Salient Inferences:
Pragmatics and *The Inheritors*

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Abstract

This paper considers the role of accounts of inferential processes in the stylistic

analysis of texts. It approaches this question by considering the range of contributions

an account of inferential processes might make to the stylistic analysis of William

Golding's 1955 novel *The Inheritors*. It considers what such an account might add to

insights already provided by previous analyses, including Halliday's famous (1971)

analysis and Hoover's more recent (1999) corpus-based work, both of which say

relatively little about inferential processes. This paper suggests that an account of

inferential processes is in principle a vital part of any adequate account of how texts

create effects, even though it is not always practical to offer a detailed account. In

some cases, including the case of *The Inheritors*, the nature of the inferential

processes which the text gives rise to makes an important contribution to how we

understand and respond to the text.

Introduction

This paper considers the role of accounts of inferential processes in the stylistic

analysis of texts. The main aim is to consider what kinds of contribution a discussion of

inferential processes can make to stylistic analyses. It approaches this question by

considering a text, William Golding's 1955 novel *The Inheritors*, which has been

analysed very successfully without much reference to the inferential processes of

readers. Section 1 considers the role of inferential processes, and accounts of

inferential processes, in understanding communicative acts in general. While most

communicators in most communicative acts do not think consciously about the inferential processes they are engaged in, the nature of some communicative acts makes aspects of the inferential processes more salient and sometimes it is hard, arguably impossible, not to notice them. Three kinds of cases are discussed here. Section 2 considers what is involved in describing and explaining such inferences. The discussion is based on the framework of Relevance Theory, although the questions explored in this paper are independent of any particular semantic or pragmatic framework. Section 3 considers the role of accounts of inferential processes in stylistic analysis and outlines several positions that might be taken with regard to the role such accounts could play. Two extreme positions, that inferential processes must always be discussed or need never be discussed, are ruled out. Section 4 considers previous stylistic analyses of *The Inheritors*, focusing mainly on Halliday's (1971) and Hoover's (1999) analyses. Both Halliday's and Hoover's analyses help to explain how the book creates effects for readers. Both raise questions which might be addressed by an account of readers' inferential processes. While not providing a detailed pragmatic analysis himself, Hoover acknowledges the contribution an account of inference could make and suggests that such an account would help to explain the effects of the text. Section 5 considers some ways in which more detailed accounts of inferential processes might help to explain interpretations of the text and suggests that important effects of the text can be understood by considering fairly salient differences in the kinds of inferential processes readers are likely to engage in when reading different sections of the book. The conclusions presented in section 6 are that an account of inferential processes is in principle a vital part of any adequate account of how texts are interpreted, even though it is not always practical to develop a detailed account, and that in some cases effects are derived because of the salient nature of the inferential processes themselves.

1   Inference in general

This section considers the role of inferential processes in everyday communication. It is widely acknowledged that understanding each other, including understanding spoken or written verbal communication, involves inference. It is also widely assumed that most communicators do not give much attention to the role of inference. But there are cases where acts of communication draw attention to inferential processes in such a way that we cannot help noticing them. Inferences in all texts, including literary texts, also cover a range from cases where audiences are unlikely to notice the inferences they are making to those where it would be hard or impossible not to be aware to some extent of inferences being made.

It is generally accepted that understanding acts of intentional communication, including acts of verbal communication, involves inference. Often, inferences are made without much, arguably without any, conscious reflection. If I invite you to lunch and you reply:

(1)   That would be lovely!

I might register your acceptance of the invitation and the fact that you are pleased to be invited without thinking about the fact that these are conclusions I have inferred and which you have communicated indirectly. I might or might not think about other conclusions which follow indirectly from your utterance, including a number of conclusions relevant to the nature of our relationship, e.g. that you feel relatively positively towards me (since you accepted the invitation and you think that lunch with me would be lovely), that this invite itself might help our friendship to develop, and so on. Even if I do notice that these conclusions are communicated indirectly, I am unlikely to notice other inferential processes which contribute to the overall interpretation, such as that I inferred that your use of the word *that* was intended to

refer to the lunch which you have been invited to. This is not a simple or obvious inference since other things could have been the intended referent, e.g. the act of inviting you. The use of the form *would* helps the hearer to identify the referent as the lunch itself whereas the use of *is* in an utterance such as (2) suggests that the act of inviting is the referent:

(2)   That is so nice of you!

Most people are not aware of the distinction between linguistic semantics (linguistically encoded meaning) and pragmatics (contextually inferred meaning) and so never or rarely think about the fact that a large amount of what they understand from utterances is inferred rather than explicitly communicated. But some of our behaviour reveals that we have some awareness of communication being de3pendent on inference. Many jokes depend on the fact that there is more than one way to understand particular utterances. Here is one version of an often-repeated joke:

(3)   A man is driving a truck down the motorway when he sees some wild monkeys playing by the side of the road. He gathers them into his truck and drives on. A police officer spots him and forces him to stop. The driver explains what has happened and asks the policeman what to do. 'I think you'd better take them to the zoo,' suggests the police officer. The man agrees. The next day, the same police officer sees the same driver in the same truck still carrying the same group of monkeys. He stops the truck again. 'What are you doing with the monkeys?' asks the police officer. 'I thought you were taking them to the zoo.' 'Yes,' replies the driver. 'I took them there yesterday. They loved it. Today I'm taking them to the seaside'.

This joke is humorous because of the mismatch between what the police officer intended when suggesting that the driver take the monkeys to the zoo and what the driver understood by it. We understand the joke by inferring this mismatch. If someone who has not had much experience of jokes, such as a young child, says that they don't understand the joke, we are likely to explain by saying something about what the police officer meant and what the driver must have understood. This discussion reveals that we are aware to some extent that the characters in the joke make inferences in trying to understand each other.

Misunderstandings can also draw attention to inferential processes. I was once embarrassed to misunderstand a student who asked this question in class:

(4)   *(Lecturer has been copying onto an overhead projector what he has just been saying to the class)*

Student: Excuse me. Can you read what you're writing?

Lecturer: I'm saying it as well!

Student: Yes. Sorry. I meant could you read it out one more time please?

The student here meant to ask the lecturer to read aloud his words one more time so that the student could take notes. The lecturer, embarrassed by his poor handwriting and expecting criticism for it, understood this as a rhetorical question implying that the writing really was very bad. Understanding what has gone wrong here requires awareness of a difference between what the lecturer inferred and what the student thought the lecturer would infer. Being thick-skinned, I then discussed this exchange in class to help students develop their understanding of inferential processes involved in verbal communication and the distinction between linguistic semantics and pragmatics.

Some utterances foreground complex inferential inferences even more fully. Examples of these are often widely discussed. Here is a well-known example:

(5) *(Bob Dylan after Dylan after reading in a newspaper that he smokes 80 cigarettes a day)*

I'm glad I'm not me.

(*Dont Look Back*, 1965. dir. D.A. Pennebaker. NB the official title of the film has no apostrophe; also uttered by Cate Blanchett as the Dylanesque character Jude Quinn in *I'm Not There*, 2007. dir. Todd Haynes)

Dylan's utterance here requires his audience to assign a different referent to the pronoun *me* from that of the first two occurrences of the pronoun *I*. To make sense of the utterance, we need to think of the two occurrences of *I* as referring to the Bob Dylan who is speaking, or perhaps to Dylan's own understanding of himself, and to think of *me* as referring to the version of himself appearing in the press and other media. Arguably, we could even distinguish the referents of the two occurrences of *I*. It is hard to see how we could explain this utterance without referring directly or indirectly to these complex inferential processes.

Political discourse is also a good source of examples. Here is what White House spokesperson Tony Snow said to the press following the death of former Enron executive Ken Lay during the presidency of George W. Bush:

(6) The president has described Ken Lay as an acquaintance, and many of the president's acquaintances have passed on during his time in office.

(Reported in many sources, including: Marsha Kranes, 'Lay Him Low: Enron's Chief Crook Ducks Big House by Dropping Dead', New York Post Online, July 6, 2006. Available at:

A full understanding of this utterance requires access to a specific set of contextual assumptions and the ability to work through a set of complex inferential processes. The contextual assumptions concern Ken Lay's relationships with George W. Bush and the scandal surrounding the company Enron. Enron was considered a very successful company until a journalist discovered that its business was largely based on fraud and deception. Ken Lay was one of Enron's senior executives and was charged with fraudulent activity as a result (several books have been published about this; perhaps the best known is McLean and Elkind 2003, which was the basis for the film *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, dir. Alex Gibney, 2005). When Enron's dubious dealings became commonly known, President Bush began to distance himself from the company and its staff. Ken Lay went from being a close friend to the President (the President had referred to him as 'Kenny Boy') to someone the President had no contact with. Here is one brief summary:

(7)   He started as "Kenny Boy." Then he was a "supporter," an acquaintance who had not talked to President Bush in "quite some time." Now he is a man convicted of conspiracy and fraud, and a symbol of corporate corruption.

This is former Enron chief Kenneth L. Lay's transformation in the words of President Bush and his spokesmen -- going from a personal and political ally to someone the White House sought to keep as distant as possible as his role in the multibillion-dollar collapse of the energy giant became clear.

(Zachary A. Goldfarb, 'Once A Friend and Ally, Now A Distant Memory',

Washington Post, May 26, 2006. Available at:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/05/25/AR20060

52501958.html)

Taking this together with assumptions about the kinds of statements politicians tend to

make when a well-known person dies, the utterance in (6) is quite striking. The

President himself made no public comment and the comment made by his

spokesperson says little more than that the President knew him and that several

people the President knew had died while he was in office. The overall effect is to

communicate the sense that the President cares very little for Lay, even in death, and

does not have any worries about insulting him publicly. Naturally, this utterance was

much discussed. Again, it can be a useful starting point for discussion in class. It has

several things in common with Grice's famous (1975) example of the letter sent by an

academic when asked to recommend a former student for a philosophy lectureship:

(8)   Dear Sir, Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at

tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc.

(Grice 1975: 52)

In both cases, the absence of things which the hearer/reader would expect (about the

student's understanding of philosophy, potential as a teacher etc.; about Ken Lay's

special status, abilities, importance to the President, etc.) point to the stronger

inference that the individual lacks the relevant positive attributes. It is hard to see how

we could understand what is indirectly communicated in either case without being

aware that it is indirect and thinking to some extent about how it is indirectly

communicated.

To sum up, we make inferences in understanding all cases of everyday communication. In general, the fact that we are doing so is not something we think about or discuss. The inferential processes become more salient in some cases, such as jokes or cases where we misunderstand each other. Some cases require relatively complex inferences where the salience of the inferential processes is relatively high. The discussion in section 5 below considers salient inferential processes in reading *The Inheritors*. The next section considers some ways of describing and explaining inferential processes.

