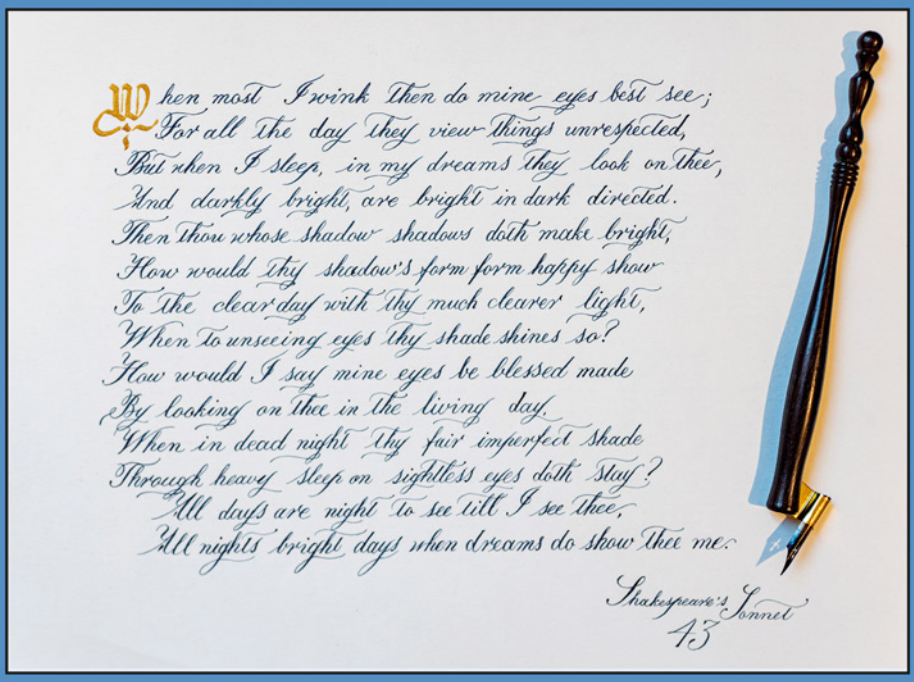

Leonie Kirchhoff

Investigating Understanding

Annotating Shakespeare's »Sonnet 43«

GÖRRES GESELLSCHAFT

BRILL | SCHÖNINGH

Leonie Kirchhoff

Investigating Understanding

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LEONIE KIRCHHOFF

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Für meine Familie,
die mich nicht von den Büchern abgehalten hat.

Ach herrje, sagte die Tante.
Jedischte! Nä, wo et sisch hinten reimt?
(Ulla Hahn *Das verborgene Wort*)

Contents

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Leonie Kirchhoff
Tübingen, 29.11.2023

Figures and Tables

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical background for the following study. Taking its starting point from a discussion of several different explanatory annotations of literary texts and the conclusions that can be drawn concerning the annotators' understanding processes (section 1.1), this study introduces a new, interdisciplinary approach (looking at cognitive, educational and literary studies) to research on literary understanding based on annotations written by university students. The annotations will serve as a methodological tool to evaluate and compare the three fields of research. Section 1.2 is concerned with a definition of what understanding means in the context of this study and includes a review of the different concepts of understanding in each field, which serves to delineate the framework of this investigation. Finally, with reference to literary studies, section 1.3 discusses why poetry is an intriguing research material and describes the generic characteristics that are of particular interest for studies on literary understanding. The sub-section further specifies why Shakespeare's "Sonnet 43" lends itself well to the approach introduced here.

1.1 Understanding Literary Texts – Annotations and their Annotators

"When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see" (l. 1) is the striking opening line of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 43" (SON43).[1] The statement may first elicit a puzzled "what?" from its readers; and justifiably so, as the line appears to be paradoxical and its meaning obscure. Some readers may even be reminded of Roland Barthes' inquisitive literary reader, who feels prompted to ask the literary text itself, albeit futilely: *what are you thinking about*? (214). There are, however, ways to address this problem. One well-known method that readers resort to in such a case is reading the explanatory annotations alongside the text in the hope of being informed why the statement in the first line of SON43 makes sense after all. For example, a reader uncertain what to make of the first line may encounter the following four annotations taken from different editions of Shakespeare's sonnets:

1 The entire sonnet is provided at the beginning of ch. 1.3.3.

> "1 wink close my eyes" (Duncan-Jones 43)[2]
>
> 1. *wink* shut my eyes, sleep *When most I wink* is curiously unidiomatic in its use of *most;* perhaps the construction was dictated by the context of the preceding sonnet; for a reader following the Q sequence, this line first seems to continue the theme of studied refusal to recognize evil: "to wink" meant "to shut one's eyes to-connive at-a fault"; see *Mac* I.iv.51–52: "Let not light see my black and deep desires./ The eye wink at the hand" and the proverb "Although I wink, I am not blind" [Tilley, W500]). (Booth 203)[3]
>
> The first quatrain opens with a paradox. Shakespeare says that when he closes his eyes – "when most I wink" – then he can see most clearly. ("Contributor 1" https://genius.com/21455387)
>
> The verb 'to wink' means "to close one's eyes"; a meaning that is now obsolete (*OED* 1a). To wink can also be used as a synonym for "to blink" which describes the action of "open[ing] and shut[ing] one's eyes momentarily" (*OED* 2). Possible other meanings also are "to sleep", "to slumber" or to "have the eyes closed in sleep" (*OED* 3).
>
> A possible interpretation is that 'to wink' was used as a synonym for "to blink" (*OED* 2). One could suggest that the speaker is able to see better when blinking more often. This could be compared to looking into the sun or a bright light, and being able to see better when blinking rapidly. Because of the explicit mentioning of sleeping and dreaming in line 3 of the poem ("But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee"), a different interpretation would be more fitting.
>
> The use of the word 'to wink' can also be interpreted as having the eyes closed in sleep, which would suggest that the speaker is able to see the clearest when he is asleep or has his eyes closed. This, however, is a paradox since one cannot physically see with one's eyes closed. The reader may assume that the speaker of the poem is asleep and dreaming, which is also confirmed in line 3. The word 'most' in this phrase indicates that the speaker is able to see best when he sleeps deeply. Booth suggests that 'wink' in this context means to shut one's eyes or to sleep (203). This reading is also corroborated by Evans, who paraphrases the passage as: "when I sleep most deeply" (144). (Student A final "wink", L1 L and L2 I)[4]

An comparison of the four annotations reveals that they differ in the amount of contextualisation they provide, and they can thus be said to suggest separate concepts of understanding, as this has consequences for what the annotators

2 All the editions referred to in the following can be found collectively in the Works Cited under Shakespeare. The two editions referred to in the introduction are Booth's 1980 edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* and Duncan-Jones' 2010 edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

3 See also Evans' annotation, which shows considerable similarities to Booth's annotation: "1 When … see A neat turn on the proverb 'Although I wink, I am not blind' (Tilley w500), which is illustrated by *Mac*. 1+52-3: 'The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be I Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.' Here, however, 'wink' = close the eyes in sleep, and 'most I wink' = when I sleep most deeply, balancing 'best see'." (144).

4 All the student annotations can be found following a link provided in Appendix C.

think will best help their readers. Moreover, the comparison also shows that the last annotation, written by a student, should be considered separately from the other annotations. The annotation is the only one that provides readers with a complete contextualisation of the word "wink" by reproducing the student's own process of understanding. The annotation therefore not only hints at a hermeneutic concept of understanding underlying the annotation process, but also allows for concrete inferences concerning the annotator's own understanding. This observation forms the basis of the following study which aims to investigate understanding processes in four students' developing annotation versions.

To describe this line of thought more clearly and, by implication, the motivation for this study as well, we should take a closer look at the annotations above. Let us begin with the annotation for "wink" (l. 1) in the Arden Edition of Shakespeare's sonnets. The annotation simply reads: "1 wink close my eyes" (Duncan-Jones 43). This short word gloss indicates that the word, other than a modern-day reader may have assumed, is not synonymous with 'to blink', but, here, actually means to shut one's eyes completely. So far, however, as we have solely read her annotation in the context of the first line, we may experience difficulties understanding why Duncan-Jones would propose that "wink" (l. 1) means "close my eyes", let alone be able to make sense of the paradoxical statement. The annotation thus raises the question why Duncan-Jones provides her readers with that exact information only and has apparently come to the conclusion that her local gloss is sufficient for readers to resolve or, at least, define the paradox. Another look at the annotation as well as the first three lines of SON43 can help answer the question:

> When most I **wink***, then do mine eyes best see;
> For all the day they view things unrespected,
> But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,

The paradox is resolved in the first lines of the poem: the speaker refers to what s/he (only) sees "in dreams" (l. 3); accordingly, it makes sense that s/he can see better with closed eyes. The knowledge about the archaic meaning of "wink" can therefore be said to help (some) readers come to a better understanding of the first line, albeit only if they contextualise the utterance. Depending on the reader, the annotation can be quite helpful. My explanation also makes clear why Duncan-Jones provided this meaning of "wink" only. As an experienced reader and annotator, she can be assumed to possess an intricate understanding of how the different parts of the sonnet relate to each other, and how each element contributes to the meaning of the rest of the sonnet and vice versa. She therefore seems to have concluded that it is sufficient to provide her readers

with the specific knowledge about the archaic meaning of "wink" and to thus enable them to make sense of the line themselves when reading on. Given that the annotator did not provide any further definitions or explanations concerning the possible meanings of "wink", of which there are several more (see below and above, as given in the student's annotation), it is justifiable to deduce that this is also the only meaning that Duncan-Jones actually considers plausible in the context of the sonnet and, hence, the only one the reader needs to know about (Duncan-Jones 43). Consequently, her annotation not only reflects her own understanding of the first line, but also reveals her notions of what reading and understanding the sonnet means for her: she allows readers to skip the research process concerning the archaic meaning of "wink" that she herself likely had to undergo to make sense of the line (or lines),[5] but expects her readers to contextualise and interpret the line(s) themselves.

In contrast to Duncan-Jones' straightforward annotation, Booth's annotation, which can be found in his edition of Shakespeare's sonnets, may elicit mixed reactions from them depending on their proficiency level. Overall, readers of Booth's annotation are provided with a compendium of knowledge. The annotation begins with a short word gloss for "wink",[6] and continues with a comment on Shakespeare's choice of language, after which Booth discusses the sonnet with regard to its placement in the sonnet sequence. He concludes the annotation with a reference to *Macbeth* and some context information about a proverb that Shakespeare may have been familiar with and the sonnet might allude to. His linguistic comment suggests that he lays claim to expert knowledge about Early Modern English (EME) phraseology. The annotation can therefore be said to be an effective demonstration of the annotator's own expertise in all aspects Shakespearean, his understanding and knowledge of the text at hand as well as of the texts referred to. His reference to *Macbeth* is employed to further prove his argument and is an indicator of Booth's familiarity with the academic practice to provide supporting evidence when making statements about a text. The reference to the proverb is additional evidence that he is well-acquainted with not only the scholarship immediately connected with Shakespeare, but also the scholarship connected with the period, such as, in this case, Tilley's *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the*

5 Any other additional information, such as references to other sonnets in the sequence or context knowledge, seem to be either presupposed or to be considered secondary if not unnecessary for her purpose to support basic text comprehension.

6 It should be noted, though, that Booth's addition of "sleep" after the word gloss suggests that it is a synonym for "wink", which is misleading. Sleep is not a synonym but rather an interpretation of the word in the context of the sonnet.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, which documents the use of proverbial phrases in EM literature.

Booth's annotation should nevertheless be considered with reservations. In contrast to Duncan-Jones, he attempts to provide his readers with a contextualisation. He points out a connection between SON42 and SON43 indicating that reading "wink" as "to shut one's eyes to-connive at-a fault" is warranted by the previous sonnet (Booth 203). He thus reveals that he understands the sonnets as a deliberate sequence and that he expects his readers to equally consider reading the sonnets as a continuous piece of work. His decision to read the sonnets in sequence rather than individually is not problematic in itself; however, his failure to provide proof of the connection between SON43 and SON42 is disconcerting. In fact, his explanation for why he assumes what "wink" means in the context of the sonnet is not borne out by the lines that follow but rather based on his speculations about the preceding sonnet.[7] In this regard, Booth's fallacious backward contextualisation renders his annotation somewhat unhelpful, even misleading. Despite this shortcoming, the annotation lends itself well for a discussion of how the annotator aims to support his prospective readers: he presents an abundance of knowledge and thus implicitly teaches his readers to read the sonnets in context, meaning they should consider the other sonnets in the sequence as well as Shakespeare's plays and should also take into account the eminent role of proverbs in Shakespeare during their reading process. Contrary to Duncan-Jones' annotation, his annotation therefore suggests that he expects his readers to make a knowledge transfer from one text to another and use this knowledge to interpret SON43. Both Duncan-Jones's and Booth's annotations were provided in extant critical editions by professional Shakespeare editors and annotators. The case may look very different, yet conceivably more interesting with regard to the expression of understanding, when considering annotations that have not actually been written by Shakespeare scholars. This assumption can be confirmed when looking at the two other annotations.

The third example is an excerpt from an annotation that can be found on the website genius.com. This annotation mentions the (apparent) paradox found in the first line and also provides a paraphrase of the line rather than a word gloss. Both aspects distinguish it from the expert annotations discussed

7 More precisely, Booth's statement about the "theme of studied refusal to recognize evil" is problematic (203), because, although it may make sense in the context of SON43 (the speaker deliberately ("studied") wishes to shut his eyes to evil), he fails to elaborate how his interpretation makes sense in the context of the *preceding sonnets*. His comment is speculative as the connection to SON42 is by no means obvious: nowhere in SON42 is the speaker deliberately shutting his eyes at the relationship between the addressee and "her".

so far. While the paraphrase is not exactly wrong, the annotation is nevertheless far from expertly written: it comments on the paradox, but explains it no further and thus fails to point out that it is actually resolved when reading on.[8] Another notable aspect is the annotator's use of the expression "Shakespeare says" which suggests that the annotator has little to no knowledge of the conventions of literary analytics, more concretely, the general distinction between author and speaker. Consequently, the annotation can be considered problematic for several reasons and reflects, at best, a superficial understanding of the first line. The annotator gives readers the name of the rhetorical device used yet does not explain its function in and effect on the interpretation of the sonnet. The paraphrase spares readers the possibly arduous work of paraphrasing the line themselves, but it is hardly of any use since it only supports the notion that the line is paradoxical. Genius.com readers will have to embed the paraphrase in the context of the sonnet themselves, and although it may be said to provide more information than, for example, Duncan-Jones, in not just giving a word gloss but pointing out the rhetorical figure, it nevertheless does not provide proper contextualisation.

The last example is an annotation written by a student in the context of a peer-learning project "Annotating Literature" at Tübingen University.[9] In comparison to the previous annotations, this annotation stands out by its considerable length. It begins with several word definitions of "wink" from the *OED* and concludes with possible interpretative approaches of the line. The language explanations comment on the archaism and offer several definitions of the word "wink" from the *OED*. This information is followed by an interpretive annotation based on the definitions provided above. The interpretation is presented in the form of an argument and, with reference to the sonnet's context, the possible meaning of the line is established successively. Moreover, similar to Booth, the student provides evidence from the text (e.g. reference to line 3) and refers to other annotators' readings of the line to support her argument, which could be said to lend her annotation greater authority. The student is thus able to (literally) demonstrate how the paradox can be resolved when considering the rest of the sonnet and, generally, provides readers with a comprehensive

8 The fact that the annotation is publicly available to all kinds of readers is slightly disconcerting as an even less expertly reader may very well take this statement for granted.

9 The student annotations are the final product of a long process of writing and re-writing their annotations. In the context of a peer-learning group, Shakespeare's Sonnet 43 was annotated by students using TEASys (Tübingen Explanatory Annotations System), a tool which has been developed to help students identify those features that make a text difficult to understand as well as to explain these aspects by collaboratively writing their own explanatory annotations (see Bauer and Zirker "Whipping Boys").

explanation as well as contextualisation of the line. Indeed, the annotation is not only more informative than the other annotations, it is also much more revealing with regard to the student's own *understanding processes*. The student first establishes the meaning of the word by referring to a reliable source, then, in a process that is suggestive of repeated readings of the sonnet complemented by the consultation of other sources and iterative reasoning processes, she develops a hypothesis concerning the meaning of the line. Her annotation thus quite effectively reveals her hermeneutic approach to the sonnet, which is reflected in the structure of the annotation. Consequently, in order to help others understand the opening line of the sonnet, she reconstructs the development of her own understanding and structures her annotation accordingly.

The student's annotation reveals that it is advisable to make a general distinction between annotations that can be analysed based on their author's underlying *concepts of understanding* and those annotations that, moreover, allow for a close analysis of the annotator's own *understanding processes* because they were written based on hermeneutic principles, which requires the annotator to constantly reflect on his/her developing understanding. In fact, the particular connection between the latter kind of annotations and the annotator's understanding of the literary text is worthy of further investigation because little attention has been paid to the potential that this approach to annotating may hold for research on the processes of understanding literary texts thus far. It is for this reason that the students' TEASys annotations (Tübingen Explanatory Annotations System) were chosen as the research material for the investigation: in contrast to the other annotations, the students' annotations allow for concrete conclusions concerning the actual understanding processes that take place while they read the poem.[10]

Moreover, the annotation above is the product of a group effort: in a mostly self-regulated approach, four students in total annotated SON43 over the course of a year. They were asked to document the different writing stages, which makes it possible to reconstruct and evaluate the students' understanding (and, also, non-understanding) processes in minute detail. The students' interaction with the text is indicative of their progress: some annotations point out lines that may have caused "bewilderment" (Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I), were "puzzling" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C), were difficult to understand "at first sight"

10 It is necessary to specify precisely how *understanding* is defined in this study. As will be explained in greater detail below (see ch. 1.2.1), *understanding* is defined as the faculty to make informed statements about the meaning of a text (and the utterances of which it consists) by means of (elaborate) reasoning processes.

(Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L1 F), and draw attention to ambiguities which may have made "it hard for readers to decide which one of [the speaker's emotions] is the predominant one" (Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I). These quotes are just a small selection of comments found in the students' own annotations of Shakespeare's SON43 and, albeit rather striking examples (purposefully so), these instances not only provide unique glimpses into the students' engagement with the sonnet, but also generally show how the student annotators in their self-revelatory remarks provide insight into how they discover and make sense of the utterances in the text at hand. Just these few of the students' thoughts, opinions, moments of reflection give rise to the assumption that the complex processes involved when working with a literary text can potentially be discerned and mapped out by analysing the students' consecutive work on the annotations as well as their final annotations of the sonnet. It can therefore be assumed that the students' explanatory annotations not only help us understand Shakespeare, but also help us understand how we understand (or do not understand) Shakespeare or even complex (literary) texts in general (see below). These initial considerations prompt two questions: if explanatory annotations truly are in some way or other an expression of their author's understanding of the text, how can this circumstance be used to investigate literary understanding? How much is it that an annotation can say about the annotator's understanding? As will become clear in the following, the answer to the latter is: plenty. The first question, however, requires some more explanation that helps further delineate the approach of this study.

The comparison of the annotations proves helpful for yet another reason. It reveals that there are different *concepts of understanding* that need to be considered in order to get as precise a picture of literary understanding as possible. In total, we can distinguish three major concepts that reflect different approaches to research on understanding as proposed by cognitivist, educational, and literary studies. These define understanding as (1) a comprehension process that begins at the word level and is concluded as soon as the reader has established the relationships between all referents, (2) a performance by an individual based on a certain set of skills or competences, or (3) an act of interpretation and hence, an ongoing (hermeneutic) process (see ch. 1.2.2). It is important to note beforehand that this does not mean that the genius.com annotation is, for example, either more or less "educational" than Booth's annotation, but rather that some of the annotations can be said to reflect one of these concepts more strongly than the others. For example, Duncan-Jones's word gloss is more in line with the concept of comprehension studies. In contrast, Booth's and the genius.com annotation are closer to the concept of

understanding proposed by educational studies, as they both seem to presuppose that readers, depending on their literary competence, can use the given information to understand the poem. Finally, the student's annotation suggests a hermeneutic understanding of literary reading which is represented in literary studies.

It makes sense to consider all three fields of research, as an interdisciplinary approach will provide more differentiated perspectives on literary understanding. Literary studies, for example, have always been concerned with understanding literature; however, they have rarely considered what understanding literary texts means outside the hermeneutic process itself.[11] Cognitivists and educationalists are less concerned with understanding as a form of hermeneutic but with modelling language processing and reading competence, respectively. I will therefore endeavour to investigate all three research fields. To summarise, I will use explanatory annotations written in the context of a student peer-group as a methodological tool to investigate the influence of this activity on reading and understanding a literary text, to identify what makes a text difficult to understand in the first place and to thus gain comprehensive knowledge about processes of understanding poetry in particular as well as literary texts in general.

The opening chapter has served to introduce a new approach to research on understanding; however, it is essential to discuss in greater detail what *understanding* means in the context of this study and how the comparison of the three research fields addressed above helps define and specify literary understanding. Moreover, it still remains to be discussed why poetry is the chosen research material and why the genre lends itself well for the approach suggested here. The discussion of each of these issues will be the purpose of the next chapters.

1.2 Investigating 'Understanding'

Learning more about the actual processes of understanding literary texts is the main objective of this study. Nevertheless, a closer look at the current definitions suggests that a quick review of the term and its usage is also important to establish a clear framework for my investigation: an analysis of the current

11 For more information on the development of a hermeneutic-phenomenological understanding of language from a more literary-philosophical perspective, see also Flatscher and Posselt's insightful chapter "Das hermeneutisch-phänomenologische Sprachverständnis: Martin Heidegger", pp. 177–194, in their monography *Sprachphilosophie*.

definitions reveals that the term alone is underspecified and that its meaning depends considerably on the context in which it is used. These initial considerations not only form the basis for a discussion of its terminological differences to other words, such as, i.e., *comprehension*, but they also emphasise the need to clearly define the term in the context of this study. The following chapter will therefore provide a definition of the term in order to avoid terminological vagueness and to delineate the focus of the study more clearly.

Moreover, these initial observations also give rise to a more elaborate discussion of how the different meanings reflect certain approaches to research on understanding: although all three research areas – cognitivist, educational, and literary studies – are concerned with processes of understanding while reading, they approach the matter differently depending on their concept of understanding. The precise delineation of the concepts will prove crucial for the subsequent analysis, evaluation, and discussion of the student annotations as the latter will serve as the methodological tool to discuss the possible insights that each of the research fields offers to answer the question how students establish (ambiguous) text meaning(s) by explaining these to themselves and others.

1.2.1 *The Term Understanding – Towards a Working Definition*

Understanding is used to describe different cognitive processes. This becomes obvious in the current definitions of the word provided by the *OED*. These mainly circumscribe the cognitive prowess of a person, such as the "[p]ower or ability to understand" (*OED* "understanding, *n.*" 1.a.) or a certain "intellectual faculty" that is manifested or expressed "in a particular person or set of persons" (*OED* "understanding, *n.*" 2.). The term is also used in a more performance-related sense to, for example, indicate that a person is capable of "judging with knowledge" (*OED* "understanding, *n.*" 1.b.). The definitions therefore reflect the particular function of the term to describe different dimensions of understanding: some definitions imply an all-or-nothing approach, which defines *understanding* as a finite process: the person either possesses the power to understand or not (cf. *OED* "understanding, *n.*" 1.a). In yet other cases *understanding* is used to explicitly describe an ongoing process that requires the individual to perform several simultaneous activities at once, such as to comprehend, reason, and judge (cf. *OED* "understanding, *n.*" 1.c. and 2.; see also Jauss 18).

With reference to the last definition especially, it also becomes possible to differentiate *understanding* from *comprehending*, which, although it may often be used synonymously to describe the notion of mentally grasping an idea or laying "hold of [sth.] with the mind or senses" (*OED* "comprehend, *v.*"

I.1.-3.),[12] is notably different in one respect: the term is much more narrowly defined than *understanding*. According to the definitions provided in the *OED*, it specifically describes those processes that relate to noticing, collecting and connecting information – "to take in, comprise, include, contain" (*OED* "comprehend, *v.*" III.6.-11.) –, which suggests that the term is ultimately closer to notions of *perceiving*. The latter definition of *understanding* not only presupposes that comprehending is just one of many activities taking place, for example, while reading, but that the individual actively engages with the text in question (reasoning and judging), which differentiates *understanding* from mere perceiving. The term *comprehending* is therefore unsuitable to describe the entire range of interactions, learning, thinking, and reasoning processes that are to be examined more closely with regard to literary understanding in the following. Conversely, these reflections corroborate *understanding* as an apt choice of term to describe and further delineate the (mental) actions of an individual before, during or after some form of engagement with an utterance in a literary text.

Altogether, *understanding* is a multifaceted term that is mostly applied when describing certain cognitive processes; however, the status of these processes and the exact nature of the knowledge, either already existing or just gained, are different. Accordingly, the question what exactly *understanding* means in the context of this thesis becomes all the more pressing. For the purposes of this thesis, the following **working definition of *understanding*** will be used:

> *Understanding*: the faculty to make informed statements about the meaning of the utterances made in a text by means of (elaborate) reasoning processes

1.2.2 *Conceptual Frameworks – Approaches in Research on Understanding in Cognitive, Educational and Literary Studies*

Above, *understanding* has been defined as either (1) a finite process, (2) a performance by an individual based on a certain set of skills, or (3) an act of interpretation and hence, an ongoing process. These three definitions reflect the different approaches to research on understanding in the three fields of study: cognitive, educational and literary studies. All three fields in one way or another provide insight into different components of understanding. In practice,

12 The reason why the definition of the verb *to comprehend* is used here to also describe the action of *comprehending* is that the only definition the *OED* provides for the noun is a link to the verb *comprehend*: "the action of COMPREHEND *v.*" (*OED* "comprehending, *n.*").

however, they often remain unconnected. In order to gain new insights into literary understanding, it seems advisable to consider all three fields of research. My working definition therefore also aims to reflect this interdisciplinary approach: a cognitive aspect ("reasoning"), competence ("faculty"), and a hermeneutic process ("(elaborate) reasoning processes"). A critical examination of the different concepts underlying the research on understanding in all three fields will help delineate the concept of understanding underlying this study and, moreover, will help lay out some general conditions for the analysis of the annotations.

1.2.2.1 Cognitive Studies – Modelling Reading Comprehension

The basic assumption of studies on reading comprehension is that reading is a process which emerges from the interaction of a reader with linguistic material (Fox and Alexander 336). Studies such as, most notably, those by van Dijk and Kintsch attempt to model the processes of understanding during reading and define the cognitive end-products (called mental models or situation models) that are created after having read the text (Oostendorp and Zwaan 5).[13] The skills involved in constructing mental representations of a text include the collection, hierarchisation, and organisation as well as reorganisation of the propositional textual elements into a coherent structure or what Stockwell describes as an "associative knowledge net" (154; see also Kintsch *Comprehension* 284; Oostendorp and Goldman). The reading process is further influenced by readers' abilities to explain and to relate "the text to relevant external information" and to "match this analysis with the appropriate analysis of the discourse itself", thus clarifying possible ambiguities (Veivo and Knuuttila 283; see also van Dijk and Kintsch 95; Lenhard 18; Strohner 193f; Ash and Baumann 391). The predominant focus of these studies is therefore on the readers and their capacities to process the text. Successful readers are identified when they are able to construct a comprehensive "mental representation of the text" (van den Broek et al. 230; see also Kintsch *Comprehension* 284).[14]

13 Cf. van Dijk and Kintsch, who describe different levels of representation in discourse processing: (1) surface structure (wording of text or its linguistic dimension), (2) propositional textbase (micro- and macrostructure of the text), and (3) the generation of a situation model (construction that integrates textbase and reader's background knowledge) (10ff).

14 This idea is based on van Dijk and Kintsch's influential text comprehension model, which served as a guiding principle for succeeding models and theories on text comprehension. The model describes how readers comprehend a text by building a mental and situation model and form connections between ideas expressed in the text and their own knowledge (Kintsch *Comprehension* 93). Van den Broek further specifies that "mental representation constitutes a situation model, including both explicitly presented information

Moreover, readers' "use and understanding of language" is constantly shaped and re-shaped by their reading experiences (C. Harrison 11).[15] Their processing of the text therefore also depends on their previous experience with language and their ability to cope with new and possibly bewildering information that challenges their prior knowledge of language use. All in all, reading is considered a highly constructive process which requires numerous synchronous cognitive operations (cf. Cho and Afflerbach 111ff).

The approach to researching text comprehension lays a strong, almost exclusive focus on how language is processed and, hence, the "reader's active engagement in constructing meaning" (McNamara and Magliano 370).[16] This aspect is also reflected in the study designs which are mostly concerned with readers' (working) memory capacities and their constructive processes, such as the amount of inferences, while or immediately after reading.[17] Consequently, cognitive studies hardly consider other aspects beyond language processing, such as, for example, the capacity to deal with fictionality, that characterise and distinguish literary texts from other texts (cf. Cho and Afflerbach 115; see also Leslie and Caldwell).[18] This approach to researching understanding is

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and concepts that were inferred, rather than a mere reflection of the text base" (243; see also Kintsch *Comprehension* 107). A situation model therefore presents the combined information from the text (inferred and not) as well as the readers own experiences and knowledge that they bring to bear upon the text in order to comprehend all aspects of the text. The reader is considered more or less successful depending on the accuracy and coherence of his/her situation model (van den Broek 230; Zwaan and Brown 289f; Baker 156f; Leslie and Caldwell 220f). For more information and a critical discussion of mental models, see ch. 3.

15 This idea faintly echoes Maturana's idea of "The Organization of the Living: A Theory of the Living Organization", pp. 313–332. He argues that the environment and the individual's experience of the environment shape its perception of the world.

16 McNamara and Magliano further distinguish between three basic cognitive processes: "spreading activation (e.g., priming), unconscious retrieval (e.g., memory based retrieval), and conscious processing (e.g., strategies, problem solving, reasoning)" (370).

17 See, for example, Leslie and Caldwell; Ahmed et al.; Veivo and Knuuttila; Brosch; McNamara and Magliano 359; Miall *Literary Reading* 91; Frederking and Brüggemann 15, who all critically comment on the unilateral focus of their research field. Although each of the authors calls for a paradigm change in the field and the inclusion of research on emotional and social aspects as crucial parts of the reading process, they have been unable to entirely detach themselves from inexpedient ideas such as mental models as a necessary outcome of a successful reading process and, possibly as a consequence thereof, have so far failed to introduce new models that can incorporate all products and components of the (literary) reading process.

18 Although there is a popular opinion among cognitivists that readers supposedly learn to adapt to a certain genre of text and develop a system or set of rules, also discussed under the term literary cognitive control system by Zwaan or, more generally, genre

problematic and shows certain shortcomings when it comes to the comprehension processes of literary texts. In fact, cognitive studies rarely consider theories concerning the properties of fictional texts that might have a decisive effect on how its readers process the information given in the text.[19]

One reason for the shortcomings in research on cognition and reading comprehension can be found in their concept of 'understanding': the reading process itself is considered finite for all texts, including literary texts, and not, as suggested by literary studies, a hermeneutic process. There is evidence, however, that readers respond differently to fictional texts.[20] Magliano et al., for example, provide initial evidence that readers only "construct a temporally, causally, and spatially rich representation of the story event" during a second reading (395). A repeated and thorough reading of the material might accordingly yield changes in readers' mental representations, depending on the meticulousness and frequency of their reading of the text.[21] Some studies

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expectations, that help them process and understand literary texts, the definition of what the system actually consists of is still vague (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 148; see also van Dijk and Kintsch 252 + 275). Moreover, the definition of *genre* in the context of literary studies is a difficult subject in itself, as many texts that show identifiable generic characteristics more often than not also disrupt and challenge these generic features. Thus, rather than focusing directly on the "supposed functioning of our minds", cognitive literary studies need to reflect more profoundly on how research on literature can influence the understanding of the mind and vice versa (Veivo and Knuuttila 301).

19 In this context, Ronen notes that to comprehend the processes of understanding a fictional world "requires a model accounting for its distinctive laws of inference and identification" (Ronen "Are Fictional Worlds Possible?" 26; see also Brockmann et al. 18; Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268; Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping" 278). Ronen here also alludes to another aspect of literary reading, which cognitivism often fails to take into account: the experiential aspect of reading a literary text (Miall *Literary Reading* 39; MacMahon 174).

20 Zwaan points out several differences between the reading of literary texts and descriptive texts: during literary comprehension readers exhibit a relatively slower reading speed, "good memory for verbatim information" and "weak representation of referential information" (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 147). His observations are supported by a study conducted by Altmann et al. which showed that readers typically pay more attention to the words in the texts as they "could bear a meaning which might become relevant later" (26f). Zwaan further explains his results arguing that the connections between the propositions are weaker because a "loosely organized textbase enables the reader to adapt his or her representation when confronted with new and contradictory information, because it still contains the building blocks for a new interpretation (the propositions)" (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 150). For further discussions concerning his theory, see also ch. 3.1.2.

21 For example, one study in C. Harrison's monograph *Cognitive Grammar in Contemporary Fiction* focuses expressly on readers developing comprehension throughout the reading process. She presents evidence that reading behaviour depends strongly on the text

could therefore come to very different conclusions if they confronted their participants with the same text several times (cf. Miall *Literary Reading* 105).[22] Although Magliano et al.'s findings intimate that the perception and reception of literary texts changes during first and consecutive perusals of the material, this aspect has been given little importance in the design of cognitive studies measuring reading comprehension (Goldman et al. 407). Thus, to focus merely on highly situational and selective reader-text-context interactions is insufficient when researching processes of understanding literary texts (cf. Fox and Alexander 345). On the contrary, interpretations of literary texts are subject to constant revisions and change depending on the amount of re-readings, on readers' thought processes and discussions with others, on their connecting their interpretations to other texts as well as relating them to their life experiences (DiYanni 11). Miall therefore argues that there are strong reasons to believe that the cognitive value of literature does not only lie in the "acquisition of true propositions", but in the training and development of several interacting competences that help readers to identify and discuss the texts' different meanings (Huemer "Cognitive Dimensions" 44; see also Huemer "Erlebnis und Erkenntnis" 78; Andringa 231; Ehlers 123; Culler 144; MacMahon 174f). Consequently, in order to fully grasp the full range of understanding

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and its particular features. The results show that readers generate a working hypothesis about the structures in the fictional world, just to revise their hypothesis completely when encountering new contradictory information throughout the reading process (cf. C. Harrison 133). One might think of Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* in which some crucial information about certain characters is only revealed consecutively in the course of the story. For example, the late John Harmon and John Rokesmith are introduced as two different persons. Only in chapter XIII. "A Solo and a Duett" does the narrator openly reveal to the readers that they are actually one and the same person. Can most of the readers of Dickens' novel then be accused of not having understood the novel until chapter XIII or of simply not being particularly attentive readers? Similar examples can be found in poetry. Quite a few sonnets introduce a reverse line of argumentation than the one followed, mostly, until lines 8 or 12. For example, in Rossetti's famous sonnet "Remember", the first eight lines are filled with the speaker's urgent pleads directed at an unknown addressee: "[r]emember me when I am gone away" (l. 1, p. 16). The tone, however, changes after line 8 and concludes with the speaker's realisation that it would be "[b]etter by far you should forget" (l. 13, p. 16). In the case of the sonnet, of course, readers come to the point of realisation much faster. Nevertheless, both examples raise doubts as to the idea of selectively investigating the level of reader's 'understanding' when it comes to reading literary texts. A similar issue is raised in ch. 5. which reviews approaches to research on literary competence.

22 See, for example, Dixon et al. who developed an approach to research on literary understanding that is based on the *rereading paradigm* (17). The approach, while being relatively popular with some cognitivists (see, e.g., Menninghaus et al.; Hakemulder; Miall *Literary Reading*), has also been put into question by others (cf. Keen 196).

processes, cognitivists should also include an assessment of the capacity to deal with certain text features and how their proficiency to consider them for their interpretation of the text develops over time as "individuals become more competent readers" and their knowledge of the topics as well as domains about which they are reading increases (Fox and Alexander 345).[23]

1.2.2.2 Educational Studies – Modelling Reading/Literary Competence

Developing models that map the composition of reading competence is one field of research in educational studies. The overall concept of understanding underlying these models is that of a set of (mostly) controllable, continuously developing and increasingly refined processes that depend on the amount of learning and the individual capacity to retrieve and apply that learning. Competence is generally defined as a set of cognitive skills and abilities that are employed in a goal-oriented manner (Groeben 13; Weinert 45) and lead to a certain kind of performance in a context-specific situation (Fleischer et al. 7; Hurrelmann 276; Klieme and Leutner 879; Weinert 45). Reading competence specifically is defined by the OECD as "understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society" (9). The cognitive components of reading competence range from basic decoding skills "to knowledge of words, grammar and larger linguistic and textual structures and features, to knowledge about the world" (OECD 9).[24] Thus, reading competence comprises different skills or abilities and is always expressed in the form of several interacting sub-competences (Klieme 12; Klieme and Hartig 24; Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung" 154; Glaesser 80).[25] More importantly, though, these sub-competences can only be developed by an individual through (1) interaction with the subject matter (Fleischer et al. 7; Klieme and Hartig 17) and

23 I here argue for a normative/evaluative approach to research on literary understanding, and it could be objected that such approaches are not conducive to the aim of cognitive studies, which is to simply describe what happens when we read. Nevertheless, the discussion of cognitive studies in chapter 1.3.2 as well as chapter 3. supports the notion that literary reading is expressly different from reading any other text and, as readers have to engage in cognitive processes that are yet different from the standard processing of vocabulary and content, cognitivists may also have to consider other approaches to the research of literary reading.

24 See also Strohner who analyses text comprehension from a psycholinguistic perspective and distinguishes between sensomotoric, pragmatic, syntactic and semantic processes; and Lisiecka-Czop's "Verstehensmechanismen und Lesestrategien von fremdsprachigen Fachtexten".

25 See also Feilke "Literalität" in which he argues that reading and developing reading skills involves highly individual processes that can hardly be generalized, pp. 9–11.

(2) social interaction with peers, researchers, critics, or what could be called a more or less knowledgeable community (Klieme and Hartig 17; Groeben 19; Klieme and Leutner 880). Most descriptions define the social dimension as written or spoken interaction within the community as one of the most vital aspects of the learning process (cf. Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 119; Leubner et al. *Literaturdidaktik*). Reading competence can therefore be understood as a set of skills that develop over the course of time and the application of which can be taught and fostered, a process which will prove to be more or less successful, depending on the individual abilities, language proficiency as well as the challenges that the given texts pose (Diehr and Surkamp 24; Hurrelmann 276; Lenhard 47).[26] A proficient reader should therefore not only demonstrate a certain amount of knowledge about the text content after having read it, but should also show that s/he is able to apply what s/he has learnt about reading in order to make certain statements about the text.

Moreover, reading competence models emphasise the importance of a critical reconsideration of the initial text understanding and, if necessary, a revision of the first reading, suggesting the notion that working with texts is a cyclical process (Burwitz-Melzer "Text- und Medienkompetenz" 143). Accordingly, textual understanding involves a significantly larger and more complex number of interdependent cognitive processes, which include the conscious employment of background knowledge, specific knowledge about reading and reading strategies and several different sub-competences, such as problem-solving abilities as well as social and productive skills (Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 144; cf. also Dalton-Puffer 125; Kramsch 358; Steininger *Modellierung Literarischer Kompetenz* 87). So far, the concept of reading competence appears to lend itself better to an application within the field of research on reading and understanding literary texts than that proposed by cognitivists, as it offers a broader, less finite concept of understanding.[27] However, pedagogical studies show considerable deficiencies when it comes to implementing this concept into their actual study designs.

The definition of reading competence suggests that research on these competences entails study designs that are different from cognitive studies;

26 The fact that competences are a set of proficiencies acquired over an individual's lifetime also forms the basis for the distinction between intelligence and competence, as intelligence is considered to be innate to the individual and to hardly change over time.

27 As has been pointed out above, pedagogical studies present a different approach to the concept of reading comprehension than cognitive studies, because they regard reading comprehension not as a more or less fixed cognitive disposition, but focus on its teachability and readers' disposition to acquire a certain set of skills or competences that will help them (better) understand texts.

however, the study designs are quite similar. Although intended to test reading competence as well as literary competence, most studies have been strongly influenced by cognitive studies, and many studies are oriented along the reading comprehension model promoted by van Dijk and Kintsch (see, i.e., Andringa; Meier et al. "An Extended Model" 59; Müller and Richter; Frederking "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz" 368; Frederking "Literarische Bzw. (Literar)Ästhetische Kompetenz"; Frederking et al. "Beyond Functional Aspects of Reading Literacy"; Roick et al. "Strukturelle und kriteriale Validität der literarästhetischen Urteilskompetenz"; Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz"; Flender and Naumann; Lenhard; Oostendorp and Zwaan; Richter and Christmann).[28] Consequently, while the studies claim to investigate reading competence, they are often based on those designs proposed by cognitive studies. This approach is questionable in so far as the concept of reading comprehension proclaimed by cognitivists has been shown to differ in several aspects from the concept of reading competence. Competence models should certainly not neglect the cognitive aspect of reading when assessing reading competence; nevertheless, the impression arises that while the goal is that of empirically researching reading competence, study designs are based on the cognitive definition of understanding, a definition that has pointedly been established in a different context and for a different purpose (cf. Bannet and Breidbach 27). As a result, many studies risk working with a problematic conceptual framework and do not evaluate the usefulness of their study approach (cf. Bannet and Breidbach 27). Indeed, reading, especially with regard to reading and understanding a literary text, should not be equalled with comprehension in the sense of cognition studies.[29] Bannet and Breidbach thus point out the problematic status of this essentially interdisciplinary research field: studies on reading competence are caught between the formulation of didactic aims, the objectives and possibilities of empirical research as well as the hermeneutic tradition of philology. It may therefore not be too surprising that many studies are oriented towards established concepts and focus exclusively on readers' cognitive capabilities to reiterate specific information read in a short text rather than on their competence to employ, for example,

28 See ch. 3.1f as well as ch. 3.2 for a critical discussion of the vanDijk and Kintsch model in the context of text comprehension research.

29 See also Winkler's inaugural lecture "Wozu Literaturdidaktik? Perspektiven auf eine Disziplin zwischen den Stühlen" as well as Baum's chapter "Lesen oder Verstehen?" in Der Widerstand gegen Literatur: Dekonstruktive Lektüren zur Literaturdidaktik, pp. 93–134. He addresses the general issue prevalent in most education research that assumes that reading is the same as understanding; a concept, which might hold with regard to descriptive texts, but has been sufficiently shown to falter when it comes to literary reading.

(declarative or procedural) literary knowledge, to make statements about the possible meaning of a literary text.[30]

Furthermore, many empirical studies also neglect other aspects of literary/reading competence, such as the productive (written and oral communication) and social component of literary competence as well as the fact that the individual competence and, thus, understanding may develop over time.[31] Although competences are considered performances in context-specific situations, the manifestation of competence should not be reduced to just one single event (Lehnen 39f). On the contrary, the dimensions of reading competence outlined at the beginning of this chapter strongly encourage longitudinal studies, including qualitative besides quantitative evaluations (cf. Bracker 182f).[32] This approach has been proposed, for instance, by the research project "Kompetenzmodellierung und -entwicklung" situated at the Tübingen School of Education, which records students' literary competence over the course of their studies (cf. Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung im Fach Englisch"). While educational studies introduce a broader and more flexible concept of 'understanding', there is still work to do when it comes to implementing the concept into their research designs.[33]

30 Methods used in many educational studies are, for example, interviews, multiple choice or constructed response items, sentence- or statement-verification, etc. (cf. Meier et al. "An Extended Model of Literary Literacy"; Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz"; Roick et al. "Strukturelle und kriteriale Validität der literarästhetischen Urteilskompetenz"). Frederking correctly points out that what makes sense for factual texts does not have to automatically make sense for literary texts ("Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz" 337).

31 See for example the study presented in "Literarisches Lesen" by Kämper-Van den Boogaart and Pieper and their discussion of the difficulty to empirically measure literary reading, pp. 61f, or Feilke's criticism of studies, such as PISA, DESI, IGLU and VERA that measure the products of the reading process rather than the actual processes themselves in "Literalität und literale Handlungskompetenz", p. 2.

32 Bracker, here, proposes a good approach by discussing the literary texts that she uses for her study and mapping out their particular fictional features. While Bracker lays a focus on the social as well as procedural component of literary reading, her study, after all, has a strong didactic purpose (cf. 43), which induces her to explicitly shift the focus away from the object towards the recipient and his/her experiential reading of the text (cf. 44). Her research then revolves around the propensity of fictional texts to evoke certain emotional reactions can be used as a stepping stone and didactic tool that offers students the space to talk about and experience their own and other emotions (Bracker 72).

33 For a more thorough discussion of studies that investigate literary competence see ch. 5.1.1.

1.2.2.3 Literary Studies – Reading Fictional Texts

The two previous subsections have shown how the concept of 'understanding', as established by cognitivists and many pedagogical studies, is challenged when it comes to researching literary understanding. While cognitive as well as educational studies (which have been shown to heavily draw on cognitivist research on reading comprehension models) mostly reflect the idea of a more or less finite comprehension process, literary studies describe an idea of literary understanding that stands in stark contrast to these models. In contrast to cognitive studies, research on understanding literary texts does not focus on the question *when*, for example, a poem is understood, but *what* is or can be understood about the poem. Literary scholars' idea of literary understanding is based on one common assumption: they argue that it is the fictional status of many literary texts that requires and influences their interpretation (see Adorno 194; Hamburger *Wahrheit und ästhetische Wahrheit* 137);[34] hence, the context in literary texts is delimited by what is included in fiction and readers have to find out exactly what the text says in order to discuss its different meanings.[35] Readers of literary texts are therefore dealing with a paradox: fictional texts are closed units or, as Bauer et al. describe them in *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson*, "self-contained units" (201), while the understanding (and interpretation) process itself is open-ended. Based on this assumption, there have been several different approaches to explain literary understanding.

In his 1974 book *The Implied Reader*, Iser discusses reader responses to fictional texts. His approach sets a strong focus on the reader of the fictional text and his/her ability to make inferences about the aspects that are 'left unsaid', but possibly implied, by the text.[36] He argues that fictional texts often leave *Leerstellen* or 'gaps', and it is up to the reader's imagination to fill these 'gaps' (Iser *The Implied Reader* 276).[37] Literary meaning, according to Iser, is therefore

34 For an in-depth discussion of SON43 as a fictional text, see ch. 5.2.1.

35 Eco defined three different concepts along which a text can be analysed – *intentio auctoris* (Autorintention), *intentio lectoris* (Leserintention), *intentio operis* (Textintention) –, but argues that only an analysis of *intentio operis* can offer a relatively objective interpretative approach (Eco *Die Grenzen der Interpretation* 35ff).

36 See also Vervaeck et al., who try to connect cognitive studies and literary theory by drawing on Genette, Iser, Herman, Dôlezel, and others to establish a model that describes the "interaction between minds and narrative gaps" (3). Arguing that while readers might strive to fill these alleged gaps and might also succeed to some extent, they will never be able to 'complete' the hermeneutic circle and there will always be some part of the text that will be left undefined (3f). Although they present some promising ideas, their approach suffers from their use of 'gaps'.

37 Imaginative involvement also includes emotional processes on the part of the reader that can make the fictional world more accessible and relatable for its readers and might facilitate interpretation (cf. Currie "Interpreting Fictions" 108).

a psychological condition and, as such, hypothetical. Thus begins what Iser calls a "dynamic process": whereas the text

> imposes certain limits on its unwritten implications in order to prevent these from becoming too blurred and hazy, … these implications, worked out by the reader's imagination, set the given situation against a background which endows it with far greater significance than it might have seemed to possess on its own. (Iser *The Implied Reader* 276)[38]

Understanding, according to Iser, therefore requires a convergence of "the different patterns of the text" and "the individual disposition of the reader" (Iser *The Implied Reader* 274f). Although his proposition still finds support in literary studies, the idea of 'gaps' in the text is a fuzzy concept as it seems that, wanting an adequate definition by Iser, the definition of these 'gaps' are mainly based on the researcher's or, in fact, the reader's personal estimation alone.[39] The reader should, however, refrain from imagining what the text does *not* talk about. Moreover, Iser's vague "implications" are quite different from the concept of implicatures, a pragmatic phenomenon, which can be determined more precisely (see below). Accordingly, his approach should be considered with due caution. It is nevertheless useful as it points out several aspects that research on the processes of understanding literary texts should endeavour to delineate more clearly in order not to render literary interpretation completely arbitrary. It highlights the question whether it is possible to distinguish between free associations and text meaning. The ability to do so should be a competence to be aimed at: a reader should be able to identify the texts' specific properties, the relation in which they stand to other things and what

38 For more information concerning this approach with regard to poetry in particular see also Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?*, Herrnstein Smith "Poetry as Fiction", Beardsley "Fiction as Representation" and Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*, pp. 147.

39 His concept finds support in the context of pedagogical studies and research on students' reception of literary texts. For example, Leubner et al.'s *Literaturdidaktik* argue that most interpretations go beyond the scope of the text and provide "Freiräume" or room for (almost) all sorts of subjective interpretations (49f). However, this line of argumentation, apart from being debatable, not only results in the misled assumption that readers of literary texts "are too wayward" to actually be considered as subjects for empirical studies (Miall *Literary Reading* 11), but empirical research that is based on Leubner et al.'s concept of literary reading makes it almost impossible to assess students' answers to their own surveys. Similarly, Feito and Donahue's argument that it is possible to "classify student annotations in terms of identification of gaps" and the "negotiation of gaps" is equally misleading as it is unclear how both define these 'gaps' in the first place (301). The lack of a clear definition of these gaps has therefore contributed to the vagueness of the concept.

consequences these aspects have both on the reading experience and on its interpretation (cf. Scholz 143).[40]

More recent approaches therefore conduct research on a clearer definition of the complicated split between the readers' subjective interpretation and the texts' semantic and pragmatic meaning. In order to do so, they attempt to describe the relationship between the actual world and the fictional world created in the text. A fictional text triggers certain processes that affect the reader and require strategies that involve the recognition and processing of fictionality. These processes include readers' abilities to infer and describe the relation or the degree of the relation "between the actual world and the worlds described by the text" (Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268).[41] On account of the text's counterfactual independence, however, making inferences or even definite statements about the text meaning can be a veritable challenge, as only the "texts themselves provide the limited context on which an interpretation of the utterance is based" (Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 201; see also Stalnaker 109). In fact, it is exactly "the space between the underdeterminacy of the relation" and "its foundation on the literal (grammatical) meaning of the text … [that] provides the room for subjective interpretation" and constitutes to the plurality of hypotheses and readings that can potentially coexist about one text or text passage (Bauer and Beck, "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268). The text's "underdeterminacy" (Bauer and Beck, "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268) requires readers to deal with the existence of several concurrent interpretations and, further, to engage in a reflection process about the relation between the different readings, and how the interaction between these readings constitutes the overall text meaning (Brockmann et al. 18). Thus, the aim of understanding and interpreting a fictional text does not necessarily lie in the disambiguation of a statement, but rather in recognizing, emphasizing and discussing its

40 Miall, for example, argues that even feelings are "subject to conditioning by convention, and readers' evaluations are clearly bound up with the norms imposed by a specific local culture" (*Literary Reading* 94).

41 Bauer and Beck suggest that the text makes the fictional world relatable by "making the general specific" ("Isomorphic Mapping" 282f). Taking Aristotle's differentiation between poetry, which "tends to express the universal", and history, which expresses "the particular", as a point of departure (Aristotle 11, transl. Butcher), Bauer and Beck explain how a fictional text can come to mean something specific for the individual reader, who recognises a fictional event as being related to an event in his/her own life (Bauer and Beck 277f): it is because fictional texts express the universal that they provide *models* that each individual reader can adapt to his/her own actual world (Bauer and Beck 282).

ambiguity with regard to possible meanings.[42] Accordingly, understanding is expressed in the form of hypotheses that are more or less plausible interpretations rather than definite answers (W. Klein 4) and, in order to arrive at an adequate interpretation of a literary text, readers will have to describe and to classify, to explain and to argue (Scholz 143; Rabinowitz and Phelan 6).

The adequacy of an interpretation can be assessed by the degree in which "the elements of the text and the elements of the interpretation correspond to each other" (Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 209; see also Fishelov "The Economy" 32).[43] A close linguistic analysis is used to specify not only where there is flexibility and ambiguity, but also which limitations may apply on account of certain formal rules (Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 212). In this manner, "wholly impossible and implausible readings" may be circumvented (Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 212). Moreover, the plausibility of interpretations is further influenced by certain expectations and literary conventions that "guide the interpretive process and impose severe limitations on the set of acceptable … readings" (Culler 148). The concept of understanding within a literary context therefore is that of a "theory building" process which prompts readers to read thoroughly, to describe and discuss scientifically, to formulate, compare and evaluate hypotheses (Scholz 139).[44] In general, literary studies provide a basis for a characterisation of the textual material and suggest a concept of understanding that is different from the previously discussed concepts in that it promotes reading approaches that are essentially guided by the hermeneutic principles of understanding. While a hermeneutic approach to reading literary texts is nothing new, the idea of a systematic approach to distinguishing (ambiguous) text meaning from free association should receive further attention.

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42 For a more elaborate discussion of this aspect with reference to an example – a stanza from Emily Dickinson's poem "Our journey had advanced" (J615; F453) –, see ch. 1.3.2 below.

43 Based on the "ratio between textual details from various phonetic, syntactic and semantic levels, and explicit or implicit assumptions that we use in order to explain these details", Fishelov distinguishes between economical and uneconomical interpretations ("The Economy" 32f). While an economical interpretation "succeeds in explaining many textual details while using only a few, simple assumptions", an uneconomical interpretation "develops a complicated set of assumptions to explain only a few textual details" (Fishelov "The Economy" 32).

44 However, Dilthey argues that the task of the humanities is not explication, but rather the investigation of understanding itself, as only an analysis of the processes of understanding can be the basis for the rules of interpretation (cf. 200).

1.2.3 *The Process(es) of Understanding*

The different concepts of understanding can be said to possess some common denominators: understanding is a process (either finite or ongoing) and the person understanding shows a certain capability to engage with the material. More specifically, the person shows that s/he possesses the cognitive ability to develop a certain attitude towards the material in order to appropriately engage in the understanding processes (ideally, in a critical, self-reflective manner) and to make informed statements about the utterances in the text. The person's endeavours can generally be said to be propelled by the extent to which the individual can critically reflect on his/her own developing understanding. If a person is for some reason incapable of reflecting on what has or has not been understood, the *understanding* process will eventually and inevitably come to a halt, unless there is some form of communication (informational input or output) that induces the individual to engage with the text once more. The activity of 'understanding' (here, a text or an utterance) thus describes all processes of an analytical, investigative, and communicative nature. An individual who engages in these processes can be assumed to be in the process of understanding a text. How much is ultimately understood may therefore be said to depend on the extent and depth to which the individual was willing and able to engage in these processes.

These observations form the basis for some general conditions for the following investigation: in order to be able to actually evaluate and make statements about the students' understanding processes, it is necessary (1) to engage the students in a task in which these processes become manifest and (2) to define certain standards along which the students' output can be assessed. The following study will focus on a specific activity, which is most likely to make exactly these reasoning processes visible: understanding a text by writing explanatory annotations and thus explaining the text to oneself as well as to others.

1.3 Poetry as an Object of Research – Notoriously Difficult or Unique Research Opportunity

Cognitivist and educationalist research, although concerned with modelling language processing and reading competence, respectively, show considerable research gaps when it comes to the processes of understanding poetry: both research fields lack adequate theoretical background from literary studies to properly define the subject matter they are dealing with. Without a theoretical background, however, investigations cannot but quickly reach their limits.

Literary studies allow for a clearer definition of poetry and thus offer a basis for a discussion of poetry as an apt object of research on literary reading. The first part of this sub-section will therefore refer to literary studies in order to describe the research material. On that basis, the following two sub-sections will review the current state of the art in cognitivist and educational studies. The objective of these sub-sections is to discuss the possible reasons for the infrequent and inexpert use of poetry in the study of reading comprehension and to show how both fields would profit from paying closer attention to the processes of understanding poetry. In order to substantiate the different aspects addressed, several examples will be included throughout the chapter (by Emily Dickinson, John Donne, George Herbert, William Shakespeare, and with reference to others).[45]

1.3.1 *Literary Studies and Poetry – Generic Idiosyncrasies as Research Opportunities*

Research on poetry in literary studies helps specify some of the most characteristic features of the genre: these include the condensed use of language, its specific form(s) of communication as well as its distinguishing formal features.[46] While these three aspects will be shown to contribute significantly to the idiosyncratic character of a poem, the aim of this sub-section is by no means to strictly separate poetry from other forms of literature; rather, the aim is to emphasise those features of poetry that are especially relevant for research concerned with the processes of understanding poetry. Accordingly, the following description will show exactly which aspects about these features make poetry an intriguing research material in its own right, but are also relevant with regard to understanding processes of other literary genres.

The German word for poetry, *Dichtung*, describes an essential feature of poetry, particularly lyric poetry: the "notion of density or compression, of much in little" (Bauer "Poetic Economy" 160). In this sense, *Dichtung* is understood as *Verdichtung* – condensation – of expression.[47] This unusual form of

45 It should be noted that the following poems were chosen because, for each poem, one feature lends itself particularly well for the illustration of the argument. They should, however, not be understood to be characterised by this single feature only. All of the poems referred to in the following are rich in content, language and form and are therefore suitable for all kinds of different purposes of illustration.

46 This list of characteristics does not pursue the claim to novelty or to completeness; rather, these particular features were chosen because they form a common basis on which the subsequent discussion of the state of the art in educationalist and cognitive studies can take place.

47 See also Kafka's statement "Poetry is condensation, an essence" (the original states: "Dichtung ist Verdichtung, eine Essenz.") (Janouch 74).

condensation of language is an accumulation of specific textual phenomena which contribute to the ambiguity and thus to the perceived complexity of the text. Even more so when considering that language in poetry is often less rigid and more flexible, a fact which induced Dickinson to say in one of her poems that to write poetry means to "dwell in Possibility" (l. 1, J657; F466) (cf. Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 165). The flexible use of language and its condensation, however, do not necessarily lead to "vagueness or utter meaninglessness" (Bauer "Poetic Economy" 160); on the contrary, language in poetry is used as a means of communication and reflects, as all forms of communication do, a shared desire to understand something or someone and, in turn, to be understood (Jauss 29). This notion is also taken up among poets who reflect on their art. For example, in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802, Wordsworth famously calls the poet "a man speaking to men" (l. 296, 751f); only the manner in which poets do so shows that they are "endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness" than others (Wordsworth l. 296f, 751).[48] Wordsworth's description points out the communicative nature of poetry, written with the intention to be understood.[49] In view of this premise, readers should assume that the text provides them with everything needed to understand the utterances made in the poem, irrespective of how "scanty" the "plot of ground" may be (l. 11, Wordsworth "Nuns fret not" 628).[50]

48 See, for example, Wordsworth's famous poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey", the composition of which reflected his notions of what writing poetry should entail: "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this: I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol" (Wordsworth 66).

49 See, for example, the passage from Ashbery's meta-poetic piece "And *Ut Pictura Poesis* Is Her Name" taken from his book *Houseboat Days*, first published in 1977: "… She approached me / About buying her desk. Suddenly the street was / Bananas and the clangor of Japanese instruments. / Humdrum testaments were scattered around. His head / Locked into mine. We were a seesaw. Something / Ought to be written about how this affects / You when you write poetry: / The extreme austerity of an almost empty mind / Colliding with the lush, Rousseau-like foliage of its desire / to communicate / Something between breaths, …" (Ashbery 44). The poem's disjointed sentences appear like swiftly changing impressions, seemingly meaningless as a collective, yet effective in their purpose to *show* the reader how difficult it is to communicate (or *tell* of) the ongoings of an "almost empty mind" that finds itself entangled in the impenetrable thicket of its own desire to "communicate". Ironically, and paradoxically, while expressing his inability to find a way to express his mind's desires, the speaker has succeeded in doing exactly that: "to communicate" ("Something") (44).

50 Also consider Sidney's observation that, in the sense of poetic economy, no word is left to chance and no word is superfluous, but each word has its very specific function so that

An example that can help make these two features of poetry, condensation and communication, more explicit is Herbert's "A True Hymn" in which the speaker reflects on the act of writing poetry.[51] In the poem, the speaker laments that his "heart was meaning all the day" (l. 2) without, however, being able to express itself. His desperate attempts to show his love of God by writing the perfect "hymne or psalme" (l. 9) can only be considered successfully accomplished when his "soul unto the lines accords" (l. 10). The speaker's heart, in the function of a *pars pro toto*, stands both for the speaker's body (that executes the act of writing) and, in a figurative sense, as the seat of the speaker's soul (that contains the vocabulary of love as well as the necessary knowledge of how to write a poem).[52] The speaker thus points out what he needs for the communication he desires. Altogether, Herbert's use of synecdoche allows him to convey more meaning without, however, saying more: the use of "heart" creates a connection to the overall theme of the poem (the speaker's love of God), while it simultaneously conveys the idea of the speaker's dedication to and actual execution of his task.

As regards communication as well as condensation, the last lines of the poem are the most intriguing ones. God, as a muse or inspiration, steps in, takes over and "writeth, 'Loved.'" (l. 20).[53] The word "Loved." is semantically underspecified. It could either be understood in the past tense, meaning *someone* (possibly, the speaker) *loved* or in the passive form *you are loved*. Both readings of the ellipsis would make sense in the context of the poem. Nonetheless, the fact that Herbert (or God through Herbert) decided to collapse both meanings into one word powerfully conveys the reciprocal notion of love and being loved.[54] He furthermore not only avoids redundant explanation, but also effectively completes the speaker's objective to put his love of God to verse. The example thus also illustrates how the principles of communication or rather what is not communicated, but implied by the speaker,[55] are effectively used

"the words, besides their delight, …, being so set, as one cannot be lost but the whole work fails" (33).

51 See Appendix A for the whole poem.

52 For an intricate analysis of metaphors and metonymy in Renaissance lyrics see Hedley's *Power in Verse*.

53 This also implies a form of collaboration between poet and God: while the poem is the poets' own product, it is also inspired and formed by God. For more information on co-creativity and collaboration in Herbert's poetry, see Bauer and Zirker, "Autorschaft und Mitschöpfung in der englischen Literatur der frühen Neuzeit", pp. 419–43.

54 For a discussion of the poem as an expression of religious truth in Herbert, see also Bauer, "Religious Metaphysical Poetry: George Herbert and Henry Vaughan", pp. 107–20.

55 With reference to literary texts in general, one difficulty is, of course, also the additional pragmatic level introduced by the distinction between author, narrator, speaker,

in poetry to convey meaning. The use of language in poetry should therefore be regarded as economical and essential to the poem's meaning; even more so since poems, as fictional texts,[56] have a delimited context, which imposes certain restrictions on the ways in which the utterances made in the poems can be understood.[57]

In this context, it is expedient to also consider the third characteristic: the distinct formal features of poetry.[58] When Herbert's speaker wishes that "the soul unto the line accords", he not only addresses the word meaning but also the form of the verse lines. Furniss and Bath argue that "poetry has more kinds of formal features than any other discourse" (52), and, owing to the notion of "much in little" particular to the genre (Bauer "Poetic Economy" 160), they are frequently used by poets because they can convey and enhance meaning beyond the level of content (see, e.g., Zirker "Performative Iconicity").[59] The application of specific language attributes (i.e. rhythm, sound, etc.) to create a certain effect is indeed part and parcel of the genre's purpose and meaning and, in this context, form also "plays an important role to create that effect" (Furniss and Bath 52).[60] Consequently, as the poet's decisions are often influenced by the genre and its constraints (Bauer "Poetic Economy" 160), analysing sound, metre and the stylistic arrangement of a poem is indispensable when attempting to understand the poem in its entirety.[61]

Lines 9–10 in the Herbert poem may serve as an example: "The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords / Is, when the soul unto the lines accords" (l. 10).

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addressee, and reader (see, i.e., Genette *Fiktion und Diktion*; Cohn, p. 775; Nünning, pp. 21–56), another aspect that many cognitivists as well as educationalists fail to discuss.

56 For a discussion of poetry as fictional texts, see ch. 5.2.

57 See, for example, also Freeman's comment that "[c]omprehension of a literary text demands not just the knowledge of word meanings but the knowledge of word meanings in context" ("Poetry as Power" 36).

58 In general, Cho and Afflerbach point out that the reading process is not only responsive to the language, but also the "language and structures" that characterise the text (cf. 111). For more information, see also Witte's discussion of the connection between content and the visual perception of the 'written image' in "Das Gesicht des Gedichts: Überlegungen zur Phänomenalität des poetischen Texts", pp. 173–90.

59 For more information on formal approaches to poetry, see, for example, Dresher and Friedberg's exhaustive monograph on *Formal Approaches to Poetry: Recent Developments in Metrics*.

60 Poe, for example, suggests that the effect depends directly on the extent of the poem, as "brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect" (164). To successfully trigger such an effect, the poet therefore has to choose his/her words with precision.

61 For a consideration of how the poetic form in its relation to the content might affect the subjective appreciation of the poem see also Barney, T. "Literary Evaluation and Poetic Form", pp. 71–82.

Pointedly "accords" (l. 10) rhymes smoothly with "affords" (l. 9); still, it seems that the speaker cannot abandon the feeling that what he wants to say (his soul) is not yet in the hymn. Nevertheless, what the speaker does in the poem here ironically "accords" (l. 10) to what is said and thus reflects the speaker's attempt to write a hymn that is "true" in every sense of the word: the rhyme suggests that the speaker has, although unwittingly, already found the right words to express his love of God. The poem's consistent rhyme scheme adds meaning to the content on the level of form and emphatically underlines the speaker's efforts. In the end, the speaker's persistence is rewarded (see above).

By contrast, a more 'hapless' man can be found in Breton's "Astrophell his Song of Phillida and Coridon".[62] Breton gives the usual charm of the pastoral lyrics sung by shepherds an ironical twist by means of a (conspicuous) repetition of the initial consonant sound ['hæ]:

> This man had hap, (O happy man
> more happy none then hee;)
> For he had hap to see the hap,
> that none had hap to see.

The speaker makes fun of a besotted shepherd by means of imitative language which is unoriginal, repetitive and interspersed with awkward puns. The lines suggest anything but an elaborate love song. The speaker's use of paranomasia, alliterations and internal rhymes conveys meaning not only on the level of content, but also by means of sound: the alliterations as well as the repetitive use of the sound ['hæ] create the impression that the speaker, imitating the breathlessness of the love-struck shepherd, is stuttering rather than singing. Breton therefore successfully conveys irony through sound. In both poems, the formal elements of the poem contribute to the meaning of the poem, albeit in different ways and for different purposes. In Herbert's case, the rhyme scheme complements the content, whereas, in Breton's case, the alliterations subvert the pathos of the shepherd's love lyric traditionally sung in romances.

Altogether, despite the condensed and often explorative use of language, the communicative nature of poetry (see above) makes it possible, based on the grammatical, contextual and pragmatic evidence at hand, to arrive at a precise description of the meaning(s) conveyed. The linguistic particularities should therefore not be regarded as incidental occurrences that impede understanding, but as essential to the poems' meaning. It has become clear

62 See in comparison the songs by the two shepherds Strephon and Klaius in Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, which Drabble describes as "two of the most elaborate love-complaints in the romance" (37).

that poetry, just like other literary texts, follows the general principles of representation and organization as well as communication and effect (Bauer "Poetic Economy" 163); however, for poetry that often aspires to represent a complex concept or idea in a rather scant space, this means that representation, organisation, communication and effect are closely interdependent. Thus, although the condensation of multiple textual phenomena is often claimed to be the main reason why poetry is considered one of the most notoriously 'difficult' literary genres to teach and to study, this characteristic of poetry also provides unique opportunities for addressing universally relevant aspects (see also ch. 5.5.3. as well as 6.2.). The brief reminder of the specific formal, linguistic and communicative characteristics of poetry provides a frame of reference for the subsequent review of cognitive and educational studies, as research in both fields seems to suffer from several misconceptions regarding these aspects. The following discussion will also serve to further outline the opportunities that poetry can generally offer for both fields of research.

