’ responses. After identifying the return of ‘Sparrer’ to the pillbox as the narrative’s most important event, one reader (R5) chose to explain their decision by referring to their perceived expectations of the research, writing that ‘You’re probably shocked I didn’t pick on the German who got shot, but the poor man/boy was never present as an individual’. Being asked to provide an explicit assessment of the praise or blame-

worthiness of an activity is unnatural, and in this case cued the reader to perform a metacognitive assessment of the study's purpose. Nevertheless, these results provide useful evidence of the stylistic effects of Hyder's writing, as R5's impression that the German soldier was 'never present as an individual' suggests a one-sided impression of the mind-modelling made available in the text, which construes the experience from Hyder's first person perspective, thereby focalising the narrator as the predominant actor whose intentions and mental state are made known to the reader.

Additionally, it is perhaps surprising how substantially the addition of narrative context affects readers' reactions to an act as morally challenging as killing another human being. As McMahan (2009) has put it, 'There is no moral belief that is more universal, stable, and unquestioned, both across different societies and throughout history, than the belief that killing people is normally wrong' (189). In the case of sensitive judgements like the blameworthiness of an act of killing in war, context provides a recognisable frame in which normative judgements are mitigated. Similarly, Russell and Roger (2011) suggest that moral anger is affected by judgements intentionality, where moral disgust is not. In ordinary circumstances, an act of killing would typically elicit a moral anger associated with blame. Evidently, however, the context of Hyder's narrative mitigates this response. If readers' assessments of intentionality and responsibility for killing in isolation and in context differ, a critical analysis which considers the effects of linguistic construal in isolation from the social context of its production is inherently incomplete. Essentially, the analysis of even an individual clause for the purposes of critical commentary is inseparable from the context in which it appears. When they appear in discourse, clauses are not interpreted in isolation: rather, the information and perspectives presented throughout the surrounding discourse affect the schemas through which the individual clause is framed and evaluated.

The interdependence of discourse, society, and cognition in the study of language is also raised by van Dijk (2014), who argues that in forming schemas or event frames, 'mental models are multimodal. They represent complex, embodied experience of events and situations [...] As such they are also uniquely personal. Indeed, they not only represent our knowledge of an event, but may also feature our evaluative or personal opinion' (126). In the case of intentionality and responsibility in particular, understanding how these concepts are construed in language appears to require this synthesis in order to form an effective understanding of the factors which contribute to readers' mental and moral evaluations of agency. As Hart (2016) notes, however, the relationship between discourse, society, and cognition is 'extremely complex [...] where the cognitive import of textual choices is subject to extra-textual factors like relative frequency, resonance, and epistemic vigilance' (18). Accordingly, this chapter does not claim to provide an account of all the possible means by which intentions might be inferred and judgements of responsibility for an action or event assessed. Rather, it has demonstrated the necessity of considering both cognitive and social factors in order to produce an adequate account of the variability in readers' productions of these evaluations.

Beyond Critical Discourse Analysis, Hutto (2007) has also recognised the need to consider an extensive range of factors in the development of a sense of self in language:

to understand which beliefs and desires were responsible for a person's action is normally only to understand why they acted in a quite skeletal way. Maximally, to understand why someone acted requires a more or less detailed description of his or her circumstances, other propositional attitudes (hopes, fears), more basic perceptions and emotions and perhaps even his or her character, current situation and history. In short, in order to fully grasp why someone took action on a particular occasion requires relating that person's 'story' (43-44)

Hutto's definition of 'story' encompasses general knowledge about the individual's life and experiences, but his narratively-oriented terminology, and reference to the act of 'relating', indicates that this information has to be presented in an act of communication. The narrative organisation of individual experience, then, is the organisation of events and surrounding information in such a way as to direct the construction of the reader's evaluation, although personal experience and knowledge, varying from reader to reader, allows for the possibility of a resistant, alternative interpretation. In the case of military memoir, the primary evaluation concerns the assessment of intentionality and its relation to responsibility for the taboo perpetration of violence.

All this is not to say that the analysis of aspects of language in isolation is worthless. As the studies which have formed part of this chapter have shown, controlling specific variables with regards to language perception can be a highly effective way of expanding the understanding of a particular linguistic feature or effect. At each stage, this chapter has shown that the analysis of sentences and the perception of their meaning cannot simply be transferred to real-world examples of the features they discuss. The act of interpreting a clause within a given narrative will always draw upon the broader context in which it is situated. However, considering these features in isolation allows for a better understanding of the relationship between elements of lexicogrammar, discursive context, and personal background knowledge. Stylistic analysis relies on being able to comment on the specific effects of a given feature of language with regards to the *way* in which it is used, and isolating these features provides a valuable means by which to more confidently discuss their probable effects.

## 7.6: Analysing ‘A Nightmare’

Having established both the importance and variability in readers’ perceptions of intentionality and responsibility with regards to both narratives and isolated clauses, this section now focuses on ‘A Nightmare’ to perform a stylistic analysis informed by the impressions outlined by the participants in the above studies. Following the imbalance in participant evaluations of Hyder’s intentionality and responsibility for killing the enemy soldier described above (7.5.1), this section explores stylistic features which may contribute to the comparably low ranking of Hyder’s responsibility and blameworthiness. Bearing in mind the variety in readers’ responses to the concept of ‘most important event’, this reading focuses on the concepts of prominence and attention, examining how the structure and language of the text contributes to the perception of particular events as the ‘most important’ of the story. Taking into account the variety of events described as the ‘most important’, this section argues that all of their readings remain predicated on comparable observations of tension, character motivation, and emotional evaluation, suggesting more similarities than differences in their overall impressions of the text.

For most of the readers who did not identify the act of killing itself as the most important event of the narrative, their answers focused on the anticipation building up to the violence, waiting at the sound of approaching footsteps (R4; R6). Throughout the build-up to the German soldier’s appearance, Hyder’s description of the scene is negatively shaded (Simpson, 2003: 58), foregrounding the uncertainty of his own senses, describing how ‘he, it, or whatever the thing was, came, silently crawling’. As in examples discussed earlier (4.3.2), Hyder construes possible disnarrated outcomes, dependent upon his response to the situation, noting that ‘A bomb tossed into that pillbox would have turned me into pictures on the wall!’. Given that the build-up and

anticipation of the enemy soldier's entry into the pillbox lasts for several paragraphs, as opposed to the single clause it takes to describe his death, readers' interest in the anticipation of violence may be attributed to its prominence within narrative time (Ricoeur, 1980). In other words, these passages provide the context and moral justification for the consequent act of violence, as well as providing dramatic tension.

Despite the variety in readers' observations of the 'most important' event, even the most contrastive reading to the expected focus on violence relies on an understanding of this narrative tension in order to succeed. Rather than identifying the killing of the enemy soldier as the climax of the narrative's tension, one reader instead interpreted Sparrer's return as the most important event, writing that 'from the point of view of [Hyder], that was important. He had never been so glad to see anyone in his life' (R5). Stylistically, R5's impression of the text focuses around the significance of the same tension in the uncertainty described by Hyder during his time alone in the bunker. In Labov and Waletzky's (1967) terms, this simply represents an assignation of prominence to the resolution of the narrative's central drama, as opposed to the complication, as Sparrer's return marks the dissolution of tension at the centre of the story. Notably, this reader answers the question 'from the point of view of [Hyder]', meaning that the question was answered less in terms of importance as relates to narrative, instead empathising with the narrator's perspective on events as they occur, and their significance.

Looking again at participants who described the act of killing as the most important event of the narrative, the reconstrued descriptions which constituted their answers always included an additional description of the German soldier, either as 'close to death and trying to find safety' (R2), 'injured' (R3), 'already dying' (R6), and 'wounded' (R8). That each reader individually draws attention to this detail in their construal of

the shooting suggests that it has some significance in their interpretation of events. However, in the narrative itself, information about the state of the soldier is not presented to the reader until after the killing, when Hyder is able to examine the dead soldier more closely. Describing the wounds to the soldier's body, he presents an imagined simulation of the soldier's thoughts on entering the bunker, going so far as to correct his previous assessment of the danger to himself in the original situation:

His left leg is badly smashed, half covered by a blood-soaked bandage with the white of bone protruding from hanging lumps of flesh. He had come over with his raiding party, stopped a piece of shell and crawled into the pillbox, perhaps to die, perhaps for safety.

I had shot him.

In this brief passage, Hyder extrapolates from context and imagines further information about the soldier, including a reconstrual of his intentions in entering the bunker: instead of intending to kill or harm Hyder, the German soldier is instead shown to have entered for his own safety. Not only does this affect the logic behind Hyder's pre-emptive act of violence, but draws parallels with his own original intentions. While brief, this humanising moment is important for the reader's reaction to Hyder, who is now shown to understand the gravity of his actions. Similarly to Turner (6.7), the narrator draws a comparison between the image of the soldier he kills and the friend he avenged by killing him. Likewise, the inclusion of the assumed mental activity of the young children killed by the drone strike in *Predator* (5.7) attempts to provide the perspective of the victim. As R5 noted in this study, however, the German soldier killed by Hyder is 'never present as an individual'. In other words, while these impressions present an attempt to model the minds of the victimised participants within the narrative, the first person perspectivisation retains focal prominence, and the reader remains aware that this construal is presented by a homodiagetic narrator with an

ideologically-driven outlook. This is evidenced in the text itself by the repeated use of ‘perhaps’ to emphasise Hyder’s own uncertainty regarding his evaluation, negatively shading the description of the German soldier’s possible thoughts and character. In each case, the effort to represent the victim of their act of violence as an intentional actor with independent, personal agency is hampered by the narrator’s inability to achieve more than speculation.

