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rint. De minnesplatser som besöks visar sig vara, eller peka på, ”tomrum”, där man inte ser någonting alls. De vittnesmål som framgår av intervjuer – intervjuer med modern, som är den primära förbindelsen till det tyska materialet – men också de vittnesmål och intervjuer som Krook läser sig till från den tyska historien – omgärdas med skepsis. Berättelsen, slutligen, upplöser sig i berättelser, berättelserna i dikt, fragment, oavslutade ansatser, ”kurze Sätze”.

Avhandlingen gestaltar minst fem perspektiv på det ”dokumentära materialet” och jag påminner om mitt Nietzsche-citat, där Nietzsche hävdar att ”ju fler affekter vi låter komma till orda om en sak, ju fler ögon, olika ögon som vi vet att använda för samma sak, desto fullständigare blir vårt begrepp om denna sak, vår objektivitet”. Jag frågade mig inledningsvis om detta stämmer: blir vi berikade? Kommer vi på den litterära gestaltningens väg närmare sanningen? Jag är nu benägen att svara både ja och nej. Ja: vi blir förvisso berikade, avhandlingens många diskussioner och ansatser och problematiseringar visar just på problem, på möjligheter och omöjligheter. Men nej: vi kommer inte närmare sanningen och inte närmare den konkreta historien. Avhandlingen är emfatisk på denna punkt, den visar på tomrum och hinder, den ”vägrar leverera”. I den mån man kan tala om sanning i sammanhanget, i den mån den litterära gestaltningen tar en egen väg till sanningen, eller visar på sin egen version av den historiska sanningen, så måste den bestå i insikten att den inte finns. Sanningen är att ingen sanning gives.

Är det den enda tänkbara slutsatsen av en litterär bearbetning av historiskt och dokumentärt material? Absolut inte. En lång rad författare har lyst rat till det som jag citerade från Becketts *The Unnameable*. De har insett att de måste vidare. De har insett att de inte kommer vidare. Så långt är Krook med och hon ger vältaligt uttryck för just detta: att inte komma vidare. Men andra fortsätter och går vidare, trots allt. Primo Levi skriver sanningen om Auschwitz trots att han vet att det inte är hela sanningen. Imre Kertesz gör detsamma på sitt sätt. Max Aurach, som intervjuas av berättaren Sebald i *De utvandrade*, slutar inte måla bara för att det är omöjligt att göra det alldeles rätt. Sebald slutar inte söka bara för att det är omöjligt att nå fram, Klemperer slutar inte skriva dagbok fast utsikterna är hopplösa. Inte heller Krook slutar, men hon verkar ha bestämt sig för att berättelsen ligger bortom

hennes möjligheter och att hon inte ska ”leverera”. Hon går inte vidare.

När Helga Krook öppnar dörrarna till sitt material vädrar hon ut bland minnesarbetets förutsättningar och möjligheter. Det är uppfriskande men också oroande. Det som oroar är att vi som läser får lyssna till en kör av röster utan att veta vem eller vad vi ska lyssna till. Att vi blir lämnade i ett labyrinthiskt arkiv, som är historiens rum, som visar sig vara ett tomrum. Jag hade önskat mig att tomrummet hade fått viska ”Jag är öppen” och att hon hade gått vidare. Men jag ska inte klaga: Krook har till fullo demonstrerat sin ”förmåga att arbeta såväl litterärt gestaltande på hög nivå som reflekterande och problemorienterat”, som det står i kursplanen för den här verksamheten som kallas ”litterär gestaltning”.

Arne Melberg

Anežka Kuzmičová, *Mental Imagery in the Experience of Literary Narrative. Views from Embodied Cognition*. Institutionen för litteraturvetenskap och idéhistoria, Stockholms universitet. Stockholm 2013.