1.3.2 *Knowledge Gaps – State of the Art in Research on Understanding Poetry*

Poetry in Cognitive Studies

Research on reading comprehension uses poems rather sparsely (cf. Kintsch "Kognitionspsychologische Prozesse" 45). Moreover, those studies that are concerned with poetry reveal that cognitivist research on the processes of understanding poetry is based on various misconceptions concerning (1) language use in poetry as well as (2) the formal and generic characteristics. As will become obvious, cognitive studies may profit from research on poetry and should therefore consider the particular nature of their research material more appropriately.

One reason why poetry in particular has been neglected is due to the genre's manner of communication, which is often, and mistakenly so, considered rather *un*communicative, either hindering the communication process or making it unnecessarily complex. To be precise, language in poetry is frequently dismissed as deviant or 'ungrammatical' and, hence, is not considered an ideal working material when researching language processing. In *Comprehension*, published several years after his joint work with van Dijk, Kintsch comments on the processes of understanding literary texts. His opinion is debatable:

> Is the comprehension of literary texts different from that of nonliterary texts? the answer must be 'yes' and 'no.' Yes, because literary texts demand specific encoding strategies and specific knowledge that do not play a role in comprehending

> nonliterary texts. Specifically, the encoding strategies for literary language are different from those employed for everyday language, and specific domain knowledge is required to understand literary texts. No, because the psychological processes involved are the same in both cases: The 'what' is different, but the 'how' is the same. (Kintsch *Comprehension* 213)[63]

This answer suggests that there is yet much work to be done when it comes to understanding the processes involved in the comprehension of poetry. Kintsch's statement that "[t]he 'what' [(encoding strategies, domain knowledge)] is different, but the 'how' [(processes of understanding)] is the same" is especially problematic (Kintsch *Comprehension* 213). He does not further specify how exactly he would define "literary language" and in what sense it is different from the language used in journalistic, or scientific texts (Kintsch *Comprehension* 213). The emphasis on different "encoding strategies" echoes the wide-spread opinion that language in literary texts (especially poetic texts) is often considered to not adhere to the rules of grammar: the "distinction between poetic and non-poetic language follows from the assumption that the former is not derived from the latter and therefore does not share its grammatical features" (Bade and Beck 319). It seems that, rather than being embraced as a research opportunity, literary texts have been too hastily dismissed as research material for exactly that reason: their idiosyncratic use of language.

Poetry, however, especially with regard to its use of language, can serve as an intriguing and unique research material. While language use in poetry differs from everyday use, recent literary studies support the notion that it is only when we draw on our existing knowledge of grammar, syntax, and semantics that we can read and understand poetry. In this context, Bade and Beck further develop a theory first introduced by Fabb and suggest an analysis of language and grammar in poetry at the semantic-pragmatic interface.[64] They conclude that

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63 For another approach that discusses language, grammar and comprehension processes see Sanders and Redeker's *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar*, which uses Fauconnier's *mental space theory* (see Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language*), a model designed to account for embeddings and restrictions of validity in language, to, amongst other aspects, discuss the effect of language use in literary texts on reader cognition.

64 Fabb states that according to the Development Hypothesis "the form of literary language and the rules and constraints which hold of it are developments of the form, rules, and constraints of ordinary language" (1227). Consequently, while literary language may share grammatical features with 'ordinary' language, it is not bound to these and may show "developments" that deviate from grammatical rules (Fabb 1227).

> while the poem may not be data in support of all properties of G,[65] it constitutes data for grammars close enough to G to be comprehensible to speakers with G in mind. Those are grammars very similar to the grammars at work in first and second language acquisition, and grammars of varieties of L1 (Bade and Beck 342).[66]

Bade and Beck present evidence that, although the interpretation process requires potentially extensive "syntactic reanalysis and semantic reinterpretation", reading poetry not only requires, at least, more elaborate cognitive processes during reading, but also that even the products of the reading process might differ (320).[67] More importantly, they prove that it is quite "possible to interpret with the rules of grammar" (Bade and Beck 320; see also Fabb 1220).[68] Undeniably, the sometimes unconventional use of language contributes to, for example, the ambiguity of poetry and poses particular challenges to readers' comprehension efforts, and the delimited context may, albeit only seemingly, render many poems unintelligible to the point that they contradict common sense or common rules of grammar.[69] The communicative qualities of poems,

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65 Bade and Beck define G as grammar G or the grammatical form of the language, in this case, English (337).

66 Cf. Chomsky's description of generative grammar in *Language and Mind* with regard to the mechanisms involved in understanding natural languages: "To say that a grammar 'generates' a certain set of structures is simply to say that it specifies this set in a precise way. In this sense, we may say that the grammar of a language generates an infinite set of "structural descriptions," each structural description being an abstract object of some sort that determines a particular sound, a particular meaning, and whatever formal properties and configurations serve to mediate the relation between sound and meaning." (91)

67 See also ch. 3. for a detailed discussion of modelling comprehension processes during the reading of literary texts.

68 In fact, this should expressly be taken into account when reading poetry, as becomes obvious in, for example, Bauer et al.'s article on Dickinson's "My Life had stood" in which they show that a combined linguistic and literary analysis of the poem can lead to new and compelling insights into Dickinson's poem.

69 MacLeish comments on this issue ironically in the last stanza of his well-known poem "Ars Poetica": "A poem should not mean / But be." (l. 23–24). Although some might find a grain of truth in these lines, the statement principally expresses some reservations concerning the persistent cliché about the non-interpretability of poetry: either because interpretation is believed to destroy the aesthetics of the poetic construct or because it simply eludes interpretation altogether. Both arguments should be considered with strong reservations as poems are neither "mute" (l. 1) nor "wordless" (l. 7). For example, in "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts," Bauer and Beck argue that "the subjective meaning is related to the grammatical meaning," thus making a point that all interpretation is restricted by grammatical rules and is therefore far from being arbitrary (251). Nevertheless, they also admit that sometimes several interpretations are coexistent. As has been shown earlier in this chapter, this circumstance need not impede interpretation; on the contrary, it might

by implication, nevertheless suggest that meaning, although not immediately obvious, may be found by means of recursive analyses and interpretation (see above).[70] It seems therefore that rather than Kintsch's 'what', the 'how' is what actually makes the difference in literary reading.

Consider, for example, the second stanza of Emily Dickinson's poem "Our journey had advanced" (J615; F453), which deals with the popular metaphor that life is a journey. The short excerpt from the poem suggests that there is a connection between grammar and interpretation that induces readers to make at least one "pragmatic step" and update the grammatical information with the context information from the text (cf. Bade and Beck 346):[71]

> Our pace took sudden awe —
> Our feet — reluctant — led —
> **Before** — were Cities — but Between —
> The Forest of the Dead — (Dickinson J615/F453; my emphasis)

Dickinson's idea of "[o]ur journey" (l. 1) is successively developed in the poem. Her interpretation of the implied linear notion of the metaphor 'life's a journey' is,[72] as Freeman argues, "grounded in notions of space and spatial orientation" ("Metaphor Making Meaning" 647). Indeed, the poem is ambiguous as regards the spatial and temporal deictic information. The ambiguity is triggered by deictic terms, such as "Before" (l. 7, l. 11) and "Between" (l. 7). The terms can be understood both in a temporal as well as spatial manner. "Before" could refer to a "sequence in space … of place, position, or direction … In front, in or on the anterior side; in a forward direction (*OED* "before," *adv.*, 1. a.). Yet, it could also refer to a "sequence in time or order," meaning the "time preceding that in question, previously to that or this, earlier, sooner. Hence: beforehand;

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lead to a deeper meaning and, possibly, even a greater appreciation of the poem for its artfully complex composition (cf. Fabb 1235; see also Furniss and Bath 78).

70 For another discussion of "the new grammar of poetry", see Carroll *The Logic of Poetic Language*, pp. 137–234.

71 See Appendix A for the entire poem.

72 Vaughan's "The Reatreat" (81f) is another famous example of a comparable reinterpretation of the concept of life as a forward motion towards a prescribed destination. However, rather than evoking a mystifying interspace, the speaker recalls his "angel infancy" (l. 2) and longs to be back in those "happy … early days" (l. 1). Therefore, the speaker would only move "by backward steps" (l. 30) in order to be reunited with God, his "first love" (l. 8). Vaughan's poem is therefore close to the idea of life as a circular passage or a path. This notion is not uncommon in Vaughan's poetry, other examples are "The World," "Regeneration," and "The Morning Watch." For an insightful analysis of his use of the 'path metaphor' see Leimberg' *Heilig öffentlich Geheimnis*, "Licht- und Wegmetaphorik", pp. 405–15.

already, in the past" (*OED* "before," *adv.*, 5. a.). Furthermore, there is also a syntactic ambiguity in the use of "[B]efore" in line 7.[73] Considering all readings of the word ("before" as temporal and spatial, and also whether the temporal "before" here means "before there were cities" (i.e. they come later) or "there were cities before" (i.e. they were there earlier)), the "Cities" (l. 7) as well as the "Forest of the Dead" (l. 8) could either lie behind the speaker or ahead of the speaker.[74] Moreover, "[b]efore" could also refer to the previous part (see n81). These readings do not, however, cancel each other out, but by means of their concurrent existence, a Bunyan-like reading of the poem is suggested: a city in the past and a city in the future; i.e., the City of Destruction and the Celestial City, or Cities. The poem ends on a hopeful note: "God" may be found "at every Gate" of the Cities ahead (l. 12). Dickinson by means of ambiguity and semantic underspecification suggests that life is a path towards God.

Although establishing a temporal/spatial model based on what is said may be challenging owing to the ambiguity of the prepositions/conjunctions,[75] it is the close analysis of the use and meaning of these prepositions which enables readers to make sense of the poem and process the text along known linguistic mechanisms. Readers need to analyse and make sense of the linguistic 'anomaly' in the context of the poem (see the additional 'pragmatic step' above). Consequently, the excerpt from Dickinson's poem not only shows how poetry may extend the range of linguistic expression,[76] but also activate complex

73 There is an apo koinou in this line, which is rendered more difficult by the fact that "led" is ambiguous: "led" can be read as either the passive form of *lead* or the *active* past tense of *lead*. The latter reading allows for two possible interpretations: **a)** break after (temporal) "Before": our feet led before our pace took sudden awe [i.e. the feet do not lead any more as our pace, awe-struck, gets slower] or **b)** break before (spatial) "Before": our feet led [i.e. were leading us] reluctantly since we were awe-struck by the cities before us [i.e. we are standing on a hill]. For a discussion of the effect of the apo koinu in another one of Dickinson's poems, see also "This was a Poet" line 8; in Bauer et al.'s *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson*, p. 61 n. 9.

74 A closer analysis of "between" yields that the word, by default, indicates something between the speaker's position (be it temporally or spatially) and the places referred to (here, the "Cities"). Accordingly, the "Forest of the Dead" is between the speaker and the "Cities".

75 In "Spatial Models Created from Text", Morrow critically discusses the conditions in which readers can create a spatial model from texts (given, of course, that a text or poem actually encourages a physical representation of space), which are mostly influenced by the referential information given in the text (70). In the case of Dickinson's poem, it becomes obvious that, while poetry may pose additional challenges for its readers, the construction of a spatial model is, in this specific case, an essential part of the understanding process. A similar case is Donne's "Lecture upon the Shadow".

76 In fact, the poem intimates the potential of poetic language to describe certain states of being and draw attention not only language, but to detail. The poet thus exploits the strict

processes of interpretation:[77] in order to arrive at a plausible interpretation, readers are required to engage in elaborate, as of now, only poorly understood cognitive processes. The '*how*' will therefore be the focus of the following investigation. In fact, poetry can be said to challenge our understanding of language and language processing in unique ways and not to investigate these aspects would simply be a gross negligence. Moreover, an investigation of these processes may also help make more concrete statements about the intricate and complex processes taking place during language comprehension in general.

For example, more research on how metaphors are processed in a poem may ultimately also help cognitivists make more specific statements about metaphor processing in everyday conversations. This claim can be confirmed when considering that metaphors are given a considerable amount of attention in cognitive studies (Das and Bhushan 222). Much of the literature concerned with metaphor processing, however, does not focus on metaphor comprehension in poems, but rather investigates fairly conventionalised metaphors, often taken completely out of context and despite the fact that many of the studies repeatedly emphasise the importance of context (see Gildea and Glucksberg).[78] It may be for this reason that the literature presents inconclusive results. Some of the findings indicate that metaphors challenge understanding as they require more time to process and require a higher working memory capacity (van Dijk and Kintsch 314, Chiappe and Chiappe 183). When a statement is first understood literally, the reader is forced to reread and reprocess its figurative message (van Dijk and Kintsch 314; Chiappe and Chiappe 183; Gerrig and Healy 673). Other studies argue that especially conventionalised metaphors, such as 'love is a rose' or 'love is red,' are easier and faster to process as they are considered closely related in readers' associative network and even go so far as to assume that metaphor processing works as fast as processing literal meaning

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boundaries of grammar and fashions it with the express purpose to "[d]istill amazing sense / From ordinary Meanings": life (Dickinson l. 2–3; J448, F446).

77 Consider also the first stanza of the last chorus of Crashaw's "A Hymn of the Nativity, Sung as by the Shepherds," in which Crashaw plays with notions of time and space, suggesting a divine inversion of the spherical order by means of a figurative temporal and spatial disintegration: "Welcome all wonders in one sight! / Eternity shut in a span! / Summer in winter! day in night! / Heaven in earth! and God in man! / Great little one, whose all-embracing birth / Lifts earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to earth!" (l. 53–58, 82)

78 Often a distinction is made between conventionalized or stereotypical and unconventional or novel metaphors: some of the studies thus use metaphors that might very well be found in a literary piece (see, i.e. *The night sky was filled with drops of molten silver* in Gerring and Healy 668), others use conversational metaphors, such as *My lawyer is a shark* in Kintsch "Metaphor Comprehension: A Computational Theory" (19). Most of the studies focus on stereotypical or conventionalised metaphors, though.

(Kintsch "Metaphor Comprehension: A Computational Theory"; Gerring and Healy 673).[79] Nevertheless, the metaphors used in almost all of these studies are short utterances presented to the readers without any context, which, in many cases, is indeed unnecessary because they are thus far conventionalised that they do not require any (see Kintsch "Metaphor Comprehension: A Computational Theory"; Bowdle and Gentner 194; Gerrig and Healy 669; Gildea and Glucksberg).

Considering the somewhat inconclusive results, it would make sense to expand the focus to research on the processes taking place when a reader tries to understand a cognitively challenging metaphor in the context of a poem that is neither conventionalised nor "expresses similarities" or "category memberships" (Bowdle and Gentner 194f).[80] This approach would give researchers the opportunity to look at the processes of understanding metaphors from a different perspective, which could provide them with new insights. For example, while Gildea and Glucksberg present evidence that metaphors are processed faster in a disambiguated context (96; see also Gerring and Healy 672) and Gibbs and Colston confirm their findings – the two researchers discuss the results of several studies and conclude that they support the "context-dependent view of metaphor comprehension in which direct access to the metaphoric meanings occurs when the meaning is relevant to the preceding context" (82) –[81] Gildea

79 In the case of Kintsch's studies, for example, the researchers only use fairly conventionalised metaphors, such as "my lawyer is a shark" ("Metaphor Comprehension: A Computational Theory" 19) and "[t]he stock market collapsed" ("Metaphor Comprehension: What Makes a Metaphor Difficult to Understand?" 5). See also Glucksberg "The Psycholinguistics of Metaphor"; Gildea and Glucksberg "On Understanding Metaphor: The Role of Context"; Kintsch and Bowles; Gibbs *The Poetics of Mind*, p. 119.

80 See Gibbs "Evaluating Contemporary Models of Figurative Language Understanding" for an intricate discussion of models that suggest figurative language understanding to involve "complex mappings across four or more spaces in conceptual integration networks" (322f). For an insightful analysis of the applicability of these models with regard to reading poetry, see Freeman's "Poetry and the Scope of Metaphor: Toward a Cognitive Theory of Literature", pp. 253–82, in which she discusses a model that can map the conceptual integration of the network of associations Dickinson creates in her poem "My Life had stood".

81 In fact, semantic coherence as well as cohesion are important factors that influence comprehension processes. The properties and relations of textual constituents must be clear; otherwise the reader might struggle to understand (van Dijk and Kintsch 337). For example, van Oostendorp shows that particularly "[d]uring initial processing of a sentence the perceived semantic cohesion is primarily dependent on the semantic relatedness between involved concepts" (39). Semantically high-related sentences were read much faster (52). Sentences used in this study were: (a) "The cat caught a mouse in the kitchen" (which was treated as a semantically high related sentence), (b) "The cat seized a mole in the field" (which was treated as a semantically low related sentence) (van Oostendorp 41).

and Glucksberg also concede that future research has yet to find out whether processing of novel metaphors or metaphors in an ambiguous context might involve other processes (69). Since poems are often ambiguous and their context is delimited, they are likely to further challenge their readers' comprehension efforts and to engage them in a series of complex cognitive processes. Poetry should therefore be considered ideal research material when it comes to introducing new incentives for research on metaphors.

The added value of poems for metaphor comprehension research, within an appropriate theoretical framework, can be shown using one such an example. In Donne's "Love's Progress", the speaker describes love as a "bear-whelp" (l. 4), warning that if licked too fervently, it will take strange shapes and turn into a "monster" (l. 6):[82]

> Whoever loves, if he do not propose
> The right true end of love, he's one that goes
> To sea for nothing but to make him sick.
> And **love's a bear-whelp born:** if we o'er-lick
> Our love, and force it new strange shapes to take,
> We err, and **of a lump a monster make.** (Donne 1–6, 348; my emphasis)

While cognitive studies might support the assumption that Donne's unusual choice of conceit could indeed be a challenge for his readers – "matching properties in the topic and vehicle concepts" or similarities between a new-born bear-whelp and love first have to be established (McGlone and Manfredi 1209; see also McNamara and Magliano 303; C. Harrison 131ff) – it is unclear how readers actually make sense of the metaphor in the context of the entire poem.[83] The purpose of the metaphor here is obviously not to confuse or to interrupt

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According to van Oostendorp, reading time for unpredictable word sentences was longer than for predictable sentences (37) as high-related sentences were considered more imaginable and were consequently read faster than low-related sentences (52). He noted, though, that the "representation" or the final reproduction of the unpredictable sentences was better (van Oostendorp 37), probably because more effort was invested into thoroughly processing the sentence. The latter finding therefore further supports the claim made in this paragraph.

82 Medieval literature frequently makes reference to the belief that bear-whelps are born as a mere lump of flesh and that their mother has to lick them into shape. Donne probably refers to Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopaedia, which was translated into English in the Early Modern period under the title *Batman uppon Bartholome His Booke De Proprietatibus Rerum* (London, 1582). The bear lore is to be found in Book 18, ch. 112, p. 384.

83 A similarly complex metaphor, yet more famous, can be found in Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning:" two parting lovers that, joined by their souls, are described as two "stiff twin compasses" (l. 26, 260) and who can therefore never be really separated as the one only moves if the other does. Marvell's "vegetable love" (l. 11, 81) that is part of a

the flow of reading; on the contrary, it is employed to both give advice on how to deal with love as well as to contemplate the purpose of love.[84] The speaker's advice is conveyed by means of a metaphor and thus turned into a graspable, more specific idea, namely by that of a new-born bear-whelp, a mere shapeless lump of fur that, when treated by an over-eager mother bear, who intends to form it exactly as she wishes it, ends up disfigured. The speaker thus conveys his warning to over-zealous lovers to not press love into "strange shapes" (l. 5) that it was not made for. By means of the metaphor, although it may be unconventional, it becomes possible for readers to understand an abstract notion through a more specific image (Fan 927).

The example further helps to point out another issue: the studies above mainly deal with the limitations that metaphors set on language processing. Metaphors are indeed almost always treated as exceptions from conventional language use; a fact which only promotes the notion that language in poetry is deviant and hardly serves as proper research material. Fan's literature review on metaphors, for example, shows that metaphors in cognitive studies are generally considered linguistic anomalies that ultimately generate illogical sentences (926).[85] Consequently, cognitivists devise methods that monitor the processing times and, depending on the speed, draw conclusions on the comprehension or memory constraints. However, reading speed is hardly a parameter that can be used to make statements about the individual processes of literary comprehension as metaphors are a necessary means of specification and enrichment in poetry. Approaches that investigate metaphors as a form of communicative strategy might be more conclusive, particularly when it comes to reading poetry (cf. Fan 926).[86] It seems, however, that cognitivist models

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prolonged line of reasoning during which the speaker tries to seduce his mistress in "To His Coy Mistress" is no less strenuous for a reader.

84 According to Addison, true wit only gives "Delight and Surprize to the Reader" when the ideas do not "lie too near one another in the Nature of things; for where the Likeness is obvious, it gives no Surprize" (Addison 1). Contrary to Johnson's rather condescending comment that the wit of the metaphysicals might best be described as "a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike" (*The Lives* 20), Donne's metaphor follows a greater end than mere wit. Although the relation between a bear-whelp and love may not be immediately obvious, Donne successfully uses the metaphor to convey an elaborate argument using just a few words.

85 Fan's findings (2018) are the more surprising considering the still popular study by Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) which supports the idea that language is highly contextual and creative and thus clearly contradicts this stigmatisation of metaphors as linguistic anomalies.

86 Fabb supports their assumption, arguing that, while literary language might differ formally from 'ordinary' language, it is unlikely to differ semantically (1219). According to Riffaterre, there are, however, three ways for what he calls "semantic indirection" to occur

are too restrictive and inflexible to account for the complexity of the concurrent inferential processes, such as "disambiguation, reference assignment and enrichment",[87] necessary for the interpretation of poetry (Locher and Jucker 3; see also ch. 3.1.). The analysis of Donne's metaphor strongly suggests that cognitivist research could profit from a closer collaboration with literary studies and could thus constructively advance the modelling of metaphor understanding in particular, and language comprehension in general (see also Kintsch "Kognitionspsychologische Prozesse" 49).

This claim finds further confirmation when considering the second issue cognitive studies are struggling with: the proper consideration of the formal and generic aspects of poetry. Cognitive studies concerned with poetry mainly focus on those characteristics that are frequently associated with poetry, namely rhyme and metre (see, i.e. Kintsch and Bowles; Kintsch "Kognitionspsychologische Prozesse"; Stabler; Solonchak and Pesina). Apart from the fact that these features by no means apply to all poems, the studies show other shortcomings when it comes to a theoretical approach that defines the features and textual phenomena which may make poetry difficult to understand.[88] For example, a study by Kintsch discusses the construction-integration model as a suitable comprehension model when it comes to reading poetry. For this purpose, Kintsch employs a simple nursery rhyme as an example. He justifies his choice by explaining that these kinds of rhymes have those characteristics of poetic use of language that matter (46). Yet, in the poem of his choice rhyme and rhythm are given such precedence that, as he correctly observes, language and words are incidental, to the detriment of meaning (Kintsch "Kognitionspsychologische Prozesse" 45f). Kintsch here

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in literature: by means of (1) distortion (for instance through ambiguities), (2) displacement (e.g. metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.), or (3) creating meaning in the form of (linguistic) signs (e.g. symmetry, rhyme, homologues in a stanza, form, etc.) (2). His choice of term as well as his list is rather blurry and hardly helps specify the features that may make poetry difficult to process than other forms of language use. Riffaterre was decisively influenced by Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight: Essays on the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, published seven years earlier, in 1971.

87 The term 'disambiguation' should be considered with some reservations here, especially regarding the fact that the Dickinson example above shows that 'disambiguation', in the sense of restricting the meaning of an ambiguous utterance to one reading only, is not the point of reading poetry, rather, *assessing the meaning of ambiguous expressions*, a process which is pointedly not the same (see also ch. 5.2.2.2).

88 For example, in "Difficult Poetry Processing", Castiglione presents evidence that shows a considerable increase in readers' processing times when being confronted with non-narrative text structures, pp. 99–121. It is, however, debatable if narrativity is a feature that should be looked at when defining "difficulty" in poems.

overlooks the fact that actual understanding is not the point of the poem. Rather, the poem explores the phonetic aspects of language, albeit in a possibly nonsensical manner. While his example was chosen among others for the purpose of investigating the effect of rhyme, rhythm, and sound on cognition, it nevertheless induces Kintsch to drastically simplify how these three features can affect the understanding of poetry, a genre which is, in his example, portrayed as a rhythmical game with phonemes that does not necessarily have to convey any notable meaning.[89] By contrast, it is explicitly *because* of their musicality that lyrical poems can be discussed as powerful examples of how the *musical aspects of language*, a certain rhyme (scheme) or metre can *contribute to the meaning of the poem*; even more so, when considering the fact that poems almost always also have a *performative component*. The exploration of the sound of language to the effect that it signifies (for a reader) beyond the mere meaning of the word has hardly been given the appropriate attention in literature on reading comprehension.[90]

Sound, rhyme, and metre in poetry are not only employed to ease memorisation,[91] but to (more or less) subtly convey and enhance meaning in

89 There are, of course, examples that might, superficially, seem to support this opinion, such as the nonsense poetry by Edward Lear, many of Lewis Carroll's poems (see, e.g., "The Jabberwocky", which is interspersed with onomatopoetic nonsense words) or the elves' poems and songs in the *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by John R. R. Tolkien. However, all three examples must be interpreted in their own respective contexts: for example, the songs of the elves are not only a linguistic experiment – Tolkien being a linguist himself – on how an artificial language develops, but also, in the novels, a means to convey the effect of the elves' enchantingly strange and alluring culture on the protagonists. For more information on the effect of the songs, see Adams' "The Pragmatics of Estrangement in Fantasy and Science Fiction", pp. 348ff; see Zirker on the poems in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* in "'All About Fishes'? The Riddle of Humpty Dumpty's Song and Recursive Understanding in Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There", pp. 81–102.

90 While Meyer et al., for example, point out the crucial role of sound in language processing (arguing that the process describes "essentially the inference of meaning from vibrations of air"), they also criticise that research has primarily focused on "acoustics and pre-lexical representations such as phonemes, phonetic features, and syllables" (1) and not on "meaning that is decoded in context", let alone the effect of sound on the meaning-making process in the larger context of a poem (cf. Meyer et al. 2).

91 There are studies that further investigate the effect of rhyme and metre on readers of poetry. Both features were shown to further increase the memorability of a line or sentence (van Dijk and Kintsch 241; Snow 33). Mnemonics and nursery rhymes are indeed well-known examples of poetry turned to use in order to facilitate remembrance; however, the fact that a reader can memorise a line does not automatically allow for the conclusion that the reader has also understood what s/he is reproducing.

often artfully crafted, complex ways. Consider, for example, the first seven lines of Bridges' "London Snow":[92]

> When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
> In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
> Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
> Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
> Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
> Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
> Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;

Bridges' euphonic opening of his poem demonstrates how the sound of language can be used to enhance and even add to the meaning of what is said in the poem.[93] The acoustic qualities of his poem are achieved by means of the play on sound.[94] The onomatopoetic emphasis on the consonant *f*, beginning with the alliteration in line 2 ("flakes falling"), contribute to a recurring sound pattern suggestive of wind shifting the snow around the city corners. The accumulation of assonances in form of the repeated sound [i], "[s]tealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying", in line 3 further evokes the idea of wispy clouds of snowflakes dancing in the wind until they finally settle lightly on "road, roof and railing" (l. 7). The brighter vowels used to describe the snowflakes' descent on the city are, however, interspersed with darker vowels. The diphthongs [aʊ] at the end of every alternating line especially ("city brown" (l. 2), "drowsy town" (l. 4), "down and down" (l. 6)) are somewhat in contrast with the jingling rhymes (the sound [ɪŋ]) of the other lines. In terms of content, the words simply describe the snowflakes' path to their final destination; however, the sound contrast of the alternating rhyme scheme creates a certain tension between the words used to describe the city of men and the snow, and, more generally, nature. This tension is heightened by the more sinister word meanings of "[d]eadening, muffling, stifling … failing" in line 5 and put into question the harmlessness of the snowflakes' descent on the city. The first lines are therefore full of foreboding and prepare the reader for the chaos and

92 See Appendix A for the entire poem.

93 It is the iconic use of language that conveys and enhances meaning in the poem. Iconic aspects of language as well as sound in language in general are a common area of interest in literary studies, which might serve as an orientation to delineate the features that contribute to and affect the comprehension processes while reading poetry. Insightful works are, for example, Zirker, Angelika, et al.'s *Dimensions of Iconicity*, and Perloff and Dworkin's *The Sound of Poetry, the Poetry of Sound*.

94 For more general considerations regarding the import of the musicality of poetry for the reading experience, see a recent article by Kirsch "On 'Getting' Poetry".

destruction in the lines to come (see also below): at the first light of the morning "war is waged with the snow" (l. 31) and men "[t]read long brown paths" (l. 33) into the "white-mossed wonder" (l. 23). The inevitability of men's impending, almost brutal, destruction of the ephemeral (yet also threatening) beauty nature bestows on the city over night is thus intimated by the snowflakes' fatal fall "down and down" (l. 6) from the sky onto the "city brown" (l. 2).

Admittedly, the poem can, to some extent, be understood without analysing its sound. How strong the effect of the play on sound is on the individual reader clearly depends on readers' (or listeners, for that matter) awareness of the phonological make-up of the poem.[95] Nevertheless, the poem's phonetic qualities achieve an effect that goes far beyond the memorability of Kintsch's nursery rhyme: the author's meticulous choice of words serves a specific purpose. A reader oblivious to the words' distinct sound pattern may also remain ignorant of the different ways in which the poem explores the relationship between man and nature. On the level of content, the relationship is somewhat strained: nature exerts a soothing effect on men whose "daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber" (l. 36), at least momentarily, at the sight of the snow, while the city's inexorable morning bustle breaks nature's charm. By contrast, the alternating rhyme scheme and the mingling of the darker and brighter sounds, also within the lines (see, i.e., line 5, "[d]eadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing", in which the city's dark murmuring vowels are literally shrouded by the snow's tinkling tune), further qualify the relationship: they refute the hypothesis that nature and men are two independent, even opposing, entities; on the contrary, they are intricately connected, both mutually affecting each other.[96] Accordingly, analysing how the content interplays with the sound of language and realising how this contributes to the meaning of the poem, actually means *understanding* the poem as well as the language and words used in their (aesthetic) entirety (see also ch. 1.3.1). Thus, contrary to Kintsch's example, versification, sound and the linguistic make-up of a poem are by no means incidental or even negligible, but should instead be considered an indispensable part of a poem's meaning.[97] How form affects content and how this interdependence influences reading behaviour and comprehension

95 In their study on affective and cognitive responses to poetry, Rumbold and Simecek support this notion. They note that students' analysis of the poem emerges "through lingering attention to the sounds of the words and their effects" (343).

96 The mutuality of the relationship is also reflected in the title, which is pointedly a compound noun made of the two words London and snow.

97 For example, Menninghaus et al. present evidence that parallelistic features serve "as general intensifiers of emotional impact" and affect readers' perception of the poems, "suggesting that these subtleties interact … with the perception of the content" (55). They

processes should be a matter of continuing interest for cognitivists. It is, however, also clear that research in this area requires a more precise description of the relationship between form and content in poetry.[98]

Two reasons have emerged why research on poetry should be in the general interest of cognitive studies: first, cognitive studies should endeavour to find out more about all aspects of language comprehension, irrespective of whether the language used resembles everyday conversations or not. In order to do so, cognitivists may have to turn to more demanding research material. Here, poetry has been shown to suggest itself as intriguing material as it confronts readers with particular challenges while still following communicative intentions (see above). This observation connects the first with the second reason. The linguistic idiosyncrasies found in poetry not only provide an extremely rich and diverse research material, but research on poetry may also be used to find out more about language processing in general (as the example of metaphors has suggested). While the benefits of poetry for cognitive studies are clear, it is also obvious that research using poetry will require a collaboration with literary scholars, who can provide an adequate theoretical background that sets out the framework for the study designs, and who can analyse and discuss the results accordingly (see ch. 3).[99]

Poetry in the Language Classroom

When it comes to the application of poetry in a language classroom, the strong orientation of educational studies along the findings in cognitive studies becomes especially obvious: while cognitivists show that learning and instruction affects cognitive processes of understanding texts, educationalists draw on exactly these findings to develop didactic methods and concepts that can be used to direct and promote students' cognitive processes. The cooperation between these two research fields has proven fruitful for the development of innovative teaching methods that aim to foster competences which enable students to collaboratively read and understand texts; however, as cognitivists still struggle with research on literary texts, so do, inevitably, educational studies. Although educational studies approach the issue of literary reading somewhat differently (see ch. 1.2.2.2), their approach to research on literary reading is affected by their heavy reliance on cognitive studies (see also ch. 5.1f). In fact,

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could not, however, make any concrete statements about their readers' meaning-making process as this was not the focus of the study (cf. Menninghaus et al. 56).

98 For more information, see ch. 3.1.3.

99 Dixon et al. point out that such a framework must "include a working definition of the text, an elaboration of the concept of the reader, and an understanding of literary processing and interpretation" (6).

similar to cognitive studies, they show certain shortcomings when it comes to an adequate theoretical background with which to approach research on understanding literary texts and poetry in particular.

One reason why few attempts have been made to remedy this shortcoming is that there are hardly any official frameworks that would make such a specification necessary. Burwitz-Melzer reviewed the Europe-wide level of education (Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen 2001 (GER)) and concluded that both the European as well as the national standards for education do not distinguish between informational and literary texts, let alone poetry (Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 136).[100] Literary texts are still given little exclusive attention in European educational studies. Although, in the US, the English Language Arts Standards provide a separate section for reading literature, they reveal under the section "Key Ideas and Details" that the Standards are chiefly written with regard to the analysis of prose texts and drama, as becomes obvious in CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: "[a]nalyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama" (*English Language Arts Standards*). Poetry is only mentioned once and is not made obligatory teaching material (cf. *English Language Arts Standards*, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7). Researchers as well as teachers therefore also lack incentives from the political side that would require them to pay particular attention to poetry.

Moreover, there are some prejudices against using poetry in the classroom: when taught in school it is said to be presented as "remote and sanctified", meaning that (1) students are "confronted with a literature which is culturally distanced from them", which makes it the more difficult for them to approach a poem "by reference to their own experience", and (2) the interpretations established by the canon exert such authority that they often smother any individual approaches to the poems (Widdowson 6; see also Giovanelli 180). In this context, Hynds laments that "teachers, through their questioning techniques, have often encouraged students to look for easy answers rather than to

100 For example, in the GER, language acquisition is the main focus, but not the associated individual competences, which are granted only 6 pages in total (cf. Coste et al. 5). In some German states, the definition of *text* remains unclear and does not distinguish between fictional and non-fictional, literary and non-literary texts. For example, in the *Bildungsplan 2016 – Gymnasium: Englisch als erste Fremdsprache*, published by the Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg in 2016, the authors even introduce a more extended definition of *text*: 'Text' is understood as all oral, written and visual products in their respective cultural and media context that are conveyed in print or digital form" (24; own translation, the authors write: "Als 'Text' werden demnach alle mündlichen, schriftlichen und visuellen Produkte in ihrem jeweiligen kulturellen und medialen Kontext verstanden, die analog oder digital vermittelt werden" 24).

grapple with the essential complexity" of literary texts (117). Duck warns that these approaches especially can "perpetuate an abstracted view of literature" (24; see also Giovanelli 180f; Fialho 61).[101] The reason why teachers would nevertheless approach poetry with a fixed set of interpretative approaches to a poem lies, so it seems, in the system itself. The "questioning techniques" that Hynds criticises so harshly are not of the teachers' own making (117). In fact, a grading system that only works in terms of right or wrong answers is simply not expedient for poems that generally tend to elude a straightforward answer and teachers are ultimately left to figure out for themselves how to test the "untestable" (see Paran and Secu).[102] They might therefore prefer texts that lend themselves to easy questioning techniques or, at least, less controversial and complex reading matter, the answers to which can ideally also be graded in a transparent and comprehensible manner.[103]

On the basis of this discussion, two correlated problems become obvious. First, the lack of attention dedicated to poetry in educational contexts has delayed the progress towards an adequate approach to research on literary understanding. As a result of the first problem, teachers tend to fall back on teaching methods that supply students with prefabricated opinions which promote the idea that poems are, if at all, approachable only through the teacher's expert opinion (Newell 112).[104] A proper theoretical basis, meaning,

101 In this context, Babuts argued in *Memory, Metaphors, and Meaning: Reading Literary Texts*, that, with "a reasonable amount of literary knowledge, anyone can interpret texts without resorting to handed down conventions or *a priori* ideologically constructed systems" (59). His argument, however, is too simplistic as strategies of comprehension usually require a lot more than merely literary knowledge. The preceding literature review has made this point sufficiently clear. Nevertheless, Babuts' approach is in so far of interest as his hypothesis that the literary conventions of 'meaning making' must be understood in order to adequately deal with literary texts ties in with the present argument concerning this much disputed issue.

102 Poetry, more often than other texts, falls victim to the belief that its interpretation is completely arbitrary owing to its ambiguity and semantic underspecification. This notion may have been influenced by a notorious misreading of Iser's gaps, which allegedly allow readers to freely indulge in any form of interpretation that their "imaginative involvement" may permit (Iser "Akte des Fingierens?" 149). For an intricate discussion of this issue, see also Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson*, pp. 211–13.

103 Giovanelli here also speaks of "teaching to the test" (180). See also Bode's intriguing article "'Look on My Works, Ye Mighty, and Despair!': Notes on the Non-Teachability of Poetry", who, modelled on Platonic dialogue, develops his arguments for and against the teachability of poetry in a dialogic exchange between two academics talking about teaching Shelley's "Ozymandias" in class.

104 In this context, McDonald describes one symptom of what he calls poesophobia: "the suspicion that poems and passages of dramatic verse contain hidden meanings, significance that the expert, the initiate, in this case the professor, has access to, but that ordinary

an adequate definition of the competences necessary to read and understand poetry, could help (re-)introduce poetry as a means to promote students' language awareness and could form the basis for more applications in the language classroom.

Although poems linguistically offer an enormous potential regarding language learning and teaching, there remains a division between language training and literary reading, which can be found in many academic as well as educational contexts (Paran "The Role of Literature" 466).[105] This hypothesis is confirmed by repeated yet mainly unheeded attempts by literary scholars, such as Chatman (1968), Widdowson (1992), Hanauer (2001), Hess (2003), Paran (2008 and 2010), and Wolbring (2018), over the past decades to make poetic texts more appealing in language learning contexts. It seems that the genre is often dismissed as disproportionately complex, the language too deviant and (thus) too difficult to teach to an uninterested student body, especially when there are other options to choose from, such as novels, short fiction and graphic novels. Murphy et al., for example, have to concede that verse drama and poetry are considered the least enjoyable literary genres among students (6). The linguistic peculiarities in many poems should, however, be of particular interest to educationalists when it comes to a discussion of the additional value of poetic texts in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context.

Poems lend themselves exceptionally well to further shape "students' linguistic sensibilities" as their interpretation demands a greater "emphasis upon the text" as well as the function and interaction of its linguistic elements (Clark and Zyngier 339; Hall 9ff; Wolbring 11).[106] The linguistic idiosyncrasies of poems are relevant for language learners exactly because they help them become aware of the special features of the (English) language in the first place. The following example shows that poems can teach us about the dimensions of language use (see formal elements, condensation, rhetorical figures, ambiguity),

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readers have to struggle to discern" (40). He goes on to emphasise that this "prejudice should be countered explicitly and constantly" by the educator (McDonald 40).

105 See also Lerner's *The Hatred of Poetry* and Burt's *Don't Read Poetry*; both books aim to make poetry more appealing (again) for readers beyond the academic context. One article that is also worth considering in this context is Gioia's perspicacious "Can Poetry Matter?" in which she discusses different reasons why poetry has become something of a sub-culture and why despite its "superabundance … within a small class", there is a notable "impoverishment outside [this class]" (Gioia).

106 In their study, Clark and Zyngier aim to confirm initial theoretical considerations regarding pedagogical methods shared by both L1 and L2 practitioners on teaching poetry in a language classroom (cf. 339). Their study showed that in order to increase students' awareness of language, teachers would have to place more emphasis on the pragmatic, cognitive and linguistic functions of reading poetry (cf. Clark and Zyngier 339).

as language is manipulated for a particular communicative purpose and each word in each utterance must be expected to contribute to the meaning of the whole. This hypothesis finds confirmation when considering Dickinson's "He fumbles at your soul" (J657; F466):[107]

> He fumbles at your Soul
> As Players at the Keys —
> Before they drop full Music on —
> He stuns you by Degrees —
>
> Prepares your brittle Nature
> For the Ethereal Blow
> By fainter Hammers – further heard —
> Then nearer — Then so — slow —
>
> Your Breath — has time to straighten —
> Your Brain — to bubble Cool —
> Deals One — imperial Thunderbolt —
> That scalps your naked soul —
>
> When Winds hold Forests in their Paws —
> The Universe — is still —

The poem presents a conundrum of metaphors, comparisons, and expressions that are arranged in a seemingly disconnected manner. Everyday life objects (<players, keys, hammers, brain, forests, paws>) as well as verbs that describe physical actions (<fumble, drop, stun, prepare, scalp, hold>) take referents that describe essentially immaterial things or abstract concepts (<soul, music, nature, breath, thunderbolt, winds, universe>), suggesting a "fusion or union of material and immaterial realms" (Bauer, Mar. et al. 107). The effect is a startling uncertainty concerning the actual goings-on in the poem and a consistent lack of clarity who is referred to in the first place. Nevertheless, the initial comparison to "Players at the Keys" (l. 2) is a recurring element in the poem and gives a clue regarding an interpretive approach. Several references to what could be parts of a piano or an organ ("Keys," "Hammers," "Winds," and "Forests" (organ pipes were traditionally made out of wood)) evoke the notion of a somewhat discordant musical piece that is "heard" (l. 7) throughout the poem, sometimes "further– / Then nearer – Then so – slow" (l. 8). Indeed, the fusion of material and immaterial matter suggested in the poem hints at the nature of music,

107 For a thorough analysis of the poem, resulting from a combined effort of literary scholars and linguists, see Mar. Bauer et al. "'The two coeval come': Emily Dickinson and Ambiguity."

which can be considered the product of a fusion of material substance and insubstantial matter, organ pipes creating sound.[108] Moreover, despite the valid arguments that support the interpretation of "He" as a "divine agent" (Bauer, Mar. et al. 106), there is also an implication, which does not necessarily rule out the divine agency, that the unspecified "He" could be a poet – or the (metaphorical) piano player – that "fumbles … stuns … prepares … scalps" (l. 1–12) and eventually, leaves his readers' brains to "bubble Cool[ly]" (l. 10) in the reverberating silence of the last lines. The associations evoked in the poem therefore suggest an analogy between creative power and aesthetic as well as religious experience. The frequent use of music in combination with poetry for religious expression in the form of psalms and hymns supports this notion. Therefore, the tenor of Dickinson's elaborate metaphor could be religious experience and its vehicle the creative as well as aesthetic dimensions of a religious musical piece.

Dickinson's choice of action verbs (these would usually take a physical referent), the underspecified personal pronouns, the referential ambiguities, and the overall evocation of seemingly unrelated associations contribute to a unique linguistic challenge. Although, taken separately, most words and expressions are not uncommon or difficult to understand, their combination, conjunction and separation via dashes creates a network of individually significant units that only partially merge into a meaningful whole. The reader is presented with several possible interpretive strands than run parallel to each other: the creative power of a possibly divine agency, a metapoetic sub-plot about a poet and/or piano player, musical references, and religious allusions all combine to a perplexingly disjoint picture. Dickinson here successfully creates new meaning by leaving certain utterances unspecified. In fact, the poem's composition reflects an emotional state, a transfixing non-understanding that is communicated to its readers and thus conveys the underlying problem of the poem: the inability to describe or to understand the extraordinary sensations felt by an individual that comes into contact with a presumably superhuman power.[109] Although the condensed language, referential ambiguities, complex

108 In fact, music is not an uncommon topic in Dickinson's poems; she also played the piano herself. Other poems that express a similar notion with regard to music are, for example, "Slant of Light" (J258; F320) or "Musicians wrestle everywhere" (J157; F229). For more information see Cooley's *The Music of Emily Dickinson's Poems and Letters: A Study of Imagery and Form*.

109 The "peculiar blend of passion and thought, feeling and ratiocination" (Grierson 3; see also Eliot *Selected Essays* 282f and Smith, A. J. 4) that is a characteristic of metaphysical poetry can also be seen in Herbert's stream-of-consciousness poem "Prayer (I)" as well as Harvey's "Church Festivals." In both poems, the reader is confronted with a torrent of

associations and salient metaphorical constructions enhance the poem's complexity and pose particular challenges to its readers,[110] these features do not reduce, but enrich the poem's content and are effectively employed to describe an experience that is beyond the conventional and moves within the realms of the inexplicable. This specific use of language in order to convey more by saying less is a particularly intriguing case in terms of understanding.

Dickinson's elliptical style explicitly provokes readers to pay particular attention to local context, to the different meaning(s) of each expression and induces them to draw back on their knowledge of grammar to make sense of the utterances in the poem by means of inferences. The tentative interpretation of the poem demonstrates that the poem certainly is, despite its linguistic particularities, explicable: as a matter of fact, the interpretation is only made possible by taking into consideration all the linguistic evidence, which forms the basis for readers to judge the plausibility of certain statements about the poem's meaning; even violations of grammar can help direct the interpretative process as they can point out those structures in the poem which might "require pragmatic enrichment" (Bauer et al. "My life had stood" 155). While a linguistic analysis of the different elements in Dickinson's poem often allows for several interpretations to coexist, the poem is hardly an example of how the use of language in a poem renders it meaningless or impossible for readers to process. The fact that readers might struggle to provide a coherent interpretation of the poem after the first or second reading neither renders the poem incomprehensible or unreadable nor should this fact render it unsuitable for teaching.[111] On the contrary, the poem suggests a whole range of different interpretations and prompts its readers to pay particular attention to language (see also Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 211).

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coalescing associations, ideas, devout reflections and metaphors suggesting passionate states and sensations felt while carrying out religious rites, such as praying or attending a church ceremony.

110 Part II of Bauer et al.'s *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* is an exceptionally insightful discussion of how the language of poetry serves as a means, here, for Emily Dickinson, to express, to describe and to create meaning in her poems, pp. 133–58.

111 In this context, T. S. Eliot makes a particularly compelling argument in favour of learning to read poetry by pointing out how the author's choice of form and the matter he wants to write about influence the way he can communicate, not, however, to appear "obscure", but to be as explicit as possible: "If you complain that a poet is obscure, and apparently ignoring you, the reader, or that he is speaking only to a limited circle of initiates from which you are excluded – remember that what he may have been trying to do, was to put something into words which could not be said in any other way, and therefore in a language which may be worth the trouble of learning." (Eliot *On Poetry and Poets* 101f)

The analysis shows that poetry can challenge and thereby expand readers' knowledge about what language can do; however, not so much to appear remote and sanctified, but to present the common through the looking glass: language and language use are under systematic examination. In this manner, poetry can indeed help "to promote linguistically aware readers who can perceive the qualities of language which are manipulated for particular effects (including the aesthetic)" (Clark and Zyngier 342; see also Fricke). Here, Clark and Zyngier indirectly address another aspect that makes poetry valuable teaching material. The condensed language also contributes to the enigmatic character of the poem: the communicative nature of poems engages readers and, as all the meanings of the poem may not reveal themselves immediately, prompts them to pay particular attention to their form and content while making sense of the utterances. Readers are thus encouraged to detect and uncover the multitude of different facets that are an integral element of many poems.

The diversity of poetry can be of special interest in the literary classroom because it can be used as an ideal working material to train literary competence, generally and on all competence levels. So far, the focus has mainly been on the peculiarities of poems; nevertheless, as has been emphasised at the beginning of the sub-section, poems are valuable not only because they are exceptional but also because their properties help us understand other literary texts, and thus their use for research and teaching beyond the genre's idiosyncrasies. In ch. 1.3.1 above, I have pointed out that, no matter what, why or how (lengthy) something is communicated in literature, on a fundamental level, the principles underlying all literary compositions are the same (cf. the four principles of representation, organisation, communication, and effect): each element of the text is deliberately organised and phrased in a certain manner for a certain communicative purpose. In lyric poetry, owing to its brevity, the influence of these principles on the composition of the text is much more pronounced and, therefore, readers may be made more easily aware of their import for the analysis and interpretation of the text than when reading longer texts, such as novels (see above). This claim can be further specified by means of a comparison, which will help illustrate why (lyric) poetry may be an even better choice than novels when it comes to teaching literary competence. Consider, for example, some of the following opening lines in **poems**:

Donne "The Canonization":
"For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love," (9)
Vaughan "The World":
"I saw Eternity the other Night," (220)
Dickinson "I Heard a Fly Buzz"
"I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died" (J591/F465), or

in comparison to the following opening sentences of three **novels:**[112]

Melville *Moby Dick*
"Call me Ishmael." (21),
Zusak *The Book Thief*
"Here's a small fact – You are going to die." (13), or
Pratchett *Small Gods*
"Now consider the tortoise and the eagle." (1)

For the purpose of my argument, all of these examples were chosen because, irrespective of the text genre or the exact techniques used by the authors (i.e., whether the speakers directly address a fictive addressee or simply begin with a somewhat odd opening statement), they appear like the opening sentence of a conversation and thus instantly engage the reader in the reading process,[113] who may be intrigued to know what the speaker/narrator has to tell. The decisive difference lies, of course, in what follows the opening sentence of our example novels in comparison to the first lines of the poems. In the case of the poems, it is pointedly not another 300 pages that may (or may not) explain the opening statement, but layers of information packed into the condensed form of a poem. To be precise, while, in novels, readers can expect that many unclarities will be explained later, in poetry, this is frequently not the case, which triggers a reflection on the utterance itself. In order to make sense of the initial utterance in the context of the poem, readers are therefore required to pay particular attention to detail. Questions such as *how* exactly language is used to communicate *what* become much more pressing simply because the answers to these questions may not be as straightforward in a poem as they may be in a novel. While reading poetry, readers are likely to reflect more consciously not only on the composition process, but, more importantly, on their own reading process, thus becoming more aware of the different dimensions of literary reading.[114] In terms of teaching literature, poetry is therefore particularly

112 It goes without saying that there are countless examples from novels that would lend themselves less well for this comparison (see, i.e., the opening statements of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, James' *Portrait of a Lady* or Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*). The purpose of the comparison is, however, not to show a correlation in the length of the utterances or the language used, but to point out the similarity of the effect the opening statement can have, compared to what the reader can expect to follow this initial statement. Opening sentences of similar length simply lend themselves better to illustrate this argument.

113 Some of them (e.g. the *Good Omens* example) even create an *in medias res* effect: the sentence appears not like an opening sentence of a conversation but a sentence right in the middle of a conversation.

114 This does not mean that these processes do not take place while reading a novel; on the contrary, they should, but as the information is often presented in a more straightforward

appealing because poems are, just like any other literary text, an adequate working material to train literary competence in general, but with the advantage that, owing to the condensed format the information is presented in, they confront students with the intricacies of literary reading and induce them to reflect on and learn about the competences needed to understand the text, all without being subjected to a 300 page novel. To adequately teach students about literary competence, however, *teachers need a clear concept what literary competence actually comprises*.

Conclusion

All in all, literary studies provide a clear definition of the particular nature of poetry. The initial description of the poetic genre made it possible to critically review research on poetry in the two other research fields. The review has revealed the need for more research on understanding poetry and not only because each of the poems has been shown to be extraordinarily versatile and challenging research material in their own right, but because their linguistic as well as a formal peculiarities, be it the grammatical challenges in Herbert's poem, Donne's metaphors or Dickinson's linguistic experiments, nevertheless provide, in an explorative way, insight into what (the English) language can do (see also Wolbring 11). The fact that there are still too few studies dealing explicitly with the mechanisms of understanding poetry should be a powerful incentive for more research. Overall, special attention should be paid to language in poetry. A common feature here is the particularly condensed way in which it is used and which contributes to their complexity and which might pose particular challenges to comprehension (cf. Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung im Fach Englisch" 149).[115] The fact that this complexity is nevertheless definable and relevant for understanding makes poetry relevant to comprehension

way, readers may simply be less conscious about them. For example, if we focus on the opening sentences of the novels again, it becomes obvious that, lacking context that is normally provided when reading the rest of the novel, we are also induced to concentrate on analysing the sentences in minute detail, as the only information about the novel, its narrator, etc., is, for the moment, condensed into this one sentence. This thought experiment may seem trivial, but it suggests that the sheer amount of context information in a novel can divert attention from the fact that a detailed analysis of the language, a close reading, is as indispensable to understand a novel in all its aspects as it is when reading a poem.

115 While Castiglione is able to present evidence that readers perceive poems that lack narrative schema as particularly difficult, he also concedes that "reception-oriented studies have little to say about how stylistic features impact on readers with regard to perceptions of difficulty" (104). For a more extensive discussion of reader responses to difficult texts, see also Purves' *The Idea of Difficulty in Literature*.

research (cf. Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung im Fach Englisch" 149). Overall, it has become clear that poetry has not just been chosen because it is particularly challenging, but because it shows phenomena that are generally relevant to understanding (literary) texts. It thus serves as an excellent research material for an investigation into the processes of understanding.

1.3.3 *Choosing the Textual Basis – Shakespeare's "Sonnet 43"*

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see;
For all the day they view things unrespected,
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?
How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
All days are nights to see till I see thee,
And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.

SON43 is a demonstration of Shakespeare's exceptional use of language.[116] His works are representative of a prolific and transformative phase in English literary history, especially regarding new and creative ways of exploring language and language use (cf. Sanders 86ff).[117] He accordingly provides complex read-

116 Indeed, he is mostly celebrated for his prodigious vocabulary, linguistic innovations, dense imagery and "skilfully handled" wordplay (Mahood 92; Belsey 9f). In fact, his poetry generally reflects a phase in literary history that laid a special focus on language and language play, a circumstance which gained poetry of the 16th and 17th centuries the reputation of being particularly difficult and complex. New rhetorical strategies for the sake of a more and more elaborate argument became highly popular at the end of the 16th and throughout the 17th century and their use was considered "evidence of the poet's wit" (Williamson *The Proper Wit of Poetry* 12). Different forms of wit were refined and developed by various poets following in Shakespeare, the most famous of which are counted among the metaphysical poets – a term coined (not very favourably, though) by the scholar Samuel Johnson in 1779 in his famous monograph on *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets: With Critical Observations on Their Works* –, who distinguished themselves by their "[m]etaphysical wit" and the unequalled complexity of their arguments (A. J. Smith 4).

117 With reference to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Sanders writes in *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* that his poems: "do more than revise the conventions and then reject the courtliness or the mythological paraphernalia of the sonnet sequences of the 1590s.

ing material that can serve as the basis to answer the question how readers deal with an abundance of textual phenomena that appear in the condensed format of a sonnet.[118]

Of all of Shakespeare's sonnets, SON43 is an intriguing research material for several reasons. As an Early Modern English (EME) text, it can be expected to pose at least some challenges to students' understanding on the level of vocabulary; however, a first perusal of the sonnet suggests that the words by themselves should only be a minor issue for EFL students. While the vocabulary in the sonnet is relatively easy to understand, students of all languages, native speakers and non-native speakers alike, can be expected to struggle with the unusual wealth of linguistic phenomena. For example, the sonnet begins with the speaker's paradoxical statement that s/he actually sees more, the more often s/he closes his or her eyes (l. 1). This is the beginning of numerous seemingly paradoxical lines, oxymoronic statements and rhetorical devices that mostly involve different forms of word repetitions. In line 4 of the sonnet "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed," no less than five stylistic devices can be identified: an antithesis, a diacope, an antimetabole (chiasmus), an oxymoron, and a polyptoton. The subsequent lines are equally loaded with stylistic devices (to name but a few: line 5: paradox, antanaclasis, polyptoton; line 7: paradox, oxymoron; line 8: two oxymora and a paradox). The argumentative structure of the poem is remarkable, too: the sonnet opens with a paradox in the first line and develops it throughout the next 13 lines while, all the way to the final couplet, making the first statement "plausible as an expression of the speaker's relationship with the addressee" (Bauer et al. "'When most I wink, then' – what?" 5). It is therefore not only its explorative use of language, but also its content that makes this one of Shakespeare's sonnets a challenging and thus apt research material. In fact, SON43 constitutes exactly those features that were defined to be of specific concern for this investigation: the poem is rich in textual phenomena which may require readers to engage in cognitive processes that are yet different from the standard vocabulary and content-processing and that have as of now been little researched.[119]

They throb with a new metrical energy, they explore a new emotional range, they wrestle with the implications of a new language, and they enact new dramas within their exact, fourteen-line structures" (147).

118 For more information on Shakespeare's language, see also the comprehensive monographs by Crystal Think on My Words: Exploring Shakespeare's Language; Hope, Shakespeare and Language: Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance; Houston, The Rhetoric of Poetry in the Renaissance and Seventeenth Century.

119 In the context of this study, the additional challenge for the students is, of course, that they are dealing with a fictional text. As has been discussed in the previous chapter,

Moreover, reading SON43 for the first time may make us understand why Shakespeare's reception is marked by a striking paradox:[120] despite the significance and impact Shakespeare's works had and still continue to have not only on English-speaking culture,[121] but for all nations and cultures across the globe (see, i.e., Murphy et al. 2; Belsey 1; E. Smith 1),[122] his works are approached only reluctantly by many and even "elicit groans" rather than excitement from those who (as a logical consequence) have the opportunity to study him (cf. Gorlewski and Shoemaker 111). There are, in fact, various studies that report how both students as well as teachers shy away from this 'literary heavyweight' (cf. Murphy et al. 2, 6; Bevington "The Words" 43; Crystal 146; E. Smith 1; Gorlewski and Shoemaker 111). It is the more surprising that there still is a certain scarcity of studies that are concerned with what exactly students are struggling with when reading Shakespeare's texts and, furthermore, how to efficiently promote the skills needed to make these texts approachable in the first place (cf. Bauer et al. "'When most I wink, then' – what?" 3; see also Murphy et al. 2). The fact that Shakespeare's works are so ambivalently received, represents another reason why a poem by Shakespeare was chosen for this study: based on the students' analyses and interpretations of the poem, I will investigate how poetry can provide new incentives to researching and teaching literary understanding.

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however, stylistic devices, such as, i.e., metaphors, can commonly be found (sometimes copious amounts) in any text. One aim of the following investigation is therefore to find out how much research on the processes of understanding literary texts and, hence, the explicit focus on understanding language and language use in these texts can teach us about reading literacy in general. Accordingly, an investigation of the processes involved in making sense of these phenomena is generally relevant, if not indispensable, to the research on understanding texts.

120 It should be noted, though, that the previous chapter has made it sufficiently clear that (early modern) poetry generally presents material for all kinds of research opportunities and Shakespeare's sonnets are clearly not the only poems suitable.

121 It is his use of language that scholars seem to be particularly fond of: E. Smith describes his writing as "technically brilliant and endlessly verbally inventive" (1) and Belsey argues that "the sheer density of the imagery can be breathtaking" (9f).

122 For example, Murphy et al. point out that "William Shakespeare is a global phenomenon" (Murphy et al. 2) and Dobson and Wells similarly state that "Shakespeare and his canon have come to be … central to anglophone culture" and beyond (vii) – e.g., "Germans feel, not entirely without justification, that Shakespeare belongs to them" (Belsey 1).

CHAPTER 2

Students' Explanatory Annotations as a Methodological Tool

Chapter 2.1 begins with a brief etymological excursus that adopts a somewhat unconventional, yet elucidating, approach towards explaining the reader – explanatory annotation – text relationship, the phenomenon that serves as the foundation for the research objective of exploring literary understanding. Chapter 2.2 discusses the suitability as well as the advantages of explanatory annotations of literary texts as a methodological tool. The claim is that annotations link the two research interests outlined in chapter 1: understanding and literary texts. Section 2.2 introduces the annotation system TEASys, a hermeneutic tool for annotating literary texts, and describes the annotation process in some detail. The delineation of the students' approach to annotating SON43 serves as a basis to address potential points of criticism against the use of written output as a research material. In section 2.3, the criteria for an appropriate annotation are defined that are essential for the evaluation of the student annotations.

2.1 A Brief Etymological Excursus

Examining the etymology of the term *understanding* reveals certain semantic implications of the word which, ironically, are not entirely irrelevant for the introduction and discussion of annotations as a methodological tool. Although a somewhat tongue-in-cheek approach, the word's etymology can be used to show an intriguing connection between the general aim of this investigation (researching (literary) understanding) and the methodological tool used to do so (explanatory annotations of literary texts), a fact which supports this thesis' particular choice of approach to investigate understanding by means of a qualitative analysis of the students' explanatory annotations.

A dialogue from Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* shall serve to introduce and to further propound my claim. Shakespeare's Launce famously makes fun of the fact that understanding can be divided into the prefix *under-* and the verb *stand*:

SPEED What an ass art thou! I understand thee not.
LAUNCE What a block art thou, that thou canst not! My staff understands me.
SPEED What thou sayest?
LAUNCE Ay, and what I do too. Look thee, I'll but lean, and my staff understands me.
SPEED It stands under thee, indeed.
LAUNCE Why, stand-under and under-stand is all one. (II.v.22–29)

In the passage, Speed understands the term in a figurative sense, while Launce uses its literal sense to describe the position of his staff. Launce here exploits the double sense of the word to not only confuse his interlocutor, using the obviously less common meaning (hence, Speed's request for clarification), but also to allow his insult – the fact that he thinks his own staff may be smarter than his interlocutor – to go unpunished. Although the dialogue can simply be enjoyed as a jaunty exchange between two servants, Lance's witty retorts are more than mere word-play. In fact, a look at the etymology of the term *understanding* reveals that he actually has a point and that "stand-under and understand" may very well all be understood as "one" (II.v.22–29).

The etymology of the term is certainly an unusual one and its origins have still not been explained. In his article "How to Understand 'Understand'", Newman maintains that "there remains a lingering doubt about the emergence" of the meaning of 'understand,' and he sets out to discuss several hypotheses concerning the semantic development of the word *understand* (190). The general opinion seems to be that *understand* can indeed "be decomposed into a prefix *under-* and a verb *stand*" (Newman 185). The Old English prefix *under-* could also be understood as "'between' … or 'among'" (Newman 189). The *OED* similarly suggests that "*under-* is correlative to *over-* prefix" and both prefixes might have been used equivalently until *under-* would eventually replace *over-* (*OED* "under-, *prefix*1" 1.b.). In combination with the verb *stand*, understand can thus either mean to stand over or to stand under as in "'physically close to'" (Newman 187).[1] This meaning is supported by its relation to the Middle Low German *understân* "to understand, to step under" (*OED* "understand, *v.*", Etymology). Moreover, an equivalent notion can also be found in the Latin word for understanding: *intellegere*. It is a compound of the prefix *inter-* ("between, among") and *legere* ("read, collect") (Newman 139). In *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Walde and Hofmann even paraphrase "intellego" as "*wähle dazwischen" and for the younger word *interlego* "lese dazwischen

1 Newman nevertheless cautions his readers that "it is by no means obvious how the sense of 'understand' has developed out of this formation" (185).

ab" (1: 353). The spatial nature of the process implied at the beginning is here supplemented by the metaphorical 'reading between the lines'. Both meanings nevertheless suggest the need for a certain proximity, be it mental or physical, to something in order to be able to inspect and analyse the material closely.

The latter dictionary entry also ties in with another argumentative line Newman discusses. He states that the formation of *under-* compounds may also refer "to psychological processes" (Newman 192). Other OE uses and versions of *understand* as in *undergietan, -niman, -standan* (*OED* under-, *prefix1*, 4.a; see also Hall and Merritt 373)[2] and *ongietan* support this observation (see also Kastovsky and Szwedek 569; Newman 193). Moreover, *stand* "can easily be extended to abstract senses, including psychological senses: for example, English *insist* and *persist* derive ultimately from the reduplicated 'stand' stem of Latin *sistere* 'to set, place, stop'" (Newman 195); understood as a nominal of the English *stance*, *understanding* could denote an "emotional or intellectual attitude or position" (Newman 196). The word is thus also suggestive of an intellectual positioning and, furthermore, a certain subjectivity on the part of the person being in the process of understanding (196). *Understanding* hence also denotes an attitudinal change, an "entering into" a close encounter (in the sense of information exchange or communication) with a text. By implication, this means that the text is perceived or noticed as something that requires closer inspection in its entirety or in its individual parts (see also distinction perceive – comprehend – understand above).[3] *Understanding* thus describes a person who is physically or mentally close to something in order to be able to inspect it and to (literally and/or figuratively) grasp or to comprehend it,[4] either in its parts or as a whole.[5]

Altogether, the brief etymological survey suggests the idea of *understanding* as a kind of 'vertical spatial positioning' with a certain implication of (physical) proximity. The positioning may be understood on both a metaphorical as well as a literal level. In the context of this thesis, the idea of being physically

2 For a full discussion of the etymology of *undergietan, -niman, -standan* in the sense of 'to understand' from Old English until their use in Modern English, see Kastovsky and Szwedek, pp. 569ff.

3 These considerations could be said to ascribe the activity 'understanding' with an explicitly volitional as well as self-reflective element: the individual must willingly choose to concern him-/herself with the object in question. For a discussion of this aspect see also ch. 1.2.3 above.

4 Newman further proposes that *undergietan* could have also been used in the sense of to "perceive" (193).

5 Here, the definition of understanding shows some parallels to the definition of to comprehend, which was also used to describe the notion of grasping something physically (*OED* "comprehend, *v.*" I.1.-3.). These meanings are, however, all obsolete now.

close to a text attains a particular meaning. While the notion of approaching a text by reading **between the lines** and thus metaphorically stepping into the text to make sense of its meaning is hardly new, it is here combined with the explicitly material nature of annotations, which, in Lance's words, literally "stand-under and under-stand" (it "is all one") the text (II.v.22–29). In a much more literal sense, annotations do indeed work between and beneath the lines, commenting on the text and explaining it.

It may or may not have been in the nature of things that the investigation of *understanding* (from a literary perspective) should also have included a hermeneutic approach to understanding *understanding*,[6] but, in this particularly felicitous case, the hermeneutic investigation into the word's etymology actually helps make the phenomenon of the annotation – reader – text relationship, which lies at the centre of the present inquiry, much more tangible, both literally and figuratively: an annotation that literally stands under the text can help others approach and understand it and, in turn, only a reader, who can metaphorically read between the lines and, hence, understand the text, can write such an annotation (that understands the text). With reference to the etymology of the term *understanding*, it is thus possible to further illustrate that (literary) understanding becomes manifest in the reader – explanatory annotation – text relationship, the phenomenon used to investigate understanding. Questions such as how do the processes of understanding become visible in the students' explanations, and which are the parameters for the analysis of the annotations will be covered in the next chapters.

2.2 When most I understand, then do I best explain? – Preliminary Considerations

With regard to the premises set out in the previous chapter, inquiries into literary understanding should obviously take into account general research on *understanding*, but should also consider the specific features and challenges of individual literary texts. A link between these two research objectives can be found in the students' **explanatory annotations** (of poetry). In their function to facilitate readers' understanding of the text, annotations make them aware of the difficulties of meaning by, for example, drawing attention to the ambiguity of a line and offering possible interpretive approaches (Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 252, 258; Kablitz 119f; Eardley 123). The

6 This argumentation is inspired by Jauss' approach to a discussion of literary hermeneutic understanding introduced in *Wege des Verstehens*.

explanatory function of the annotations – "to describe or give an account of in order to bring about understanding" (*OED* "explain" *v.*, I.2.a) – highlights the cognitive discursive function of the act of understanding (see also ch. 1.2): to identify and make explicit problems of understanding is part of the process of explaining and vice versa (Dalton-Puffer 12; see also Andringa 233; Bevington "Confessions" 20). Moreover, the activity of explaining, of course, presupposes that something is worth elucidating. Here, the premise is that an annotation explains exactly that passage in the text which also requires a detailed explanation.[7] Consequently, annotations are, in their "innately referential" qualities to enrich and to explain the text while drawing attention to its possible (linguistic) challenges, also a **reflection of the text itself** (Benstock 205; see also Hunter "The Social Function of Annotation" 177; Metz and Zubarik *Am Rande bemerkt* 9; Fohrmann 248).[8] In this context, the explicitly fictional nature of the literary text becomes relevant. In contrast to, for example, annotations of historical texts, it is the delimited context, the impossibility to simply enrich and explain the text by referring to historical facts and references alone, that makes the utterances in the text not only explanation-worthy, but that also requires a specific kind of annotation. Explanatory annotations of poetry are thus inextricably suggestive of the question how (hermetic) poetry can be explained. Accordingly, annotations can be said to form a link between understanding and literary texts.[9] They should therefore be considered an effective tool to further current research on **understanding literary texts**.