As well as attempting to present a description of the soldier as an actor, this passage of ‘A Nightmare’ has a second stylistic function. For Monroe et al. (2012), blame is evaluated in relation to what the agent could have done differently (182), and the earlier passage of disnarration (‘if so – goodnight!’) construes the perceived risk to Hyder’s life which justifies the killing of the soldier. In this passage, however, the revelation that the soldier posed no threat in the first instance undercuts such an interpretation. Instead, however, the new disnarration of the hypothesised intentions of the soldier in entering the bunker, ‘perhaps to die’, coupled with the detailed description of his wounds, present an alternative series of future events, identified by readers in their own redescriptions of the soldier as ‘close to death’ (R2) and ‘already dying’ (R6). With this second construal of alternative outcomes, Hyder’s moral position is accounted for whether or not the soldier posed a threat to him by anticipating a possible rejection of the construal thus far: if the reader does not believe that the soldier posed a threat to Hyder, then the moral seriousness of killing the enemy soldier is instead reduced by suggesting that his death was inevitable regardless.

Despite the ways in which these elements of the narrative work to justify Hyder’s decision, the closing lines of ‘A Nightmare’ provide an emotional evaluation which indicates that the narrator feels guilt or regret for his actions: ‘still at night sometimes comes a sweat that wakes me by its deathly chill to hear again that creeping, creeping’

(175). While the narration itself does not include direct descriptions of the narrator's emotions towards the events which occur, Hyder's reconstrual of the same events (shooting and crawling) after their occurrence indicate their significance, and the final line includes a single evaluative adjective ('deathly') and repetition ('creeping, creeping') to mark the lasting effects on the narrator. As Frith (2013) has noted:

The other strong experience [aside from causation] associated with agency is regret. Regret has to be distinguished from disappointment. We feel disappointment when the outcome of our action is worse than we expected. We feel regret when we learn that we would have achieved a better outcome if only we had chosen the other action. Regret is strongly linked to agency because, to feel regret, we have to believe that *we could have chosen the other action*. (138, my emphasis).

Not all authors produce such apologetic evaluations of their actions and experiences. Indeed, as the discussion above suggests, Hyder presents the death of the enemy soldier as either justified self-defence or an inevitable outcome of his existing wounds, meaning that the expression of regret does not straightforwardly include an outcome in which the enemy soldier survived. Moreover, as was discussed earlier (3.2.1), Julian Grenfell (1915) notoriously writes home about taking pleasure in the act of killing, and Bourke (1999) discusses many further examples of soldiers who enjoy taking an active role in the violence of war. Hyder's decision to frame the narrative entirely in terms of this evaluation, given the title, suggest that Hyder's own moral evaluation of his actions conforms to social expectations that, while killing may be permissible during war, there is an expectation that the status quo will return after the fact through self-reflecting regret. Indeed, this self-effacing conclusion may also account for readers in this study choosing not to blame Hyder for his actions. Throughout the narrative, Hyder provides a number of explanations for killing the soldier, with readers perceiving the death ultimately as either justified, inevitable, or both. Even when the act of killing itself was

not described as the most important event of the story, readers nonetheless gave prominence to the context in which the act of violence took place.

## **7.7: Further Thoughts on Intentionality**

According to Ricoeur, 'the decisive step in the direction of a narrative conception of personal identity is taken when one passes from the action to the character' (1992: 143), and these last two chapters have sought to examine what the process of passing from individual actions to overarching conceptualisations of character might entail from a cognitive perspective. Having worked through the means by which the capacity for volitional action can be represented within Cognitive Grammar's model of events, the present study has demonstrated how the process of understanding meaning requires the consideration of the social dimensions of language and interpretation. Ahearn (2001) defines agency as the 'socioculturally mediated capacity to act [...] both in its production and interpretation' (112), and the role of societal norms and cultural knowledge have been demonstrated in the sheer variety of responses to the same text presented to all participants in this study. In terms of understanding agency, the primary result of this chapter is the conclusion that readers' perceptions of responsibility can be meaningfully distinguished from their perceptions of intentionality. In the case of violent acts during wartime in particular, readers regularly referred to the mitigating circumstances of war as diminishing the violent actor's responsibility, while simultaneously maintaining that the act of killing was intentional.

Additionally, the variety in readers' responses to both the sentence and narrative level studies reaffirms the conclusion of Chapter 3 that considering the perspectives of non-specialist readers in interpretation is an essential component of effective critical analysis which aims to reflect actual reading practices. In the case of intentionality,

responsibility, and blame, the intersection between cognitive and social elements of interpretation result in numerous different perspectives according to the reader's background knowledge, event models, and personal ideology. Not only does this provide the researcher with additional evidence regarding the most common interpretation of a text's meaning and the inferences frequently associated with an action, but it can also provide evidence for readings which run counter to the researcher's own, or at least their expectations for how a text will be read. By observing the similarities and differences between reader responses, the close reading of the text in question can account for a number of ideological perspectives through a cognitive framework which acknowledges the role of previous usage and frames in forming interpretative judgements. In that sense, the metalinguistic analysis of readers' reconstructions and evaluations of a text provide a vital insight into the stylistic features and semantic fields foregrounded in non-specialist reading.

Adopting lay-readers' responses to texts as the premise of critical analysis demonstrates the key fact that the act of interpretation relies substantially on a series of sociocultural cues which differ from reader to reader. In correspondence with van Dijk and Throop, Duranti (2014) summarises this position in relation to intentionality, observing that 'an intention is embedded in its situation' (Van Dijk, Duranti and Throop, 2014: 153). This chapter has shown that the process of interpreting events relies on contexts broader than are construed within a single clause, or even the overall discourse, as readers enact background knowledge and personal moral perspectives, which affect the perception of concepts such as agency and responsibility. In narrative, the reading of a single clause is not an isolated process. Instead, readers draw on the context of actions to make evaluative judgements based in part on their schematic understanding of intentionality. Hence, the same clause can elicit a distinct interpretation of intentionality based on the variation of its narrative context. The analysis of

intentionality and responsibility as independent variables in this chapter demonstrate the significance of considering the variety of ways in which individual readers may respond to identical linguistic prompts. Moreover, while the recognition the social dimensions of reading and interpretation complicates the process of producing a critical analysis, contemporary cognitive theories of language and communication readily account for the role of experiential differences between readers.

Overall, this chapter and the last have not simply made a case for recognising the interpretative differences between perceptions of causality, intentionality, responsibility, and praise/blame, but argued that doing so is essential to the production of meaningful critical commentary on the perception of violence in these texts. Each stage of evaluation requires socio-cognitive analysis, relying on image schemata, and with the possibility of being influenced by subtle shifts in lexicogrammatical and narrative stylistic choices. As Van Leeuwen (1997) has observed of social action, these categories cannot be assigned direct linguistic parallels. Rather, the social and cognitive processes of determining whether an action was performed intentionally, and whether or not the agent in question is accountable for it, takes into account both information associated with the lexicogrammar of its linguistic construal, and broader social knowledge and beliefs. Contemporary cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 2014; Hart, 2014; 2018) recognises the significance of the interrelationship between discourse, society, and cognition, as well as the complexity of combining these elements for analytical purposes. By moving to situate the perception of responsibility and moral evaluations in relation to a socio-cognitive conceptualisation of agency, this chapter has aimed to expand the critical and stylistic discussion of intentionality from the cognitively focused account of Chapter 6, towards a model which more actively considers the social dynamics in which the clauses evaluated function pragmatically.

# Chapter 8: Conclusions

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## 8.1: Overview

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the ways in which twentieth and twenty-first century soldiers have employed language to convey their experiences of war, and as perpetrators of violence. Using Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1991; 2008; 2009) to examine soldiers' linguistic choices – from clause level to narrative structure – has provided an insight into the ways in which violence can be construed for a civilian readership. In doing so, however, the thesis has also engaged with the limitations and challenges faced in both Cognitive Grammar (Pincombe, 2014) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Widdowson, 1998; O'Halloran, 2003; Billig, 2008). The concluding discussion now reviews the primary aims of each chapter, and contextualises their approach and findings in relation to the overall research goals. Following this, specific findings are set out with regards to the general stylistic features identified in the primary texts (8.2), the thesis' contributions to methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (8.3), and the advances it has made in the application of Cognitive Grammar to the study of actions and actors across discourse (8.4). Finally, the limitations of the present research are discussed (8.5), alongside proposed directions for future research.

