Language, Literature and Binocular Interdisciplinarity: On Negation in Homer

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues a strong form of the proposition that linguistics and literary criticism, literary and non-literary texts should be combined so closely that the outcome will produce new understanding. It distinguishes between weak forms of interdisciplinarity in common practice, and two more powerful forms: metadisciplinarity, which is inclusive and transcends boundaries, and binocular interdisciplinarity, which uses the analogy with binocular vision where recognition of difference produces perception of depth in space and time. It will show that linguistic analysis on its own provides an inadequate account of language, and conversely that literary interpretations are inherently superficial without being anchored in a comprehensive knowledge of language and social systems. The paper sets the challenge of developing this productive relationship into the metadisciplinary framework of social semiotics. The argument is developed through analysing language and meaning in Homer, starting from the role of negation in the famous Cyclops story in the Odyssey. Under linguistic, literary and semiotic analysis, including postcolonial perspectives, multiple contexts of negation connect with profound meanings of the episode, and with Homer's significance as a world-historical figure in western civilization.

Key Words: Interdisciplinarity: binocular interdisciplinarity: Linguistics and Literature: Social Semiotics: Negation: Homer's Cyclops story.

1. Introduction

This paper was prepared for a specific occasion full of particular meanings, all interesting and important enough in their own right to deserve to be brought into prominence in this text they inspired. The conference was held online, like most conferences in 2020, a year dominated by impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The combination of the plague and solutions from emerging information technology allowed a new kind of international event, in which minds could interact and collaborate from dispersed global sites.

I was physically located in Sydney, Australia. I would have dearly loved to be present in Turkey, a place that has long fascinated me, which I have not visited often enough, but circumstances prevented it. The theme also attracted me. Throughout my long academic life I have tried to draw on and bring together the two great disciplines, literary studies and linguistics/semiotics, which this conference sponsors.

I am committed to this union, but more aware than many other scholars of the difficulties of making it happen. One is raised by the key term in the conference and the journal: 'Englishers'. English is currently accepted as a global language, and that fact has allowed contributions to shared themes from fluent readers and speakers of English across their main countries of origin (e.g. Turkey and Pakistan, co-sponsors of the conference, and India others from this region). That fact only makes me more aware of the politics and practices of the different languages of the world's peoples and literatures.

As linguist I briefly note some implications of this key word, 'Englisher'. On the surface it seems to announce allegiance to its referent, 'English', the language or people. However, as native speakers of English know as part of their competence in English, this is not an English word. It is formed by normal processes from a regular English word. 'Er' as suffix has the meaning of agency, as in 'baker', 'fighter', 'speaker.' But this word is a neologism, a confident appropriation of the English language by non-native English speakers. As a speech act it subtly declares the power and rights of non-native English speakers over the ostensible masters of the language. It expresses not subservience but power.

I espouse complexity theory (Hodge, 2017) in terms of which reducing complexity may make problems more intractable, while conversely working non-reductively with complexity may allow it to be better managed. In this case adding literature and linguistics together seems to create even greater complexity. However, in this paper I argue that that greater complexity allows us to find satisfactory solutions to what previously seemed to be insoluble problems.

Bringing disciplines together is often called 'interdisciplinarity'. I use the outcomes of this article as materials for reflecting more generally on the nature, uses and limitations of kinds of interdisciplinarity. Good theory always arises from intensive particular analysis, so I chose one text, from the famous literary work, Homer's *Odyssey,* in 10th century BP Ionic Greek. Homer's 'greatness' is conveniently beyond dispute. In a grand history of European culture Homer's work is seen as revolutionary, positioned between oral literature and culture, and written forms that define the literary canon. It is also a landmark text for linguistics, a complete text from an early stage in the spoken Greek language, like a time-capsule produced by a technology that would not exist for another 2500 years.

Homer's text is claimed as a universal work in world literature, and it does indeed have very high status. However, Homer had a specific time and place which are also part of his meanings. He was probably a poet from an early stage of Turkey, after this part became a Greek colony, long before it became Turkey. He wrote in the language of the Greek invaders of this region, to report or celebrate an otherwise obscure historical event which took place in Troy, whose now recovered site, Hisarlik, is a major historical site in Turkey.