2   Describing and explaining inferences

Linguists, of course, are explicitly aware of the distinction between linguistically encoded and pragmatically inferred meanings. Since the work of Paul Grice (1975; 1989), pragmatists have developed increasingly sophisticated accounts of inferred meanings. There is, of course, disagreement about the exact nature of the semantics-pragmatics distinction and about the extent to which meanings are encoded or inferred. (For discussion of these issues, see Burton-Roberts 2007, Carston 2002, Levinson 2000, Recanati 2004). Nevertheless, there is widespread recognition of the role of inference in utterance interpretation and many pragmatists accept the 'radical underdeterminacy thesis' which states that the linguistically encoded meanings of utterances vastly underdetermine their actual interpretation. A simple everyday utterance such as (9):

(9)   She's here now

has many different possible interpretations. These depend on accessing the appropriate set of contextual assumptions and using them to answer a number of questions including:

(10) a.   What are the referents of *she, here* and *now*?

      b.   Is the speaker being literal or not?

      c.   Is the speaker expressing her own thought or someone else's?

      d.   Is that thought a belief, a desire, a representation of someone else's thought or something else?

      e.   Is the speaker being ironic?

      f.   What range of implicatures is the speaker intending to communicate?

The aim of this paper is not to explore the pros and cons of any particular approach but to consider what kinds of insights might follow from developing accounts of inference within any framework. For consistency, the discussion will be based on a version of Relevance Theory, starting with a simplified sketch of the kinds of things which might be involved in understanding an utterance of (9) in an actual context.

One part of the explanation would be to sketch the 'radically underdetermined' linguistic meaning of (9). This semantic representation might look something like this:
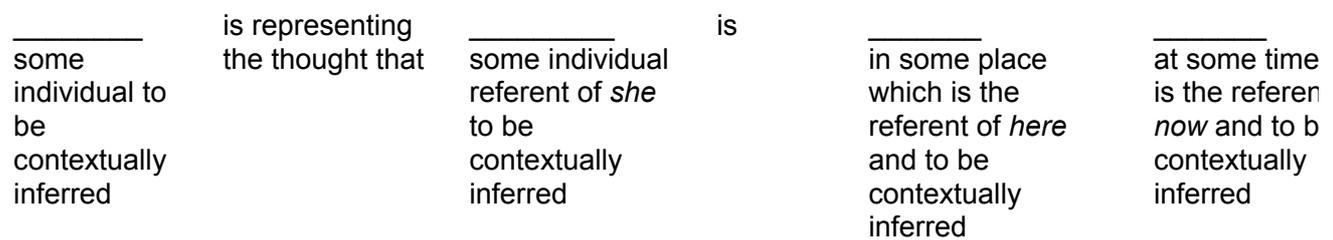
[FIGURE 1 HERE]

_____	is representing the thought that	_____	is	_____	_____
some individual to be contextually inferred		some individual referent of *she* to be contextually inferred		in some place which is the referent of *here* and to be contextually inferred	at some time is the referen *now* and to b contextually inferred

Figure 1. Semantic representation of *'she's here now'*

While this roughly corresponds to what is linguistically encoded by *she's here now*, this is not to claim that any individual ever entertains a representation like this one. Any hearer of an utterance of *she's here now* will begin computing values for the gaps in the representation as soon as (arguably sometimes even before) the speaker begins producing their utterance. Discussions of levels of representation, or 'stages' in utterance interpretation, are always idealisations which necessarily depart from the realities of what goes on in actual utterance interpretation. Some of the gaps in this representation correspond to linguistic expressions which indicate that an inference needs to be made to determine their value. These are the gaps corresponding to the referring expressions *she, here* and *now*. For other gaps, there is no linguistic material to indicate that an inference needs to be made. These include inferences about who is representing the thought being communicated and how they are representing it (e.g. we need to decide whether the speaker is expressing her own belief or attributing a thought or utterance to someone else, we need to decide whether the speaker is stating or asking, and so on.

The next step is to explain how the hearer accesses the intended set of contextual assumptions and uses them to 'fill in the blanks' in this representation. Suppose, for example, that an academic called Sonia has just told her colleague Tania

that she's been trying to contact her head of department for days but has not been able to contact her. Tania replies with the utterance represented in (9):

(9)   She's here now.

Simplifying greatly, which includes making the false assumption that these linguistic expressions unproblematically represent propositional representations, the range of contextual assumptions which Sonia might use in interpreting Tania's utterance includes:

(11) a.   It is 10am on Monday the 5th of May 2008.

b.   Tania is responding to Sonia's previous utterance in which Sonia expressed her frustration at not being able to contact Sonia's head of department.

c.   Tania, Sonia and Sonia's head of department have offices in the same building.

d.   Sonia's head of department does not mind colleagues dropping in when she's in her office.

Assuming Sonia can access these assumptions, and still simplifying, she should be able to infer the following conclusions, for some of which she will have greater evidence than others:

(12) a.   Tania is communicating her (Tania's) belief that Sonia and Tania's head of department is in her office at 10am on Monday the 5th of May 2008.

b. Sonia and Tania's head of department is in her office at 10am on Monday the 5th of May 2008.

c. Sonia can talk to her head of department if she goes to her office now and knocks on the door.

d. Sonia can solve the problem of not having been able to talk to her head of department.

e. Tania has helped Sonia to solve her problem.

f. Tania is helpful.

g. Sonia should have checked to see whether her head of department was in when she arrived on campus.

h. Tania is better than Sonia at keeping herself informed of things on campus, including the head of department's whereabouts.

These are organised roughly in order of how strong the evidence is for each assumption. For example, it is quite likely that any listener would assume that Tania has communicated (12a) but (12h) depends on a range of other assumptions about Sonia, Tania and their relationship. It is possible that such an assumption would not occur to either of them.

How does Sonia access these contextual assumptions and come to these conclusions? On the Relevance Theory account, the hearer is guided by the presumption that the speaker's utterance is 'optimally relevant', i.e. that it provides enough effects to justify the effort involved in interpreting it at the expense of other possible cognitive activity, that it provides as many effects as are consistent with the communicator's abilities and preferences, and that it puts the hearer to no unjustifiable effort in providing these effects. When Sonia considers the possibilities that *she* refers to her head of department, that *here* refers to the building where Sonia and the head of department have their offices, that *now* refers to the time of utterance, and so on, she

arrives at an interpretation which has enough effects to justify her effort and one that Tania manifestly could have intended. She will then conclude that this is the intended interpretation. The different levels of strength with which she entertains the various conclusions in (12) arise because there are differing amounts of evidence for each one. (12a), for example, is very strongly communicated because it is hard to see how Tania's utterance would have been relevant without concluding this. (12b)-(12e) are also very likely to be inferred by any hearer. The evidence for (12f) is clear but the evidence that Tania manifestly intended to communicate it is less strong. The evidence for (12g) and (12h) depends on specific assumptions about Tania and her relationship with Sonia.

The discussion so far has focused on what the inferences are rather than how a hearer will make them. We might explore this following Wilson and Sperber's (2004: 616) outline (which they describe as 'considerably oversimplified') of some of the stages in forming hypotheses about the interpretation of an utterance of *'He forgot to go to the bank'* as uttered by Mary in the following scenario:

(13) Peter: Did John pay back the money he owed you?

Mary: No, He forgot to go to the bank.

[FIGURE 2 HERE]

(a) Mary has said to Peter, "He$_x$ forgot to go to the BANK$_1$ / BANK$_2$." [He$_x$ = uninterpreted pronoun] [BANK$_1$ = financial institution] [BANK$_2$ = river bank]	*Embedding of the decoded (incomplete) logical form of Mary's utterance into a description of Mary's ostensive behaviour.*
(b) Mary's utterance will be optimally relevant to Peter.	*Expectation raised by recognition of Mary's ostensive behaviour and acceptance of the presumption of relevance it conveys.*
(c) Mary's utterance will achieve relevance by explaining why John has not repaid the money he owed her.	*Expectation raised by (b), together with the fact that such an explanation would be most relevant to Peter at this point.*
(d) Forgetting to go to the BANK$_1$ may make one unable to repay the money one owes.	*First assumption to occur to Peter which, together with other appropriate premises, might satisfy expectation (c). Accepted as an implicit premise of Mary's utterance.*
(e) John forgot to go to the BANK$_1$.	*First enrichment of the logical form of Mary's utterance to occur to Peter which might combine with (d) to lead to the satisfaction of (c). Accepted as an explicature of Mary's utterance.*
(f) John was unable to repay Mary the money he owes because he forgot to go to the BANK$_1$.	*Inferred from (d) and (e), satisfying (c) and accepted as an implicit conclusion of Mary's utterance.*
(g) John may repay Mary the money he owes when he next goes to the BANK$_1$.	*From (f) plus background knowledge. One of several possible weak implicatures of Mary's utterance which, together with (f), satisfy expectation (b).*

Figure 2. Schematic outline of hypotheses formed in interpreting an utterance of *'He forgot to go to the bank'*

(Wilson and Sperber 2004: 616)

Even in this 'oversimplified' form, it is clear that explaining inferences fully takes

considerable time and space. Using a similar diagram, we can represent some of the

stages in inferring hypotheses about Tania's utterance in (9). Here is a representation

of just the first few stages:

[FIGURE 3 HERE]

(a) Tania has said to Sonia "She$_x$ is here$_x$ now$_x$" [She$_x$ = uninterpreted pronoun] [Here$_x$ = uninterpreted pronoun] [Now$_x$ = uninterpreted pronoun]	*Embedding of the decoded (incomplete) logical form of Tania's utterance into a description of Tania's ostensive behaviour.*
(b) Tania's utterance will be optimally relevant to Sonia.	*Expectation raised by recognition of Tania's ostensive behaviour and acceptance of the presumption of relevance it conveys.*
(c) Tania's utterance will achieve relevance by responding to Sonia's expression of frustration at not being able to see her head of department.	*Expectation raised by (b), together with the fact that a response to Sonia's previous utterance would be most relevant to Sonia at this point.*
(d) If Sonia's head of department were in her office at the current time (10am on the 5th of May 2008) then Sonia could speak to the had of department	*First assumption to occur to Sonia which, together with other appropriate premises, might satisfy expectation (c).*
(e) Sonia's head of department is in her office at 10am on the 5th of May 2008.	*First enrichment of the logical form of Tania's utterance to occur to Sonia which might combine with (d) to lead to the satisfaction of (c). Accepted as an explicature of Mary's utterance.*
(f) Sonia will be able to talk to her head of department if she goes to her office and knocks on the door at or shortly after 10am on the 5th of May 2008	*Inferred from (d) and (e), satisfying (c) and accepted as an implicit conclusion of Tania' utterance.*
(g) John may repay Mary the money he owes when he next goes to the BANK$_1$.	*From (f) plus background knowledge. One of several possible weak implicatures of Mary's utterance which, together with (f), satisfy expectation (b).*

Figure 3. Schematic outline of hypotheses formed in interpreting an utterance of *'She's here now'*

(based on Wilson and Sperber 2004: 616)

This brief, superficial sketch of what is involved in interpreting the utterances should be enough to indicate one of the major obstacles to providing relatively full and relatively explicit accounts of inferential processes in developing stylistic analyses. Even this partial account requires a significant amount of time and space to develop and express. The requirements for fuller accounts of larger texts will of course be much

higher. Section 5 below provides some evidence that the effort will sometimes be worthwhile.