The thesis began with a review of the linguistic frameworks employed in critical and stylistic analysis. Beginning with Systemic Functional Linguistics (2.2), it conducted practical analyses to demonstrate the value of transitivity and ergativity in accounting for the construal of agency in soldiers' language choices. Following a review of the literature employing SFL for textual analysis (2.2.2), Cognitive Grammar was introduced (2.3) as an alternative framework through which to analyse stylistic features. Developed through the analysis of extracts of war writing, Cognitive Grammar's models of event

construal (2.3.1), and its constituent features (2.3.2; 2.3.3), was presented as the preferred means for modelling actions throughout this thesis. Simultaneously, cognitive approaches to metaphor (2.3.4) were examined, and the functions of Common Ground (Werth, 1993; Browse, in press 2018) and the conceptual substrate (2.3.5) were introduced as an indicator of the ways in which Cognitive Grammar moves from clause-level to discourse-level analysis. The chapter concluded (2.5) by affirming the value of Cognitive Grammar as a framework for critical analysis within the scope of this research, as well as observing preliminary trends in the stylistic features of the extracts, examined in terms of causality and the transfer of force.

Chapter 3 began by examining existing studies of the language employed by soldiers to describe acts of violence (Benke and Wodak, 2003; Grassiani, 2011; Robinson, 2011), and found that the concept of social agency (van Leeuwen, 1997) was often conflated with the linguistic application of the term (3.2.1). Additionally, the chapter examined concerns that Critical Discourse Analysis produces specialist readings which are not reflective of the interpretations of everyday readers (3.2.2). After examining the cognitive (3.3) and discursive (3.4) ways in which readers might infer causal connections unspecified or segmented within a text, a reader response study (3.5) was conducted to produce non-specialist interpretations to inform the ensuing critical commentary. This demonstrated ‘a commitment to triangulation’ (Hart, 2018: 400) in CDA, ensuring that the textual analysis was not over-reliant on the subjective perspective of the individual analyst. The findings of this study demonstrated that readers were able to directly infer a causal relationship between two segmented events within the source narrative (3.5.2), limiting critical interpretations of event segmentation as masking agency.

In addition, readers’ qualitative comments from this study (3.5.3; 3.5.4) showed that their interpretations considered context from across the narrative in the assessment

of individual clauses. Chapter 4 therefore introduced narratological research (4.2), in order to examine the narrative construction of identity across discourse. This research was contextualised in relation to Cognitive Grammar (4.3.1) and Critical Discourse Analysis (4.3.2), introducing the value and challenges of Cognitive Grammar's application to discourse-level analysis. In addition, the narrative construction of identity was discussed in relation to research on war writing (4.4), which typically follows the position of Strong Narrativism critiqued in Strawson (2004). In responding to Strawson's objections to the prominence of narrative in discussions of selfhood (4.5), the chapter situated the thesis in general in relation to the Narrative Self Shaping Hypothesis (Hutto, 2016), acknowledging the primacy of narrative as a sense-making tool in the majority of cases, but recognising that episodic perspectives and traumatic experiences challenge the view of narrative identity as one which spans a lifetime (4.6). As a result, this chapter established a relationship between Cognitive Grammar and theories of narrative and identity, allowing later chapters to address the scalability of its application beyond individual clauses.

Chapter 5 followed on from this discussion with a direct and extended analysis of two primary texts (Martin and Sasser, 2010; McCurley and Maurer, 2016). The ability of drone pilots to assert the flesh-witness authority typically associated with war-time experience (Harari, 2010) was put under question from the outset (Royakkers and van Est, 2010; Chamayou, 2015; Daggett, 2015), making the language choices of the authors particularly important to the reader's perception of the pilots' identity. This chapter was the first analysis of the phenomenology of drone warfare from a linguistic perspective, and critically examined the effects of features from deixis (5.3.1; 5.3.2) to action chains (5.4; 5.5) and negative shading (5.6). As discourse around drone warfare itself is in its infancy, this chapter identified emerging stylistic trends (5.7) in the available literature.

More broadly, it also recognised that a model of Cognitive Grammar analysis confined to clause-level discussion is limited in its ability to discuss book-length texts.

The next chapter responded to this problem directly, by proposing a model of intentionality within Cognitive Grammar. Although the perception of intentionality is essential to the processing of meaning (6.3), this model is the first variation of the Canonical Event Model (Langacker, 2008: 357) to distinguish between intentional and superventional events. Beginning with simple clauses (6.4.1), the chapter built towards the analysis of intentions across complex sentences (6.4.2), as well as multiple sentences across a passage of text (6.4.3; 6.5). Following these examples, the model was contextualised within Langacker's (2008: 480) view of the process of transitioning Cognitive Grammar to the analysis of discourse (6.6), before critically analysing a longer passage of text (6.7), the findings of which are discussed below (8.2.2). This contribution to the critical and stylistic application of Cognitive Grammar represents the first effort in the development of a model which should continue to be applied and refined in future research.

The final chapter examined the discussion of intentionality in relation to the concept of agency more generally (7.2), and distinguished between the perception of intentionality, responsibility, and praise/blameworthiness as each comprise and affect the sense of agency. Following the findings from Chapter 3 that non-specialist readers produced novel interpretations of the primary material which challenged the critical interpretations of the individual researcher (3.5.4), the majority of Chapter 7 was dedicated to the production of a further reader response study (7.4; 7.5), designed to test the perception of intentionality and responsibility in narrative. The general trends of these responses (7.5.1; 7.5.2), demonstrate that while lexicogrammatical features can provide indications of intentionality and responsibility, the precise responses of

individual readers vary according to differing background knowledge and cultural scripts associated with each assessed activity. Additionally, participants produced unexpected responses when prompted to define the ‘most important event’ of the war story they read (7.5.2), which formed the basis of a critical analysis of the language of the source text (7.6). Given the range and unexpectedness of its findings, this chapter strongly supports the call for a triangulation of methods in all forms of stylistic analysis.

## **8.2: Findings for the Stylistics of War Writing**

Although the primary texts examined in this thesis do not constitute an exhaustive corpus of soldiers’ war writings, they provide a promising indication of the stylistic conventions associated with the construal of acts of killing within the genre (Ch. 1.4). This section reviews three key features which occurred throughout these texts as indicative of possible points of interest in future studies using larger corpora. Likewise, as the authors took a range of ideological stances towards their own actions, the summaries below also reflect how these stylistic features were shown to be used to produce a variety of discursive and evaluative positions.

### **8.2.1: Construal and Granularity**

Although the term ‘construal’ broadly refers to a range of ways in which language encodes perspective (cf. Langacker, 2008: 55), granularity has been shown to be particularly significant in the way soldiers describe acts of violence. From the introduction of the term (2.3.2), this thesis has shown that soldiers employ both high and low granularity descriptions when reporting killing enemy combatants. In the case of highly granular construals, it was shown (3.5.2) that readers are able to infer the causal connections between these segmented descriptions, and therefore that to

describe this feature as obscuring the agency of the narrator would misrepresent the majority of readers' engagements with the text. Instead, the description of simpler movements grounds the construal in relation to everyday activities, allowing these authors to find an experiential Common Ground with non-combatant readers attempting to understand the phenomenology of combat (2.3.5).

By contrast, low granularity descriptions *do* render the details inaccessible to the reader. Instead, these descriptions often rely on metaphor (2.3.4), or meta-irony (5.5) to construe an act of killing in relation to a longer-term goal or more abstract concept, such as keeping people safe, paying interest, or hunting. While such construals make it impossible to know precisely what acts the narrator refers to in their description, the semantic fields they foreground in selecting a lower granularity frame of reference to which to map their actions can be used to examine the ideological frameworks which govern the perception of violence across the text (2.3.2; 5.3.1). Of course, as these observations in isolation risk criticising soldiers' language choices for both not being descriptive enough, and being too focused on detail, analysing the stylistic effects of granularity requires reader-response data. Comparable with the study in Chapter 3, and performed on a case-by-case basis, this additional affective data has revealed more precisely the effects of a given construal. As both high and low granularity construals have been shown to produce ideologically wide ranging accounts of violence, coupling the modelling of force with granularity represents an invaluable direction for future critical analysis of the genre.

### **8.2.2: Action Chains**

Many of the passages examined in this thesis have been discussed in relation to action chains (Langacker, 2008: 355) as a means of conceptualising a relationship between individual events through the perceived transfer of force and causation. Two

key stylistic effects have been associated with action chains as a consequence. First, the extension of the number of links in a chain has been shown to produce a conceptual distance between the initial actor of the narrator, and the individual who is eventually harmed. Although readers have been shown to be capable of perceiving a causal connection between these segmented events (Ch. 3.5), a construal which divorces the narrator from a direct transfer of force to an enemy combatant nonetheless weakens the kind of relationship represented between the two participants in causal terms.

Secondly, several authors (Ch. 5.5; 6.7) construed action chains in which the narrator is not the head of the chain. In these instances, either an authority figure ordered them to act, or the act of killing was situated as a response to an enemy's action which elicited an emotional response in the narrator. In other words, the metaphorical and abstract nature of force allows authors to construe social or emotional pressures as the cause of their actions, thereby limiting their own responsibility. Existing literature on the experience of warfare (Keegan, 1976; Leed, 1979, Bourke, 1999) emphasises the impersonal nature of conflict as an experience in which the soldier is 'coerced [...] by vast, unlocalised forces' (Keegan, 1976: 324). With this in mind, construals which foreground heads of action chains other than the narrator are a promising indication of stylistic feature of war writing more generally.