Writing annotations indeed means intensive text work that must be converted into effective and precise output in order to keep the information content and the general relevance of the statements as high as possible without getting lost in detail, excessive descriptions or implausible interpretations (see also ch. 2.3 below). The explanatory function of annotations compels students to make explicit and reflect more on their own processes of understanding. In fact, to be able to explain and make statements about the meaning of

7 These considerations also imply the assumption that the literary text itself is something ontological; meaning, a literary text is singular and its meaning is determined by its internal structure. Owing to its singularity, these structures require explanation and/or interpretation.

8 Bowersock argues that annotations, as a form of paratext, are simultaneously "loose and bound at the same time" (Bowersock 55). Derrida famously characterised this relation as the "double bind" of annotations (202).

9 In this context, Assmann writes that text and commentary are at the intersection of two cultural lines of development: (1) the history of commenting can be more generally described as the history of hermeneutics, the annotator as *homo interpres* or the origin and development of the science of interpretation, and (2) the history of text production and, the development of text theory (12). For a similar discussion of this question see also Woesler "Zu den Aufgaben des heutigen Kommentars", pp. 18–35.

the utterances (in SON43) presupposes that understanding of the text must have taken place: in order to write annotations that effectively help readers overcome comprehension difficulties, the annotator him-/herself must have understood the sonnet in all its parts (Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (Through) Annotations" 44; see also Zirker et al. "Commentatory Annotation" 16; Ricklefs 72). While explanatory annotations should first and foremost bring about understanding of the text at hand, by implication, they also reflect the annotators' ability to (1) take into account the exact processes and features of the text that might make understanding difficult and (2) assess how to best help future readers to better understand the sonnet (see also Battestin 4). The annotations can therefore be used to make statements about the students' understanding processes based on their output.[10]

This hypothesis is further supported by evidence presented in a study concerned with students' annotations. In their article "Minding the Gap: Annotation as Preparation for Discussion", Feito and Donahue point out that free annotating activities can provide insight as to how the students' understanding of the text works. They note that the students' work can be "a study of the practice of reading itself" (305) and conclude that "it is possible to classify student annotations in terms of … [their] efforts to build consistent viewpoints" (301). Although their article is only concerned with students' immediate reactions to the text and does not consider the development of different annotation versions that were written in a self-reflective, peer-reviewed process over a longer period of time, Feito and Donahue's pioneering work can nevertheless be considered an encouragement for an in-depth investigation of annotations as indicators of the students' understanding processes. Another promising report of a scholar's practical experience with analysing students' written output is provided by Dalton-Puffer in "Elemente einer 'academic literacy'".[11] Presenting her analysis of students' speech acts in their written output, she supports the idea that written and spoken output can be used to analyse and make concrete assumptions about the students' cognitive processes (Dalton-Puffer 120). Both studies indicate that annotations written by students can reflect their interaction with and perception of the textual product and

10 While the annotations are written to be published online and in a digital format, including hyperlinks among the annotation categories as well as hyperlinks to other annotations, the students' reading should be considered analogue although they heavily draw on digital resources for their research.

11 See also Hoy II "Reciprocal Acts: Reading and Writing", pp. 24–48, in which she discusses ways in which writing can help students learn to improve their reading skills. For more information, see also Boers et al.'s "On the Benefits of Multimodal Annotations for Vocabulary Uptake from Reading", pp. 709–25 and Wolfe's "Effects of Annotations on Student Readers and Writers", pp. 19–26.

provide further insight into the competences needed to understand it.[12] The present annotations will be treated as speech acts that are a manifestation of their writer's communicative intentions, and, therefore, a manifestation of the students' cognitive processes (cf. Dalton-Puffer 120; see also Elbow 12).[13]

Altogether, these theoretical considerations lead to the general premise of this thesis: explanatory annotations of literary texts are not only facilitators, but also, as they reflect cognitive processes, indicators of understanding processes and can thus serve as a unique working material to investigate understanding. This premise forms the basis for the two questions this study aims to answer: (1) what can the annotations reveal about the processes of understanding a literary text, such as Shakespeare's SON43, and (2) how can literary understanding be defined? The observations from the qualitative analysis of the student annotations will be compared to research on understanding in each of the three previously discussed fields: cognition, education, and literature. The student annotations of SON43 will thereby serve as a methodological tool to investigate the processes of understanding poetry by reviewing, validating and, potentially, specifying past and current research on understanding in the fields of cognitive, educational, and literary studies.

2.3 The Student Annotations

2.3.1 *Tübingen Explanatory Annotations System* (*TEASys*) – *A Hermeneutic Tool for Annotating Literary Texts*

The student annotations were written based on the Tübingen Explanatory Annotations System (TEASys). TEASys was introduced by Prof. Zirker and Prof. Bauer at the University of Tübingen as a best-practice model for explanatory annotations of literary texts.[14] Since its first introduction, TEASys has been continuously improved and revised based on the knowledge exchange among

12 Other studies concerned with investigations into how annotations can be used to research and promote students' literary expertise see also Bauer and Zirker "Understanding (Through) Annotations"; Brown "I'll Have Mine Annotated, Please: Helping Students Make Connections with Texts", pp. 73–78; DiYanni "Reading Responsively, Reading Responsibly", pp. 3–23.; Porter-O'Donnell "Beyond the Yellow Highlighter: Teaching Annotation Skills to Improve Reading Comprehension", pp. 82–89.

13 Another (empirical) study concerned with annotations is, for example, that by Omheni et al., which analyses the influence of the personality traits on the annotator's annotation practices, pp. 1–6.

14 Further details about the research project can be found under the following link: https://www.annotating-literature.org/annotations/. The student project as well as to the annotated texts can be found on the following website: https://www.annotating-literature.org/

students, peer mentors, the project assistants and the two project supervisors.[15] At the beginning of the peer-learning project "Annotating Literature", data was collected in order to categorise explanatory notes and thus develop a standardised system for annotations. The system is based on the idea that readers are provided with precisely the amount and the kind of information that is relevant to their respective interests and needs as readers of literary texts (Bauer and Zirker "Whipping Boys Explained"; see also Bauer and Zirker "Explanatory Annotation of Literary Texts"). The information provided in the annotations is subdivided based on their level of detail and their content. TEASys thus consists of two components that structure the annotations: levels and categories. Each annotation can have up to three levels that describe the scope as well as the level of detail of the information contained:

> Level 1: briefly answers the most urgent questions that may arise while reading
> Level 2: builds on this information and offers a more detailed explanation
> Level 3: builds on levels 1 and 2 and contains even more detailed information

Altogether, the three levels offer information from basic linguistic explanations to more extensive accounts of, for example, a historical persona or possible interpretations. The levels therefore describe the individual steps from a rough to a very comprehensive understanding of a text passage or the entire text. Additionally, within these levels, the annotations are divided into eight different categories, according to their content:[16]

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15 The TEASys living style guide is under constant revision, the current version (last update 2020-11-01) further defines purpose and content of each category and level ("Annotating Literature").

16 Over the past years, several similarly comprehensive lists were compiled that delineate all the different kinds of items that may be subject of an annotation (see, i.e., J. Schmidt "Die editorischen Leitlinien" 316f; Frühwald 23–29; Mundt et al. 162f; Bauer and Zirker "Explanatory Annotation of Literary Texts" 224f). One other example would be Mundt et al.'s list, which also shows strong parallels to the TEASys categories. This elaborate list was collected in "Kommentar-Empfehlungen für Editionen von Texten der Frühen Neuzeit" (Mundt et al. 162f):
a) factual comments (e.g., historical context, etc.)
b) literary annotations (e.g. stylistic features, special features of poetic diction, etc.)
c) identifying quotes and allusions
d) describing illustrations and relating them back to the text
e) (if necessary): explaining any musical additions
f) language annotations (e.g. rare and archaic words, etc.)
g) words/passages in foreign languages --> translate
h) explain foreign words
i) relating the text to its times, adding contemporary extra material (references to texts that share the text's ideology)
j) Variants (Mundt et al. 162f)

(1) Linguistic Annotation: lexical, syntactic, etc. comments
(2) Formal Annotation: verse, narrative structure, iconicity, etc.
(3) Context Annotation: biographical, historical, etc. comments
(4) Interpretive Annotation: constitutes as a synthesis of (1)-(7)
(5) Intertextual Annotation: references to other texts
(6) Intratextual Annotation: motifs, themes, references to previous passages etc.
(7) Textual Annotation: variants of the text
(8) Questions (Bauer and Zirker "Whipping Boys Explained")[17]

Fig. 1 shows a screenshot of an annotation of SON43 with its respective levels (1 and 2) and categories (language and interpretation):

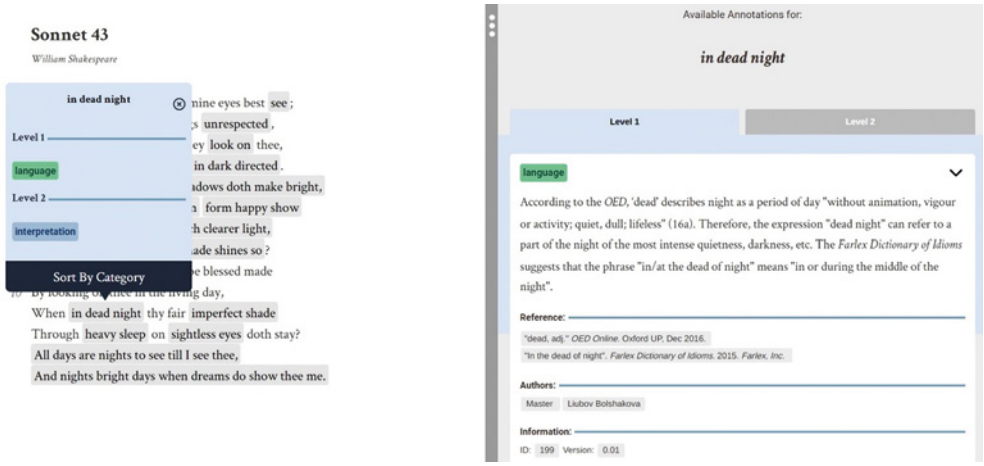

Fig. 1 Annotation of "in dead night" (l. 11) with levels and categories. Website accessed on 2021-01-13.

TEASys was further developed as a heuristic learning and teaching tool that would help students write their own annotations in peer-learning groups.[18] This means that the approach to writing annotations with TEASys is essentially guided by the principles of hermeneutics (see also ch. 2.2.1 below): the text is considered a hermeneutic challenge, the aim of which is to understand, e.g., a poem as a whole by successively overcoming the difficulties posed by the

17 For a more elaborate description of which kind of information belongs to which category see also TEASys living style guide.
18 For more information on the practical applicability of TEASys as an online teaching tool see "Students as Digital Annotators of Shakespeare's Sonnets" by Kirchhoff, Lahrsow and Zirker.

text. Meaning is thus generated by iterative reasoning processes during which the students continually update their knowledge about the "relations between sentences (or utterances)" (Scholz 142) and their "(contextual) assumptions about the text" (Gius and Jacke 241). In order to establish a common level of understanding between the poem and its readers, the students aim not only to recreate this process in their annotations, but also to revise them according to their own evolving understanding.

For example, in the case of the student annotations under investigation here, many of the students' deletions show that an initially straight-forward interpretation, suggesting one reading of a line only, is deleted for the sake of a less definite statement that comments on the ambiguity of the same line and proposes several possible readings.[19] These revisions usually go along with an increase in knowledge on the part of the students; this may include knowledge about words, rhetorical figures, the historical context, etc. Many of the editing processes therefore reveal the students' hermeneutic approach to understanding the sonnet:[20] they systematically and collaboratively expand the hermeneutic circle by continually revising, substantiating, or elaborating upon their interpretations of the speaker's utterances. An in-depth analysis of the students' approaches to SON43 will thus provide new insights into the students' abilities to make sense of the sonnet by means of analytical, iterative reading processes that spiral out as the students' knowledge increases: from assumptions about the utterance meaning to text meaning and vice versa (see Ricklefs 45).

Furthermore, as the present annotation versions were written in a peer-learning group, they can also be used to investigate the students' processes of understanding that include their own individual research *as well as* collaborative research in the peer groups. For example, the students are encouraged by their peers to reflect on which part or feature of a text makes it difficult to understand and devise strategies to overcome these problems of understanding by writing (an) annotation(s) for the respective passage (see ch. 5.4.1). The feedback process thus promotes their capabilities to employ metacognitive

19 Cf. Bauer and Brockmann, who argue that the analysis of literary texts includes the fact that ambiguities "have to be regarded as intentionally included in the text. Maximal informativity on the ground of the cooperative principle thus has to include all readings these structures make possible" (342).

20 The concept of hermeneutics employed here is oriented along the school of thought promoted, among others, by Dilthey and Gadamer. It is considered a discursive practice that – based on the idea that iterative thought processes, which are influenced by the recognition of discrepancy and accordance, lead to knowledge – is used to describe any form of man-made art (see Dilthey; Gadamer).

strategies, such as problem-solving strategies. Consequently, one of the main goals of TEASys is not only to develop a standardised system for digital annotations in online editions, but also to promote students' understanding of literary works through writing annotations. Moreover, as will become obvious in the following, owing to its clear structure and its promotion of a step-by-step approach to a holistic understanding of the text passage, TEASys can make these various aspects of the understanding processes visible.[21]

2.3.2 *Reservations and Opportunities*

A Case for Qualitative Research

Despite the fact that the students' annotations present a promising approach to the examination of their literary understanding, there are nevertheless certain reservations that need to be considered beforehand. As of now, little is known of the insights that a close analysis of different annotation versions can provide in the context of investigating literary understanding. In fact, many studies are reluctant to include written output into their research owing to the fact that opinions are divided whether or not to consider written products as an indicator of reading comprehension.[22] This reluctance is also reflected by the ongoing discussions whether or not to use multiple-choice items (MC) or rather constructed response (CR) items for empirical studies.[23] For example, Leslie and

21 For example, TEASys can be used to evaluate the explanatory annotations with respect to their different categories as well as their general adequacy and relevance in the context of annotating SON43 (see also ch. 5.3).

22 In educational studies, this dispute originates from the fact that written output in the sense of a 'performance' conflicts with Chomsky's definition of competences as exclusively cognitive functions or procedural knowledge and which therefore strictly excludes any form of conscious language production abilities (*Language and Mind* 102f; *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* 4).

23 Both CR and MC items have their advantages and disadvantages. In contrast to CR items, testing times for MC items are usually shorter and more MC items can be answered in less time. They are also faster and easier to assess. However, MC items are also considered fairly problematic in terms of their validity: it is unclear whether they show test taking or problem-solving strategies rather than their text comprehension. Rupp et al., for example, concluded that "the sequence and structure of MC questions appear[s] to provide important cues for test-takers that allow[s] or influence[s] them to select response strategies" and may thus have an influence on their overall performance in the test ("How Assessing Reading Comprehension with Multiple-Choice Questions Shapes the Construct" 469). By contrast, CR items induce test-takers to explain their answer and do not provide any preconceived answers that they can choose from. Nevertheless, for participants, they are more time-consuming to answer and the number of items that can be answered in a certain time frame is limited. For researchers, the answers are more time-intensive to assess,

Caldwell caution that students' written output may be said to "confound the estimate of students' understanding of a text with their ability to express that understanding in writing" (222). However, there are plenty educational studies by now strongly arguing for including students' productive abilities in the evaluation of their reading competence and their literary competence in particular (Diehr and Surkamp 24; Bachmann 41; Dalton-Puffer 125f; Bierwisch 14; Andringa; Schmölzer-Eibinger and Fanta). Although Burwitz-Melzer has been criticised for being too general in her definition of reading literacy by Bannet und Breidbach (33), she is right when including factors such as writing, speaking and listening among the aspects of literary competence, arguing that any interaction with a text, especially in an educational context, usually also requires one or more of these skills (Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 144; cf. also Dalton-Puffer 125; Kramsch 358; Giovanelli 179). Elbow further argues that writing especially supports a "metacognitive understanding of the nature of the reading process" and, therefore, forms a crucial part of students' reflections concerning their own understanding (12). Feilke in "Literalität und literale Handlungskompetenz" supports Elbow's argument, discussing reading and writing as interdependent problem-solving activities which both contribute in equal shares to the formation of students' literacy (9f). Moreover, some researchers argue that a qualitative analysis of written output may even be imperative for a more holistic understanding of all the processes involved when making sense of a literary text. Andringa, for example, discourages quantitative studies when it comes to literary reading and argues that qualitative research is indispensable when wanting to gain "insight into the natural complexity of the processes" (232).

A qualitative analysis of the annotations, as suggested in this study, can indeed be said to be less prone to some other points of critique that apply to both MC and CR items as well as empirical research in general. In the context of a critical examination of empirical studies on reading comprehension, Rupp et al. discuss the possibility that specific question formats induce testtakers to "frequently segment a text into chunks that are aligned with individual questions and focus predominantly on the microstructure of a text" ("How Assessing Reading Comprehension with Multiple-Choice Questions Shapes the Construct" 469). Another study by Magliano et al. presents further affirmative evidence of Rupp et al.'s findings showing that the outcome of a study and the dimensions that are ultimately monitored also "depend on a reader's comprehension goals" (396). These goals, however, are pre-empted by the catalogue

while, simultaneously, they have to struggle to make the rating process as transparent as possible to avoid accusations of arbitrariness and subjectivity (cf. Andringa 232).

of questions (which may further be influenced by researchers' expectations or study aims) and "prompt readers to allocate resources to specific dimensions" (Magliano et al. 396; see also Ehlers 116). Consequently, post- and in-processing tasks that contain concrete instructions might not necessarily represent the best approach as they prime readers to invest more in certain cognitive processes and dismiss others in order to save time and working memory. By contrast, the annotations were written self-responsibly in peer-learning groups. The only instructions the students were given was the task to annotate the sonnet along the categories set out in the TEASys style guide. The analysis of the different annotation versions could therefore make it possible "to approximate natural processes, and [to focus] on differences between individual readers rather than on similarities and amplitudinal effects" (Andringa 232). The annotations may thus prove a vital resource for basic research on understanding and may also be employed for future investigations. Moreover, despite the fact that the annotations are not necessarily CR items in the most common sense, they can nevertheless be treated as such, as, similar to CR items, the annotations provide the possibility to reconstruct students' performances based on their output that was generated in a specific context (Klieme and Hartig 25f).

A Language Issue?

Another prominent argument against CR items is concerned with items written in a non-native language (or L2). This argument may also be brought forward as an argument against using the students' annotations as research material for an evaluation of their understanding of the sonnet. The annotations analysed in the following are written by non-native (EFL) speakers, which might render an assessment of the exact problems the students encountered during the writing process more difficult and may cause difficulties when trying to determine whether the student really did not understand the text or whether there were language barriers that kept the student from writing a proper response.[24] However, the student annotations under investigation were written exclusively by university students of English that can be expected to have an adequate command of English. Apart from that, during their work on the annotations, the students had multiple online and other resources at hand that could have helped them overcome possible language deficiencies

24 In "How Reading Comprehension Works", Grabe and Stoller discuss another factor which can have an influence on EFL students' understanding of English texts: their cultural knowledge or rather the lack thereof, which is inevitable when not having grown up in an English-speaking culture. The sonnet was, however, chosen with this aspect in mind and its cultural context, e.g. its reference to Plato's allegory of the cave, likely challenges the knowledge base of both native as well as non-native students (see ch. 1.3.3).

and, consequently, their linguistic skills are, in this specific context, a negligible factor. As a matter of fact, with reference to Burwitz-Melzer, Steininger supports the assumption that linguistic abilities and productive abilities are inseparable, arguing that if there is a linguistic barrier that impedes reading comprehension, there will also be one in writing and vice versa (*Modellierung literarischer Kompetenz* 87).

Educationalists are also supported by evidence from cognitive linguistics. There is significant evidence for the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis", which show that L1 comprehension skills also influences L2 comprehension (Zwaan and Brown 319).[25] Roick et al. corroborate this finding, presenting evidence that an in-depth understanding of syntactic structures is necessary for the comprehension of formal peculiarities in L1 literary texts and for those in L2 syntax ("Strukturelle und kriteriale Validität der literarästhetischen Urteilskompetenz" 172; see also Lisiecka-Czop 88). Literary competence in the L1 can therefore influence L2 literary competence. In fact, it can be assumed that the L1 competences can compensate some of the language deficiencies in the L2, meaning that students not fluent in the L2, but with adequate literary competence in their L1, can nonetheless use their skills effectively to deal with many of the similar challenges of analysing a text in the L2.[26]

Furthermore, some researchers even argue that non-native speakers might have – not necessarily an advantage – a different approach to an L2 text than native speakers, which may help them analyse a text more thoroughly. For example, Bracker describes how insecurities in the foreign language can also be a potential reason for more elaborate reflections on the different meanings of a word and can thereby contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the text (24ff).[27] Dealing with an L2 text from an unfamiliar culture can

25 Zwaan and Brown compare between the linguistic threshold hypothesis and the linguistic interdependence hypothesis (or, briefly, L1 vs. L2), both of which find some support. Whereas evidence strongly suggests that a certain level of L2 proficiency is necessary for the generation of a situation model, which supports the linguistic threshold hypothesis, the linguistic interdependence hypothesis did not get such corroborating results (Zwaan and Brown 322). Nevertheless, Zwaan and Brown could prove that a higher L1 verbal ability can have an influence on reading comprehension (322).

26 It should also be noted that the students' language proficiency obviously need not equal the language level in the text, it need only be sufficient to express understanding of the text or passage in writing.

27 For this reason, in "The Role of Literature in Instructed Foreign Language Learning and Teaching", Paran also points out the benefits and potential of employing literary texts for the purpose of teaching English as a foreign language. See also Bernhardt's chapter 5 in *Understanding Advanced Second-Language Reading*, "Second-Language Readers and Literary Text".

therefore make readers more attentive and more receptive to 'problem areas' in a text. In a recent study, Murphy et al. present further evidence (contradicting their own expectations) revealing that L1 and L2 speakers who read Shakespeare do not express greater or lesser difficulties understanding the text (16). Most importantly, the results "seem to suggest that many difficulties are likely to be common to first- and additional-language speakers regardless of language proficiency **above a certain level**" (Murphy et al. 21, my emphasis).[28] Their finding not only supports the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis", but it also highlights another aspect that is of particular importance especially in the context of literary reading: other than many cognitivists – and also many educationalists – often suggest, understanding, particularly literary understanding, is not altogether about fast and easy language processing.[29] There are strong reasons to believe that literary understanding, as a form of hermeneutics, involves yet other processes that go beyond mere language processing.[30] The focus should therefore be above all on the students' abilities to engage critically with a text over a longer period of time in order to make statements about its meaning(s).

Annotations Written in the Context of the Peer-learning Project Annotating Literature

Three other aspects should be considered that are specific to the annotations written in the context of the peer-learning project "Annotating Literature". First, the annotations are the product of several students engaging with the text together. In the peer-groups, they try to not only make sense of the text themselves but also to collectively discuss their explanatory annotations and how these can make the text more accessible to others. The exchange of ideas takes place mostly in the peer-learning groups or seminars, whereas the actual writing process takes place at home where the feedback is integrated in order to improve the quality and nature of the annotations. Accordingly, the annotations are not an immediate written reaction to the text, but most of the statements in the annotations are the product of an extensive process of close reading and rereading the text as well as a product of a more or less collaborative work. This fact should, however, not be considered an impediment, but rather an opportunity for further research.

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28 Hall comes to a similar conclusion when discussing a study by Hanauer (2001): "the second language variable did not seem to change behaviours of poetry readers" (189).

29 See, for example, Meireles, who argues that non-native speakers, most of all, need to acquire a differentiated and rich vocabulary that ensures a fast and efficient understanding of the text message (299).

30 For a discussion of this aspect, see ch. 3.

The social dimension is said to form a vital part of student's individual literary competence (see Hallet "Literatur, Bildung und Kompetenzen" 17; Weinert 27; Klieme and Hartig 17; Groeben 19; Klieme and Leutner 880; Fox and Alexander 341; Assmann 30f; Brosch 426). How the 'collective knowledge' and collaboration among the students feeds into the annotations will therefore also be an important part of the analysis.[31] In fact, every engagement with a text in a classroom or in an academic context can be considered a group effort as the analysis and interpretation of a literary text is hardly ever the work of just one person alone, but usually occurs in form of some sort of a social exchange,[32] be it the direct communication between peers, "explicit instruction" or the indirect confrontation with the written output of a critical community (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 18; see also Kramsch 358; Fox and Alexander 340; Snow 14). In this context, Bracker's action study also shows that a qualitative analysis of students' exchange about a literary text can even lead to more insights and better results in their output as they have to explain their problems of understanding to themselves as well as to others, and vice versa (182f). Nevertheless, her study is one of few that actually consider this aspect; most empirical studies ask students to work on their texts alone. The analysis of the annotations will therefore not only reflect a text-oriented understanding of competence but will also include an identification of those aspects of literary reading that become evident in the writing and rewriting of annotations while working intensively on a comprehensive understanding of the poem in a group.

Second, the students' annotating decisions are to some degree influenced by their own experiences with annotations, including certain (wrong) preconceptions as well as their own opinion of what annotations should and should not do.[33] These, however, can have a wide range. For example, during one session of a seminar on "Annotating Religious Poetry: John Donne to Gerard Manley Hopkins" in the summer term 2019, the students listed names, bewildering passages and passages they found striking or noteworthy as those aspects that require annotations. Apart from the fact that these points are immensely unspecific, they nevertheless reflect a common problem that requires further consideration: there is no "single adequate theory of annotation" (Small 189), and, thus, there is no common agreement concerning *what* should be

31 See ch. 5.4.1.

32 See also ch. 5.5.2 for a more elaborate discussion of this issue with regard to literary competences.

33 This fact stresses the importance of defining objective criteria based on which the students' annotations are going to be evaluated, for a delineation of these criteria, see the following chapter.

annotated and *how* annotations of a literary text should look. Assessing students' literary competence with regard to their capability to implement certain predetermined annotation standards will therefore be difficult. Indeed, all three annotation groups stated that they approached their poems differently – e.g., departing from the critical literature or starting with a close reading of the poem – and annotated their poems with respect to its very own singularities and difficulties. Apart from the 'what and how', the process of writing and revising the annotations must therefore be the focus of the evaluation.

The third aspect is somewhat aligned with the second. It is important to note that, despite the unique opportunity to intricately retrace and research students' work with a text, not every adjustment made to the annotations is necessarily a manifestation of understanding. For example, during the seminar mentioned in the previous paragraph, one student stated that she was planning on writing a level two context annotation on a line in Constable's "To St. Margret", but was still unsure what aspects of the information to include in the second level and, in fact, had not even started writing the annotation yet. The student's intentions are something that the different versions of the annotations cannot reflect. They can only show the actual changes to the document. Obviously, the addition of an annotation or more information should not automatically be understood as an increase or a development of literary competence. Rather, the way the information is ultimately presented must be the focus of the analysis. The challenge here is to analyse and map out the students' individual development in minute detail and to thoroughly investigate if and to what extent aspects, such as steps in the working and revision process, writing skills as well as 'stylistic decisions' (e.g., corrections made in order to use a more academic mode of expression) may or may not be an expression of understanding.

2.4 An Appropriate Annotation – Defining Criteria for the Evaluation

To make the evaluation process more transparent, this chapter will focus on the delineation of the evaluation criteria applied when analysing and assessing the students' annotations. In fact, it should be noted that the annotations, despite their potential to reflect the annotator's understanding, can by no means be used to determine the exact moment a student has understood something. This issue poses a major challenge to all studies on reading comprehension and should therefore also be taken into account here. It is generally assumed that understanding is itself a latent phenomenon, but, although it is hardly possible to point out the exact moment someone has understood

something, it is possible to say that the students have fulfilled certain (predefined) criteria (see also ch. 1.2.3). While an annotation is of course not in itself proof of understanding, the fact that the student could engage with the text in a manner that enabled him/her to write an appropriate annotation can be said to be an expedient criterion. Therefore, in the present scenario, the **standard of evaluation is defined as a student's competence to deal with a literary text by writing an appropriate annotation**. In light of these considerations, it is imperative to define certain criteria that adequately describe an appropriate or useful annotation.

Small summarises the basic rationale for explanatory annotations of literary texts as "enabling a prospective reader to 'understand'" (190). An annotation can therefore generally be said to be useful if it successfully contributes to the readers' understanding of the text. Although a relatively obvious and consensual conclusion, it also represents the main challenge when it comes to annotating literature: there is a considerable disagreement concerning the question how to go about 'helping the reader understand' and, hence, what an annotation should or should not do (see Small 189; Lamont 52; Jansohn 213; Zirker and Bauer "Explanatory Annotation in the Context of the Digital Humanities" 145f).[34] In fact, the amount of literature concerned with the history, practices, and theory of explanatory annotations reflects the somewhat troubled nature of literary annotations.[35] One way to constructively approach the task is suggested by Bauer and Zirker in their article "Explanatory Annotation of Literary Texts and the Reader: Seven Types of Problems" in which they aimed to answer

34 This fact represents a further raison d'être for this thesis: this observation, yet again, reveals the need for a more thorough investigation of the processes of understanding literary texts, here, in the fields of research concerned with annotation theory. A more elaborate understanding of these processes may indeed also help annotators establish a more standardised theory of annotations that promote readers' understanding of the text in question.

35 Plenty of articles have been published that are concerned with what makes explanatory annotations useful. For example, different scholars state that annotations should function as "a critical addition to a text" (Zafrin 209), "remove obscurities" or disambiguate the text (Lamont 47), "serve to transmit knowledge and understanding about texts and their content" (Bauer and Zirker "Whipping Boys Explained"; see also Hagen, "Textkonstitution und Erläuterungspraxis" 174) and make "explicit the cultural and literary knowledge which was implicit for contemporary readers" (Small 197; cf. also Jansohn 213; Bogner 134; Spevack 443). Albeit not incorrect, these somewhat vague suggestions can differ considerably depending on the text as well as the purpose of the edition. Jahnson therefore also felt compelled to argue that there "can be no single adequate theory or generally applicable system of annotation, but only individual practices" (213; see also Arnold 237; Nantke and Schlupkothen 2).

the question "What kind(s) of annotations do improve text comprehension?" (212).

Bauer and Zirker propose a taxonomy of reader-problems by evaluating and categorising annotations that can objectively be said to impede readers' understanding. They first reviewed existing annotations taken from editions of William Shakespeare and John Donne and then defined seven issues that should be avoided in annotations. It may therefore be reasonable to begin the present chapter in a similar manner: not by defining what is useful, but by first defining which criteria make an annotation useless to future readers. Based on these initial considerations, it will then be possible to delineate the criteria that apply to an appropriate annotation. Indeed, there also seems to be a greater consensus concerning what is arguably a bad annotation (see below). Bauer and Zirker list seven issues found in their review of the annotations:

1. Stating the obvious
2. Inconsistent assumptions and unclear functions
3. Presupposing (expert) knowledge
4. Sending the reader on the wrong track
5. Delimiting interpretation
6. Offering intuitions without evidence
7. Missing annotations (Bauer and Zirker "Seven Types of Problems" 215f)[36]

The list suggests that useless annotations neglect the context in which the annotated item appears (see also Ricklefs 34–35), potentially, to the point that they delimit interpretation, interfere with the actual text in a way that misguides its readers or provide unnecessary and/or unexplained information (see also Jansohn 214–215; Hagen "Von den Erläuterungen" 215–216; Woesler 23; Knoop 190; Eardley 130; Martens "Kommentar" 46; Small 190). Conversely, this means that annotations should make the annotation process transparent and

36 Zitner, in "Excessive Annotation, or Piling Pelion on Parnassus", also provides a list. He categorises annotations based on his notions of "excessive":
1. **irrelevant** parallel passages not required for the **clarification** of the text
2. refutation of misreadings
3. negative results, such as evidence of the editor's unsuccessful attempts to find information, of **elaborate** grammatical analyses of incomprehensible or ambiguous passages
4. cross-referencing of repetitions without textual or thematic import
5. moral or esthetic [sic] reflections not required for **clarification** of the text (Zitner 136, author's emphasis)
The categories also reflect Zitner's claim for annotations to be relevant and to provide additional information within the scope of the text. Another list is provided by Mathijsen in "Die 'Sieben Todsünden' des Kommentars", pp. 257–9.

accountable (Windfuhr 175; Ricklefs 60).[37] More specifically, they should be concise, yet exhaustive enough not to confuse the reader, and avoid speculations (Mundt et al. 163). They should further be immediately relevant not only to the passage they are annotating, but to the whole text as well (Zitner 131; Friedman 119; Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (Through) Annotations" 44; Zirker et al. "Commentatory Annotation" 18). In summary, these considerations suggest that the usefulness of an annotation or its effectiveness to make its readers understand should be evaluated based on its **relevance**, the way the **information** is **presented, and its overall subservience to the hermeneutic process** (cf. Bauer and Zirker "Whipping Boys Explained"; see also Hanna, III 178; Battestin 9; Eggert 64; Hagen "Von den Erläuterungen" 221f).[38]

Nevertheless, considering the present objective to map out different processes of understanding and, consequentially, also non-understanding, the question remains how these criteria can be used to judge the extent of the annotator's understanding as expressed in his/her annotation versions. The preceding chapters have made it clear that the (student) annotator's understanding of the text is inextricably linked to the quality of the annotations, to put it sententiously: an annotation is just as good as its author's understanding of the text. Therefore, each annotation or annotation version must be considered with regard to its potential to reflect its author's (developing) awareness of its function and relevance for the understanding of the poem. How the annotators' understanding can be evaluated will best be shown by means of an example.

For example, it can be objectively observed that an annotator chooses to extensively annotate Shakespeare's SON43 with the category form annotation (Mundt et al. call these "literary annotation" 162). The form of the sonnet is indeed comment-worthy (see also ch. 1.3.3), and the annotations suggest that the student has noticed this fact. This may be interpreted as a sign that the student has understood that the sonnet's specific features (here, excessive use of stylistic devices) require a certain kind of approach to the sonnet, which may be eased for future readers by providing several form annotations. A general

37 Martens warns that there is always the danger of a certain abuse of power on the part of the annotator: the reader is subjected to the annotator's reading of the text and his/her reading of the text may be crucially influenced by the way the annotator understands and interprets the text (Martens "Kommentar" 38; see also Eardley 130; Jansohn 214f). Goulden similarly argues that annotators tend to try and shape their reader's interpretation, thus trying to "create an ideal reader who understands the text exactly as they do" (142–43; see also Woesler 23).

38 These aspects further concretise the three main concerns found in the literature on annotations: (1) what kind of information to provide readers with, (2) when and (3) how much (see, i.e., Wilcox "The Character of a Footnote" 197; Zitner 131; Battestin 9; Hagen "Textkonstitution und Erläuterungspraxis" 174).

look at *what kind of information* is provided in the annotations can thus be used as an incentive for a closer analysis of the student's understanding. However, simply by judging the number of annotations, there is, of course, no way of determining whether the way s/he goes about writing the annotations will actually prove helpful to a prospective readership. Indeed, the question "*what*" neither answers the question whether the student provided the information at the appropriate point in the sonnet, nor does it allow for conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the presentation of the information. It becomes clear that the three questions are linked and the question *what* inevitably leads to the questions *when* and *how* (much).

Generally, the information in the annotation must be evaluated based on whether or not it is "immediately relevant to the element of the text to which [it is] attached" (Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (Through) Annotations" 44). In order to meet this criterion, the annotator must therefore show that s/he is able to judge which specific piece of information is required at what exact point in the text.[39] Any irrelevant information may be an indicator that the annotator has difficulties assessing what a reader may need at this point in the text and, hence, is not able to reflect on what exactly it is in this passage that may require further explanation in the first place. The fact that an annotator provides irrelevant information can reflect upon his/her own understanding process in so far as it suggests that the annotator has troubles fully grasping (1) the import of the passage in the context of the poem and/or (2) how what s/he has read about the text is relevant for the passage s/he is currently annotating. The question of relevance indirectly also ensures that the information presentation is exhaustive as well as concise (aim at completeness and comprehensiveness) (Battestin 13; Mundt et al. 163; Ricklefs 34f).

The latter statement ties in with the fact that an annotation should be "subservient and conducive to the hermeneutic process" of reading and, in this function, should contribute effectively to the understanding or reading process as a whole (Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (Through) Annotations" 44). To be able to assess whether or not this actually applies to the annotation s/he is working on, the student annotator must have understood the text in its entirety as well as how the different parts of the text contribute to the understanding of

39 Baker, in her article "How Do We Know When We Don't Understand", for example, notes that "[a]lthough it is often possible to get the gist of a passage without understanding the meaning of every word, some words are obviously more crucial to comprehension than others" (159). The student annotator can thus show a thorough understanding of the passage when being able to assess which word it is exactly that requires explanation, be that because it is an archaism or it refers to a specific kind of historical context that may be unknown to 21st century readers.

the whole (Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (Through) Annotations" 44; see also Zirker et al. "Commentatory Annotation" 16; Ricklefs 72). An annotation that meets this criterion may be said to reflect an elaborate understanding of the relationships between the different text elements (cf. ch. 1.2.1).[40] Moreover, how the student ultimately presents the information can further be indicative of his/her abilities to proficiently deal with and discuss the passages in the text.[41] The fact that the information should be presented in a clear and coherent manner almost goes without saying. Incoherent statements and unclarities can, however, also be an indicator of some problem of understanding (see ch. 5.4.1).

Altogether, the quality of the annotations can be evaluated with regard to the following questions: Was the annotator able to aptly judge

(1) **what kind of information** and **how much** is necessary,
(2) **when** or **at which point exactly in the text** it is most helpful,
(3) how the single annotation is generally **relevant to the understanding of the whole text?**

These three questions will serve as a point of orientation for the analysis of the annotations and the consecutive discussions. The specific aspects addressed in the questions can be used as indicators of either understanding or non-understanding. If the criteria (**relevance, comprehensive information presentation, and subservience to the hermeneutic process**) for an appropriate annotation are successfully met, it may indicate that the student has understood the text or at least the passage in question. It must then be determined which of those processes that become obvious in the student's revisions of his/

40 For example, Bauer et al. comment on the adequacy or plausibility of an interpretation: "Adequacy of interpretation is achieved when the elements of the text and the elements of the interpretation correspond to each other; that is, if there is an element A in the text, there has to be an element A' in the interpretation, and so on. Likewise, if element A translates to ambiguity in interpretation, there will be both A' and A"." (*More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 209; see also Bauer and Brockmann 332)
According to Culler, an interpretation also depends on the "meanings which [readers] are willing to accept as both plausible and justifiable when they are explained" (144). This means that an interpretation is just as good as the evidence and the arguments made to support this interpretation. "While the annotators should aim at disambiguation, they should also consider all elements that led to the ambiguity in the first place. (Veivo and Knuuttila 283; Knoop 190)

41 For example, prerequisite for an adequate presentation of the information is the annotator's understanding or awareness that s/he is part of a discourse community that has "a common discourse, in the narrow sense of common ways of using language, and in the broader sense of common ways of acting in relation to knowledge" (Barton 57; see also ch. 5.4.2.1 in particular).

her annotation enabled him/her to write the annotation. Conversely, if either one of these criteria is not fulfilled in one of the annotations, it may be an indicator of non-understanding. Again, this will be taken as an opportunity to examine why this criterion could not be met by the student; meaning, where in the annotation process did the problem first arise and can this knowledge be used to reveal a particular step in the understanding process which could not be made by the student. In the following, the criteria for an appropriate annotation will be used to trace the different processes of understanding in close detail and to discuss these with regard to the possible insights that each of the three research fields can provide.

CHAPTER 3

Cognitive Studies – Reading Comprehension Models and Annotations

This chapter is concerned with a critical review of specific aspects in cognitivist research on literary reading and investigates whether it is possible, based on an analysis of the students' annotations, to determine more specifically if and how literary reading is different from reading any other text. Section 3.1 commences with a brief overview of comprehension models, which reveals three issues that will serve as the basis for the investigation in the following subchapters: (1) the idea of a "mental representation" of a text, (2) the exclusively reader-oriented approach to text comprehension, (3) an inconclusive concept of text. The analysis of the student annotations with regard to these three issues allows for specific conclusions regarding the current state of knowledge about literary understanding in cognitive research. On the one hand, it puts into question the suitability of comprehension models in effectively capturing the complex processes involved in understanding literary texts. On the other hand, it unveils potential avenues for future research, thus paving the way for further exploration in this domain. Section 3.2 discusses the implications the observations may have for further research: firstly, a closer collaboration between cognitivists and literary scholars, and, secondly, the inexpediency of an exclusive focus on quantifiable single-event reader responses as well as "mental representation" when researching literary understanding.

3.1 Reading Comprehension Models

Cognitive studies have done critical (empirical) groundwork regarding research on reading comprehension. Many of the results have proven an incentive for more research and have given rise to theories on the processes of reading and reading competence (see ch. 1.2.2.1). Cognitive studies may hence be considered a logical starting point for an investigation into the mechanisms of understanding literary texts. A brief review of the literature on reading comprehension, however, suggests that comprehension models have primarily been developed with anything but literary texts in mind. This initial observation is the incentive for the evaluation of current research on comprehension models.

Text comprehension models are concerned with readers' abilities to process language while reading (cf. Oostendorp and Zwaan 2). The most influential model regarding text comprehension was developed by van Dijk and Kintsch in 1978 and was refined several times over the following decade (1978, 1983, 1988). It has also served as a guiding principle for succeeding models and theories on text comprehension. Van Dijk and Kintsch distinguish between different levels of representation during discourse processing:[1] (1) surface structure (actual wording of a text or the linguistic dimension of the text),[2] (2) propositional textbase (microstructure and macrostructure of the text or "the network of propositions that represent the meaning of the text" (Kintsch *Comprehension* 105)), and (3) the generation of a situation model ("a construction that integrates the textbase and relevant aspects of the comprehender's knowledge" (Kintsch *Comprehension* 107))[3] (van Dijk and Kintsch 10ff).[4] Accordingly, readers comprehend a text by building a

1 The distinction between multiple levels of text comprehension introduced in van Dijk and Kintsch's model remains a common denominator even in more recent approaches. For example, based on a distinction between the size of the text elements or units of meaning that are to be connected into a coherent structure, Fox and Alexander (cf. 339) as well as Richter and Christmann distinguish between higher and lower order processes (28). Lower order processes involve the development of a propositional textbase, meaning the recognition of words and semantic and syntactic relationships, and building local coherences, including semantic relationships between sentences (cf. Fox and Alexander 339; see also McNamara and Magliano 302; Richter and Christmann 28). Higher order processes affect global coherence-building processes that establish a relationship between larger textual propositional sequences in order to generate a macrostructure, a process which eventually contributes to the mapping of a superstructure of the text (Richter and Christmann 28–34).

2 Ahmed et al.'s study, for example, showed the "importance of vocabulary and background knowledge … to understanding narrative texts, not just informational texts" (80). The readers' vocabulary knowledge is discussed in several other studies as a vital component of comprehension (cf. Ash and Baumann; Cromley and Azevedo 311; Ahmed et al. 78ff). This requires a certain metalinguistic awareness, which comprises (1) phonological or phonemic awareness (2) syntactic awareness, (3) metasemantic awareness (different meanings of words), and, finally, (4) morphological awareness (Ash and Baumann 391). Other text factors that may also influence the surface structure representation are, for example, metrical vs non-metrical lines in poetry (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 168).

3 The event-index model offers a more fully developed analysis of the processes involved in situation model construction (Magliano et al.). The difference to Kintsch's construction-integration model is the increased importance that is given to the situation model in "establishing relationships between discourse constituents" (McNamara and Magliano 321).

4 For more information on earlier processes of reading, including the oculomotor and perception processes, the actual recognition of letters and words on the page as well as the phonological and lexical decoding of the words see Krämer "Punkt, Strich, Fläche", Krämer "Operationsraum Schrift" and Krämer "Zur Sichtbarkeit der Schrift oder: Die Visualisierung des Unsichtbaren in der operativen Schrift"; Birk "Schriftbildlichkeitsphänomene"; Giertler

"situation model", forming connections between ideas expressed in the text and their own knowledge (Kintsch *Comprehension* 93). The so-called situation models include both "explicitly presented information and concepts that were inferred" rather than just a mere reflection of the information from the text (van den Broek et al. 234). The exhaustiveness of the situation model is determined by the comprehender's capability to engage in "inferential processes" (van den Broek et al. 230; see also Kintsch 284; Cromley and Azevedo 311). Broek et al. define two different kinds of inferences: (1) *connecting* inferences,[5] which connect presently read information with prior text elements and, (2) *elaborative* inferences that involve "the activation of background knowledge" regarding, e.g., the semantic information of the words (van den Broek et al. 232f). Elaborative inferences can also be referred to in order to explain or to disambiguate a text element (van den Broek et al. 232f).[6] During the higher-order processes of reading, the inferences are used to make sense of the different units of meaning and to connect these units of meaning to create a "coherent mental representation of the text", which is generally understood as the main purpose of text processing (van den Broek et al. 230; see also Fox and Alexander 336).[7] Overall, a review of cognitivist literature suggests that text comprehension is considered a constructivist process which involves different, often simultaneous processes on multiple levels and which depends on the readers' abilities to generate an inferential network between different units of meaning (Magliano et al. 395; Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 168; Fox and Alexander 339; Cho and Afflerbach 111). Cognitive studies attempt to define and map out the different processes that are said to influence comprehension: e.g., how readers deal with word meanings, activate, and apply

"Lesen als Akt des Sehens der Schrift"; Glück *Schrift und Schriftlichkeit*; Goodman *Languages of Art*; Grube "Rückseite der Sichtbarkeit"; Gumbrecht *Schrift*.

5 Lomicka also calls these causal inferences; an inference that "connects events in a text at a local or global level, allowing for integration of the text, and leading to both comprehension and coherence" (44).

6 Depending on readers' proficiency level, these activities revolve more around the creation of a local context (less skilled comprehenders) or engage in inferential processes that support the construction of a global coherence (skilled comprehenders) (McNamara and Magliano 345f). Difficulties that are encountered on a local level, however, may be overcome by effectively working on the generation of global coherence (Richter and Christmann 45).

7 The outcome of the process is further said to depend on readers' "cognitive capacities (e.g., attention, memory, critical analytic ability, inferencing, visualization ability)", their degree of "motivation (a purpose for reading, an interest in the content being read, self-efficacy as a reader)" as well as the nature and range of their "background knowledge (vocabulary, domain and topic knowledge, linguistic and discourse knowledge, knowledge of specific comprehension strategies)" (Snow 13; see also Kintsch *Comprehension* 103; Cromley and Azevedo 311; Fox and Alexander 336).

text-relevant prior knowledge, generate said inferences, judge the importance of text information, construct main ideas from the text, and self-monitor their understanding by detecting and solving processing difficulties (Cho and Afflerbach 115; Cromley and Azevedo 311; Leslie and Caldwell 232).

Although this brief overview of reading comprehension research intimates the extent of this well-established field, it also reveals some weaknesses with regard to the applicability of the comprehension models for mapping the reading processes for literary texts and for reading poetry in particular. These issues become particularly obvious when taking a closer look at van Dijk and Kintsch's definition of text comprehension: they define text comprehension as readers' ability to "represent" a text by imagining "a situation in which certain individuals have the properties or relations indicated by the text",[8] but also understanding "the relations between the local facts and the global facts to which the text refers" (337). Three issues can be identified when considering the implications of their definition, which become apparent in many other cognitive studies as well. Firstly, the idea of a "mental representation" of a text is vague and, as will become clear in the following, ill-suited for research on literary understanding. Secondly, the definition reveals an exclusively reader-oriented approach to text comprehension, a fact which directly affects the third aspect: van Dijk and Kintsch propose a rather inconclusive concept of *text*, which supposedly consist of local and global *facts* to which they refer (van Dijk and Kintsch 337; see also ch. 1.3.2). The students' annotations will serve as a basis to discuss these three aspects with regard to the applicability of cognitivist approaches to research on literary understanding. The analysis will show that, while many cognitive studies make inconclusive statements as regards literary reading, some results can provide new perspectives on the processes of understanding (literary) texts when discussed against the background of literary studies.

3.1.1 *Mental Representation*

The first issue concerns the concept of "mental representation" which, on closer inspection, is not only rather vague, but also inexpedient when it comes to reading poetry. In *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension*, van Dijk and Kintsch explain that their new model evolved via several previous ones which also deal with text comprehension: "'possible worlds', … 'discourse referents' …,

8 The specific situations that are allegedly indicated in all texts and which a successful reader will be able to imagine may account for the situation in 'situational model'; however, the term is ambiguous: it may also denote the idea that the model is the product of a specific situation, meaning the model generated at that exact moment of reading.

'reference nets' …, 'text-world theory', 'discourse representations', and the 'mental model'" (337). They further justify this approach, arguing that "all of these notions are motivated by the same insight: to understand the text we have to represent what it is about" (337). The new model was therefore to be understood as a more elaborate one; however, rather than specifying the concept, their argumentation only contributed to the fact that terms, such as situation model, mental representation, discourse representation, reference nets, mental models or text-worlds,[9] are often used interchangeably with each other. The definitions for each of the terms varies, and many studies come up with their individual description of its components: for example, sometimes the situation model explicitly includes aspects such as an emotional or pragmatic dimension of reading and describes all local and global coherence building processes (Kintsch *Comprehension* 103; van Dijk and Kintsch 336ff), sometimes it only includes lexical, syntactic, semantic as well as reader's world knowledge, excluding the pragmatic dimension (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 152), and in other studies the situation model is listed along with other cognitive products, such as propositional textbase, local coherence, and global coherence-building processes (McNamara and Magliano 335). Moreover, depending on the study, the alleged mental representations must be understood as an actual mental image in the reader's mind (e.g. of a certain scene that is unfolding in the text), a concise summary or paraphrase of the text's propositions, or the reader's more or less coherent word-for-word recollections of the text or even all together. Each one of these reading activities involves very specific processes (i.e., readers who are just trying to remember a piece of text vs. readers who attempt to actually comprehend the text), and for that reason there should also be a clear distinction between the terms that describe these different processes (cf. Vipond and Hunt 273).

It becomes clear that the terms are notoriously overcharged and that their uncritical use only enhances the myth of "mental representation" without

9 For example, in Gavins, text-world theorists argue that readers construct mental representations that are text-worlds (2). It is yet another model that describes human language processing based on the notion of mental representation as found in cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics (Gavins 8). Other than cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, however, it takes into consideration the discursive framework, meaning that it is "concerned not just with how a particular text is constructed but how the *context* surrounding that text influences its production and reception" (Gavins 8, author's emphasis). Gavins' theory thus also takes the social and emotional component of reading into account that is often neglected in other comprehension studies (cf. Gavins 10; see also Miall *Literary Reading* 19; Veivo and Knuuttila 301). Apart from the fact that especially the latter statement seems to reflect reasonable innovations in the context of research on literary reading, the study hardly helps clarify the concept "mental model".

explaining it. In fact, it seems that the term *situation model* or *mental representation* has come to be employed less because it describes a clear concept, but as a stopgap or umbrella term, used in want of a better description of readers' cognitive processes. The only consistency is that the product under investigation is some form of coherent description of what the text is about (see, i.e., van Dijk and Kintsch 337; McNamara and Magliano 335; Lomicka 44; Zwaan and Brown 311; van den Broek 230; Leslie and Caldwell 223). This concept, however, seems to presuppose that the texts read all follow a certain descriptive structure and that certain utterances can be pieced together or, in Wolbring's words, can be translated into a mental image (cf. 42).[10] There are, however, texts that may simply not allow readers to *coherently* reproduce what the text is about and that producing a situation model may prove quite problematic,[11] especially when considering textual ambiguities.[12] With this caveat in mind,

10 Brosch even argues that understanding a fictional text is simply impossible for a reader who cannot construct a mental image of the fictional world (or space) that is created. She writes: "Ohne eine räumliche Vorstellung der fiktionalen Welt ist Verständnis schlechterdings unmöglich." (Brosch 429). The following example, however, expressly refutes her argument.

11 Although McNamara and Magliano and others identify plenty other text features, such as (1) grammar, (2) morphology and syntax, (3) referential cohesion, (4) situational semantics, (5) situational cohesion and (6) stylistic and rhetorical information, that may affect readers' understanding of a text (or coherence building processes), they do not reveal whether they actually considered the fact that a violation of any of these features may not be an obstruction to the understanding process per se, but, on the contrary, may contribute as an essential part to the text's meaning (335; see also van Dijk and Kintsch 95; Richter and Christmann 26; Lenhard 18; Strohner 193f; Snow 25; Flender and Naumann 61). How the understanding processes work in these cases is, however, still fairly unknown.

12 This aspect can further be illustrated with a short example. One may think of the beginning of Dickinson's poem "My Life had stood" (J754, F764): "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun – / In Corners – till a Day / The Owner passed – identified – / And carried Me away –" In the first stanza of the poem, several "local inconsistencies that cannot be resolved" therefore render a coherent reading of the text impossible – not with an exhaustive linguistic analysis or a literary analysis of the following stanzas (Bauer et al. "Dickinson's 'My Life had stood'" 123). The poem simultaneously introduces the idea that either a gun or a human being is reflecting on his/her/its life. Depending on the interpretative strand the reader chooses to follow, the poem can be understood in several different ways. In fact, neither of the two interpretations introduced in the first stanza "allow for an interpretative process to run coherently throughout the whole poem" (Bauer et al. "Dickinson's 'My Life had stood'" 138). Nevertheless, this aspect does not render the poem sense- or meaningless. On the contrary, the ambiguities in the poem draw particular attention to language and prompt the reader to "constantly think about the meaning of the text in order to proceed with interpretation" (Bauer et al. "Dickinson's 'My Life had stood'" 138). The poem is thus turned into a "reflection about language itself" (Bauer et al. "Dickinson's 'My Life had stood'" 138). Accordingly, the poem should itself not be read as describing

I will analyse a student's annotation for "imperfect shade" in the third quatrain of SON43 (l. 11):

> How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made
> By looking on thee in the living day,
> When in dead night thy fair **imperfect shade**[*]
> Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay? (Duncan-Jones 43)

The student's earliest annotation draft reflects her reaction to the ambiguity of the passage. She first notices that there are two completely different and unrelated readings of one and the same phrase. Notably, both readings are listed separately:

> 1. In dreams one cannot always see things as detailed as they are. When saying 'imperfect shade' the Speaker means the dream image 'which is deficient, less-than-whole because unreal' [Paterson, p.130], 'as only the shadow of the reality' [Evans, p. 144], i.e. imperfect (blurred, incomplete) representation of Addressee's appearance/form in the Speaker's dream (not a physical actuality);
> 2. It can also refer to a recollection of the allusions to the young man's moral defects in 33-5 and can be interpreted as 'the image of you, beautiful despite your moral imperfection' [Duncan-Jones, p. 196].
> (Student D "imperfect shade" V1, L2 I)

The first interpretation is built upon the language definitions [L1]; the second interpretation is given in the context of the sonnet sequence about the failings of the friend (see, i.e., also Sonnet 33), which might all refer to the same addressee. Furthermore, interpretation 1 is a description of an actual visual sensation, an image, whereas interpretation 2 is a description or judgement of a person's moral disposition. Nevertheless, both interpretations are plausible in the context of the sonnet, in which the speaker mourns the absence of the beloved and must therefore exist concurrently. The initial analysis of the annotation gives rise to an important observation: there are at least two different processes or possibly even two consecutive steps involved in the reading process, if following the logic of Kintsch's construction-integration model (CI model): (1) the meaning of the expression on a purely semantic level (textbase (see Kintsch *Comprehension* 105)) and (2) the meaning of the passage when adding context as well as very specific additional background knowledge (situational model (see Kintsch *Comprehension* 107)). It is unclear whether this was

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a situation that can be represented in a situational model, but as a reflection on certain states of being.

also the reason why the student (although potentially unwittingly) decided to hierarchise the different readings by numbering them rather than making a list in the form of bullet points. Cognitivists may therefore explain these observations based on the CI model, arguing that both readings are on different levels of the CI model and thus represent different depths of understanding (cf. Fox and Alexander 339; see also Goldman et al. 395). It becomes obvious, however, that such a description of the reading process is misleading. There is no hierarchy between both readings and they should be considered to co-exist simultaneously, both reflecting some sort of understanding on the part of the reader. Moreover, to describe the students' grasp of the line as "incoherent or fragmentary" would be equally fallacious (Castiglione 100; see also Yaron 146).[13] Indeed, although only her first take on the passage, the student's reading of the line is not fragmentary, but consists of multiple hypotheses, which reflect her more than adequate grasp of the various ways in which the passage can be read.

The example illustrates the limits of the idea of *coherence* or a "coherent mental representation" when it comes to literary texts (van den Broek et al. 230; cf. ch. 1.3.2). The passage only constitutes a small element of the overall 14 lines of the poem and adumbrates the problems readers might have when asked to prove their understanding of the text by giving a coherent account of what the entire sonnet is about; 'the speaker misses his mistress' would obviously only present one part of the picture. Moreover, taking the ambiguity of "imperfect shade" (l. 11) as an example, it becomes obvious that what is conveyed in the poem is, in fact, not a situation in the strictest sense.[14] Rather, it presents the speaker's reflections on the potential of his/her dreams to fill the void experienced throughout the vacant, "unrespected" days (l. 2) that are dominated by the beloved's absence and to console him/her with imaginary pictures of the lover whom s/he longs to see during the real, "living day" (l. 10) (cf. Vendler 223).[15] Imagining a mental representation that incorporates

13 A reader who notices the first reading based on the language definitions only may be able to provide a coherent account of at least this passage, an account, which is notably not incorrect. His or her inability to notice the second reading (here, most likely because of a lack of background knowledge) should nevertheless not be taken lightly. In fact, this shortcoming is not insignificant as it may affect his/her reading of the entire sonnet. It is one of several instances in the sonnet in which the speaker implies certain doubts regarding his/her beloved's sincerity (see also ch. 5.2.2.2).

14 Consider also Eliot's reflections on poetry that can both "**fix and make more conscious and precise emotions and feelings**" and can "draw within the orbit of feeling and sense what had existed only in thought" (*The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 51, my emphasis).

15 Although this one-sentence-summary may appear to some like a satisfactory representation of what the text is about (van Dijk and Kintsch 337), it is important to note that the summary should by no means be considered an adequate presentation of the ongoings

all ideas, i.e. how the speaker expresses his/her ambivalent feelings towards his/her dreams as well as his/her lover, is simply impossible.[16] It is therefore not so much the reader but the nature of the text that hardly allows for a coherent mental representation.

While an incoherent account of a text may hint at comprehension difficulties, it also suggests that the text simply does not present information in a way that would allow for a more coherent process or let alone a descriptive account of a certain situation. On the contrary, the way meaning is conveyed in poetry strongly encourages research methods that break away from rigid concepts such as the coherence of mental representations, as these suggest that there is just one answer to the question and that many readers do not reach what would be considered a full or even shared understanding of the text.[17] Many cognitive studies can therefore only argue that readers vary greatly in their responses and present results that readers defer the construction of a situation model altogether (see also Van Oostendorp and Zwaan 2; van Dijk and Kintsch 340; Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 150). These findings are, however, somewhat unsatisfactory and, furthermore, suggest that it may simply be inexpedient to look at readers and their "mental representation". Accordingly, comprehension studies should focus on a precise definition of the text's features and its linguistic structures that have led readers to make certain statements about the meaning(s) of a passage in the first place. This issue should be kept

in the poem. It only describes what the speaker does in the poem – s/he reflects on his/her dreams – and *does not* make any statements about what the speaker actually means when, for example, talking about the "living day" (l. 10). The description thus hardly reflects understanding in the sense of the definition of *understanding* presented at the beginning of this study: the faculty to make informed statements about the meaning of the utterances made in a text by means of (elaborate) reasoning processes (see ch. 1.2.1).

16 In a small scale study conducted with some of his students, Wolbring comes to a similar conclusion. Based on the poem "Zwei Segel" by Meyer, he asked the students whether they were imagining the scene described in the poem to take place by day or by night, only to find that there was a third group that did not imagine a scene at all simply because they realised they could not 'translate' the events conveyed by the text into a concrete image (Wolbring 42). He explains this phenomenon by arguing that translating the text events into an image would require its readers to commit to one reading only, which is, however, owing to the underspecified language in the poem, quite impossible (Wolbring 42).

17 In "Text and Comprehension: A Retrospective, Perspective, and Prospective", Fox and Alexander discuss recent trends among cognitivists that call for innovative and less rigid models and frameworks of comprehension (341). Ironically, these requests have not become popular because of researchers' new-found interest in the question how the specific nature of literary texts may affect readers' reading behaviours, and they can be mapped in more adequate models, but because the old models also fail to map what "reading comprehension means across diverse reading texts" in the context of an increasingly digitalised world (Fox and Alexander 341).

in mind during the discussion of several other findings that cognitive studies present with regard to research on literary understanding.

3.1.2 *Flexible Working Hypotheses*

Most comprehension models suggest that reading is almost exclusively the product of (individual) cognition (cf. Veivo and Knuuttila 284). Although there are cognitive studies that deal exclusively with literary reading as a separate field, many of these are concerned with readers' construction of a situation model only and therefore often come to the conclusion that readers' representations of the texts are far too heterogeneous to actually allow for definite statements about the processes of literary reading (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 2; see also Kintsch *Comprehension* 213; van Dijk and Kintsch 340; van Broek et al. 237). For example, Van Oostendorp and Zwaan found that "mental representations while reading … may vary (e.g. according to the constraints of a given genre)" (2), and van Dijk and Kintsch also provide evidence that "literary texts often do not constrain the situation model very tightly" (340) or that readers "defer the construction of a strong situational representation because this model will constrain their comprehension efforts too much" (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 150). Other cognitive studies present evidence showing that literary texts induce readers to delay processes that would require them to commit to definite statements about a text's overall meaning (see Miall *Literary Reading* 104f). As will become clear, the findings are by no means wrong or invalid, but simply lack an appropriate discussion of the results against a literary background.

Here, another example from the students' annotations may help substantiate my claim. The students' first joint document "What to Annotate" supports the findings made by cognitivists: in the document, they collected first hypotheses for passages they generally consider annotation-worthy as well as word definitions. It includes several tentative interpretations of the couplet of SON43 as well as the poem as a whole. The students mostly note down questions that they potentially want to follow up on during their writing process rather than actual fully-fledged interpretations: "Or is he maybe hurting because she's [sic] doesn't return his feelings? … Is the speaker unhappy because his love is either not returned or too far away and they are separated? … Does the addressee return the speaker's love? … Are they separated or can they see each other?" (cf. "What to Annotate", V1). The compilation of different questions is noteworthy as they partly support Zwaan's claim that readers avoid making too hasty conclusions about the text meaning (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 150). To avoid confusion, it should nonetheless be pointed out that the processes under investigation here are slightly different and should hence be distinguished

from each other. On the one hand, there are those processes that can be traced, for example, during eye-tracking experiments. These experiments are more immediate and may provide indicators for difficult passages or other factors that induce readers to jump back and forth in the text.[18] In poetry, this kind of reading behaviour may possibly be triggered by the delimited context. Readers may either opt to keep several meanings in their working memory until there is a cue further on in the text as to the actual meaning of the passage, which induces readers to reread the passage based on this reading, or they may just read more attentively, try to remember more passages word-for-word (whether they understand them or not), read on and thus delay making a decision concerning the meaning of the text until the very end. These are the processes Zwaan refers to in his monograph. On the other hand, the processes becoming apparent in the students' annotations do not depict actual phases of their immediate comprehension processes, but a decidedly more conscious decision to first only collect hypotheses in the form of questions as well as word definitions and to wait until they better understand the text and/or have more information in order to decide whether the definitions are relevant for their understanding or not. It therefore seems that the students are well aware of the fact that the (literary) text at hand requires a specific reading strategy, a hermeneutic approach.[19] In this case, understanding the sonnet demands a certain openness from its readers for different, possibly even conflicting meanings that might only reveal themselves after several close reading sessions. The second version of the "What to Annotate"-document accords with this claim as it includes notably more indications regarding ambiguous passages (cf. "What to Annotate", V2). The students retain their hypotheses concerning the meaning of the lines until they have gathered more information. The fact that they note down their first impressions in open question formats further supports this notion.

Schmitz et al. argue that, when confronted with a literary text, students tend to focus more on local cohesion-building processes rather than global cohesion (Schmitz et al. 1131). Their findings confirm evidence from an earlier study by

18 For example, Stabler et al. found that readers "are pulled backwards by the memory of a sound while the visual cue of a rhyme pulls them forwards" (206). Consequently, they were able to show that there is an "increased percentage of regression eye movements for poetry compared with prose" (Stabler et al. 206).

19 Some cognitive studies are concerned with how a reader's reading behaviour changes depending on the genre of the reading material (see, i.e., Zwaan "Effect of Genre Expectations on Text Comprehension"). Cognitivists usually discuss this aspect under the term "genre expectations". See ch. 3.1.3 below for a thorough review of their approach to this topic.

Zwaan which suggests that readers' expectations concerning the literary text they were reading "caused them to allocate more resources to surface-level and textbase-level" (Zwaan "Effect of Genre Expectations on Text Comprehension" 930; see also Schmitz et al. 1130). He further specifies that the textbase, meaning the propositions generated in the reader's memory while reading, contains:

> more propositions than a highly integrated textbase, but the connections between these propositions will be weaker. A loosely organized textbase enables the reader to adapt his or her representation when confronted with new and contradictory information,[20] because it still contains the building blocks for a new interpretation (the propositions). (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 150)[21]

The first annotation versions reveal the students' endeavours to make sense of their observations on a more local level to begin with and then, in a second step, to create coherence between the different units of meaning by connecting them on a more global level. At the beginning of the process, the students are indeed primarily concerned with language. The earliest annotation versions show that they mostly begin their research process with a consultation of the *OED* (see Student B "shadows" final, L1 L; Student D "heavy sleep" final, L1 L; Student C "darkly bright" final, L1 L; Student A "see" final, L1 L).[22] One such instance can be seen in the following language annotation draft for the word "show":

> The fact of being presented to view or displayed. (*OED* 1b)
> Often with the idea that the reality behind is different (cf. 6, 7): In appearance only, ostensibly, seemingly. (*OED* 2b)

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20 Zwaan defines a loosely organised textbase as containing "seemingly irrelevant or contradictory information" (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 149).

21 Cf. Riffaterre who uses the term matrix to describe a concept similar to that of the propositional representation of a textbase. In agreement with Zwaan's argument, he also defines the matrix as a cognitive product that is merely hypothetical and is, after all, a temporary product that can be subject to remodelling the initial proposition (Riffaterre 19).

22 Other dictionaries include the *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, which is referred to six times, and the *Farlex Dictionary of Idioms*, which is only used as a reference once (see Student D final "in dead night", L1 L). Admittedly, this approach could be influenced by the fact that students are dealing with an early modern poem. The considerable temporal stretch between the origin of the poem and its 21st century readers has blurred the distinctions between ordinary words, rare/archaic words, or neologisms and the students aim to recover this distinction by establishing a "historical perspective" in their language annotations (A. Walker 99). Their 'strategy' could also be influenced by scholarly annotations that mainly consist of language annotations. For a more elaborate discussion of this issue, see also ch. 5.4.2.1f.