In an article that appeared in the *New York Times* in 2010 (Patricia Cohen, “Next Big Thing in English. Knowing They Know That You Know”, *New York Times*, April 1 2010), cognitive approaches were hailed as “the next big thing” in the study of literature, as something that can save literature as an academic discipline. But how does a cognitive approach proceed? How does one study what cognitive narratologist David Herman – speaking for the dominant form of literature – calls “the nexus of narrative and mind” (David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 2009, title of chapter 6)? The problem here is that “the mind” and either “literature” or “narrative” are so deeply entangled that they cannot be separated: all literature and all narratives are created by a mind, and read by a mind, so that every approach to literature deals in a sense with the mind. There are several ways to focus more narrowly on the mental operations required by literary texts, but all of them are fraught with difficulties.

The first is the experimental approach, which is widely practiced in psychology departments. In this method, the investigator composes a text that

presents a specific interpretative problem, gives it to read to test subjects, and asks the subjects to perform a task – for instance press a button when they have figured out something, or the time of their reading is monitored and compared for different types of texts. This kind of research is usually ignored by literary scholars for at least two reasons. First, it takes considerable resources, equipment, test subjects, and a practical training that literary scholars do not have. And second, it does not use complex literary texts but simple texts specifically created for the occasion. This approach tests basic narrative comprehension, but it cannot capture the nature of the literary experience in its full complexity.

The second approach, which I call neurological, is also experimental, but it uses much more sophisticated equipment than psychological research, and it aims at a deeper cognitive level — the level of neurons rather than the level of meanings. It consists of taking fMRI images of the brain of people while they are reading texts. Such research has shown that the same regions of the brain are activated when we perform an action as when we read about it. This phenomenon has been attributed to the existence of so-called “mirror neurons,” a type of neurons that are heavily used by monkeys — monkey see, monkey do — but whose existence cannot be verified in humans because their detection would require excessively invasive technology. The problem with these studies is that they provide nothing more than a physiological explanation of independently observed phenomena. To go back to the mirror neuron hypothesis: it has been invoked as the reason we experience empathy for fictional characters, but it tells us nothing about the nature of empathy nor about the textual features that promote it.

A third possibility is the top-down cognitivist approach. Practitioners of this approach read a lot about recent developments in cognitive science, or recent work in philosophy of mind, and they scrutinize literary texts for evidence that verifies these theories. Since literary critics always find what they are looking for — whether it is a confirmation of Freud’s theories or a demonstration of inseparability of mind and body — the outcome of such an approach is almost entirely predictable: it will always confirm the theories that are currently fashionable, for it would be too risky to try to rehabilitate a discarded theory.

So how can a cognitive approach to literature avoid all these problems? Anežka Kuzmičová’s *Mental Imagery in the Experience of Narrative* demonstrates that there is a fourth way for cognitive literary studies, a productive compromise between the approaches mentioned above and a simple alternative: use your own mind to study what the mind does when it reads literature. In other words, rely on introspection, on your own experience, rather than on external informants, sophisticated instruments, or ready-made theories. But this approach can certainly use experimental research and cognitive theories to support its findings whenever they are helpful, without being enslaved to this research. This is what Kuzmičová does in her groundbreaking study of the role of mental imagery in the experience of literary narrative. Her use of introspection is particularly well suited to her topic, because the formation of mental images when we read literary narrative is widely attested by readers, though it is also highly variable. Some readers form vivid mental images; others tend to process texts as a collection of propositions. The only way to access mental imagery is to try to analyze one’s own experience of texts. Introspection provides a very personal, very subjective view of mental imagery, but this does not mean that the principles on which this imagery is built cannot be generalized. Current cognitive research can provide precious help in formulating these principles, even though it cannot predict exactly how a text will be turned into mental images by a given reader.

The study of mental imagery is particularly relevant to literary narratives, not only because these narratives inspire richer imaginings than purely utilitarian ones, but also because writing deprives the senses of input, and forces the imagination to compensate. In oral storytelling you do not have to form an image of the voice of the narrator, since you hear it, and in film you do not have to form a mental image of what the characters and the setting look like, since you see them, but in literature the senses are not given anything to perceive except for the text itself, and the text, as a physical object, is not part of the storyworld. It is therefore left entirely to the imagination to form a representation of the storyworld.