### **8.2.3: Disnarration**

As well as examining the ways in which the individual clauses which construe the act of killing are constructed across the primary sources, disnarration (Prince, 1988) has been frequently observed (Ch. 4.3.2; 5.1; 6.5; 7.6) across the texts examined in this thesis, as narrators foregrounded alternative outcomes, detailing the dangers of deciding *not* to act violently. By construing hypothetical scenarios, these authors pre-empted resistant readings of their representations of events (cf. Browse, in press 2018). In the

case of drone pilots in particular, disnarration allowed the authors to situate their experiences within scripted frames of understanding war, which was used to both exemplify the differences between their experiences and those of ground troops (5.1), and foreground similarities (5.6). In the same way that the perception of intentionality was described as a 'network of possible explanations' (Ch. 6.4.2), disnarration restricts the number of possible outcomes, encouraging the reader to view the course of events in which the narrator kills as the most logical, primarily in terms of self-preservation. Describing what could have been affords narrators the possibility of situating events which actually occurred within an evaluative frame which serves to justify their actions.

### **8.3: Findings for Critical Discourse Analysis**

As well as noting stylistic patterns across the primary texts, this research has been equally concerned with the development of its analytical methods, and the practices associated with its conceptual frameworks. In particular, it has supported the development of reader response methods in Critical Discourse Analysis. Additionally, in breaking down the concept of agency into its constituent concepts (Ch. 7.2), this thesis proposes that analysts interested in the discussion of agency in language and society take greater care in distinguishing between the two concepts, and recognising the distinction between the composite factors which affect their perception, such as intentionality, responsibility, and blame.

#### **8.2.1: Researcher Subjectivity and the Reading Process**

Critiques of Critical Discourse Analysis have long been concerned with the ways in which CDA selects (Widdowson, 1998), analyses (Stubbs, 1997; O'Halloran, 2003; Breeze, 2013), and writes about (Billig, 2008) its source material. As a result, the reader

response studies in this thesis (Ch. 3.5; 7.5) have supported the textual analysis of their associated stylistic features, and indicated areas in which the research methodology required adaptation. In particular, the discussion of unexpected findings (Ch. 3.5.4; 7.5.5) prompted reflexive consideration of the ideological and intellectual position from which this research has been conducted.

At first glance, a Critical Discourse Analysis which aims for objectivity may at best seem paradoxical, as the ideological position of the researcher has often been described as inextricable from the research itself (Fairclough, 2001; O'Halloran, 2003; Butt et al., 2004; Sorsoli, 2007). Given the capacity for readers to extrapolate any number of potential interpretations from a source text, supporting critical analysis of linguistic features with reader-response data indicates the *likelihood* of given interpretations. The continued development of a cognitive model of language contributes to this aim, and this thesis has shown how one particular dimension of meaning can be affected by both linguistic and social factors.

### **8.2.2: The Structure of Agency**

From the outset, this thesis has been concerned with the function and perception of 'agency', both as a feature of grammar and a social concept. In Chapter 2, the conceptualisation of agency in language was examined comparatively across Systemic Functional (2.2) and Cognitive Grammar (2.3) approaches to transitivity and force. The use of the term 'agency' in critical commentary was problematised, however, with the observation that the linguistic category of agent has often been conflated with the concept of social agency, a term itself used to cover a range of perceptions from intentionality to responsibility (3.2.1). Later studies (7.3), further suggest that readers' assessments of intent and responsibility, which are partially affected by lexicogrammar, are also affected by pre-existing scripts of activity developed through previous usage.

Understanding more precisely how the perception of agency can be segmented into its constituent concepts, as well as how these concepts can be investigated linguistically, will be a rich source of continuing research. For now, this thesis has shown that segmenting the concept of agency into its constituent elements of causality, intentionality, and responsibility demonstrates the value of Cognitive Grammar's modelling of force in explaining the construal of events, but has also highlighted its present limits.

By breaking the concept of agency into its constituent elements, this research has developed a gradual analysis of each aspect independently. Beginning with causality in Chapters 2 and 3, followed by the sense of selfhood (Chapters 4 and 5), and intentional action (Chapters 6 and 7), the perception of agency is borne from an amalgam of inferential cognitive processes, relying on cultural scripts and mind-modelling in order to draw probabilistic conclusions about actors and their goals. In many cases, the precise reasons for an actor's actions remains unspecified, or multivalent, but recognising the capacity for intent, alongside probable associated goals, provides an insight into the ways in which readers can reach multiple and even competing interpretations of actions and actors. A probabilistic model of interpretation, then, both takes into account the construal of information presented to the reader by the text, its discursive context, as well as the capacity for each individual readers' background knowledge to affect their perceptions, from the intentions of an actor to the meaning of a story. As Labov (2013) notes of believability in oral narratives of personal experience, 'a credible narrative is one in which the sequence of events is plausible *in accordance with what we know of human behaviour*' (225, my emphasis). Even beyond cognitivist approaches to language, modelling the capacity for particular behaviours is inherent to the process of making inferences about actors and events in narrative. Likewise, in the individual event clauses which constitute narratives, readers'

evaluations of agency are founded on an interrelated network of lexicogrammatical cues, and more diverse social knowledge, whereby previous usage establishes scripts of probable activity which allow for the modelling of prototypical intentions.

## **8.4: Findings for Cognitive Grammar**

Cognitive Grammar has been employed as a framework for the critical analysis of clause and discourse-level language throughout this thesis. With the increasing application of Cognitive Grammar to critical and stylistic analyses in recent years (Stockwell, 2009; Hart, 2013; 2014; 2018; Harrison et al., 2014; Harrison, 2017; Browse, in press 2018; Giovanelli and Harrison, in press 2018), this thesis has reflected on the present applications of Cognitive Grammar to discourse, alongside its limitations (Pincombe, 2014). In addressing these challenges, this thesis has contributed both to the application of the framework to the analysis of a new genre, and to adapting its conceptualisation of actions and events, with a view to overcoming its present boundaries.

### **8.4.1: Event Models in Critical Analysis**

In the introduction to the clausal analysis of Chapter 2, Cognitive Grammar was presented as the preferred linguistic framework through which to discuss acts of killing in war writing. Cognitive approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis have largely been concerned with the role of metaphor in ideology (Goatly, 2007; Hart, 2008; 2011a; Underhill, 2011; Musolff, 2012; Ana et al., 2017). By contrast, this thesis has primarily examined the construal of force and causality in events in language. Given the close attention of this research to event clauses concerned with physical motion and acts of violence, the billiard-ball model (Langacker, 2008: 355) allowed for straightforward

representations of the various ways in which force was construed in soldiers' language. In close association with the concepts of granularity and prominence (2.3.2), modelling events in these terms provides an effective means of critically discussing the causal relationships between participants. Findings regarding the language of soldiers' war writings (8.2.1; 8.2.2), for example, are readily explicable in these terms, and Cognitive Grammar is well equipped to assess the conceptualisation of force in individual clauses.

#### **8.4.2: Scaling Cognitive Grammar to the Analysis of Discourse**

With the introduction of reader response studies to the investigation, the role of context in the readers' interpretations of individual clauses became apparent (3.5). Subsequently, the role of narrative structure and identity (Chapter 4), cultural familiarity (Chapter 5), and socio-cultural assessments (Chapters 6 and 7) have each been examined as factors in the process of interpretation. While convenient for the modelling of motion and force in Cognitive Grammar, the isolation of individual clauses from their discursive context fails to reflect the interpretative practices of ordinary readers. While Langacker (2008) has emphasised the importance of discursive context in the interpretation of grammatical structure and meaning, he also acknowledges that the modelling of discourse in CG is in its infancy (vii), with the complexity of the model drawing concern with regard to its practical applicability to larger units of discourse. This thesis has suggested that a model of analysis based on the perception of intentionality provides a solution to this issue when producing a cognitively-oriented analysis of similar scope to the transitivity profiling of Systemic Functional approaches (Simpson, 2003; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). In grouping activities according to the capacity for action, activity across a discourse can be analysed selectively without recourse to mapping each aspect of its construals.

The adaptation of the Reference Point Model (Langacker, 2008: 83-88) to the analysis of discourse has recently been explored in cognitive poetic research (Stockwell, 2009; van Vliet, 2009; Harrison, 2017). This thesis has contributed to this development by suggesting that inferred intentions can operate as reference points (6.6), affecting readers' perceptions of actors and their actions in relation to narrative context and background knowledge. Moreover, comparisons between the role of intentionality in the perception of meaning and conventional applications of the Reference Point Model contribute to the analysis of ways in which characters and their intentions or beliefs develop *across* a text. While this has clear implications for fiction, where the goals and beliefs of characters can change and develop over a substantial period of time, it also represents significant possibilities for critical analysis. Being able to trace gradual ideological shifts in discourse, for instance, is a direct application of this approach with substantial social impact. Once again, the success of this approach relies on research supported by non-specialist readers' interpretations. As this research has shown, readers have the capacity to assess a wide range of responses to the intentionality of an action, let alone infer specific intentions. With increasing reference to these readers' responses to a text, studies interested in the perceived goals of action – and their consequences for judgements of responsibility and blameworthiness – can be further grounded in everyday reading practices. Just as the processing of clause-level meaning requires the consideration of the interaction between its lexicogrammatical components, so the reading of discourse is grounded in selective attention to the events and participants which make up its narrative.