3   Stylistics and inference

Given that all interpretations depend on inference, we might expect stylistic analysis routinely to involve accounts of inferential processes. The importance of inferential processes in understanding texts has often been acknowledged by work in stylistics and there has been an increase in the amount of work which at least mentions inferential processes or pragmatics more broadly. (For a general overview, see MacMahon 2006. Work which recognises a role for pragmatics in stylistic analysis, and in some cases focuses closely on pragmatic analysis, includes: Bex, Burke and Stockwell 2000; Black 2006; Culpeper 2001; Culpeper, Short and Verdonk 1998; Leech and Short 1981; van Peer and Renkema 1984; Pilkington 2000; Pratt 1977; Sell 1991; Simpson 1993, 2003a, 2003b; Toolan 1992, 1996, 1998. Naturally, it is not possible to offer anything approaching a comprehensive list). The aim of this paper is not to survey the range of work which focuses on inferential processes, but rather to consider what kinds of contribution might be made by an account of inferential processes. There are a number of possible stances which might be taken by a stylistician who recognises the role of inferential processes in understanding and responding to texts. For the purposes of the present discussion, this paper considers four options. Of course, these are not the only possible positions to take, and they are sketched only briefly here, but they indicate possible responses to the tension between recognising the role of inference and recognising the practical difficulties in developing inferential analyses. The first two positions, the 'hardline inferentialist' position and the 'casual inferentialist' position, represent extremes and this paper will not argue for either of them. Options three and four, the 'occasional inferentialist' and the

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'sophisticated inferentialist', seem more promising at first glance and the suggestion here will be that 'sophisticated inferentialism' is the most reasonable approach at the moment.

a)   'hardline inferentialism'

On this view, it is essential to explore all of the inferential processes involved in understanding every text since all acts of interpretation involve inference. Three things make this seem impractical. First, the time and space taken to develop an adequate analysis of even a short utterance such as *'she's here now'* (and remember that the discussion above did not go into detail on each inferential step) mean that it will be almost impossible ever to provide an actual analysis of every inferential process involved in any one text. Second, variation from individual to individual means that we can hope at best either for an account of just one individual's interpretation or some kind of summary which attempts to roughly merge the different interpretations of a group of interpreters. Finally, even for one individual there will be no clear single interpretation. In interpreting Tania's utterance of *'she's here now'* as indicated above, Sonia may well be uncertain whether there is any implicature of reproach or of Tania's superiority to Sonia. She may even change her mind from one moment to the next or reinterpret the utterance several times. Or, as in 'non-spontaneous' interpretation (Furlong 1996), the kind of sustained explicit inferential processing involved in developing literary interpretations, she might spend a very long time thinking about the interpretation of the text. Lovers of literature or literary scholars might claim to well spend a whole lifetime interpreting one text. Given this, issues of idealisation and representativeness are very important here.

b)   'casual inferentialism'

On this view, it is not important to explore inferential processes since we can all see what inferences we make without having to develop an explicit account for each one. One argument against this view is that it rules out in principle the exploration of one of the key processes involved in interpreting texts. If inference is what audiences do, and a large part of what a writer does is to attempt to manipulate the inferences of readers, it seems to be a non-starter to decide in advance that we will not be interested. It is also clear from work in linguistic pragmatics that the processes we go through in inferring meanings are far from obvious. There is still considerable debate, for example, around how we understand utterances containing 'simple' everyday words such as *and, but, some, all* or cardinal numbers (see Blakemore 2002 and Carston 2002 for discussion of some of these issues). It is not immediately obvious to all adults, for example, that the word *some* has a linguistic meaning which is consistent with the use of *all*. For example, Noveck (2001; see also Bott and Noveck 2004) has shown that adults often think an utterance such as (14) is false given that all elephants are mammals:

(14)   Some elephants are mammals.

Noveck's work suggests that children under the age of 10 are 'more logical' than adults since they are more likely to accept that (14) is true if they know that all elephants are mammals. Finally, a huge amount of work in literary studies can be understood as being concerned with inferences we make when reading and responding to texts. It surely makes sense to apply whatever techniques we have to investigating how these processes work.

c)   'occasional inferentialism'

This is the view that an account of inferential processes is important in cases where there is something unusual or marked about the inferential processes we go through when understanding a text, but that it is otherwise not something stylisticians should think about. Thinking of our 'everyday' examples above, this view would reject an exploration of the inferential processes involved in understanding *'that would be lovely'* in response to a dinner invitation or *'she's here now'* in response to en expression of frustration at not seeing someone, but it would presumably think it is worth exploring how we understand or don't understand jokes, cases of misunderstanding and highly marked cases such as the utterances by Bob Dylan and Tony Snow.

'Occasional inferentialism' seems to be a more defensible position than the two extremes we have looked at so far. The risk it runs is that important insights might be missed since cases which seem straightforward may well turn out to be more complicated when examined more closely.

d)   'sophisticated inferentialism'

On this view, which might also be termed 'practical inferentialism', it is in principle always worth exploring all of the inferential processes involved in understanding a text, but not practical to do so. Where analysts notice something marked or unusual about an interpretation, this calls for an analysis of inferential processes. But cases which seem simpler are in principle of interest too. It will be up to the analyst to decide in each case whether and where to develop an account of inferential processes. This approach will be briefly applied in section 5. Before that, section 4 will look at two generally successful works of stylistic analysis which offer genuine insights without developing a detailed account of inference.

4   *The Inheritors* — previous analyses

Many readers find *The Inheritors* deeply disturbing. But it is also generally considered to be gripping and thought-provoking. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor (1964: 11) suggest that 'the sharpest reaction to a first reading ... is often one of puzzlement' and that after a first reading 'we feel in the presence of a difficult if fascinating book'. Much of the difficulty and the fascination arise because of linguistic decisions made by Golding in writing it. Section 5 explores some of the ways in which Golding's text can be understood as an exercise in manipulating the inferential processes of readers. This section briefly summarises the book and then outlines two very successful analyses. The first is Halliday's (1971) famous analysis which applies ideas from Halliday's own work on grammar and explores different linguistic styles associated with different passages of the book. The second is Hoover's (1999) thorough and illuminating analysis based on corpus data. Hoover's work supports some of Halliday's conclusions but rejects and replaces others. While neither of these accounts say much about inference, they both seem likely to be complemented by an account of inferential processes. Hoover explicitly suggests that a fuller account of inferential processes is likely to be useful in helping us understand the text. After looking at these two analyses and developing a sense of what can be achieved without (much) analysis of inference, section 5 considers what might be added by an explicit account of inferential processes. A central claim of this paper is that significant effects of the novel can be explained in terms of the inferential processes of readers.

4.1   The Inheritors: structure and interpretation

Many existing discussions summarise *The Inheritors*. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor (2002) offer perhaps the best-known general literary discussion (an earlier edition of this book was referred to by Halliday in his 1971 paper). The style of the novel has also been discussed by a number of authors, including Adriaens 1970, Black 1993, Halliday 1971, Hoover 1999, Lee 1976. This section offers a very brief summary of the novel's

structure and mentions a few key aspects of its interpretation which most readers are likely to share.

The book begins with an epigraph:

(15) " . . . We know very little of the appearance of the Neanderthal man, but this
. . . seems to suggest an extreme hairiness, an ugliness, or a repulsive
strangeness in his appearance over and above his low forehead, his beetle
brows, his ape neck, and his inferior stature. . . . Says Sir Harry Johnston,
in a survey of the rise of modern man in his *Views and Reviews:* 'The dim
racial remembrance of such gorilla-like monsters, with cunning brains,
shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic
tendencies, may be the germ of the ogre in folklore. . . .' "

H.G. Wells, *Outline of History*

Following this, the book itself can be seen as divided into three sections (Hoover disagrees with Halliday about the division into sections; this summary follows Hoover's assumptions). The first and by far the largest part of the book (pages 1-216; page references here are to the 1955 hardback edition) is presented by a third-person narrator who often seems to share some of the point of view, or 'mind style' (Fowler 1977: 103-113; Fowler 1986: 150-167; see also discussion by Leech and Short 1981: 187-208 and Semino 2007) of the main character Lok and his people (usually referred to as 'the people'):

(16) Lok was running as fast as he could. His head was down and he carried his
thorn bush horizontally for balance and smacked the drifts of vivid buds
aside with his free hand. Liku rode him laughing, one hand clutched in the
chestnut curls that lay on his neck and down his spine, the other holding

the little Oa tucked under his chin. Lok's feet were clever. They saw. They threw him round the displayed roots of the beeches, leapt when a puddle of water lay across the trail. Liku beat his belly with her feet.

"Faster! Faster!"

His feet stabbed, he swerved and slowed. Now they could hear the river that lay parallel but hidden to their left. The beeches opened, the bush went away and they were in the little patch of flat mud where the log was.

"There, Liku."

The onyx marsh water was spread before them, widening into the river. The trail along by the river began again on the other side on ground that rose until it was lost in the trees. Lok, grinning happily, took two paces towards the river and stopped. The grin faded and his mouth opened till the lower lip hung down. Liku slid to his knee then dropped to the ground. She put the little Oa's head to her mouth and looked over her.

Lok laughed uncertainly.

"The log has gone away."

<div align="right">(Golding 1955: 11-12)</div>

The second section, from pages 216 to 222, is presented by a more detached third-person narrator:

(17)   The red creature stood on the edge of the terrace and did nothing. The hollow log was a dark spot on the water towards the place where the sun had gone down. The air in the gap was clear and blue and calm. There was no noise at all now except for the fall, for there was no wind and the green sky was clear. The red creature turned to the right and trotted slowly towards the far end of the terrace. Water was cascading down the rocks

beyond the terrace from the melting ice in the mountains. The river was high and flat and drowned the edge of the terrace. There were long scars in the earth and rock where the branches of a tree had been dragged past by the water. The red creature came trotting back to a dark hollow in the side of the cliff where there was evidence of occupation.