> An unreal or illusory appearance (*of* something); an appearance with little or no reality behind it. (*OED* 6a)
> In generalized sense: Empty appearance without reality. (*OED* 6b)
> to make (a) show, to assume an appearance which is more or less deceptive; to make a pretence or feint, pretend. (*OED* 7b)
> A phantasmal appearance; an apparition. (*OED* 11)
> A spectacle elaborately prepared or arranged in order to entertain a number of spectators; a pageant, masque, procession, or similar display on a large scale. (*OED* 13a)
> Applied to any kind of public display; e.g. an exhibition of pictures, a dramatic performance in a theatre (*OED* 15a). (Student B "show", V1, L1 L)

The avoidance of definite statements about the poem's meaning seems to be a conscious one, which suggests that the students are aware that they might not have enough understanding of the text and might possibly lack valuable context information that could give them clues as to how the passage can (also) be interpreted. The list of definitions is somewhat extensive and indicates that the student has yet to assess the definitions regarding their relevance in the context of the sonnet. Nevertheless, it is also clear that a certain pre-selection has taken place (cf. "show, *n.*" *OED*). This selection is part of an important observation as it can be considered an indicator that the student has come to a certain understanding or interpretation regarding the meaning of the line.[23] Based on her interim hypothesis, the student has ruled out several definitions that she considers irrelevant for the understanding of the sonnet and first provides an exhaustive list of only those meanings of the word that she conjectures could fit the context. The annotation therefore indicates that the students' understanding depends on their awareness of the reading process itself. Notably, all other student annotation drafts show similar signs of a preselection of possible definitions (see Student B "shadow", V1, L1 L; Student D "imperfect shade", V1, L1 L; Student C "darkly bright", V1, L1 L; Student A "look on", V1, L1 L). These observations seem to initially support cognitivist research on literary reading which found that readers of literary texts usually pay more

23 This observation notably supports the notion that during literary reading not all meanings of the words may present themselves immediately, and that although some meaning may seem more likely than others, which can accordingly be considered less relevant after the first few perusals, it makes sense to retain a certain openness towards potential changes. In this context, Knoop generally criticises annotators for having (implicitly) interpreted the text to begin with and then choose the word meaning that best suits their own interpretation (196). The students' annotations, however, reflect their endeavours to first look up all meanings a word can have and then, interpret the line based on their findings. This particular example therefore also shows the importance of continuous context updates. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see also ch. 5.3.

attention to the meaning of words and maintain "a loosely organized textbase" and which can accordingly be more easily adapted to new information when reading on (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 150; see also Altman et al. 26). The findings could, however, be made more specific when further considering how the process changes or is affected by readers' awareness of the fact that the meaning of a word might change, depending on the context as well as information gathered in the research process following their first perusals of the sonnet.

A draft of an annotation for "directed" in line four of the sonnet, "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark **directed**" (my emphasis), suggests that an early decision might be counter-productive to the interpretation. In this line, the speaker uses the passive form to describe the process; it is unclear, though, who is the actual master of his/her eyes. This ambiguity is further enhanced by the fact that s/he talks of his/her eyes as some form of separate entity in the preceding lines: rather than saying 'I view' or 'I look on thee', s/he says that "they view" (l. 2) or "they look on thee" (l. 3), implying that what the eyes look at is not entirely under the speaker's control. Thus, on the one hand, it could be the speaker himself who directs his eyes to look into the darkness. On the other hand, the line could imply that the eyes are directed by the lover or drawn involuntarily towards the lover's image. The student misses out on the fact that the line is ambiguous and further deletes the following language annotation in the consecutive version, making it even more difficult for readers of her annotation to retrace how she came to her final interpretation in the first place.

> LANGUAGE:
> The adjective *directed* is often a synonym for aimed, guided or addressed (*OED* 1).
> INTERPRETATION:
> The speaker directs his bright eyes into the darkness. (To be continued..)
> (Student C "directed", V1, L1)

Her decision affects her entire interpretation of the sonnet. Her final annotation of "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" (l. 4) is representative of the student's shortcoming:

> ... Given the importance of ocularcentrism in its historical context, the elements of visual perception in the poem are not merely ornamental or signs of rhetorical playfulness. On the contrary, they are strong indicators for [sic] the speaker's psychological and emotional state.
>
> The antimetabole "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" (l. 4) is only one of several instances in this poem in which the boundaries of light and dark

> (or of day and night) are blurred: it is no longer possible to make a clear distinction between what is bright, dimmed or dark. However, this does not create a gloomy or threatening atmosphere. Innes argues that Sonnet 43 "tries to make the conflation of night and day into something positive" (165): The speaker is not a victim of darkness, but actively provokes it and shapes his own perception in order to be able to see the image he desires. While doing so, he states a clear preference of mental images over those which he sees in the real world during the day. Hunter goes even further in attributing positivity to this line by pointing out that it is "not merely a piece of wordplay but also a triumphant dance of words expressing a lover's delight" (158). (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I)

Although the argumentative structure of this annotation is quite comprehensible, not every hypothesis is established in a straightforward manner. Without clearly indicating it, the student introduces another interpretation in her annotation: she rather automatically presumes the implications that the verb "directed" may carry, coming to the conclusion that the image is evoked deliberately (cf. Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I). However, this somewhat hasty conclusion ignores the ambiguity of the line, which states that the eyes "are … directed" in the darkness. The interpretation of line 4 that the speaker's eyes are involuntarily "directed" as well as the intertextual connection to SON27, in which the speaker laments that "by day my limbs, by night my mind, / For thee, and for myself, no quiet find" (l. 13–14), suggests that s/he is tormented by the fact that s/he is in love and separated from the beloved. This knowledge changes the reading of the sonnet, suggesting that the speaker, whether s/he wants to or not, cannot but look on the addressee's image, which gives the sonnet a rather eerie twist. Readers' ability to identify textual ambiguities can therefore also be used as an indicator of their performance.

Altogether, the students' annotations seem to provide evidence that supports cognitivist research concerning readers' adoption of a flexible working hypothesis while reading. It is the studies' discussion of the results, however, that reveals several issues. In fact, Zwaan explains most of his results based on the "indeterminacy hypothesis", which assumes that literature and, hence, literary reading is fundamentally vague and unspecific (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 147–152). His research reflects a wide-spread assumption among cognitivists that readers of literary texts generate results that are too diverse to be seriously considered for empirical research (cf. Miall *Literary Reading* 39; see also MacMahon 174f), and, although Zwaan's findings are notably supportive of potential differences between literary reading and the reading of factual texts, his approach only inconclusively accounts for the different

dimensions of literary reading.[24] In fact, the analysis suggests that intricate knowledge of the text and its features can help specify which aspects of the text induce readers to resort to specific reading behaviours; however, as a consequence of the notorious insistence on readers rather than (also) their texts, the studies seem to be unable to make any concrete statements about what induces readers to change their reading behaviour.

While the studies discussed so far present valuable findings with regard to readers' responses to literary texts, these only account for the students' deviations from the standard conception of a coherent mental representation (see also previous discussion subsection 3.1.1). The discussion of the examples has therefore confirmed the assumption that an exclusive focus on readers' responses to literary texts is simply not expedient when it comes to research on literary understanding.[25] The analysis shows that the students are quite aware of the nature of the textual material they are dealing with and adapt their reading behaviour accordingly. Cognitive studies should focus more on the specific nature of literary texts and how this may affect readers' immediate as well as consecutive understanding processes. Here, however, lies another problem of cognitivist approaches. Goldman et al., for example, concede that "scholars have not agreed on a specific definition of what constitutes a literary text" (387).[26] Definitions of "literary texts" are therefore often reduced to a rough distinction between a literary text and, for example, a newspaper article (see, i.e., Schmitz et al.; Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension*) without, however, a further specification of the text's particular features (see below). Such a gross generalisation suggests that many cognitivists struggle to properly define the research material and approach their research on understanding literature based on erroneous assumptions.

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24 Similar to Vipond and Hunt, Zwaan does not discuss his observations with reference to literary theories about fictional texts and thus misses out on the fact that this is a particular reading strategy needed when reading fiction. Readers who employ this strategy may be said to show a certain awareness of the fact that they are reading a fictional text and, owing to the delimited context, they must assume that the narrator/speaker provides them exactly with as much information as they need to understand the text. They therefore have to pay particular attention to the text as what is said may be crucial information that they need to understand future utterances.

25 Indeed, the examples suggest that a rough distinction between literary and non-literary texts is simply not enough to explain all the processes going on during literary reading (see also ch. 3.1.3).

26 Goldman et al. therefore opt to simply avoid the issue altogether. Rather than defining "literary text", they differentiate between two approaches ("literal stance" or "interpretive stance") to the text and investigate the effect on the understanding of the text (Goldman et al. 387).

3.1.3 *Genre Expectations*

The Research Material: Between Fact and Fiction

Some of the unsatisfactory results in comprehension studies are also owing to the definition of 'literary text', which is often vague, and, in the case of van Dijk and Kintsch's definition of reading comprehension, it is unclear what they mean when they say that texts generally refer to *facts* (cf. 337). In the context of research on literary texts, it is important to define the exact relationship between the facts in the literary text and actual facts in the real world, as the relation of a fictional utterance to the real world is decisively different from that of a factual utterance.[27] Lacking a more elaborate explanation, van Dijk and Kintsch's argument seems to exclude fictional texts. Only few studies define or even consider how readers of fictional texts make sense of and experience textual meaning (C. Harrison 135). Although Zwaan, for example, presents evidence concerning readers' responses to fictional texts, these results should be considered with caution, as his research neglects the discussions revolving around the fictional nature of texts:[28] Zwaan's observation that his readers show more ease in processing what he calls "contradictions of consensus reality" lays open two shortcomings of his research. He neither defines what he means by "consensus reality" nor does he seriously consider theories concerned with these "contradictions" in literary texts (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 147). Rather, his discussion regarding readers' processing of a fictional utterance or counterfactuals is based solely on the idea that readers possess what he calls a "literary-fantastic control system" (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 151). Statements in the text that contradict our knowledge of the real world are checked against this system and are either rendered acceptable or not, depending on the reader's generic assumptions regarding the text at hand. Reading a novel is, however, decidedly not only about whether readers do or do not agree for a moment to believe in the existence of dragons.[29]

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27 For more information on theories of fictionality, see ch. 5.2.

28 For a discussion of lyrical poems and, specifically SON43, as fictional texts, see ch. 5.2.1.

29 His approach reflects a general misconception about Coleridge's reflections regarding his own work, which fell victim to the fate of being notoriously misquoted: "my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that **willing suspension of disbelief** for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith" (Coleridge ch. XIV, my emphasis) Coleridge does not describe readers' unquestioned acceptance of "persons and characters supernatural", but rather the power of poetry to create something "supernatural" or fictional, which nevertheless has a "semblance of truth" that touches "human interest" and thus makes the characters and events relatable (ch. XIV).

An example taken from one student annotation may help to illustrate this issue. The annotation for "see" reflects a student's initial reactions to the sonnet's paradoxical first line "When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see;" (l. 1). Contrary to Zwaan's overly general prediction that these "contradictions of consensus reality" might be accepted by readers as a possibility in the fictional world, the student does not immediately accept the statement as a fact (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 147). If she had, she would have had to assume that, in the speaker's world, it is somehow possible to see with one's eyes closed, and she would consequently have missed the metaphorical meaning of the line. Although it is unclear if the student was able to determine right away whether the issue was text- or reader-related, she likely concluded that the line's paradoxical statement requires further explanation. She decided to annotate and disambiguate the word "see", a word that could generally be assumed not to pose any further difficulties for a university level student of English literature, but which turns out to be quite annotation-worthy in the context of the sonnet.

The student provided future readers with a definition from the *OED* that lists possible meanings of the word "see", which they might not immediately be aware of. Her choice of definition strongly suggests that the student realised she was confronted merely with an apparent paradox (it does not make sense to close one's eyes and see better at the same time) that could nevertheless be resolved with reference to the poem's context. In her first annotation version, she writes that

> The verb *to see* does not only mean that one is perceiving their surroundings through their eyes. It can also mean "to behold (visual objects) in imagination, or in a dream or vision" (*OED* 1e). (Student A "see", V1, L1 L)

The definition from the *OED* seems to have been the most appropriate one for her, as it indirectly provides an explanation for her initial problem with the line. In fact, only a few lines into the reading of the sonnet, in line 3 to be precise, does the speaker reveal that s/he is talking about his/her "dreams" (l. 3). The student's consecutive annotation on L2 includes this information in her interpretation of the line. She decided to write a follow-up interpretive annotation further explaining her discovery in the same first document:

> Since the speaker is able to see with his eyes closed, one can assume that he is able to see in his dreams. This sensation is not physical, but a mental one. The speaker is able to produce an imagined image of the speaker which he can view in his dream. (Student A "see", V1, L2 I)

Both annotations written by the student in her first document version are suggestive of her thought processes. First, she noticed the contradiction in the speaker's statement that s/he can see best when s/he closes his/her eyes. Second, the observation induced her to reprocess the sentence, which led to the realisation that 'to see' might have more than one meaning in this particular context. Although a fictional utterance, the student questions this statement based on her knowledge of the real world and assumes that this contradiction can be explained by looking at the context in which the utterance was made.[30]

Overall, Zwaan's discussion indicates an overly simplified version of the actual relation of fictional utterances to the real world and their effect on readers' understanding processes (see also ch. 5.2.2). It is simultaneously the autonomy from and dependence on the real world – the impossibility for readers to disambiguate a statement by referring to the real world, while the use of language, being bound to the laws of referentiality, still makes it possible for readers to understand such a statement – which is likely to make the reading process more complex (Ronen "Are Fictional Worlds Possible?" 26; Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 258; Martìnez-Bonati 74).[31] Readers'

30 The text has not given us any indication of presenting a world in which natural laws are different from ours. In fact, the statement in the first line is not, in Zwaan's words, fantastic, – it does not make statements about a fictional world that proves it different from the actual world. Rather, it becomes obvious that readers are dealing with a semantic problem. The example was chosen for exactly that reason. It effectively shows that there are certain processes, owing to the sonnet's delimited context, that induce students to react in certain ways to the utterances in the text, which are not necessarily as simple as Zwaan's fantastic control system. For example, it would indeed be a mistake to simply accept the statement in the first line as the speaker's description of his curious gift or skill. It would be just as wrong to make a direct connection to the actual world and to resolve the paradox by simply assuming that the speaker has an eye disease. On the contrary, the students need to be aware at all times with what kind of text they are dealing with and how to critically reflect on their own responses to the statements in the text. For further discussions regarding students' responses to fictionality, see also ch. 5.2.2.

31 These observations bring to mind Chomsky's reflections on language in poetry. Based on Schlegel's considerations in "Gespräch über die Poesie", he establishes a direct connection between poetic creativity, language and human cognition: he suggests that language as the medium of poetry is "boundless in scope" owing to the fact that language is essentially an "expression of the human mind" (Chomsky *Language and Mind* 90). Implicitly underlying Chomsky's argumentation is the notion that poetry simultaneously requires and triggers a (creative) cognitive effort: the poet communicates something in the condensed format of a poem and, in order to make sense of what is communicated, the readers of the poem have to retrace the steps that led to the end-product thus engaging in a creative act of their own. The reason why readers can make sense of the utterances at all despite the delimitation of context is owing to the principles of language. Chomsky's observations

statements about a certain text therefore strongly depend on the nature of the material they are dealing with. The example above is a case in point. The student expresses an understanding of the process of reading a fictional text: she assumes that the speaker intends to communicate something and that, by analysing the context in which the line was uttered, without making it dependent e.g. on what happened in Shakespeare's everyday life, she can make statements about the meaning of the initially contradictory line. The annotation reflects the student's realisation that her understanding depends on the attention she pays to language, meaning and context.

Another study discussed by Miall supports the notion that, owing to the texts' delimited context, readers approach and process fictional texts differently. He discusses evidence from a study by Vipond and Hunt that readers of literary texts seem to pay attention to the text's "syntax or style" after all; the study also notes an almost exaggerated attention to establishing connections between different text elements – reflected in the attempt to "connect apparently unrelated or unnecessary parts of a story" –,[32] because readers assume a certain motive behind the narrator's decision to structure the narrative in that particular way and thus suppose that this might contribute to meaning or might prove relevant during further reading (Miall *Literary Reading* 106; see also Vipond and Hunt). Whether this slightly more cumbersome strategy will prove them successful readers or not is, for the time being, irrelevant. More important is that these findings suggest that readers' understanding of the text should not be assessed along their expression of some arbitrary paraphrase of the text's possible statements, but in their understanding that the text requires certain strategies which take into consideration language and its context(s) as well as the broader context surrounding the text and its production: the utterances by the speaker or narrator are not necessarily made to encourage readers to disengage everything that is being said from either any known referential system or any known facts, but to analyse the statements as utterances made with a certain communicative intent and to create a certain effect. Altogether, the observations suggest that readers not only respond to a fictional text in a certain manner, but, most importantly, that to find out how

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thus specify how understanding a literary text is actually possible: the act of making sense of literature is influenced by the structures dictated by the human mind and this is why the utterances in a literary text attain meaning accessible to all through hermeneutic reading processes (see 5.3).

32 While this observation is similar to the one made by Zwaan above, this is focussed on larger text structures, whereas Zwaan's observation are more on the word level.

exactly readers process fictional utterances, cognitivists must take into consideration the nature of the material that triggers these processes (cf. Veivo and Knuuttila 284).[33]

Investigating the Relationship between Form and Content

In "The Effect of Genre Expectations", Zwaan argues that, depending on what type of text readers are confronted with, they resort to different reading strategies. He presents evidence that the participants of his study "differentially allocated their processing resources according to whether they were told the texts were literary stories or news stories" (Zwaan "Effect of Genre Expectations" 930).[34] By distinguishing between "literary stories" and "news stories" in a very general sense, Zwaan is too unspecific both with regard to literary (fictional) texts as a whole (i.e. what are the features that differentiate them from non-fictional texts) and with regard to the different genres of literature. Vague definitions of the reading material have, however, led cognitivists to make inappropriate assumptions. For example, this has resulted in the fairly undisputed consensus among cognitivists that readers' knowledge about the formal and generic characteristics can help them understand poetry (van Dijk and

33 For an in-depth discussion of this issue as well as an exemplary approach to researching understanding based on the definition of SON43 as a fictional text in the students' annotations, see ch. 5.2.2f.

34 Although a thorough discussion of this issue would clearly exceed the limits of this chapter, it should nevertheless be noted that the gross distinction between poem and newspaper article, as Zwaan suggests here, is particularly problematic with regard to the observations made and discussed in the following. My results almost exclusively indicate that reading a literary texts is different because it induces readers to pay particular attention to language and language use in the text. Interpreting the findings based on Zwaan's distinction could, however, bring us dangerously close to the conclusion that a newspaper article is or need not be read attentively regarding its rhetorical structure and language use. In an era in which 'fake news' are a tangible threat to societal structures – one may only recall the events of January 6, 2021 – a newspaper article should, of course, be read equally critically and readers should be just as perceptive of language, language use and rhetorical strategies in particular as when they are reading a literary text. The strategies employed while reading a newspaper article are, of course, different, but they are different because one text contains fictional utterances (hence, language use has different aims and functions and lacks context) and the other does not (or should not). The aim of this study is to find out what the latter distinction or knowledge about the text's fictionality means for the consecutive reading, understanding and interpretation processes. These considerations should be kept in mind during the presentation and discussion of the results in the following.

Kintsch 92; Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 2).[35] With reference to the comprehension of poetic texts, van Dijk and Kintsch argue that:

> A rhyme schema in a poem, for instance, … organizes prosodic, phonological, and graphical structures. In those cases where the rhyme schema has become conventionalized, for example, in a sonnet … [its] stereotypical or conventionalized nature encourages top-down processing and makes it easier to apply comprehension strategies, thereby facilitating semantic comprehension. (van Dijk and Kintsch 92)[36]

Zwaan further develops this hypothesis, declaring that "for each (frequently encountered) text type, proficient readers have developed a particular *cognitive control system*, which guides their comprehension efforts" (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 2, author's emphasis).[37] The CCS consists of "knowledge structures and procedures" that regulate the individual behaviour during

35 Their approach may have been influenced by findings in the field of cognitive stylistics. Most notably promoted by I. A. Richards during the early 20th century, their hypothesis is based on Richards's argument that similar to Pavlov's dog that starts drooling upon hearing the dinner bell, humans are conditioned to connect two seemingly unconnected events when processing language: signs or words and the thing they refer to (cf. West 65f). The idea was further taken up by Riffaterre, who surmises that readers' representation of a text is among others founded upon the "referentiality of language, that is, upon a direct relationship of words to things" (Riffaterre 2). However, Huemer conclusively objects to this approach arguing that the concepts of "reference" and "truth" as terms are more than unsuitable for the analysis of fictional texts (Huemer "Erlebnis und Erkenntnis" 79; see also Kablitz 107).

36 It is entirely unclear what van Dijk and Kintsch mean when they say that "prosodic, phonological, and graphical structures" may facilitate "semantic comprehension" (92). It is, in fact, rather unlikely that the sonnet's rhyme scheme, which is by no means the same for all sonnets, can generally help decoding semantically ambiguous passages. The same applies for the sonnet's form. Although the volta, for example, might indicate a change in tone or a reversal of the argument, many sonnets are far too deviant from the traditional sonnet form and the volta could ultimately be anywhere in those 14 lines and then, that hardly means that there is a change in the structure of the argument (see also discussion below).

37 Cf. Culler, who approaches the topic from a structuralist perspective, proposing that readers have some sort of "internal grammar" (131), which constitutes a set of simple rules that helps identify certain properties of a work. These rules influence the reading of that particular work (Culler 132). He was most likely inspired by Chomsky's work on generative grammar regarding the exact mechanisms involved in understanding natural languages: "To say that a grammar 'generates' a certain set of structures is simply to say that it specifies this set in a precise way." (91) For further discussion concerning the linguistic-poetic interface, see also Currie Hall, pp. 233–252. He investigates the interaction between natural language and metrical structure in Russian verse, providing evidence regarding how grammar can play a role in accounting for statistically relevant

the reading process (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 17). It is based on both "incidental learning"[38] and "explicit instruction" (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 18; see also Klieme und Leutner 880). Readers supposedly learn to adapt to a certain genre of text (cf. Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 148; van Dijk and Kintsch 252 and 275).[39] In support of Zwaan's LCCS, Culler argues that the poem's structure defines the approach to its comprehension by "a series of formal rules derived from one's experience of reading poetry" (147).[40] Thus, depending on readers' abilities to identify the formal and generic features of the text at hand, they will be able to adapt to the different text types, and enough background knowledge will help them understand.[41] It is, however, difficult to believe that recognising the form of the text at hand may help readers understand its content.

This caveat can be discussed based on the example used by van Dijk and Kintsch as well as Zwaan: the sonnet form. They argue that readers (even with background knowledge about the traditional sonnet form), who fail to notice that what they are just reading is a sonnet, might also fail to notice the volta between the octave and the sestet (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 16). Although the knowledge may facilitate the interpretation of the sonnet, Zwaan's statement presents the actual facts in an overly simplistic light. Countless sonnets that deviate from the traditional sonnet form (as well as its original use as love lyric) support the reservations expressed regarding Zwaan's theory. The sonnet form as a specific kind of poem is indeed hardly a reliable reference. The sonnet underwent several modifications throughout

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metrical patterns and distinguishing a "source of variability from the orderly grammar of poetry" (Currie Hall 246).

38 A study by Drouillet et al. found, for example, that implicit learning abilities actually facilitate the comprehension of metaphors (13). Nevertheless, the authors do not distinguish between novel and/or conventionalised metaphors, which might involve yet different processes.

39 For an insightful account see Zwaan "Effect of Genre Expectations on Text Comprehension." His argument is decisively contradicted by Babuts who supports the hypothesis that generally "anyone can interpret texts without resorting to handed down conventions or *a priori* ideologically constructed systems" (59).

40 Bauer et al., in "'When most I wink, then' – what?", actually provide evidence that there might be an, albeit weak, correlation between students' previous experience with Shakespeare's poems and their performance in a reading comprehension test that employs a sonnet by Shakespeare (14).

41 In an experiment, Fish demonstrated the possible downsides of what Zwaan calls the LCCS. Fish, a reader response theorist, discusses these aspects in detail in his monograph *Is There a Text in This Class?* as well as his lecture "How to Recognize a Poem when You See One?". He is particularly concerned with the question how and why students also accept nonsense sentences as poetry if told so and vice versa.

the centuries: for example, Donne's "La Corona" is a crown of sonnets (the last line is also the first line of the following sonnet), countless poets drop the volta altogether (e.g. Wordsworth in "London 1802" or Owen in "Anthem for a Doomed Youth"), and there are also double sonnets, such as Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," and sonnets that deviate from meter and rhyme scheme (e.g. Hopkin's "Carrion Comfort"). Despite these variations, these poems are sonnets, a form of poetry that is still considered to have a high recognition value and to be fairly restrictive with regard to its form. Other forms of poetry, such as the ballad, ode, and villanelle, or lesser known forms, such as the tanka, ghazal or pantoum will prove similarly difficult, if not harder, to recognise. A set of rules that is applied as soon as a poem's structure is recognised is therefore difficult to imagine. The students' approach to the sonnet confirms these reservations.

In their document "What to Annotate", a first collection of annotation-worthy passages (see also ch. 3.1.2 above), the students mention the volta, which suggests that they have rather specific expectations regarding this particular type of poem, a sonnet. The students' realisation that they are dealing with a sonnet apparently makes them aware of the fact that they need to employ certain reading strategies that will help them understand. However, in the case of SON43, the volta is, possibly contrary to the students' expectations, not particularly remarkable and does not support the rhetorical division into a two-partite structure that many Renaissance sonnets followed (cf. Fuller xxx; Hirsch and Boland 51ff): it neither introduces a reversal of tone nor a change in the argument. In SON43, there is only a concluding rhyming couplet, which emphatically summarises the sonnet's previous statements in a metaphorical reversal of day and night. The lack of a more noteworthy effect on the interpretation of the sonnet may be the reason why the students pursue the volta no further than their initial remarks in the "What to Annotate"-document. The students' critical preconceptions of the 'traditional' sonnet form might have distracted them from focusing on more noteworthy aspects in the poem, inducing them to actively search for the volta in the sonnet and possibly overanalyse its impact on the understanding of the poem. The example thereby suggests that, although cognitivists' assumptions about a CCS are not incorrect, the annotations also show that a top-down approach to a literary text is *not* always helpful.[42]

42 See, for example, also Fish's "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One?" and *Is There a Text in This Class?* in which he discusses the pitfalls of approach a text with a certain set of expectations.

Moreover, Zwaan also fails to specify whether he really sees a fixed link between the sonnet form and readers' "comprehension behavior" (Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 16). This lack of clarity may lead to a critique of his hypothesis, especially considering that the sonnet has long been used as a platform to present and inspire reflection on a great variety of other topics apart from 'love': it has been used for devotional contemplations (cf. Donne's *Holy Sonnets*), political statements (e.g. McKay's "If We Must Die," Cumming's "next to god america i," or Duhig's "Civilisation"), anti- and pro-war slogans (Brooke's "The Soldier" or Sassoon's "The Poet as Hero"), for purely aesthetic aspirations (William's "Sonnet in Search of an Author" or Gwynn's "Shakespearean Sonnet"), to express an exalted appreciation of one's surroundings (Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge"), just to name a few.[43] It becomes clear that, in order to develop something that is close to an effective system, readers may have to invest an enormous amount of time without the guarantee that form may ever ease what van Dijk and Kintsch call "semantic comprehension" (92). Moreover, it is also obvious that poetry can be read and understood without having studied it for 10,000 hours (cf. Gladwell[44]).[45] Consequently, contrary to cognitivists' efforts to prove that genre conventions help interpret poems in a top-down manner, the matter is more complex (cf. Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 147).

The examples have, however, not been put forward for the purpose of rejecting Zwaan's idea of "incidental learning" and "explicit instruction" (*Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 18), as both have been proven to help reading and understanding poetry in countless university seminars, but to show that understanding poetry is far more complex and that the theory may be too simplistic: a poem cannot be processed by relying on just formal and generic expectations only. Therefore, in order to describe how genre expectations affect certain reading behaviours adequately, cognitive studies should consider genre theory

43 Cousins and Howarth's *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet* and Fuller's *The Oxford Book of Sonnets* both give a detailed overview of the development of the sonnet over the last centuries.

44 When Gladwell's book was published, it made the headlines several times – it still is a bestseller on amazon.com. His theory states that a person can become an expert in any field when studying/practicing it for 10,000 hours. It has nevertheless been refuted over the last years (see, i.e., Loria's "The '10,000-hour Rule' about Becoming an Expert Is Wrong – Here's Why").

45 In "Kognitionspsychologische Prozesse des Textverstehens", Kintsch argues that, in order to become remotely proficient as a literary reader, one would have to study literature for at least 10 years (51).

and the conventions regarding literary interpretation more thoroughly.[46] To be exact, it should not be readers' reactions to the supposedly consistent formal rules of poetry that should be the focus of cognitivist research but rather the (formal) versatility of poetry and how specific (generic, grammatical or formal) knowledge may *help along* certain understanding *processes*.

Investigating the Relationship between Genre-Specific Knowledge and Understanding

To further describe this argument, I will discuss the results from a small quantitative as well as qualitative study presented at the *Connotations* conference 2019, "Understanding (Through) Annotations", which allows us to discuss to what extent knowledge of, in our example, rhetorical devices can actually help process poetry in a top-down manner. The study was originally designed to gain more insight into the different concepts of understanding of student annotators in contrast to expert annotators; nevertheless, the considerable differences between student and expert annotators when it comes to annotations of stylistic devices gave rise to a discussion of the students' genre expectations. More precisely, the observations made in the study suggest that a top-down approach to a poem is a strategy more likely used by less experienced readers of poetry as it helps structure their approach to a poem and thus also helps along certain understanding processes. In the study, the student annotations were compared to five different expert editions of Shakespeare's sonnets.[47] In a qualitative analysis, the annotations were categorised based on TEASys.[48] The comparison of student and expert annotations shows that the kind of information with which they provide their readers is quite different. Fig. 2 shows the

46 In fact, according to studies by van Dijk and Kintsch as well as Richter and Christmann only an adequate amount of domain knowledge will provide a basis for an adequate interpretation.

47 The editions are by Hammond (2012), Paterson (2010), Duncan-Jones (2010), Evans (2006), and Booth (1980).

48 The categorisation was obviously rather straightforward in the case of the student annotations. The expert annotations proved more challenging as their explanatory annotations were not written based on TEASys. Nevertheless, as TEASys is based on the practice of annotating linked to a best practice model as well as a theory of annotations – the eight TEASys categories were developed over the course of the past eight years and are still constantly updated in a Living Style Guide (Bauer and Zirker "Whipping Boys Explained" 4) –, most of the expert annotations could be expected to be assignable to one of the TEASys categories. This was indeed mostly the case. In few cases, an annotation had to be split because it provided two or more different kinds of information at once. This should, however, not be considered as a corruption of the results, given that the aim was both of a quantitative and qualitative nature, namely: to find out whether there are differences between what experts and students think their readers need to understand the poem.

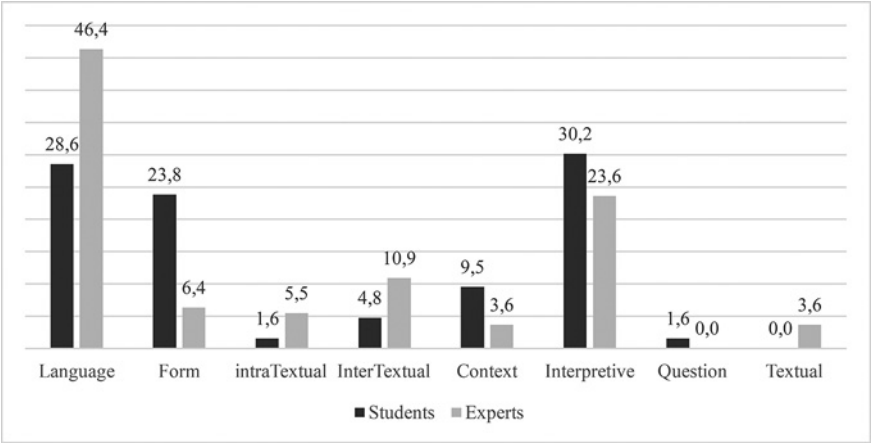

Fig. 2 Student and expert annotations in percent

Table 1 Student and expert annotations in total numbers

	Language	**Form**	**Intra-textual**	**Inter-textual**	**Context**	**Inter-pretive**	**Question**	**Textual**	**SUM**
Experts	51	7	6	12	4	26	0	4	110
Students	18	**15**	1	3	6	19	1	0	63

distribution of the annotation categories in percent.[49] The largest differences between students and experts are their language and form annotations.

The differences between the students' and the experts' annotations are of particular interest. For example, experts only provide 7 form annotations, whereas students wrote double the amount of formal annotations (15).[50] Obviously, the uneven distribution of the kind of information experts and students consider relevant for the poem requires further investigation.[51]

49 Although presenting the numbers in percent might be misleading as they are not representative of the actual amount of annotations (e.g. the 46% are only 15 annotations), the graph can nevertheless be a useful visualisation of who lays most focus on what kind of information.

50 These numbers are, of course, too small to be representative. Nevertheless, they may prove useful when including more than one sonnet/poem into these calculations.

51 The differences between student and expert annotations are of course based on the definition of a language or a form annotation as determined by the TEASys Style Guide. The numbers nevertheless show that, irrespective of the definition of a form or language

One reason for the lack of form annotations in expert editions may be that they remark on the formal peculiarities of the poem in a short comment beforehand. All experts, except Hammond, opted for this approach. Booth and Paterson list the stylistic devices along with the respective passages in the poem. Duncan-Jones as well as Evans only inform their readers about the abundance of stylistic devices, also naming one or two, without, however, pointing out the exact lines in which they occur. The experts apparently think that knowing the technical term is not as important as the ability to unravel the puzzling use of language in order to understand the line in the context of the poem.

This notion also becomes evident in their annotations. The experts mainly write synonyms, paraphrases, or a short word gloss in their annotations. For example, Booth, just like Hammond (2012), Evans (2006) and Duncan-Jones (1997), annotates "shadow" in line 5 by providing a short word gloss:[52] "image produced by the imagination" (204). Booth further annotates "shadows" with the synonym "darkness" (204).[53] In contrast to Booth, Paterson and Evans do

annotation, there is a discrepancy between the kinds of information students and experts provide in their annotations for one and the same poem.

52 See Bevington, who criticises 20th-century annotators' tendency to promote verbal glosses that are "brief and oversimplified in ways that [fail] to inform readers of resonances of meaning and context" ("Confessions" 7). The different meanings of the words are what he considers part of the reading experience of Shakespeare or the "essential ingredients of Shakespeare's verbal magic" (Bevington "Confessions" 7). Therefore, he supports notes that "explain the verbal complexity of the situation", as each of these notes "can be genuinely helpful if it offers alternative actions and indicates that further possibilities might also be considered" (Bevington "Confessions" 12). In a similar vein, Murphy argues that each word's "broader use in the language as a whole is what shapes their meanings, and … feeds into the specifics of their meanings in Shakespeare" (Murphy et al. 6). Word glosses "tend to underplay" this feature of Shakespeare's language and thus "learners are presented with a fixed set of meanings, of equivalences", which constrains their own responses to and interpretations of the poem (Murphy et al. 6).

53 Booth's word gloss seems to most effectively paraphrase the words' meaning in the context of the poem. Indeed, this is generally considered the most effective (Chen and Yen 417, Chen 421) and also most preferred method for promoting reading comprehension (AbuSeileek 1287). Lomicka nevertheless adds some reservations concerning the use of word explanations in general, as students seem to use annotations "primarily to construct a strong textbase and as a result do not fully explore the potential resources available" (48). Ricklefs also warns annotators of the use of paraphrases in their annotations and other studies confirm his reservations (72f). Although paraphrases can reflect and convey understanding of a text (Zwaan and Brown 311), the form of understanding is mostly focused on the text base and the connection between individual words without attempting to set the information into its larger context (Leslie and Caldwell 220). A paraphrase of a line in poetry might therefore be counter-productive for global understanding, as it prescribes one particular reading of the line without leaving room for other

not provide a synonym or short word gloss; instead, they paraphrase the line: "then you, whose image the darkness makes bright" (Paterson 129) and "you make ordinary shadows (or other mental images) appear bright through your brightness" (Evans 144). Consequently, experts are concerned with conveying meaning on the level of content, acknowledging that making sense of unusual lexical choices and linguistic constructions in the context of the poem is indispensable for comprehensive understanding, but also showing that their concern does not lie primarily with identifying the text's formal features.

By contrast, the importance that is attached to genre-specific knowledge, here, of rhetorical figures, in the students' annotations is unusual when compared to the expert editions in which they are hardly given any importance. In fact, a look at the annotations of the respective passages reveals that knowledge of the stylistic device is not irrelevant for understanding them. The students provide an annotation that explicitly draws attention to the stylistic devices used in the line and explains them further. The construction "shadow shadows" is thus shown to be a "polyptoton and an antanaclasis" (Student B final "shadow shadows", L1 F). The follow-up annotation on level two then explains how the employment of the rhetorical figures affects the meaning of the passage:

> 'shadow shadows' (l. 5)
> L2 FORM:
> The rhetorical figures of polyptoton and antanaclasis overlap in this line. The repetition 'shadow shadows' (l. 5) is a polyptoton in that the two, otherwise identical, nouns differ in grammatical number. However, on a semantic level, they are far from being identical, and this is where antanaclasis becomes relevant. Although 'shadow' and 'shadows' share much in their connotations, they actually refer to two different things: the shadow of the addressee as opposed to the shadows (or darkness) that the addressee makes bright. [...] (Student B final "shadow shadows", L2 F)

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interpretations. In fact, four annotators altogether neglect the fact that the word "shadow" can assume several meanings in the context of the poem. In this context, Bevington's warning that "[a]ll paraphrase, all translation, is inadequate" attains particular relevance ("Confessions" 20). Widdowson similarly argues that no paraphrase can actually account for poetic meaning, but must be seen as a basis for discussion and the development of an interpretative hypothesis (13). Nevertheless, Bevington also concedes that "reading and interpretation necessarily must resort to language as the only means by which we attempt to understand", thus suggesting that paraphrase is also one of the essential means that readers draw upon in order to approach and explain Shakespeare's language ("Confessions" 20).

In general, the effect can be considered comparable to that of the expert annotations: it becomes clear that the first "shadow" refers to the lover/addressee, whereas the second repetition refers to actual "shadows (or darkness)". However, this annotation is remarkable in that it not only names and explains the rhetorical devices, but also describes the phenomenon that the annotator believes requires explanation: the "identical [...] nouns" that "on a semantic level, [...] are far from being identical" (Student B final "shadow", L2 F). It further shows explicitly how this difficulty can be resolved by offering a paraphrase of the line, quite similar to those of the expert annotators. Based on her findings, the student also provides an interpretive annotation on level 3 (see Student B final "shadow", L3 I). However, the question remains why being able to name the stylistic devices should be considered important for the understanding of the poem when their naming does not contribute to the overall meaning of the poem?

When considering the significance of rhetorical devices for the composition, analysis and interpretation of a poem, the students' motives become understandable.[54] Rhetorical figures have a significant function within the poem that directly affects the comprehension process (cf. also Zirker "Performative Iconicity"; cf. Furniss and Bath ch. 3): they convey meaning beyond the level of content. For example, in the case of SON43, most of the stylistic devices are figures of repetition. These linguistic patterns evoke the notion of a repeated action, namely, that of the lover tossing and turning in bed night after night, as endlessly as hopelessly longing to see his beloved. Furthermore, the repeated words always appear in pairs, which literally expresses a duality: that of the lover and his beloved, both being intricately connected in and through the

54 It should be noted that the annotations were written in an educational context and, generally, in the "Introduction to Literary Studies Seminars" at Tübingen University as well as in German educational contexts the identification of stylistic devices, mostly in the context of a unit on poetry, strongly encouraged, if not obligatory (i.e., see Diehr and Surkamp 34). It is therefore not unlikely that their educational background might have led students to approach the poem by first identifying the stylistic devices. Nevertheless, Diehr and Surkamp point out the advantages of such an approach in the context of their discussion regarding implications for teaching lyrical texts: teachers should emphasise the poetic function of language early on and should discuss the many ways that the speaker of the poem can convey meaning to the reader (34). This approach can help less experienced readers reflect on the compositional nature and use of language in the poem and how it is possible to condense meaning into just a few well-chosen words. A formal analysis of the poem thus also helps counteract the all too easy dismissal of complex linguistic constructions, rather popular among many students, as employed by the poets only for the sake of making understanding yet more difficult and, instead, offers an explanation why the author chose to use these particular words and this particular structure and not any other.

words used in the poem.[55] In SON43, the use of stylistic devices, such as an antanaclasis, and polyptoton, therefore has a performative function: the form reflects the argument (cf. Zirker "Performative Iconicity"). This aspect further emphasises the importance of being able to reflect on why and to what effect the author chose to use a specific combination of words. Moreover, although anyone can understand said passages while at the same time being oblivious to the actual rhetorical device, they will be unable to expertly include the pragmatic effect of the stylistic choice into their interpretation. In fact, the terms of rhetorical figures are used as a shared language among literary scholars in order to point out textual phenomena. Thus, as part of the semiotics of poetry, they describe and characterise particular features and constructions of language and enable scholars to share their interpretation within a community.[56]

The students seem to be aware of the fact that genre-specific knowledge can help along certain understanding processes: while analysing the sonnet's language, they conduct a formal analysis of the sonnet, which reveals their awareness of certain established approaches to the analysis and interpretation of poems. Most of the students' comments are concerned with language, stylistic devices, and the poems' generic idiosyncrasies. Their notes show that rhyme is one aspect the students are concerned with, as it might play a role in the interpretation of the sonnet. For example, they comment on the internal rhymes in lines 13–14 (cf. "What to Annotate", V1). They also analyse stylistic devices, such as the oxymora in line four "[a]nd, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed". The line seems to have been perceived as particularly challenging as it induced the students to write several comments (see "What to Annotate", V1–2). They also take note of the unusual sentence construction in line 6: "thy shadow's form form happy show" (cf. "What to Annotate", V2) and further remark that line four could be a reference to the volta after line 12 (cf. "What to Annotate", V1), connecting the rhyming couplet with the first lines of the poem. Other observations relate to a more global level of the poem, and the students discern several prominent concepts juxtaposed throughout the poem that are typically associated with the semantic field 'night': "light/dark, day/night, wakefulness/sleep, dead/living, seeing/not seeing, shadows/light" ("What to Annotate", V1). The students' first approach to the poem is thus influenced by their expectations regarding the genre *and* the conventions regarding literary interpretation as well as the literary institution (cf. Veivo and Knuuttila 284).

55 For more information on numerology in Elizabethan Poetry see also Fowler *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry*.

56 For more information see also discussion ch. 5.4.2.1.

Altogether, the difference between students and experts suggests that stylistic devices can be used as a means to approach poems, leading to first hypotheses and an interpretation, which can, in turn, be affirmed by the stylistic device and vice versa (Diehr und Surkamp 34). A study by Hanauer presents evidence that supports this hypothesis: "the reader directs attention towards the formal language structures of the poem and uses these to construct meaning" (317). The students realise this when they analyse formal and rhetorical features and their effects. In a second analysis, they then determine how these factors interact and contribute to the overall meaning of the poem (see Miall *Literary Reading* 112; Bierwisch 12; Hanauer 318). Being able to identify the stylistic devices in a poem can thus be said to open up a way for readers to deal with the intensely condensed language and organise it in a way that helps them unravel the complexity of its (poetic) meaning (cf. Clark and Zyniger 342). It should nevertheless be stressed that the examples both from experts and students also show that, although learning about a stylistic device allows readers to describe what is going on in the poem, it does not automatically lead to a better understanding of the poem. In fact, the extent to which rhetorical devices allow readers to process poetry in a top-down manner is extremely limited. We can further assume that the same applies to other genre characteristics: knowing about a certain genre and its characteristics can be helpful; however, not because the genre offers a fixed relation of form and content/meaning, but because knowledge of typical poetic forms and other generic characteristics can be used by readers as a form of heuristic tool which helps them arrive at a more informed analysis of what is going on in the poem. While the formal elements can radically deviate from anything they have read before, readers may nevertheless use this knowledge to point out and discuss the possible effects of these deviations on the understanding of the poem. The cognitive processes involved in this activity can be expected to be different and notably more complex than those outlined by the cognitivists above.

3.1.4 *Foregrounded Passages*

Another aspect addressed by cognitivist literature are reader responses to foregrounded passages (cf. Miall *Literary Reading* 27). This approach to research on literary texts was developed in defiance of the "common assumption" of the wayward reader (Miall *Literary Reading* 11) and aims to promote a greater focus on the actual text in question and the delineation of objectively definable characteristics of the text (*Literary Reading* 19; see also Dixon et al. 7f; Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung" 149). Miall defines foregrounded features either as some form of deviation (e.g., metaphors, ellipses, etc.) or as constituting "an unusual parallelism (e.g., the use of rhyme, or a repeated stress pattern)"

(*Literary Reading* 112). His description of foregrounded features is, however, problematic as the definition is underspecified – it is unclear what is being 'foregrounded' against which background – and for whom? – and, especially with reference to poetry, a more refined definition of foregrounded passages might be needed that would also make such an assumption more applicable to research on poems (cf. van Peer; Miall *Literary Reading*; Hunt and Vipond "Evaluations in Literary Reading"). Indeed, the condensation of language in poetry is likely to induce readers to point out constructions as unusual, and although there are passages in the sonnet that the students lay particular focus on, the abundance of textual phenomena in SON43 also makes the assumption more difficult to either argue for or against.[57] Research on 'foregrounding' must therefore make the concept much more specific to be useful. The question is if and how the student annotations can help shed further light on this issue.

An examination of the latter issue can form the basis for the discussion of the first. Using the student annotations for research on 'foregrounding' is hampered by the fact that foregrounded passages do not necessarily go hand in hand with difficulties or comprehension problems that require annotation. Still, we can assume that there is some overlap. Several studies found that strikingness predicts foregrounding, which implies that foregrounded passages attract the reader's attention because they show a to them unfamiliar or striking, i.e. marked, use of language (Miall *Literary Reading* 112; see also van Peer *Stylistics and Psychology* 3ff; Bierwisch 12).[58] It is therefore possible to exploit the fact that annotations make us aware of unusual text features (because they may also require further explanation). Accordingly, a list of the passages that were most frequently annotated by students as well as a group of other

57 Indeed, SON43 is a particularly challenging reading matter (see also ch. 1.3.3). The sonnet contains a number of seemingly paradoxical lines, oxymoronic statements and rhetorical devices that mostly involve different forms of word repetitions. For example, in line 4 of the sonnet, "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed," no less than five stylistic devices can be identified: an antithesis, a diacope, an antimetabole (chiasmus), an oxymoron and a polyptoton. The subsequent lines are equally loaded with stylistic devices (to name but a few: line 5: paradox, antanaclasis, polyptoton; line 7: paradox, oxymoron; line 8: two oxymora and a paradox). Nevertheless, the condensation of diverse textual phenomena was also discussed as one of the aspects that makes poetry particularly appealing for research on literary reading (see ch. 1.3.2). The sonnet should therefore be considered a challenging, yet, apt object of research.

58 Prague school linguists used the term "foregrounding" to describe "a stylistic feature characterizing poetic language (and literary language in general), in which verbal devices (e.g. rhetorical figures of speech) draw particular attention to themselves" ("foregrounding", *Oxford Reference*).

(expert) annotators may provide further insights (see also ch. 3.1.3). The idea is that, according to students and experts' common assessment, the most annotated passages are considered those parts of the sonnet that strike annotators (as readers) as noteworthy, which induces them to analyse these more closely. The small quantitative analysis yielded the following results for SON43:[59]

(1) "darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" (12x) (l. 4)
(2) "shadow shadows doth make bright" (12x) (l. 5)
(3) "shadow's form form happy show" (11x) (l. 6)

A closer scrutiny of the list reveals that the lines most annotated by both parties share one particularity. All three include one or more stylistic devices and play with the repetition of words or word stems. The most annotated lines could therefore be said to point out a particular group of 'foregrounding' (word play). This assumption is further supported by a qualitative analysis of the annotations. When considering the kind of information experts and students provide for their readers, it becomes clear that the passages were annotated because the use of language in these lines is striking and not because they contain an interesting cultural reference or refer to another prominent literary text. Table 2 shows that the language and form annotations for these three lines contribute the largest segments of the language and form annotations when compared to the rest of the poem.

Table 2 Student and expert annotations of most annotated passages in total numbers

	Students	**Experts**
Language (whole poem)	18	51
Language (most annotated)	**7**	**34**
Form (whole poem)	15	7
Form (most annotated)	**9**	**3**

The comparison shows that experts' language annotations for the three passages take up 34 of the 51 language annotations for the whole poem, which is

59 The analysis of SON43's most frequently annotated passages also reveals that students and experts only partially agree on what to annotate in the entire sonnet. Only 21 of the 44 passages were annotated by students and scholars alike; that is only a 48% agreement ratio. Although an investigation into the reasons for this divergence may also be of interest, this chapter will only be concerned with those passages that students and scholars equally agree to be difficult rather than those passages about which they diverge.

more than half of the language annotations. The students' language annotations for the passages in focus (7 out of the 18) are fewer compared to those provided by the experts, but they wrote double the amount of formal annotations (15), more than half of which are annotations for these lines (9). The overall amount of language and form annotations (as well as interpretive annotations on the students' part) for the passage further suggests that this particular class of foregrounding, passages which contain linguistic word play, seems to require annotation and, hence, explanation. The small study thus reveals that annotations may indeed help shed further light on text features that can be considered 'foregrounded'. More importantly, though, it suggests that more attention is dedicated to foregrounded passages because they require certain strategies from the readers that enable them to explain these unusual text features (to themselves). This observation should be discussed with regard to another hypothesis proposed by cognitivists, which brings us to the second issue addressed above: research on understanding foregrounded passages must be supplemented by a thorough discussion of a theoretical background appropriate to the material under investigation. This would also make foregrounding more applicable to poetry.

In *Literary Reading*, Miall introduces a hypothesis of the processes that readers are likely to undergo when being confronted with a foregrounded passage. He describes their encounters with foregrounded passages as a two-stage process: first, readers remark on the passage because they find it striking or unfamiliar (Miall *Literary Reading* 112).[60] In a second step, these passages then induce readers to "engage in a search … for a context in which to locate the unusual meanings suggested by foregrounding" (Miall *Literary Reading* 113).[61] He thus establishes a connection between the general linguistic analysis and the consecutive processes of making sense of the narrator's or speaker's utterances.[62] Miall does not, however, specify what he means by "context" (*Literary*

60 Schwarz-Friesel even argues that foregrounded structures, which highlight specific text information, trigger some emotional reaction from readers or what she calls "emotive judgments" on these particular structures (176).

61 Miall seems to assume that foregrounding automatically suggests "unusual meanings" (*Literary Reading* 113). The previous discussion has, however, made it clear that this is not necessarily the case.

62 With reference to other studies, Miall argues that reader responses to foregrounded passages challenge "the standard view that literary response depends on acquiring the relevant conventions and genre knowledge" (*Literary Reading* 27). In this context, he refers to a study by Kuiken et al. which presents evidence that a "response to foregrounding occurs regardless of degree of literary training" (27). This claim can, however, only partly be true. It is likely that any reader, expert or not, might have noticed or pointed out the passages discussed above: the passages are striking because the use of language is unusual

Reading 113). He merely argues that the reader's search for a context is "led by feeling" (Miall *Literary Reading* 113), which would suggest that he means either the context in which the reader reads the passage or, in a pragmatic sense, the context in which the reader imagines the statement to be uttered. The origin of this rather blatant generalisation lies in the fact that the theoretical background regarding 'foregrounding' is not yet fully developed. One annotation written by a student lends itself particularly well to a discussion of Miall's theory as the analysis of the student's work shows that the process of making sense of a foregrounded passage requires a series of complex processes, which remain largely unheeded by Miall's hypothesis. More specifically, the analysis suggests that an adequate definition of context, which takes into consideration the kinds of contexts readers are dealing with when making sense of a fictional text, is crucial when it comes to research on foregrounding.

The student annotated the sonnet's final couplet which is an extended metaphor and, hence, according to Miall, a foregrounded passage (cf. *Literary Reading* 112): "All days are nights to see till I see thee, /And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me" (l. 13–14). Her first interpretive annotation draft reveals that she already has a vague idea what she thinks the speaker wishes to communicate.[63] This can be seen in her initial paraphrase of the two lines: "the nights seem like bright days when I see you in my dreams" (Student D "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", V1, L1 I). While parsing the two lines, she must have noticed that the speaker's utterance violates the maxim of quality (cf. Grice 46): it is impossible for days to also be nights and vice versa. In a second step, she must have realised that the metaphorical reversal of day and night in the couplet intimates an implicature and should be analysed as a means used by the speaker to communicate meaning. Her annotation reveals that she therefore tried to analyse the pragmatic dimension of the speaker's utterance. In her final annotation, she concludes that "using metaphorical images" the speaker intends to imply his/her emotional state (Student D "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me" final, L2 I):

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and, in this case, also renders the lines particularly complex. Readers' abilities to point out foregrounded passages should, however, by no means be considered as proof that "literary response" takes place regardless of literary training: whether readers notice, for example, a play on words in a text and whether they are ultimately able to make sense of it should be considered two completely different pairs of shoes.

63 As an additional observation, it can be noted that the student's interpretation also shows her realisation that she should first and foremost consider the speaker's objectives which should by no means be mistaken for the author's own statements or intentions. This observation also applies for all other student annotations.

> By using metaphorical images, the speaker conveys his happiness to see the addressee's image; his days are like nights because he is sad because he does not see the addressee. The dream acts as a medium to evoke the addressee's image, thus, the phrase can be interpreted as 'I am dependent on dreams to show you to me' (Vendler 224). (Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L2 I)

The student thus assumes that the speaker's utterance can be interpreted as a hint towards his/her distress about the lover's absence (Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L2 I). The interpretive annotation challenges Miall's hypothesis: the students' explanation of the passage intimates that Miall's idea of a "search … for context" is too reductive because he fails to consider the fact that literary texts often have a *delimited context* in which to situate certain utterances (*Literary Reading* 113). In fact, the annotation shows that readers first notice a deviation and then try to *establish* rather than search for a context, here, in the pragmatic sense, for the foregrounded passages. A discussion of the annotations' shortcomings further supports this claim.

The student attributed the scene with a pragmatic dimension, which is not entirely wrong, but, in this case, her disambiguation of the speaker's utterance was possibly influenced by her own assumptions as to how she would feel in such a situation. She therefore disregards other readings of the line, and her annotation simply does not reflect what is occurring in the sonnet as a whole: the sonnet is quite ambiguous with regard to the speaker's emotional state (see also ch. 5.2.2.2). Vendler's paraphrase of the last two lines "I am dependent on dreams to show you to me" (224) implies a loss of agency and, accordingly, the last line could also express the speaker's impotence to take control of his/her dreams. This interpretative approach suggests that the speaker's attitude towards his/her dreams is ambivalent, which should ideally be discussed in the student's annotation. The student has failed to take into consideration everything the speaker says. Overall, it becomes clear that it is the delimitation of context that induces the student to respond in a certain way to the sonnet's couplet and that, furthermore, the student's efforts to establish a context for the speaker's utterance are influenced by both her own assumptions about what the utterance could mean as well as the text's particular features.

The discussion of the annotation reveals that readers are required to follow up on a series of complex processes that are essential to arrive at a full understanding of the line/poem. There is little comprehension research, though, that properly defines 'context(s)' and, consequently, we still know little about the role of context in a reader's response to "foregrounding" in fictional texts (cf. Huemer "Erlebnis und Erkenntnis" 80ff; Murphy et al. 5). The students'

annotations suggest that, in their attempt at explaining foregrounded passages, they find it hard to distinguish between what the text provides and assumptions derived e.g. from the students' own experience.[64] The discussion further reinforces the demand for more thorough research into reader responses to 'foregrounding' that considers the different dimensions of literary interpretation laying equal focus on reader, text, and the literary institution (cf. Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 152; Veivo and Knuuttila 284; Morrow 70; Magliano et al. 369).

3.2 Some Conclusions

Overall, the question whether the reading and annotation process of a literary text can contribute to research on comprehension models in general and understanding literary texts in particular can be answered in the affirmative: the annotations discussed both support and challenge some of the cognitivists' assumptions and study results. Such a partial confirmation can be found in the fact that literary texts induce students to maintain flexible working hypotheses. A comparison with later annotation versions even suggests that initial deficiencies (e.g., the ability to maintain a flexible working hypothesis as seen in the first annotation version) allow for approximate predictions of the quality of the students' subsequent work on the text (see ch. 3.1.2). Similarly, we have seen that a particular kind of foregrounding has an effect on the understanding of literary texts (see ch. 3.1.5). More research on foregrounded passages in literary texts could therefore yield further insights into readers' responses to fictional utterances.

Nevertheless, most approaches to reading comprehension do not sufficiently consider the nature of the research material: without an appropriate consideration of the specifics of literary texts and a thorough analysis of the textual material in question, cognitive studies will continue to struggle with inconclusive results (cf. 3.1.2 and 3.1.3), vague concepts and rather inappropriate models (cf. 3.1.1). In fact, the students' later annotation versions in particular are especially strong indicators of processes that go beyond mere

64 See ch. 5.2.2 for a more elaborate discussion of this issue. The analysis of the annotations in this chapter shows that there are different reasons why readers interpret a text differently: (1) there are passages that are ambiguous and, in these cases, various interpretations are possible and also appropriate; however, (2) there are often instances when readers make assumptions about the utterances in the text and phrase interpretations that are not warranted by what the text actually says. A close analysis of the text can help determine which of the two reasons has led to a certain interpretation.

language processing and thus demonstrate that the students, each within their individual abilities, engage with the text in a way that helps them define and overcome problems of understanding, develop their ways of reasoning in the annotations and learn to make specific statements about the meaning of the sonnet. They are therefore indicative of ongoing hermeneutic processes that cannot be described by models which define reading as a finite process that *ends* in some vague notion of a mental representation of the text. On the contrary, cognitive studies should investigate literary understanding as a *progressive* activity that is characterised by a consecutive development of working hypotheses. Research on literary reading requires models that include readers' metacognitive strategies, such as comprehension monitoring, assessing the individual progress toward reading goals as well as adjusting interpretative hypotheses according to the developing degree of comprehension (cf. Cho and Afflerbach 111; Dixon et al. 30; see ch. 5.2ff). Most comprehension models are, however, hardly concerned with the processes and strategies involved when engaging with textual material over a longer period of time.

In light of these observations, the concept of reading competence or literary competence as suggested by pedagogical studies might prove a useful approach that can provide further insight into the students' processes of understanding SON43 (see also ch. 1.2.2.2). The concept not only involves the immediate processes of understanding a text, but is further used to describe strategies that go beyond the initial reading process, that is how to analyse, to interpret, to explain and generally, to intensively work with literary texts in order to be able to participate in a social exchange with a knowledgeable community (Babuts 60; Eggert 192; Klieme 3; OECD 49, Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung" 158; Lenhard 46). The analysis of reading competence models along the versions of annotations might therefore be used as a basis for more critical discussions and may help further delineate and define the different processes of making sense of SON43 and literary texts in general.

CHAPTER 4

Educational Studies – Reading Competence Models and Annotations

Chapter 4 takes up the discussion of the previous chapter and the proposal that competence models introduced by educationalists may help specify the processes taking place while reading: they are able to do this because they are not merely concerned with (more or less) immediate understanding processes, but instead describe competences that develop over time and do not apply to the reading of one specific text only. The first part of the chapter (4.1) introduces various approaches to reading competence models and discusses how student annotations can serve as valuable resources for advancing research on literary competence within this framework. Section 4.1.1 analyses the students' annotations based on the definition of five aspects that can be considered manifestations of their reading competence. The results are discussed in Section 4.2: the analysis indicates that, while there are certain overlaps between reading and literary competence, the nature of the material decisively influences the students' approach to the text. In order to precisely define literary competence, it must therefore be considered separately from reading competence. This conclusion leads up to the assessment and definition of literary competence in chapter 5.

4.1 Reading Competence Models

Competence models map the skills or the disposition which enables an individual to cope with a certain situation (see, i.e., Klieme and Leutner 879). Reading competence models in particular aim to define the skills and abilities necessary to understand, use, reflect on and engage with written texts (OECD 9; see also Fleischer at al. 8). Apart from the cognitive components of reading competence (ranging from basic decoding skills "to knowledge of words, grammar and larger linguistic and textual structures and features, to knowledge about the world" (OECD 9)), the models suggest how reading competence can be taught, fostered and developed by the individual through frequent interaction with the subject matter as well as with a (more or less) knowledgeable community (Fleischer et al. 7; Klieme and Hartig 17; Groeben 19; Klieme and Leutner 880).

There are plenty of suggestions as to possible reading models. Glaesser distinguishes between "models of competence *structures* and models of competence *levels*" (Glaesser 74). For example, Burwitz-Melzer's reading competence model *structures* reading competence into six sub-areas: motivational, cognitive and affective, intercultural competences and competences regarding the follow-up communication about the text as well as reflective skills in general ("Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 138f). The different areas of competence can also vary from model to model. In the context of literary reading, Leubner and Saupe discuss empathy as an additional sub-competence (52). Departing from the model suggested by Burwitz-Melzer, other models chose to exclude motivational and social components of reading competence for their research (see, i.e., Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung im Fach Englisch"; Klieme "Was sind Kompetenzen").[1] PISA, by contrast, introduces seven different *levels* (see OECD 58f). The focus of their research is also a slightly different one: to monitor the quality of the output of students who have undergone a particular educational system. The students are retrospectively assigned to the levels that were defined beforehand (see also Klieme "Was sind Kompetenzen" 12). Despite the difference among these approaches, there is a certain consensus on some basic assumptions in competence research which can be used to discuss the suitability of the student annotations as research material.

Researchers generally agree that reading competence integrates skills related to the reception of texts and also relates different areas of competence to one another (Burwitz-Melzer "Text- und Medienkompetenz" 141ff; see also Klieme "Was sind Kompetenzen" 12; Klieme and Hartig 24; Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung" 154; Glaesser 80). As reading competence is expressed in form of a number of several interacting sub-competences, it would not suffice to just focus on one single observation; most studies therefore try to integrate a range of previously specified observations and expectations that can guarantee the validity of the evaluation (see, i.e., Klieme "Was sind Kompetenzen" 12; Klieme and Hartig 24; Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung" 154).[2] For example, some empirical studies use a combination of complemen-

1 This decision is also commented on by Glaesser, who argues that including "motivational states" in research on reading might define the competence areas too broadly, which might make them "harder to study and may be less suited to explaining the outcome of interest" (71).

2 For example, in the context of the "Modeling and Measuring Competencies in Higher Education" (KoKoHs) research programme – a research programme that included over 220 higher education institutions in Germany that aimed at "creating the foundation for assessing acquisition of and change in competencies" (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al. 21) –, a multitude of different measurement methods were employed (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia

tary test methods, such as the study introduced by Flender and Naumann who use 'PL-Lesen' (Ger. for "print literacy"; reading) as well as log-file analyses (reading and writing).[3] Their study design aims at making the different aspects of the reading process visible, e.g., the reader's ability to recognise opinions or evaluative statements (Flender and Naumann 61). Other studies use psychometric test models to represent the connection between the theoretical competence model and the students' concrete test behaviour during reading (Fleischer et al. 10; see also Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung"; Klieme and Hartig 25f). The researchers model individual competences while specifically taking into account the situational requirements under which they become manifest (cf. Fleischer et al. 10).[4]

The four students' annotations are obviously unsuitable for an empirical approach, hardly constituting a representative amount for this form of research on reading competences. There is, however, reason to believe that the qualitative analysis of the students' annotations may contribute to the development of an observation-based approach complementary to more abstract empirical models (see also ch. 2.2.2). It is indeed possible to diagnose and assess the students' expression of competence based on a range of individual observations, which will focus on the question how the student annotators react to the different problems posed by the text. The evaluation of the students' reading competence will therefore be based on their statements in the annotations about the possible meaning(s) of the text. With reference to the previous discussion of competence research, this approach can be considered a plausible method as it allows the investigation of several interacting sub-competences in a specific situation.

Furthermore, reading competence should ideally be considered with regard to their development over a longer time span (cf. Bredella *Narratives*

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et al. 25). In total, "more than 100 test instruments (including sub-scales) were developed: 60 paper-pencil tests, more than 30 computer-based tests and approximately 10 video-based formats" (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al. 24). Furthermore, different tests at different points of the students' careers were taken; the researchers surveyed students at a designated moment throughout their studies as well as "during or after transition into professional practice" (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al. 25).

3 The instrument "PL-reading" is based on the van Dijk and Kintsch model and comprises a total of 7 subtests (Flender and Naumann 61). All subtests are designed to focus on at most two of the strategy types introduced by van Dijk and Kintsch's model (Flender and Naumann 61). For example, subtest 1 aims to assess participants' propositional strategies (Flender and Naumann 62).

4 In the context of the German DESI study, for example, the test design is based on the item-response theory (IRT) and the reading competence test comprises of 46 multiple-choice questions (Nold and Rossa 198, 201).

und interkulturelles Verstehen: Zur Entwicklung von Empathie-, Urteils- und Kooperationsfähigkeit; Diehr and Surkamp 24; Ehlers 124; Hurrelmann 276; Hallet "Literatur, Bildung und Kompetenzen" 14ff; Klieme and Hartig 17; Lenhard 47; Bracker 43). Although many studies agree on this aim, few studies actually investigate the development of reading competence over a longer period of time because it would require a considerable amount of additional organisational effort that is often simply not feasible.[5] Studies that can trace students' development over a longer period of time could therefore contribute as essential groundwork to the development of a reading competence model. The fact that the annotations are the product of the students' work on the sonnet over the course of a year can be used here to investigate the expression and development of reading competence more thoroughly and to reveal more clearly why the person was or was not able to cope with the task (cf. Glaesser 71).

Finally, it should be noted that the disposition to cope with a task will not be assumed to be directly observable, though the individual actions resulting from this particular disposition will be (Glaesser 71; see also ch. 2.2). It is therefore necessary to first define the actions that can be expected to express a certain competence to approach the sonnet adequately as it will then be possible to specify in which situations individual differences in competence levels are expressed and in which way (Klieme and Hartig 24). Different studies on reading competence each describe similar competences, yet with varying specificity including basic skills, such as fluency in reading, making inferences, forming hypotheses, applying background knowledge (Ehlers 120), being able to grasp the content and (re)constructing a coherent meaning of the text (Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 71), self-reflective skills as well as the ability to communicate about the text meaning (Lenhard 47), or, more generally, problem-solving skills (Weinert 55) and methodological competences (Steininger *Modellierung literarischer Kompetenz* 352). Although the definition of reading competence provided by the OECD may be said to best summarise the many aspects of the definitions provided in other studies on competence and competence models, it is not entirely sufficient for the present endeavours. It lays too much stress on knowledge itself rather than the

5 For example, Janssen et al.'s qualitative study examines verbal data from their think-aloud study; the number of students tested was, however, low (19) (Janssen et al. 38). Think-aloud studies are, however, still rare as they "are notoriously time consuming and challenging to score" (Leslie and Caldwell 221). Their application in formal assessments is therefore still a project for the future when automated scoring of complex data such as verbal statements may become a reality (Leslie and Caldwell 221).

ability to employ a certain kind of knowledge to deal with specific situational demands:

> Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts [...] Reading literacy includes a wide range of cognitive competencies, from basic decoding, to knowledge of words, grammar and larger linguistic and textual structures and features, to knowledge about the world (OECD 49)

While knowledge per se must certainly be acknowledged as contributing essentially to the manifestation of the students' competences, it is important to note that knowledge and competence describe different kinds of concepts and should therefore not be used interchangeably (Glaesser 71). It is not students' knowledge, but specifically their dispositions to act adequately when being confronted with a text that are under investigation here. I will therefore use the definition only as a basic point of orientation to delineate those aspects that will be investigated as manifestations of the students' reading competence in their annotations. With reference to the studies on reading competence as well as the definition provided by the OECD, five aspects can be defined that will be analysed more closely as manifestations of the students' reading competence. These include their ability to (1) comprehend and reflect on the reading material at hand, (2) integrate (acquired) knowledge (about the world) to make informed statements about certain utterances, (3) make connections between different text elements as well as types of knowledge, (4) formulate and argue for a hypothesis (reasoning; assessing), (5) think critically, e.g. by discussing the statements made by others about the text.[6]

4.1.1 *Reading and Reflecting on the Text – Dealing with Ambiguity*

As has been pointed out, the sonnet's limited context and ambiguous syntax encourages several readings of a line, and not every ambiguity can be explained easily in an annotation. The students' annotations show their awareness of the impossibility to delimit the meaning of an ambiguous word or line to one reading only. This awareness finds expression either in form of a short sentence fragment, often including a qualifying element, such as "[p]ossible other meanings also are" (Student A final, L1 L) or regarding lexical or syntactical ambiguities

6 This list also excludes all motivational, volitional as well as emotional aspects that may influence students' expression of competence. Although they can be assumed to contribute to and even be required for the individual to be able to act effectively, they are left out to ensure that the phenomenon under investigation can be explained and analysed based on clear conceptual distinctions and only with regard to those aspects in the students' products that are of interest here. The present study is therefore limited to the cognitive abilities of the students.