## **8.5: Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

In focusing on the construal of a particular kind of action across a range of primary sources, this thesis has been deliberately restrained in its discussion of the language of war writing more generally. Although the discussion throughout this chapter has indicated directions in which further research could be conducted, two key directions are outline explicitly below, in which long-term, large-scale research projects could be readily developed: namely, further points of interest in the language of war writing (8.5.1), and the development of intentionality as an approach to discourse-level analysis (8.5.2). Each proposes a number of possible directions within each research interest, demonstrating the versatility of this research in its analysis of both the primary material and its own linguistic framework.

### **8.5.1: Further Research on War Writing**

As well as examining the representation of violence in additional texts, the close reading of drone pilots' memoirs in Chapter 5 suggests that the technological distance between combatants affects the ways in which violence is perceived and reported. Moreover, this thesis has remained focused on one small aspect of soldiers' experiences of conflict. It would be particularly interesting, for example, to compare the ways in which soldiers construe the injuring of others to the language they employ to their own injuries. Likewise, Kleeinresink (2014) shows that soldiers from different countries choose to publish their memoirs for different reasons, and a cross-cultural stylistic analysis could prove to be a fascinating next step in situating the linguistic choices of soldiers in socio-cultural settings.

Expanding the discussion of war writing established in this thesis, in order to assert whether the stylistic features noted in the sampled texts represent trends in the

style of the genre, requires substantial developments in archival practices. At present, the majority of archived material at the Imperial War Museum has not been digitalised, and the limited number of texts available online have been entered as images, meaning that individual words cannot be searched for, or readily tagged as tokens in a corpus linguistic project. Additionally, the genre of war writing itself has been considered within a limited scope. Applying the methods advanced in this research to literary war memoirs, for example, or fiction produced by veterans, would provide comparative frames of reference from which to discuss the effects and significance of linguistic construals chosen by veterans themselves. Similarly, as the discussion of drone warfare's representation in contemporary cinema (5.6) indicates, war is construed as a cultural artefact as well as a political one. Given the frequent references to video games noted in drone pilots' accounts of combat (5.3) contemporary war writing may arise from a bi-directional relationship in which culturally constructed, fictionalised representations of conflict inform the ways in which actual military experience is presented. A logical next step in the study of soldiers' war writings, then, could be the interaction of these forms, and the consequences for the everyday perception of conflict and military experience.

### **8.5.2: Advancing the Model of Intentionality**

While the model for the discussion of intentionality in discourse advanced in Chapter 6 and 7 has been applied to a single style of writing within this thesis, the theory itself is designed to model the perception of intentions in language generally, and is readily applicable to other genres of narrative. Indeed, future work concerning the role of perceptions of intentionality as reference points across discourse (Ch. 6.6) would benefit from extending the study to new kinds of text. Given that the texts examined in this thesis have been concerned with the construal, and sometimes justification, of acts

of violence, the reader's ability to infer the intentionality of actions has been particularly important. In different contexts, such as legal, political, or fictional discourse, the significance of intentionality as a prominent feature of character identity may vary. Nonetheless, understanding that agents' minds are modelled through a comparison with our own thoughts and experiences (Zunshine, 2006; Stockwell, 2009) is central to the cognitive approach to stylistics. Examining the ways in which readers are able to infer such intentions, therefore, is part of a logical development in the tool-kit of stylistically-focused analysis for examining larger units of text.

The reader response studies of Chapters 3 and 7 produced valuable responses served to demonstrate the subjective biases of the individual researcher in selecting stylistic for analysis and discussion. However, their sample sizes limit the ability to extrapolate their findings to reading practices more generally. Producing similar studies with larger cohorts, then, is an immediate direction for ongoing research into the perception of events and intentions in language. In addition to replicating the questions asked in the present studies, future research could probe readers for more specific responses with regards to actors' intentions. This in turns moves from an observation that intentionality *is* perceived, to more specific evidence of exactly what kinds of intentions are commonly associated with particular lexicogrammatical structures. With a more qualitative assessment of intentionality, a study into the goals associated with particular acts – both in isolation and broader discursive context – would shed further light on the ways in which pre-existing background knowledge affects readers' assessments of actors' minds. Such research would be well-suited to the present directions of cognitive poetics, and would benefit an understanding of readers' engagement with fictional characters, as well as their evaluation of real-world actors represented in language.

Recently, Nakamura (2018) has suggested that probability, not morality, explains the disparity between readers' assessments of intentionality in identical actions with socially positive or negative outcomes, while Kukkonen (2014) has posited the applicability of a Bayesian model of probability to the understanding of readers' engagement with fictional narratives. As was noted, the model of intentionality in this thesis views the inference of intentions as probabilistic (6.3; 6.4.2). Extrapolating the role of probability in mind-modelling and cognition to consider the ideological dimensions of other forms of discourse, such as the perception of causality and the assignation of responsibility, an approach to CDA grounded in models of probability will be well equipped to explore meaning in both narrow (what the reader is likely to infer) and broader (what the reader *could* infer) senses.

## **8.6: Conclusion**

Language always encodes a perspective upon the events it describes, regardless of the purpose of the discourse in question. From the perspective of traditional Critical Discourse Analysis, which takes as the subject of its analysis 'the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone, or ignore social inequality and injustice' (van Dijk, 1993: 252), soldiers' own writings are an overlooked genre in which the construction and perception of agency in language, and its association with ideology, is crucial. As has been stated from the beginning of this thesis, these texts represent a challenging environment (1.3) in which to examine these concepts critically, as the moral and ideological analysis of killing in war is multi-faceted. By looking beyond newspaper reports and political discourse, to instead examine the construals of the actors themselves, this thesis proposes that not only can CDA be applied to unconventional genres of discourse, but that the analysis of morally ambiguous texts requires an

introspective assessment of the ways in which ideological positions are inferred. To write about perpetrating acts of violence is a careful negotiation of social and moral boundaries through language, and the stylistic analysis of these texts' language refines the ways in which critical analysis is conducted across discourse.

Modelling the relationship between lexicogrammar, socio-cultural knowledge, and the beliefs and opinions of the reader requires a linguistic framework which situates language directly within everyday perceptual processes and cognitive activity. With its capacity to model knowledge beyond that presented in the immediate text, Cognitive Grammar showcases a complex but powerful approach to meaning structure, in the infancy of its application to discourse analysis. In this thesis, its capacity to represent the transfer of force from actors to patients in language provided a logical conceptualisation of the construals inherent to the discussion of military violence, although this represents only one dimension of its model of linguistic meaning. In negotiating the relationship between language, cognition, and context, the findings of this thesis contribute to the ongoing development of a model of linguistic analysis which seeks not only to understand how language and communication work, but how our perceptions of the world and the minds of others are continually shaped by discourse and society.

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# Appendices

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## **Appendix A: Primary Text and Select Participant Responses for the Reader Response Study of Reconstrual (Chapter 3)**

### **A.1: Participant Information and Consent Pages**

## Language and Violence - Reader Response Study

### Participant Information Sheet

This research is interested in the way first language readers of English respond to stories about violence in military memoirs. If you consent to take part in this research, you will shortly be asked to read short sections of a story, and to write any thoughts you might have about it as you progress. Please feel free to write whatever seems to be an appropriate response to you – there are no right or wrong answers. The process should take no longer than 20 minutes, although you are free to respond at your own pace.

Some of the passages included in this research involve scenes of graphic military violence, which you may find distressing. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, please feel free to discontinue with the process. **\*\*You are under no obligation to continue with this research, or to submit your responses, and you do not have to give a reason for withdrawing\*\***. If you exit the page before pressing the 'submit' button at the end of the study, your responses will not be saved in any way. You may also choose to have your responses removed from the study at any point after completing this form (prior to publication) by contacting myself or my supervisor at the addresses below.

The responses you provide will be collected and analysed as part of my PhD research. This means that extracts from your responses may be presented verbatim as part of the final dissertation, or in similar presentations regarding my research, but your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. During data collection and analysis, your personal data (name, email and response) will be stored securely and confidentially in password protected files, and will not be shared or used in any way outside of my professional research.

On the following page, you will find a multiple choice consent form. Please select the options that accurately reflect the information presented to you on this page, in order to demonstrate that you have fully understood the conditions of your participation in this project, as well as the way in which your data will be handled. If you do not select correct options, you will not be able to take part in the study.

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this study. If you have any further questions or concerns, please email me at [matthew.voice@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.voice@sheffield.ac.uk) or contact my supervisor, Richard Steadman-Jones, at [r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk)

BACK

NEXT

In order to take part in this study, you must first demonstrate that you understand the conditions under which your data and responses will be stored and used. All the answers to these questions are explained on the previous Participant Information page. If you do not select the correct responses, you will not be allowed to take part in the study, and will be redirected to another page. Please feel free to move back and forth between this page and the Participant Information page, in order to ensure your answers are accurate.

Do you have to complete this study? \*

- Once I begin, I am obligated to complete and submit this form.
- My completion of this form is voluntary, but once submitted I may not withdraw it.
- My completion of this form is voluntary, and I may withdraw it from the study at any time, prior to publication, without providing a reason.

How will your personal information (e.g. name) be stored and used? \*

- My personal information will be shared, and used for future projects
- My personal information will be held only by the researcher, and will be stored in various locations
- My personal information will be held only by the researcher, in a single password protected file

How will your responses to this survey be used? \*

- My responses are confidential, and will not appear in the researcher's dissertation and/or associated papers.
- My responses may appear anonymously in the researcher's dissertation and/or associated papers.
- My responses may appear along with my name in the researcher's dissertation and/or associated papers.