(Golding 1955: 216-217)

The third and final section, from pages 223 to 233, makes up the twelfth and final chapter and is presented by a third-person narrator who seems to share some of the point of view of the character Tuami and the 'new people':

(18)   Tuami sat in the stern of the dug-out, the steering paddle under his left arm. There was plenty of light and the patches of salt no longer looked like holes in the skin sail. He thought bitterly of the great square sail they had left bundled up in that last mad hour among the mountains; for with that and the breeze through the gap he need not have endured these hours of strain. He need not have sat all night wondering whether the current would beat the wind and bear them back to the fall while the people or as many as were left of them slept their collapsed sleep. Still, they had moved on, the walls of rock folding back until this lake became so broad that he had been able to find no transits for judging their motion but sat, guessing, with the mountains looming over the flat water and his eyes red with the tears of strain. Now he stirred a little for the rounded bilge was hard and the pad of leather that many steersmen had moulded to a comfortable seat was lost on the slope up from the forest. He could feel the slight pressure transmitted to his forearm along the loom of the paddle and knew that if he

were to trail his hand over the side the water would tinkle against the palm

and heap up over his wrist.

<div align="right">(Golding 1955: 223)</div>

Of course, it is not possible here to explore all of the many interpretations of the book which have been or could be suggested. In part, the book is a response to Harry Johnston's idea quoted by Wells which Golding used as an epigraph to the novel. Contradicting the view of Neanderthal man as brutish and ogre-like, the book suggests that the Neanderthals are gentle and sensitive. The contrast between the Neanderthals, referred to as the 'people', and the new people is an important part of the book. Where the people are empathetic (even telepathic), social beings, the new people are individualistic and selfish. The people have no secrets from each other and have a strong awareness that what affects one of them affects all of them. The new people are each out for themselves and willing to commit savage acts to further their own individual ends. The realisation that the new people are closer ancestors to contemporary humans than the people is one of the key ideas in the book. We understand that the new people are 'the inheritors' and that their arrival has caused the extinction of the people. Interpretations will then consider what the book suggests about 'us', i.e. homo sapiens, how exactly it challenges the view expressed in the epigraph, how the 'innocence' of the people contributes to their downfall, how the 'knowingness' of the new people helps them, the positive and negative aspects of both the 'innocence' and the 'knowingness', and so on. Readers will also think about connections with Biblical ideas such as 'the Fall' and Eden (various kinds of fall are mentioned in the book and there is a key moment where terrible knowledge is gained by a character in a tree). There is room for considerable discussion of possible different interpretations of the book, and there is no space here to do justice to them. The main interpretive argument developed below is that a key aspect of the contrast between the

two groups and our understanding of the story is based on the different kinds of

inferential processes we go through when reading different parts of the book.

4.2   Halliday on The Inheritors

Halliday's (1971) analysis of *The Inheritors*, described recently as 'one of the

groundbreaking analyses in stylistics' (Carter and Stockwell 2008: 19), sees the book

as divided into two parts with a transitional section between them. Part one is in

'Language A' and part two is in 'Language C'. Halliday argues that there is no

'Language B' but that the transitional passage has features of both languages.

He lists a number of features of Language A. These include restricted diction

(e.g. the use of words such as *stick*, *twig* or *log* rather than *bow, arrow* or *boat*

reflecting the fact that the people do not know about such things as bows, arrows or

boats), inanimate objects or human body parts appearing as the subjects of transitive

verbs (e.g. *his feet stabbed* in the extract in (16) above), and a high number of

intransitive verbs. Language C, by contrast, has richer diction (e.g. objects are referred

to as *dug-out, steering paddle, sail,* and so on), human subjects for transitive verbs and

a higher incidence of transitive verbs. Halliday suggests (1971: 349-353) that in the first

part of the book:

> 'The picture is one in which people act, but they do not act on
>
> things; they move, but they move only themselves, not other
>
> objects ... It is particularly the lack of transitive clauses of
>
> action with human subjects . . . that creates an atmosphere of
>
> ineffectual activity: the scene is one of constant movement,
>
> but movement which is as much inanimate as human and in
>
> which only the mover is affected — nothing else changes ... it
>
> is the syntax as such, rather than the syntactic reflection of the
>
> subject-matter, to which we are responding ... the entire

transitivity structure of Language A can be summed up by

saying that there is no cause and effect.'

(Halliday 1971: 349-353)

Halliday's claim is that facts about the syntax of the text contribute to particular

kinds of interpretations. In particular, the syntax is one of the ways in which we

understand that the people lack agency, move themselves but not the world around

them, fail to understand or realise relationships of cause and effect. Halliday goes so

far as to suggest that 'it is the syntax as such, rather than the syntactic reflection of the

subject matter, to which we are responding' (Halliday 1971: 350).

Halliday's work was much discussed, the most well-known discussion surely

being the attack by Fish (1973), who took Halliday's paper as an example representing

problems with stylistics as a whole. The strongest claim Fish made was that Halliday's

analysis, like most work in stylistics at that time, was arbitrary in that there was no

reason to link the description of linguistic features to one interpretation rather than

another. Questions about interpretations of the book are discussed in more detail in

section 5 below.

4.3   Hoover on The Inheritors

Hoover defends Halliday against Fish's criticisms. As well as referring to earlier

discussion of Fish's approach in general by Milic (1985) and Ellis (1989: 113-136)

which demonstrates that 'the attack frequently seems unfair and misguided', he points

out greater similarities between Halliday and Fish than Fish realises:

'The kinds of analyses that Fish and Halliday favor do not

seem so different as Fish wants to claim: he prefers to

emphasize readers' temporal activities when faced with a text,

and Halliday prefers to concentrate more on the

characteristics of the text that elicit and partly constrain those

activities. Neither element can be ignored. Surely no one

believes that readers' activities are unconstrained by the texts

to which they respond, just as no one believes that texts

completely determine the interpretive activities of readers. The

difficult and interesting question is to what extent and in what

ways readers, with their internalized and partly institutional

assumptions, beliefs, and interpretive techniques, create

meanings from marks on paper; and to what extent and in

what ways those ink marks, with their partly conventional and

institutional status as passages of a language (and their status

as literary texts), constrain, regulate, or influence the activities

of readers. With this question on the table, we can proceed to

a re-examination of the specific claims of Halliday's analysis.'

(Hoover 1999: 26)

While Hoover thinks Halliday's approach is a good one and that it generates useful

insights into how the text creates its effects, he also points out two problems with

Halliday's analysis. First, it is not explicit enough. Hoover explains in some detail his

own attempt to replicate Halliday's analysis (pp.27-41) and a number of uncertainties

he faced in doing so. More importantly, though, he suggests that the main part of

Halliday's analysis is wrong:

'A more serious problem with Halliday's analysis exists than

those caused by lack of explicitness and what seem to be

misclassifications, or at least questionable classifications: its

central claim is simply wrong. *The Inheritors* cannot be divided

into two different sections or languages on the basis of

differences in transitivity patterns. It is simply not true that the

first long section (language A) is very intransitive compared

with the second short section (language C). While the lack of

transitive verbs with human subjects in passages like A does

show certain limitations in Lok's understanding, it is not true

that the Neanderthal world as a whole lacks cause and effect,

nor that the people cannot act as agents in their world, as

Halliday claims.'

(Hoover 1999: 41)

While Hoover agrees that patterns of transitivity are important, he suggests that the

nature of these patterns is not as simple as suggested by Halliday and, in particular,

that 'There is no monolithic language A, at least not with respect to transitivity' (Hoover

1999: 26). Based on evidence from corpus work, Hoover concludes that '....the

extremely high levels of transitivity in some sections of language A are more unusual

than the low levels in some sections of language A and language C' (Hoover 1999: 46).

He rejects Halliday's suggestion that the transitivity levels are 'independent of subject

matter' (Hoover 1999: 46) and points out that the language of the people is often

straightforwardly transitive, as here, for example:

(19)   They followed the scent from the blood to the edge of the river. There

was blood on the rock by the water too and a little milk. Fa pressed her

hands on her head and gave her picture words.

"They killed Nil and threw her into the water. And the old woman."

"They have taken Liku and the new one"

(Golding 1955: 114)

Hoover concludes that Halliday was right to focus on transitivity and agency,

particularly when the people are trying to understand the strange ways of the new

people. But he questions the conclusion that this is because there is no cause and

effect in the world as understood by the people. Significantly, he suggests that 'the sense of powerlessness and ineffectuality that Halliday ascribes to the syntax seems to inhere instead in the plot. Lok and the people are unsuccessful in their struggle with the new people, who seem powerful in contrast because of their success.' (Hoover 1999: 52). At the same time, he discusses evidence that the people are superior in some ways to the new people, e.g. morally and spiritually. Ultimately, Hoover suggests that the main linguistic characteristics of *The Inheritors* (mainly of Language A) are:

- short, simple sentences, mainly in simple past tense
- body parts and inanimate objects as agents, and as subjects of mental process and perception verbs, and intransitive verbs of motion
- body parts and inanimate objects with attributes normally associated with animate beings
- a small, concentrated, peculiarly distributed vocabulary of short words
- a high proportion of very frequent concrete, physical nouns and verbs
- natural object words used to refer to artifacts, buildings, and boats
- words referring to modern cultural phenomena and activities and names of known places and people are absent

Despite their differences, and despite objections from some, Halliday's and Hoover's approaches both illustrate how detailed and systematic stylistic analysis can help us to understand how this text gives rise to particular effects for readers. Hoover's impressive and careful corpus work shows that stylistic analyses can be tested, compared and improved upon, and there seems to be little doubt that Halliday's and Hoover's work both help us to understand how the book creates effects for readers. Hoover's exploration of Halliday's analysis and suggestions for improvement are also evidence of a systematic approach making claims which can be tested and improved in

the light of further studies. The next section considers what might be added by a systematic account of inferential processes.

5   *The Inheritors* and inference

Both Halliday's and Hoover's analyses are likely to encourage pragmatists to think that they have something to contribute to our understanding of *The Inheritors.* Halliday (1971: 330) makes clear that he is looking for ways of judging which linguistic features are relevant to the meaning of the text:

> 'My main concern, in this paper, is with criteria of relevance.
> This, it seems to me, is one of the central problems in the
> study of 'style in language': I mean the problem of
> distinguishing between mere linguistic regularity, which in itself
> is of no interest to literary studies, and regularity which is
> significant for the poem or prose work in which we find it.'