"most probably refers to" (Student B final "thy shadow's form", L3 I), or they simply resort to "either … or …" constructions (Student B final "form happy show", L1 L). One student tries to justify the reading of one word by referring to the frequency of its use in that sense by the author: "was often employed by Shakespeare in this sense" (Student B final "shadow", L1 L). Another student even conjectures about the possible reasons for the author's decisions, as becomes obvious in her annotation which claims that "Shakespeare was quite fond of such playful devices" (Student B final "shadow shadows", L2 F). Her statement is indicative of her attempt to find a plausible explanation for this peculiar language use. The poem's vast interpretive range also becomes clear in remarks on oxymoronic line structures which make it "impossible to determine whether the eyes are dark yet sparkling, or bright yet darkened or blurred" (Student C final "darkly bright", L2 I) or in more general comments on the sonnet that "seems to oscillate between positive and negative" (Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I). Other statements such as a "possible interpretation is" (Student A final "most I wink", L2 I) or "some doubts remain as to" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 Q) are a further indicator of the sonnet's ambiguous lines as well as the students' awareness thereof. The sonnet's propensity to incite different interpretations might also account for a certain vagueness in the students' annotations that finds expression in their frequent use of modal verb constructions, such as "could … [or] would suggest" (Student A final, L2 I) or in other qualifiers such as *may* (used 7x in total), *might* (used 8x in total) or *seems* (used 12x in total) (cf. Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L3 I; Student D final "imperfect shade", L3 I; Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I). Adverbs and adjectives, such as "paradoxically" (Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L3 I; Student B final "form happy show", L2 C) or "puzzling" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C) can also be considered proof of the students' reaction to the sonnet's "contradictory" (Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I) information. The annotations are therefore representative of the students' attempts to not only make sense of a text that is highly ambiguous, but to present and discuss all possible readings of a line or the whole sonnet.[7]

7 For an elaborate discussion how the students integrate all possible readings of a line into their final interpretation, see, i.e., ch. 5.3.

4.1.2 *Integrating* (*Acquired*) *Knowledge*

The students' approach to the sonnet is further characterised by their inclusion or presentation of knowledge acquired during their research. They point out complex text features, look up unknown words or show that they conducted some context research, thus approaching the sonnet and its difficult language by activities that are mainly fact-oriented: a quantitative analysis of the students' annotations shows that they wrote 23.8% form annotations and 28.6% language annotations, which totalled make up slightly more than half (52.4%) of the sonnet's overall annotations (see also ch. 3.1.3). Many language annotations simply comment on the meaning of a word that "is now obsolete" (Student A final, L1 L) or expressions that are now "an archaic idiom" (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L1 L). Formal annotations are dominated by discussions and descriptions of mostly linguistic phenomena or rhetorical devices, such as can be seen in Student C's annotation on the line "bright in dark directed" in line 4: "[t]he phrase … works as an antithesis" (final, L1 F) or Student B's annotation on "shadow shadows": "this line is an example of both a polyptoton and an antanaclasis" (final, L1 F). Other formal features, such as an instance of "sound repetition" that "draws … attention to" (Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L1 F) a certain word are commented on as well. Finally, they also refer to their grammatical knowledge and, for example, annotate syntactic ambiguities: "the structure of this clause is ambiguous" (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I) or the "main dispute in this line is caused by the word order" (Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L1 F). Their approach to the poem therefore reflects their consideration of those aspects of their knowledge that they can draw on to make sense of the poem. They use this to come up with a conclusive explanation of the text's phenomena.

The students' context annotations, which account for the overall greatest number of annotations (30.2%), show a similar pattern. In these annotations they attempt, among other things, to present and discuss a "theoretical framework" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C) or historical context information that might have influenced some aspects addressed in the poem. Indeed, the critical consideration of context knowledge is an important aspect of an annotator's work that can help arrive at plausible interpretations. The students' endeavours to make the text more accessible to themselves and others by drawing on different knowledge resources becomes evident in their annotations. They mostly draw on references to a (literary or historical) authority in order to support their argument, such as in "XY suggests that" (Student A "most I wink" final, L2 I; Student D final "in dead night", L1 L)

or "according to XY" (Student A "see" final, L1 L; Student C "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" final, L2 C; Student D final "imperfect shade", L3 I).[8]

Many of the annotations that are concerned with the presentation of knowledge are dominated by an objective, somewhat standardised presentation of the information. They mostly follow a certain pattern or use 'formulaic' expressions, such as the above or "were believed to" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 Q), "were thought to be" (Student B final "shadow", L2 C).[9] Feilke argues that the development of the competences to present and discuss knowledge essentially consists in the appropriation of linguistic resources that are expressed in form of such "text routines" ("Textroutine, Textsemantik und sprachliches Wissen" 224; see also Knopp et al. 113). These expressions should not be considered as merely clichéd expressions of academic writing or, even worse, the students' last resort to conceal their incompetence to present their findings in their own words. Rather, the students' *text routines* can reflect a development of their attitude towards their own performance: they realise that interpretations (including contextualisations) cannot be taken for granted but must be assessed and presented in a certain manner (see Feilke "Was sind Textroutinen?" 3). Routine expressions should therefore be evaluated with regard to their adequate employment for the presentation of the research as well as their contribution to the students' meaning-making processes. Statements such as "[c]enturies later, a shift from … to … theories became dominant" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C) or simply "[s]ince antiquity" (Student B final "shadow", L2 C) can therefore show the students' attempt to appropriately reconstruct those aspects of the historical background that are relevant for the understanding of the poem.[10]

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8 In "Was sind Textroutinen?", Feilke discusses these particular methodical expressions in scientific papers in more detail, assuming that these formulations could be popular, because they help present the argument in the form of a possibility or a hypothesis rather than actual, irrefutable fact, the latter being a move that might be perceived as patronising by some readers (14f).

9 Schmölzer-Eibinger and Fanta further argue that these kinds of routine expressions support both the understanding as well as the formulation of speech acts, such as *explaining* (163).

10 Nevertheless, it should be noted here that the students are not entirely beyond any subjectivity. Sometimes, their interpretations are not necessarily perceived as such or rather are introduced more subtly in the annotation, presenting one reading of the sonnet at the expense of a discussion of all possible options, such as when the students present an interpretation in form of a paraphrase: "speaker is able to see the addressee in his dream …, i.e. to see a projected image of the addressee before his inner eye" (Student A final "look on", L2 I). Despite the fact that paraphrases are one of the most prominently

Nevertheless, the integration of knowledge is not solely restricted to research concerning historical facts or rhetorical devices. Another important aspect is the students' (re-)consideration and integration of their own common sense or world knowledge that they build on or refer back to in order to make sense of the poem.[11] There are, for example, annotations that record an instance in which the student discovers a contradiction triggered by a discrepancy between their own associations regarding a word and its possible contexts and what is stated in the poem. This conflict requires them to (re-)assess their hypotheses with reference to the actual argument made by the poem, which often leads to a moment of reflection, noticeable in a more clearly argumentative structure of their annotations. For example, the annotators of the poem notice a paradoxical connection between seeing and not seeing that is developed throughout the sonnet: "[t]his … is a paradox since one cannot physically see with one's eyes closed" (Student A final "most I wink", L2 I). The

used tools of annotators (see AbuSeileek 1287; Lomicka 48), many paraphrases are actually interpretations and should therefore not be considered as the definitive reading of the line. Eardley, for example, argues that "notes … appear to be factual, objective, and a necessary means of eradicating difficulties in the material," but are actually "highly subjective readings of those aspects of the text of interest to a particular editor" (118; see also Steding 313; Battestin 4; Hagen "Von den Erläuterungen" 204; Bauer and Zirker "Seven Types of Problems" 213). Other annotations reveal rhetorical techniques that direct their readers' attention to aspects that the students find particularly interesting or consider "vital for a better understanding" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C). Some statements are even suggestive of a personally preferred reading of the line: "[t]he sense here should be" (Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L1 F) or "most probably refers to" (Student B final "thy shadow's form", L3 I). This issue is not reserved for interpretive annotations alone. When presenting historical information, for example, they indicate what students want to lay a particular focus on, describing a "decisive shift towards" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C) or pointing out that the theory just described "was quite popular in the Renaissance" (Student B final "thy shadow's form", L2 C). These examples show why Ricklefs would warn of dogmatic formulations, arguing that commentary should not paraphrase, but should analyse, combine, connect, discuss, support and justify, and should generally be of a high relevance for the text (72). Apart from the fact that they might suffocate the text, they might also influence the reader into believing the objectivity of the annotation and yield to the almost didactic character of the footnote. The example nevertheless also shows how what he calls 'commenting speech' can be actually be combined with appropriate academic register and modes of expressions. For example, Appel presents evidence that the quality of an explanation depends, first, on its factual correctness and appropriateness, and, second on how it is tailored to the recipient and also makes use of appropriate terminology (42).

11 Cf. J. Klein, who argues that new, complex knowledge is processed to a high degree by referring back to existing, related knowledge (34).

paradox here can only be identified, and possibly resolved, by integrating common knowledge into the overall reading of the poem.

One of the student's annotations of the first line of SON43 exemplifies this process: "[w]hen most I wink, then do mine eyes best see" (l. 1). Since the annotation makes the student's exact line of thought while annotating unusually explicit, it here serves as an example of the thought processes that are incited by the task of annotating the word "wink" (l. 1):

> A possible interpretation is that 'to wink' was used as a synonym for 'to blink' (*OED* 2). One could suggest that the speaker is able to see better when blinking more often. This could be compared to looking into the sun or a bright light, and being able to see better when blinking rapidly. Because of the explicit mentioning of sleeping and dreaming in line 3 of the poem ('But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee'), a different interpretation would be more fitting … (Student A final, L2 I)

The word *wink* is shown to be synonymous with blink, which leads the student to express her first intuition that the speaker's statement can be compared to the action of "looking into the sun" (Student A final "wink", L2 I). Blinking and looking into the bright light might be a familiar association in the actual world; here, however, it is incorrect with respect to the situation described in the rest of the sonnet. Indeed, this assumption is quickly discarded for the sake of a "more fitting" interpretation that considers the actual context in which the word is uttered, without imposing meaning on the poem that is not given by the text: she concludes that the references to "dreams" (l. 3) strongly suggest that the speaker is asleep or, at least, imagines her/his lover behind closed eyes. In the annotation, the relevance of the student's somewhat digressive comment can be questioned, but it shows how the student's very general claim, which is based on her own experience of the actual world, is overruled by a close analysis focused solely on the assertions made by the poem's speaker.[12] The annotation is thus representative of the student's comprehension processes while annotating and demonstrates her competence to direct her first inkling to a more focused textual analysis based on the poem's linguistic interpretability.[13] She can be said to successfully identify and to resolve the paradoxical

12 Miall argues that the interaction of linguistic utterances with the personal meaning for the individual readers "suggests that readers initially need to mobilize specific personal information to contextualize the world of a literary text" (*Literary Reading* 29). This interaction between text information, language and world knowledge, crucial for a comprehensive understanding of a text, is also described in Leubner et al.'s *Literaturdidaktik* (48).

13 In "Literary Texts in the Classroom", Kramsch discusses the importance of associations that each word in the text might evoke for the individual student, as far-fetched as they

statement of the first line (Student A final "wink", L2 I). A similar instance can be found when another student ponders the question whether the speaker is talking about "the darkness of the night, as this is the time when people go to sleep and close their eyes[, or] the darkness perceived upon closing one's eyes" (Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I). The statement shows how the student comes to think about and resolves the ambiguity caused by the antithetical syntax of the line. However, it is not knowledge and research alone that helps students to make sense of the sonnet. Their annotations are further indicative of another process that is essential for their work as readers and annotators.

4.1.3 *Making Connections*

The students' analysis and research can only lead to a comprehensive understanding of the sonnet when they are able to make connections between their different observations and, further, to evaluate the nature of these connections. In order to indicate the connection or contrast between different thoughts, ideas, observations or, generally, types of knowledge, the students use connectives in their writing, such as "furthermore", "even though" (Student B final "shadow", L3 I) or "also" (Student D final "All days are nights to see till I see thee", L1 F). Feilke found that the process of structuring their writing also induces students to continuously reflect on and structure their own thought processes ("Was sind Textroutinen?" 9). Thus, depending on the coherence between their ideas as well as the comprehensibility of their descriptions, certain conclusions can be drawn with regard to the students' own understanding of the subject matter they are discussing. These inferences can be made when evaluating the way students disclose connections between the sonnet's different textual elements on the level of content, form, or language (Leubner et al. 47).

For example, the students point out word repetitions: "the use of the same adjective seems to … encourage a comparison between …" (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I), argue that the understanding of one word "makes sense in the logic of the sonnet" (Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I), or indicate that "the idea … is taken up again later in the poem" (Student A final "look on", L2 I).[14] Furthermore, they

may be at first. These, she claims, help increase the text's relevance for the students and will motivate them to engage more with the text (Kramsch 360).

14 The students here employ a fairly common strategy in academic writing, revealing their competence as writers by applying the appropriate writing style. Both use meta-language in order to make explicit what is going to be discussed in the following. Another, more obvious example would be the following statement by Student A: "[t]he line can be interpreted in two different ways, depending on the paraphrase chosen" (final "unrespected",

connect the notions expressed in the poem to the information they have gathered concerning contemporary theories, controversies and critical discourse on these topics. In SON43, they connect their knowledge about "a common motif in early modern courtly poetry" (Student B final "shadow", L2 C) with an analysis of how the motif is presented in the poem. This analysis is followed by a comparison of the observations and the question whether the "motif [that] is also evoked" (Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L2 ierT) in other works by Shakespeare. Another such instance can be observed in an annotation in which the student establishes both a connection as well as an evaluation of the validity or plausibility of the hypothesis in the context of the poem: "the connection of … with the theatre is plausible" (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I).

Moreover, identifying word clusters, motifs and different associations and establishing the exact nature of the relationship between them enables the students to make sense of the poem. This strategy can be observed in many of the students' annotations; for example, when establishing connections between historical context information and the poem's formal features:

> "[i]n the reversed hierarchical relationship common to love sonnets of the time, the wooer fashions himself as dependent and subordinate to the object of pursuit, and the addressee is attributed with the power to bring light into the speaker's life" (Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L3 I).

The student here connects her research on the tradition of the love sonnet to the speaker's statements that imply a possible dependence on the addressee. Following a similar strategy, another student assigns meaning to the sonnet's sometimes confusing word play: "[g]iven the importance of … in its historical context, the elements … in the poem are not merely ornamental or signs of rhetorical playfulness" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I). In a different annotation, the student proves her ability to not only identify tropes important to the sonnet by mapping the imagery used, but also to connect and relate her two findings by showing how the "play with contrasting images and concepts underpins the general impression of paradox [sic] between dreams and reality" (Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L3 iraT).

L2 I). The sentence makes clear that, in the following, she will present and discuss both paraphrases in the context of the poem. Feilke calls this methodological technique "Verfahrensexplikation" ("Was sind Textroutinen?" 18).

Students' intertextual annotations are a special case with regard to establishing connections. These are often written in an argumentative style, especially when the reference is an indirect one and based on the treatment of a similar topic, tropes, or themes (cf. Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L2 ierT). This can be seen in the annotation on the line 5 "[t]hen thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright":

> Considering that the phrase 'make bright' might also imply that the addressee's shadow has a beautifying impact on 'the darkness of [the] night' ('shadow, n.' *OED* 2a), one might argue that line 5 is reminiscent of Shakespeare's Sonnet 27. In 27, the shadow of the addressee is not only bright 'like a jewel' (l. 11), but it also has the ability to '[make] black night beauteous' (l. 12), much like in Sonnet 43 … Yet, this idea of the image of the beloved shedding light onto the speaker's darkness is not solely reserved to Shakespeare's imagination, but seems to be part of a general tradition. For example, in Sidney's Sonnet 38 from his sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, 'Stella's image' (l. 6; p. 149) perceived in the speaker's dreams appears to be shining (after all, 'Stella' in Latin means 'star') … (Student B final, L2 ierT)

The student points out the similarities and differences between an idea expressed in SON43 that can also be found in other works by Shakespeare as well as works by Sidney and Spenser (cf. Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L2 ierT). The first part of the annotation is of a more descriptive nature which maps out the aspects of SON27 that make the two poems comparable. The student then assumes a broader perspective and tries to situate the motif taken up in both sonnets into the context of contemporary literary conventions. The annotation suggests that in intertextual annotations students use several skills at once. They draw on experiences from reading other literary works, establish the nature of the connections between the different literary works, and discuss and present the relationship between the works effectively. The annotation further highlights the fact that the students should be able to realise that the sonnet is not an isolated verbal document, but part of a literary tradition. A plausible interpretation of the sonnet therefore also requires them to analyse its different parts and how they relate to each other, meaning, an analysis of its linguistic and formal features and taking into consideration the relevant literary background that can give clues as to how the sonnet can be understood. Thus, although the information that is objectively conveyed on a linguistic level is limited, the annotating students are able to access the text by using and connecting all the information available.

4.1.4 *Phrasing and Arguing for a Hypothesis*

The students mainly use their observations to develop them into plausible interpretations. Generally, they concern themselves with those issues in the

sonnet that they think "might carry some … [further] implications" (Student B final "shadow", L3 I). Based on an analysis of the poem's formal features, imagery, rhetorical devices, possible allusions to contemporary debates, etc. the students then develop their hypotheses, which are often introduced by verb forms of "imply" (Student B final "thy shadow's form", L3 I; Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L1 F; Student D final "imperfect shade", L3 I), "allude to" (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L2 I), "assume" (Student A final "most I wink", L2 I; Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I) or "suggest" (Student A final "unrespected", L2 I; Student C final "darkly bright", L2 I; Student B final "thy shadow's form", L3 I; Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I). The students' choice of words when making a hypothesis is indicative of the polysemic character of the object of their scrutiny. Consequently, many of the students' interpretations use words and expressions that indicate a weighing of arguments for or against the reading of a line. In order to nevertheless lend their interpretation some authority, they embed their hypothesis in an argumentative structure.[15] Indicators of the students' attempts to argue for the most plausible interpretation are the use of adverbs and/or (often causal) conjunctions such as *therefore, although, yet, whereas, but, even though* (Student A final "see", L2 I; Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I; Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I; Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 Q; Student A final "unrespected", L2 I; Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L3 I), but also verbs such as "support" (Student A final "unrespected", L2 I) or "indicate" (Student A final "unrespected", L2 I) as well as expressions like the following: "bearing in mind" (Student C final "darkly bright", L2 I), "given the importance of" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I), "considering that" (Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L2 ierT) and "it could be argued that" (Student C final "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", L2 I).[16] These appear with high frequency in the students' interpretive annotations

15 J. Klein describes the act of explaining as involving two propositions: making explicit a situation (explanandum) by pointing out the special conditions or circumstances (explanans) that have logically led to the explanandum (30). This form of logical conclusion scheme, he argues, can be used to formulate more explicit declarations, prognoses or to derive more concrete implications (J. Klein 30f). Explanations therefore usually require, along with a description and presentation of a particular aspect, an argumentation delineating the possible context and its implications (J. Klein 28). Thus, what J. Klein describes is an approach that can be used when phrasing the interpretation of a passage in an explanatory annotation. It similarly involves the pointing out of an issue, an analysis of this aspect and the presentation of the implications based on the contextual evidence.

16 Gätje et al. reference several studies, showing that the use and range of such *verba dicendi* increases throughout the writers' maturation processes (131).

and reflect their careful assessment of all possible interpretive approaches.[17] The following annotation of "bright in dark directed" (l. 4) is representative of the student's argumentative strategies:

> … Yet, it is unclear what kind of darkness the speaker is talking about. It could be the darkness of the night, as this is the time when people go to sleep and close their eyes. Given that 'But' in line 3 introduces a shift away from 'day' (l. 2), the night-reading would make sense. However, it is equally possible that the speaker refers to the darkness perceived upon closing one's eyes. Instead of seeing nothing (or only blackness), the closing of the eyes allows the speaker to see something brightly and clearly. As the eyes are 'directed', it can be assumed that the image he sees is not random, but evoked deliberately. (Student B final, L2 I)

The annotation shows that the student is aware of the peculiarity of the construction "darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" which requires her to draw not only on her linguistic knowledge alone, but to also consider her world knowledge and how she can connect both in order make sense of the poem's complex rhetoric. Her annotation is therefore representative of a combination of skills. The phrases "[y]et, it is unclear" or "it is equally possible" show that the student recognises the ambiguity of the utterance. The ambiguity, however, cannot be easily resolved owing to the fact that the sonnet is notoriously underspecified. Her awareness of this issue is reflected in the argumentative structure of the annotation. She justifies her interpretation by presenting her close reading of the text, which enables her to make assumptions concerning the possible meaning of the line. This becomes particularly obvious in her conclusion that "the night-reading would make sense" (Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I). It shows that she can evaluate and reflect on her previous conclusions as well as identify the most plausible reading of the line.

4.1.5 *Critical Thinking*

Although the information in the annotations is often presented in a neutral, straightforward manner, a closer analysis reveals that the students' individual interaction with the text and its related materials has many facets. The use of qualifiers, for instance, can provide insight into the students' critical evaluation regarding the relevance of an interpretation or any other kind of information. They often reveal their evaluation of the secondary literature and its conformity with their own interpretation in an often subtly integrated judgment, such as in the following case: XY "goes even further … attributing positivity to this line" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I).

17 For example, *although* is used in an interpretive annotation 4 out of 6 times, *yet* 7 out of 10 times, *indicate* 5 out of 6 times.

The student here implies that the scholar "goes even further" than she would go with her own interpretation. She thus suggests that, although she considers this information plausible, she also has some reservations regarding the possible scope of the interpretation of this line. The readers of the annotation are accordingly left to judge for themselves whether they want to consider this interpretation as too far-fetched or not.

Another annotation expresses the student's judgement more openly: "describing the effect … as a balance is too weak, as it also creates tension and bewilderment instead of merely re-establishing harmony" (Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I).[18] The student obviously considers the interpretation suggested by a scholar as an insufficient description of the effect of the line. She therefore supplements the scholar's suggestion with her own interpretation, thus proving that she is not only capable of a critical reading of the poem, but also that she is able to critically reflect on the findings of her research:

> The speaker is neither in a place of darkness nor of light. Describing this in-between state as a 'balance' would neglect the tension created by the semantics and rhetorical figures of the poem: they all indicate that the speaker is torn between positive and negative emotions. (Student B final "bright in dark directed", L2 I)

DiYanni even sees a long-term benefit for students in this type of literary analysis, arguing that "through producing annotations and marginalia students become acculturated into the community of critical readers, such that reading critically becomes for them purposeful, meaningful, and habitual" (7). The last aspect, in particular, can be an incentive for students to engage more actively and more confidently with literary texts in the future.[19]

4.2 Discussion of Observations – Reading Competence and/or Literary Competence?

The students' attempts to understand and to explain Shakespeare's SON43 become evident in their annotations and, although some of their annotations are factually incorrect, they are authentic products of their engagement

18 For more information concerning students' writing techniques when including their own subjective reflections into an academic paper see Gätje et al. "Positionierung".

19 See, for example Gailey, who claims in her article on "Teaching Attentive Reading and Motivated Writing Through Digital Editing" that the "sense of acquired expertise on a topic can be a powerful impetus for purposeful writing" (198).

with the text (cf. OECD 49). Accordingly, the students' annotations provide insight into what they consider important for themselves and others in order to understand the sonnet as well as, more importantly, show that they are able make sense of the poem (cf. also DiYanni 4; Senger 71). Their competence to make sense of the utterances in Shakespeare's SON43 (for themselves and others) is expressed in their ability (1) to show a comprehensive grasp of the reading material by reflecting on and discussing, for example, textual ambiguities in their annotations. The annotations further indicate that the students are able (2) to draw on and integrate different kinds of (acquired) knowledge to make the poem more accessible to themselves (and others). In this context, it also became clear that the students' use of routine expressions and phrases, in many cases, reflects their attempts at coming to terms with the textual phenomena they are trying to explain in their annotations. These endeavours prove to be closely linked with their ability (3) to make connections between their (newly gained) insights and to determine the relationship between the different parts of the sonnet. The analysis further suggests that the previous thought processes are an integral part of the students' capability to (4) formulate and argue for a hypothesis regarding the sonnet's meaning. Moreover, the annotations reveal that the quality of the students' annotations increases when (5) they are able to not only reflect on the statements made by a community of critical readers, but they can also discuss these statements with regard to their own interpretation of the line/sonnet. Finally, rather than working in a hierarchical or structured order, these five aspects overlap and appear in different forms of expression in the annotations.

The annotations provide insights into the students' competence to engage with the poem. Nevertheless, the analysis also suggests that the definition of reading competence is, as of now, not precise enough to describe all the processes going on during literary reading. The literature indirectly supports this assumption: all aspects above can be found under more or less corresponding definitions in studies concerned with reading competence and literary competence alike (cf. Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 139ff; Ehlers 120; Lenhard 47; Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 71ff; Steininger *Modellierung literarischer Kompetenz* 352; Weinert 55). The analysis may therefore suggest that, irrespective of the genre or format, students (or, generally, readers) can be expected to read texts in similar ways. This is, however, an all too hasty assumption and it should be considered with due reservations. As of now, the similarity between the definitions of literary and reading competence only allows for one tentative hypothesis: reading a literary text requires a basic skill set applicable to any kind of text, but there may be competences specific for reading literary texts. The question is how to investigate the competences needed to engage in understanding processes that are characteristic

of literary texts only.[20] To answer this question, the next chapter will be concerned with defining literary competence by focusing on the students' hermeneutic approach to the sonnet. The following chapters therefore aim to provide a detailed account of how the students employ competences in ways specific to literary texts and how they engage in a hermeneutic reading process which enables them to make sense of the text.[21] This approach will help both specify the connection between the two competences and point out their differences.

20 These observations generally accord with the literature on reading and literary competences, see ch. 5. They also reconfirm the argument made in the previous chapters (see ch. 1.3 and ch. 3.2), namely that literary texts can be a valuable source to teach us both something about text comprehension in general as well as literary reading specifically.

21 See, for example, ch. 5.4.2.1 which not only includes a discussion of the theoretical considerations regarding the inclusion of, e.g., historical information in the interpretation of a fictional text, but also describes in more detail how this process is different when reading a non-fictional text.

CHAPTER 5

Investigating Literary Competence

This chapter is concerned with the investigation and definition of literary competence. Section 5.1 opens with a critical discussion of the distinction between reading competence and literary competence, including a critical analysis of examples from previous studies (cf. ch. 5.1.1) and concludes with an outlook in ch. 5.1.2 The discussion provides the basic framework for section 5.2 which begins with a detailed definition of the nature of the textual material as well as an analysis of the students' responses to SON43 as a fictional text. The observations support the hypothesis that an investigation of the students' hermeneutic approach can help further define literary competence. The analysis in section 5.3 not only provides an authentic picture of their developing understanding of the sonnet, but also suggests that their ability to evaluate their current state of understanding is closely linked to their metacognitive skills. Section 5.4 is therefore concerned with the students' metacognitive strategies and how these influence their understanding of the sonnet. Finally, section 5.5 provides a more refined definition of literary competence; it also discusses a further implication of the findings: literary reading should, first and foremost, be recognised and taught as a social activity. The chapter ends with an appeal for more research on literary competence as well as for the promotion of the concept in general (see sub-section 5.5.3).

5.1 Reading Competence or Literary Competence – A Conceptual Problem

Although literary competence is closely connected to reading competence and cannot be detached from factors that also determine the scope of the individual reading competence, such as intelligence, declarative as well as procedural knowledge (including language, world and domain knowledge),[1] and metacognitive skills, it should be considered as separate from reading competence (Abraham 15; Artelt and Schlagmüller 179; Frederking "Literarische

1 This is a clear distinction from Chomsky's definition of competences that excludes declarative knowledge, which is, for him, an aspect that defines performance (*Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* 4). See Klieme and Hartig 19, Weinert 55, Leubner et al. "Literaturdidaktik" 45, and Klieme "Was sind Kompetenzen" 10 for a definition of reading competences.

bzw. (literar)ästhetische Kompetenz" 42; Frederking "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz"; Meier et al. "Literaturästhetische Textverstehenskompetenz" 241; Meier et al. "An Extended Model" 56; Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 70; Surkamp 81). This opinion has been widely accepted since Artelt and Schlagmüller's report in 2004 which presented initial evidence that literary competence should be researched independently. Nevertheless, Burwitz-Melzer rightly claims that research in literary didactics has not yet succeeded in developing its own competence model and verifying it empirically (cf. Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 136; see also Burwitz-Melzer "Text- und Medienkompetenz" 141f; Steininger "A Defence of Literature" 91).[2] The definition of literary competence as well as its relation to reading competence is still a matter of discussion, and a look at the literature reveals that there is still much work to do.[3]

As of now, literary competence is defined as the disposition to make sense of the content and meaning of a literary text and the ability to grasp the formal peculiarities of a literary text and to analyse their aesthetic function within their historical contextual framework (Diehr and Surkamp 27; Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 71ff).).[4] In "An Extended Model of Literary Literacy", Meier et al. further list the ability to "recognize

2 In "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz", Frederking discusses the difficulty to operationalise and empirically test literary competence, pp. 342–53. His summaries show that these studies are mainly concerned with cognitive aspects of reading. Despite his intriguing and insightful discussions both in *Schwer messbare Kompetenzen* and "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz", he leaves his readers puzzled as to what a new approach to measuring literary competence might look like. In "Beyond Functional Aspects of Reading Literacy", however, he suggests a tentative approach: "Therefore, an interpretation can be judged as more or less appropriate as long as unsuitable interpretations can be falsified on the basis of the text. This basic assumption presents the starting point of our item construction process." (3) His basic assumption reflects the problems that come along with the item construction: they should reflect the fact that literary texts are often ambiguous and that some interpretations can neither be falsified nor confirmed on the basis of the text; however, they should also be suitable for empirical investigations. For another discussion of this issue, see also Steinmetz, *Verstehenssupport im Literaturunterricht*, pp. 17ff.

3 See the contribution "Competence Modelling in the English Classroom: Literary Studies meets Psychometrics" by Zirker et al. in which they, among other things, discuss existing definitions of competence thereby providing an extensive overview of the literature on reading competences, Klieme and Hartig's "Kompetenzkonzepte in den Sozialwissenschaften und im erziehungswissenschaftlichen Diskurs", or Glaesser's more critical approach to the overall concept and use of competences in "Competence in Educational Theory and Practice: A Critical Discussion".

4 These three aspects should not be seen as clearly separated, but as contributing to literary competence as a set of interacting sub-competences. For example, subject-specific contextual knowledge is necessary in order to make appropriate literary aesthetic judgments, and

foregrounded passages", to "apply specific literary knowledge" as well as cognitive processes that help them "recognize emotions intended by a literary text" among those competences that might be important for understanding literary texts (58f; see also Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 71ff and Frederking et al. "Ein Modell literarästhetischer Urteilskompetenz"). Based on Burwitz-Melzer's model of literary competence, Steininger adds methodological and research competences to his own definition of literary competence (Steininger "Modellierung literarischer Kompetenz" 385ff). He describes them as those strategies employed for solving problems that come up in the process of the textual analysis and those that involve the acquisition and appropriate application of (background) knowledge. A particular focus in educational studies is the literary experience and the readers' abilities to reflect on their emotional reactions to the text and those textual passages or phenomena that trigger them, as well as their motivation to read the text (Hallet "Literarische Kompetenz" 201; Frederking "Literarische und (literar)ästhetische Kompetenz" 87; Surkamp 81).

In summary, the approaches to investigating literary competence try to (1) describe the processes a reader goes through to understand what a literary text means (2) take into account the formal peculiarities of literary texts, as well as (3) the socio-historical as well as generic implications and (4) make reader responses an important aspect by highlighting the individual confrontation with the textual product (see, e.g., Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 139ff; Ehlers 120; Lenhard 47; Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 71ff; Steininger *Modellierung literarischer Kompetenz* 352f). These aspects are, however, not only somewhat vague, but they are also not necessarily specific to literary competence only: on the contrary, they show parallels to those competences defined as reading competence (s. previous chapter) and can or rather should be considered relevant for reading *any* text, be it literary or not.[5] It therefore appears that educationalists are still working with a vague definition of literary competence that could seriously undermine their endeavours to develop students' literary competence.[6] The reasons for the absence of more

aesthetic judgments can contribute to expand and develop the subject-specific contextual knowledge.

5 Cf., for example, Lisiecka-Czop in *Verstehensmechanismen und Lesestrategien von fremdsprachigen Fachtexten*, who presents a similar list of strategies, although her research is concerned with the reading of factual texts only (95).

6 For example, in "Typische Operationen literarischen Verstehens", Zabka presents a concept of literary reading that introduces a distinction between the information that the text or text features provide and the reader's competence to process these features (80–101; see also Zabka "Interpretationskompetenz"); however, he does not introduce a model that can be

concrete definitions and a more differentiated picture of what exactly constitutes literary competence lie not only in the general neglect of literary reading in particular in educational policies (see ch. 1.2.2.2), but also in the difficulties educationalists encounter when confronted with the task of defining the reading material itself (cf. Frederking "Literarische bzw. (literar)ästhetische Kompetenz" 43).

Burwitz-Melzer's critical analysis of the European as well as German education policy suggests that teaching "literary competence" specifically is hardly encouraged in education plans owing to the lack of a clear distinction between the different reading materials. She criticises the political decisions concerning a Europe-wide level of education (Gemeinsamer Europäischen Referenzrahmen 2001 (GER)), the German national educational standards for EFL (2004) as well as the uniform examination requirements for the Abiturprüfung in EFL (EPA), which, in her opinion, treat literary texts inadequately and in an ill-informed manner (Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 136; see also Burwitz-Melzer "Text- Und Medienkompetenz" 142f).[7] She concludes that the handling of didactic questions when it comes to literature is negligent, which can be seen in the fact that neither the European nor the national standards for education clearly distinguish between factual and literary texts (Burwitz-Melzer "Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 136).[8]

A similar situation can be seen in the US in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English/Language Arts (ELA) grades K-5 and 6–12. The

operationalised (cf. Frederking "Modellierung Literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz" 348). In another study, Schreier and Appel claim to focus more on the text and also introduce a different approach, suggesting that the reception of a fictional work is an interplay between an objective distinction of the individual's own world of experience, the fictional world and, simultaneously, the establishment of connections between those two (243; see also Hurrelmann). While their approach is promising, it is still too much influenced by their focus on the reader and not the text properties and the interpretation process these might require.

7 See, for example, the requirements for the Abitur examination in EFL, pp. 11–14, in *Facherlass für die Abiturprüfung 2021* published by Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, in which literature is given so little prominence that students may not consider it expedient to even read the works of literature on the reading list. In fact, for the first two tasks (reading comprehension and analysis), the students are provided with a short text (excerpt) based on which they have to answer questions and write a short analysis and, for the third task task (composition), they are given the chance to choose between essay writing and literary interpretation, which allows them to mostly avoid having to concern themselves with the focus topic literature at all.

8 For example, all three regulations reviewed by Burwitz-Melzer stipulate that students should be tested on the basis of their abilities to extract information from the different texts, grossly disregarding the fact that while this might be a suitable method for descriptive texts, it is likely an inappropriate method to evaluate literary understanding, as has been suggested above in the context of cognitive studies ("Ein Lesekompetenzmodell" 136; see ch. 1.2.2.).

Standards actually devote a separate section to literary reading with a particular focus on close reading (cf. Welsch et al. 96); however, a scrutiny of the key ideas reveals that the Standards are vague and it is not entirely clear which concept of 'literariness' the authors of the CCSS applied. For example, the English Language Arts Standards for reading an informational text state the following under the aspect "Craft and Structure" (*English Language Arts Standards*, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4):

> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

Under the same aspect, this paragraph was adapted to reading a literary text (*English Language Arts Standard*, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4):

> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

It is unclear why "specific word choices on meaning and tone" should not play a role in informational texts and, apart from the fact that it is difficult to determine in the first place, how "language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful" should be a feature that is unique for literary texts only (*English Language Arts Standards*). Consequently, the specifications of the different requirements for a literary and an informational text seem rather random.

This last aspect becomes further obvious in the section "Key Ideas and Details" which specifies that students should "provide an objective summary of the text" (*English Language Arts Standards*, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2). It is unclear, however, what the summary of a literary text means since it is by no means identical with its plot. Furthermore, an "objective" summary is difficult to achieve since fictional texts are characterized by their ability to trigger different meanings for different readers (cf. Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268; see ch. 5.2.2). It therefore seems that the new standards, setting a stronger focus on close reading of literary texts, have been imposed as a reaction to (and to counterbalance) recent discussions about screen reading[9] – which have witnessed a powerful resurgence in the wake of the

9 For example, Mangen presents evidence showing that "research on screen reading in general indicates that screens seem to encourage skimming, scanning, and hence a kind of 'superficial' reading" (251).

now popular concept of distant reading[10] – without, however, properly outlining the didactic implications the introduction of this concept might have (cf. Welsch et al. 109f). Overall, the brief review suggests that educational studies continue to show certain deficiencies regarding their definition of literary competence, the implementation of the concept into education plans as well as their development of study designs that take into account the particular features of the textual material.[11] This assumption finds confirmation when taking a closer look at some specific studies. It becomes obvious that the reasons for these deficiencies lie in a discrepancy between what has been discovered so far and what can ultimately be said about literary competence. Despite the existence of numerous definitions and proposals for a literary competence model, it is evident that actual research insights and the definitions are at different stages of development: the definitions themselves are highly advanced, while the research itself lags behind due to the continuing lack of a clear separation and definition of factual and literary texts.

5.1.1 *Critical Discussion of Studies on Literary Competence*

The following analysis of two studies in particular that investigate literary competence reveals that there are two main issues. Firstly, the approaches discussed raise some methodological questions as not all tasks are equally suited for the different research materials at hand. Secondly, it seems that those studies that attempt a definition of the reading material fail because educationalists make the definition of the competences needed to understand literary texts dependent on their expectation of which competence they hope to be able to promote with the reading material. The close analysis of two studies, with reference to other studies (Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" and Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel"), will allow for a further specification of the issues researchers are struggling with and suggests that in order to develop a

10 For a basic introduction to the concepts of close and distant reading, see Moretti *Distant Reading*.

11 For example, this issue becomes obvious in Frederking's discussion of the findings of three large scale studies (DESI, LUK, and the DFG project "Lesesozialisation in der Mediengesellschaft") in *Schwer messbare Kompetenzen: Herausforderungen für die empirische Fachdidaktik*. Despite the fact that the studies do not research literary competence exclusively, they nevertheless use their results to also make claims about the participants' literary competence. This is problematic as a brief analysis will show that the studies are hardly designed to allow for statements about literary competence. The reason why the researchers can maintain to nevertheless test literary competence – often without having set out to do so in the first place (cf. Beck and Klieme) – is that many studies, for want of more adequate approaches, rely on the very same definitions and methods that are used for assessing reading competence.

methodologically sound approach to research on literary competence, empiricists and educationalists will have to concern themselves with two fundamental questions: What are sensible questions to ask when wanting to investigate literary understanding specifically? What makes a literary text a literary text in the first place?

"Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz"

The study by Roick et al., "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz", investigates an approach to literary reading that is focused on students' close reading abilities. Nevertheless, an analysis of the questions reveals some issues: it seems that the researchers were struggling to find a test format that is suitable for investigating literary competence. The questions are based on an excerpt from Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. The short passage itself is a stream-of-consciousness-like report of the narrator's auditory impressions of the world outside his room. Written in short paratactic sentence fragments, the narrator's senses simultaneously take in the sounds closest to him and the noise further down the street. His description of the commotion around him creates an eerie scene in which he, although safely in his bed, appears to be literally enveloped by the noise, standing right in the middle of the traffic, automobiles driving over him, and the electric tram rushing through his chamber, thus enhancing the nightmarish illusion of the asynchronous tumult of the city rushing in and out of his room.

Two questions are introduced that both deal with this passage; one question is in multiple choice format (MC), the other question is in constructed response format (CR).[12] The MC question simply asks the student to tick the box where the scene is set; either on a farm, in a small town, a large town or a village (Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 72f; cf. also Frederking et al. "Beyond Functional Aspects of Reading Literacy"). The CR question asks the students to discuss (with examples from the text) whether the scene is set on a farm or in a large city. In the MC format, the given answers farm, village, large or small city require the students to draw on their linguistic net of associations connected with these words and then look for keywords in the text, a task that basically just tests their abilities to retrieve specific information from the passage. Admittedly, the task is made harder by the fact that the passage offers keywords for all settings, which is not in the least objectionable as students are obliged to read closely and choose their answer carefully. Nevertheless, in the case of the MC question format, students are simply left to rule out the most unlikely answers or go with a 25% chance to tick the correct

12 For the full passage and corresponding tasks, please see Appendix B.

answer. This approach to the task is clearly more informative about students' test-taking strategies than their literary competence.[13] Moreover, although the CR item at least asks students to give a coherent justification for their choice, it pre-empts their answers to the passage by predefining two possible solutions and suggesting that one of them is wrong. The students' chances to argue for the 'right' answer are therefore at 50%.

It is difficult to comprehend, despite the authors' explanations, how the competences tested with those kinds of questions can be considered specifically literary, except for the fact that they concern a literary text. These kinds of questions are, however, not unusual in educational contexts. Although the openness of many literary texts should be given more consideration in comprehension tests, many reading comprehension tests (e.g. the German Abitur, but also the Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English) do the exact opposite in their multiple choice tests, and sometimes even give zero points if the candidate writes that Character X is "upset" instead of "sad". They are designed to improve close reading skills and to make students pay attention to detail; however, they could also, in the worst case, have the opposite effect: they could train students to ignore ambiguity and may, in the long run, even have a negative impact on their reading comprehension, "privileging answer-hunting" and "narrowing, rather than broadening responses" from students (Hynds 120).[14] It is therefore even more important to dedicate more sustained efforts to the scrutiny and definition of literary competences. This might eventually also lead to the development of more advanced test formats.

Another look at the questions from Roick et al.'s study further illustrates this aspect. Irrespective of their format, the exemplary questions from Roick et al.'s study both ask for the narrator's location. Even though the scene from Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* is quite intense and vividly descriptive, it does not give any concrete clue as to the actual location of the narrator. Although the electric tram and automobiles make the answers for

13 See A. A. Rupp et al. whose "findings strongly suggest that the sequence and structure of MC questions appear to provide important cues for test-takers that allow or influence them to select response strategies, which may result in response processes that deviate significantly from those predicted by a model of reading comprehension in non-testing contexts." (469) For a conclusive discussion of the use of MC question formats for testing reading comprehension see their full article "How Assessing Reading Comprehension with Multiple-choice Questions Shapes the Construct", pp. 441–74.

14 Giovanelli also argues that an approach to a literary text which is "largely influenced by the teacher" plays down student's own responses to the text and, in the worst case, encourage them to search for and reduce the text to a certain 'message' (180ff). The study is therefore a good example of how a predetermined approach to a text may help point out to students and teach them about elements of the story, but, unfortunately, does not teach them the competence to engage with a literary text (cf. Giovanelli 180).

farm and village unlikely, the last few sentences of the passage, mentioning a dog barking and a rooster crowing, might put this into question. This specific excerpt of the novel is therefore ambiguous with regard to the narrator's location. One reading could be that to hear a dog barking and a rooster crowing over the noise of the city is a relief for the narrator, as these two noises finally send him to sleep, which suggests that he is not used to the sounds of the city and would rather fall asleep to more familiar farm or village noises. However, whereas the barking of the dog is not unlikely in a city, hearing the crowing of a rooster is somewhat at odds with the previous depiction of turbulent urban life. There could be two explanations for this. Either the narrator, in his half-awake state, mistakes a city noise for the crowing of the rooster, or, considering the nightly setting of the passage, the strangely surreal account of the scene (personifications and paratactic sentences enhance the intensity of the impressions on the overwhelmed narrator) could also imply that the narrator is under the illusion that he is awake and listening to the sounds of the city, whereas, actually, he is already asleep. The nightmarish events in his dreams might or might not be evoked by memories of a past life in a large city. Then, hearing the real sounds of his farm or village surroundings, he is eventually soothed into a dreamless sleep. The passage therefore does not allow for a clear answer without more context. Nevertheless, both question formats ask the students to give definite answers to questions that, without having read the novel, they can hardly be expected to provide.[15] The task formulation is therefore inadequate; if anything, the questions encourage students to offer (in the case of the MC item unexplained) speculations concerning the setting of the passage.[16]

Literary texts are rarely done justice to in terms of right or wrong answers or the identification of text items such as tram, automobiles, rooster, or dog alone. Rather, adequate interpretations "rely on explicit and coherent

15 Both questions suggest that the authors of this item were familiar with the work and failed to fully analyse the selected passage out of the context of the novel in order to make sure to know what kind of information uninformed readers might gather from the passage and, consequently, which questions they can be expected to answer and how. This is confirmed when looking at Roick et al.'s considerations concerning possible student answers, which mention the text's ambiguity but fail to reflect on the impossibility to answer their questions without further context (cf. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" 72f). Interpretations indeed depend on a combination of complex processes that require students' in-depth linguistic analysis of the entire passage as well as the consideration of the context of the passage itself. Thus, apart from the questionability of the questions, the selected passage itself appears to be chosen somewhat arbitrarily.

16 See also Leslie and Caldwell who note that the "lack of recognition of the multifaceted nature of the inference process impinges on the validity of questions presently used in the classroom" (232).

arguments" (Veivo and Knuuttila 283; cf. also Scholz 143; Currie "Interpreting Fictions" 111; Jansohn 218). These, however, develop from a series of inferences and a multi-step process involving the "formation, comparison and evaluation of hypotheses" (Scholz 139) which will, nevertheless, always be subject to revisions and modifications (DiYanni 11). A more appropriate approach to this passage would therefore have been a question that actually encourages the students' critical reflections regarding the composition and ambiguity of the passage, which would make transparent the thought processes that have led students to draw the one or the other conclusion. The answers to this question would at least reflect their ability to consider and discuss the particular features of the text they are dealing with and, based on their analysis, draw their conclusions. The issue described here shows that it is inexpedient to rely on students' claims to have understood an utterance (see ch. 5.1); rather, "being able to say **how one has established the meaning** of a line seems to be a more reliable indicator" of actual understanding (Bauer et al. "'When most I wink, then' – what?" 11, my emphasis). It therefore makes more sense to develop tasks that require students to explain how they came to make certain statements about a text and, then, to analyse the forms and expressions of understanding in their explanations.

The selection of the passage and the corresponding questions suggest that it is yet unclear how the competences needed in order to understand a literary text can be investigated adequately without disregarding the material that triggers the employment of these particular competences. The discussion strongly suggests that asking just for the outcome of these complex processes is a futile endeavour when it comes to researching literary competence. Moreover, the observation also supports Steininger's argument that "[e]mpirical research on literary competence can possibly not be successful completely without some supplementary qualitative research" ("A Defence of Literature" 92).[17] Indeed, it seems that the cognitive processes as well as necessary competence that allows students to make statements about a text have not yet been outlined sufficiently to allow for their operationalisation and thus, larger empirical studies.

Fictionality Competence?[18]

Some studies (see below) attempt to consider the particular features of literary texts and suggest that it is the fictional character of a literary text that

17 See also discussion of Rupp's case study below.

18 For a comprehensive definition of fictionality competence, see Groeben and Dutt in *Handbuch Erzählliteratur*, pp. 65–66.

has an influence on students' reading behaviour and requires them to draw on a different set of competences (cf. Rössler 175; Spinner 7; Leubner and Saupe *Lesestrategien für die Hypothesenbildung*; Schreier and Appel; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel"; Müller and Richter; Bracker). Most of these studies investigate students' perception or recognition of fictionality as well as their capabilities to relate the presented matter in the fictional text to her/his own world of experience.[19] The competence to deal with fictionality is thus often divided into two sub-competences: first, the competence to differentiate between fiction and reality (Realitäts-Fiktions-Unterscheidung (RFU[20]) or Faktion-Fiktions-Unterscheidungskompetenz (Rössler 172)) and, second, the competence to relate the text to reality (Realitäts-Fiktions-Bezugskompetenz or Fiktionsrezeptionskompetenz (Rössler 173)) (see Schreier and Appel; Saupe; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel"; Nickel-Bacon; Rössler; Frederking "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz"). The latter refers to, for example, the relatability of moral or ethical dilemmas presented and discussed in a literary text.[21] Consequently, an essential part of literary competence, according to educationalists, is the ability to recognise the fictional world as fictional and, in a second step, to relate and apply information or scenes presented in the text to reflections on one's own experiences of the real world (Schreier and Appel 246).[22] Groeben and Dutt therefore describe fictional competence as

19 Their approach may, again, have been influenced by cognitive studies, see ch. 1.2.2.2 as well as ch. 3.1.3 See, i.e., Hallet "Literatur, Bildung Und Kompetenzen" 17; Surkamp 89; Bredella "Die welterzeugende und die welterschließende Kraft literarischer Texte" 74; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 109; Schreier and Appel 246; Saupe 65; Nickel-Bacon et al.; Rössler; Frederking "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz".

20 See Schreier und Appel for more information concerning how the presentation of 'reality' in the respective medium can influence the perception and the degree of immersion in the story (238).

21 For more information on the power of literary texts to create new perspectives on and bridges to the real world of experience, see especially Bredella's "Die welterzeugende und die welterschließende Kraft literarischer Texte".

22 For example, Saupe, in *Lernchancen*, presents an approach to teaching a unit on the young adult fiction novel *Switcher*. Each lesson encourages students to direct their focus on one specific aspect in the narrative (e.g. the main character, Tess, her social life, her relationship to her friend, Kevin, etc. (cf. Saupe 64)). The tasks are formulated in a way that promotes students' reading for content only. Their 'interpretations' of the texts are therefore likely to be mostly descriptive rather than analytic. Although the unit is designed for year 7–8 students, and they can hardly be expected to be able to deal with a thorough introduction to theories of fictionality, it nevertheless becomes clear that there is a certain lack of a concept of what constitutes fictional competence beyond being able to identify a story as fictional (notably, a story about two teenagers that can turn into any animal of their liking) and comparing their social life to one's own. There is no focus on, e.g., an analysis of language or character presentation. It is indeed quite possible to assume that

the development of a certain attitude towards the text and its content (65). A closer scrutiny of the objectives and materials used in the studies reveals three shortcomings of their approaches.

First, most of the studies dealing with RFU include other media apart from literary texts. Schreier and Appel, for example, discuss their concept of RFU in connection with media such as computer games that aim at a high level of involvement, reality TV, horror movies, etc. (Schreier and Appel 248; see also Nickel-Bacon et al. 29; see Hallet "Literatur, Bildung und Kompetenzen" 17; Surkamp "Literarische Texte" 89; Bredella "Die welterzeugende und die welterschließende Kraft literarischer Texte" 74; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 109; Schreier and Appel 246; Saupe 65; Rössler; Frederking "Modellierung literarischer Rezeptionskompetenz"). As a consequence, many of these studies do not define fiction by consulting the literary scholarship concerning 'fiction' at all, but just adhere to the idea that to be able to deal with fictionality means to be able to distinguish between the real world and the 'fake' world in a text or other kind of media. In the context of increasing digitalisation and high-involvement media it is understandable that educationalists would want to raise students' awareness of and foster their ability to reflect on what it means to clearly distinguish between what is real and what is fiction;[23] however, this approach to reading fiction is a drastically simplified version of the actual processes involved when reading fiction as discussed by literary scholars.

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even students in year 7–8 may very well be able to also do a close reading of a passage and focus on the language, the way in which, e.g., a certain character is depicted and how this affects the presentation of this character.

23 In this context, Bracker argues that the focus should rather be on "developing an understanding of the constructive nature of reality and, in this context, the symbolic nature of language as our tool for accessing the world" (24, *my translation*). It is indeed crucial that students learn to reflect on how language is used to communicate and how this may affect them. It is therefore important to note that it is not only language in literature, but language in general that has the capacity to allow us to be affected by what we read: if we acknowledge that "the language we learn is the source of our world picture" and if a poem or other text "can make us see that world differently" (Belsey 9–10), then we need not only learn to appreciate literature's educational potential in that respect, but, first and foremost, we must learn to understand language and how it can shape our understanding of the world. We may also recall Gioia's almost prophetic warning in her memorable essay "Can Poetry Matter" that "[a] society whose intellectual leaders lose the skill to shape, appreciate, and understand the power of language will become the slaves of those who retain it – be they politicians, preachers, copywriters, or newscasters." In light of the unbroken struggle against 'fake news', her warning attains unprecedented topicality. Understanding how language can be used and how it affects us should therefore be of utmost interest for educationalists.

Second, some studies are more concerned with the effect the choice of didactic methods has on students' interpretations rather than on how students were able to arrive at their interpretations. In Rupp's "Empirisches Beispiel", for example, a study concerned with literary interpretation in the classroom, the author chooses a short story, Günter Kunert's "Olympia Zwo", which deals with media and media use (Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 106f).[24] The choice of text suggests that the study was designed with a strong pedagogical purpose in mind. It may also explain why the focus of the study is mostly on readers' "Anschlusskommunikation" rather than the students' actual work on the text (follow-up responses or communication) (Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 107). In fact, Rupp states that he will only focus on the interpretative aspect of literary reading in his study, thereby excluding students' formal, semantic and structural analysis of the text as part of his investigation ("Empirisches Beispiel" 107). In this context, he specifies that interpretation, for him, describes those processes concerned with text intention and text evaluation (Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 107). The focus of his study is therefore hardly on the text itself, but on the analysis of the students' responses to the text that become obvious in their subsequent work on other, related texts, their own lyrical texts, and short films, their general communication in the classroom, a questionnaire, and interviews (Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 107). Because of his approach, his study inevitably fails to do what it proclaims to do: to investigate how students understand literary texts (cf. Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 109).

These observations intimate the third issue: it becomes clear that the studies concerned with fiction and literary reading focus less on the text and more on students' emotional-affective processes as well as their abilities to apply what they have read to their own world (Schreier and Appel 243; see also Meier et al. "An Extended Model" 56; Hurrelmann 281f or even Finck von Finckenstein *Kompetenzentwicklung im filmbasierten Englischunterricht*).[25] The studies are

24 Perpetual loner, Wilhelm Zwart, imagines a beautiful newscaster to address him personally during her news programme one evening (Kunert "Olympia Zwo"). Zwart's fixation on the newscaster following this short interaction is certainly a result of his loneliness and desire for social contact, but the story also draws a picture of an elderly man who comes into contact with a technological world so foreign to him – he is also a sceptic of the radio and, in the end, the newscaster turns out to be a robot – that he is incapable of understanding its implications (Kunert "Olympia Zwo").

25 This statement should not be understood to undermine the importance of affect while reading (a fictional text). On the contrary, there is an important connection between affect and cognition as studies, such as, for example, Rumbold and Simecek's small-scale study with university students "Affective and Cognitive Responses to Poetry in the University Classroom", pp. 335–50, prove. See also Pullinger and Whitley's "Beyond Measure: The Value of the Memorised Poem", pp. 314–25, and Miall's "Beyond the Schema

mainly concerned with methods that could help increase the text's relevance for the students, promote their reading motivation and, ideally, their personal development.[26] Although understanding and, accordingly, fostering these aspects of students' reading behaviour is undeniably an integral part of teaching literary texts, the studies fall short of shedding light on the competences students apply when reading the text. Groeben and Dutt, for example, concede that a fully-fledged theory and research in this area are still lacking (Groeben and Dutt 66; see also Rössler 175; Saupe 65).

Altogether, it seems that most approaches to literary reading (1) focus almost exclusively on the subject reading the text rather than the text itself and (2) neglect a crucial part of literary reading: repeated close readings of the text (passage), which potentially involves other cognitive processes that allow the students to analyse, assess and understand the text in all its parts.[27] The first aspect in particular poses a major obstacle for educational studies, as hardly any study includes current research from literary studies that would allow them to define the specific nature of fictional texts.[28] Understanding

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Given: Affective Comprehension of Literary Narratives", pp. 55–78, prove. Nevertheless, students should be taught to reflect on their affective responses to the text and trace "the source of their responses in the language of the poem itself" (Rumbold and Simecek 344). For an insightful discussion of experiencing vs. interpreting literature in an educational context, see also Fialho et al.'s study "Experiencing or Interpreting Literature: Wording Instructions", pp. 58–76. See also ch. 5.2.

26 The exaggerated focus on an emotional approach to a literary text is disconcerting as it has reduced literary reading to a superficial matter of identification or non-identification with the characters in the text and the question how students may (or may not) mature emotionally from the experience or, in the best case, develop a certain attitude towards, for example, particular ethical standpoints addressed. Although these are essential components of literary reading, they are decisively not the only ones, let alone, the only way to approach or use a literary text in the classroom. This widespread misconception has, however, effected a fatal blindness towards the texts versatility of applications in other areas of (language) teaching. See also ch. 5.5.3.

27 In this context, a recent study by Welsch et al. suggests that "teachers should select short, complex texts which are either on or above-grade level and these texts should reflect a range of genres. Repeated reading, use of text dependent questions, student annotations, and discussion are key elements of close reading which should be evident in close reading instructional routines" (109).

28 Another example of a poor adaptation of the methodological approach to the specific nature of the research material is the study by Schmitz et al. They claim to test students' genre expectations and the effects of text cohesion on reading comprehension. The term 'genre' is only vaguely defined and used indiscriminately to describe the texts in terms of their topic as well as their being fictional or non-fictional. The same applies for the researchers' claim that they included literary as well as expository passages in the texts for the survey without, however, defining what they consider a "literary passage" (1115). They then set out to test students' ability to process text cohesion of what they purported to

literary texts obviously involves more than the mere identification of a text as fictional: it is essentially about understanding what is communicated and how it is communicated in the text (Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts"; see also Grice; Searle).[29]

For example, Brockmann et al. argue that a textual analysis is imperative for understanding as fictional assertions work primarily on the text level (17). They introduce the pragmatic operator *FictionalAssert* to describe the additional pragmatic step which allows for inferences concerning the relation between the actual world and the worlds described by the text (cf. Brockman et al.; Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268; Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping" 280f). The pragmatic operator *FictionalAssert*

> triggers a reflection process about the relation between the different readings and demonstrates that a global interpretation of text not only tolerates the existence of several readings, but demands it in that the interaction between the readings constitutes the overall text meaning (Brockmann et al. 18).[30]

This statement, however, should not be misunderstood as promoting a reader response approach to research on literary reading. On the contrary, it is not about text reception but about understanding fiction or, more specifically, fictional utterances. The approach to fictional texts proposed by Brockmann et al. is notably different from the theory underlying RFU, as it is based on analysing the text along the rules and limitations set by the specific nature of the speech act performed: a fictional utterance. The focus is therefore less on the processes that enable readers to map their own experiences, beliefs and knowledge onto the text and shaping his/her interpretations accordingly (top-down), but rather the other way around (bottom-up): on defining what kind of utterances readers are dealing with, how information is communicated accordingly and how this affects reading strategies.

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be either the fictional or the expository text ignoring the obvious fact that a hardly cohesive literary text requires decisively different processes than an incohesive factual text, let alone an expository text that includes "literary passages" but is presented as a literary text by the researcher. The processes of literary text comprehension should hardly be tested alongside students' processing of text cohesion in an expository text.

29 These observations hint at a larger discussion between close reading, a tight focus on language and form in contrast to approaches to literature that promote the individual (emotional) engagement with and contextual reading of the text (see, e.g., Brewer, pp. 635–42; Pender, pp. 67–81).

30 Brockman et al. further refer to the pragmatic operator to substantiate the argument that fictional texts are indeed a "valuable data source for natural language use that demonstrates the whole spectrum of possible uses, rather than being an exception that has to be interpreted separately from other uses of language" (18).

All in all, studies concerned with research on fictional competences should consider theories of fictionality as a means of defining and anticipating which particular text features trigger the competences under investigation. It may be owing to this reason that most models still fail to sufficiently describe what makes understanding a fictional text different from understanding a non-fictional text and, consequently, what actually constitutes literary competence.

5.1.2 *Outlook*

Although the term "literary competence" indicates that students are dealing with a particular kind of textual material, many studies (see above) fail to acknowledge what makes the texts they were using for their studies different from other texts, and how these textual features might influence students' reading behaviour. Rather, educationalists have been shown to focus solely on creating a theoretical model for literary competences while disregarding the fact that a definition of literary competence, firstly, requires a consideration of the following question: what actually makes a literary text a literary text (Eggert 186; Diehr and Surkamp 11; Kämper-Van den Boogaart and Pieper 48)? Without connecting a specification of the text features with the competences needed to deal with this particular sort of textual material, the definition of literary competence is arbitrary (cf. Barton 53; Baum 93). This observation strongly encourages a closer collaboration between literary scholars and educational researchers.[31] Approaches that adequately define both, the textual material as well as the competences needed to make sense of literary texts, could form the basis for the development of innovative teaching methods that help students understand what form of communication they are dealing with and, accordingly, help them analyse and interpret the speaker's communication (cf. 34).

The analysis of several studies has helped emphasise the importance of the questions posed at the beginning of chapter 5.1.1 for research on literary understanding. I will therefore begin the next chapter with a precise definition of my textual material, which will be followed by an analysis of the student annotations that focuses on their ability to recognise, process, and understand the implications of dealing with the fictional utterances made in the poem. This preliminary analysis supports the notion that any research on literary

31 The studies by Nickel-Bacon et al. as well as Zipfel's review of theories of fictionality may serve as an example to point out a larger issue: they either fail to describe the particular features of the texts used for their research (see Nickel-Bacon et al.) or their theoretical considerations generally remain on an abstract level without describing any text in particular (see Zipfel).

understanding must also include an investigation into hermeneutic reading processes. These considerations, in turn, suggest that a sensible approach to further my research on literary understanding is to ask how hermeneutic processes become manifest in the student annotations.

5.2 Reading and Understanding SON43 as a Fictional Text

5.2.1 *Theories of Fictionality and Lyric Poetry*

Over the past 60 years, an abundance of theories have been developed to define literary texts based on their fictional characteristics.[32] However, the amount of theories and approaches that attempt to define the nature of fictional texts contributes to the increasing vagueness of the term and hence, the difficulty to properly describe the features of literary texts with regard to the concept of fictionality (cf. Zipfel 313–322). Moreover, many of the features described by the literature as an exclusive characteristic of fictional texts can also be found in other texts and vice versa. An example of discussions concerning the fictional nature of lyric poetry helps illustrate the problem. Hamburger questions whether lyric poetry can be considered fictional as, for her, it conveys the experience of actual reality without any aspiration to evoke a fictional world,[33] such as, for example, a novel would by introducing a fictional persona, which supports the appearance of life-like situations (*Die Logik der Dichtung* 12 and *Wahrheit und ästhetische Wahrheit* 99; cf. also Frye 68). Her objections are contested by theories that dissociate the author and the (fictional) speaker of a poem (Beardsley 301; see also Cohn 775): by drawing on Genette's theory of fictional discourse that distinguishes between the author of a story and its narrator (cf. Genette *Fiktion und Diktion*), the distinction between the author and the speaker of the poem makes it possible to analyse poems as a form of fictional discourse. According to this approach, lyric poetry is fictional.

Nevertheless, taking a pragmatic perspective into account, it is important to recognise that not all poems can be readily classified as fictional utterances, as some poems express their authors' own feelings and emotions. This can include poems expressing religious convictions, such as those by Hopkins

32 Zipfel in *Fiktion, Fiktivität, Fiktionalität* distinguishes between four general approaches: author-oriented, reader-oriented, text-oriented and context-oriented theories of fictionality.

33 Zipfel actually criticises the fact that that poetry is often only defined by its linguistic peculiarities, which may lead to the hasty conclusion that poetry is not fiction (303).

("The World is Charged with the Grandeur of God")[34] or Herbert ("Jordan I"),[35] and those that overtly call for political action (McKay's "If We Must Die" or any kind of ecopoetry, such as the recently published poetry collection by Santos Perez *Habitat Threshold*). Moreover, there are also factual poems that also elude a clear categorisation as fictional or non-fictional, such as those written by Donne, for example "To Lucy, Countess of Bedford", and those written in memory of Elizabeth Drury, "Anatomy of the World" and "Elegy on Mistress Elizabeth Drury", and also more recent poems, such as Livingston's 2016 HGSE graduation speech/poem "Lift Off". Whether or not lyric poetry can be considered fictional therefore depends on the theoretical tenets that are brought to bear upon that particular genre. It is therefore difficult to define all poems as exclusively fictional without being guilty of a blatant generalisation.

In the following, based on the most prominent approaches in literature concerned with the description of the nature of fictional texts, I will discuss why SON43 can be understood as a fictional text. These approaches may be indicative of some of the challenges that the poetic genre poses to understanding and they will serve as a basis to discussions identifying a set of competences needed in order to analyse and/or understand a poem. The chapter thus explains why the reflection of fictionality is so important for literary competence especially: it makes clear that as the meaning of an utterance in a poem can only be deduced from the utterance itself, the exact understanding of the utterance is important; any reference to facts "outside" the poem may lead to inappropriate interpretations (see ch. 5.2.2). Therefore, as will become clear in the following, the ability to recognise the fictional nature of a poetic text and to reflect on how this specific characteristic of the text can influence its analysis and interpretation is an essential component of literary competence. This claim will be exemplified along the students' annotations of Shakespeare's SON43 in the subsequent chapter.

Reading SON43 as a Fictional Text

Although there is no consensus regarding whether or not fictional texts have specific intrinsic properties or signals that indicate their status as a fictional text (see Searle 325; Currie *The Nature of Fiction* 2f; Davies 34; Zipfel 234),[36]

34 For a more detailed discussion of the fictionality of Hopkins' poetry see Beardsley "Fiction as Representation", 301.

35 Ironically, in the first lines of this poem, Herbert addresses exactly that question: "Who says that fictions only and false hair / Become a verse? Is there in truth no beauty?" (209).

36 See also Nickel-Bacon et al.'s discussion of a pragmatic approach to defining the fictionality of a literary text, pp. 274–76, as well as Schreier and Appel who discuss how formal-pragmatic signals or paratextual signals can or cannot, depending on the respective text

some linguistic phenomena in lyric poetry can be said to encourage us to regard a text as fictional. For example, the use of language in Shakespeare's SON43 is simultaneously familiar and defamiliarizing, paradoxical lines, oxymoronic statements and an abundance of other rhetorical devices, mostly forms of word repetitions, are used to create an atmosphere of unrest and the half-dreaming, half-awake speaker's evocation of his beloved's almost uncanny spectre(s).[37] The poem's unusual grammatical constructions, such as "shadow's form form happy show / To the much clearer day" (l. 6), as well as the choice of the poetic form along with the ambiguous language draw attention to the artificiality of the poem. Although the artificiality of a text cannot be equalled to its being fictional, SON43's explicit 'constructedness' nevertheless suggests that the utterances are produced to fulfil certain intentions (Currie calls these "fictive intentions" (*The Nature of Fiction* 11), which can be a sign that it should be understood as a work of fiction or a fictional utterance (Currie *The Nature of Fiction* 11; Lamarque and Olsen 41; Davies 37).[38] Approaches to an interpretation of the poem need to consider "what constraints were taken, by the author" to adjust the language effectively to the objective of writing in the poetic form of, e.g. a sonnet (why was a particular word used in a particular construction, e.g. for the sake of adhering to the metrical rhythm) (cf. Davies 48), and the choice of language used to present the fictional situation (Stalnaker 111; Ronen *Possible Worlds* 63f; cf. also Kablitz).

This issue can be further elaborated on by considering the implications and conditions that go along with producing a fictional assertion or, generally, fiction production. Theories dealing with these kinds of questions argue that, rather than "feign[ing]" or lying (Bacon 55f),[39] writing a poem can be

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or medium, be sufficient indicators of fictionality (238). Nünning argues in a similar vein that "fictionality is generally marked explicitly or implicitly by numerous paratextual and textual indicators" (43).

37 For example, in line 4 of the sonnet, "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed," no less than five stylistic devices can be identified: an antithesis, a diacope, an antimetabole (chiasmus), an oxymoron and a polyptoton. The poem is indeed abundant with stylistic devices, to name but a few more: line 5: paradox, antanaclasis, polyptoton; line 7: paradox, oxymoron; line 8: two oxymora and a paradox.