Are you a first language speaker of English? \*

- Yes
- No

Do you consent to take part in this research project? \*

- Yes
- No

## **A.2: Source Text and Participant Responses**

### **Section 1 - Text:**

Re-aligning ourselves to our officer's liking we started off on our attack, heading for the line of shell-bursts. It was heavy going over the torn-up earth but all else was easy, and our artillery had done a great job in preparing the path for us; no bullets came our way and we gradually lost the crouch which a soldier instinctively adopts when in danger. As we drew near to our goal the barrage lifted and we simply walked on through a shattered landscape where no one could possibly have survived unless sheltered in deep, well-made bunkers.

### **Section 2 - Text:**

We carried on to our 'stop line', just short of a small and scattered hamlet of sorts. Due to the shortened winter day and the miserable weather it was darkening rapidly and we couldn't see too well. We dug ourselves in, fully on the alert as Jerry was a master of the sudden counter-attack. Nothing happened and we were just congratulating ourselves, thinking the Germans had more or less given up, when, without warning, a persistent 'stonk' began ('stonk' was the Army's slang term for a bout of enemy shelling). Every few minutes a couple of heavy mortar bombs would fall among us. As we were well dug-in, proof against all except a direct hit or a very near miss, no one was hurt... The mortaring was far too accurate for it to be the result of a random map-shoot by the enemy and our officer realised we must be under observation – and pretty close observation at that – as every time a group left their cover for any reason, over came another pair of bombs.

He reckoned the observer just had to be in one or other of the houses near to us. It was now too dark, despite the artificial moonlight, for anyone to observe us from a greater distance. He called upon our tank group; they rattled up and took stock of the

situation, then blew the houses to but with their guns, following up by going to each in turn and setting fire to it was a liberal dose of tracer. The mortaring stopped soon after this so it was assumed the observer had been killed.

### **Section 3 – Text:**

Again Tom had read the situation correctly. He had realised that the attack on our right wasn't being pressed home so was in all likelihood a feint. The mortaring was also part of the ploy, all designed to keep our attention elsewhere while the main attack came from our front. The enemy had worked through the young, dense trees in order to assault the crossroads from our side.

Everyone opened fire, dropping a number of the Germans in their tracks. Some of them immediately went to ground, firing back at us while still others began the usual 'fire and movement' tactics, alternately sprinting and dropping behind new cover, there to open fire themselves while others repeated the manoeuvre.

Shouting to us to cover him, Tom jumped from his trench and ran over to the tanks, the crews of which had fallen for the feint attack and had swung their turrets towards it. Reaching the sheltered side of the first one he beat upon it with the butt of his Sten-gun; the officer peeped out through a hatch and Tom told him of the attack that was developing. They swung their guns around as Tom dashed back to us.

### **Section 4 – Text:**

We had maintained a non-stop fire all this while, keeping the attackers from forming any cohesive pattern and a number of them lay in the open where they had been cut down. One of them, obviously wounded, attempted to bring his Spandau to

bear on us but he was seen by Les on the Bren gun who gave him a burst. The man's head literally exploded as the bullets smashed into it. Seeing this, our men began to put bullets into the other bodies lying about whenever they hadn't a live target to fire at. The tanks joined in, adding their machine-gun fire to the mass of metal which was being poured at the Germans, now perhaps fifty or more strong, but forced to spread out with little chance of advancing. The trees to our front were mature and well spaced-out so there was little cover for the attackers.

### **Section 5 – Text:**

I saw one of the enemy soldiers slip from behind one tree to another, nearer one. As the two were almost in line with us he hadn't been seen by anyone else. Realising that he must be standing upright and sideways on so as to be hidden, I reckoned that, though the centre of the trunk was thick enough to stop a bullet, the edges would certainly let one through and, as the tree was not too broad, I would stand a chance of getting the man behind it. My Sten, with its low-powered pistol ammunition, stood little chance of this so I grabbed Frank's rifle, aimed at a point about a third in from the edge of the trunk and fired: the man pitched forward to lie on his face. All this took far less time than it takes to tell.

### **Section 5 – Reader Reconstructions:**

**R1:** One of our soldiers sees an enemy soldier move from being behind one tree to another. The soldier works out that he must be standing up right so that no other soldiers can see him. The soldier who has seen him shoots him with another soldier's rifle.

**R2:** The soldier was now fully alert and looking for the enemy. He spotted one behind a tree and realised his own weapon would be ineffective against this position. So,

using a mate's more powerful weapon, he calculates how to 'drop' the enemy, which he succeeds doing.

**R3:** The narrator kills a man behind a tree.

**R4:** The narrator borrows Frank's rifle to kill an enemy soldier hidden behind a tree. He needed the rifle because his pistol wasn't powerful enough to fire through the trunk.

**R5:** One enemy soldier was moving from one tree to another, The narrator killed him with a carefully aimed rifle shot penetrating the edge of the tree the enemy soldier was sheltering behind,

**R6:** One soldier spotted a German soldier hiding who may have been the man behind the attack, and so took someone else's gun which was better and shot the hiding soldier all in a short space of time.

**R7:** This soldier noticed that there was a man hiding behind a tree and that only he could kill him. To do this, he figured he'd need a more powerful gun and to shoot through the edge of the tree. He used someone else's gun and shot accurately where he needed to, killing the soldier behind the tree.

**R8:** Seeing an enemy soldier hide behind a tree he sees an opportunity for a kill, the tree wouldn't be cover enough. Realising his machine gun wouldn't be powerful enough to penetrate the tree he borrowed a friend's rifle and shot, he was successful and the enemy fell.

**R9:** The writer recounts his ingenuity in finding a way to kill one of the enemy who he realises is hiding behind a tree.

**R10:** I saw a man hiding behind the tree, so I shot him with my friend's better gun.

### **Section 5 –Evaluation:**

**R1:** This text has not evoked as much feeling in me as the others, I'm not sure why!

**R3:** It's very rational in the sense that is a presentation of a sequence of events and the thought processes he has about them. Again, there seems very little emotion.

**R4:** Again, action packed. Part of me felt triumphant that the narrator got one up on 'jerry', another part of me feels I shouldn't approve of killing and glorifying war.

**R5:** Nathan Bedford Forrest "d unto them as they would do unto you, But do it fur'stest

**R8:** The soldier is putting thought into how to kill the enemy in a sort of scientific way and is successful.

**R10:** I bet the other man thought he was so sneaky and cunning sneaking around behind the trees. And then he died.

### **Section 6 – Text:**

Beckoning to our stretcher-bearers to come and deal with the casualties, I told Dave about “my” victim. Finding him, we looked at the tree trunk. Sure enough, the bullet had ripped clean through it. Looking at the man, it was obvious that the bullet had flattened on its path through the wood and had then caught the poor devil across the shoulders, tearing out both shoulder blades and making a terrible, messy wound from the blood which was still oozing despite the fact that a great deal of bleeding had already taken place, forming a thick red pool in the pine needles. Turning him over, we

saw a young man of my age – a teenager in fact. To my surprise and horror he was still alive – but only just. Somehow or other his body had survived the awful wound inflicted upon it. I stood, transfixed for what seemed like an eternity, looking down at the lad. Visions of his possibly being saved raced through my mind and I called to Jimmy, one of our first-aiders. ‘Come over and look at this guy, Jim.’

He came over and gave the young German a casual glance. ‘He’s nearly dead, won’t be long.’

‘Can you do anything for him?’

‘No, he’s as good as gone.’

As we spoke the German lad simply died... no rattle, no movement, nothing at all; his life simply left his mutilated body; the only visible sign was that his eyes glazed over. Jim checked his pulse. ‘He’s gone,’ said he.

### **Section 6 – Evaluation:**

**R1:** I said that the last passage didn't evoke much emotion, but now that I have seen the other side of the story, it has made me reflect more on the last passage and brings home the reality of war. The people you shoot from far away are real people, with real lives, not just 'the enemy'.

**R2:** Although taken aback by the sight of the dying soldier's wounds and age, is the soldier who'd fired the shot nevertheless offering some kind of 'fair play' when wanting to help? It's just a game, I shoot you, you shoot me.

**R3:** This extract has more emotion with words like 'terrible', 'awful', 'poor devil', 'mutilated'. The emotion seems a little perfunctory perhaps?

**R4:** I warmed to the narrator as the harsh reality of war hits him. I'm wondering

if the stretcher bearers are there to deal with German casualties as well as allied? The fact that the German soldier is so young is truly sad. I don't think soldiers on either side had much choice in whether to go to war or not.

**R6:** The soldier who had shot the other soldier felt sorry for him and wanted to help him as he related to him as they were the same age and he had seen what he had done to him.

**R8:** After shooting the enemy he goes to help him with a stretcher bearer, sees the injuries to the man and seeks first aid help, all to no avail, as the man dies. These are humane actions to help, that follow cleverly thought out actions to injure / kill the man initially. A massive contradiction of actions in a short period of time

**R9:** The writer expresses a degree of empathy when face to face with one of the enemy, as distinct from the enemy being at a distance.

**R10:** Did the narrator feel remorse? He wanted to save him? Was it just because the victim was young or because he felt the guilt himself at having done that to someone?

