Panel 1: The experience of literature

Guillemette Bolens (Geneva) – 'Understanding Gestures and Kinesic Events in Literature'

I will explore the way in which literature communicates about experiencing kinesis, and succeeds in triggering perceptual simulations of kinesic perceptions and sensations in readers. I will highlight the fact that a reflective attention to perceptual simulations elicits a type of understanding that is hermeneutic.

Elspeth Jajdelska (Strathclyde) – 'What can we learn about literature by analysing literary experience in a neural network frame?'

Does the medium by which we acquire information matter? Does it make any difference, for example, if we learn Red Riding Hood by film or by text? Twenty years of work in narrative, led by the psychologist Rolf Zwaan, has identified some important ways in which it does not. For Zwaan and his followers, we use the same cognitive processes to extract information from the environment as from film narrative and text narrative. A similar implicit reluctance to give literature a special status in narrative is found in psychological work on empathy and in transmedia narrative theory. These approaches have strong arguments and evidence on their side for a common mechanism for narrative processing, which at first sight leaves little room for the distinctive aspects of the experience of literature as much more than noise in the signal of narrative. Working through an example, I show how literary analysis within this framework can address some long standing issues in literary theory.

Panel 2: Models of verbal meaning and literary style

Peter Stockwell (Nottingham) – 'Not because they are easy, but because they are hard'

Cognitive Poetics can account for and illuminate most aspects of literary critical exploration; however the field is most rewarding when it turns its attention to features of literary reading that are widely experienced but difficult to articulate and explain. Readers tend to describe such experiences either vaguely or in unfocused metaphors. Professional critics tend not to have the theoretical grounding to address such phenomena. Readerly effects that might fall into this category could include ambience, tone, empathy, resistance, urgency, pace,

suspense, horror, immersion, and so on. These effects are analytically interesting precisely because they are difficult to account for, and this is where cognitive poetics can truly test itself.

Max van Duijn (Leiden) – 'Who does the mindreading, reader or narrator?'

An established claim within the cognitive literary paradigm is that readers/spectators have to invest mindreading efforts for understanding and appreciating a work of fiction. In previous research I have argued that stories not only impose a tax on readers' mindreading capacities, but also provide support and scaffolding for their processing of character mindstates. In this talk I will discuss various stretches of narrative text to demonstrate how some parts of the mindreading process are left to the reader, while other parts are presented in "pre-processed" form by the narrator.

Panel 3: Cognitive science and the hermeneutics-poetics distinction

Emily T. Troscianko (Oxford) – 'Interpretation should be an object as well as a method of inquiry for literary studies'

Trying to come up with new meanings for texts should not be what literary studies does. Just as biology has progressed beyond collecting new species, so literary criticism should learn to embrace more than new readings. Generating a new reading (i.e. a verbal statement of one or more textual 'meanings') may be a significant step in a critic's process of engagement with a text. But in the professional study of literature, arriving at such a reading should be a precursor to the more interesting (and much more difficult) work of establishing *how* one arrived at it. As such, any 'hermeneutical' reading of a text is an explanation in cognitive poetics waiting to happen, and conversely, every cognitive elucidation of a text also holds within it at least one and usually multiple conventional 'readings'.

So one answer to the question 'can cognitive approaches generate new readings of texts?' is 'Yes, of course'. But a better answer is 'Yes, but every reader of literature can do that. Does anyone deserve to get paid for generating one more reading of *Crime and Punishment*? What literary studies as a research discipline should by now be focusing on is why generating new readings seems valuable, why it's enjoyable, and (above all) how it happens.' That is, we need to find out a lot more about what interpretation is.

Interpretation is a basic action of organic life, and is central to everything the human mind does: literature is just one corner of an infinitely interpretable world, albeit an especially captivating corner. If we continue to treat interpretation primarily as a *method* of inquiry, and do not train ourselves to treat it also as an *object* of inquiry, we'll learn much less than we otherwise could about ourselves and the world – including the world of literary texts. We will also fail to contribute our importantly literature-informed perspectives to the multidisciplinary study of mind.

I'll illustrate this argument with some readings of 'The Shadow', a short story by Hans Christian Andersen, generated as part of the lasting stand-off between cognitive and unnatural narratology.

Felix Budelmann (Oxford) – 'Science or theory? Cognitive criticism between knowledge and readings'

Cognitive criticism isn't a unitary field but ranges from empirical experimentation to literary theory. This diversity is one reason why the question whether cognitive criticism can produce readings is so often being asked, and part of the answer must be that certain types of cognitive criticism don't have, and shouldn't be expected to have, that aim, while others do. This diversity is to be welcomed, but creates the need for self-consciousness. My presentation will explore modes of interaction between cognitive and 'standard' literary criticism from this vantage point.