38 In *On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language*, Herrnstein Smith argues that the "fictiveness of literary artworks is not to be discovered in the unreality of the characters, objects, and events alluded to, but in the unreality of the *alludings* themselves" (11, author's emphasis).

39 Consider also Sidney's famous statement that "the poet … nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth" (35) and Bentham's definition of a "fictitious entity" as "an object, the existence of which is feigned by the imagination, – feigned for the purpose of discourse, and which, when so formed, is spoken of as a real one" (325).

considered "a certain kind of communicative act … on the part of the author" (Currie *The Nature of Fiction* 35; Lamarque and Olsen 41).[40] The sonnet, when viewed as a communicative act by the author, becomes an invitation for readers to make sense of its meaning. Hence, particular attention must be paid to the use of language in fictional texts: if we assume an utterance to be fictional – e.g. when we believe that certain instances of communication, which may be regarded as non-cooperative in factual utterances, are intentional as well as informative –, we must also adapt our reading behaviour: the fictional nature of a text requires a close focus on the exact verbal expression, which means adapting our knowledge of the meaning of certain words to the context in which they appear.[41] It is therefore the entirety of the words used, rather than one word alone (for example, the word "shadow" in l. 5 is in itself not a sign of fictionality, neither does it immediately stand out as a fictional object) that can be an indicator of the poem's fictionality.

Notably, Stalnaker's theory on counterfactuals – inspired by Goodman's work on conditionals in *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* –,[42] has been influential with regard to the description of the specific nature of language in fictional texts. Since its publication, his "Theory of Conditionals" has been further developed by several scholars over the past 51 years (cf. Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts"; Stalnaker; Davies; Doležel; Lewis "Truth in Fiction"; Ryan;

These definitions possibly find their source in the etymology of the word *fiction* which derives from Latin *fictiōn-em*, the noun of *fingĕre* meaning to fashion, to feign or to imitate (cf. *OED* "fiction", n.).

40 In his article "Cognitive Dimensions of Achieving (and Failing) in Literature", Huemer quotes the opening passage of Peter Bichsel's story "There is no such place as America" as an example of what might happen when fictional assertions are not recognised as such: "I have the story of a man who tells stories. I have told him repeatedly that I don't believe his stories. 'You're lying,' I said, 'you're fibbing, you're making things up, you're pulling my leg.' That didn't impress him. He continued unperturbed, and when I called out: 'You liar, you fibber, you yarnspinner, you legpuller!' He gazed at me for a long time, shook his head, smiled sadly and then said so softly that I almost felt ashamed of myself: 'There is no such place as America.' Just to comfort him, I promised to write down his story." (qtd. in Huemer 27f) The narrator of the story obviously misunderstands the fact that the stories told by the storyteller have no actual claim to truth, but are told as a communicative act, inviting the reader to pretend *as if* the story told was actually true (cf. also Searle 324).

41 Roelcke speaks of "Deautonomisierung der Sprache" (Engl. de-automatisation of language) which induces readers to reflect on their understanding of the utterances in the text (478).

42 See also Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* in which he is concerned with the idea of mimesis and systems of representation. He approaches the topic by exploring the connection between art and literature and how they represent known things through denotation and exemplification. For a more current work, see also Goodman's *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*.

Ronen *Possible Worlds*; Proudfoot; Woodward).[43] Taking a semantic perspective, Stalnaker argues that the theory of conditionals can provide insight into the truth conditions of counterfactual statements in fictional narratives; he suggests that despite presenting a counterfactual world, fictional utterances, after all, have "a specified relation" to the actual world (112; cf. also Ronen "Are Fictional Worlds Possible?" 26; Ronen *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* 63; Frye 68; Huemer "Cognitive Dimensions" 31ff; W. Klein 21).[44] The language of poetry, although an artificial construct, is thus simultaneously bound to and free from the laws of referentiality of and to the actual world (Ronen "Are Fictional Worlds Possible?" 26; Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 258; Martìnez-Bonati 74).[45] More precisely, whereas both fictional and non-fictional texts use the same language to express something, non-fictional texts are based on real-life events, use actual sources that its readers can refer to for additional information in case of uncertainties and often aim at disambiguation, fictional texts do not depend on the factuality of what they refer to

43 For a concise discussion of different pragmatic approaches to a theory of fictionality see also Nickel-Bacon et al.'s "Fiktionssignale Pragmatisch: Ein medienübergreifendes Modell zur Unterscheidung von Fiktion(En) und Realität(En)", pp. 276–86. The model resulting from their investigations should nevertheless be considered with reservations as it is exclusively concerned with modelling a pragmatic, perception-based description of fiction, which can fundamentally help to differentiate between the nuances of fictional and non-fictional texts, but is missing a critical discussion of what other problems the fictional theories raise in the actual understanding of literary texts.

44 The inconclusive status of fictional language fuels an ongoing debate regarding the question whether possible worlds say something about the features of our language and its relation to the world (language-model epistemology), or possible worlds say something about the structure of reality itself and must be considered independent of our linguistic system that is used to talk about alternative world scenarios (language-model ontology) (Ronen *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* 66ff).

45 In this context, Riffaterre discusses the referential dimension of language. In *Semiotics of Poetry*, he argues that a sign must be translatable as well as relatable to our known system in order to be understood (Riffaterre 11). Readers' representations of a text are therefore, among others, founded upon the "referentiality of language, that is, upon a direct relationship of words to things" (Riffaterre 2; cf. also Martens "Kommentar" 40f). Understanding a fictional text, however, would, according to Riffaterre, be more difficult due to the shifting of linguistic signs to fictional objects. Huemer therefore rightly criticises Riffaterre for using terms, such as 'reference' or 'truth', which are, especially when talking about fictional texts, inadequate to build upon a general theory of language and language use in fictional texts. Riffaterre's theory nevertheless lays open a general problem that educationalists and cognitivists face (Huemer "Erlebnis Und Erkenntnis" 79; see also Kablitz 107): they lack a proper theoretical, more precisely, literary background.

and could be considered "self-contained unit[s]" (cf. Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 201; see also Frye 68, 71f[46]).[47]

The independence of what is said from the real world requires an acute awareness of each poem's own linguistic peculiarities and an analysis focusing on how each meaningful unit of the text can contribute to and be organised to generate plausible interpretations (cf. Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 201, 212; cf. also Bauer and Brockmann 342).[48] This process of understanding becomes even more relevant when analysing lyric poetry that often provides its readers with much less information than longer narrative texts about the fictional situation, thus making them aware of their dependence on the little information that is given with regard to its speaker's character, communicative situation and other information needed for a comprehensive understanding. Nevertheless, in "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts", Bauer and Beck also argue that "what makes a fictional text relevant to a reader is that it establishes a similarity to the real (actual) world": this similarity makes it approachable and relatable for its readers (252; cf. also Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping").[49]

Here, however, also lie the dangers when it comes to interpreting a fictional text. Stalnaker, Ronen and Lewis' theory also implies that the alternative possible world is only different from the actual world in what has been stated in the text or what has not been contradicted by the text (cf. Stalnaker 102; Ronen "Are Fictional Worlds Possible?" 25; Lewis "Truth in Fiction" 43f; Martìnez-Bonati 74; Huemer "Cognitive Dimensions" 32). Woodward calls Lewis and Stalnaker's approach into question, arguing that the close relationship between the actual

46 Frye here quotes from Blake's "On Homer's Poetry": "Every Poem must necessarily be a perfect Unity" (71).

47 In a more philosophical vein, the fictional nature of texts can be compared to the image of the ouroboros (Gr. 'I eat'), the snake/dragon eating itself, which supposedly represents the theme of unity. Whatever the words or signs used in the poem refer to exists only in the confines of their own universe and is simultaneously defined by them. Like the ouroboros, they therefore mean by giving meaning (or 'life') to themselves or depend on themselves to create what they refer to, thus suggesting a certain circularity of their world.

48 See for example Bauer et al.'s discussion of the demonstrative "this" in Emily Dickinson's "This was a Poet" (*More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 54ff). "This" does not take a clear referent within the context of the poem and can refer to several entities. During a first perusal of the poem, its meaning needs to be locally suspended on account of the limited context (Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 54ff). Only after a closer analysis of the poem does it become clear what "this" might refer to.

49 See also Woolf, who, in *A Room of One's Own*, describes fiction as "a creation owning a certain looking-glass likeness to life, though of course with simplifications and distortions innumerable … [Hence,] [l]ife conflicts with something that is not life. … [However,] since life it is in part, we judge it as life." (82f)

and the fictional world can lead to misconceptions about the fictional world: the similarity to the actual world could encourage readers to assume facts about the fictional world that might be true without, however, having been made explicit in the text (161).[50] It is impossible to prove or refute any facts that are not mentioned in the text, which opens fictional texts to all kinds of misleading interpretations and futile speculations. Its fictionality therefore makes poetry susceptible to interpretations along the "anything-goes-principle", opening itself to the idea that anything can be read into a poem as long as fairly good argumentation supports the point.[51] The nature of poetry, however, may indeed invite readers to resort to more generalised interpretations than, for example, fictional narratives as the information presented in a poem is, because of its often very condensed format, massively underspecified. This can lead to very generalised statements that have little relation to the poem.

In the context of an analysis of SON43, for example, it is unimportant to discuss the speaker's perseverance concerning her/his amorous pursuits of his beloved or whether the communication between the speaker and addressee should be imagined as part of an intimate confession spoken directly to the addressee or indirectly in a letter or, indeed, in form of a poem.[52] Similarly, it is unnecessary to inquire whether the speaker's winking might be an indication of an eye disease that makes her/him see flashes of light in front of her/his eyes.[53] When analysing a poem, the reader must therefore be aware that its interpretability with relation to the real world must give way to the limited extent of interpretability within the poem's context, and facts that can neither be proven true nor false must be discarded and should not influence the overall understanding of the written text.[54] After all, the

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50 Woodward gives an example of this problem, simply stating as a fact that the number of stars that could be seen at the night sky in Nabokov's *Pnin* is "three trillion" (162). This fact cannot be proven wrong, but also no statement in the novel discourages this fact.

51 For a more elaborate discussion of this issue see also Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson*, pp. 211–213.

52 See for example ee cummings' sonnet "next to god america i" in which the reader only discovers in the last two lines that the preceding lines are actually part of a political speech.

53 Although these interpretational approaches might seem exaggerated, they are not far from those that can be found in students' interpretations of SON43. These statements are, with slight changes, taken out of a survey on SON43, which asked students to write a short interpretation of the poem's first line. For more information on the survey, see also Bauer et al. "'When most I wink, then' – what?"

54 This does not mean, however, that a poem should never be read in the context of its production. Depending on the school of thought (see, e.g., Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, a.o.), the context should be given more or less attention during the interpretation process; but, considering the previous discussion, the "context of making" can and should be used as a basis as well as, of course, a constraint for possible readings of the poem (Davies 37).

> relation between the actual world and the worlds described by the text has to be inferred. The space between the underdeterminacy of the relation on the one hand, and its foundation on the literal (grammatical) meaning of the text on the other, provides the room for subjective interpretation (Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268; see also Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 212)[55]

An interpretation that is actually plausible, therefore, requires a close reading and rereading of the text while establishing and discarding hypotheses (Currie "Interpreting Fictions" 99; Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268); this also depends on its readers' individual background and knowledge, which can vary widely (Stalnaker 109; cf. also Iser *The Implied Reader* 274f). For example, in many poems, such as is also the case in SON43, a plausible reconstruction of the communicative situation can prove difficult for readers owing to restrictions or liberties, depending on the point of view, that are, among others, imposed by the poem's fictionality. A seemingly infinite amount of possible scenarios and hypotheses concerning the situation at hand could present themselves to the readers. To recognise indications of intentions and functions of textual elements as well as linguistic knowledge of the recipient therefore forms an essential part of the interaction process of the reader and the literary text (Zipfel 230). These considerations strongly suggest that the fictional nature of a text influences the process and the strategies applied to resolve and explain what is communicated in the text. In the next chapter, I will therefore analyse the students' annotations in order to make statements about how they read and understood SON43 as a fictional text.

5.2.2 *Student Annotations and the Concept of Fictionality*

Despite the generally high quality of the annotations and the students' long-term, collective working process, there are some contradictions in their interpretations of the speaker's statements. While disagreements concerning the interpretation of literary texts are indeed far from uncommon, an investigation of the annotations may offer further insights into the nature and origin of these discrepancies. To some extent, these insights concern the ways in which students read the poem as fictional or non-fictional. In fact, fictional texts written as some form of communicative act that makes assertions about possible worlds that are counterfactually independent of the actual world (and that

55 Francis Bacon also discussed this issue as early as 1605 in his book *The Advancement of Learning*, pointing to the imaginative power of poetry by defining it as "a kind of learning generally confined to the measure of words, but otherwise extremely licentious, and truly belonging to the imagination" (Bacon 55f).

might or might not attempt to achieve a mimetic effect) can trigger a considerable range of responses from their readers (see above). Here, a distinction should be made between (1) semantic and pragmatic meaning(s) *of* the text and (2) responses and associations *triggered by* fictional texts (e.g. mapping the text to persons in real life; see Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping"). The analysis of the annotations shows that (2) may influence the perception of (1) and lead to inadequate claims about the semantic and pragmatic meaning(s) of the text which are not warranted by what the text actually says (cf. Bauer, et al. "'When Most I Wink, Then' – What?" 2). The interpretative discrepancies are thus influenced by the students' personal associations and responses to the text which either induce them to make assumptions about the speaker's utterances that are irrelevant for the interpretation of the text or bias them towards one line of interpretation only and make them (more) intolerant towards textual ambiguities.[56] The annotations not only provide more insights into the students' individual engagement with the text and give hints as to where their difficulties of understanding may lie, but also show that a consideration of the fictional nature of the text (including its potential ambiguity etc.) helps disentangle the problems of interpretation found in the annotations.

5.2.2.1 Mind the Gap – Interpretations Outside the Actual Scope of the Text

Upon closer analysis, the annotations reveal that, in a few cases, the students write interpretations that go beyond the actual scope of the text. In the first example, certain statements suggest that the students' perception of a lack of context in which to locate the speaker's utterances induces the students to embed them into a, for them, more meaningful context. Based on her reading of the first line, one student assumes that "the speaker of the poem is asleep and dreaming" (Student A final "most I wink", L2 I). Her interpretation is contradicted by a second student, who imagines the speaker slowly falling asleep

56 While it is almost unavoidable that the following analysis may also include some considerations regarding how language in general may affect the individual reader on an emotional level (see, i.e. Havas et al. "Emotion Simulation During Language Comprehension", pp. 436–441; Díez-Álamo et al. "The Linguistic Looming Effect", pp. 104–147), the chapter aims not at mapping students' emotional responses, but it is explicitly concerned with how the fictional nature of the text, more specifically, the limited context affects their reading and interpretation of the sonnet. See also chapter 4., which explicitly states that emotional, volitional as well as motivational aspects will not be part of this investigation (ch. 4). These aspects form part of what Weinert terms action competencies (dt. *Handlungskompetenz*); they were excluded in order to define the concept of reading competence as narrowly as possible and, thus, to precisely define the scope of the investigation (cf. Weinert 51).

and describes the speaker's longing as well as his/her dependency on his dreams to show the lover: based on an analysis of word clusters in the poem, she suggests that in the course of "the poem the speaker slowly falls asleep ('wink'), and gradually … starts dreaming of the addressee" (Student D final "sightless eyes", L3 I). However, the contextualisation of the situation, presented in both cases as a hard fact, is rather speculative. It seems that the lack of a more specific context prompted the students to make assumptions that go beyond the poem's scope of interpretation. In fact, whether the speaker is currently asleep, dozing off or wide awake is irrelevant for the interpretation of the poem and is, technically, not a 'problem' or question that needs or can be answered in the sonnet. The lack of indicators regarding the actual 'scene' in which to place the speaker apparently further induced them to come up with suggestions of their own.

In a similar scenario, the interpretation of the speaker's utterances is further shown to be influenced by the students' rather individualised reading of the sonnet. Two students describe the atmosphere that can (apparently) be re-created within the context of the poem. In the first student's annotation of line 4, she claims that, despite the nightly setting and the play of shadows described, the poem "does not create a gloomy or threatening atmosphere" as the speaker "actively provokes it and shapes his own perception" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I). Another annotation by a different student reveals a completely opposite reading of the sonnet. She is concerned with the somewhat gloomy atmosphere of the setting and the "uncanny implications" of the shadow(s) that the speaker finds him/herself confronted with in his/her dreams (cf. Student B final "shadow", L3 I). Her annotation indicates a rather oppressive, even threatening atmosphere when she describes "the dreadful darkness of 'dead night' (l.11)" (Student B final, L3 I). In both cases, the students' interpretations of the nightly scene reveal their efforts to provide the scene with an additional, yet irrelevant, context.

As with the first example, the students here focus on an issue that goes beyond what the text actually says. The interpretations are thus an example of an unnecessary elaboration or a cumbersome explanation of a specific detail in the text that can neither be contradicted nor supported (cf. Fishelov "The Economy of Literary Interpretation" 32). This could either be due to an implicature – their analysis of the textual details has prompted the students to find implicatures in the speaker's statements that are not actually there – or to an actual effect of fiction – readers presuppose that, similar to a real world communication, the fictional speaker also performs his/her communicative act in a certain context, thus attributing the scene with a pragmatic dimension

about which the text says nothing;[57] however, this supposition apparently induced the students to make statements about the context in which the utterance was made. The example supports Herrnstein Smith's argument that "[a]ll our experiences with languages and the contexts in which men speak not only enable us to make [an] inference but really oblige us to make [one]" ("Poetry as Fiction" 274).[58] The fact that language triggers such responses makes it all the more important for readers to critically and continually reflect on their own (subjective) responses to fictional texts and how these may influence its interpretation.[59]

Moreover, the observations also call to mind Kintsch's hypothesis that the "how" of reading "is the same for literary texts as for the simple narratives and descriptive texts" (*Comprehension* 205). Although the evidence partly supports his argument, there seem to be some steps in the reading process that – while

57 Baker suggests another possible explanation for the student's reaction. In her chapter "How Do We Know When We Don't Understand: Standards for Evaluating Text Comprehension", she defines a set of standards that readers use to evaluate their understanding of a text (cf. Baker 155). She argues that, rather than identifying 'gaps', readers undergo an "evaluation phase", which "involves introducing problems of some sort into an otherwise intact [or straightforward] text" (Baker 155f). These include, among others, instances when, based on their own personal assessment, the students believe to detect a violation concerning the text's "informational completeness" (cf. Baker 156). She further adds that "[s]uccess at identifying these problems is taken as evidence that subjects evaluated their understanding during reading" (155). Whereas the evaluation of one's understanding during reading is a crucial step to a better understanding, Baker fails to address the fact that some readers might also introduce problems where there are none to begin with, which is the case here.

58 Cf., however, Recanati in "Does Linguistic Communication Rest on Inference?", who questions inferentialists, such as Herrnstein Smith, that set the focus mainly on the pragmatic dimensions of communication and suggest that readers automatically make inferences. He argues that the "semantic interpretation by itself gives us the content of the speech act" and that it is only when "the unreflective, normal process of interpretation yields weird results" that "an inference process take[s] place whereby we use evidence concerning the speaker's beliefs and intentions to work out what he means" (Recanati 108). He further states that even in a case of semantic underdetermination, the *anti-inferentialist* argument holds as "*they need not involve any inference at all*" (Recanati 114, author's emphasis). While his argument finds support in the fact that the students should have refrained from making inferences – there simply are no indicators and therefore also no need to make inferences about the situation in which the speaker's utterances were made –, the students' predilection to nevertheless make inferences suggests otherwise.

59 See also Bauer and Beck's article "Isomorphic Mapping", in which they argue that the speech act operator *FictionalAssert* "is a first step towards understanding the mechanisms of how the pragmatic meaning of a fictional utterance is derived: it is an inference required by the speech act performed by a fictional utterance" (281).

unnecessary for the comprehension of a non-fictional text – are essential for understanding a literary text. In this context, recent findings that the brain processes the information gathered from fictional texts similar to reflections on real or future events open new grounds for discussion (Altman et al. 26; see also Stockwell; Veivo and Knuuttila 301).[60] One consequence of these findings is that one of the steps in the understanding process must be the making explicit of the fictional nature of the text and the concomitant possibilities and limitations concerning the statements that can be made about the speaker's utterances. The annotations, however, suggest that this is not an entirely easy task and requires students to make an additional cognitive effort to consciously distinguish between the conclusions they can make about real world events and those events or statements made in the world that is evoked in a fictional text.[61]

As the last example annotation reveals, the students might have been influenced by their own associations, possibly with ghost stories, that the references to "dead night" and "shadows" may well evoke. These associations could have led them to inquire further into this line of interpretation without reflecting on the fact that the question whether the speaker is scared of actual shadows in the night is not an issue in the sonnet.[62] The students' statements are indicative

60 Altman et al.'s article "Fact vs Fiction--How Paratextual Information Shapes our Reading Processes" supports Pfeiffer's argument. They present neuroscientific evidence about readers' reactions to fictional texts by mapping the brain activity while reading fictional texts. The results show that reading about events in fictional texts has an influence on that part of readers' brains that is also active when imagining future or past events. Readers therefore at least unconsciously connect the fictional events of the story to some degree to their own world of experience, which can have an effect on their interpretation of the text.

61 See also Bauer and Beck who discuss readers' proneness to identify and link elements of the text worlds with the world they know and experience frequently, which leads to their "becoming conscious of the nature of that world" ("Isomorphic Mapping" 289). Literary texts, they argue, thus encourage readers to engage with the world in the text in a way that enables them to reflect on and interpret its statements (Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping" 281f; see also Bredella "Die Welterzeugende und die welterschließende Kraft literarischer Texte", pp. 65–85). However, the students' annotations show that here also lie the pitfalls for many readers of literary texts: if the reader makes too many assumptions based on his/her own world of experience, s/he might make misled and irrelevant assumptions about the text's meaning that are unrelated to anything that can be said about the fictional world. Mapping or the interpretative process, is a two-edged sword – while the processes seem necessary for readers to come to a certain understanding of the text, readers will also have to carefully assess which statements the text allows for and which of their assumptions go beyond the scope of the text.

62 Miall in *Literary Reading* also notes that "literary readers form specific anticipations while reading, … and that markedly more personal memories are evoked during reading" (90).

of their, potentially unwitting, tendency to read aspects into the text that are influenced by their own beliefs and convictions, world or literary knowledge and which affect their interpretation. Indeed, a closer analysis of the development of each annotation further reveals that the students' approach to the text seems to depend on the interplay between linguistic analysis, their research and their individual response to the speaker's utterances.

For example, while Student C conducted research on Renaissance theories of the eyes in the context of the line "darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" (cf. V2, L2 C), Student B (cf. V7, L3 I) looked up possible meanings of the word "shadow" as well as the Elizabethan concepts of the mind. A conflation of Student B's research into an interpretation yields that the lover's "shadow", which, according to the *OED*, can also be associated with "phantom", appears in the speaker's 'mind theatre' as a somewhat uncanny shadow actor. Along with a language annotation on level 1, she changes her interpretation of line 4 by adding her own rather subjective reading of the "dreadful darkness of 'dead night' (l. 11)" (Student B "shadow", V7, L3 I). Only in a final revision process does she change her initial interpretation to: "the shadow might carry some uncanny implications and remind momentarily of ghosts or spirits [Hyperlink to L2 INTERPRETATION: "dead night" (l. 11)]", conceding that "this possibility is not pursued any further in this sonnet" (Student B "shadow" final, L3 I).[63] The speaker's statements in SON43 are inconclusive with regard to this aspect, but her analysis of the utterances is clearly influenced by a personal preference of one interpretation over another. In fact, the student takes up this thought in an even more questionable interpretation: "[f]inally, an interesting possibility is that 'show' is meant in the sense of 'ghost', as it reminds of the uncanny, yet unspoken, subtext of shadow" (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I). Thus, the students' subjective readings may bias them towards certain lines of interpretation.

In other cases, the analysis of the sonnet's rhetoric induces the students to make statements about the line's meaning that disregard the context of a line within the sonnet. These (*uneconomical*[64]) interpretations are not specific to

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In "Beyond the Schema Given", Miall further argues that "affect is primarily a top-down process, directing lower-level cognitive processes involved in decoding language and in memory and reasoning" (75). The student's example thus supports his argument that certain world views the readers bring to the text might consciously or unconsciously affect their cognitive processes.

63 For another discussion of such an example see also Bauer and Zirker "Understanding (Through) Annotations", pp. 41f.

64 The term is based on a definition proposed by Fishelov in his article "The Economy of Literary Interpretation" in which he argues that "an economical interpretation is one that

the text and are less a result of a close reading, but a product of the student's attempt to make sense of a textual element (not understood in its context) by imposing meaning taken from elsewhere. For example, the sonnet's first line, "[w]hen most I wink, then do mine eyes best see" (l. 1), seems to be rather challenging with regard to several issues. A survey on students' understanding of SON43 conducted in the context of the project "Competence Modelling" at the Tübingen School of Education (TüSE) forms the basis for this observation (see Zirker et al. "Kompetenzmodellierung im Fach Englisch"; Bauer et al. "'When most I wink, then' – what?"). The survey should therefore serve as an example to illustrate the problem: the first line is ambiguous and could either be read as (1) a paradox, (2) a conditional or (3) in a temporal sense. Moreover, the meaning of "wink" as in "to close one's eyes" (*OED* 1a) is now obsolete and can therefore lead to some confusion if readers are unaware of this meaning. However, the greatest difficulty for students is not the archaism,[65] but the identification and, consequently, the resolution of the paradoxical statement. The survey showed that a large number of students attempted to explain the speaker's paradoxical utterance by drawing on their own experiences as well as world knowledge.[66] These could be speculations about the speaker's medical condition, knowledge about the physiology of the eye, and generalisations, such as the idea that closing one's eyes might make one think clearer, or might help stay strong in a difficult situation. Although mere conjectures, these speculations suggest that many students make statements about the text in complete ignorance of the text's or, here, sonnet's context, thus overinterpreting and even indulging in unfounded speculations about the line's meaning. It seems that while they are able to identify that they lack some piece of information that helps them understand the text, they try to compensate this lack

succeeds in explaining many textual details while using only a few, simple assumptions. An uneconomical (or strange or cumbersome) interpretation, on the other hand, develops a complicated set of assumptions to explain only a few textual details." (32)

Fishelov thus describes the interpretation of a literary text as "the ratio between textual details … and [the] explicit or implicit assumptions" used to explain these details (32). Whereas Fishelov is mainly concerned with the definition of a basic rational for a plausible or economical interpretation, this chapter is also concerned with the reasons that lead to certain rather "imaginative readings" (Fishelov 48).

65 The students were divided into groups A, B, and C: group A had no annotations, group B and C were both provided with two different kinds of explanatory annotations that would, among others, explain the archaism. The survey results showed no significant differences between all three groups.

66 This approach is, of course, not necessarily wrong, but only as long as it does not delimit the meaning of the poem or steer it in a direction contradicted by other parts of the poem.

of understanding by drawing on their own knowledge of the real world rather than finding an explanation for the paradox in other parts of the poem.[67] The question is why students found it necessary to resolve the paradox by adding external knowledge in which the speaker's statement might make sense, albeit, only to them.[68] The students' annotations suggest that they seem to have the greatest difficulties when dealing with problems at the semantic-pragmatic interface. Although they try to use the text's linguistic information as a means to make sense of the speaker's utterances, their personal estimation of what they assume to be left unspecified in the poem induces them to make unnecessary inferences that strongly influence their interpretation. This aspect becomes particularly obvious when it comes to the students' responses to textual ambiguities.

5.2.2.2 Understanding Ambiguities

Disambiguation

The examples above are evidence of the students' reading processes, their subjective reactions to the text and their conscious or unconscious individual responses to the speaker's statements. In this context, Pfeiffer emphasises the influence of affective components or the degree of identification while reading literary texts and points out that it is generally said to be greater than while reading factual texts (456; see also Frederking and Brüggemann). For this reason, the interaction between text and readers as well as the visibly different effects of the text on its readers should be discussed further. Indeed, the discrepancies between the students' annotations highlight the fact that understanding the processes of reading fictional texts should also include a consideration of the reasons why the readers of fictional texts actually arrive at such diverging

67 Leslie and Caldwell also call this group of readers "elaborators", a group of readers that invokes "inappropriate background knowledge, which often [overrides] information in the text" (220). Zwaan and Brown's findings in their study on language proficiency and comprehension skills further support Leslie and Caldwell's observation. They found that less skilled comprehenders often make inferences based on associations rather than explanations (311). However, "associations merely elaborate textual information" and, unlike explanations, do not necessarily regard the text's overall context (Zwaan and Brown 311). As can be seen in the present example, random associations can therefore also have a negative effect on text comprehension, especially in the context of understanding literary texts.

68 This aspect also strongly suggests that the students were unable to reflect on their own process of making sense of the line, as they were obviously unconscious of the fact that their own explanation is inappropriate.

interpretations (cf. Miall *Literary Reading* 35; see also Schwarz-Friesel 160; Nussbaum 3; Hynds 120).[69]

Whereas the resolution of ambiguities in non-fictional texts is fairly straightforward – it is always (at least theoretically) possible to compare what the text says to what is actually the fact and therefore establish if it is accurate or not – this process is impossible for fictional texts.[70] In contrast to the fact-based reading of non-fictional texts, reading and understanding fictional texts means to regard ambiguities as an essential part of the meaning-making process.[71] Nevertheless, some of the students' interpretations reflect their desire to disambiguate the speaker's utterances at the cost of possible other interpretative approaches. The resulting interpretations are, again, influenced by personal preferences and associations, which may account for some of the discrepancies.[72] Several annotations discuss the (metaphorical) juxtaposition of night and day / light and day in the sonnet. One student supposes that the final couplet allows for conclusions concerning the speaker's relationship or feelings towards the addressee. For this purpose, she imagines how the speaker might, hypothetically, feel: "the speaker conveys his happiness to see the addressee's image; his days are like nights because he is sad because he does not see the addressee" (Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L I). The student's annotation shows her endeavours to make sense of

69 Some theorists actually argue that the speaker's utterances invite its readers to "make believe [becoming] a temporary member" of his/her fictional world (Ryan 557) and to accept the utterances made in the text as possibly true, thus enabling them to penetrate and evaluate the fictional world as 'participants' (see Walton; Lamarque and Olsen 41; Currie "Interpreting Fictions"; Iser *The Implied Reader*; Davies 42; Genette *Fiktion und Diktion*; Zipfel 214). Although there is little evidence that the students actually perceived themselves as participants in the speaker's communication, their responses to the statements above suggest that they interpreted his utterances in the same manner as a real world communication (see also ch. 5.2.1).

70 For a discussion of the term ambiguity from the perspective of German literature classes in secondary schools, see Hochstad "Von der (un)eindeutigen Absenz der Mehrdeutigkeit – Die Dominanz eines funktionalen Sprachbegriffs im Deutschunterricht", pp. 115–35.

71 Fishelov here makes an important point: "[p]oetic language … known to be replete with ambiguities, ironies, paradoxes, tensions and complexities, … may be a strong incentive to maintain multiple interpretations" ("The Economy of Literary Interpretation" 48). Taking these characteristics into account, the fact that some interpretations might "logically exclude others … should not intimidate us" (Fishelov "The Economy of Literary Interpretation" 48).

72 In fact, even the professional scholars who annotated the sonnet are also not entirely free from their personal judgement. For example, whereas Innes sees "something positive" in line 4 of the sonnet (165), Hunter even fancies herself to be able to detect signs of the "lover's delight" in these lines ("The Dramatic Technique of Shakespeare's Sonnets" 158). In contrast, Vendler reads both "desire and frustration" into the sonnet (225).

the poem by either projecting herself into the speaker's role or associating the speaker's situation with a comparable scene from a movie or other literary text. This could account for the student's interpretation of the speaker's emotional state as rather sad and distressed, as she automatically assumes that, because more often than not depicted as such, the separation from the lover is a painful experience.[73] Her idea that the speaker is almost hopelessly dependent on his dreams is therefore a more or less comprehensible conclusion (cf. Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L2 I). Her intention to disambiguate the speaker's utterance is possibly influenced by her own assumptions how she would feel in such a situation, inducing her to disregard other readings of the line. The student's own emotions therefore subvert her interpretation of the utterance and bias her towards one reading of the line only. The relationship between the speaker and the addressee is, however, much more complex than the simple separation of two lovers.

The student's rather one-sided interpretation becomes even more so when considering another student's annotation, which suggests a different interpretation of the sonnet's paradoxical rhetoric and proposes several different conclusions concerning the relationship between speaker and addressee. This student interprets the line based on the fact that line 7, "[t]o the clear day with thy much clearer light", of the sonnet is ambiguous: "the relationship between the light of the day and the metaphorical light of the beloved" might encourage "a comparison between the two" that favours the beloved's beauty over the loveliness of the light of day (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much

73 Meier et al. argue that "consistency between recognizing textually intended emotions and evoked emotions in the reader would facilitate or moderate the understanding of a literary text" ("An Extended Model of Literary Literacy" 69). This is an important observation. For example, Andringa suggests that while readers' emotional reactions to the text can lead to more intense discussions of the textual material and the development of new hypotheses and interpretations, especially negative emotions can impede "an active dialogue between text and reader" (252). A study by Havas et al. further presents evidence that emotions, here, simulated in an experiment, affected participants' comprehension processes beyond initial lexical access (436). Overall, this discussion intimates the importance that the role of affect might play during cognitive processes (see Miall *Literary Reading* 27; Miall "Beyond the Schema Given" 55). For more information, see also Frederking and Brüggemann's discussions in "Literarisch kodierte, intendierte bzw. evozierte Emotionen und literarästhetische Verstehenskompetenz", pp. 15–40; Feagin "Imagining Emotions and Appreciating Fiction" in *Emotion and the Arts*, pp. 50–62; Friend "Fiction and Emotion" in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, pp. 217–30; Jacobs and Lüdtke "Immersion into Narrative and Poetic Worlds" in *Creative Confluence*, pp. 69–96; Kuiken et al. "Forms of Self-Implication in Literary Reading" in *Poetics Today*, pp. 171–203; Livingston and Mele "Evaluating Emotional Responses to Fiction" in *Emotion and the Arts*, pp. 157–76.

clearer light", L3 I). She adds, however, that the line could also be read as a comparison between the dream image and the real person (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I). The student thus concludes that the speaker either views the addressee with a certain clarity or attributes the addressee with a certain purity (cf. Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L2 I; Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I). Although the student considers the ambiguity of the line and successfully presents a more adequate analysis and interpretation of the sonnet's complex rhetoric, her annotation is not free of a certain bias. In fact, the student's last sentence suggests a third reading by embedding the line in a possible literary context: "[a] 'clearer light,' in the sense of 'more perfect, more complete' (Booth 204n7), could refer to the Platonic form in the sense of an ideal archetype" (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I). "[L]ight" might thus be understood as a metaphor for the whole idea of the beloved, irrespective of her status as dream image or a real person. The student leaves this statement mysteriously uncommented, which is in so far unfortunate as an interpretation of the speaker's utterance in this context opens yet another interpretative approach.

The speaker could also imagine his connection to his/her lover to be of a more platonic, spiritual kind: the speaker may not desire an actual physical (re-)union and, moreover, perceives her/him as much more real than the actual day. This reading implies that the speaker cannot or refuses to distinguish between what is real and what has sprung from his/her imagination and, moreover, rather chooses the idea of his/her beloved over the actual, "unrespected" (l. 2) realities of the "clear day" (l. 7). Lines 6–7 would then be paraphrased as follows: although you are merely an idea/image in my mind, you are more real to me than anything I see during the day. This last interpretation can be connected to Vendler's observation that the speaker's "deteriorating eyesight" ("see'ing" (l. 1) to "unseeing" (l. 8) and, finally, "sightless" (l. 12)) is a sign of his/her loss of agency, which implies the speaker's increasing infatuation with the idealised image of a, possibly, real lover (Vendler 223).[74] Her argument is supported by the fact that, in several instances, Shakespeare describes love as being "painted blind", such as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*MND* I.i.235) and in Sonnet 148. Thus, rather than suggesting sadness or a certain clarity of vision, the final couplet can be read as an indication of the speaker's growing obsession, a consequence of his/her hopeless pursuit of an unattainable lover,

74 In fact, nowhere in the sonnet is it said that the addressee is anything more than a "shadow" (l. 5) of the speaker's imagination.

which finds expression in the reversal of his/her day-night rhythm and goes along with the speaker's voluntary alienation from the world.

The student may have failed to include the platonic ideal in her interpretation because this concept is actually rather far from her own ideas about love, and she may have been unfamiliar with the Elizabethan rhetoric of love.[75] The student's reading further raises some doubts with regard to the speaker's mental state.[76] It appears to be a line of interpretation that the student is unsure about, which finds confirmation when looking at the student's annotation of "thy shadow's form" in which she (also in the last sentence) just vaguely hints at the fact that "this presence could be compared to a Platonic ideal" and without elaborating any further (Student B "thy shadow's form" final, L3 I). The analysis of the two students' annotations again emphasises the importance of a continuous critical reflection of one's own interpretations in order to avoid personal bias to interfere with an adequate, i.e. text-based, interpretation of the different ways in which the speaker's utterances can be understood. Moreover, it highlights that students should maintain a certain tolerance not only towards the co-existence of several interpretations, but also a tolerance towards ideas and concepts that may be unfamiliar or contradict their knowledge or current beliefs.

Assessing the Meaning of Ambiguous Utterances

The previous analysis has shown that students need to develop a certain kind of competence that enables them to reflect on their own subjective perception and encourages an openness towards numerous possibly concomitant interpretative hypotheses (see also ch. 5.4 below). The students should therefore be encouraged to approach a fictional text with the general assumption that, while the text might occasionally appear to violate the conversational maxims defined by Grice, the speaker should generally be considered "fully cooperative"

75 Miall, in "Beyond the Schema Given", supports this assumption, which suggests that the further away from the students' familiar concepts the more difficult it may be for them to interpret the poems with regard to certain theories or concepts consistently (75).

76 One reason why the students' may show a general reluctance to accede to the speaker signs of possible irrationality could be because this aspect further introduces difficulties especially regarding the interpretation of his/her utterances on a pragmatic level, which could result, in the worst case, in a questionability of all of his/her utterances. See, for example, Recanati who argues that for pragmatic interpretation readers/interlocuters initially "presuppose that the agent is *rational*" (106, author's emphasis). Ascribing the speaker's utterances an irrational stance could therefore generally put his communicative intentions into question. A similar example of a possibly uncooperative speaker (potentially non compos mentis owing to unsound desire and/or sleep) can also be discussed in Shakespeare's SON28.

(Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 195f):[77] any ambiguities in the text serve to initiate and encourage interpretation. While, of course, each reader brings his/her own knowledge of the real world to the text, they should be aware that "as a consequence of their counterfactual independence, the texts themselves provide the limited context on which an interpretation of the utterance is based" (Bauer et al. *More on the Grammar of Emily Dickinson* 201; see also Bauer and Brockmann 342).[78] Thus, rather than embellishing the text's 'unspecificities' with knowledge of one's experience or knowledge and delimiting the poem's scope of interpretation to one (reader-personalised) reading only, readers should endorse the texts' ambiguities as a basis for their interpretations.[79] However, as the analysis of the student's divergent interpretations has shown, this approach is difficult and requires what can be considered literary competence.

In this context, the quality of the student annotations suggests that the task of annotating draws the students' attention to the creative process of writing the sonnet and makes them aware of how meaning is created in the sonnet, which encourages them to consider why a scene is presented the way it is and how its presentation affects the reading of the text (Scholz 143; cf. also MacMahon 174f). Several statements in the students' annotations suggest that they know they are dealing with a fictional text. For example, they make comments such as the following: "[r]egardless of whether this is an inversion or not, the placement of 'form' is deliberate" (Student B final "form happy show", L1 F), "the intentionally puzzling line" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C), or Shakespeare's play on words that "evoke different images that allowed for different interpretations without necessarily cancelling each other" (Student B "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright" final, L3 I). These few examples intimate that the students can identify ambiguities in the sonnet and are further able to reflect on their status as a reader of a fictional text (Zipfel 278; cf. also Schreier and Appel 243; Dilthey 200). Their annotations thus show that they realise that the poem's grammatical meaning forms, simultaneously, the "basis and constraints" for possible meanings (Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 268; see also Bade and Beck 320f; Locher and Jucker 3; Scholz 142; Zons 396f).

77 For more information concerning the functional aspect of apparent violations of the Gricean maxims in fictional texts, see Brockman et al.'s "*FictionalAssert* and Implicatures".

78 Eco even argues that the only analysis of *intentio operis* (text intention) can actually enable a reasonably objective approach to interpretation (*Die Grenzen der Interpretation* 35ff).

79 See for example Currie's "Interpreting Fiction" in which he argues that "what we count as true in a story depends not only on our choice of an overall interpretation, but also on our choice of a criterion of relevant evidence" (110).

Their reflections on the creative process of writing the sonnet also seem to positively affect their tolerance for ambiguities in the text. For example, rather than pinpointing the speaker's emotions to one sentiment only, one student attempts to show the range of emotions revealed in the sonnet. Arguing that the "elements of visual perception in the poem … are strong indicators for the speaker's psychological and emotional state" (Student C final "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I), she concludes that the "speaker is torn between positive and negative emotions" (Student C final "bright in dark directed", L2 I). The student further maintains this hypothesis throughout all her annotations: "[a]s some elements become brighter whereas others become darker, … the poem indicates the alternation of the speaker's feelings: They sometimes have a tendency towards sadness, sometimes towards happiness" (Student C final "shade", L2 I). Another student equally uses the ambiguity of the speaker's statements for further interpretations. She notes the paradoxical situation in the poem and defines the speaker as, simultaneously, the creator and perceiver of the nocturnal visions: "the stage of dramatic dream action … is created and directed by and for the speaker before his inner eye" (cf. Student B final "shadow", L3 I), thus implying the speaker's emotional turmoil and unsettling uncertainty whether or not s/he is still acting agent or helpless subordinate of his/her own mind's fabrications. Indeed, the sonnet's twisted rhetoric suggests the speaker's conflicting emotions, attributing him/her with a particularly complex range of emotions that are reflective of an individual that surrenders him-/herself to the trials and tribulations of love.

5.2.3 *Discussion and First Conclusions – What is Literary Competence?*

The students' annotations have shown that understanding the processes of reading fictional texts essentially includes a consideration of the nature of fictional texts and their effects on their readers. Moreover, the chapter has revealed two further aspects. First, despite the intensive revision and feedback processes, deficient and implausible interpretations remain an issue in the individual annotations. The subjectivity found among the different interpretations was shown to originate in an inappropriately strong top-down approach to the text,[80] using intuitive reactions, personal associations, and irrelevant knowledge to make sense of the utterances, as opposed to a bottom-up approach based on a stylistic/linguistic analysis. It further appears that

80 It should be noted here that this kind of subjectivity is different from the "subjective meaning" (or better: meaning for the reader) established by mapping the fiction onto the actual world as experienced by the reader (see, i.e. Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping").

students are at times reluctant to change and revise what they have written. Both their personal associations and what they have read about the text biased them towards certain, inadequate, lines of interpretation. This observation is directly linked to the second aspect: while it may be easier in schools, as well as in an academic context, to directly teach students about (plausible interpretations of) the text, also making it easier to objectively assess what the students 'know' about the text, this approach hardly fosters their competence to deal with a fictional text.[81] Accordingly, one major issue for pedagogical studies is to reconsider what aspects of student reading (i.e. making statements about the meaning of a passage, writing interpretations, etc.) can actually be defined as assessable evidence of literary understanding and, more importantly, how to define literary competence in the first place.[82]

The analysis of the annotations (ch. 5.2.2f) has shown that the students' statements about the literary text should not be rated as the outcome of a reading process like any other. On the contrary, students should be made aware of how a literary text or the utterances in a literary text function and, consequently, how they should be dealt with (cf. Bode 149f). Instructors should point out that a reader's subjective first approach must necessarily be followed by an objective analysis of the linguistic evidence provided by the text as its fictional nature requires a close focus on the exact words used in the text. This also means that the context in which the words appear determines what we can say about the meaning of these words. The analysis will then allow readers

81 In this context, Baum, in *Der Widerstand gegen Literatur*, justifiably laments the fact that, as a consequence, literature and literary reading have been reduced to teachable knowledge or a teachable subject matter that, after all, has little to do with the actual reading of a complex text (cf. 10). Brooks and Warren also vehemently argue against approaches to the interpretation of literary works (especially of poetry), such as "message-hunting" or the "beautiful statement of some higher truth" (8–16), that reduce the text to one single, condensed statement or 'message' only, ignoring the fact that literary texts hardly ever have just one meaning only. This practice is, however, often supported and even encouraged in educational contexts as both make grading students' 'understanding' of the text easier. In *What Is Fiction For?*, B. Harrison makes a similar case "against 'the meaning of a work'", pp. 292ff. See also Hynds, Giovanelli, Widdowson, Bode, Culler 142, Burwitz-Melzer "Text- und Medienkompetenz" 143.

82 The question how the (necessary) objective assessment of the achievement of the learning goals can be reconciled with the many different interpretations a literary text can yield is still a subject of discussion. For a more information see Paran's article "Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Dilemmas of Testing Language and Literature", pp. 143–64, in Paran and Sercu's *Testing the Untestable in Language Education*. See also Steininger "A Defence of Literature" 91, Bredella "Die welterzeugende und die welterschließende Kraft", Ehlers 115, Hallet "Literarische Kompetenz", Hynds 117, Winkler 11, and Paran "The Role of Literature" 490.

to argue for a plausible interpretation based on adequate consideration of all the evidence available. The students should also be encouraged to be open to new interpretations and be ready to revise their interpretations when necessary. Therefore, the subject of the teacher's evaluation should be the students' endeavours to understand and make sense of the utterances in the text: more precisely, the manner and extent to which students show that they are capable of actively engaging with the text and reflecting on their own reading/understanding process.[83]

How the students eventually make sense of the text and how an analysis of the individual as well as collective revision processes can contribute to research on literary competences will be discussed in the following chapters which put the students' hermeneutic processes at the centre of the investigation. The analysis will be concerned with the students' abilities to make inferences, to engage in the hermeneutic circle and to develop a form of argumentative reasoning that helps them make adequate statements about the speaker's utterances. The investigation will be followed by an inquiry into how much the progression of the students' hermeneutic reading depends on their metacognitive strategies – a re-evaluation of their statements about the text based on social exchange either through peers or secondary literature.

5.3 Hermeneutic Processes in Annotation Versions

This chapter addresses another point of critique mentioned at the outset of the thesis: hardly any of the studies under discussion consider the fact that competences, although performances in context-specific situations, should not be reduced to just one single event (Lehnen 39f).[84] Rather, they should be measured based on one of their most important characteristics: their development over the course of time.[85] As of now, no attempt has been made to document the working processes of students in the context of reading poetry

83 This claim is also supported by the findings in ch. 3.1.2 (see also ch. 3.2) in which the ability to maintain a flexible working hypothesis is shown to have a considerable influence on the quality of students' subsequent work on the text.

84 See for example the study presented in "Literarisches Lesen" by Kämper-Van den Boogaart and Pieper and their discussion of the difficulty to empirically measure literary reading, pp. 61f, or Feilke's criticism of studies, such as PISA, DESI, IGLU and VERA that measure the products of the reading process rather than the actual processes themselves in "Literalität und literale Handlungskompetenz", p. 2.

85 See also Feilke "Literalität" in which he argues that reading and developing reading skills involves highly individual processes that can hardly be generalized, pp. 9–11 (cf. Bredella *Narratives und interkulturelles Verstehen: Zur Entwicklung von Empathie-,*

over a longer period of time and, accordingly, little is known about how literary competence can become evident while continuously working on a poem.

In this context, a quantitative analysis of the changes made to the annotated passages over the course of one year can provide some insight. The analysis shows that students revise their annotations as well as the passages they want to annotate considerably over the course of time: in their entirety, the emendations comprise 9 additional passages, 4 deleted passages and 5 anchors that were altered regarding their length. These alterations only include the actual annotated passages; however, the number of individual annotations that were added is even higher (see Table 3).

Table 3 Total of added annotation categories between first round of "what to annotate" and final annotations

Annotation Category	**First round: "what to annotate"**	**Number of Additions**
Interpretive	8	16
Language	5	13
Form	2	11
Intratextual	0	3
Intertextual	0	3
Context	4	3
Question	1	1
SUM	**19**	**50**

The interpretive annotations show a considerable increase; as do the language and form annotations. With regard to the latter two, these numbers can to some extent be explained by the sonnet's linguistic peculiarities. Whereas the general abundance of stylistic devices (see ch. 1.3.3) may account for the increase in form annotations, the increase in language annotations could be owing to the fact that there are quite a few words in the sonnet that appear unproblematic for a modern reader, but have less common or archaic uses: "wink" (l. 1), "shadow" (l. 5), "bright" (l. 5), "show" (l. 5), "shade" (l. 8). The students can obviously only comment on these additional meanings or linguistic peculiarities after having consulted, for example, the *OED*, and thus having become aware of the fact that the modern meaning might not be entirely appropriate. Along with the concomitant increase noted in the interpretive annotations category,

Urteils- und Kooperationsfähigkeit; Diehr and Surkamp 24; Ehlers 124; Hurrelmann 276; Hallet "Literatur, Bildung und Kompetenzen" 14ff; Klieme and Hartig 17; Lenhard 47).

both observations intimate that understanding the sonnet in all its aspects involves several steps that go beyond the mere comprehension of the words' meaning. The correlation between the time invested in understanding the sonnet and the progressive development of the annotations can be explained when considering the operations involved when approaching a literary text. In this context, DiYanni makes an important observation about reading processes in his article "Reading Responsively, Reading Responsibly":

> In reading critically, students attempt to understand how a text – whatever its length or its genre – breaks down into parts. Students need to identify the parts. They need to understand what each part contributes to the whole; they need to identify each part's function or purpose. In short, they need to understand relationships – the relationship of part to part and of part to whole. The process of rereading a text, focusing on its overall structure, solidifies and deepens students' understanding. Without understanding a text's structure, students can achieve no real understanding of its governing idea … On the basis of those connections, students can begin to think about implications. They are now ready to make well-grounded inferences. (DiYanni 15)

In order to come up with useful annotations, students must therefore have understood the material they are dealing with in all its parts. This means that they have to collect and evaluate all the information, make inferences and formulate hypotheses based on these, which, in turn, have to be assessed again until, finally, the students can draw their own conclusions and can also formulate interpretations. The hermeneutic processes of literary reading as outlined by DiYanni become obvious in the students' progressive work on their annotations.

For example, the annotation by one student on the line "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright," (l. 5) started with a suggestion for a language and a context annotation on "shadow" and was then successively extended. An interpretive annotation on level 3 was added to the "shadow" annotation. Moreover, other annotations on "shadows" (language annotation level 1); "shadow shadows" (form annotation L1 and L2) as well as the whole line "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright," (form, language, intratextual annotations on level 1, intertextual annotation on level 2 and an interpretive annotation on level 3) were added. Here, the additional annotations reflect the student's progressing work on the annotations and further suggest her attempts to structure and hierarchise the information according to its contribution to the meaning of a line. The students' revisions of their annotations thus reflect their developing estimation which elements might be more or less relevant for understanding. Indeed, especially for annotators, critical reading skills and the identification of problematic passages are crucial

to help them decide what information is particularly relevant for understanding the sonnet and consequently, which passages to annotate. Literary competence may thus become obvious when looking at the students' step-by-step approach to the text, mapped out in their different annotation versions (cf. ch. 2.3). A close qualitative analysis of the students' revisions will therefore be helpful for a more accurate definition of literary competence.

The students' understanding processes become particularly evident in the co-evolution of several annotations concerning the line "[a]nd, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" (l. 4). One of the student's first intuitions when reading the line lets her assume that "darkly bright" (l. 4) describes "a color, or degree of brightness" (Student C "darkly bright", V1, L2 I). In a second annotation written around the same time, she comments on the second part of the line, "bright in dark directed" (l. 4), suggesting that it could mean that "there is brightness in the darkness" (Student C "bright in dark directed", V1, L2 I). In a subsequent revision of both annotations, however, she comes to a less definite conclusion, simply stating that both oxymora stress the blurring of light and dark in the sonnet (cf. Student C "darkly bright", V1, L2 I; Student C "bright in dark directed", V1, L2 I). The student apparently reread the poem, reconsidering the meaning of each separate utterance as well as their meaning with regard to the interpretation of the whole line. Her subsequent revisions reflect this development. She adds a third annotation to her first two annotations which considers "darkly bright" and "bright in dark directed" (l. 4) separately. This third annotation comments on the whole line. More specifically, it is a form annotation that points out the peculiar aggregation of stylistic devices in line 4 (cf. Student C "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V1, L1 F). Based on her observation, she then corrects her initial assumption and is also able to develop more plausible interpretative hypotheses that consider the ambiguity of the line (cf. Student C "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V3, L3 I). The hermeneutic process is thus propelled onward by the realization of either a discrepancy and/or an accordance of her analyses of the sonnet with her interpretations.[86] Depending on whether the student's interpretation still agrees with her analysis or not (and vice versa), she formulates a new hypothesis that corresponds to her findings.

The suggested reciprocal process can be seen as the student progresses with her work. In fact, the first revisions are only the beginning of the student's

86 The distinction between interpretation and analysis is derived from Rupp's suggested definition: analysis in this context includes all processes that take into account the formal, structural and semantic aspects of the text, whereas interpretation describes the processes that, based on the text's analysis, are used to make assumptions about the text's meaning and an evaluation of the statements made in the text as well as an assessment of the plausibility of one's own statements (cf. Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 107).

endeavours to write adequate annotations for line 4. It is moreover a particularly valuable example of how the student considers and integrates the historical context throughout her annotation process. In the first version of the annotations, the student also makes note of another observation that she will follow up on in the next annotation versions: "Booth points out that 'the Renaissance eyes were generally thought of as giving off light'" (Student C "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V1, L2 C). Consequently, the student begins writing an extensive level 2 context annotation on the whole line, explaining that, in Renaissance thought, the eyes as well as the objects seen could send out rays (see Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C). Version 2 of her annotations already provides an extensive context annotation that discusses theories of visual perception from ocularcentrism inspired by Aristotle and Plato to the "shift from extra- to intromission theories" during the 16th and 17th centuries (Student C "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V2, L2 C). At the end of her annotation, she considers the uncertainties that have come along with the discourse on a subjective element in human perception. She points out that the shift to intromission theories raised some "doubts about the reliability of visual impressions" (Student C "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V2, L2 C). Only after she has completed her context annotation in version six does she return to the L2 interpretive annotation of "darkly bright" (l. 4).

In version 7 of her annotations, after a major revision process, she further elaborates her initial interpretations by connecting her contextual knowledge with her analysis of the speaker's utterances. She thus concludes that, although it is "impossible to determine whether the eyes are dark yet sparkling, or bright yet darkened or blurred", she can make conjectures concerning the "enigmatic" properties of the speaker's eyes (cf. Student C final "darkly bright", L2 I). It becomes obvious that the student tries to understand the theories on vision and visual perception in their connection to the utterances made in the poem and that she realises that it is ultimately not despite but because of the ambiguity of the utterance, together with an appropriate consideration of historical background knowledge, that the line can attain meaning beyond the mere meaning of the words. The changes to her annotations are therefore twofold: her additions (1) emphasise the sonnet's most dominant linguistic patterns[87] and (2) propose further interpretations based on the assumption that the line's dense rhetoric is "not merely ornamental" or a sign of "rhetorical playfulness", but can be regarded as a linguistic cue (Student C "And, darkly

87 One example of such an addition is the following remark: "'[s]hade[s]' and 'shadow[s]' repeatedly occur in the poem and contribute to the permanent play on bright and dark elements" (Student C, "shade" V7, L1 L).

bright, are bright in dark directed", V7, L3 I). The student's revisions of her annotations are indicative of an important process: she realises that the rhetorical figures, as intricate part of the semiotics of SON43, convey meaning beyond the level of content and can be a foundation for further interpretations (cf. Zirker "Performative Iconicity"; see also ch. 3.1.3; Furniss and Bath ch. 3). Her annotation versions hence show her continuous process of making assumptions about the text meaning while simultaneously reconsidering the annotated item with regard to its meaning in the context of the poem and her increasing knowledge (e.g. about words, rhetorical figures, early modern physiology, etc.). She thus arrives at a deeper understanding not only of the line, but of the whole poem.

In this context, the structure of TEASys makes an important contribution to revealing the student's hermeneutic processes while (re-)writing her annotations: it divides the annotations into different levels that often argumentatively build on each other. Their interdependence becomes obvious in the student's interpretive annotation on level 3 in which she argues that "given the importance of ocularcentrism", a concise discussion of which is provided on level 2 of the annotation, and the continuous rhetorical play on words that blur the "boundaries of light and dark", a formal aspect which is commented on in the form annotation on level 1, conclusions can be drawn concerning "the speaker's psychological and emotional state" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 I).[88] The annotations are therefore revised and adapted according to the student's developing understanding of how the single units of meaning feed into the interpretation of the whole sonnet.

This observation leads us to believe that no single annotation should be evaluated in terms of its revisions, but that the students' annotations should be evaluated in the entirety of their respective changes. Another example of a student's annotation supports this claim. The line "To the clear day with thy much clearer light" (l. 7) is difficult to understand even though each word can be understood by each reader/student. An analysis of the concurrent annotations shows that the line is indeed rather complex (cf. Student B V1-V9). The student's first approach is a linguistic analysis: she looks up the possible meanings of the word "clear" and, in her second version, further comments on its climactic repetition (cf. Student B "clear", V1, L1 L; Student B "clear", V2, L1 F).

88 Nevertheless, despite the student's thorough analysis and research, her decision to add a question annotation shows that, at least for her, the hermeneutic circle is still ongoing. The text's notorious ambiguity leaves room for some open questions and the student wonders whether SON43 portrays either or "both the joy of the imagination and the suffering caused by the knowledge that this image is not real?" (Student C final "And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L3 Q).

In version 6, she elaborates her linguistic analysis, commenting on the relationship between the words by pointing out that the same adjective is used twice to refer to two different nouns and that the line has a climactic structure (Student B "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", V6, L2 I). Based on these two observations, she formulates two tentative interpretations: (1) the double use of "clear" could establish "a relationship between the light of the day and to [sic] the metaphorical light of the addressee", and (2) the climactic structure might hint at a possible hierarchical structure between the words and their referents: "clear (day) – clearer (reality) – the clearest (shadow/dream image/ideal)" (Student B "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", V6, L2 I). The latter assumption is phrased as a question and could have been influenced by the two other annotations on "shadow" as well as "shadow's form" (l. 6) that she has been working on in the meantime. This instance shows that, like the student mentioned above, the following two reasons induce her to revise her assumptions about the text's meaning: (1) integration of other parts of the poem into her considerations and (2) increased knowledge.

In both annotations, the student makes references to the Platonic distinction between shadow and form, which is explored in his allegory of the cave, and expresses the idea that "a form is the 'essential determinant principle of a thing' (*OED* 4a)", whereas a *shadow* or *species* is a mere reproduction of an image (Student B "shadow's form", V6, L1 L; Student B "shadow", V6, L2 C): the learned men are able to see the 'true forms' of things, while those who do not dedicate their lives to philosophical contemplations will always just see a mere reflection or a shadow of the outside world on the walls of the cave. As a consequence of her research on Plato, she concludes in her annotation on "shadows form" (l. 6) that, in "the Neoplatonic context", the addressee's shadow "could be compared to a Platonic ideal" (Student B "thy shadow's form", V9, L3 I). Her context knowledge gained from writing the annotation of "shadows form" (l. 6) directly influences her annotation of line 7: it opens yet another interpretation of the line, which suggests that the speaker evokes an ideal image of the beloved rather than imagining his/her actual shape.

In her last revision process, she therefore decides to rephrase her initial statement that the line is a "comparative construct" (Student B "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", V8, L2 I). This formulation seems to not have captured the complexity of the line, as, in her rewritten annotation, she suggests the following interpretation: she argues that the "clause is ambiguous" (Student B final, L3 I) and could mean three different things: (1) what the student considers the "more likely comparison … between the dream image and its pendant [sic] in real life", (2) it could also suggest a "relationship between the light of the day and the metaphorical light of the beloved" (Student B final

"To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I) and (3), with regard to her annotation of "thy shadow's form", the hypothesis that the speaker is thinking of his beloved in the platonic "sense of an ideal archetype [Hyperlink to L3 INTERPRETATION: "thy shadow's form" (l. 6)]" (Student B final "To the clear day with thy much clearer light", L3 I). The line could therefore imply that the speaker imagines his beloved's beauty to increase when seeing her/him face to face in daylight, but the reference to the platonic ideal could also suggest that, rather than being based on a corporeal or sensual attraction to the beloved, the speaker's love is mainly spiritual. The student's overall approach, again, reflects the ongoing hermeneutic process while writing her annotations: her analyses of the meaning of line 7 are constantly updated with information concerning its possible historical context as well as the line's context within the poem, which is then cross-checked with the line's linguistic information and so forth. Moreover, the possibility to create a hyperlink in the last annotation even makes her process of meaning making transparent to the readers of her annotation, which further supports the viability of TEASys as a hermeneutic tool.

Another example of an annotation process shows how the students realise that, in order to formulate plausible interpretations, they have to make sense of the line or passage they are currently annotating by constantly updating their knowledge concerning the poem's linguistic information and their increasing knowledge regarding the socio-historical context. The first version of one of the annotations for "shadow" is a language annotation referencing the definitions for 'shadow' provided by the *OED*. A look at the document reveals that the first lines of the very first draft for this annotation were written in one sitting except for one bullet point, which was not included in the original annotation: "'an actor or a play' (*OED* 6b) – often used by Shakespeare in this sense (cf. Arden)" (Student B "shadow", V1, L1 L). This is in so far interesting as there is no direct reference to the theatre or acting in the sonnet, merely the reference to a footnote in the Arden edition suggests where the student might have her information from; however, the Arden edition does not offer any explanation (cf. Duncan-Jones 43). The student therefore, at first, did not seem to know what to make of this information. In this scenario, the student faces the challenge to accommodate the, as of now, insufficient information into her own interpretation of the sonnet, which provides the unique possibility to investigate her strategy to solve this issue.

In the first version, there is only one other annotation – the annotation for "show", which appears one line later – that addresses a first tentative connection between the motif of dreaming evoked in the first line of the sonnet and the theatre. Student B lists, among a collection of possible definitions for 'show'

in the form of bullet points, the *OED*'s definition 15a "applied to any kind of public display; e.g. an exhibition of pictures, a dramatic performance in a theatre" (*OED* 15a). Furthermore, she adds a note for a L2 interpretive annotation of "show" (l. 6), stating "[c]onnection with the theatre" and, as a form of explanation, "'[s]cene' etymologically related to 'Shadow' (from the greek σκηνή – σκιά)" (Student B "show", V1, L2 I). However, she does not elaborate upon this any further.[89] This, again, suggests that the student was only in the process of understanding the 'shadow-actor problem'. Nevertheless, here, the importance of the student's personal knowledge and background becomes relevant as the student is bilingual in German and Greek. She was therefore able to establish the connection to the theatre quite early in the process due to her expertise in Greek. Her knowledge may have influenced her subsequent decisions.

In fact, the second version of her language annotation for "shadow" shows an important change. The student now includes the information into her annotation. This is a sign that the student must have gone through a process that made her feel like this information was relevant for the poem after all. Moreover, from the first version to the second version of her "shadow" annotations, a considerably well-elaborated L2 context annotation was added. Whereas there were only notes and shorter quotes from secondary literature in her first draft of the L2 context, the student now had a clearer concept about the different motifs in the poem and how the passage she was annotating was relevant for the rest of the sonnet. In fact, she established the connection between the paradoxical first line of the poem "[w]hen most I wink, then do mine eyes best see" (l. 1) to the shadow motif introduced in her line. Therefore, in the context annotation, she describes the close association between the faculties of imagination and memory in Elizabethan thought (Student B "V1-V2"):

> It was believed that once the eye perceived an actual object, this produced a likeness of itself (what Aristotle called a 'species') and travelled in the form of a mental impression from the outer to the inner senses in order to be examined by the common sense, to be stored in memory and, eventually, to be retrieved by the imagination at will (Clark 15; William Rossky 50–51). Dreams were one of those products of imagination. (Student B "shadow", V2, L2 C)

89 Feilke argues that, before phrasing a complex argumentation or hypothesis, students often tend to write lists of associations and ideas that are only connected into a coherent argument in a second step ("Literalität und literale Handlungskompetenz" 10). Writing a list first supposedly helps them to get an overview of their thoughts and allows them to hierarchise, sort and eventually, connect their ideas in a logical and conclusive manner (Feilke "Literalität und literale Handlungskompetenz" 10).

Thus, the association of the shadow as more than just an image, a possibly even physical apparition in the speaker's mind that is a likeness of the original object, makes the connection to the theatre and acting more creditable. In fact, akin to a theatrical performance, the inner eye or the imagination was not only considered a projector of representations, but also a distorter, shaper and creator of a subjective reality (Clark 39). So far, the student was able, by researching and acquiring background knowledge and integrating the relevant aspects into her annotation, to further explain the speaker's use of the word shadow with regard to the definitions given in the *OED*. Although a direct explanation for the connection between dreams, shadows and actors has not yet been formulated in the annotation, the early modern theories of the mind lay the foundation for the interpretation.

This supposition is confirmed when looking at even later versions of the annotations. It is only in version six of her annotations that Student B finally provides evidence for a connection between the mind and the theatre; however, not in the annotation on "shadow". She added an elaborate L1 context annotation for the annotation of "show", a step which was already implied in her first version when making a note that she should conduct further research on the connection between "show" and the theatre. Despite the fact that she has not solved her 'shadow-actor problem', the newly gained information reflects the process of her trying to accommodate the general paradox of seeing, yet dreaming, but vividly observing, into the overall context of the sonnet. The student does so by delineating the evolution of 'memory theatre' in philosophical thought throughout the 16th century, tracing the origin of this concept back to the etymology of the word 'theatre' which finds its roots in the Greek word for 'seeing' (Student B "show", V6, L2 C). She concludes that any object, physical, real or imagined, can be evoked in the so-called "memory theatre", which should be understood as a "'cognitive environment in which physical objects give shape to and even constitute the mind itself' (Wilder 56–57)" (Student B "show", V6, L2 C). In both cases, there would be an observer of the scene; however, in the 'memory theatre' the boundaries between the spectator's and the actor's role become somewhat blurred, as the imagining, remembering, or dreaming person has a more active part in the 'direction' of the scene. After all, she concludes that "the connection of 'show' with the theatre is plausible" (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I), as the mind can see and enact scenes just as in a theatre, scenes can be seen and are enacted. Arguing that, "[w]ithin the context of eyes … [and] the realm of dreams" evoked several times throughout the sonnet (Student B final, L3 I), "the shadow can … be

understood as an actor impersonating the addressee on the stage of dramatic dream action" (Student B final, L3 I).[90]

Throughout their revision processes, the students make increasingly more use of hyperlinks in order to connect their annotations with those of their fellow students, thus making their arguments stronger and resolving the tensions between the single units of meaning.[91] This particular instance shows how TEASys functions as a hermeneutic tool that lays open the annotators' decisions, systematises them and further, allows its readers to structure their own approach to the poem (s. Zirker et al. "Commentatory Annotation and Hermeneutics in Digital Texts" 15). Indeed, the students' revision processes show that, much in the sense of the hermeneutic circle, writing localised annotations contributes to a better understanding of the whole text, while the understanding of the whole text feeds back into a better understanding of the single passage, and so on (cf. also Zirker et al. "Commentatory Annotation and Hermeneutics in Digital Texts" 18). All in all, the cognitive challenge of reading literature lies in the students' abilities to make inferences and to engage in

90 The student's continuous editing processes suggest what Ricklefs describes as the "Spannungsfeld" (area of tension) between single, local commentary and the text as a whole (61): similar to the idea that local understanding contributes to global understanding and vice versa, the student is aware of the fact that her annotations, albeit single comments, all somehow contribute to the understanding of the whole poem. Thus, in order to facilitate understanding, an annotation itself must be the outcome of a hermeneutic process. It is, however, often difficult to determine which section of the poem is important for its understanding as a whole, and where and what kind of information is to be provided so that understanding can be optimally promoted. Zirker et al. also address this problem in their paper on "Commentatory Annotation and Hermeneutics in Digital Texts": with regard to questions of understanding, it is not always easy to clearly determine and narrow down the part of the text that should be annotated (16, *my translation*). The creation of hyperlinks can, at least partly, solve this issue. The student's revisions therefore go along with the creation of hyperlinks between her annotations as well as those of the other students from version 1 on (cf. Student B V1-V9). This observation can be made in the annotation versions of all four students.