Over thousands of years invaders have come and gone, but this is a lost part of the long history of colonization and resistance that constituted ancient and modern Turkey. Homer and his Greeks were colonizers, and a 'post-colonial' perspective has a role in understanding what is claimed as a masterpiece of 'Western' literature. Many layers of history have come between to complicate patterns of identity and allegiance, but there is still a salutary point to make by claiming, with many qualifications, that Homer's poems are among other things long-lost masterpieces of Turkish literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Interdisciplinarity

In the arrangement of disciplines as they exist in 'Western' academia today, bringing together literature and linguistics would be seen as 'interdisciplinary'. In this article I reflect more deeply on this over-used and misunderstood word and concept, in itself and in different forms that can illuminate the 'Englishers' project.

There is an *Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Frodeman *et al.* 2017), evidence that Interdisciplinarity is respectable. In their overview, these authors note a success story: interdisciplinarity is increasing in traditional disciplines, with a wider international presence and more funding. But Abbott (2001) reviewed 50 years of interdisciplinary studies in USA and found that interdisciplinarity was mainly rhetorical. The institutional organization into disciplines maintained the iron grip of disciplinarity through curriculum, staffing and funding. This is slowly shifting, as the Oxford author's note, but mainly due to external pressures. Theories, Abbott claims, are still mainly produced from inside disciplines.

This situation varies in different fields. Stephen Fuller, from the interdisciplinary field of Science and Technology Studies, claims that Interdisciplinarity is the primary motivator of epistemic change (2004). Jacobs and Frickel (2011) report on one indicator of interdisciplinarity, the presence of the word in titles of articles or books. They find Education and Medicine at the top of this list, with more than 4% of titles containing the word. Literature, linguistics and philosophy all make the top 25 disciplines, but at the bottom. Philosophy comes in at 25th with 1.8%.

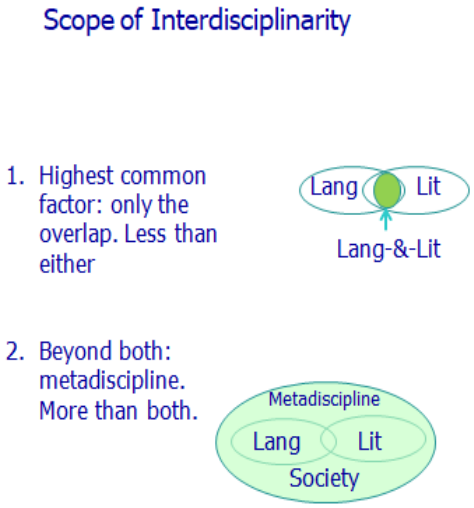
A study by Paolo Dini and colleagues illustrates the complex dynamics of interdisciplinarity today (2011). The team mounted a consciously interdisciplinary project, encouraged by an international funding body, a wide-spread tendency as Frodeman et al (2017) noted. They found that their team worked well towards their common external goal, but that it was 'impossible to develop a unified interdisciplinary framework due to irreconcilable epistemological differences' (Dini, 2011, p. 3).

2.2 A General Model of Interdisciplinarity

Against this background I drill down into the term, in itself and as it applies to possible relationships between literature and linguistics. 'Inter-'in 'interdisciplinary' indicates some spatial relationship between more than one 'discipline'. The spatial relationship it invokes can take very different forms, with major implications for theory and practice. A Venn diagram illustrates the different logics for two main options (figure 1).

Figure 1

Types of Interdisciplinarity



Option 1 represents the most common form of interdisciplinarity, in a disciplinary regime where most of the field of language is covered by its designated discipline, linguistics, as is literature with its own subject matter. The intersection between them is smaller than either, an optional extra. This is Abbott's form of interdisciplinarity, and the model shows why it is so superficial. It is a rhetorical feature, for disciplines that do not need any other discipline to produce knowledge about its object. This is the situation with departments which include two names and often more, purely as an administrative arrangement.