<div align="right">(Halliday 1971: 330)</div>

This will encourage any pragmatist to think they might have some answers and not only because the term 'relevance' chimes with uses of that term in a number of pragmatic theories. A natural assumption is that what makes a linguistic regularity 'significant' is the fact that it plays a role in interpretations or other effects of the text on its audience. Halliday's claim for the relevance of the features he discusses is that 'by considering how the meaning [of features he discusses] 'relates to an interpretation of the meaning of the work, one can show that they are relevant both as subject-matter and as underlying theme' (Halliday 1971: 358). Pragmatic theories aim explicitly to account for the effects on audiences of the use of particular linguistic forms. A large part of an account of what makes a particular linguistic choice significant, and in some

cases consciously noticed by audiences, will be an account of the pragmatic processes of interpretation.

Hoover explicitly mentions the role pragmatics might play:

> 'While I have made modest use of what might be called
>
> reader-response analysis in chapter 1, and have referred to
>
> pragmatic analysis in chapter 1, the latter, especially,
>
> deserves a fuller treatment.'

<div align="right">(Hoover 1999: xvii)</div>

He goes on to make brief suggestions about how pragmatic accounts might be developed for two specific passages in the novel. This section responds to Hoover's suggestion by considering some ways in which an account of the inferential processes of readers might help us to understand the text. Section 5.1 suggests how we might account for specific local inferences made when reading the text by fleshing out accounts of two passages discussed by Hoover. Section 5.2 considers how we might flesh out comments made by Hoover, which did not refer explicitly to pragmatics, on the effects of specific kinds of contextual material, including the design of the cover and its epigraph. Section 5.3 considers 'global' inferences about the interpretation of the book as a whole and the development of literary interpretations. Section 5.4 contrasts local inferences made when reading different parts of the book and suggests that some of the impact of the book derives from salient differences in the kinds of inferences made when reading different sections.

5.1   *Local inferences*

Hoover makes some suggestions about ways in which pragmatics might help with the interpretation of two particular passages. This section fleshes out the discussion of these by considering what a pragmatic theory might say about them.

Hoover discusses this passage near the beginning of the book:

(20)   Fa looked across to the place where the broken trail began again. There

was earth churned up there where the other end of the log had lain. She

asked a question of Ha and he answered her with his mouth.

(Golding 1955: 13)

Making clear that the communicative relationship being focused on is between author

and reader rather than between characters in the novel, Hoover (1999: 4) suggests

that the final sentence here can be understood as an apparent violation of the Gricean

maxim of quantity (Grice 1975). Since we presuppose that asking and answering

questions in face-to-face interaction will be by way of mouths and ears, it seems odd to

say that Ha answered 'with his mouth'. 'Unless we have other reasons to believe that

the narrator is unreliable, however, we are more likely to revise our ideas about the

fictional world than to doubt the author's sincerity or competence' (Hoover 1999: 4). So

we look for an explanation and decide that face-to-face communication for the people

does not necessarily or automatically involve mouths and ears. As Hoover points out,

this will reinforce conclusions suggested by other passages, e.g. where Lok's feet are

described as if they had sight ('Lok's feet were clever. They saw') and suggestions that

the people might be able to communicate nonverbally or even telepathically.

This inferential process follows a fairly common pattern. Toolan (1998: 174)

makes a similar suggestion in explaining part of our understanding of Raymond

Carver's story *Cathedral* (Carver 1983). In discussing a blind man, Robert, who is a

friend of his wife and whose own wife, Beulah, has recently died, the character

narrating the story tells us something about the blind man and his wife's life together:

(21)   They'd married, lived and worked together, slept together — had sex, sure

— and then the blind man had to bury her.

Toolan suggests that:

> '...what jars is what the husband assumes to be in need of
>
> telling, on the presupposition that if he had not done so, we
>
> addressees might have assumed otherwise. Thus he judges
>
> that he needs to tell us that Beulah and Robert 'slept together
>
> — had sex, sure —', believing that we wouldn't have expected
>
> such normal human behaviour from a couple that included a
>
> blind person.'

More generally, we often seem to make inferences based on wondering why a speaker or writer chose a particular kind of wording. Within Grice's approach, both of these cases would be explained along the lines suggested by Hoover, as apparent violations of the maxim of quantity which therefore lead to implicatures which preserve the assumption that the utterance as a whole is appropriately informative. Within Relevance Theory, the assumption is that a speaker or writer will only put us to the effort of processing something if there is a justification for it in terms of cognitive effects. Many cases have been discussed where a small amount of extra effort results in increased effects.

(22)   a. How are you?

       b. How are you these days?

(23)   a. My childhood days are gone.

       b. My childhood days are gone, gone.

Zegarac and Clark (1999: 336) discuss the examples in (22) within the framework of Relevance Theory. (22b) differs from (22a) only in the addition of the two words *these days.* Strictly, these words add to what is communicated only something which would usually have been inferred even if these words had not been uttered, i.e. that the period of time during which the hearer's well-being is of interest is around the time of the utterance. But the speaker has chosen to put the hearer to the extra effort involved in processing these words and Relevance Theory claims that hearers will assume that any effort they are asked to expend is justifiable. This means that this utterance must be communicating something more than would have been conveyed by (22a). A likely explanation is that the speaker wants to know about how the hearer is 'these days' in contrast to how they were at some earlier time. This will in turn suggest that the speaker has a genuine interest in the hearer's current situation and so (22b) is likely to be understood as 'less phatic' than (22a) would have been in a similar context.

Sperber and Wilson (1986: 219) discuss (23b) alongside other examples of repetition and suggest that the 'poetic' effects of the repetition here follow because the only accessible justification for the repetition is as an encouragement to think about the speaker's emotional state. So the hearer is encouraged to think about the speaker's emotional state while thinking about the distance of their childhood days.

Returning to the example from *The Inheritors*, there is in fact more to say than we have said so far about the effect of saying that Ha answered 'with his mouth'. If we simply removed these words, the passage would still sound odd:

(24)   Fa looked across to the place where the broken trail began again. There was earth churned up there where the other end of the log had lain. She asked a question of Ha and he answered her.

The last sentence in this version is still odd. It seems that it is odd to state that she asked a question and he answered, even without saying that he answered 'with his mouth'. Alongside the sense that it is telling us too much to say that he used his mouth to answer, it is at the same time too little just to tell us that she asked something and he answered. Using the same logic as we have used so far, this would suggest that it is unusual for the people to ask and answer questions. This would, of course, fit with Hoover's initial suggestion that the passage connects with hypotheses we are already forming about how the people can communicate without words and perhaps telepathically. Hoover refers to this passage on page 12:

(25) She came straight to the water's edge, looked, smelt, then turned accusingly to Lok. She did not need to speak. Lok began to jerk his head at her.

(Golding 1955: 12)

If the people sometimes do not need to speak and can understand each other in a different way, then it will be relevant to let us know when one of the people needs to ask a question of another, even if it is not asked with a mouth, as well as to tell us when someone uses a mouth to reply. Now consider how the passage carries on in the original version:

(26) Fa looked across to the place where the broken trail began again. There was earth churned up there where the other end of the log had lain. She asked a question of Ha and he answered her with his mouth.
      "One day. Perhaps two days. Not three."

(Golding 1955: 13)

What does Ha's response tell us? That the question is quite specific, expecting an answer about a duration of time measured in days, and that he understood exactly what this fairly precise question was. So this exchange tells us more about how the people can communicate with each other. By showing us only what the people perceive externally, it also makes clear to us that we are not able to access all of the things that are being communicated. This ties in with other interpretations about how there are some ways in which the people are superior to us. We are missing out on something which they possess in their ability to communicate so effectively without words. We are being shown this and made to experience our separateness to some extent, rather than simply being told about it. We are frustrated in our inability to understand the people's world fully.

Whether explanations are couched within a Gricean approach, making reference to the maxim of quantity, within a Relevance Theory approach based on the presumption that any effort on the part of the hearer/reader will be justified by effects, or within the framework of some other pragmatic theory, it seems clear that Hoover's account of the extract from *The Inheritors*, like Toolan's account of the extract from *Cathedral,* are cases where an account of the inferential processes of readers helps us to understand the effects of a text. The brief discussion here also suggests that there is more to be said about the detailed inferential processes involved and that exploring these will help explain the effects of the text.

Hoover also sees the 'restricted diction', or 'underlexicalisation' (the term coined by Fowler 1981: 40; Fowler 1986: 152-154) of the people as a feature of the text which is likely to be explicable in terms of pragmatics:

'Golding also avoids, at times with great difficulty, names for

artifacts which the new people use but which are not part of

the Neanderthal world. As we saw in the discussion of Ha's

answering Fa with his mouth, a pragmatic analysis helps to

38

show how these dictional restrictions work. When the
Neanderthals consistently call boats "logs", for example, the
apparent violation of the maxim of quality counts as a
demonstration that Lok does not know what a boat is rather
than as a real violation. To put it more accurately, Golding's
flouting of the maxim of quality reveals a gap in Lok's
vocabulary and in Neanderthal culture.'

(Hoover 1999: 10)

Again, Hoover is careful here to make clear that he is focusing on what the author is
communicating to the reader rather than what the characters are communicating to
each other. He is surely right to suggest that an account of the inferential processes of
readers coming across these vocabulary items will help us to understand the effects of
the text. In fact, though, it is doubtful that reference to the maxim of quality will be the
best way to explain this. First, there are reasons to doubt the usefulness of a notion of
'quality' or 'truthfulness' in general (see Wilson and Sperber 2002 for discussion). More
importantly here, it is unlikely that a full account of these specific usages can be
developed in terms of a maxim of quality. In some cases, it is not clear that the choice
of vocabulary item gives rise to falsehood. It is not strictly false to say that a hollowed
out log used as a boat is still a log. Arguably, the bow in the book is still a stick and
even the arrow may be a sharpened twig. The issue here seems to be more one of
appropriateness. We expect a log used for water transportation to be referred to as a
'boat', and so on for the other tools. One general problem with Grice's suggestions
about the role of the maxim of quality in explaining particular interpretations is that it is
not clear how we know which interpretation to go for when we recognise a violation of
the maxim. How do we know when a violation should point us to a metaphorical
interpretation, when it should point us to an ironical interpretation, and so on? This

problem also arises here. We could, for example, ask why readers do not decide that these uses are metaphorical. Black (1993) also discusses the underlexicalisation of the people. She points out that the distinction between underlexicalisation and metaphor is not always easy to draw and suggests that this follows because 'metaphor is one way of extending the lexical resources of language' (Black 1993: 41). She suggests that:

> 'Cases of underlexicalisation are clear when a non-specific
>
> noun (such as *log*) is used to refer to something for which a
>
> specific word exists in English'

<div align="right">(Black 1993: 41)</div>

Underlexicalisation, she suggests, is 'a technique which is used to suggest that the people are at a very early stage of linguistic development' (Black 1993: 41). She goes further and suggests that the book shows us the people developing linguistically as well as in other ways, making some specific suggestions about the meaning of metaphor and simile, and how the people's understanding of these develops through the book.