91 Tanner raises some objections regarding readers' ease while reading a hyperlinked text, highlighting that "countless studies from the 1990s to the present have shown that readers of linear text actually understand better, learn more, and remember more of what they have read than readers of hyperlinked text" as it might increase "a reader's cognitive load" (5). Tanner further suggests that a "that simply deciding whether or not to click on a link" the amount of thought dedicated to this decision creates a distraction that may "inhibit comprehension" (5). Thus, while hyperlinks might help the students conclusively connect their ideas and make their individual annotations relevant for the respective passage, it remains to be seen whether the hyperlinks also facilitate readers' reading experience.

the hermeneutic circle and to "better develop their specific ways of reasoning" (Huemer "Cognitive Dimensions" 44). The hermeneutic circle is, however, not only propelled forward by the student's interaction with the literary text. As will become obvious in the following, the progression of the students' hermeneutic reading depends on yet other processes as well.

5.4 Metacognitive Strategies

The previous chapter has shown how the students make inferences and engage in the hermeneutic circle to further their understanding of the sonnet. Their ability to evaluate their current state of understanding is of particular importance in this context. The employment of metacognitive skills is discussed as an essential aspect of literary reading among cognitivists and educationalists alike. Both fields of study argue that metacognitive strategies are expressed in readers' capability for "continuity monitoring" (McNamara and Magliano 340), which describes actions that are connected to the metacognitive processes of evaluating one's own sense of comprehension (see also Müller and Richter 42; Lenhard 36; Cho and Afflerbach 111; Baker 155). Educational studies further develop these findings, arguing that *metacognitive strategies* affect the manifestation and development of literary competence. Metacognitive strategies are defined as the "adaption" of knowledge (Dresel et al. 462), "planning, initiating, monitoring, evaluating, and manipulating one's own cognitive processes and task-specific actions" (Weinert 55). Students' competences can thus be expected to become evident in situations during which they activate metacognitive knowledge and/or regulation mechanisms (Klieme und Hartig 19; see also Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al. 44). These competences are said to also influence students' "problem-solving performance", which could prove essential for their approach to and the understanding of literary texts (Weinert 55; see also Leubner et al. *Literaturdidaktik* 45). Their capacity to understand the sonnet and explain it to others might therefore be influenced by their ability to apply a variety of metacognitive strategies that help them develop better ways of reasoning and explore new approaches to the sonnet. In the following, the student annotations will be analysed with regard to their application of metacognitive strategies.

5.4.1 *Student Feedback and their Re-evaluation Strategies*

The discussion of the students' collective work on the annotations has, among other things, shown the correlation between the quality of the annotations and the students' use of hyperlinks to connect their annotations to those of

their peers. The students' different document versions show that they benefit in yet other ways from the close work with their peers. Although reading is often discussed as a task performed by the individual (Miall *Literary Reading* 11), readers' understanding depends on talking, writing and reading about reading, e.g. in a classroom scenario or in any other social context (Kramsch 358; see also Elbow 12; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 119; Leubner et al. *Literaturdidaktik*; Klieme and Leutner 880; Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 18; Weinert 51; Groeben 19; Hallet "Literatur, Bildung und Kompetenzen" 17; Bachmann 41; DiYanni 11). Reading competence is thus the result of a learning process that is strongly influenced by external influences (cf. Klieme and Hartig 17). While working on their annotations, the students were not only required to implement the feedback they get from their peers, but also to give feedback themselves. The multiple loops of these feedback processes provide a unique opportunity to learn more about how individual metacognitive strategies are influenced by the groups' feedback culture. Consequently, this chapter aims to answer the following question: how do the feedback comments affect the students' understanding and thus, their approach to the sonnet? This question can be answered by analysing how the students implement their peers' feedback. Ultimately, this will allow us to draw conclusions about the students' problem-solving skills and how these, in turn, affect developing understanding of the texts they annotate.

5.4.1.1 An Analysis of the Students' Implementation of Feedback

Presenting Relevant Information Comprehensively

The students note insufficient or unclear explanations (see Student B "thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright", V7, L2 C; Student B "shadow", V8, L3 I; Student C "darkly bright", V1, L1 L; Student A "see", V3, L2 I) and propose structural alterations for a more adequate presentation of the information; for example, how to make the annotation more coherent by improving its overall structure (Student B "shadow", V5, L2 C), by making the transitions between the paragraphs clearer (see Student C "to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so", V6, L2 I), or simply by adding an introductory sentence to a paragraph (Student B "shadow", V2, L1 L). Although these comments can be considered just a question of the students' writing competences, they also allow for conclusions about their level of understanding regarding the sonnet as well as the other materials they are referring to. In fact, their struggles to present the matter appropriately can frequently be linked to a potential lack of understanding.

This claim is best exemplified when examining a case that shows the students' difficulties to implement their peers' feedback. One student, for example, writes a rather sketchy interpretive annotation about the speaker's

eyes (Student A "see", V3, L3 I). A peer therefore decides to make suggestions that might help her improve her annotation (Student A "see", V3, L3 I): "try to approach this interpretation from a different angle by first introducing the cultural perception of the 'inner eye' … you can go on to explaining what this means for the poem" (see Student A "see", V3, L2 I). Two document versions later, the student has worked on her other annotations, but has not yet rewritten the annotation in question. Her reluctance to continue her work on the annotation could be an indicator that she is in the middle of an ongoing research process or that, despite the comment, she is still trying to figure out how to use her background research in order to make sense of the paradoxical line. The lack of notes that might indicate an ongoing research process suggests the latter and, as will become clear in the following, this intuition is correct. Even so, another student decides to also comment on her yet unfinished annotation with a source and a possible paraphrase of the sonnet's first line (see Student A "see", V5, L2 I). In the following document version, the student finally adds a context annotation, which, along with the other student's hint, then forms the basis for her interpretive annotation (see Student A "see" final, L2 C and L3 I). The student thus resolves the paradox in the first line by explaining that the speaker is able to see best when his/her eyes are closed, because the "image of the addressee is … projected before the speaker's inner eye", which is "not a physical, but a psychological" experience (Student A "see" final, L3 I). On a superficial level, this interpretation of the first line seems plausible and takes into account the overall context of the sonnet as well as the possible historical background. However, the student's context annotation, although adequate in terms of its content, is rather short and includes a hyperlink to an extensive context annotation written by another peer student on the subject of the 'inner eye' (see Student A "see" final, L2 C). Her decision to make a connection between the annotations via a hyperlink is generally a good idea, but in this particular case it is fairly obvious that the student uses the hyperlink to avoid having to conduct research on the Renaissance concept of the inner eye herself.

The student's overall struggle to implement the feedback and her need for more concrete hints how the knowledge about the concept of the 'inner eye' can help her (and, eventually, others) make sense of the first line suggest some more profound comprehension issues. A closer look at her final annotation confirms the impression given by her revision process. The student's inability to understand the first line's connection to the historical concept of the 'inner eye' is revealed more openly in her final annotation, which lacks clarity and coherence:

> The speaker claims to be able to see best in his dreams. This is due to the belief in an inner eye that enables to see objects even with one's eyes closed. The object that the speaker sees is the addressee of the poem. This is revealed in line 3: 'in dreams they [the eyes] look on thee'. The image of the addressee is therefore projected before the speaker's inner eye. This experience is not a physical, but a psychological one. (Student A "see" final, L3 I)

Student A's heavy use of paratactical sentences as well as the almost complete absence of connectives and coordinating conjunctions markedly affects the quality of the annotation. The statements seem disconnected and incoherent. Moreover, the last two sentences are a repetition of the statements made in the first three sentences. Ultimately, the annotation hardly provides a comprehensive explanation of the first line.

The circular line of argumentation as well as the lack of coherence between the sentences suggest that the student struggles to connect the information conclusively. The steps that are usually said to precede an interpretation are a series of processes that connect, evaluate, and compare the information that can be gathered from the speaker's utterances and are considered a vital part of the interpretation or "theory building" process (Scholz 139). Although the other students' input contributes as 'building blocks' for her interpretation, the student's inability to formulate an "explicit and coherent argument" and thus provide an adequate interpretation of the passage suggests that she bypassed several of these steps and merely used the students' feedback to formulate a rough explanatory paraphrase of the first line (Veivo and Knuuttila 283; see also Scholz 143; Jansohn 218f). The annotation therefore hardly suggests that she has understood what she herself is trying to explain. Her example supports the assumption that the ability to explain and present information appropriately is closely connected to the students' own understanding.[92]

This initial hypothesis finds further confirmation when looking at other revision processes that follow a peer comment: mostly, when the students point out incoherences in their peers' annotations, failures to connect argumentatively or to structure coherently, the subsequent revision processes reveal more profound issues than mere structural adjustments can amend. On the contrary, the comments often induce the students to review old and

92 In this context, Zwaan and Brown present evidence that skilled comprehenders generate significantly more explanations, rather than mere associations, while reading a text. Their evidence ties in with the comprehension skill hypothesis which states that "explanations are more useful inferences" as they directly integrate information and thereby contribute to a more conclusive understanding of the text and its elements of meaning (311).

new material for the entire passage they are annotating and, owing to the hermeneutic processes involved when reading and understanding literature, the students often arrive at new insights concerning the meaning of the line and, consequently, are obliged to revise their initial conclusions. This shows that the feedback as well as subsequent revision processes require complex operations: the annotators will not only have to reflect on their current understanding and to adopt measures that remedy their annotations' shortcomings, but they also have to assess how their revisions affect the reading of the sonnet, and whether these make revisions in their other annotations necessary. The quality of their annotations is therefore influenced by their ability to break the text into its smaller units of meaning as well as their ability to reflect on how these, in turn, contribute to the understanding of the whole. This also means that they must define the relationships between the different parts, as they will only then be able to provide the right amount of information at the right point in the sonnet. An analysis of the revisions following the students' feedback comments will make the annotators' understanding of these dimensions of literary reading clearer.

There are abundant comments that remind the students to keep their annotations as relevant as possible and to reconsider their written product regarding this aspect. For example, it is a crucial comment by one of her peer tutors in version six of the annotations that induces one student to revise her annotations and connect her research adequately with an interpretation of the line. The student provided an elaborate context annotation describing the concept of the 'memory theatre' in her previous annotation versions, but was unsuccessful in making the connection to her claim in a L1 language annotation that "shadow" can be a synonym for *actor*. The peer tutor then adds a question to the student's statement: "Can this meaning be related back to the sonnet?" (Student B "shadow", V6, L1 L). Student B had already established the link between the mind, dreaming and the theatre by referring to several sources; however, she had not yet explained the connection between her research and the use of "shadow" as *actor* in the sonnet. She had therefore failed to establish the relevance of this information for the understanding of the sonnet. In the next annotation version, she provides a first draft for an interpretive annotation on L3, thus finally connecting the statement to the speaker's utterances (see Student B "shadow", V7, L3 I).

The peer comment as well as the revisions following the comment allow for two observations. First, the comment reflects the peer student's awareness of the different steps in the hermeneutic circle. Second, whereas the additional reading is important for background knowledge, the more important and, potentially, more difficult step is to refer this knowledge back to the poem

and to assess the relevance of each piece of information for the understanding of the poem, as not everything might be relevant. As Zirker and Bauer discussed in their introductory talk to the *Connotations* Conference 2019 on "Understanding (through) Annotations", each annotation must be relevant to the text passage to which they are attached, which in turn must be relevant to the understanding of the whole text. Indeed, the second aspect in particular is much harder to assess, as the students can only know that an annotated text item is actually relevant to understanding the text as a whole when they also have an adequate understanding of the entire sonnet (cf. Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (through) Annotations"). Moreover, the student's ability to connect the information in her annotation back to the sonnet not only increases the quality of the annotation, but also shows the student's understanding of how her research can contribute to the understanding of the sonnet as a whole.

Reflecting on the Hermeneutic Reading Process

The example emphasises yet another aspect of the students' understanding processes. Whereas their own understanding is crucial for their annotations, they must also have a good grasp of the principles of understanding literary texts in general, which includes their ability to explicitly reflect on and regulate their own hermeneutic approach to the text.[93] The discussion of the students' revisions in this sub-section is therefore different from the previous section as it concerns the students' abilities to reflect on how their increased understanding of one line affects their understanding of the whole sonnet (Barton 58; Miall *Literary Reading* 11; Culler 148).

The revision processes that ultimately lead to better annotations are often incited by peers that encourage their fellow annotators to conduct more research on a topic and elaborate their annotation accordingly. The comments mostly include simple questions that ask the annotator to look up other meanings of a word or a concept that might not be known to 21st century readers (cf. Student B "thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright", V5). For example, one of the peers suggests to Student B that she should look up the word "bright" for the annotation of line 5, which, as the peer correctly assumes, might have an archaic meaning. The comment triggers a research process which not only reveals that *bright* can have several meanings in the context of the line, but also uncovers parallels to other sonnets by Shakespeare. In fact, if she had not

93 Baker argues that "regulation … comes into play when the reader has evaluated his or her understanding and found it inadequate. At such time, a competent reader selects and deploys some sort of remedial strategy" (155).

looked up the meaning of *bright*, which can also be "an archaism" meaning "'to make beautiful or fair' (cf. *OED* 3)", she might have never seen the connection between SON43 and SON27 (Student B "make bright", V6, L1 L). The student is able to add an intertextual annotation as the addressee's "beautifying impact on 'the darkness of [the] night' ("shadow, n." *OED* 2a)" in SON43 is indeed "reminiscent of Shakespeare's sonnet 27" (Student B "thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright", V6, L2 IerT). The peer's comment initiates a cascade of new insights that induce the student to rewrite her annotation, consider new interpretative approaches with regard to "the contemporary love imagery and rhetoric", and even make her appreciate this "multi-layered phrase" more deeply (Student B final "thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L2 I).[94] The process shows how the student successfully implements the feedback and uses it to revise her annotations extensively. Furthermore, adhering to the hermeneutic principles of literary text comprehension, she uses her new insights to extend her understanding of the sonnet in general. This approach enables her to make new observations and write more relevant explanatory annotations. The exemplary case shows how closely understanding, interpreting, and writing useful explanations are connected (cf. also Zirker et al. "Commentatory Annotation" 13).

In this context, TEASys as a heuristic tool plays an important role in enhancing the quality of the students' annotations. Its sub-division into categories and levels as well as its digital component that allows the creation of hyperlinks makes the hermeneutic processes more explicit and, thus,

> helps structure and make transparent the process of understanding a text as it shows how pieces of information build on each other and how, for instance, the annotators' interpretations are being arrived at (Bauer and Zirker "Seven Types of Problems" 229)

The systems encourages the students to constantly reflect on and make explicit their own processes of understanding a literary text. Throughout the annotation process, many peer comments can be found that encourage their fellow annotators to keep this process in mind; for example, the correct classification of the information into the appropriate category or level (see Student A "look on", V7, L2 I; Student B "shadow", V6, L2 C; Student D "imperfect shade", V4,

94 The student's positive reaction supports a finding by Fayn et al., who, in "Confused or Curious? Openness/Intellect Predicts More Positive Interest-Confusion Relations", discuss the correlation between intellect and a positive attitude towards complex, possibly confusing, information. They present evidence that the positive correlation also has relevance for engagement with information and learning, pp. 1016–1033.

L1 L; Student D "All days are nights to see till I see thee", V7, L1 F; Student C "shade", V6, L2 IraT). Moreover, the students are often asked to connect their own annotations with the other students' research to support their annotation by creating hyperlinks (cf. Student B "shadow", V6, L1 L; Student A "see", V3, L3 I; Student D "imperfect shade", V4, L2 I; Student C "shade", V6, L1 L). Although these comments are specific to TEASys, they nevertheless show that the students and their annotations can profit from the encouragement to make their (hermeneutic) processes of understanding more explicit.

For example, some comments encourage the students to argumentatively connect their own annotations: "Write an introductory sentence that ties it back to the context annotation" (see Student C "[a]nd, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V6, L3 I). Although this may appear like a simple stylistic issue, the student's revisions suggest more complex processes. The original opening of the annotation stated that the "oxymoron playing with bright and dark causes a blurring of darkness and light: it is no longer possible to make a clear distinction between what is bright, dimmed or dark" (Student C "[a]nd, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V6, L3 I). The student here merely connects her level 3 interpretive annotation to the form annotation on level 1. The fellow student's comment, however, makes her reconsider her approach and reflect on how she arrived at the interpretation in the first place. In her revised annotation, she attempts to include all the information that contributed to her final interpretation:

> Given the importance of ocularcentrism in its historical context, the elements of visual perception in the poem are not merely ornamental or signs of rhetorical playfulness …
>
> The antimetabole 'And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed' (l. 4) is only one of several instances in this poem in which the boundaries of light and dark (or of day and night) are blurred: it is no longer possible to make a clear distinction between what is bright, dimmed or dark. (Student C "[a]nd, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" final, L3 I)

The student's final annotation version reflects her developed sense of understanding. In fact, her revisions suggest that her fellow student's feedback triggered several processes. First, in order to comply with her peer's request properly, the student had to reconstruct her own comprehension process, meaning rereading the line as well as her own language and context annotations. These would help her retrace her steps. Second, retracing her steps apparently induced her to reconsider all her findings in light of her developing interpretive annotation. Finally, she used her new insights to rewrite her

interpretive annotation and, thus, make her argument stronger. Not only does the annotation now include a reference to the student's context annotation, which forms a basis for her interpretation, but it also shows the student's increased awareness of the overall composition of the poem: she comments that the antimetabole is "only one of several instances in this poem" in which the play on words obfuscates the distinction between what is bright and what is dark (Student C "[a]nd, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" final, L3 I). Furthermore, she changes her initial remark that the line is an oxymoron to the observation that it is an antimetabole, which is correct when considering the fact that she comments on the whole line and not exclusively on "darkly bright" (l. 4). The student's revisions thus show that, in order to also make the sonnet more accessible for others, the students have to (re-)examine their own processes of understanding.

Indeed, an essential aspect of the students' endeavours to write useful annotations for the sonnet is their ability to first define and then solve their own problems of understanding. These revision processes often indicate their employment of strategies that structure their own cognitive processes.[95] These processes become obvious in the different document versions and, for example, in the bullet points used by a student as guideposts to structure her thought processes. This student only wrote a short note concerning line 6 of the sonnet, "[h]ow would thy shadow's form form happy show", in which she comments that there is a "syntactic ambiguity" in the line (Student B "form happy show", V6, L1 F). However, she fails to elaborate or explain this any further. In fact, this line's ambiguous syntax has been commented on by scholars in extant editions and its peculiarity is indeed worth a more detailed discussion (cf. Booth 204; Paterson 129). One of the peer mentors makes her aware of this issue and, in the following version, the student provides a more elaborate form annotation on this subject:

> The phrase "form happy show" can be read as syntactically ambiguous, even if not transparently so. According to standard English grammar, the subject of a sentence ("thy shadow's form" (l. 6) in this case) has to be principally succeeded by a verb: 'form(v.) happy(adj.) show(n.)'. In poetic forms, however, the rules of syntax – being not as rigid – could allow for the possibility of inversion: 'form(n.) happy(adj.) show (v.)' in the sense of 'show happy form'. Repetition of 'form' – doubling (Student B "form happy show", V7, L1 F)

In this first stage of the annotation, the student's initial thought processes become clear. Her insertion of the sub-clause "even if not transparently so"

95 For example, Feilke, in "Was sind Textroutinen?" argues that, in addition to communicative competences, cognitive structuring is also required (3).

can be an indicator that, for her, the sentence did not immediately seem to be problematic. Although this section is deleted in a later version, it may nevertheless account for her decision to discontinue writing the annotation, not knowing what to make of the information from the extant editions. The second sentence in her annotation makes this hypothesis even more likely. She explains that the line could be read simply along the rules of "standard English grammar" (Student B "form happy show", V7, L1 F). However, as the grammatical rules in poetry are used more flexibly, often for aesthetic reasons, and "form" (l. 6) could either be read as a verb or a noun, its repetition justifies the claim that the syntactical order in this line could also be inversed. Her annotation is phrased as an argument and, underlying this formulation, might be her own doubtful estimation of the plausibility of this interpretation. Nevertheless, her last addition to her annotation draft, "[r]epetition of 'form' – doubling", is indicative of a first idea that the deliberate doubling of "form" may be the basis for an interpretation (Student B "form happy show", V7, L1 F). Indeed, in her addition to the final annotation, she points out that "the placement of 'form' is deliberate as it results in an aesthetic doubling with 'shadow's form' (l. 6)." (Student B final "form happy show", L1 F). She even takes up this idea in the interpretive annotation on L3:

> the choice of 'show' might momentarily strike a dissonant chord in this otherwise glorifying tribute to the beloved. This uncertainty is enhanced by the potential syntactical ambiguity of the phrase 'form happy show' (l. 6) (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I)

The student thus uses her newly acquired insight to phrase an interpretation which argues that the syntactic ambiguity is deliberate and might support a different, more sombre perspective on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Although it is unclear whether the student would have arrived at this conclusion without the tutor's feedback, it certainly encouraged her to invest more thought into this line and, eventually, to also write a useful annotation that is relevant for the understanding of the whole poem.

In this case, the revision of her annotation even made the student discover a new aspect in the poem that presents the sonnet's "otherwise glorifying tribute to the beloved" in a more critical light (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I). Her example demonstrates how the feedback and exchange with others can motivate students to invest more effort into making sense of a line. More importantly, though, it shows that the students can help each other to re-evaluate the current state of their own ongoing comprehension process (Baker 155). This re-evaluation results in what Baker calls a regulation process, which "comes into play when the reader has evaluated his or her understanding

and found it inadequate" (155). A "competent reader" will attempt to remedy this situation by selecting and deploying a strategy that will help him/her understand (Baker 155). In the student's case, this strategy is not characterised by one single instance but involves several steps that, much in the sense of the hermeneutic circle, include her analysis of the linguistic features, leading to assumptions about the utterance's possible meaning which in turn lead to text meaning. The comments thus encourage students to be more critical of the speaker's utterances in general and search for veiled implications, allusions, ambiguous statements or, in this case, conflicting emotions. Moreover, the recommendations for elaborations also encourage the student to reflect critically on her own writing and improve her annotations adequately with regard to their deficiencies.

In fact, in the same instance, the student begins writing her annotation commenting on "show" (l. 6) (see Student B "form happy show", V7, L1 L). She lists possible definitions of "show" from the *OED*; however, she discontinues writing the annotation until document version 9. Her other annotations are proof of her continuous working progress and, therefore, it is remarkable that this annotation remains unchanged for eight versions. She was obviously undecided which definitions from the *OED* are relevant for the sonnet. Eventually, also in version 7, a peer comments that she might be missing out on possible negative overtones, suggesting that the line might require an interpretive annotation, as, possibly, "the speaker criticises the addressee for being 'fake'" (see Student B "form happy show", V7, L1 L). The student was either unaware or sceptical of the fact that "show" in the sense of "to put on a show" may also have a negative connotation. She corrects herself in her final annotation: she adds that "sometimes, [show] can imply superficiality and intentional deceit" (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I). She further elaborates on this issue in her interpretive annotation, arguing that "show may, at times, imply a mere external display and illusion instead of sincerity and reality" and hinting at the possibility that "the speaker could be criticising the addressee for being dishonest" (Student B final "form happy show", L3 I). Indeed, despite the speaker's superficial adoration of the addressee, there might be darker overtones that are only revealed when analysing the speaker's utterances more critically. The peer's comment encouraged the student to re-consider the *OED* definitions with regard to the speaker's utterances and to reflect on their relevance for the understanding of the rest of the poem. Her revisions thus show her awareness of the fact that her annotations should be "conducive to the hermeneutic process" (Zirker and Bauer "Understanding (through) Annotations").

One revision process that was only partially successful shows that the students are not always aware of this aspect of literary reading: the student's

disregard of the fact that the meaning of one text element contributes to the meaning of the whole sonnet is shown to also affect the quality of her annotations. In this scenario, the peer tries to encourage the annotator to reflect on her current approach to the sonnet by suggesting the next possible steps in her annotation process. The peer tutor comments on the student's annotation of "dead night" (l. 11). He recommends that she should, first, conduct more research on what the "different editors say about the meaning of the phrase" and then try to connect the possible meanings "back to the original text" in order to inquire whether it actually makes sense in the context of the poem (see Student D "dead night", V4, L2 I). He even suggests ideas how to begin the interpretation by asking the student to also think about "who of those three editors your interpretation agrees with / disagrees with" (see Student D "dead night", V4, L2 I). The student's next annotation version reflects her implementation of the feedback. She presents the different editors' notes concerning the phrase "dead night" (l. 11) and concludes that they all agree that the expression "dead night" and "the semantic field of shadows (ll.5, 6, 11)" may further support the reading of "shade as a 'ghost'" (Student D "dead night", V5, L2 I). Based on her reading of the secondary literature, she explains in her annotation how the expression "dead night" (l. 11) may be influenced by other text elements and vice versa (Student D final "dead night", L2 I).

Her emendation of the annotation is nevertheless not entirely satisfactory. Although she implements the feedback in her annotation of "dead night" (l. 11), she fails to come up with her own paraphrase of the line and to connect the observations made in this annotation to her other annotation of the word "shade" (l. 11). In fact, she provides no interpretation at all that discusses the effect of the synonym *ghost* for "shade" in her annotation of "imperfect shade". Her final annotation only indirectly addresses how the possible reading of "shade" (l. 11) as *ghost* or *phantasm* can be understood in the context of the sonnet: "it is an imperfect … representation of the addressee's image in the speaker's dream, and not a physical actuality" (Student D final "imperfect shade", L2 I). Her interpretation therefore only considers one aspect of the use of "shade" without considering the uncanny associations the references to shadows, shades, ghosts as well as the sonnet's overall nocturnal setting might also evoke.[96]

96 The student aims to explicate the meaning of "shade" on a local level, ignoring how the meaning of "shade" affects the rest of the poem and vice versa: the almost sinister quality of the allusions to the spectres that the nightly gloom creates could further be connected to the sonnet's couplet in which the dreams rather than the speaker are revealed as the acting agents that evoke the "shadow" (l. 5) in this sonnet. This example therefore also raises the question of the validity or plausibility of the interpretation against which

Overall, the student shows that she can follow her peer's advice more or less precisely as suggested; however, she fails to apply the insight gained from revising her annotation for observations of her own as well as for her other annotations. The example thus stresses the importance not only of the ability to appropriately revise an annotation with regard to the feedback, but also the ability to assess the relevance of the newly gained insight for the overall reading of the sonnet. This, however, requires a more general grasp of how the different parts of the sonnet contribute to the understanding of the whole.[97]

5.4.1.2 Discussion of Observations

All in all, most of the feedback comments by the students as well as their tutors show their collaborative attempts to successively improve the quality of their peers' annotations: they encourage them to reconsider their hypotheses, offer new or different approaches, open new perspectives and generally promote the students' critical thinking skills. Moreover, the nature of their feedback can roughly be grouped under the following three categories: (1) *elaborations and clarifications*, (2) *reflecting on the hermeneutic process* and (3) *relevance*.[98] Mostly, the students ask their peers to elaborate a specific detail that might be relevant but has until then only been discussed inchoately. On the part of the student (or tutor) reviewing an annotation, of course, this requires the ability to judge the clarity, coherence, and plausibility of the argument, which further presupposes an advanced level of understanding which stands in contrast to the annotators' own current knowledge. On the part of the annotators, sensibly implemented feedback has been shown to be an indicator for their understanding of the material they are annotating as well as the material they

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the students' annotations are measured. More often than not, a text passage can have numerous different interpretations, a fact which indeed still poses substantial challenges for researches, especially with regard to empirical research, but this and the following chapter in particular show that evaluating the plausibility of their interpretations is not the only way to assess the students' literary competence: it is also necessary to assess the degree to which the individual student engages into each one of the outlined processes that lead to the interpretations.

97 McNamara and Magliano support this hypothesis, providing evidence that "[s]pecifically the comprehension processes of less skilled comprehenders tend to operate on the local context" (345f). By contrast, comprehenders engage more in inferential processes that help them also make statements about the global meaning (McNamara and Magliano 345f).

98 These categories notably also reflect the criteria for an appropriate annotation established at the beginning of this study: relevance, comprehensive information presentation, and subservience to the hermeneutic process (see ch. 2.3).

refer to during their research.[99] The peer comments lay open possible aspects that the (individual) students are struggling with and show how they attempt to overcome these challenges. Although the comments lead to different outcomes depending on the individual student, they generally trigger processes that support and enhance the students' grasp of the sonnet. In fact, the successful implementation of the feedback as well as the general quality of the final annotations confirms this claim.

The feedback also allows for more general conclusions. Most of the comments pick up the students at an important stage in their understanding process: they seldomly resolve a student's problem; rather, they point out that there is a problem that the student may have been unaware of. The peer feedback therefore induces the students to employ different strategies in order to define the nature of their problem more precisely by acquiring more knowledge (e.g. about a word, line or concept) and rereading the line/sonnet in consideration of their advanced perspective. This further helps them distinguish whether the comprehension problem(s) are text-based or are a result of their own ignorance (cf. Baker). Based on this knowledge they can re-assess the state of their own understanding, how they have come to that understanding, how to further it and, eventually, how to rewrite their annotation adequately. The feedback thus enables them to consciously reflect on their developing understanding and (re-)structure their thought processes (see Dalton-Puffer 118f). Altogether, their collaborative work on the annotations therefore affects the manifestation as well as the development of what McNamara and Magliano call "continuity monitoring" (340), which describes actions that are connected to the metacognitive process of evaluating one's own sense of comprehension (see also Müller and Richter 42; Lenhard 36; Cho and Afflerbach 111; Baker 155). In fact, the reviewed annotations suggest that the feedback loops are crucial steps in the students' progress towards the enhancement of their own performance as annotators.

Moreover, TEASys has been shown to promote the students' hermeneutic processes of understanding SON43, by structuring and supporting their own cognitive approach. This has a decisive effect on the strategies and methods students employ to make sense of the sonnet: in order to do so effectively, they must consider how the particular nature of the text influences the processes of understanding. Possibly unconscious, procedural knowledge is thus

99 See also Lehnen, who argues that students' performative skills can be improved by continually revising their texts; the revision process makes clear whether the knowledge can be implemented (57).

turned into explicit knowledge during their reflections regarding how much and what kind of knowledge they or any other potential reader of SON43 would need in order to understand the sonnet. Under these premises, the observations strongly suggest that literary competence involves the ability (1) to verbalise or make explicit and continually reflect on one's own processes of understanding and (2) to use these re-evaluation strategies to remedy possible misunderstandings.

5.4.2 *Conformity of Text Base and Knowledge Base*

The previous chapter has shown that understanding is a continual progress, driven forward by the student's hermeneutic approach to the sonnet. This approach is also influenced by their use of secondary literature. In fact, a review of the students' annotations reveals that they use secondary sources as an important resource and realise that the application of the knowledge gained from reading a particular secondary source can lead them (and, ultimately, others) to a deeper understanding of the text at hand (cf. Leubner et al. "Literaturdidaktik" 45). Their integration of the knowledge seems to depend on competences that have different degrees of complexity: there are considerable differences between the students and how they integrate secondary literature into their developing annotations. It is possible to distinguish three different complementary phases that characterise the students' work with the sources: (1) the *application of background knowledge*, including the acquisition, selection, and integration of information, (2) followed by *a critical analysis* of the information with regard to the literary text at hand, a process which depends on their cognitive flexibility and eventually (3) enables them to *generate* their *own hypotheses* concerning the possible meaning(s) of a line or passage in a self-reflexive manner. Depending on each student's ability to engage in these processes, they are able to write annotations that are not only concise and reflect their expertise in the topic, but also demonstrate the student's competence to discuss the sources critically in relation to the text and, based on the discussion, to develop their own plausible interpretations of the sonnet. Some annotations, however, show that their authors either did not move beyond phases (1) or (2) in the process or only inadequately handle phase (2) and/or (3). These instances are indicative of the fact that the students not only need different competences with varying levels of complexity for each task, but that, as a closer analysis will show, these competences, such as, for example, the phrasing of own hypotheses, require specific reasoning processes that are also, in some respects, specific to literary texts (see discussion below).

5.4.2.1 The Students' Uses of Secondary Sources and Extant Annotations

The students' first annotation versions suggest that, based on prior knowledge and the sonnet's context, they can make certain statements about the sonnet or formulate hypotheses without consulting secondary sources (see also ch. 3.1.1f). The annotation versions are, however, also suggestive of the students' realisation that their current state of knowledge might be insufficient. All four students, whose annotations form the basis of this investigation, seem to feel that their understanding of the poem is, at least, unsatisfactory: they identify a knowledge gap or a problem that they might not be able to define/solve without the consultation of other sources. They indicate this, for example, by adding notes for themselves underneath their first annotation drafts, such as in "The darkness that the speaker refers to could either be the darkness of night, the darkness of the addressee's shadow or just the darkness of having his eyes closed and sleeping. (To be continued …)" (Student C "bright in dark directed", V1, L2 I; see also Student C "darkly bright", V1, L2 I).[100] They also use direct cues, often a simple "?", to indicate the need for more information that might help them define/solve the problems they have encountered and to make more sense of the line (see Student A "When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see", V1, L? I; Student C "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V1, L2 C; Student B "show", V1, C; Student D "imperfect shade", V1, L2 IraT). One student, for example, provided annotation drafts for "most I wink" (l. 1) and "see" (l. 2) but adds another placeholder annotation for the whole first line "L? Interpretation" (Student A "When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see", V1, L[evel]? I). Generally, the students' additions to their annotations point towards several issues: the incompleteness of an annotation (see first example "to be continued"), an intuition that there is more to the line (see second example "?"), an uncertainty concerning the levels (prospective depth and scope of the annotation) and, lastly, a lack of knowledge/questions based

100 While this might also point to the fact that the annotation does not yet fully cover the complexity of the text – the student may well have understood the passage –, the subsequent changes to the annotation suggest otherwise: the student first understood the passage to describe "a color, or degree of brightness" (Student C "darkly bright", V1, L2 I). In the following document, the revisions show her realisation that the passage need not necessarily be understood literally and is ambiguous, to begin with. The fact that she also adds that the "description of the eyes is puzzling for readers" supports the assumption that the student regarded her grasp of the passage to be too insufficient at that time to explain it adequately to others (Student C "darkly bright", V1, L2 I). A similar progression can be seen in the annotation on "bright in dark directed".

on extant content. Notwithstanding the different forms of expression, the students' notes all point towards the same realisation. Their comments show that they have realised that the 'problem' might be reader- rather than text-based. They indicate that by including direct cues for the need of more context information in their first annotations: "Booth points out that 'in the Renaissance eyes were generally thought of as giving off light' (203). → Clark" (Student C "And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", V1, L2 C); "[Pindar: 'Is man but the shadow of a dream (skias onar)?']" (Student B "show", V1, C) or "Plato's Cave (?)" (Student D "imperfect shade", V1, L2 IraT).[101] This realisation (that they seem to be missing some piece of information) induces them to draw on additional material, such as secondary literature, as a source of knowledge in order to define and overcome potential problems of understanding.

Knowledge Acquisition, Selection and Integration

Overall, the final versions of the students' annotations (which cover 63 annotations in seven different categories, making up 22 annotated items) show that they mostly draw on the *OED*, secondary sources as well as scholarly articles and on annotations of extant editions. In total, 23 or more references to the *OED* can be found in the students' annotations.[102] There are 33 references to secondary literature as well as diverse scholarly articles on, e.g. Renaissance schools of thought, in the annotation categories. The largest amount of secondary sources the students draw upon are the annotations in extant editions of Shakespeare's sonnets. These are referred to 35 times in total. The students use the sources as a basis for critical discussions or a point of departure for more research and as evidence, either to provide knowledge, to summarise facts or to reinforce their argument. Moreover, those annotations that also include expert opinions are usually more advanced in their early stages than other annotations; for example, when they provide paraphrases or synonyms for the lines:

> The adjective 'unrespected' describes something that is 'not held in respect or regard' (*OED* 2). Other annotations of 'unrespected' in previous editions paraphrase the term as 'unvalued' (Duncan-Jones 196), 'ignored' (Booth 203), or 'unnoticed' (Hammond 194). (Student A "unrespected", V3, L1 L and Student A final "unrespected" L1 L)

101 Castiglione also calls these observations "offline difficulty" which is a "post-reading feeling of incomplete or unsatisfactory understanding", which induced students to engage in "hermeneutic labour" (104).

102 Often, there are several quotations from the *OED* in one annotation discussing the different possible definitions of a word. These have been counted as only one instance.

The student here refers to the synonyms of the word "unrespected" (l. 2) provided in extant editions and uses them as additional material to elaborate the paraphrase selected from the *OED*. The manner in which the student includes all four synonyms given by Duncan-Jones, Booth, Hammond, and Evans further shows that she intended them to support her decision to select that particular *OED* definition. This annotation is among the first that she finishes (there are no further changes after V3). The student uses the scholars' annotations to corroborate her own findings and, by referring to both the experts and the *OED*, she shows that she has been able to develop an understanding of the word "unrespected" in the context of the sonnet (l. 2).[103] The interpretive annotation on L2 shows that she makes a comparison between the expert annotations and deduces that, depending on the choice of the synonym suggested by the experts, there are actually two possible readings of the line:

> The line can be interpreted in two different ways, depending on the paraphrase chosen. … First, 'unrespected' can be substituted with 'ignored' (Booth 203), which would suggest that the speaker observes his surroundings, but deems the things to be unimportant and actively chooses to ignore them … Second, 'unrespected' could be substituted with 'unnoticed' (Hammond 194). This reading would indicate that the speaker does not even observe or notice the things around him. (Student A final "unrespected" L2 I)

The student refrains from simply copying the information provided by the experts, but contrasts the different synonyms and shows that she can reflect on the effect of each annotation on the reading of the sonnet. She analyses the material with regard to its relevance for the poem. Her annotation is further

103 Cf. Ash and Baumann in "Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension", who argue that vocabulary learning or what they call "word consciousness" involves an awareness of word choice (cognitive dimension) as well as an appreciation of language (affective dimension) (391). The students' annotations could be said to appeal to both dimensions. They (1) leave the readers not only with more room for interpretation, but (2) also leave readers with a deepened sense of the different meanings of the words, which promotes vocabulary learning and a more flexible use of the word in the future (cf. McNamara and Magliano 360). Thus, these kinds of annotations not only help overcome immediate comprehension problems, but might also have a long-term effect on readers' reading competence in general. The students' approach therefore suggests that, although language learning and literature have often and still are perceived as two separate disciplines, the students' exhaustive efforts to uncover and comprehend all possible meanings of each word of the poem shows how much their language skills and language awareness can be promoted through an intensive investigation of language use in literary texts. For a concise overview of the benefits of learner interaction with literary texts on language learning see also Paran "The Role of Literature in Instructed Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: An Evidence-Based Survey.", pp. 465–96.

indicative of her endeavours to avoid reducing the word to one meaning only, but to provide her readers with all possible relevant readings of the line. In fact, the student here shows how she can effectively use the information in these annotations to expand and elaborate her own annotations. Her annotation further demonstrates an openness to different interpretations (one ascribing more active, the other more passive attributes to the speaker) and reflects her awareness and tolerance of ambiguities. The student uses all the possible relevant meanings of the words she is annotating in order to guarantee a comprehensive reading of the sonnet.[104] The expert annotations are thus used as an orientation and a basis for a more exhaustive reading.

The annotation for the line "shadow's form" (l. 6) may serve as another example of how a student develops her annotation by beginning with a simple inquiry for a language annotation and expanding her research from there. The student's proceeding, though, is slightly more elaborate. The language annotation on L1 generally comments on the meanings of the word "form", describing it as some form of a shape or an appearance that could either be material or immaterial, but also referring to Plato's philosophy of a 'form' as an ideal state of a thing or concept (see Student B "shadow's form", V1, L1 L). Paterson's reference to Plato and his philosophical writings in his edition to Shakespeare's sonnets apparently inspired her to follow up on this idea (cf. 129): she makes a note of it in several annotations as well as in the annotation categories (see Student B "shadow" V1, L1 L; Student B "shadow's form", V1, L1 L; Student B "show" V1, C). Throughout the annotation process, she eventually decides to provide an exhaustive context annotation on L2 for "shadow's form" (l. 6). She argues that

> [i]t is only through 'true knowledge' achieved by philosophical contemplation that one can "[perceive] the forms directly, with [one's] mind's eye" (Bruce n.pag.).
>
> In Neoplatonic thought, the notion of contemplation is broadened to include the intense contemplation of sensible things, such as a "person of rare beauty", which would then lead the way up to the world of forms (Jones 10). Under these

104 The students thereby indirectly confirm Ricklefs' admonitory words suggesting that the mere clarification of a fact or (archaic) meaning of a word is hermeneutically inadequate to overcome the obstacles to understanding as these explanations are selective and often inconsistent and the identified as well as unidentified problems of understanding are mostly not on the level of just an incomprehensible word or thing (56). For a critical discussion of elaborate (interpretative) annotations see also Linne and Niederhoff "Annotation as an Embedded Textual Practice: Analysing Explanatory Notes in Three Editions of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*", pp. 48–76.

> premises, imagining or dreaming about a beloved constituted "the first step towards a higher form of love" (Wickert 283, my translation) (Student B final "shadow's form", L2 C).

Her annotation reflects not only her understanding of the sources but also of the sonnet, which can be seen in the way she chose a few select quotes from the sources in order to effectively develop and support her own argument. The information she provides her readers with is further brought forward in a clear and coherent manner and is also presented as concisely as possible. Her presentation of the sources therefore suggests that she has understood them sufficiently to reproduce the scholars' argument in her own words. More importantly, rather than just summarising her sources and presenting the reader with seemingly random bits of information, her annotation shows that she has understood the sources in a manner that enables her to judge their usefulness for her own as well as other potential readers' understanding of the sonnet. In order to do so, she not only must have had a good grasp of the sonnet while reading the sources, but she must also have been able to accommodate the new information into her present understanding of the sonnet. Her ability to do so is remarkable as Plato's allegory of the cave is not likely to be familiar to a student whose field is not philosophy. Thus, although the information might be new or even disruptive to the student's current understanding, she is able to include and discuss it in her interpretive annotation on level 3, which shows that the student also acknowledges the "ambiguity of the word 'form'" that goes along with the now-found information (Student B final "shadow's form", L3 I).

The annotation draws attention to another issue regarding the interpretation of the utterances with reference to actual historical information: the annotation moves from a short description of Plato's allegory of the cave to a more detailed discussion of how and which aspect of this particular context is relevant for the understanding of the passage in the poem. It thus reflects the student's awareness of the fact that she must carefully assess any context information in terms of its relevance and the nature of its contribution to the text's meaning, because, strictly speaking, the "only contextual information available is [and should be] the text itself" (Bauer and Brockmann 342). For this reason, any discussion of, here, a philosophical context must be linked to the contextual information provided by the text. Drawing on Schleiermacher, Dilthey explains the process between text production and understanding as an inference process that continually updates information concerning grammar, logic and historical knowledge (200f). The justification for the inclusion of historical context knowledge for the generation of interpretation is therefore, as

Dilthey insinuates, a logical one. Defining what Shakespeare might have known on the subject of, for example eyes, therefore also means setting the boundaries for possible interpretive approaches to the sonnet, which can hardly be read in the context of 21st century knowledge on eye physiology.[105] It therefore makes sense to establish a frame of reference by delineating the historical context in which Shakespeare performed this illocutionary act (cf. Eardley 122; see also Ricklefs 47ff; Friedman 118; Wilcox "The Character of a Footnote" 198f; Jansohn 213; Roloff 8; A. Walker 99).[106] These processes of understanding in connection to the sonnet's cultural, social, philosophical and historical implications belong to one of the most difficult aspects for a reader (Kramsch 357). Any context or other information referred to in order to disambiguate or contextualise the sonnet's statements, should be assessed carefully in terms of its relevance and the nature of its contribution to the text's meaning.[107] The student successfully demonstrates her ability to reflect on this issue by pointing out how the line can, "under these premises" (Student B final "shadow's form", L2 C), meaning, based on a reference to Plato's allegory, also be understood.

A similar example of this issue can be found in another annotation or rather in one of the other students' comments concerning her evolving context annotation. It shows that she is aware of the fact that she has to deal critically with the information she has gathered:

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105 Ricklefs comments favourably on this form of approach in explanatory annotations of literary texts: "Der häufig wichtigste Kontext für einen Text sind zweifellos nicht die autorspezifischen und werkimmanenten Zusammenhänge, sondern so etwas wie die Vorstellungs-, Sprach-, Deutungs-, Bild-, Stil und Gedankenmuster etc. des zeitgenössischen Literaturzusammenhangs, auf die hin ein Text in Variation, Repetition und Opposition geschrieben ist." (50) He thus emphasises the importance of explanatory annotations that recover, explain and discuss contemporary knowledge with regard to its influence on the generation of the respective text.

106 For discussions concerning references to actual places or persons in fictional texts, see Searle's "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse.", p. 13ff, Lewis' "Truth in Fiction", p. 38f, Ryan's "Possible Worlds and Accessibility Relations", p. 11ff, Davies' *Aesthetics and Literature*, p. 34f, and Proudfoot's "Possible Worlds Semantics and Fiction".

107 In this context, critical voices often warn that by disambiguating and illuminating intentional vagueness or "flesh[ing] out a fact or reference" (Zafrin 209) annotations can, from an aesthetic point of view, destroy the fictional illusion of a text (Martens "Kommentar" 42; Günther 187). However, the fictional assertions made in the poem only attain relevance for the readers when they analyse and interpret them (Bauer and Beck "On the Meaning of Fictional Texts" 252 + 258; cf. also Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping") and can thus lead to a greater appreciation of the poem as a whole (Hagen "Von den Erläuterungen" 207). This can also be seen in a rare example of a student's reaction to the sonnet. She openly acknowledges the sonnet's aesthetic value: "[t]his multi-layered phrase is a brilliant token of how Shakespeare managed to play with different nuances" (Student B final "Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", L3 I).

> could we assume that the discourse about vision was popular enough during Shakespeare's time to presuppose that his readers were familiar with the theories? This would probably read as a far-fetched justification for extramission theory (?) (Student C "darkly bright", V5, L2 I)

The student solves her dilemma by creating a link to the context annotation on level 2 for the readers of her interpretive annotation, thus offering them the chance to judge for themselves:

> According to Stuart Clark in *Vanities of the Eye*, the close relationship between eyes and light can be dated back to Platonic times and has influenced writers and readers over centuries. For more context on theories of vision, cf. [link to l.4 L2 Context]. (Student C, V7, L2 I)

She is thus able to support her interpretation with evidence without, however, admitting her interpretation to stand and fall with the mere possibility that Shakespeare could have known of these theories. Based on Gadamer's hermeneutic concept of text comprehension, Ehlers describes this process as an act of an attempted approximation to a historically foreign and subjective text, which aims at an eventual convergence of the interpreter's horizon and the text's possible meanings (110).[108] It is how both students use the information they encounter during their research and their successive integration of the information in the annotations that best reflect their cognitive flexibility and ability to engage in a critical analysis of the sonnet as well as the sources, two processes that are shown to correlate closely.

Cognitive Flexibility and Critical Analysis

The following annotation on L1 for line 7 "to the clear day with thy much clearer light" will further illustrate the correlation of the two processes addressed above. The annotations in extant scholarly editions are inconclusive regarding this line. For example, Booth incorrectly suggests that the stylistic device employed is an antistasis (203), and Evans adds a random and unrelated quote, because unexplained, from Sidney's *Arcadia* (144). However, the difference between the processes triggered here and those triggered in the previous annotation highlights the general necessity for a certain amount of cognitive flexibility and the students' need to draw on different resources and strategies depending on the nature of the 'problem' at hand. The first versions of the annotation on L1

108 She adds that his concept has been developed and refined over the past years, as he does not provide a rationale of the exact hermeneutic methods of text analysis and interpretation (110).

for line 7 "to the clear day with thy much clearer light" shows that the student apparently did not know where to begin her research. Although her document indicates that she intended to annotate this line, obviously considering the repetition of "clear … clearer" (l. 7) noteworthy, she merely provides several definitions of "clear" from the *OED* and otherwise leaves the annotation in its rudimentary state for altogether 6 versions (see Student B "clear", V1–6, L1 L), while dedicating much work to her other annotations, which could be an indicator of her as yet unsuccessful attempts to find an appropriate approach to the annotation. This struggle could possibly be owing to her inability to point out what exactly it is about this line that makes it difficult to understand. In version six, however, the student finally takes up her work on the annotation again by pointing out and describing the correct stylistic device, explaining that the "repetition of the adjective 'clear' in its comparative form 'clearer'" is an "example of a polyptoton as the repeated word varies in terms of inflection ("Polyptoton", *Princeton* 1086)" (Student B "clear", V6, L1 F).

The identification of the correct stylistic device seemed to have been the necessary input for the student. Whereas she seems to have dedicated much thought to the "relationship" between the two adjectives "clear – clearer" (Student B "clear", V5, L1 F), possibly owing to her research on antistasis (which is defined as a stylistic device that repeats words in a contrary sense) (see below), she then begins to focus more on the fact that she has to think of the relationship between the two words differently; namely, as the "same adjective referring to different nouns", thus "establishing a relationship between the light of the day and … the metaphorical light of the addressee" (Student B "clear", V6, L1 F). In the interpretive annotation on L2, she is able to write a preliminary discussion of the different readings of the line based on the word's different meanings (see Student B "clear", V6, L1 L). Furthermore, as a consequence of her discovery, she rewrites the definitions that she selected for the passage from the *OED* into a prose text. On L3 she develops her readings into a more elaborate interpretive approach of the line, which reflects the student's progress: she is now able to make more sense of the comparative construction and to analyse the relationship between the two elements up for comparison. The student next comments on the ambiguity of the line that results from the syntactically ambiguous construction of the previous line 6: the comparison could either be between the addressee's "shadow" evoked earlier in the sonnet or the actual daylight (see Student B "clear" final, L3 I, 124). Observing the "unequivocal brightness of the 'clear day' and the 'much clearer light' (l. 7) of the addressee", the student can then make statements about the line's singular explicitness that is "set in sharp contrast to the ambiguous interplay of darkness and light in the preceding lines of the sonnet" (Student B "clear" final, L1 L, 124).

The annotation's development allows for another observation as well. The student not only identifies the polyptoton and defines it, but she is also aware that she must consider all the evidence available to her to increase her understanding of the line. As a matter of fact, the actual difficulty does not only lie in that exact line, but begins in the previous line: while the meaning of the words in "to the clear day with thy much clearer light" are fairly easy to understand, even for modern day readers, it is the syntactic and semantic analysis of the previous line that affects the reading of line 7 "[t]o the clear day with thy much clearer light".[109] However, the student does not notice the relationship until later in the annotation process. Her work on line 6 therefore influences the annotation on line 7 considerably: she first notes the syntactic ambiguity in line 6 before she concerns herself with her annotation of "clear … clearer" (l. 7). The annotation is therefore not only an example of how the student attempts to make sense of a line that she considers insufficiently explained by other scholars; it is also an example of the student's ability to critically evaluate her sources, to conduct research if she considers the information unsatisfactory or faulty and, most importantly, to use all the textual evidence from the poem to define more explicitly what might cause her problems of understanding. The student's annotation emphasises the importance of the ability to realise that reading and extracting information from sources, especially from extant annotations that often only focus on one specific item in a passage, is not a unilateral process. The acquisition as well as the application of the knowledge requires the students to constantly (re-)assess and adapt their current state of understanding by rereading the line/sonnet in consideration of their increasingly advanced knowledge on a certain topic. Consequently, their rereading of a line should either prompt them to conduct more research or to change their former hypotheses concerning the line/sonnet and to formulate new ones.

In another annotation, an incorrectly described stylistic device for line 5 of the sonnet, "shadow shadows", triggers a similarly extensive research process. In version two of her annotation, the student added a direct quote from Booth, who identifies the construction "shadow shadows" as the rhetorical figure antistasis. The student adds a comment for herself to this quotation asking "Is Booth right?" (Student B "shadow shadows", V2, L1 L). Apparently, the student is unsure about the correct definition of the rhetorical device 'antistasis' and, rather than unquestioningly accepting Booth as a reliable reference, her note on the first draft reveals that she intends to cross-check the definition of

109 Baker maintains that the syntactic evaluation "plays a less central role in comprehension monitoring", which might explain why the student took her time with this particular annotation (165).

an antistasis as well as whether the figure is actually correctly applied.[110] The note is indeed also suggestive of her research agenda: "[What is the difference between Polyptoton and Antistasis? Is Booth right?]" (Student B "shadows", V2, L1 F). One reason why she could not solve her problem on the spot is that a reliable definition of antistasis cannot be found easily: the *OED* fails to provide one, and an adequate definition cannot be found on any other reliable website. This may be the reason why she decided to make a note of this issue in order to conduct more research later in her annotation process. Another reason could be the lack of more concrete hints from extant editions, which supports the initial observation that the expert annotations are an important source for the students.

Nevertheless, the next annotation versions show some radical revisions. The student has concluded that Booth's definition of antistasis is actually inaccurate (cf. 203). The student corrects Booth's mistake and notes that the rhetorical device used in this line is not an antistasis, but an antanaclasis. Consequently, she revises the form annotation on L1 in order to agree with the group's (now) correct definition and application of the rhetorical devices: antanaclasis and polyptoton. In her annotation, she also shows that the antanaclasis is crucial for an adequate description of this exceptional line, as only the antanaclasis points to the semantic peculiarity of the expression (see Student B "shadow shadows", V7, L1 F and L2 F). Another form annotation on level 2 further explains the linguistic peculiarities of this passage. The student explains the difference between polyptoton and antanaclasis in her annotations, a fact which is quite likely owing to the student's own initial insecurity concerning the exact definition of each of the two stylistic devices. She effectively makes her own developing understanding in the annotation transparent, thus possibly also facilitating the approach for future readers. Elbow argues that it is the writing process, including the writing of annotation, which supports the development of students' "metacognitive understanding of the nature of the reading process" (12). The way the student decides to present the information in her annotation supports his view.

Moreover, in a last step, drawing on several scholarly sources at the same time (Duncan-Jones, Booth, Hammond, Clark, Innes, Hunter), the student's interpretive annotation seeks to explain the paradoxical statement of the line by referring to her research on the Renaissance rhetoric of love, namely that the sight of the lover before the inner eye brings light into the speaker's

110 Booth writes: "antistasis (repetition of a word in a different or contrary sense): bright the adjective, bright the adverb (4); shadow shadows (5); form form (6); clear, clearer (7)" (203).

otherwise bleak prospects of ever seeing his love requited or seeing his love at all. In line 5, the explicit repetition of the word suggests, according to Wickert, the interchangeability of shadow with light and vice versa (Student B "thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright", V9, L3 I). Remarkably, the student only provided this interpretation once she was sure to have enough information at hand to phrase and evaluate her hypotheses about the line. She monitors, whether consciously or not, her own advancing knowledge. This is further confirmed by her annotation that considers her previous findings and embeds them within the context of the poem.[111] Müller and Richter argue that learning to access texts using different strategies independently and to reflect critically on one's own understanding of the text is a crucial aspect of students' competence development (43). Indeed, the student's annotations show how a critical engagement with other sources can be used as a basis and an incentive to conduct more research. Her research further suggests that the student can judge the validity and usefulness of a resource, while realising that the informational content is unsatisfactory and that she needs to conduct more research until she finds a source that is relevant for the text she is currently working on.

Engaging in the Critical Discourse and Phrasing Hypotheses

While most of the preceding examples have shown how the students deal with and profit from the discussions provided by the critical community, several other annotations highlight the importance of not simply accepting the information from the sources as sure facts, but to engage in the academic discourse and to further the critical debate. For example, in version 6 of her annotation concerning the line "bright in dark directed" (l. 4), the student comments that

> Ingram's following remark on this line '[h]ere the adverb [bright] balances "darkly"' (100) is to be criticized: describing the effect of "bright" as a balance is too weak, as it also creates tension and bewilderment instead of merely re-establishing harmony (Student C "bright in dark directed", V6, L2 I)

Her annotation is hardly elaborate, and unsuccessfully explains why she actually disagrees with Ingram's remark that "bright" balances "darkly" (l. 4). Her next version shows that she tries to remedy her annotation's shortcomings:

111 The student's example stands in stark contrast to a group of readers that Leslie and Caldwell call paraphrasers, which focus their attention solely on the current text (i.e., text base), but are unable to make connections with their developing knowledge base (220). The result is that the readers can provide a rough summary or paraphrase about the meaning of the line or text as a whole, but cannot make more concrete statements about how this understanding comes about and how the different elements of the text influence that understanding.

> The speaker is neither in a place of darkness nor of light. Describing this in-between state as a 'balance' would neglect the tension created by the semantics and rhetorical figures of the poem: They all indicate that the speaker is torn between positive and negative emotions. (Student C "bright in dark directed", V7, L2 I).

She successfully expresses her criticism and, arguing along the sonnet, shows why Ingram's description might not reflect the poem's conflicting statements appropriately. This instance highlights the importance of critical thinking, both with regard to one's own written products but also that of others. Her annotation is therefore evidence of her ability to critically reflect on the scholar's comment and check it against her own interpretations of the line. Moreover, the discrepancy between her and the scholar's notions of the line do not induce her to accept the scholar's opinion. Rather, the divergence prompts her to assess the plausibility of both interpretations based on a critical reanalysis of the sonnet. Not only does her argument become stronger, but she is also able to show that she can contribute to the general discourse on the sonnet. Her readers may agree more with Ingram, but she is able to comprehensibly introduce her own stance.

The assumption that the student can successfully reach a conformity between her text base and knowledge base can also be seen in the other annotations of the entire line. She is able to provide a concise summary of a large and complex amount of information (relating to Renaissance concepts of the eye and vision), which she condensates into the most relevant aspects based on the reading and combination of a number of sources (cf. Student C final "darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L2 C). The development of her final interpretations of this complex line can be traced along the three annotation categories that, although independent annotations, build on each other and prove relevant to understanding in themselves and complementary to the information provided in the other annotations (see Student C final "darkly bright, are bright in dark directed", L1–3).

The following two examples illustrate the importance of critically engaging in the discourse. Both annotations show that the student was less successful regarding the discussion of a scholarly source. The early stages of her annotation are rather promising; however, the student struggles when it comes to discussing and developing an argument on her own. Similar to the other students, this student also used expert annotations as a basis for her research. The following first draft of an interpretive annotation for "imperfect shade" (l. 11) mainly contains quotes of scholars' paraphrases:

> We suggest two possible interpretations of the phrase: the first interpretation is built upon the language definitions [L1]; the second interpretation is given in the context of sequence with the failings of the friend (e.g. Sonnet 33), which might refer to the same Addressee [sic].
> 1. In dreams one cannot always see things as detailed as they are. When saying 'imperfect shade' the Speaker means the dream image 'which is deficient, less-than-whole because unreal' [Paterson, p.130], 'as only the shadow of the reality' [Evans, p. 144], i.e. imperfect (blurred, incomplete) representation of Addressee's appearance/form in the Speaker's dream (not a physical actuality);
> 2. It can also refer to a recollection of the allusions to the young man's moral defects in 33–5 and can be interpreted as 'the image of you, beautiful despite your moral imperfection' [Duncan-Jones, p. 196].
>
> (Student D "imperfect shade", V1, L2 I)

In this first draft of her annotation, the student just provides a list of the different paraphrases she found in extant editions of Shakespeare's sonnets. The first part of her annotation shows that these have triggered some independent thought processes. The comparison of the experts' paraphrases has apparently led the student to the realisation that the line may have several meanings. Her own analysis of both possible readings of the line must have further led her to the conclusion that both propose a plausible interpretation of "imperfect shade" (l. 11). Thus, in the final stage of the annotations, the student comments on the possible meanings of the two words in the context of the poem on L1.

The annotation categories on L2+3 (intertextual and interpretation, respectively) reflect her intensive work with the poem based on the scholars' paraphrases (Student D final "imperfect shade", L3 I). In the interpretive annotation on L3, she develops her argument by including several quotes taken from altogether five different scholarly editions (Duncan-Jones, Hammond, Evans, Paterson, Vendler). So far, the student seems to have profited from the scholars' input as she can include the information she finds in the scholarly annotations to present several interpretations of the line and use quotes as building blocks for her annotation:

> … the speaker means the dream image 'which is deficient, [and] less-than-whole because unreal' (Paterson 130). While dreaming, one might perceive the images 'as only the shadow of the reality' (Evans 144). Thus, it is an imperfect … representation of the addressee's image in the speaker's dream, and not a physical actuality (Hammond: 'because not substantial like the Boy's body' (194n11); Vendler: 'its radical imperfection as a substitute for real presence is admitted' (224)). The speaker's imagination is reproducing only a likeness of reality.

> Considering a possible intertextual connection with Sonnet 33, another interpretation of the phrase can be suggested. '[I]mperfect shade' can here also refer to a recollection of the allusions to the young man's moral defects in 33.5 [sic] and, according to Duncan-Jones, can be interpreted as 'the image of you, beautiful despite your moral imperfection' (196). This representation of 'imperfect shade' seems to stand out from the previous interpretation, because it excludes the speaker's dreaming the image of the addressee. (Student D final "imperfect shade")

The annotation shows how the student connects and hierarchises the scholars' paraphrases. She also forms her own opinion concerning the plausibility of the diverse hypotheses, at least to some extent. Her understanding of the sources in relation to reading and understanding the poem can indeed be seen in the way she structures the different quotes beginning with what the student considers most important and ending with an interpretative approach that the student is more critical about. Whereas she considers Paterson, Evans, Hammond and Vendler to present more or less the same interpretation, she decides to consider Duncan-Jones' hypothesis that "stand[s] out from the previous interpretation" in a different paragraph, indicating that her annotation of line 11 opens yet another interpretation (Student D "imperfect shade" final, L3 I). Moreover, the student's phrasing in the paragraph reveals that she seems to have some reservations regarding Duncan-Jones' interpretation or at least considers it less plausible than the others. The introductory sentence of the paragraph indicates that, while she considers the intertextual connection to sonnet 33–5 "possible", she herself does not find the connection particularly obvious and convincing (Student D final "imperfect shade"). The statement "according to Duncan-Jones" in the second sentence further supports this assumption, suggesting that the interpretation reflects less her own opinion, but that of Duncan-Jones (Student D final "imperfect shade"). She thus qualifies Duncan-Jones' paraphrase of "imperfect shade" (l. 11) as her less preferred interpretation of the line (Student D final "imperfect shade").

Indeed, in her last annotation the student also gives a reason why she has some objections concerning Duncan-Jones' paraphrase; her discussion of the reasons why the paraphrase should be met with reservations is, however, somewhat lacking.

> Considering a possible intertextual connection with Sonnet 33, … '[I]mperfect shade' …, according to Duncan-Jones, can be interpreted as 'the image of you, beautiful despite your moral imperfection' (196). **This representation of 'imperfect shade' seems to stand out from the previous interpretation, because it excludes the speaker's dreaming the image of the addressee.** (Student D final "imperfect shade"; my emphasis)

On the basis of its topical relation particularly to SON33, the student considers the interpretation of "imperfect shade" discussion-worthy, as it "stand[s] out" from the others (Student D final "imperfect shade"); however, she also makes clear that, for her, it partly disregards the poem's overall context. Nevertheless, the last part of the student's annotation leaves room to suspect that she has not yet fully understood the sonnet. Her argument why she thinks that Duncan-Jones' interpretation should be discussed more critically is slightly unclear. The scholar's interpretation does not necessarily exclude the fact that the speaker is actually "dreaming the image of the addressee" (Student D final "imperfect shade"). The student's last comment is proof that she was unable to formulate her reservations regarding this interpretative strand more explicitly. It seems the student noticed that the information contradicts her current understanding of the sonnet; however, she cannot reflect on exactly what it is that appears contradictory to her. Her difficulty to do so may originate in the fact that she has not reread the sonnet based on her newly acquired knowledge from Duncan-Jones' annotation. While the student may be critical of the sources and information she reads – Duncan-Jones' interpretation can indeed be criticised –,[112] her critique is, in this case, inaccurate. The annotation shows that she is unable or unwilling to recognise the ambiguity in the sonnet – the student seems to consider the addressee just a creation of the speaker's fancies; however, the addressee can be both, a real person or an imagined ideal; neither interpretation excludes the other. Her example emphasises the importance of a certain awareness or acceptance that ones' previous understanding of the text base might have to be adjusted based on the new information. While this new knowledge or hypothesis stands in contrast to the student's previous understanding of the sonnet, the hypothesis should not be discarded as less plausible or unacceptable until a cross-check with the text base suggests otherwise as the newly introduced interpretation of the line could potentially open up a new, until then, overlooked reading of the poem, which is the case

112 Duncan-Jones' interpretation may be considered a bit far-fetched as there is hardly any other allusion to the fact that (1) the addressee is actually the alleged 'young man' and (2) the speaker, in the same instance, questions this young man's moral standards (see, for example, the annotation on "form happy show", L3 I). Both inferences made in her argument are built on the negative connotations of one word ("imperfect" (l. 11)) only, which is rather a long stretch. Apart from that, her annotation also suggests that she considers Shakespeare's sonnets as one entire oeuvre rather than interpreting each sonnet as one separate unit. Her approach is not uncommon, but the academic community is nevertheless divided as to how much importance should be given to possible intertextual or topical connections between the sonnets as well as the general idea of ascribing the sonnets some sort of narrative character.

here. This shortcoming also renders her incapable of engaging in a critical discussion of the quote.

In another example, the student faces a similar issue. She writes a first draft for an intratextual annotation in her second document version that is almost entirely based on a quote from secondary literature:

> In combination with "unseeing eyes" in l. 8, Vendler argues that 'the poem, in short, gets darker as the seeing eyes become unseeing and then sightless, and as the shade darkens from shin[ing] brightness to imperfect[ion]' (223). (Student D "sightless", V6, L2 IraT)

The annotation clearly lacks a critical discussion of the quote. It should make transparent why she chose this quote in the first place and/or why she considers it relevant. She might even rephrase the annotation and provide a summary or paraphrase of the quote in her own words. In version 8, as a first step, the student decides to move Vendler's quote to an interpretive annotation on L3 (Student D "sightless", V8, L3 I). She further tries to implement a tutor's advice by adding her own thoughts, which suggests that she noticed that the quote was better suited for an interpretive annotation. Based on Vendler's line of argumentation, she argues that the development from eyes that "best see" (l. 1) to "unseeing" (l. 8) and, then, "sightless" (l. 12) might imply that the speaker is indeed slowly drifting off to sleep and "and gradually, … starts dreaming of the addressee" (Student D final "sightless eyes", L3 I). Although her interpretation is not necessarily wrong, it nevertheless fails to reflect Vendler's original argument that "the poem […] gets darker as the seeing eyes become … sightless, and … the shade darkens … to imperfect[ion]" (223). The reason why she deviates from Vendler's interpretation may be that the initial purpose of Vendler's quote was just to point out an intratextual network of adjectives which insinuate the deterioration of the speaker's eyesight and the quality of the addressee's "shade" (l. 8, l. 11) or image. Vendler's conclusion, however, is not that the speaker falls asleep, but that the poem's atmosphere is getting darker as the "dreams" (l. 14) eventually replace the eyes as the "active agents" (223). For her interpretive annotation, the student could therefore have discarded Vendler's quote altogether as her own conclusion regarding the deterioration of the speaker's eyesight has little in common with Vendler's reading. The student either misunderstood Vendler, failing to make sense of the scholar's argument and/or unsuccessfully tried to connect Vendler's argument conclusively with her own. Based on the preceding analysis, in this case, it is more likely that the student is at least struggling to understand what she is annotating. This assumption is confirmed when she concludes almost all of her interpretive annotations with a quote from a scholar, avoiding having to paraphrase the

statements in her own words or to come to her own conclusions and instead letting the secondary literature speak for her. To simply reproduce what another has already said about a certain text is, however, hardly the purpose of critical literary discourse in an interpretive annotation.