Option 2 models another kind of interdisciplinarity. It is inclusive. Everything in the two is covered, and more. I call this a 'meta'-discipline because it is above individual disciplines, and reflects on them. It has the rigor and coherence expected of a discipline, but over a wider

range. It could be a meta-discipline for only two disciplines, e.g. linguistics and literature, but in practice it is likely to include more than one, because from this vantage point boundaries around each discipline are likely to seem arbitrary. The contexts of both are likely to include history, society and politics in an essential relationship.

2.3. Binocular Interdisciplinarity

Metadisciplinary interdisciplinarity is rare because it is so demanding. I outline a third kind of interdisciplinarity here, narrower than metadisciplinarity but more rigorous and productive. It is based on the physiological phenomenon of binocular vision, so I call it binocular interdisciplinarity. I recommend it as a powerful way to produce radical new insights out of a conjunction of two – no more and no less than two – disciplines or approaches.

Binocular vision is a remarkable property of human vision, shared by only a small number of other species, including primates and some birds. The definitive work on it, by Bela Julesz (1971) intriguingly makes a connection with Homer across different disciplines, science and literature. Julesz took the already-known phenomenon of depth perception made possible by the coordinated use of two eyes, and noted that neither single eye could perceive depth. Only the imagined single eye deep inside the brain sees depth. The unity of that eye negated that difference yet never removed it.

Julesz named this powerful integrating eye after Homer's famous one-eyed Cyclops. He was inspired by this ancient myth yet rewrote it. One-eyed Cyclops is usually seen as less than human. For Julesz he represents a highly-developed human capacity. Julesz' account of how binocular vision works is up-to-date modern science. In the image we see how the two eyes receive two different images from the same reality. The brain brings them together in a single cyclopean image, whose illusion of depth comes from the effort the brain registers in bringing them together.

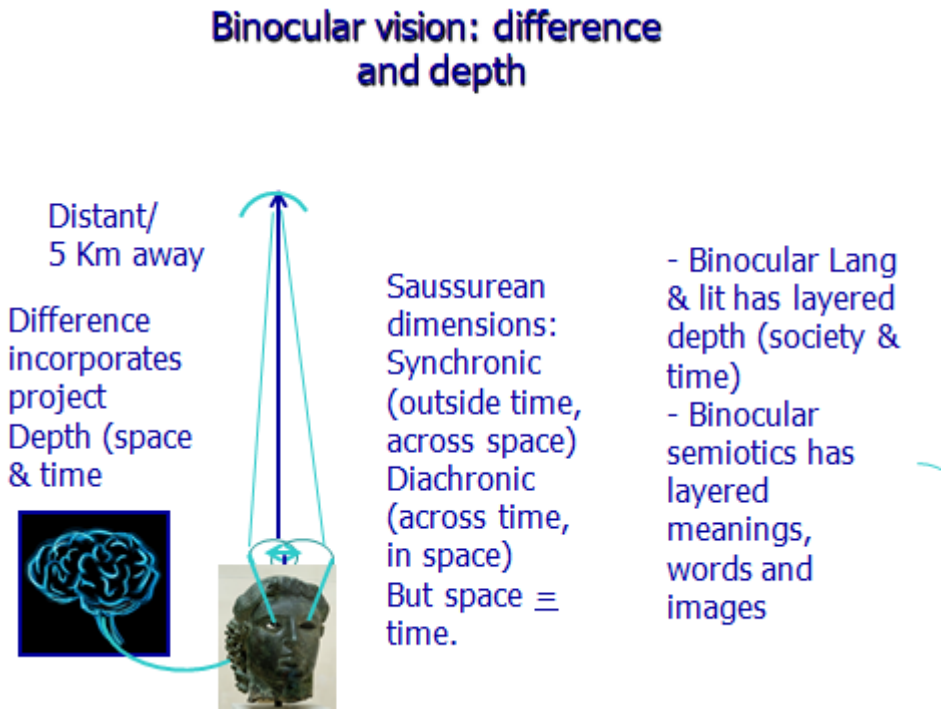
This can be represented mathematically by the isosceles triangle whose base is the line between the two eyes. For instance the eyes of Odysseus an experienced sailor in this instance can 'see' that the object on the horizon is 5 kilometres away. The same mathematics used in astronomy was known as parallax, geometry still used by modern astronomers to estimate the distance of the sun and moon from earth.