### **Section 7 – Text:**

I felt devastated. This was strange since he and his comrades but a short while ago were out to kill me and my mates. It was a totally irrational feeling. I tried to tell myself that if I hadn't shot him he would have taken the greatest pleasure in shooting me, but it had little effect. Had he been dead or more normally wounded when I found him it wouldn't have bothered me. It was the sight of that ghastly wound combined with his being alive that got to me. Looking back, I'm glad he died. If he had been taken back and by a miracle restored to some degree of life, then he would surely have been a wreck of a man and I would probably never have lost the feeling of guilt that possessed me for a while on that day.

## Section 7 – Evaluation:

**R1:** This has confused me because maybe I have got the last passage wrong and it was not his comrade who found him dead but his enemy... It is important to hear how doing something like killing the enemy can be difficult for the soldiers, as they think about the life that that person had and that they have taken away.

**R3:** The claim that his feelings of devastation are 'totally irrational' is strange, as I think they are quite normal. I mean, it's a human being that he's dealing with here - someone his own age roughly and quite young. Of course that would be devastating, even if it is an enemy. It's also strange he says he is glad the enemy soldier died for the reason that he would feel guilty about it if he had lived on in suffering. He could conceivably feel guilty simply for him dying too. I wouldn't want to judge the narrator too harshly because feelings are feelings and I wouldn't want to second guess him, but I think the reaction here are a little strange. I mean, he ascribes a viciousness to the enemy soldier which he does not apply to himself - saying that the enemy soldier would 'take pleasure' in killing him. How does he not know the enemy soldier would have the same guilty feeling about killing an Allied soldier? It is also strange that a 'devastating' feeling of guilt only 'possessed him for a while on that day'. This seems like a very short time to feel devastated.

**R4:** Its a hard thing to come to terms with, shooting someone and seeing the results. As the daughter of a soldier (who has certainly killed people) this has made me think about my dad and the horrendous affect of military service on his mental health. In war there are no victors.

**R5:** Having spent a year as a casualty officer, a year doing neurosurgery and more than 25 years as a coroner, I'm afraid that the the nature of fatal injuries, and survivors' reactions to them doesn't upset me as much as perhaps it should. When you see a 25

year old woman who has, quite literally, blown her head off with a shotgun, it gives you a certain perspective.

**R8:** Conflicting emotions again, the injuries caused to the man caused problems, he finds himself wishing a less serious injury was caused to the man, that the man could have been killed straight away, then glad he died as he would have been forever guilty if the man had survived and lived with the wounds.

**R9:** It might be that the wounded enemy soldier would have agreed that early death was preferable to continued but severely maimed life, but the writer imposes his own view of that choice and thus comforts himself.

**R10:** Total rationalisation. Makes sense, I suppose, because how else do you live with yourself knowing that you killed someone and they died slowly and painfully, and it was because of you? Better to believe that really had he lived, the soldier would have had an awful painful life. Killing him was a favour.

## Appendix B: Signed consent forms and email correspondence with Charles Sasser (B.1) and Kevin Maurer (B.2), regarding the citation of personal correspondence (Ch. 5.2)

### B.1.1: Charles Sasser – Consent Form



The  
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Sheffield.

#### Participant Information Sheet

**Project Name:** Writing Fighting: A Cognitively-Oriented Critical Study of Representations of Violence in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Military Memoir

**Lead Researcher:** Matthew Voice

**Purpose of the Project:** This is an English Language and Linguistics PhD research project, interested in understanding how soldiers from the First World War to the present day are able to describe their experiences of conflict in narrative form. In particular, it is concerned with the language used to describe experiences of performing acts of violence. The aim of the study is to investigate how concepts such as causality, intentionality, and responsibility are expressed in these memoirs, and to use these findings to reflect on the effectiveness of critical linguistic research practices more broadly.

**Why have I been chosen:** Because of your expertise as a recent co-author of a work related to this research project, your correspondence with the researcher will be a useful source to quote in explaining current practices in the publication of drone pilots' memoirs.

**What will happen:** I would like to use quotations from our correspondence in the body of my thesis. In particular, I would like to quote you as having written the following:

'The process of writing PREDATOR, is I interviewed Matt and from those interviews and my research wrote the book.'

'I do take extensive notes, but not always on the minor details other than the subject's interaction with whatever his mission might be.'

These quotations will appear in a discussion of the ways in which co-authorship makes the study of a book's language difficult, as it can be impossible to know for sure whose words are being read at any one time. I would like to use these quotes to support this point in the thesis, and future publications which may result from the work produced here.

**What do I have to do:** In order to include this correspondence in the final thesis, I require your explicit consent. You can provide this by returning this form to the lead researcher with either a physical or electronic signature attached.

**Do I have to consent:** No. If you do not return this form to the researcher with your signature attached, then your correspondence will not appear in the thesis.

**How will my data appear:** If you consent, then your quotations will appear in the main body of the thesis, along with your name. In addition, the thesis appendices will contain a transcript of the entire email correspondence to ensure that your quotations are not taken out of context. While your name will remain, your contact details will be removed from these transcripts.

**Who has ethically reviewed this project:** The project has been ethically reviewed by a panel from the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Committee.

**Further information:** If you require further information about this research project, or the way in which your data will be handled, please contact:

Matthew Voice, lead researcher: [matthew.voice@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.voice@sheffield.ac.uk)

Dr Richard Steadman-Jones, primary supervisor: [r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you very much for your time. If you consent for your data to appear as part of this research project, please tick the boxes and sign below, and return this form to the lead researcher.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet above explaining the project, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary. Should I not wish for the above quotations to appear in the thesis, I am free to decline.
3. I agree for the data collected from me to appear in future research.
5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Charles W. SASSER 2 Feb 2018



Name of Participant

Date

Signature

## **B.1.2: Email Correspondence with Charles Sasser**

17/5/2017

Dear Mr Sasser,

My name is Matthew Voice, and I am a PhD researcher at the University of Sheffield, in the UK. In the course of my research on the language of violence in military memoir, I came across 'Predator: The Remote-Control Air War over Iraq and Afghanistan: A Pilot's Story', co-authored by Matthew Martin and yourself.

Because my research interest is in the language used by soldiers to describe their experiences, I wanted to contact you directly to ask a few questions about the writing of the book. How did you come to collaborate with Matthew Martin on the book? At what stage did you become involved in the book's development, and did you act as a writer, advisor, or in some other role? I hope you can find the time to shed some light on the process, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any questions for me, I would be more than happy to answer them.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Voice

18/5/2017

Dear Mr. Voice. Matt is a friend; I'm a professional writer with over 60 books published, thousand of magazine articles. I'm also a veteran of 29 years in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army, 13 of those years in Army Special Forces (Green Berets). I've published a number of books about the military. The most recent fiction are, just published: SIX; BLOOD BROTHERS; and SIX:END GAME—the novelization of the History channel drama mini-series, SIX., based on U.S. Navy SEALs. The most recent non-fiction published this year, also military, are NIGHT FIGHTER, and BLOOD IN THE HILLS.

I'd be happy to help if I can.

Chuck sasser

19/05/2017

Dear Mr Sasser,

Thank you so much for your swift response. It's really useful for me knowing a bit more about your relationship with Matt. I'd like to know a little bit more about the process of writing the book, and your involvement. Your name appears next to Matt's on the cover, and I'd like to establish which parts of the book you were involved with, and in what way.

22/05/2017

Mr. Voice—

The process of writing PREDATOR, is I interviewed Matt and from those interviews and my research wrote the book. Hope your project goes well.

22/05/2017

Dear Mr Sasser,

Thank you again for your reply. As a linguist interested in language use, it's important for me to know who produced the text in the first place. This is incredibly valuable information for me and my work, and I appreciate your response immensely. Would you be happy for me to include this conversation within the appendix of my PhD? Being able to refer to it directly will make my discussion of the book a great deal better.

As my research is particularly focused around scenes of combat, I would be keenly interested in knowing exactly which details of the book came from Matthew Martin through your interviews. Do you still have records of those interviews, and is there any way you would be willing to share them with me for research purposes?

Finally, I would be interested to know whether you believe your own combat experience influenced your writing. I appreciate these are a lot of questions, but I'm very keen to accurately represent your role in writing the book.

03/06/2017

Sorry I couldn't get back with you right away—but I'm often on deadlines that demand foreign travel. Anyhow, the truth is that Matt and I were both career military men. As such, military people speak a particular language that you see in my military books. It has to do with nomenclature, environment of fighting men, understanding of so many

various missions scattered across the various military branches the details of which we often share, and the fact [sic] that so many of us depend on each other for that understanding. For example, I was in Army Special Forces (Green Berets) for 13 years. During that time, on missions, we depended upon Air Force people like Matt for support, and on Air Force for our transportation and insertions, upon Navy at times for insertions and air support, as well as upon Marines for various tasks. You see, all branches of the U.S. military are in many ways interlocked and made stronger by the fact that we all speak the same military language. I don't know how to explain it any better than that.

Same goes for the books I write about military people. I do take extensive notes, but not always on the minor details other than the subject's interaction with whatever his mission might be. The individual is most important in these stories, not the overall nomenclature. If you can get a copy of THE SNIPER HANDBOOK, published by Sword & Pen in Britain, you will find one of my pieces I did on WWII Russian female sniper Ludymila Pavlichenko, "the most dangerous woman in the world." Writing about the military from ancient times to foreign militaries is essentially a military understanding in common.