Black's discussion supports the idea that it is appropriateness rather than truthfulness which is relevant here and it suggests a similarity between this case and the extract in (20) above ('he answered her with his mouth'). In both cases, the reader is expected to notice something unusual in the words used and to infer a reason for this. In (20), we infer that answering with his mouth is not necessarily what would be expected of Ha. In the cases of underlexicalisation, we infer the absence of expected vocabulary and, further, that this absence reflects a lack of contact with examples of the concepts expressed by the vocabulary, i.e. we assume that Lok does not know what a boat is, or what bows and arrows are. Black also makes the point (1993: 44) that to treat cases which are less clearcut as metaphor rather than underlexicalisation

would have the effect of distancing us from the point of view of Lok and the people. Of course, one key aspect of Golding's style is the way in which he manipulates our understanding of the point of view, or mind style, from which the story is narrated. Many of the inferences discussed here contribute to our sense of that mind style and this is discussed in more detail in section 5.4. In the next section, we consider the effects of material which readers come across before reading the main part of the novel.

5.2   Contextual assumptions before reading

This section considers how readers might be affected by assumptions they entertain before they begin reading. There are, of course, many different kinds of assumptions which readers might make before reading any book. These include assumptions about the author and her/his status in the literary world, about the book itself, perhaps based on reviews or on what others have said about it, and assumptions created by the book itself, e.g. by its cover or by its location in the bookshop where it was bought. Hoover (1999: 1-4) begins his book with a discussion of the epigraph, the cover design on the version he first read and a later edition and some of the inferences readers are likely to make as they read the opening pages (culminating in the passage discussed in (20) above where Ha answers 'with his mouth'). There are several ways in which we might flesh out Hoover's brief discussion of how such preliminary material affects interpretations. One possibility is that such material generates contextual assumptions which help to narrow down interpretations. This might resemble the effect of information about topic which provides a 'frame' for understanding a text, as explored in Bransford and Johnson's well-known (1972) paper. Here, for example, the information that the topic is 'the paragraph you will hear will be about washing clothes' had a dramatic (facilitating) effect on comprehension of this passage (only the beginning is reproduced here):

(27)   The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into

different groups depending on their makeup. Of course, one pile may be

sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go

somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you

are pretty well set...

(Bransford and Johnson 1972: 722)

Here, the information that the passage is about 'washing clothes' helps readers to

assign referents to noun phrases such as 'the procedure', and 'things' and so on.

Often, however, the effect is much less determinate. Consider, for example, the

epigraph at the beginning of the book:

(28)   " . . . We know very little of the appearance of the Neanderthal man, but this

. . . seems to suggest an extreme hairiness, an ugliness, or a repulsive

strangeness in his appearance over and above his low forehead, his beetle

brows, his ape neck, and his inferior stature. . . . Says Sir Harry Johnston,

in a survey of the rise of modern man in his *Views and Reviews:* 'The dim

racial remembrance of such gorilla-like monsters, with cunning brains,

shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic

tendencies, may be the germ of the ogre in folklore. . . .' "

H.G. Wells, *Outline of History*

What kinds of inferences might this lead to? The following seem likely:

(29)   a.   Golding is quoting H.G. Wells.

b.   Wells is a distinguished figure

        c.   Wells is himself quoting Sir Harry Johnston

        d.   Sir Harry Johnston has some eminence/authority

        e.   Quoting authority figures is sometimes intended as a way of adding
               credibility to an author's own work.

        f.   Quoting authority figures is sometimes a preface to arguing against
               them or presenting evidence against their views.

Of course, there are many more possibilities. But it is reasonable to suggest that assumptions such as these will lead to the reader wondering how exactly the novel will respond to Wells's epigraph. This is what Hoover suggests. So the epigraph leads us to read the opening sections of the book (and the book as a whole) with a view to finding out whether Golding endorses or opposes Wells's view. As Hoover points out, it soon becomes clear that the aim is to oppose these views. The effect of the epigraph then is not to guide us towards one interpretation but to raise questions about possible interpretations and encourage us to read the novel with a view to finding out what kind of response to Well's quote it represents.

     Hoover mentions the covers of three different editions of the book. The one he first remembers reading had:

> 'a picture of a naked, beetle-browed man squatting in front of
> a fire'

<div align="right">(Hoover 1999: 1)</div>

Another:

> 'trumpets Golding's name on a white background in inch-high
> gold and brown letters just below the promotional "Nobel
> Laureate for Literature" (quarter-inch black letters)'; below
> that, in smaller, three-quarter-inch dark green letters, is the

title ... below the title, a stark black stone ax rests in a bunch

of flowers.'

<div align="right">(Hoover 1999: 1)</div>

Finally, he mentions what he considers an 'even more remarkable' cover, namely the

'tan-grey jacket of the first British edition' where:

'below the title and the author's name is a cream-coloured

suggestion of a forest scene with a standing human-stag in

the middle. The stag has large antlers, and its human hands

and feet are clearly visible, as are what seem to be male sex

organs. Parts of its body and the tips of its ears are red, and

its beady eyes are ringed with red. On the spine are a stag's

head and earth-mother figures with large breasts and bellies'.

<div align="right">(Hoover 1999: 1-2)</div>

The influence of the various features of these covers will be even less determinate than

the effects of the epigraph. The first, the picture of the 'naked, beetle-browed man' will

presumably suggest that we access fairly stereotypical contextual assumptions about

'cavemen' or versions of our ancestors. How specific these assumptions are will

depend on how much knowledge an individual reader has about Neanderthal and other

species. Golding himself had read widely on this at the time he wrote the book. In an

interview published in 1970, he said:

'When I wrote *The Inheritors*, I had read about all there was to

read [on archaeology]. In fact, if you found a contradiction

between Neanderthal man as he is now known and

Neanderthal man as I wrote him, my guess is you will find that

it has been discovered since ... I could be caught out on this

one, but I would guess my knowledge of Neanderthal man

was about as wide as it could be for an amateur at that time'.

(Golding reported in Biles 1970: 106-107)

So most readers will be much less well informed than Golding was and there will be

considerable variation from reader to reader. A more important contrast, though, is

between the assumptions that will be accessible to readers who have seen this image

on the cover of the book and those who have not.

The second cover discussed by Hoover draws attention to the credentials of the

author, well-known as he is and now officially recognised as a Nobel Laureate. This will

encourage us to approach the book as a serious, literary work and adjust our

interpretation accordingly. The image of the axe among the flowers suggests notions of

contrast, between nature and human-made tools, beauty and function, and so on.

There is, of course, a two-way relationship here. Our interpretation of the image will

affect our interpretation of the book. At the same time, our interpretation of the book will

affect our interpretation of the image. The more complex imagery on the third example

will have more complex effects. The group of images will themselves raise interpretive

challenges and have a complex interpretation of their own. The interaction between

this and interpretations of the book will also be quite complex.

Analyses of the effects of the cover design may exploit ideas about the

relationship between words and images and multimodality such as those originally

proposed by Barthes (1977) and developed in later work by a number of authors (for

discussion, see Kress 2001 and van Leeuwen 2005).

There is a much wider range of assumptions we might have in mind before

reading texts and which will affect interpretations. Other factors include the book's

physical location in bookshops and its perceived relationship to other texts,

assumptions about the author, about the cultural context, and so on. Explaining these

can be seen as an application of pragmatics focusing on the effects of particular sets of contextual assumptions while inferring meanings from the text.

5.3 Global inferences

Alongside local inferences about specific parts of the book, readers will also make inferences about the book as a whole. A wide range of kinds of inferences are possible, including about the author's intentions in writing it, about the extent to which these have been realised, about its moral or political implications, about any argument it might be seen as making directly or indirectly. Some readers will also make inferences which will not be accessible to many or even any other readers. I might, for example, make inferences about which of my friends will like it. When I read the book, I decided that some people I know would certainly not want to read it because I knew the disturbing aspects would outweigh the positive impact it might have for them. Two notions which seem relevant here are the distinction drawn within Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) between 'implications' and 'implicatures' and the distinction drawn by Furlong (1996) between 'spontaneous' and 'non-spontaneous' interpretations.

Implications are conclusions which follow from one or more premises. Implicatures are the subset of these which are intentionally communicated. Suppose that I know that my friend Robbie is a big fan of the pop group Belle and Sebastian and then a friend of mine who doesn't know Robbie tells me:

(30)   Belle and Sebastian are playing at Brixton Academy this Saturday

Then an implication of (30) is:

(31)   Robbie would like to go to the concert at Brixton Academy this Saturday

This cannot be an implicature because the speaker does not know Robbie or that he likes Belle and Sebastian. Suppose, on the other hand, that the speaker of (30) knows Robbie, knows that he likes Belle and Sebastian and knows that Robbie is about to visit me in London for the weekend. As long as I realise all of these assumptions (and believe that the speaker thinks that I can access them) then (31) will be an implicature of the utterance, i.e. I will decide that the speaker intends to communicate (31) to me. In principle, then, we can divide the conclusions a reader draws into those for which the author is responsible (implicatures) and those which the author could not have envisaged (non-communicated implications). The implicatures are a subset of the implications so all of the implicatures will, of course, also be implications. One way of describing the task of interpreting any utterance is to say that it involves accessing implications of the utterance and deciding which of these implications are also implicatures. Often, the distinction is difficult to draw and this is particularly true of more creative utterances, including literary or other artistic texts.

This distinction can be applied when considering the difference between what is communicated to readers by the author of a text and what is communicated by characters to each other. Clark (1996) points out that what is a mere implication of the utterance of a character or a description of a character's behaviour may simultaneously be an implicature communicated by the author to readers. The distinction can also be relevant when considering literary interpretation since implications may be relevant even when not intended by the author, in both literary and non-literary communication.

Another relevant distinction is the one drawn by Furlong (1996) between 'spontaneous' and 'non-spontaneous' interpretations. A spontaneous interpretation is the kind of interpretation we are likely to arrive at in everyday communication. It involves looking at the evidence provided by an utterance, seeking an interpretation

and stopping when a plausible interpretation has been found. If, for example, you tell me that:

(32) There's a bus strike today.