The term “imagery” suggests the visual: English lacks a term for the mental representation of other sensory experience, and bundles them all under the same umbrella term. This may be why studies of mental imagery have so far been almost exclusively limited to visualizations. The originality

of Kuzmičová's work lies in the fact that she does not limit mental imagery to some kind of cinema in the mind. Her discussion of mental imagery presents a neatly symmetrical organization. She distinguishes two basic types of imagery: referential imagery (discussed in chapters 2 and 3), which relates to things or events in the storyworld, and verbal imagery (discussed in chapter 4), which, as one may expect, relates to language, more specifically to speaking and hearing. Both types are divided into two subcategories, and there is a striking parallelism between them that cuts across the more basic dichotomy. Referential imagery is divided into enactment imagery, by which readers mentally simulate the movements and actions of characters, and description imagery, which is a more static representation of the storyworld. Meanwhile, in verbal imagery, Kuzmičová distinguishes rehearsal imagery, by which readers silently simulate the enunciation of the text, and speech imagery, by which they imagine the voice of the characters and perhaps even, in certain cases, the voice of the narrator. In both enactment imagery and rehearsal imagery there is some kind of simulation that involves the reader's body, whether this body is actual or virtual, while in both description imagery and speech imagery the reader is distanced from what she imagines and the body is not involved. Let's now look at the four forms of imagery, one by one.

Chapter 2, "Enactment imagery," deals with how this type of mental activity contributes to a phenomenon that is attracting increased attention from cognitive studies: the reader's immersion in a storyworld. Following virtual reality theorists, Kuzmičová attributes immersion to a sense of presence, which she defines as "the subjective sense of having entered the tangible environment of the storyworld, of 'being there'" (50). The most powerful factor of immersion is found in passages describing the movements of characters, because, as a school of cognitive science known as enactmentism has claimed (supported by the fMRI experiments mentioned above), watching or reading about movements involves an identification of the cognizer with the moving body, a sense of bodily performing these movements. But not all descriptions of movement lead to a sense of presence; the movement must be "dynamically veracious" (62), which means that the time needed to perform the movement must be commensurable with the time needed to read about it. It takes an event like "as she sewed, she pricked her fingers" (from Flaubert's

Madame Bovary, quoted 74) rather than "Emma went to Rouen" to inspire identification with the character. The idea of embodied simulation, which operates on dynamic but not on static imagery, explains why it is much easier to imagine Emma Bovary sneaking out of the house to join her lover, or taking the poison, than to visualize her face. In her discussion of the contribution of enactment imagery to immersion, Kuzmičová insists on the importance of a natural, spontaneous, barely conscious act of imagination. She makes a claim that would be considered heretical by what I call "textualist" theories of literature, i.e. theories that locate literary art in a heightened awareness of language: in enactment imagery, and in the resulting sense of presence, the medium becomes invisible, as it yields the spotlight to the participating body. Taking a stand against the formalist claim that narrative art rests on defamiliarization, Kuzmičová argues that in order to sustain interest, narrative must strike a balance between defamiliarization and familiarity, which benefits simulation.

Chapter 3, titled "Description-imagery: reference without experience," deals with the cognitive processing of texts like this one: "Beyond stands the lamp, in the right corner of the table: a square base six inches on each side, a disk tangent with its sides, of the same diameter, a fluted column supporting a dark, slightly conical lampshade (Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy*, quoted 113). The chapter concentrates on visual description, arguably because its mental processing takes a much more obvious form than, for example, gustatory or olfactory information: the form of an image. Though description, and more particularly the visual kind, has often been addressed by narratologists, the comparison of enactment and descriptive imagery leads Kuzmičová to insights that would not be possible if description were treated in isolation. The contrast between enactment and description imagery lies in the following properties: movement versus vision; presence versus distance; corporeal involvement vs. purely mental representation; vividness versus feeble and transient representation; identification with characters vs. observing them from a third-person point of view; three-dimensional spatial representation (necessary to the simulation of movement) vs. projection of mental images on a two-dimensional imaginary screen; contributing to the flow of narrative time vs. interrupting it; easily constructed vs. requiring considerable effort (try to visualize the