The same mathematics can be used for time, to determine depths in time in similar ways. One fathers of modern structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), proposed an absolute distinction between what he called the 'synchronic' plane, relations in space understood as prevailing in a single time, and the 'diachronic' plane, relations across time in a given space.

Saussure influentially proposed that the two planes were incommensurable, so that descriptions of systems were incompatible with descriptions of their history. This tendency can be seen in both linguistics and literature. Literary studies in Anglo-American academia tended to split into two warring traditions, close readings, especially of contemporary works ('new criticism') versus literary history. In linguistics the previously dominant diachronic tradition, 'philology', was substantially replaced by synchronic linguistic theories (Chomsky, 1957; Halliday, 1985).

Figure 2

The binocular model and interdisciplinarity



Many scholars now recognise the dangers and limitations of too strong a turn away from diachrony. Likewise modern science since Einstein recognises that space and time interact to

form a single space-time continuum, in which neither dimension can be studied in isolation. One solution in terms of the binocular model would be to see these two perspectives, synchronic and diachronic, as like the action of two eyes, integrated by the cyclops eye of theory to produce new deeper understanding.

The model can be applied to other perspectives. One is the critical approach of post colonialism. Conference participants come mainly from former colonies (e.g. British India and Pakistan, Turkey as a nation that broke away from the Ottoman Empire). Different perspectives from above (from the powerful, the colonizers) and below (descendants of the colonized), can be brought together as a single 3-dimensional object visible to a Cyclopean gaze in space-time.

I have represented the binocular option as single and fixed. This focus is undoubtedly important and productive. But just as Odysseus could fix on a number of distant objects with his binocular gaze, scholars can combine different kinds of gaze, objects at different depths to build up a more solid space or time, or different politics of the same complex object, such as a critical and appreciative understanding of the same poem or poet. Some of the greatest writers, such as Shakespeare and Homer, can be ambiguous.

2.4 Practicing Binocular Interdisciplinarity: Auerbach

In this section I illustrate binocular perception in practice by examining the work of a particular theorist. Erich Auerbach (1892-1957)'s masterpiece, Mimesis, (1953), occupies a significant place in the history of relationships between linguistics and literature. Auerbach called his discipline 'philology,' (literally 'loving words') but this discipline had two branches which separated over time. As practised by Saussure (1983) philology was primarily historical linguistics, but it also studied texts, literary and other, in many languages, mainly European, modern and classical.

When Auerbach was writing, philology had already come apart at this seam. A few fine scholars, like Leo Spitzer (1946) and Auerbach himself, tried to hold them together, as a single binocular but fissured discipline. For most linguists connections with literature became irrelevant. Interdisciplinary reconnections with literature became a low priority, as did

linguistic connections for literary scholars. Auerbach's achievement now seems old-fashioned, looking back to a vanished disciplinary form.

Mimesis contains influential comments on Homer, which exemplify his literary/linguistic method and provide useful background to my own study. Homer played a pivotal role in Auerbach's book, mainly in its foundational first chapter, where he laid out two traditions within European literature and culture.

Auerbach foregrounds Homer's kind of realism, illustrated with an apparently minor episode which describes Odysseus' scar, revealed when he is bathed by his old nurse. He analyzed the syntax to argue that in Homer there are multiple connections but they are all on the surface. He then contrasts this with the Bible story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, which he uses linguistic analysis again to suggest that this is a world with vague surface but infinite depths.
I now switch the metaphor to apply to another domain, politics and literature. I begin was basic facts about Auerbach. Auerbach was Jewish, born in Berlin in 1892, expelled in 1935 as a result of Nazi anti-Semitism. A final fact seemingly less important, connects him to Turkey where he stayed for 11 years as Professor of Philology. His masterpiece was 'Written in Istanbul between May 1942 and April 1945' as he declares in his frontispiece.