A typical spontaneous interpretation will lead me to infer perhaps the following range of implicatures and probably not much more:

(33) a. There will be no busses running in town today.

   b. Anyone who is planning to take the bus will need to make another plan

   c. Other modes of transport will be more heavily used.

   d. The kids might be late home from school.

   e. It was helpful to tell me.

Such a range of implicatures is surely enough to support the assumption that your utterance justified the effort involvesd in processing it.

A non-spontaneous interpretation will go further, trying to gather all possible evidence and build as comprehensive an interpretation as possible. A non-spontaneous interpretation in an everyday context might lead to questions about the motives of the speaker, why exactly they might have said this, and so on. Or it might treat the utterance as if it were literary or artistic, imagining it as the first line of a poem or song or story, focusing on the sound qualities, etc. With a literary text, of course, part of the motivation is often to provide the basis for rich literary interpretations. In the case of *The Inheritors*, Golding provides material for very rich interpretive work. Here are just a few possible lines along which a literary interpretation might be developed. Hoover suggests the possibility of developing an economic/Marxist or a feminist

analysis. Fish (1973: 128-129) attributes to Halliday (1971) a Darwinian reading on which the 'inferior' people are being replaced by the 'superior' new people. He suggests that this is arbitrary and that:

> 'Given the evidence, at least as he marshals it, the way seems
>
> equally open to an Edenic rather than a Darwinian reading of
>
> the novel ... The triumph of the "new people" would then be a
>
> disaster, the beginning of the end ....'

<div align="right">(Fish 1973: 128)</div>

In fact, it is not obvious that Halliday is suggesting a 'Darwinian' reading of the novel as a whole. The 'Edenic' reading seems much more salient (for an insightful discussion showing how the text provides evidence for a range of readings, see Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, 2002: 48-98). There is evidence to support the Darwinian reading inasmuch as that the new people are in some senses better adapted than the people., There is stronger evidence for the notion that the arrival of the new people is a tragedy, and not just for the people themselves. Toolan (1990: 15-16) points out that it is possible to argue that both the Darwinian and the Edenic reading 'are supported by the grammatical contrasts Halliday notes'. Hoover (1999: 21-22) echoes this view and points out that Halliday was doubtful about using the linguistic analysis to support an interpretation in the way attributed to him by Fish.

Of course, developing and discussing non-spontaneous interpretations requires considerable time and space. In fact, a sense of completion would be a disappointment. As Furlong suggests, such discussion can be understood as a kind of applied pragmatics, exploring the various kinds of evidence for deriving conclusions and combining them into an overall interpretation.

Discussion of such global inferences considers evidence from many sources, including not only the structure of the plot, the natures of the characters, specific local inferences and other evidence supplied by the text. It might also focus on non-textual

evidence such as information about the author, the historical context, and so on. The next section considers what we can discover about the text by comparing the kinds of inferential processes which different parts of the text give rise to.

5.4   The relevance of inference

One striking aspect of the text which has not been commented on in previous work is a salient difference in the experience of making inferences while reading different passages of the text. This section considers how we interpret four passages and then considers differences among them. The first two passages are from the first section where the third person narrator reflects Lok's mind style. These are the very beginning of the text and the passage where one of the new people fires a poisoned arrow from a bow at Lok. The third is from the section where the narrator has a detached, quasi-scientific point of view. The fourth is the opening of the final section where the point of view shifts to that of the new people. All readers will notice the different points of view of these passages and they have been commented on in much if not all written discussions of the book. What has not been commented on explicitly is the different experience of inferring meanings for each part. One way to begin to explore this is to consider the kinds of intuitions readers have when reading the book.

Perhaps the strongest intuition readers have, reflected in all discussion of the book I have seen, is of the contrast between the experiences of reading the first section (pages 1-216), the second section (pages 216-222) and the third and final section (pages 223-233). The first section is very difficult to process and there is a constant sense of uncertainty about what exactly is happening. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor (1964, 2002) address this when discussing the 'difficulty' of the book. In emphasising the importance of the experience of reading the first section of the book, they refer to our 'intellectual frustration at being confronted with the apparently unintelligible' (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 2002: 49). This experience is also

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addressed by Halliday (1971) when discussing the marked nature of 'Language A' and by Fowler (1977: 103-113) when discussing the difficulties of understanding Lok's mind style. Most discussions of the style of the book focus on the first section which is markedly different from other texts. The second section moves to an objective detached perspective where things are described in a very matter of fact way and we look at Lok from a different, 'neutral', point of view, Section three represents a dramatic shift as the narrator now seems to think 'like us'. The mind style now is unmarked compared to other texts but marked compared to the rest of this book. It is now easy to follow what is happening and my own intuition was of suddenly making a large number of inferences at once. I could 'see' what was going on, could understand the action and the motivations of the new person, Tuami, whose point of view the narration now takes on. I could read more quickly and as I read lots of thoughts raced through my mind, including very disturbing thoughts about how close the new people are to us. This was made more disturbing by the freshness of the tragedy which happened to Lok and the people.

The contrast between these passages is captured to some extent by Halliday's and Hoover's analyses of the language and by Fowler's notion of 'mind style'. But part of the effect can be captured by thinking about the nature of inferential processes when reading the three sections. Just as with jokes and examples such as Bob Dylan's and Tony Snow's utterances in (5) and (6) above, we become more aware of the nature of inferential processes we are making at the different stages of reading. Salient differences in the inferential processes are an important part of our experience of the text and there is more to be said about the three sections than just that there is a different mind style in each case.

There is no space here for a detailed account of the inferential processes at each stage, and there are important passages not mentioned here, but we can get some indication of the differences by adapting Wilson and Sperber's (2004: 616) schematic

outline presented in figure 2 above to provide informal representations of some of the likely inferential processes of readers of the four passages. Figures 4 to 7 present outlines. Rather than focusing on how semantic representations are fleshed out, these represent conclusions readers might be hypothesising at each stage and unresolved questions which remain to be answered. Of course, this is quite an informal methodology but it does suggest something about the nature of the contrasts.

[FIGURES 4 TO 7 HERE]

Sentence just read	Current hypotheses	Unresolved Questions
Lok was running as fast as he could.	*Lok must be a male character in the novel. It's an exotic name. Lok is running as fast as Lok can.*	*What kind of character/creature/person is Lok? Is he an earlier human, e.g. Neanderthal?*
His head was down and he carried his thorn bush horizontally for balance and smacked the drifts of vivid buds aside with his free hand.	*Lok's head is down and he is running using a thorn bush and smacking aside buds. Lok is in a natural environment*	*What is a thorn bush exactly?*
Liku rode him laughing, one hand clutched in the chestnut curls that lay on his neck and down his spine, the other holding the little Oa tucked under his chin.	*Liku is riding on Lok's back. Liku must be a young human. Lok has hair running down his back. Liku is quite skilful if holding on with just one hand.*	*What is an Oa?*
Lok's feet were clever.	*Lok's feet are clever.*	*Is this a metaphor?*
They saw.	*Lok's feet can see. This must be a metaphor.*	*Does it mean more than that he is a skilful runner/athlete?*
They threw him round the displayed roots of the beeches, leapt when a puddle of water lay across the trail.	*Lok's feet are throwing him round beech roots and leaping over puddles.*	*Is this more than a metaphor to say that Lok is a skilful runner?*
Liku beat his belly with her feet.	*Liku beats Lok's belly with her feet.*	
"Faster! Faster!"	*Liku is crying out for Lok to move faster.This is how a twentieth/twenty-first century child might call out like this.*	
His feet stabbed, he swerved and slowed.	*Lok's feet stabbed. Now Lok is the one who swerves and slows rather than his feet.*	*Is this a metaphor for a sudden stop? Is the switch to 'he' as a subject anything other than just moving away from the metaphor?*
Now they could hear the river that lay parallel but hidden to their left	*Lok and Liku can hear the river behind whatever is hiding it to their left. Presumably, it is hidden by trees and/or bushes or other plants.*	
The beeches opened, the bush went away and they were in the little patch of flat mud where the log was.	*The beeches 'open', the bush 'goes away'. They 'are' in the flat patch of mud (rather than they 'stood' or 'moved into').*	*Is this a metaphor for Lok's and Liku's point of view? Is the aim to be cinematic? Is the last clause just a statement or is it suggesting that they have less conscious control over their actions than we'd expect?*
"There, Liku."	*Lok is saying 'there' to Liku.*	*Does this mean 'we are there'? Or something is*

		over there? Or 'look over there'? Or something else?
The onyx marsh water was spread before them, widening into the river.	*The water is onyx coloured. 'Onyx' is quite a sophisticated word to use. The marsh water must be stagnant. They are at a marsh near the beginning of a river.*	
The trail along by the river began again on the other side on ground that rose until it was lost in the trees.	*The trail they have followed carries on up into some trees on the other side of the marsh/river.*	
Lok, grinning happily, took two paces towards the river and stopped.	*Lok is happy to be there but stops after taking two steps forward.*	*Is something wrong?*
The grin faded and his mouth opened till the lower lip hung down.	*Lok's grin fades and his mouth opens and his lip moves down. So it seems something is wrong. Describing his facial movements like this is not unusual but it connects with other earlier choices where the description suggests that Lok's body parts are doing things themselves rather than being controlled by Lok.*	*Does this suggest Lok does not have control over his own mouth?*
Liku slid to his knee then dropped to the ground.	*Liku slides down to Lok's knee and onto the ground.*	
She put the little Oa's head to her mouth and looked over her.	*Liku puts the Oa's head in her mouth and looks over it.*	*Is the Oa a doll?*
Lok laughed uncertainly.	*Lok laughs uncertainly.*	*Is he confused? Is this a nervous laugh? (Since it seems to follow something that isn't funny). Is something disturbing him?*
"The log has gone away."	*Lok says that 'the log has gone away'. Again, an inanimate object is doing something itself. The log not being there is a surprise to Lok.*	*Why isn't it there? Why is this bad? Could someone or something have moved it? Is Lok a bit naive/innocent? Is this ominous? Could something or someone have moved the log? Why doesn't this occur to Lok?*

Figure 4. Schematic outline of hypotheses and questions formed while reading the opening of the novel (Golding 1955: 11-12).