table described by Robbe-Grillet!); and a contrast that requires an explanation: perceptually mimetic vs. non-perceptually mimetic. The perceptually mimetic images of enactment convey an experience of the world “as we apprehend it preverbally” (96) even though they are mediated by language (which, as we have seen, tends to become transparent in enactment imagery), while with the non-perceptually mimetic images of description, the reader “assumes the stance of somebody who is being informed that a certain object has certain properties” (99) rather than the stance of somebody who perceives the object. With all the immersive features clustering on the side of enactment imagery, one may wonder why authors ever bother with visual description, especially since the reader’s ability to visualize objects or scenes does not depend on the amount of detail: Kuzmičová observes that a single word is often more efficient in conjuring a mental image than a long description. One possible answer has to do with the idea of defamiliarization, which regains here some aesthetic importance. While enactment imagery invests in the familiar, so that it can be easily simulated, description imagery invests in the out of the ordinary: most authors would not bother to describe objects if they fully conformed to expectations. (Some writers will do so, however, because a close-up, lengthy description of a familiar object, such as a broom, can have a defamiliarizing effect.)

Chapter 4, “The verbal domain: speech imagery, rehearsal imagery, interpretation,” is the most innovative, but also the most speculative and occasionally controversial. Both types of verbal imagery focus on the medium, as opposed to referential imagery, which constructs a representation of the storyworld. Speech imagery is the process by which readers “hear” in their mind the utterance of narrative language; rehearsal imagery is the process by which they enunciate this language silently. Speech imagery thus represents language as coming from the outside (characters, possibly a narrator), as “not mine,” while rehearsal imagery represents language as spoken by the reader, this is to say, as “mine.” Post-modern literary theory, following Derrida, might object that both kinds of imagery rest on an oral bias that ignores the distinction between spoken and written language, but rehearsal imagery has the blessing of cognitive scientists, who claim that when we read silently, we perform a “subvocalization” that affects, ever so slightly, the muscles of the speech apparatus. These muscles will be happy

or unhappy, depending on the rhythm and flow of language, though making them unhappy does not necessarily mean failure, since it can be a deliberate way to reach certain effects. As for speech imagery, its most intense realization occurs when the reader processes dialogue quoted in the direct mode. One of Kuzmičová’s favorite examples is this utterance by David, a character from Hemingway’s *The Garden of Eden*, who notices that Catherine, his new wife, has cut her hair: “What did you do, Devil?” (quoted 31 and elsewhere). When we read this sentence, we imagine the tone of voice of the character (surprise, delight, disapproval?), and by doing so, we perform an interpretation, since we decide whether David likes or dislikes the hairstyle. But for Kuzmičová, speech imagery is not limited to dialogue; she claims that it extends to the voice of the narrator, and this in both first-person and third-person narration. This claim seems to me problematic. There are admittedly first-person narrators who speak in a strongly marked social or regional dialect, and whose idiosyncratic voice inspires imaginings (e.g. the narrator of Ring Lardner’s “Haircut”), but third-person narrators are usually non-individuated, purely abstract sources of language who cannot be said to either speak or write. These narrators are not imagined as having a human voice, especially not when they display non-human abilities such as omniscience, though they can be imagined as having a style (or more precisely, as relaying the author’s style). Moreover, when it relates to fictional narrators, speech imagery presupposes that narrators perform in a specific pragmatic context, for a specific reason, with a specific audience in mind; it presupposes, in other words, a “natural” speech situation that imitates a genre of non-fictional language. But few are the fictional narrators, whether in the first or third person, who fulfill these conditions. I can certainly follow Kuzmičová when she claims that the voice of David and Catherine, Hemingway’s characters, resonate in the reader’s mind, but unlike her I cannot hear the voice of Ruth, the first-person narrator of Marilynne Robinson’s novel *Housekeeping*, because the style is highly literary, and because there is no concrete speech or writing situation: we just don’t know in what circumstances this narrator is narrating her life. Moreover, since the language of narrators supports the entire text, imagining this language as spoken utterance would make too great a demand on the reader’s attention, while imagining the speech of characters can be limited to certain passages of high im-