His Jewish identity at first may seem irrelevant. *Mimesis* could be seen as a grand narrative of European identity, the 'European civilization' whose superiority to all others has been presented by postcolonial ideologues the Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1979) called 'Orientalists' as the justification of their inherent right to rule Oriental others, including Semitics, Asians and Africans.

Said's work has become a foundational work for postcolonial theory. In a similar vein the Jewish scholar Martin Bernal (1987) argued that the whole European philological tradition was a racist enterprise, designed to manufacture European superiority and denigrate non-European contributions to the development of Western culture.

Auerbach's case about Homer versus the Bible is positioned differently against what these other scholars claim is the dominant narrative. He establishes two sources at the origin of Western civilization, Indo-European Greek Homer and the Semitic Bible. He seems to praise Homer as a great writer, but his syntactic analysis demonstrates that Homer is totally

superficial, with no depth, while the Semitic masterpiece is all depth with very little surface. If we compare his position on this point we see it is inverse orientalism.

Auerbach's case is subtle but devastating. Part of the complexity comes from his range, insightful commentaries on literature in six European languages, Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, and English. As a linguist he is impressively multilingual, an ideal reader of the European tradition with a rare linguistic competence across the languages which divide the notional 'Europe' as an ideological force before the formation of the 'European Union'. This German Jew celebrated this ideal through his scholarship at the very moment the Nazis were demonstrating the fatal flaw in that ideal, committing genocide against his own people. Yet these two lines of sight, Auerbach as European and Jew, were conditions of his binocular vision. He insisted on their absolute difference at the beginning of the creation of European civilization. This difference had to be absolute in order to subtend so long a history, in a present where as he know only too well they had not converged, but grown dangerously further apart.

This makes the role and meaning of Turkey potentially significant as the place this German Jewish exile felt enabled to write this book. During this time Turkey was a secular Muslim society, neutral in the World War, without the financial resources or prestige of Germany, his country of origin, nor USA, his home for his last decade. These material facts are not in doubt, but their meanings are. In terms of a binocular theory, Turkey's role as unifying cyclopean eye where Auerbach was more free to see the point of convergence of the two pairs of perspectives, political and disciplinary.

2.5 Metadisciplinarity

In this article I am concerned with issues of method, especially the value of combining linguistic and literary perspectives and data as an immensely powerful tool for research and practice today. I mainly emphasise binocular interdisciplinarity but metadisciplinarity has an indispensable role in providing a broader context.

Auerbach chose Homer for his epochal importance, in relation to a kind of Hegelian theory of history that is now unfashionable, especially in English-speaking traditions. Marx criticized Hegel's causal theory, that ideas drive history, instead insisting that material developments

drive ideas, but he saw the same pattern, where one form was followed by its negation, and that negation was then itself negated. However, this negation of the negation was not reducible to the original form. Hegel's influential term was *aufheben,* which is often translated as 'transcendence'.

Hegel was a philosopher whose work influenced European philosophy and linguistics, but was strongly resisted in Anglo-American traditions, especially in linguistics. But linguistics needs a concept on the scale of 'epochal'. Otherwise it will not be able to conceive of and analyse something of this importance. Disciplines which cannot comprehend objects are dangerously likely to say they do not exist, or do not matter.

The broad point is not in doubt: Homer composed his masterpieces in the interface between traditional oral culture and cultures of writing. 19th century criticism was aware of this relation, but it had no framework to make sense of the fact. Only in the mid-20th century did the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord (1960) revolutionise the modern understanding of Homer by using ethnography to demonstrate that many distinctive forms of his work were based on oral techniques. Auerbach probably did not know this work as he was writing Mimesis, but it puts Homer at the interface between oral and literate cultures that can be seen to be the foundation of modern culture, as McLuhan (1964) later influentially claimed will be the effect of modern media.

Homer's epic is an achievement on a scale previously impossible for oral cultures. Homer's fame can be taken as evidence of a social-literary-cultural fact: Homer not only represented this epochal triumph of literary over oral modes, in some measure he made it happen. In studying Homer's texts we can glimpse a giant player at work in this epochal change.