Sentence just read	Current hypotheses	Unresolved Questions
The bushes twitched again.	*The bushes twitched again. Lok thinks of the bushes as moving by themselves. We know one of the new people is moving them, perhaps spying, perhaps planning something worse such as an attack.*	*What kind of creature is looking at Lok? Is Lok in danger?*
Lok steadied by the tree and gazed.	*Lok steadies himself by the tree and gazes across.*	*What will he see? Is it safe just to stand there? Should he hide?*
A head and a chest faced him, half-hidden.	*He can see a head and a chest. We are worrying about what the other person is about to do. Lok is just observing and not thinking about the intentions of the other person.*	*What is the other person going to do? Is he going to attack Lok? Why doesn't Lok run away? Does he not realise the danger?*
There were white bone things behind the leaves and hair.	*Something on the other person's face looks like 'white bone things' to Lok.*	*What are the white bone things? Paint or makeup of some kind?*
The man had white bone things above his eyes and under the mouth so that his face was longer than face should be.	*Something on the other person's face looks like 'white bone things' to Lok and his face looks too long.*	*What are the white bone things? Paint or makeup of some kind? Could the 'bone things' just be his skin? Is his face a different shape from Lok's? Maybe he looks more like us and less like Lok?*
The man turned sideways in the bushes and looked at Lok along his shoulder.	*He has turned sideways and is looking along his shoulder.*	*Why is he looking at Lok like this? Could he be aiming?*
A stick rose upright and there was a lump of bone in the middle.	*A stick appears upright with a lump of bone in the middle of it.*	*Is the other person raising the stick rather than it just raising itself? What is a stick with a lump of bone? Could the bone be a hand? Is it a bow?*
Lok peered at the stick and the lump of bone and the small eyes in the bone things over the face.	*He's seeing a stick with a lump of bone in the middle and eyes.*	*Could the 'lump of bone' be a hand? Holding a bow? Is the other person aiming at Lok?*
Suddenly Lok understood that the man was holding the stick out to him but neither he nor Lok could reach across the river.	*Lok thinks he's reaching to him. But it's more likely he's aiming.*	*Is Lok about to be hit by an arrow?*
He would have laughed if it were not for the echo of the screaming in his head.	*Lok is confused since he finds this comical on its own terms but is disturbed because of his very disturbing recent memory.*	*What exactly is Lok thinking and feeling?*
The stick began to grow shorter at both ends.	*This sounds like a bow would look as the string is pulled back before firing at the person*	*Is an arrow about to be fired at Lok?*

		looking at it (i.e. its target).	
Then it shot out to full length again.	*Definitely what a bow would do if fired.*	*Has an arrow been fired?*
The dead tree by Lok's ear acquired a voice.	*A noise from the tree. Again, typically of Lok, described as if the tree were alive.*	*Did the arrow hit the tree?*
"Clop!"	*Sounds like an arrow from the bow hitting the tree. Interesting that it's told as if there were gaps between discrete events, as if it were all happening slower than it would. It's worrying that Lok doesn't understand what's happening.*	*Did the arrow hit the tree? Is Lok about to die?*
His ears twitched and he turned to the tree.	*Again his ears twitch as if separate entities. Lok is in great danger but doesn't seem to realise it.*	*Why doesn't he react more urgently? Does he not understand what's happening? Is he about to die?*
By his face there had grown a twig: a twig that smelt of other, and of goose, and of the bitter berries that Lok's stomach told him he must not eat.	*This must be Lok's point of view. He thinks a twig has grown in the tree very quickly. It's 'by his face' so it must have only just missed him. The smells suggest goose and poisonous berries.*	*Is this a poisonous arrow?*
This twig had a white bone at the end.	*This bone must be some kind of arrowhead.*	*What is the other person doing? Will he fire the bow again?*
There were hooks in the bone and sticky brown stuff hung in the crooks.	*The hooks must be there to make it hard to remove from its target. The sticky stuff must be poison. Lok has had a narrow escape!*	
His nose examined this stuff and did not like it.	*Again his nose acts separately from him. It doesn't like it, which means it smells bad.*	
He smelled along the shaft of the twig.	*He is smelling it. Now Lok is acting. But he is investigating instead of realising the urgency of what is going on and acting on it.*	
The leaves on the twig were red feathers and reminded him of goose.	*The arrow must have goose feathers on it as flights. These people make tools in a more 'advanced' or sophisticated way than the people do.*	
He was lost in a generalised astonishment and excitement.	*Lok is absolutely amazed because this is not like anything he's ever seen. He does not understand that the other person is trying to kill him.*	*What will happen? Is Lok too innocent to survive meeting the new people?*

Figure 5. Schematic outline of hypotheses and questions formed while reading the 'bow and arrow' passage (Golding 1955: 106)

Sentence just read	Current hypotheses	Unresolved Questions
The red creature stood on the edge of the terrace and did nothing.	*'The red creature' must be Lok. We've switched to a fully third person point of view. Lok is standing on the edge of the terrace.*	*None.*
The hollow log was a dark spot on the water towards the place where the sun had gone down.	*The hollow log is off towards the sunset.*	
The air in the gap was clear and blue and calm.	*The air is clear, blue and calm.*	
There was no noise at all now except for the fall, for there was no wind and the green sky was clear.	*The only noise is the fall. It's windless and a clear night.*	
The red creature turned to the right and trotted slowly towards the far end of the terrace.	*Lok turns and 'trots' to the far end of the terrace. 'trots' suggests movement like an animal.*	
Water was cascading down the rocks beyond the terrace from the melting ice in the mountains.	*The ice in the mountains is melting down the rocks beyond the terrace.*	
The river was high and flat and drowned the edge of the terrace.	*The river is high and flat completely covering the edge of the terrace.*	
There were long scars in the earth and rock where the branches of a tree had been dragged past by the water.	*The earth and rock have been scratched by a tree being dragged past by the water.*	
The red creature came trotting back to a dark hollow in the side of the cliff where there was evidence of occupation.	*Lok is trotting back to the hollow in the cliff. This narrator acts as if knowing nothing about what has happened before.*	

Figure 6. Schematic outline of hypotheses and questions formed while reading the opening of the 'detached narrator' section of the novel (Golding 1955: 216-217)

Sentence just read	Current hypotheses	Unresolved Questions
Tuami sat in the stern of the dug-out, the steering paddle under his left arm.	*Tuami is sitting in his boat steering. He uses technical terms.*	*None.*
There was plenty of light and the patches of salt no longer looked like holes in the skin sail.	*It's quite light and he notices how the salt on the sail looks different now. He understands what he's seeing clearly and knows the difference between appearances and reality.*	
He thought bitterly of the great square sail they had left bundled up in that last mad hour among the mountains; for with that and the breeze through the gap he need not have endured these hours of strain.	*He's annoyed that they left a useful sail behind which would have made things much easier.* *Tuami thinks like us.*	
He need not have sat all night wondering whether the current would beat the wind and bear them back to the fall while the people or as many as were left of them slept their collapsed sleep.	*He is thinking about what it was like to struggle with the wind against the current all night and how much easier it would have been with the other sail.* *He doesn't know how many of the people there are left.*	
Still, they had moved on, the walls of rock folding back until this lake became so broad that he had been able to find no transits for judging their motion but sat, guessing, with the mountains looming over the flat water and his eyes red with the tears of strain.	*He thinks back over what happened. He describes the rock 'folding back; and the lake 'becoming broad', similar to Lok's way of thinking of inanimates as acting, but this time it is metaphor rather than literal.*	
Now he stirred a little for the rounded bilge was hard and the pad of leather that many steersmen had moulded to a comfortable seat was lost on the slope up from the forest.	*Again he's acting and thinking about what he's doing. And thinking about the history of the leather seat. And using more technical terms. These people must travel by water often.*	
He could feel the slight pressure transmitted to his forearm along the loom of the paddle and knew that if he were to trail his hand over the side the water would tinkle against the palm and heap up over his wrist.	*Thinking about what he's doing and what would happen if he put his arm in the water. This passage is much easier than the other passages and shows that he thinks like us.*	

Figure 7. Schematic outline of hypotheses and questions formed while reading the opening of the final section of the novel (Golding 1955: 233)

The most obvious difference is that the first two passages leave a number of questions unresolved for readers. As we read, we notice a number of things we don't yet know and we have to keep these questions in mind as we read on. This places a significant cognitive burden on the reader. There are no obvious unresolved questions raised by the passages from the second and third sections represented in Figures 6 and 7. This means that readers will find it easier to process the passages and that they will be more readily able to make further inferences about the passages. These two sections also answer some of the earlier questions. The detached narrator in the second section describes Lok as 'the red creature' and describes his movement as 'trotting'. This fits with the hypothesis that he is a Neanderthal as well as encouraging us to think of him as animal-like. There is an interesting contrast between this external view and the more internal view we had when we shared Lok's perspective in the first section. There is also something emotive about simultaneously a 'red creature' from a detached point of view and being able to empathise with him.

The more dramatic effect of the final section comes from the shift to the mind style of the new people and of Tuami in particular. As well as being able to process quickly, we now move into the perspective of the new people and, of course, we feel quite at home with this point of view. We are able quickly to follow what is going on while simultaneously thinking about what Tuami is thinking, about what has happened in the rest of the book from the point of view of the new people, about the fact that these are a variety of homo sapiens and so closer to ourselves, about the implicatures this generates about our own nature and our impact on the world, and so on. This section also ties in with global inferences about the overall interpretation of the book, including about our nature and about evil, and about how 'progress' and evolutionary 'success' are connected with evil. There is an interesting contrast between a positive sense of being 'liberated' as processing becomes easier and negative implicatures about our nature and our effect on the world. The overall effect is that the experience of

reading the final section is dramatic, exciting and disturbing. All of this is partly captured by referring to linguistic differences and to mind style. But a recognition of the sudden ease and speed of inferential processes helps to explain important aspects of our experience of reading the book. In particular, it helps to capture what Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor have in mind when they say that Golding is not aiming just to tell us about what is happening in the story but wants to actually manipulate our experience as well. Finally, focusing on specific inferences helps us to understand how Halliday's identification of lack of linguistic agency goes alongside inferences about lack of agency which we derive from the meaning of what is said. This is a more specific way of confirming that the linguistic facts are relevant to our interpretation of the book.

6   Conclusion

Clearly, we cannot understand a text without making inferences and so in principle stylistic analyses should always consider the inferences made by audiences. But there are practical considerations which make it tempting to put this part of an analysis to one side and so risk missing important facts about texts and their interpretations. This paper has considered some of the ways in which an account of inferential processes can contribute to stylistic analysis. While it is not practical to attempt to describe and explain the details of every inferential process involved in understanding a text, there is a lot be discovered by exploring inferential processes and there are cases where the nature of the inferential processes is itself salient and contributes to readers' interpretations and experience of the text.

Notes

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