14/12/2017

Dear Charles,

I am writing again to thank you for answering my questions about Predator. Understanding your involvement in the process of writing the book has been very helpful for me in my own work. As a result, I would like to quote passages from our correspondence in my PhD thesis. In order to do this, however, I need your explicit consent. I have attached to this email a participant information sheet, which explains a bit more about the nature of my work, and exactly how I would like to quote your correspondence. If you are happy with this, please attach a digital signature to the document, or print and sign it then send me a scan, so that I can provide evidence of your consent. If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to email me.

15/12/2017

Morning, Matt. No problem. I'll sign and return the form to you. I'd love to read your paper itself when you've finished and published. Only, I have no idea how to use a digital signature—and I don't scan. Send me a mailing address, please, and I'll mail it to you promptly. (I like to keep life simple without so many machines controlling our lives, which, I believe, is ultimately a great danger to mankind and civilization.) Anyway, good luck.

## B.2: Kevin Maurer – Consent Form



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

### Participant Information Sheet

**Project Name:** Writing Fighting: A Cognitively-Oriented Critical Study of Representations of Violence in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Military Memoir

**Lead Researcher:** Matthew Voice

**Purpose of the Project:** This is an English Language and Linguistics PhD research project, interested in understanding how soldiers from the First World War to the present day are able to describe their experiences of conflict in narrative form. In particular, it is concerned with the language used to describe experiences of performing acts of violence. The aim of the study is to investigate how concepts such as causality, intentionality, and responsibility are expressed in these memoirs, and to use these findings to reflect on the effectiveness of critical linguistic research practices more broadly.

**Why have I been chosen:** Because of your expertise as a recent co-author of a work related to this research project, your correspondence with the researcher will be a useful source to quote in explaining current practices in the publication of drone pilots' memoirs.

**What will happen:** I would like to use quotations from our correspondence in the body of my thesis. In particular, I would like to quote you as having written the following:

'McCurley wrote the first draft of Hunter Killer and I revised it from there. Unlike other books I've done, this one had more of my co-writer's work than usual. I'd be happy to talk about other projects, but for this one I usually took McCurley's chapters and rewrote from there.'

This quotation will appear in a discussion of the ways in which co-authorship makes the study of a book's language difficult, as it can be impossible to know for sure whose words are being read at any one time. I would like to use this quote to support this point in the thesis, and future publications which may result from the work produced here.

**What do I have to do:** In order to include this correspondence in the final thesis, I require your explicit consent. You can provide this by returning this form to the lead researcher with either a physical or electronic signature attached.

**Do I have to consent:** No. If you do not return this form to the researcher with your signature attached, then your correspondence will not appear in the thesis.

**How will my data appear:** If you consent, then your quotations will appear in the main body of the thesis, along with your name. In addition, the thesis appendices will contain a transcript of the entire email correspondence to ensure that your quotations are not taken out of context. While your name will remain, your contact details will be removed from these transcripts.

**Who has ethically reviewed this project:** The project has been ethically reviewed by a panel from the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Committee.

**Further information:** If you require further information about this research project, or the way in which your data will be handled, please contact:

Matthew Voice, lead researcher: [matthew.voice@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.voice@sheffield.ac.uk)

Dr Richard Steadman-Jones, primary supervisor: [r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you very much for your time. If you consent for your data to appear as part of this research project, please tick the boxes and sign below, and return this form to the lead researcher.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet above explaining the project, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.



2. I understand that my participation is voluntary. Should I not wish for the above quotations to appear in the thesis, I am free to decline.



3. I agree for the data collected from me to appear in future research.



5. I agree to take part in the above research project.



<u>Kevin Maurer</u>	<u>14 Dec 2017</u>	
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

## B.2.2: Email correspondence with Kevin Maurer

24/5/2017

Dear Mr Maurer,

My name is Matthew Voice, and I am a PhD researcher at the University of Sheffield, in the UK. In the course of my research on the language of violence in military memoir, I came across 'Hunter Killer: Inside the Lethal World of Drone Warfare', which you co-authored with Lt. Col. T. Mark McCurley.

Because my research interest is in the language used by soldiers to describe their experiences, I wanted to get a bit more detail with regards to the process of writing the book. From my experience in contacting other authors, my understanding has been that the second author has interviewed the soldier, before writing up the book. Was this the case with 'Hunter Killer'? If so, I'd be really interested to know how the writing relates to the source material. If not, then further clarification of the writing process would be most welcome.

I hope you can find the time to shed some light on the process, and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any questions for me, I would be more than happy to answer them.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Voice

23/5/2017

Hey Matthew,

Thanks for reaching out. McCurley wrote the first draft of Hunter Killer and I revised it from there. Unlike other books I've done, this one had more of my co-writer's work than usual. I'd be happy to talk about other projects, but for this one I usually took McCurley's chapters and rewrote from there.

Kevin

25/5/2017

Hi Kevin,

Thanks so much for your swift response. As a linguist, I'd love to know a bit more about what the process of rewriting means, exactly. My research interest is in the way language represents experience, particularly in the context of conflict, and the idea of a third party being involved in the editing of someone's autobiographical writing really intrigues me. How do you go about rewriting that kind of work, and how does the process differ from representing the events and experiences in a book like No Easy Day?

14/12/2017

Hi Kevin,

I am writing again to thank you for answering my questions about Hunter Killer. Understanding your involvement in the process of writing the book has been very helpful for me in my own work. As a result, I would like to quote passages from our correspondence in my PhD thesis. In order to do this, however, I need your explicit consent. I have attached to this email a participant information sheet, which explains a bit more about the nature of my work, and exactly how I would like to quote your correspondence. If you are happy with this, please attach a digital signature to the document, or print and sign it then send me a scan, so that I can provide evidence of your consent. If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to email me.

14/12/2017

Hey Matthew,

Happy to help. Don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything else.

## **Appendix C: Participant responses for the study of perceptions of intentionality and responsibility (Chapter 7)**

### **C.1: Question Structure**

- 1) In your own words, please describe the most important event of this story.
- 2) Is the person/thing who performs the most important event acting intentionally? (1 = not acting intentionally, 10 = Acting intentionally)
- 3) To what extent is the person/thing that performs the most important event responsible for it? (1 = not at all responsible, 10 = highly responsible)
- 4) Please complete this sentence: the person/thing responsible for the most important event should be \_\_\_\_\_ for it.
  - a) Praised
  - b) Blamed
  - c) Neither
- 5) If you have any further thoughts on 'A Nightmare' or the questions you were asked about the story, please record them here.

### **C.2: Participant Responses**

**R1:** 'The german raid and artillery strike, as this led to the german soldier entering the bunker.'

**Intentionality:** 8

**Responsibility:** 9

**Praise/blame:** Neither

**R2:** 'The discovery that the man he shot was not a threat to him but was close to death and trying to find safety.'

**Intentionality:** 10

**Responsibility:** 8

**Praise/blame:** Neither

**R3:** 'The shooting of the German in terror for his life, not realising he was injured'

**Intentionality:** 10

**Responsibility:** 8

**Praise/blame:** Neither

'The fact that it happens in a war zone makes a difference. It was reasonable to believe his own life was in danger.'

**R4:** 'The most important part of the story is the protagonist waiting in the pillbox, hearing the sound of someone approaching and feeling afraid and not knowing what to do.'

**Intentionality:** 10

**Responsibility:** 7

**Praise/blame:** Neither

**R5:** Sparrer came back with the chisel, and some rum and hot tea. From the point of view of the other man, who went on to survive the war, that was important. He had never been so glad to see anyone in his life

**Intentionality:** 8

**Responsibility:** 10

**Praise/blame:** Praise

'You're probably shocked I didn't pick on the German who got shot, but the poor man/boy was never present as an individual.'

**R6:** 'The narrator's moments alone in the pillbox, waiting for his friend to return, hearing the raid of enemy fire on his camp, and realizing his hideout is about to be discovered. The most important event is his distinguishing friend from foe and defensively shooting the German soldier, even though he was already dying.'

**Intentionality:** 10

**Responsibility:** 7

**Praise/blame:** Neither

'I don't think the narrator should be praised for killing his enemy, nor would he be blamed for accidentally killing his friend. Defending oneself in a time of war does carry responsibility, but not as much as it does in peace time. The soldiers are responsible for protecting their country and neutralizing the enemy; if under attack, they cannot be blamed nor praised for killing preemptively or in return.'

**R7:** 'When the narrator kills the German soldier who came into the pill box.'

**Intentionality:** 10

**Responsibility:** 10

**Praise/blame:** Praise

**R8:** 'The shooting of the German soldier appears the most important, for if the narrator hadn't shot the German there would be no drama to the narrative other than a potential bond between the wounded soldier and said narrator.'

**Intentionality:** 10

**Responsibility:** 1

**Praise/blame:** Neither

'Great story. The blame is on the related governments in that particular story, for if it weren't for the greeds of government war might be a scarcity, and good people wouldn't find themselves in such situations.'

**R9:** 'The shooting of the German soldier'

**Intentionality:** 6

**Responsibility:** 8

**Praise/blame:** Neither