But on closer inspection it turns out that Homer's relationship to these earlier stages was complex, and it is too simplistic to take a simple side against one or other of them. I begin from some recognized facts of Homer's literary context. As has long been agreed, as the Parry-Lord thesis argues even more strongly, Homer's epics draw on prior materials, many of them obviously from oral sources, typical myths then as now. The Cyclops story has long been recognized as the re-working of a myth that has analogues in 'primitive' cultures in Africa and the Middle-east, including in territories occupied then by pre-Turkish people.

In these terms, Homer's work is made up of earlier stages of language and culture overlaid by later forms from different stages or epochs. The layers are not simply ordered as earlier and later, as is the case with every text, since all texts have intertextual relationships with many prior texts. Homer's diachronic boundary crosses different epochs that are fundamental in many theories of the grand history of civilization.

A Parry-Lord reading of Homer recovered an earlier stage of Western culture, a 'primitive' stage that was superseded everywhere, but which everywhere also remained, usually as the language and culture of a conquered people. This makes it a typical object of analysis for a postcolonial approach. Homer is both premodern yet also fully modern. The diachronic depth of his text is not less than that of later texts but more. Auerbach was precisely wrong in denying Homer this kind of depth.

The complex interplay between Homer's status as the poet of epochal change and the continuing role of Orientalism can be seen in a major work from Turkish literature, the Epic translated by Geoffrey Lewis (1974) as 'The Book of Dede Korkut'. Something similar to the Cyclops story in chapter 8, 'How Beast killed Goggle Eye'. The introduction notes the connection with Homer's story and assumes that the Korkut author borrowed it, not recognizing that Homer himself obviously borrowed it from traditional sources, which may have continued in oral traditions over a thousand years, as Parry and Milman found with Albanian traditions.

In another example of Orientalism, the back cover proclaims, to its English-speaking readers: 'The stories are peopled by characters as bizarre as they are unforgettable'. This presents the characters as figures of fun, but fascinating. This is the classic double face of Orientalism, as Said describes it. The merits of the others have to be denied, in the present as in the past, before the fascination with their culture can be safely acknowledged.

2.7 Disciplinarity and Progress

In this analysis I adapt Auerbach's philological method, because it demonstrates the merits of earlier strategies for analysing the interdisciplinary interplay between linguistic and literary approaches which are not available to the current monodisciplinary dispensation which separates them too greatly. But I do not seek to set the clock back. There are important

developments in both literary and linguistics to be incorporated in a new interdisciplinary form of study.

According to the binocular principle, differences are not brushed over. It is only by recognizing the irreducible importance of differences can this unitary yet hybrid approach reveal otherwise unsuspected depths, which can then illuminate both Literature and Linguistics, including in very modern forms, such as the novels of Margaret Attwood and classroom pedagogy, both topics for presentations in the conference.

Linguistics after Auerbach has advanced in some ways, as it has gone backwards in others. That is a common feature of disciplinary progress after 'revolutions' which reject some of their past as they stake out new avenues for their future.

Chomsky's revolution (1957) emphasised structures over contexts, meanings and functions. I mention four main theories which challenged and reversed the limitations of mainstream linguistics in Chomsky's mode. As Halliday's Systemic Functional theory (1985) insisted, language should be analysed for its use in context, where many structures could have the same function, and many functions could be realized through the same structure. As Critical Discourse Analysis, (Hodge & Kress 1993; Fairclough, 1989) and Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff, 2004) recognized, political functions operate in language use in all domains, public and private. As Social Semiotics proposed (Hodge & Kress 1988; Hodge 2017) all these processes are multimodal, occurring across all forms, on all scales.

Literary works provide contexts for language in use which are not usually available in a rich form in the data compiled by field linguists. Homer provides us with enough information for us to be able to say more about the two main individuals whose interaction frames the exchange and provides its social meanings. Odysseus is a minor aristocrat in a rigid society with weak social rules. He is part of a raiding party which at this point in the story has successfully destroyed another community, the Greek-speaking Trojans from the same loosely organized group, who themselves had established their rule over an area occupied by indigenous inhabitants who have apparently been dispossessed, though neither Odysseus not anyone in the poem mentions the fact.