mersive power, such as “What did you do, Devil?” Another problem with this chapter, one that the author fully recognizes, is that rehearsal imagery is not really an act of imagining, that is to say, an act of representing something in one’s mind, but rather a real and mostly unconscious muscular activity. One gets the impression that it is treated as mental imagery to fill the neat symmetrical pattern that I mention earlier: two types of imagining (enactment and rehearsal) involving the body, and creating proximity; two types of imaginings (description and speech imagery) disembodied and presupposing distance. Also, the introspective judgments on which the treatment of rehearsal imagery is based are so subjective that it renders most of the discussion neither falsifiable nor verifiable – a serious problem for a cognitivist approach.

The view of the experience of literature that emerges from the dissertation — and from cognitive approaches in general — is quite different from the teaching of the formalist/textualist approaches that have dominated academic discourse in the latter part of the twentieth century. The principal difference lies in Kuzmičová’s understanding of the limits of the reader’s attention. Whereas rigidly formalist theories claim that the reader should pay attention to “all the words and no others” (in the terms of Louise Rosenblatt, quoted 138), Kuzmičová realizes that attention has its peaks and valleys, and that mental imagery can only happen in privileged moments. This is why descriptions that accumulate details, such as those found in Robbe-Grillet’s novels, do not result in an increased sense of presence, but rather, in an alienation of the reader from the storyworld. Moreover, while formalist/textualist theories insist that the medium, i.e. language, should be visible at all times, Kuzmičová understands that close attention to verbal imagery gets in the way of referential imagery, and vice-versa. Reading is therefore a trade-off between attention to the medium and attention to the storyworld, different parts inspiring different kinds of imagery, not only because of their intrinsic substance, but also because of variability in the reader’s disposition. Not only are some readers more musically oriented, favoring verbal imagery, and others more content oriented, favoring referential imagery (or processing content as propositions rather than as images), they may also differ in their cognitive treatment of the same passage. Certain readers will process the mention of an object,

say a broom, visually, by forming a mental image of its appearance, while others will process it enactively, by imagining the action of sweeping. Similarly, the same words can be experienced auditively, as heard discourse, or in the rehearsal mode, as being spoken by the reader. But in some particularly felicitous moments, the mind is invaded by multiple types of images, and the reader will experience an intense sense of presence. One of these felicitous moments, for Kuzmičová, is a passage from Hemingway’s *The Garden of Eden* where Catherine expresses her sexual desire for David with a slightly ungrammatical sentence: “You now please. Please now” (quoted 152 and elsewhere). In this moment the distinction between speech imagery and rehearsal imagery collapses, and readers experience Catherine’s utterance as both theirs and Catherine’s, while building a vivid mental simulation of the scene. This convergence of mental imagery leads the author to a lovely definition of poetry: “The typically poetic experience may be defined as one in which the reader cannot tell whether sound and its meaning is coming from the outside or the inside, and which part of the reading body, the ear or the throat, is the primarily locus” (154). According to this definition, poetry can occur in both poems and narrative texts. The difference between these genres lies not in the nature of the poetic experience but in its distribution: highly concentrated in a poem, more intermittent in narratives, which, as long texts, cannot maintain steadily the highest level of attention.

Well-researched, rigorously argued, providing a well-organized and thoroughly original model, Kuzmičová’s dissertation is an impressive achievement that blazes new paths for narratology and cognitive approaches to literature. My occasional reservations should be taken as proof of how stimulating I found the author’s discussion of the selected texts. The next step in this kind of research should be the study of the role of mental imagery in narrative media that, in contrast to written language, offer perceptual input: media such as film, graphic narrative, oral storytelling or audio-books.

Marie-Laure Ryan