Although the preceding case is a specific example, the strategy to conclude an argument with a direct quote from secondary texts rather than paraphrasing or reasoning in one's own words is not uncommon among students. The example should indeed not be considered a singular case and may actually pose a familiar scenario to many who have taught or are teaching literature in an academic or educational context. Unfortunately, while it is relatively clear in the example above where the student went wrong, many other cases cannot be assessed as easily. A look at other quotations the student uses to conclude her annotations may further exemplify the issue. The quotes she chose are quite appropriate and plausible interpretations of the sonnet (Student D final "dead night", L2 I; Student D final "All days are nights to see till I see thee", L2 I; Student D final "And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me", L2 I). As a matter of fact, they are proof that the student conducted some research and was able to select those quotes that provide relevant interpretations of the respective lines. It is therefore likely that the student has understood the extracts from the literature and, additionally, must have had at least some form of hypothesis concerning the interpretation of the line. Otherwise, she would not have been able to assess the plausibility of the presented interpretative approaches in the context of her endeavours to write an interpretive annotation on the select passages. Nevertheless, her annotations lack a proactive discussion of the lines' possible meanings in the student's own words. She seems unable to use her analysis of the sonnet to develop her own interpretation or to discuss the information given in the secondary literature in a way that enables her to come to her own conclusions or interpretations of the line. Although the observation might initially suggest that the problem originates from difficulties on the level of cognitive or meta-cognitive processing of the textual information alone, as in the previous example, this need not necessarily be the case. It could also be owing to a certain level of insecurity that finds its origin in the student's belief that she cannot appropriately convey her interpretation in her own words; this could have induced her to allow the scholars to speak for her. However, her decision to do so concedes the scholars she quotes an exaggerated authority that prevents literary critical debate. Furthermore, the annotation effectively illustrates an issue discussed at the beginning of this work (see ch. 1.3.2). The scholars are given such authority over the student's own approach to the interpretation of the sonnet that she might indeed have had the impression that the sonnet is too remote and "culturally distanced"

from her to allow for approaches based on her own knowledge and experience (Widdowson 6; see also Rumbold and Simecek 338).

The example therefore shows that students should be made aware of the fact that engaging with a literary text also means to critically reflect on and to develop the statements made by a critical community and not to unreflectively reproduce what the literary critics, lecturers or teachers say. After all, literary understanding is by no means a finite process and benefits not only from a cross-fertilisation of ideas, but also from the variety of different interpretations and knowledge that are brought to the text. It is the text, not the critical community, that establishes both the interpretative freedom as well as the limitations for certain interpretations. One component of the students' literary competence is therefore expressed in their ability to reflect on and to discuss the hypotheses introduced by scholars based on their own critical analysis of the text at hand. This realisation enables the students to become part of the literary community as contributors to the literary discourse themselves.[113] Consequently, approaches to teaching poetry should emphasise the importance of a focus on close reading, on language and on form: students should be taught means to approach the reading task in a manner that encourages them to conduct their own analysis of the language, to develop their own hypotheses in an objective and evidence-based way without letting individual or private associations intrude too much into their interpretation and, in this manner, also find their own voice as readers of poetry (cf. Duck 24). These teaching objectives should ideally also enable them to disengage themselves from critical preconceptions that dictate their interpretation of a given poem/text and encourage them to develop their own personal approach to reading poetry (see also ch. 5.5.3).

The last example of this chapter describes an instance in which one student engages in the process described above: the student successfully elaborates an annotation by critically reflecting on the information provided, which induces her to dig deeper and come up with contexts that explain the question under discussion in the sonnet and, finally, phrase her own hypothesis based on her own interpretation. The student conducted further research when she found that the extant annotation in a scholarly edition was unclear and even misleading. Similar to the other students, she set out to find out more about the meaning of the word "shadow" (l. 5) that she intends to annotate. She therefore consulted extant editions as well as the *OED*. She added a rather inconclusive definition for the word "shadow" provided by the Arden edition only as a bullet

113 For a discussion of the discursive function of annotations in the literary debate, see Fohrmann's "Der Kommentar als diskursive Einheit der Wissenschaft", pp. 244–57.

point in the first version of her annotation and set apart from the rest with a line break: "'an actor or a play' (*OED* 6b) – often used by Shakespeare in this sense (cf. Arden)" (Student B "shadow", V1, L1 L). The student was apparently unsure whether or not to include this information in her annotation. The fact that this definition was provided in the Arden edition of Shakespeare's sonnets may have led her to believe that it was relevant; however, there is no direct reference to the theatre or acting in the sonnet, nor is actor used as a metaphor, as is implied by Duncan-Jones' further elaboration with her quote of Macbeth's "Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player" (Duncan-Jones 43). Thus, the Arden edition hardly provides any useful explanation that would justify this interpretation, and the student therefore apparently did not know what to make of this information. Rather than discarding the annotation as irrelevant information, however, she noted that this might be a comprehension problem which originates from her own lack of relevant knowledge that is necessary to understand the line. Her next version of the annotation contains a first rough draft of a context annotation, which entails a research process that develops over the course of altogether nine versions.

Departing from Duncan-Jones' rather obscure annotation, the student expanded her investigation to sources about Renaissance concepts of dreams, the mind, and the shadow motif in Shakespeare. Her subsequent research unearthed articles by Clark, Rossky, Alt, and Wickert, which she boiled down to the most relevant aspects:

> Dreams were one of those products [sic] of imagination; they were defined as 'vision[s] presented to the interior senses' (Dupleix qtd. in Clark 302–303) and projected during sleep before the inner eye, similar to a theatrical performance. … The reproduced 'species' or 'phantasm' could also be referred to as a 'shadow' (Clark 15). (Student B "shadow" final, L2 C)

The appropriate employment of her findings in her context annotation is indicative of her ability to select, evaluate and compare several sources for a critical discussion of the Renaissance concept of dreams. In fact, the development of the student's argument can be traced along the three different annotation categories that build on each other and prove relevant not only in themselves as independent annotations, but also in their quality to complement the information and interpretative approaches discussed in the other annotations and to thus contribute to a better understanding of the sonnet. For example, in her interpretive annotation, her choice of quotes from the sources effectively supports and corroborates her argument with evidence while also showing that she is able to assess the relevance of the sources for the development of her own interpretation of the speaker's utterances (see Student B "shadow"

final, L3 I). She concludes that "[t]he shadow can therefore be understood as an actor impersonating the addressee on the stage of dramatic dream action which is created and directed by and for the speaker before his inner eye" (Student B "shadow" final, L3 I). Her reaction to the insufficient explanation in Duncan-Jones' edition shows that the student is not only able to initiate processes that help her define and overcome her problem of understanding, but that she can effectively draw on secondary sources to phrase her own hypotheses.[114] The student's annotation process and her engagement with the sources demonstrates her capacity to participate in and make valuable contributions to the literary debate (Roth 180; Bannet and Breidbach 25; Grabowski 13; Klieme and Hartig 21; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 119; Gailey 198). Altogether, the examples therefore support the notion that literary competence means not only the study of literary texts, but also the study of the conventions and practices surrounding the reading of these texts (Barton 58; Miall *Literary Reading* 11; Culler 148; Hynds 117).

5.4.2.2 Discussion of Observations – Monitoring Understanding Processes

Literary understanding has been shown to be the result of a learning process that is substantially affected by external influences, such as an academic community.[115] More specifically, the students' understanding process depends on their ability to *draw on different knowledge resources* and *engage in a critical analysis* regarding the relevance and usefulness of the information for understanding the literary text at hand. While evaluating the appropriateness of each source they must decide *what kind of information* and *at what point in the sonnet* they need a specific kind of information in order to make sense of the passage (knowledge of text base and relationships between textual elements as well as secondary literature). The analysis of the annotations has thus revealed another aspect that is crucial for the definition of literary competence: in order to use the sources effectively, the students must have a basic understanding of the sonnet in order to determine how the passage they are annotating relates to the rest of the poem. Only in this manner can they adequately judge which

114 The student's annotation also reflects her endeavours to interpret and explain the sonnet with regard to its cultural, social, philosophical and historical contexts. One objective of explanatory annotations is to help their readers to understand the literary text in its contemporary (literary) contexts (cf. Ricklefs 50; Jansohn 213; Friedman 117f; Günther 149; Martens "Kommentar" 48f; J. Schmidt 316f; Mundt 162f; Woesler 20).

115 See Klieme and Hartig 17; see also Kramsch 358; Elbow 12; Rupp "Empirisches Beispiel" 119; Leubner et al. *Literaturdidaktik*, Klieme and Leutner 880; Zwaan *Aspects of Literary Comprehension* 18; Weinert 51; Groeben 19; Hallet "Literatur, Bildung und Kompetenzen" 17; Bachmann 41; Hall 62.

details of what they are currently reading might further their own as well as other readers' understanding of the line or passage. The fact that they have to decide exactly *when* to provide *what* kind of information is likely to make the students to reflect more consciously on their developing knowledge.[116] Most of the revisions in the annotations support these assumptions, suggesting that the strategies students use to acquire, reflect on critically and employ new knowledge enable them to draw their own conclusions, formulate interpretations and thus progressively broaden their understanding of the text.

Moreover, the analysis of the different outcomes of this process has shown that dealing with secondary literature requires students to be *flexible and accepting of processes that might disrupt* and *transform* their current understanding of the text and add to their knowledge in perhaps unexpected ways.[117] The students' use of secondary literature therefore also shows some superficial similarities to their reaction to and integration of their peers' feedback: both, the sources as well as the feedback, induce the students to identify and reflect on gaps in their knowledge and make them aware of their own potential ignorance regarding a certain topic or an interpretative approach, thus triggering remedial strategies. The competences applied in their treatment of secondary sources and extant annotations are nevertheless at least partly different. Their self-determined development of the annotations involves a research process which is less directed than the often rather straight-forward instructions in the peer feedback and is of a more autonomous, explorative nature. Consequently, the research process is more challenging for the individual student, who

116 There are examples which support this assumption: the students begin their work on the annotation in one category, conduct research, revise their annotation and then move their annotation to a different category. The sources can therefore also have an influence on the choice of category. Moreover, the changes can even be understood as a sign of the student's developing understanding: in some cases, the students note that the focus of their annotation has shifted, which is an indicator that there was at least a moment of reflection or self-monitoring in the sense of: what kind of information am I actually providing, how is it relevant for this passage? However, this hypothesis should be regarded with at least some reservations as it is difficult to distinguish between the different reasons for students' changes. Sometimes, they move the annotation because they have understood the concept of the categories better, not because they had a new insight on the level of content. In chapters 2.2.1 and 5.3, the influence of TEASys on students' hermeneutic approach to understanding the sonnet has already been discussed in more detail. TEASys, as a hermeneutic tool, obviously plays an important role to not only make the understanding processes visible, but also to structure the students' approach. For example, by means of the categories that can function for the students as a sort of question catalogue that helps direct them to possible areas of research.

117 In his latest monograph *Language vs. Reality*, Enfield even argues that the "process of sense making starts with disruption" (176).

must monitor his/her own comprehension processes much more closely and, initially, without the help of others. The students' competence to engage in such a process here becomes evident in their engagement in self-regulatory learning (SRL) mechanisms that express themselves in an "interplay between different learning strategies, learning processes, and types of knowledge" (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al. 44; Klieme und Hartig 19). The success of this process can be said to be reflected in their ability to *generate and present* their *own hypotheses* in an *adequate and self-reflexive* manner, thus participating in and contributing to the critical discourse about the sonnet.

Finally, the observations emphasise the fact that reading a literary text is ***work in progress***. This progress is driven forward by the students' hermeneutic approach to the sonnet: their understanding process is founded on the hermeneutic principles of establishing meaning through recursive reading that situates the utterances in the poem in their context(s). Most importantly, though, the last two chapters have demonstrated that the students' approach to the sonnet is hardly an autonomous process. Their work on the poem is essentially influenced by their collaboration with their peers and the interaction with the scholarly community (by reading and reacting to the input). Both activities have been shown to encourage the students to assess their current state of knowledge (text base and knowledge base) and to solve understanding problems irrespective of potential difficulties that arise during the reading and research process. In short, both forms of social interaction induced the students to employ (and, consequently, to train) metacognitive strategies in order to further their understanding of the sonnet and write more adequate annotations.[118]

5.5 Understanding "Sonnet 43" – Literary Competence

The annotations provide insights into the students' individual engagement with the text, they give hints as to where their difficulties of understanding may lie and show that the competences necessary to deal with literature can become manifest in the students' different annotation versions. More importantly, however, the findings emphasise the fact that the distinction between reading competence and literary competence is not only possible, but also a crucial and necessary step towards new research approaches and a better

118 Several studies support the notion that metacognitive strategies can positively affect students' performance (see Weinert 55; Leubner et al. "Literaturdidaktik" 45; Klieme and Hartig 21; Grabowski 13; Roth 180; Dresel et al. 462).

delineation of what it means to read and understand (and teach) literature. It has further become clear that reading literary texts does not just mean text comprehension, but also involves a complex interplay between several areas of competence. These competences to deal with a literary text emerge in the students' step-by-step approach to the sonnet; especially, when looking at their identification and consecutive development of adequate explanations for problematic passages: the quality of their explanations depends on each student's individual capacities to engage in a hermeneutic process by monitoring his/her developing understanding of the utterances' meaning(s), their ability to reflect upon and integrate the input of others and to employ problem-solving skills specific to literary texts. In this respect, the students' metacognitive strategies proved to be particularly important as their use of these strategies was shown to be intricately connected to the fictional nature of the text, and, hence, its delimited context, which requires readers to constantly reassess the impact and relevance of their interpretations with regard to the utterances made in the text (see ch. 5.3 and ch. 5.4). Based on the analysis of the annotations, it is therefore possible to better define literary competence and to distinguish a set of sub-competences.

5.5.1 *Defining Literary Competence – Awareness of Textual Material, Interpretation of Utterances, and Appropriation of the Literary Discourse*

One component of literary competence became obvious when looking at the discrepancies among the students' annotations and interpretations: the sonnet's rhetoric and, more generally, its status as a fictional text leads to rather singular interpretations, such as, for example, embedding the speaker's utterances into what appears to the students a meaningful context, albeit only to them. A closer analysis of this issue revealed that the students are caught between two conflicting aspects of literary reading: (i) the semantic meaning(s) *of* the text and (ii) their individual responses and associations *triggered by* fictional texts. (ii) influenced the perception of (i) and could accordingly lead to inadequate claims made about the semantic meaning(s) of the text that are not actually warranted by what the text says.[119] In this study, the term subjective interpretation therefore describes interpretations that are an unnecessary elaboration of

119 It should be noted here that there is a difference between subjective interpretation, as described and examined in this passage as well as in ch. 5.2.2 and what could be called the 'meaning for the reader'. The latter describes the process when readers link "elements of the text worlds with the world they know and experience", which "frequently leads to their becoming conscious of the nature of that world" (Bauer and Beck "Isomorphic Mapping" 289).

a detail in a text that can neither be contradicted nor supported (cf. Fishelov "The Economy of Literary Interpretation" 32).[120] The subjectivity found among the different interpretations has been shown to originate in an inappropriately strong top down approach to the text as opposed to a close (linguistic) analysis of the utterances.[121] The delimited context in particular seemed to have a decisive influence on the process and the strategies applied to resolve and explain the problematic passages identified in the text. Consequently, the students' subjective reading and, possibly, also their research done (and time invested), biased them towards certain, inadequate, lines of interpretation.

The consideration of the fictional nature of the sonnet (including its potential ambiguity etc.) therefore not only helped disentangle the interpretation discrepancies in the annotations, but showed that the students' ability to recognise the challenges the text may bring along could help them develop the competence to **(a)** reflect on their own subjective associations triggered by the reading material and, hence, to avoid too far-fetched or misconstrued interpretations as well as to **(b)** develop a tolerance towards a number of possibly concomitant interpretative hypotheses (i.e. interpretations based on (actual) ambiguity or underspecification), which may, in turn, lead to a more profound understanding of the text altogether. Contrary to fast, information-driven reading, literary reading has thus been shown to be a slow process that aims at a profound analysis of the language and meaning is generated by iterative reasoning processes.[122] Moreover, the students' increased awareness of their need to develop the competences to engage in the hermeneutic reading process was influenced by the feedback they received on their annotations.

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120 This could, for example, either be due to an analysis of a textual detail that has prompted the student to find an implicature in the speaker's statements that are not actually there or due to the student's assumption that the fictional speaker performs his/her communicative act in a certain context, an assumption which induces the student to attribute the scene with a pragmatic dimension about which the text says nothing.

121 For an exemplary comparison between a top-down and bottom-up approach to reading, see also Zerkowitz's "Stylistics for Language Teachers", pp. 193–210. She shows that both approaches are obviously not mutually exclusive, but rather that knowledge about the two approaches and their adequate employment can lead to plausible interpretations that are based on both readers' knowledge as well as linguistic evidence from the text.

122 This component of literary reading gains in importance when considering that, for example, Mangen discusses evidence showing that "research on screen reading in general indicates that screens seem to encourage skimming, scanning, and hence a kind of 'superficial' reading" (251). In an era in which digital reading of any kind has become a daily activity for many, it is important to be aware of the different kinds of reading techniques and to consciously choose the technique that is appropriate for the text type and the reading objectives.

The multiple loops in the feedback process provide a unique opportunity to learn more about how individual competences are influenced by the groups' feedback culture. One of the most important observations here is that most of their peers' comments pick up the students at an essential stage in their understanding process: they induced the students to focus on exactly those aspects that they are still struggling with; however, the comments hardly ever offered a concrete solution to the student's problem, but rather pointed them towards a problem that they until then had been ignorant of. The feedback thus made the students aware of the fact that they need to employ different strategies in order to define the nature of their problem more precisely by acquiring more knowledge (e.g. about a word, line or concept) and rereading the line/sonnet in consideration of a, now, more critical perspective. In this regard, sensibly implemented feedback can be an indicator of the students' developing understanding of the material they are annotating as well as the material they refer to during their research. The observations strongly suggest that the expression of literary competence depends on the ability **(c)** to understand critical feedback and integrate it into one's own process of understanding the literary text.[123]

Here, secondary sources prove another important resource in order to define and overcome problems of understanding. The annotations are indicative of the students' awareness that the knowledge gained from reading secondary sources can lead them and others to a deeper understanding of the text. The work with the sources, again, required them to engage in reiterated cognitive operations in order to, ultimately, make appropriate inferences about the speaker's utterances. The annotations show how a student's judgement of the validity, usefulness and, most of all, relevance of a resource could affect her consecutive work on the annotations. In this context, the students must also be able to realise that the informational content of a source may be unsatisfactory and that more research is necessary to help them understand, and, thus, better explain what the utterance in the text may mean. Furthermore, the annotations reveal instances during which the students noticed that they were entering into a form of (written) communication with a literary community and that they had to adapt to, appropriate and engage in this specific kind of discourse. Part of this process was that they had to prove themselves capable of developing a certain attitude towards the material provided by literary critics and scholars as well as the material they were currently working on (here, the sonnet). This adjustment in their performance enables them to not only

123 The importance of this particular competence is further supported by the observation that literary reading should be considered primarily as a social activity (see ch. 5.5.2 below).

(d) verbalise or make explicit and continually reflect on one's own processes of understanding, including specifically those processes that help accommodate all possible readings of the text, but, based on their reading material, to **(e)** engage in an informed discussion, appropriate to the circumstances, about the different readings of the text and to **(f)** develop ways of adequately phrasing and presenting their own hypotheses.

Altogether, it can be said that at the core of *literary competence* lies in

the ability to carry out a hermeneutic process which is propelled by the students' continuous reflection of their own understanding processes and their abilities to systematically and collaboratively expand the hermeneutic circle by continually revising, substantiating or elaborating their interpretations of the speaker's utterances.

The outcome of this process is essentially affected by a set of subcompetences, which include the ability to

a. reflect on one's own subjective associations triggered by the reading material
b. develop tolerance towards a number of possibly concomitant interpretative hypotheses
c. understand critical feedback and integrate it into one's own process of understanding the literary text
d. verbalise or make explicit and continually reflect on one's own processes of understanding, including specifically those processes that help accommodate all possible readings of the text
e. engage in an informed discussion, appropriate to the circumstances, about the different readings of the text
f. develop ways of adequately phrasing and presenting one's own hypotheses

5.5.2 *Literary Reading as a Social Activity*

In addition to the literary competences discussed in this conclusion to the chapter, there is another observation that can be made with regard to literary reading: although reading is an activity that is first performed by an individual alone, all observations point towards the fact that a comprehensive understanding of a literary text can only be achieved when engaging in some form of

social interaction or communication and when accessing other (knowledge) resources. Consequently, literary reading should be recognised and practiced as a social activity.[124] A reconsideration of the nature of the reading material helps substantiate this claim.

Literary texts are forms of communication (see chapters 1.3.1and 5.2.1); however, with the difference from everyday conversations that we cannot ask the speaker/narrator to elucidate or explain. Moreover, as can also happen in an everyday conversation, we may not even realise that we need some sort of explanation – two people may be talking about two utterly different things without even noticing this. When engaging in or reflecting on some form of communication, we should therefore be aware of two things: first, we can misunderstand certain words and intentions and, second, we may not even be aware of this, but others may be. The differences in the understanding of certain statements are owing to readers' (or interlocutors') previous experiences with certain situations and word usages, including syntactic and pragmatic information, different connotations they attach to the words, certain concepts the words may allude to, as well as the various associations these words may trigger. In a successful conversation, these misunderstandings can be clarified and words can be specified or explained. Depending on how well the interlocuters know each other or, depending on their 'common ground', they will need more or fewer clarifications (cf. Bade and Beck 324; Lahey 54).

The situation is different when reading literary texts: the limitation of context as well as common ground makes it more difficult for us to establish what exactly is communicated and, especially, what we may have misunderstood or not understood at all. Herrnstein Smith argues that our personal experiences with language(s) and the contexts in which we speak oblige us to find a plausible context for the words uttered in a fictional text ("Poetry as Fiction" 274). Our backgrounds therefore induce us to make inferences about the meaning of an utterance at the risk that our knowledge and experiences can also lead us to make inappropriate assumptions, falsely identify an implicature where there is none or prevent us from noticing a reference, a syntactic ambiguity, etc. altogether (see ch. 5.2.2).[125] Both ignorance and over- or misinterpretation can lead readers to, potentially unwittingly, read aspects into the text that affect their

124 "Social activity" in the context of literary reading is defined as all those processes that involve some form of communication as well as collaboration on the part of the students to make (more) adequate statements about the text.

125 The analysis of the annotations in chapters 5.2.2, 5.4.1 as well as 5.4.2 in particular support this observation: for example, chapter 5.2.2 showed that the students' interpretations are influenced by their own associations, possibly with ghost stories, that the references to "dead night" and "shadows" may well evoke. As a consequence of their diverging

interpretations. The fact that language triggers such responses requires some additional steps in the reading process that are essential for understanding the text.

The annotations suggest that it is not an easy task for the students to make these steps. It can indeed be difficult to determine at our own discretion at which point in the understanding and interpretation process we went wrong and to identify those passages that we have not yet understood, as, in both cases, we may be entirely unaware of our own ignorance.[126] The question is how we can monitor our own understanding when we do not even know that we lack crucial information or have failed to realise that we have misunderstood an utterance. The annotations show that the number of misunderstandings or

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associations, one student describes the atmosphere as gloomy, whereas the other student does not consider the possible reference to ghosts as creating a threatening atmosphere.

126 This statement can further be explained with reference to the idea of structural determinism, promoted most famously by Maturana and Varela (see, i.e. Varela et al.). Maturana endorses an essentially constructivist take on cognition as a phenomenon that comprises all processes and regulation mechanisms of an organism (as an autopoietic unit) in a certain milieu. He argues that the physical space in which humans exist is ontologically and epistemologically singular, meaning each person is unique in his or her perception and every cognitive process is determined by the individual's internal structure. Perturbation of the system results in fairly similar outcomes as the organisms' adaptation or learning processes are, owing to the similar structure of their central nervous system, the same. The environment and the individual's experience with the world can nevertheless shape and influence the growth of its dendritic and synaptic system (cf. Maturana, pp. 313–332). Maturana's theory can, hypothetically, also be transferred to language or text comprehension. The individual's previous experiences with language, his/her lexical and semantic networks, would then be understood as part of the individual's internal structure. In this scenario, a literary text or words in a literary text must be understood as a specific kind of perturbation that induces a reaction from an individual to this form of outside stimuli (Varela et al.; see also Veivo and Knuuttila). This thought experiment is interesting with regard to literary texts as the texts' delimited context induces us to make them accessible to us by engaging with them in a particular way (see ch. 5.2.1ff). While, within the confines of our own cognitive capabilities and based on past experiences, we can react to the stimulus *text* to some extent, we will, eventually, reach a point at which we are unable to make any further statements about the text – although there may still be much to be said about its meaning(s) – without some external stimuli that further specify or explicate the text's stimuli. Consequently, although the text provides readers with everything they need to understand it, readers can only make the text accessible to themselves based on their own terms: existing 'structures', e.g. lexical and semantic networks, dictate how readers understand the utterances made in the text. Readers may therefore miss out on the meaning of a word completely or assign meaning to a word that biases them towards one reading only. My investigation has shown, however, that through talking and reading about literature the students become aware of their own limits and are encouraged to expand and develop their own knowledge structures in order to understand the literary text in its entirety.

yet undetected misunderstandings can be reduced considerably when reading secondary literature or collaborating with peers: the greatest changes in the annotations can be noticed when the students realise that the consideration of knowledge resources other than their own helps expedite their understanding processes.[127] These interventions trigger a moment of reflection on the part of the student, inducing them to reconsider their current perspective and level of knowledge. Readers can therefore learn to influence and change the terms and conditions that may keep them in ignorance of a certain meaning of an utterance or an allusion and can, other than some structuralists may proclaim (see n130), acquire competences that help them venture beyond the confines of (their own) possibilities by communicating about the text. This finding substantiates not only the importance of *teaching* literary competences, but especially of doing so in a classroom or seminar scenario that creates room for exchange. With regard to teaching literature, it is the educators' task to create such spaces of free and open communication as well as collaboration.

5.5.3 *Promoting the Concept* Literary Competence

At the beginning of this chapter, two interconnected problems were addressed with regard to teaching literary texts in an educational context (see ch. 5.1). First, owing to a general lack of attention and research dedicated to this area of the teaching curriculum, literary competences are still so poorly understood that teachers have few clear instructions (and, hence, incentives) to employ literary texts in a way that effectively promotes their students' literary competence (Burwitz-Melzer 124; see also Bredella "Die welterzeugende und die welterschließende Kraft"; Ehlers 115; Hallet "Literarische Kompetenz"; Hynds 117; Winkler 11; Paran 490).[128] Second, as a consequence of the first aspect, literary

127 It is unimportant for the argument that there are differences in the general processes involved – reading and selecting secondary literature is decisively different from a communication with a peer, starting with the fact that peer-to-peer communication is much more direct, whereas reading secondary literature takes longer for students to realise and determine where problems of understanding may lie (see chapters 5.4.1 and 5.4.2). The only crucial observation in the context of this chapter is the fact that, in both cases, all four students realised that they may not be able to analyse, interpret and, finally, annotate the sonnet adequately without collaborating with others.

128 Another aspect can be discussed with regard to teaching literary competence. Although only implicitly addressed, the study raises the question of how students' understanding of a literary text as well as their competence to deal with a literary text in the future can be assessed more adequately. This study has shown that testing literary understanding requires a reconsideration of what aspects can actually be evaluated and analysed with regard to students' understanding. The review of extant studies has been particularly insightful in that regard. It has become clear that, in order to investigate literary

texts are often reduced to what Baum calls teachable knowledge or a teachable subject matter (10; see also Steininger "A Defence of Literature" 91; Hynds; Giovanelli; Paran "Between Scylla and Charybdis"; Paran and Sercu; Widdowson; Bode; Brooks and Warren 8–16; B. Harrison 292ff).[129] Both aspects will be discussed with reference to the findings of this study. It should be noted beforehand, though, that, despite the fact that most aspects of the following discussion can be generalised and are likely to be easily adaptable to an educational context, this study is concerned with annotations written by university students and, hence, in an academic context. The following discussion is based only on those considerations that the results of this study allow for: (1) the teaching approach underlying the hermeneutic tool used to write the annotations analysed in this study, and (2) the adaptability of a literary text to serve several different kinds of teaching aims.

The teaching approach underlying TEASys may serve as an example of how to promote *literary competence*.[130] This goes beyond using a literary text only for a specific, ideally testable, learning objective (e.g. teaching students how to deal responsibly with virtual media). Such a specific use is problematic because it hardly serves to foster the competence of students to deal with literary texts in the future, often teaching them only what the text is *about* and not how to engage with it. It may even promote a certain ignorance of the inherent value of literary texts, which should be appreciated not only for their potential to teach (i.e., research and writing skills), but also for their potential to inspire a variety of different responses from their readers.[131] Altogether, acquiring more knowledge about the specific competences needed to understand a

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understanding, researchers should focus on tasks that ask students to explain how they were able to "establish the meaning of a line" (Bauer et al. "'When most I wink, then' – what?" 11). The aim of a reading task should be to make visible and evaluate the various steps in the hermeneutic process. Based on the definition of literary competence introduced in this study, it is possible to identify those competence areas (i.e. to be able to reflect on one's own subjective associations triggered by the reading material; s. previous chapter) the student is already proficient in or which processes the student can successfully engage in and, more importantly, to determine more specifically in which areas of competence the student still requires support. These initial considerations require more research, however, and need to be tested and developed in future studies.

129 Burwitz-Melzer writes: "Mit dieser Ausklammerung eines traditionell zentralen Textbereichs für den Fremdsprachenunterricht treten auch die Kompetenzen, die mit der Sinnkonstitution dieser Texte verbunden sind, in den Hintergrund" (Burwitz-Melzer "Text- Und Medienkompetenz" 142).

130 Newell introduces another approach in his article "Exploring the Relationships Between Writing and Literary Understanding: A Language and Learning Perspective", pp. 111–27.

131 A teacher may, for example, influence or "manufacture" readings through specific lesson designs and classroom activities that draw "students' attention towards particular aspects

literary text is crucial for the introduction of innovative teaching approaches and can prove to be conducive to the advancement and appreciation of literary reading in general.

One answer to the question how instructors can encourage (student) readers to engage in and, in the best case, to enjoy the forms of iterative hermeneutic reading required to make appropriate statements about what is said (or not said, but implied) lies in the teaching approach developed along with TEASys. The activity of annotating literary texts has been tried and tested in multiple seminars on annotation at Tübingen University, e.g. "Annotating Poetry", "Annotating Shakespeare", etc.[132] During the seminars the students are asked to pick a passage, line, and/or word in a poem (or any literary text) that they find particularly interesting or revealing and, based on their analysis, write annotations for this passage. While the students are allowed to choose the passages they would like to annotate in a self-determined manner,[133] several rounds of peer feedback help them to reflect on their decisions as well as to revise and to develop their annotations. Students can thus approach literature largely on their own terms without having their approach dictated by specific teaching aims or through the authority of the instructor/teacher, but they are also given the opportunity to draw on the valuable input from their peers as well as their instructor (cf. Widdowson 6; Giovanelli 180).[134]

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of the text such as themes or certain language features; by consequence other potential avenues of interest may remain in the background" (Giovanelli 180).

132 For a list of all the seminars taught on annotations at Tübingen University, see the website of the research project.

133 Self-determination has been propagated as a decisive motivator in educational contexts (see, e.g., Deci and Ryan 58). In this context, the processes analysed in the "Feedback"-chapter prove insightful in other respects: it is possible to discern four kinds of 'leading questions' that seem particularly effective when intending to propel the students' hermeneutic process without, however, having to intervene too much with the students' individual approach to the text or even pre-empting certain interpretations. These include:

(1) asking for elaborations and clarifications to promote further reasoning processes
(2) asking about the relevance of a certain statement to promote intensive work with the text and reflections about specific text features
(3) asking about next steps in the process to encourage strategic use of resources to apply the students' own and acquired background knowledge in an appropriate and exhaustive manner
(4) asking about the students' own thoughts and interpretations to build confidence to develop and phrase their own hypotheses

134 These considerations are supported by research presenting evidence that to teach pre-empted interpretations has at least one negative side-effect: this form of teaching can easily be perceived by the students as a constraint on their self-determination and, hence, as demotivating (Dörnyei 143; see also A. L. Walker 6; Deci and Ryan 58; Csikszentmihalyi

In this context, TEASys proves to be a helpful tool to teach the students **about the hermeneutic reading process.** Indeed, the task of annotating makes a focused form of close reading visible that proves important when teaching literary competences:[135] the ability (1) to focus on a single small text element, (2) to explore its meaning(s), and (3) to discuss the effect(s) of (2) on the text as a whole. Poems seem to lend themselves particularly well to this kind of activity as their linguistic condensation promotes language awareness as well as the analysis of language and meaning in a fictional text.[136] The explicit focus on the language in a poem can help raise the students' awareness of the fact that the meaning of fictional texts cannot be determined by contexts that are extrinsic to them, nor can ambiguities and uncertainties resolved by those.

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and Nakamura 176). The term 'demotivation' describes a process that involves "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or ongoing action" (Dörnyei 143). Consequently, a higher personal involvement can increase a person's intrinsic motivation, which Deci and Ryan describe as a sensation of being "competent and self determining" (Deci and Ryan 58). Intrinsic motivation is therefore considered a highly desirable objective in education as it is said to result in students' positive learning attitude. In an attempt to develop a new approach to teaching literature more flexibly and based on both text- and the student-demands, Lambrou presents an action study in which she explores different teaching methods in her university seminar. Her findings show that her students' involvement increased considerably when given "time to prepare in advance at their own pace" and when allowed to learn "through problem-based activities" (Lambrou 421). Her finding supports another study conducted by I. Schmidt, in 2004, who found that students "seem to profit most from a balanced combination of both learner-centred and text-centred approaches" (211). One way to do exactly that is given in the annotation approach: a space in which the students can explore and find out about the meanings of the utterances in the sonnet in a mainly self-determined manner. For a more general review of how different forms of annotating texts can be employed in different educational settings, see also Kalir and Garcia's chapter "Annotation Aids Learning", pp. 137–160, in their recently published book *Annotation*, as well as Sofield's "The Sonnets in the Classroom: Student, Teacher, Editor-Annotator(S), and Cruxes" in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry*, pp. 431–48.

135 In this context, Porter-O'Donnell also points out that the task of annotating can serve as a means "to teach the struggling readers that reading is a process" (85) which requires making explicit one's own cognitive processes. She further notes that students are also more involved in the reading process because, in their annotations, they record and, hence, reflect more actively on their own comprehension process (87).

136 Hanauer, for example, strongly encourages the use of poetry in an EFL classroom, arguing that it is "particularly suited for use in L2 learning because understanding poetry is inextricably linked to considering form" and induces students "to stretch their knowledge and 'extend their understanding of the potential range of uses and meanings of an existing linguistic structure'" (319). In "Paraphrase as a Way to a Contextualized Stylistic Analysis of Poetry: Tony Harrison's 'Marked with a D'", Verdonk presents and discusses another possible classroom scenario that addresses exactly these aspects: text, context and discourse, pp. 11–23.

Nevertheless, it is possible, based on the communicative nature of fictional texts, to make sense of the utterances (see ch. 5.2f). This knowledge will help them realise that the nature of the material decisively affects how they can approach the text and, hence, how their reading techniques must be adapted to these special circumstances:[137] literary texts should be approached as a hermeneutic challenge, the aim of which is to understand, e.g. a poem, as a whole by successively overcoming the difficulties posed by the text much in the sense of the hermeneutic circle.[138]

Used in an educational context, annotating poems can therefore be a method to promote literary competence.[139] While annotations help students make the literary text accessible to them, the annotation task serves as a regulatory mechanism which reminds them that, in order to understand the poem in its entirety, small-step reading techniques are necessary and, further, that its comprehensibility depends on their own capability to analyse the linguistic structures and how they are meaningful for the understanding of the whole

137 Students can thus learn that hermeneutics is an art of reading that understands how to absorb not only the language but also the meaning of the text in the ensemble of graphic signs (Assmann 31). Assmann writes: "Hermeneutik als einer Kunst des Lesens, die es versteht, im Ensemble graphischer Zeichen nicht nur die Sprach-, sondern auch die Sinngestalt des Textes aufzunehmen" (31).

138 The chapters on student annotations and the concept of fictionality (see ch 5.2.2 as well as ch. 5.4.1) have further revealed several mistakes students tend to make. The analysis of the annotations can therefore be used to collect some of the more common issues students seem to struggle with:
- Ambiguity intolerance
- Interpretations that disregard the text's (linguistic) context
- Generalisations
- Speculations (making assumptions about what is left unspecified in the text)
- Irrelevant statements
- Personal bias that intervenes with a proper analysis
- Unawareness of literary concepts of text (e.g. fictionality, communicative nature of poems)
- Uncritical reading of speaker's or narrator's utterances
- Failure to consider the effect or impact of one's local reading on the global interpretation of the text
- Incoherent presentation of argument/interpretation
- Use of quotations from scholars to summarise findings
- Failure to include own interpretative approaches

139 As evident from this dissertation, this method also offers an approach to assess literary competence and thus provides answer to the question how to achieve the necessary objective assessment of specific learning goals amidst the multitude of interpretations that a literary text can yield (see ch. 5.2.3).

text.[140] Ultimately, these reading methods may also prove valuable when reading longer novels: they create an awareness for detail and help make visible in what ways language functions and how it is employed in literary texts (e.g., to create a certain effect).[141]

Moreover, the students' annotations further emphasise the adaptability of a literary text to serve several different kinds of teaching aims at the same time, which is an aspect that is particularly relevant not only with regard to teaching literary texts but (literary) education in general. Although their focus is essentially on SON43, the entirety of the information provided in the annotations reveals the wealth of new insights and discoveries, be they related to language, form or context, that each of the students has made. The sonnet has thus proven a pathway for them not only to Shakespeare's language and works (see, e.g. the references made to SON81 and SON23), but also to early modern thought, culture, and philosophy in general (e.g. Renaissance theories of the eye and/or the mind, Plato's allegory of the cave, etc.) as well as, notably, topics that exist beyond any particular time frames: their work on the sonnet induced them to explore ideas of love, separation, and desire, and to reflect on how language in poetry is used to communicate such complex human notions. This observation demonstrates not only the wealth of the sonnet, but it also points out the didactic possibilities that may lie in a single poem.[142]

The adaptability of literature to different teaching and learning aims, such as learning about language, cultural or historical contexts, genres, (creative) writing, as well as discourse and communication, etc., should therefore find more recognition in educational contexts. A literary text, such as SON43, should not be reduced to one 'core message' only, but it should be acknowledged as a text that provides a multitude of different learning opportunities. It is the task of the instructor to assess and recognise the text's potential and to (re-)use it effectively to educate the students on various levels and in various

140 This teaching approach can also be used to show that generalised statements (in the context of the poem) that students often resort to are unsuitable for a literary approach to reading.

141 See also Bernhardt's chapter "Second-Language Readers and Literary Text" in her monography *Understanding Advanced Second-Language Reading* in which she argues that it is especially in literary texts that readers may find and adopt those knowledge structures needed to "develop usable, authentic language skills" (185). These skills should therefore not be considered important for literary reading only, but may be said to generally affect all areas of EFL teaching.

142 For example, Bernhardt also writes that "it is in literary texts that the implicit knowledge structures, and the unstated cultural heritage, that all learners need if they are to develop usable, authentic language skills are found" (185).

areas of expertise.[143] Goethe's statement in "Über das Lehrgedicht" (transl. "About the Didactic Poem") can be generalised for all poetic texts: they should be appreciated both for the use of their content and the general (philosophical) matters they may address *as well as* their poetic value (498f).[144] Literary texts should hence not only be recognised as a learning and teaching material that can be used in a wide variety of applications, but literature in general may even be given the possibility to (again) live up to its reputation: to universally teach and delight (see also ch. 6.2 below).[145]

143 In the context of a discussion whether or not it is expedient or even possible to teach poetry in the classroom, Bode came to the conclusion that it is almost impossible to teach literature and poetry specifically, unless the literary classroom undergoes some changes: "Now in my case, it's the poetry that questions the teaching. The problem is not to find a poem that fits your teaching or which can be made to fit your teaching, but how to widen your teaching so that it opens up a space where poetry can happen" (Bode 150). Bode here advocates an approach that reverses the roles of teaching aim and teaching material: rather than having the teaching aim dictate the teaching material (here, the poem), the material should dictate what is taught and how it is taught. Teaching approaches that categorically disregard the versatile nature of the material may fall short of making full use of its potential. Bode calls for a return to or rather a reorientation towards the teaching material, suggesting that this could lead to the development of more suitable teaching approaches that can also do justice to the rich, intricate and fundamentally multi-layered nature of literary texts. His statement is echoed by Duck, who argues that open approaches to poetry (and literature in general) can counteract the traditional view of the instructor who *teaches* interpretations of the poems rather than granting the students their own space to explore the literature themselves and on their own terms (24; see also McDonald 27). The former approach is often perceived as authoritative, hence, demotivating and may further promote the idea that literature is inaccessible without the help of a teacher (cf. Duck 24; see also Giovanelli 180f).

144 Goethe writes: "… selbst der begabteste Dichter sollte es sich zur Ehre rechnen auch irgend ein Kapitel des Wissenswerten also behandelt zu haben … Und nun hätte der … Lehrer ein gar schönes Feld, in diesem Kapitel Ordnung zu machen, in dem er seinen Schülern das Verdienst der vorzüglichsten Gedichte dieser Art nicht nach dem Nutzen ihres Inhalts, sondern nach dem höhern oder geringern Grade ihres poetischen Wertes zu ordnen und klar zu machen suchte." (498f)

145 See Horace's *Ars Poetica* in which he first introduces the "prodesse and delectare" principle that maintains poetry simultaneously to be useful (or to teach) and delight its readers (479, transl. Fairclough). The idea of poetry as a medium to teach and delight has influenced the discourse about poetry as well as poetry itself throughout literary history, be it because this characteristic was considered a general condition of poetry (see, i.e., Eliot "Religion and Literature"), because poetry was regarded as a means to teach specific knowledge (see, e.g. Lucretius' *De Rerum Naturum* ("On the Nature of Things"), Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*, or Goethe's "Über das Lehrgedicht") or by teaching through metaphor and thus connecting the field of knowledge to wider fields of philosophical thinking (see Frost *The Selected Prose of Robert Frost*, p. 35, 49).

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Understanding Poetry – Results, Reflections and Research Incentives

The students' annotations have proven a useful methodological tool to investigate and test past and current research on understanding in cognitivist, educational, and literary studies. In this way, they refine and critically reflect our picture of literary understanding. The analysis of the annotations has reconfirmed the importance of hermeneutic processes and made it possible to discern and concretely outline the steps that lead to plausible interpretations. The quality of the interpretations depends on both readers' knowledge and linguistic evidence from the text: readers of literary texts are required to engage in a complex range of iterative cognitive processes and to continually reflect on the development and increase of their own knowledge about and understanding of the literary text. The recursiveness of the process demands great attentiveness as well as cognitive flexibility of its readers not only with regard to the text and its features but also to one's own understanding. Reading a literary text is therefore not a one-time experience, but a long-term process requiring and fostering multiple competences and sub-competences that must be employed efficiently to lead to the desired outcome: an adequate understanding of the text (which may or may not, depending on the text and its reader, still change over time). The range and complexity of the processes taking place during literary reading stresses the need for more research to further delineate the impact and extent to which each aspect of literary reading affects readers' understanding of the literary text.

For example, cognitive research on literary reading could be confirmed with respect to two observations: (1) literary texts induce readers to maintain flexible working hypotheses; failure to do so affected the quality of the students' subsequent work on the text and (2) the students responded to foregrounded passages, remarking on striking or unfamiliar passages and, in a second step, tried to make sense of these utterances by looking at the context in which they appear (cf. Miall *Literary Reading* 112). Research on both the first and second aspect, however, was also shown to still be somewhat vague and to require new incentives.[1] In this context, the review of cognitive studies based on

1 The latter aspect especially may, for example, serve as a starting point for more research on how readers deal with complexity in literature.

the students' annotation versions also raised doubts as to whether cognitive research alone would suffice to provide a comprehensive picture of literary understanding. More specifically, most studies lack a theoretical basis in literary studies, a fact that proved vital for an adequate discussion of studies conducted by cognitivists. Their findings become considerably more concrete when discussed against a literary background (see ch. 3.1f). For example, it became clear that the focus of cognitivist research should not be readers' reactions to the supposedly consistent formal rules of poetry, but rather the (formal) versatility of poetry, and how specific (generic, grammatical or formal) knowledge may *help along* certain understanding *processes* (see ch. 3.1.3).

Based on the evaluation of the annotations, it appears that future research on literary understanding should take two issues into account. First, cognitivists and literary scholars should collaborate more closely. Second, cognitivist research that is concerned with quantifiable reader responses or 'mental representations' can only yield inconclusive results. Research should take into consideration that literary texts trigger cognitive processes that are decisively different from other courses of reading and understanding: the critical analysis of the annotations intimated that cognitivists should invest more effort into studies that adequately define the research material *and* monitor readers' cognitive processes while they try to establish the meaning of a line/passage, rather than focus on a poorly defined end product that reduces intricate and continuous processes of meaning making to a single quantified phenomenon (see ch. 3.2).

The second field of research that has been reviewed by means of the students' annotations is educational research. It was chosen because it defines literary reading not as a finite process, but as a competence that can be trained and developed over time. Educational studies are, however, shown to draw heavily on the findings made by cognitivists and to also lack crucial input from the field of literary studies. A first scrutiny of educational research has revealed that the studies relied on test designs that are unfitting for the nature of the reading material. One particularly important observation in this context is the fact that literary understanding is difficult to assess through tasks that mainly ask for text knowledge (see ch. 5.1). Approaches to the assessment of literary understanding should rather take into account the particular nature of fictional texts, their delimitation of context in particular, and how this affects understanding. One way to assess literary understanding is proposed in this study: it is possible to evaluate students' understanding of a text (ideally over the course of a longer time span) when engaging them in a task that asks them to reflect on and explain how they were able to make certain statements about the utterances in the literary text. Based on a reading of SON43 as a fictional text, the analysis of the annotations has shown that a greater focus on the

fictional nature of the material can lead to new insights in the research field and to a more concrete investigation of literary competences (see ch. 5.2). Most importantly, the analysis confirmed the assumption that literary understanding depends on a number of interacting competences that develop over time.

Moreover, the continuous development of these competences allows students to engage in the kind of hermeneutic reading necessary to analyse and establish relationships between the words on the page, to connect them to larger units of meaning, to interpret and, finally, to understand the utterances in the context of the sonnet (see ch. 5.3). The delineation of these competences in chapter 5.5.1 – the ability to carry out a hermeneutic process which is propelled by the students' continuous reflection of their own understanding and their abilities to systematically and collaboratively establish the meaning of the text by continually revising, substantiating or elaborating their interpretations of the speaker's utterances – can be used as a point of orientation for teachers. It can help them develop didactic approaches that teach students how to deal more proficiently with the particular nature of whatever literary text they are concerned with (see ch. 5.5). One teaching approach has suggested itself in the analysis of the annotations: the task of annotating the sonnet effectively shows how the activity of writing annotations can contribute to a better understanding of the text and its features. The implementation of this activity in a classroom scenario can also be used as a new approach to teaching literary texts.[2]

All in all, research in literary studies provides the necessary theoretical background for a comparison of the insights of cognitive studies and educational research. This approach has contributed to a better understanding of literary reading. The analysis of the students' annotations has therefore shown the need for a closer collaboration between all three fields of research. The discussion of the annotations in the light of the three fields together has allowed for a comprehensive definition of literary understanding and made it possible to suggest more detailed answers concerning the question what it means to read and understand literature.

6.2 Understanding (in) Literature

By using the students' annotations, this study has striven to confirm current research, identify various weak points, and provide incentives for new approaches in the research fields in question. In spite of the fact that the results are based on the analysis of the annotations for one single poem,

2 For more information, see ch. 5.5.2.

which are furthermore written by four students only,[3] they may claim a certain general validity (see ch. 5.5). This is because they suggest that it is not the annotator but the fictional text itself that asks for the hermeneutic reading processes described in this study. Accordingly, the focus on the text should be at least as strong as the focus on the reader, an aspect which ought to affect future studies on the understanding of fictional texts, in literary, educational and cognitive studies alike. They will be right to take into account the interdependence between readers' efforts to understand and those textual phenomena that influence the process of understanding. The following excerpts from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as well as Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* will be used to illustrate and substantiate this claim.

In both examples, two conversations about reading indirectly teach us about reader-text communication, showing that this form of communication constitutes one of the key elements in literary reading: the speaker/narrator communicates something and it is up to the reader to not just read "words, [after] words, [after] words", as Hamlet does (see below), but to understand their meaning(s), what they denote and connote, in their context. The text decisively influences this process and constitutes the general framework of how the words can be understood. In the case of the 'nonsensical' language in "The Jabberwocky" from *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* this dimension of the reading process is particularly noticeable. Both examples help show that, – whether it is poetry, drama, or a novel –, the meaning making process lies not only with the reader, but primarily with the fictional text and its features.

6.2.1 *"What do you read …?"*

The following scene from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is not only an indirect reflection of the act of reading itself, but it can also form the basis for a discussion of the dependence of the reader on the text as well as the dependence of the text on its interpretation by the reader. The, at first, rather elusive dialogue takes place between Hamlet, the play's eponymous hero, and the late king's chief counsellor, Polonius:

3 Miall, for example, warns that a qualitative analysis could allow for categories "(such as certain kinds of feeling, or personal memories) … that participate in processes distinctive to literary response, its dependence on readers' verbal facility and its closeness to the text being read" to emerge from the data and may thus "make theoretical generalizations about such evidence problematic … risk[ing] limiting its conclusions to the specific case being analysed" (*Literary Reading* 97).

> Polonius: What do you read, my lord?
> Hamlet: Words, words, words.
> Polonius: What is the matter, my lord?
> Hamlet: Between who?
> Polonius: I mean, the matter that you read, my lord. (*Hamlet* II.ii.188–192)

"Words, words, words" is Hamlet's somewhat unexpected answer to Polonius' question (II.ii.189). Although Polonius is clearly confused by Hamlet's answer – hence, his consecutive clarifying questions –, Hamlet actually responds quite accurately: what he reads are essentially just words. This short dialogue thus contains a plain yet striking reflection on the act of reading itself. In fact, we as readers or the audience may, like Polonius, be startled by Hamlet's answer. The incongruity between what we expect him to answer, e.g. the title of the book, a comment about the content etc., makes us aware of the fact that reading is not just about accumulating and stringing together some words, but about what the words *mean*, how we connect, interpret, and understand words in context.

A closer analysis of the communication between Hamlet and Polonius can further help specify this statement. The conversation is a case of discrepant awareness: in contrast to the reader, Polonius lacks decisive context information and, to him, Hamlet's answers mean little more than "words, words, words" (*HAM* II.ii. 188–192).[4] As a consequence, he considers the conversation as proof that his protégée has truly gone mad (cf. *HAM* II.ii.201f). Initially, Hamlet's answers may indeed seem odd, and it appears that the communication between the two fails because neither Polonius nor Hamlet can make himself understood.[5] Nevertheless, in I.v.169f, Hamlet has revealed that he plans to feign madness: "As I perchance hereafter shall think meet / to put an antic disposition on", which is an essential piece of information that provides readers with the knowledge they need to be able to make sense of his strange retorts. A reader who is able to make the connection to the earlier scene and can set in context what is, or, in fact, is *not* communicated *here* can come to a different conclusion than Polonius regarding the success of the conversation: Hamlet's non-compliance throughout the conversation is neither proof

4 Reconsidering the opening quote, it is ironical that, at least with regard to his own reading material, Hamlet seems to be in a similar situation as Polonius: Hamlet's problem is not so much that he does not understand, but that the words he reads do not signify (to him).

5 To be precise, Hamlet ignores the rather obvious implication in Polonius' speech act: tell me what you are reading about. Hamlet's refusal to engage in the conversation is further enforced by second answer which, again, subverts Polonius' question owing to the ambiguity of the word "matter" to describe either "subject of contention, dispute, litigation" (*OED* "matter, *n.*", 2.a.) or the "substance of a book, speech, etc." (*OED* "matter, *n.*", II.9.a.).

of his madness nor is the communication unsuccessful in Hamlet's eyes; on the contrary, his seemingly nonsensical answers follow a very specific communicative purpose. He intends Polonius to misinterpret his responses, as his madness and his inability to communicate are merely an act (see *HAM* I.v.169ff).[6] Paradoxically, Hamlet therefore makes sense by not making sense. With regard to the scene's indirect reflection on reading, these considerations make us aware of two general prerequisites for literary reading: (1) the words and sentences uttered in any literary text actually have to *mean* as the principles of hermeneutics depend on the utterances in the text, which denote and connote what is communicated and (2) the reader is required to *establish meaning* based on the information (i.e. context) provided by the text.

The importance of these prerequisites becomes even clearer when considering that Hamlet's behaviour throughout the play is still subject to discussions (Thompson and Taylor "Introduction" 135ff). For example, the irrationality behind Polonius' brutal murder in act III is a case in point and,[7] retrospectively, puts into question Hamlet's accountability (see, e.g., his later comment to Rosencrantz: "[m]y wit's diseased" (III.ii.)).[8] This realisation should, however, not induce readers to consider the hero's words and actions as meaningless ramblings of a madman; on the contrary, with reference to the two prerequisites of literary reading stated above, it becomes clear that, based on a close reading of the text, readers should endeavour to answer the question

6 The passage becomes even more intriguing when considering the larger context in which Hamlet utters these words. His plan to feign madness ("As I perchance hereafter shall think meet / to put an antic disposition on" (*HAM* I.v.169f)) suggests that he uses his words pointedly to make others believe something that is not actually true. In the context of the play, this instance can therefore be interpreted as metatheatrical comment about the nature of a play: words spoken by actors in an act of pretence to make the audience believe that they are a certain kind of person. As an actor, Hamlet thus aims to use his words to a specific purpose, namely, to achieve a certain effect on the part of his 'audience', in this case, Polonius.

7 In the sense of dramatic irony, the conversation above therefore anticipates another, for Polonius, fatal, misunderstanding: he is Hamlet's first (innocent) victim owing to a sudden bout of paranoia on the hero's part (cf. III.vi.). The fact that it does not to matter to Hamlet who his victim will turn out to be, not being able to see behind the arras, further supports this notion.

8 Kallendorf even argues that the ghost, allegedly in the form of his father, may further be attributed with possible demoniac powers that assert authority over Hamlet's susceptible mind, suggesting a more or less complete loss of agency from early on in the play (77). Levy, in "*Hamlet* and the Madness in Reason", presents a less drastic interpretation and argues that Hamlet's mental state vacillates between "sub-rationality ('bestial oblivion') and its contrary, hyper-rationality ('thinking too precisely on the event,' [VI.vi.])" (104).

'*what does* Hamlet's alleged madness *mean* in the context of the play?'.[9] In fact, in a play in which sense can be found in madness and madness can come in the guise of reason (see above),[10] the reader should pay particular attention to Hamlet's words, which are an indispensable part of the hero's (self-)fashioning as a 'madman' and the exploration of what, how, and who he can appear "to be or not to be" (III.i.; cf. Kallendorf 79f).[11] The reader-text interdependence becomes particularly obvious here: the text's ambiguity as regards Hamlet's mental state requires interpretation by a reader, who can assess the meaning of this ambiguity based on the information provided by the text. The question is, however, what happens when the actual language used is devoid of sense, what happens when the words do not actually (seem to) signify? This aspect can be further illustrated by the following rather playful example.

6.2.2 *Alice and "Jabberwocky"*

> 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
> And the mome raths outgrabe. (Carroll 174)

"'It seems very pretty,' she said when she had finished it, 'but it's *rather* hard to understand!'" is Alice's conclusion in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* upon reading the "Jabberwocky" poem for the first time (Carroll 176, author's emphasis). It is likely that many readers, who read "Jabberwocky" for the first time, can empathise with Alice's reaction, as the meaning of the poem seems to elude us: the obvious formal features (stanzas, rhyme, metre) could be said to characterise it as a poem; however, this hardly

9 It should furthermore be noted that this question can be answered in two levels: (1) intra-mimetic: what does Hamlet mean by this behaviour?, and (2) what does Shakespeare mean by presenting a character that behaves in such a way?

10 Ironically, when Polonius contemplates Hamlet's behaviour, he concludes that "though this be madness yet there is / method in't" (*HAM* II.ii.201f). His statement becomes even more poignant when his observation is later echoed by Laertes, who comments on Ophelia's transformation: "this nothing's more than matter" (*HAM* IV.v.168), suggesting that sense can also be made of in Ophelia's song.

11 And, indeed, what else, if not literature, should teach us about (our) possibilities? For a more detailed discussion of *possibility* as a concept in literature and how this notion can affect character presentation, perception and interpretation in literature, see, i.e., chapter 4 "Playing with Possibilities" in Riecker's *Reflections on Fictionality: The Poetics of Henry V* (forthcoming).

helps us understand the *meaning* of the words uttered.[12] An initial assessment would therefore suggest that the poem challenges the notion of the communicative nature of fictional texts. This is, however, not the case: "Jabberwocky" makes a second appearance in the context of a conversation between Alice and Humpty Dumpty, which provides the reader with crucial hints what the poem and its individual words mean.

Cued by Alice to please explain to her "the meaning of the poem called 'Jabberwocky'", Humpty Dumpty provides her with an extensive, albeit hardly straight-forward list of word glosses (Carroll 252f). Based on his explanation, the stanza now reads more or less like this:

> It was four o'clock in the afternoon and the slimy active/lithe badger – lizard – corkscrew – creatures
> went round and round like a gyroscope and made holes like a gimblet in the grass-plot around the sun-dial:
> All flimsy and miserable were the shabby-looking birds,
> and the greenish forlorn pigs bellow-whistle-sneezed

Humpty Dumpty, the self-proclaimed "master" of words, provides a version of the stanza is hardly elucidating:[13] his explanations are underspecified, the animals described now clearly belong to a fantastical realm and, owing to his renditions, the lines seem not less perplexing (Carroll 251). Nevertheless, "Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity" understands his logic and manages to chime in with explanations of her own now and again (Carroll 253). It seems that she understands the poem as a game in which she is invited to partake. In

12 The poem could therefore also be used as evidence that genre/form of a text need not tell readers much about its content. For a discussion of this issue, see also ch. 3.1.3.

13 Carroll himself left hints as to what the opening stanza could mean. One of the first 'translations' was indeed provided alongside the poem by the author himself. As Gardner and Burstein note, the poem first appeared in *Mischmasch*, a magazine Carroll, then, still Charles L. Dodgson, wrote to amuse his siblings (Carroll 175n17). He published the first stanza along with a word-for-word gloss of the four lines. Based on his clues, Gardner and Burstein paraphrase the stanza as follows: "It was evening, and the smooth active badgers / were scratching and boring holes in the hill-side; / all unhappy were the parrots; / and the grave turtles squeaked out" (Carroll 176n17). There are some similarities between the Lewis Carroll and Humpty Dumpty's readings. In both 'translations' the day is coming towards its end. The badgers, starring in both versions, also seem to be similarly employed with drilling of some form and Humpty Dumpty's birds and "greenish pig" could very well be the parrots and turtles in Carroll's first published version. The effect of the first stanza is also fairly the same for both poems: the four lines paint an outdoor scene of industrious flurry, the impending night accompanied by the disconcerting sounds of nature's creatures create a somewhat gloomy atmosphere, but, altogether, evoke the idea of an almost pastoral, other-worldly, idyll.

fact, while reading the poem, it seems that, similar to Alice,[14] we are induced to intuitively try to apply grammatical rules as best as we can, and many would probably agree that, for example, "borogroves" is likely a noun, whereas "mimsy" is an adjective modifying the noun "Borogroves" (whatever that may be) and "outgrabe" a verb.[15] While each reader may imagine the words in the "Jabberwocky" to mean something different, there still is a certain mutual agreement regarding the classification of the words and the grammar owing to the similarity to English syntax and morphology (e.g., "mimsy" ≙ flimsy or "outgrabe" ≙ possibly an onomatopoetic *portmanteau*-combination of the words out~~ery~~ and grave) (cf. Zirker *Der Pilger als Kind* 167f).[16] The nonsense words in the Alice books thus lay claim to their own, particular form of sense, and it becomes clear that it is less the meaning of the words, be it turtle or greenish pig, that contribute to the charm of the poem, but the quizzical language and the potential that lies in its nonsensicality: whoever understands the game, can join and let imagination create its own sense.[17]

Furthermore, considering the fact that the narrative explores the way a child may imagine and perceive the world around her, it should be taken into consideration that, while in an adult world encountering hitherto unknown words that have the distinct appearance of being entirely made-up is unusual and possibly perplexing, children, by contrast, may be more used to encountering new fantastical-sounding words whose meaning will have to be explained to them by someone more knowledgeable. Not always knowing what to make of the new words, they may feel induced to imagine what they could mean, allowing them to walk through a fantastical world of their own making, possibly not unlike the world behind the looking-glass.[18] Through the poem, read-

14 Alice's description of her reaction to the poem may well reflect our own understanding process: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't exactly know what they are! However, *somebody* killed *something*: that's clear, at any rate –" (Carroll 176).

15 For an elaborate discussion of Carroll's mock-etymological approach to writing the "Jabberwocky", see also Zirker's *Der Pilger Als Kind: Spiel, Sprache Und Erlösung in Lewis Carrolls "Alice"-Büchern*, pp. 166–171.

16 Carroll's "Jabberwocky" is indeed one of the most famous nonsense poems, and while the possible meanings of the words, particularly of the first stanza, have inspired his readers all over the world, the word classes often remain the same. In several extensive footnotes, Gardner and Burstein present and discuss various translations and adaptations of the poem in different languages; see Carroll 175n17.

17 See, for example, also H. Levin's article "Wonderland Revisited" in which he invented the following beautifully lyrical version based on the opening stanza's rhythmical as well as grammatical pattern: "'Twas April and the heavy rains / Did drip and drizzle on the road: / All misty were the windowpanes, / And the drainpipes overflowed."

18 A rather disconcerting take on this notion is explored by Padgett in his short fiction "Mimsy Were the Borogroves", pp. 181–210.

ers are thus invited to look back into their own childhood, very much in the sense of the backwards-working world of the looking-glass. The answer to the question how to read the poem therefore lies in the narrative itself: the grammatical form dictates the mode of reading and provides the clues as to how the poem should be read. To fully enjoy and join in the game, s/he will have to let her-/himself be transported back (and forth) in time. Consequently, making sense of the poem means to understand why such a nonsense poem fits into the looking-glass world. Moreover, the poem itself makes us indirectly aware of the processes of understanding as reading the "Jabberwocky" can be said to be symbolic of hermeneutic processes, a regressive movement in which we endlessly back-track our thoughts to the beginning: "the problem of understanding is also the result of the process of understanding" (Zirker "'All About Fishes'?" 96).[19] The understanding process is reflected in the reader's metaphorical movements in time.

The two literary examples have shown in different ways that it is indeed the interdependence between the reader's meaning making and the textual features that requires a process founded on hermeneutic principles. At this point, we may recollect the spontaneous reaction from our imaginary reader at the beginning of this study. Barthes describes an inquisitive literary reader who responds to the literary text's discreet hint (after all, it engages us in some form of communication) and feels inclined to ask it directly: *what are you thinking about*? (214).[20] Barthes comments on the superfluity of this question on the grounds of a sure lack of an answer from the text, a fact which seemingly supports his argument that meaning in a literary text is cancelled by the sheer density of possible meanings (214). In light of the present study, it appears, however, that the rejection of his own question is too radical and that we may indeed receive plenty of rewarding answers if we, with a wink, rephrased the question to: *what is it that I am understanding*?

19 She also notes that Humpty Dumpty can himself be seen as "an appropriate symbol of the recursive and endlessly regressive process of understanding" ("'All About Fishes'?" 79); being egg-shaped, he is "the embodiment of one of the oldest riddles ever, namely, the question of origin, which again points backward: what was there first, the hen, or the egg?" ("'All About Fishes'?" 79).

20 In a reverse line of thought, Inge Leimberg, in her essay on "Personales Interpretieren" cites Rilke: "'… denn da ist keine Stelle, /die dich nicht sieht. …' (Rilke 1955: 'Archaischer Torso Apollos' 157)" (116). Leimberg thereby implies that the text finds us rather than the reader being inquisitive about the text's meaning.

Appendix

Appendix A: Example Poems

George Herbert "A True Hymn"

MY Joy, my Life, my Crown!
My heart was meaning all the day,
    Somewhat it fain would say,
And still it runneth muttering up and down
With only this, My Joy, my Life, my Crown!
    Yet slight not those few words;
If truly said, they may take part
    Among the best in art:
The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords
Is, when the soul unto the lines accord.
    He who craves all the mind,
And all the soul, and strength, and time,
    If the words only rhyme,
Justly complains that somewhat is behind
To make His verse, or write a hymn in kind.
    Whereas if the heart be moved,
Although the verse be somewhat scant,
    God doth supply the want;
As when the heart says, sighing to be approved,
"O, could I love!" and stops, God writeth, "Loved."

Emily Dickinson "Our journey had advanced" (*J615/F453*)

Our journey had advanced —
Our feet were almost come
To that odd Fork in Being's Road —
Eternity — by Term —
Our pace took sudden awe —
Our feet — reluctant — led —
Before — were Cities — but Between —
The Forest of the Dead —
Retreat — was out of Hope —
Behind — a Sealed Route —

Eternity's White Flag — Before —
And God — at every Gate — (Dickinson J615; F453)

Robert Bridges "London Snow"

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:
The eye marvelled — marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;
The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.
Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
'O look at the trees!' they cried, 'O look at the trees!'
With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,
Following along the white deserted way,
A country company long dispersed asunder:
When now already the sun, in pale display
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.
For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:
But even for them awhile no cares encumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,

The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm they have broken.

Appendix B: Roick et al. "Literarische Textverstehenskompetenz" – Text Passage and Tasks (p. 72–4)

A.1. Text Passage

[…] Daß ich es nicht lassen kann, bei offenem Fenster zu schlafen. Elektrische Bahnen rasen läutend durch meine Stube. Automobile gehen über mich hin. Eine Tür fällt zu. Irgendwo klirrt eine Scheibe herunter, ich höre ihre großen Scherben lachen, die kleinen Splitter kichern. Dann plötzlich dumpfer, eingeschlossener Lärm von der anderen Seite, innen im Hause. Jemand steigt die Treppe. Kommt, kommt unaufhörlich. Ist da, ist lange da, geht vorbei. Und wieder die Straße. Ein Mädchen kreischt: Ah tais-toi, je ne veux plus. Die Elektrische rennt ganz erregt heran, darüber fort, fort über alles. Jemand ruft. Leute laufen, überholen sich. Ein Hund bellt. Was für eine Erleichterung: ein Hund. Gegen Morgen kräht sogar ein Hahn, und das ist Wohltun ohne Grenzen. Dann schlafe ich plötzlich ein.

A.2. Question 1 (MC)

Wo befindet sich der Ich-Erzähler? Kreuze die richtige Antwort an. Nur eine Antwort ist richtig.

o auf einem Bauernhof
o in einer kleinen Stadt
o in einer großen Stadt
o in einem Dorf

A.3. Question 2 (RC)

Die Schüler einer Klasse diskutieren darüber, wo sich die Geschichte abspielt. Barbara sagt: "Ich glaube, die Geschichte spielt in einer großen Stadt." Steve sagt: "Ich glaube die Geschichte spielt in einem Dorf." Welcher Schüler hat Recht? Begründe deine Entscheidung mit Textbeispielen.

Appendix C: External Appendix – The Student Annotations

The external appendix contains all of the annotation versions referred to in this study. The annotations can be accessed here: http://dx.doi.org/10.15496/

publikation-90096. The annotations were written by four students (A, B, C, D) in the context of the peer learning group "Annotating Literature" offered at Tübingen University. The different annotation versions result from the students' work on Shakespeare's Sonnet 43 over the course of one year. To make the references in the study to the changes in the annotations traceable for the reader, each annotation version is presented in its original state. The versions include peer comments as well as any changes made to the documents by the students. Only a few format changes were deleted to make the presentation of the document versions more reader-friendly. The format changes were automatically tracked by word but are not considered in this study and are therefore irrelevant.

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