Homer makes it clear that Cyclops and his people have a simpler form of society and technology. Odysseus' raid, then, is the same kind of political action as the original Greek invasion of their fellow Greeks in Troy, who hold their territory purely by force. Polyphemus speaks Greek, though not as well as Odysseus. Indeed, that is to be a major plot point. The details of who is invading whom are not always clear, but the overall picture is highly recognizable. Small states invade territories belonging to others. Sometimes Greeks set up colonies, as others did at this time: Egyptians, Phoenicians, Persians, Assyrians then, Romans later. Later European powers used these processes and even inherited the language.

The specificities of Homer's unusually rich and realistic picture allow us to do justice to the complexity of the similarities and differences across this time and space. Homer's context in this story is unique and strange, yet it is also a recognizable form of colonial processes. What is called 'postcolonial theory' is a relevant body of theory to add to literary/linguistic approaches, as a binocular probe within in a metadisciplinary political, historical and cultural toolkit.

3. Methodology

3.1 Negation

Negation is a fundamental feature of every language, so it should be and is treated in every grammar and theory of language. Literary scholars should be able to refer to linguists on this theme wherever it seems to play a significant literary role, as it does in Homer, or in English literature, as in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (s. 1.1, p. 87-93) where the plot is driven by Lear's daughter's refusal to withdraw her controversial negative, or (s. 5.3.8) where Lear repeats 'no' four times, to intensify it not or (s. 5.3, p. 306) where he repeats 'never' for an unprecedented five times.

No literary commentary I have read on either of these famous passages has referred to any grammar or linguistic resource. Nor do linguistic commentaries usually deal with the complexity of literary examples like these two, though their authors are so famous in their respective languages. The separation between linguistics and literary studies is so advanced because it is taken for granted, not because there is conscious ill-will between them.

In what follows I move between the different levels where negation is a major theme. It is too large a topic for me to attempt a comprehensive synthesis. My main point in this article is that understanding how negation works outside language is essential to understanding how it works in language, and vice versa. This is part of my methodological argument: that binocular interdisciplinarity between literature and linguistics is able to see an object which is essential for both, yet cannot be seen by either on its own.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Orientalism and the Dialectic as Negation

There are rich reflections on negation outside linguistics which could be incorporated into Linguistics, just as the linguistics of negation could affect theories of negation. From philosophy comes Hegel's theory of the dialectic, a theory of Thought and its double negation as a theory of history (2000).

Hegel's theory makes an original claim about negation in general that could apply to every level of thought and language, including the sentence level that linguistics tends to concentrate on. It proposes that a negation of a negation does not always return to the original affirmation. It can produce something that transcends the original affirmation, something that is both true and not true in a different dimension.

We can see many similar processes of negation below Hegel's epochal level and above the sentence level of linguistics. All these interact with each other and are manifested in linguistic forms, and can and should be included in a multiscale theory (Hodge, 2017).

For instance the stratagems of Orientalism as described by Said (1979) and Bernal (1987) work through a series of partial negations. High cultures, such as Egyptian, Middle-eastern, Chinese or Indian are affirmed, but their origin with colonized people, present-day Egyptians etc., are negated, and their value appropriated, so that they do not reflect value on the colonized, who are represented as unworthy, even uncomprehending of their true meanings until these are explained by experts from the West: exoticised and paradoxically deployed to aggrandize the culture and right to rule of colonial rulers.

One feature of this process as analyzed by Said needs a theory like the present theory of negation. In his account, Orientalists typically denigrate the capacities of 'natives' but celebrate their culture, once it has been appropriated. The 'marvels' or 'mysteries' of the Orient are objects of fascination once they have been safely appropriated. We saw the process in a clear form at the linguistic level in the Orientalizing translation of *The Book of Dede Korkut,* which in two parts of the same sentence mocks its 'bizarre' characters while claiming they are 'unforgettable' (1973).

We can see traces of the same process in Homer's treatment of the Cyclops. Odysseus treats them as primitive, uncivilized, worthy of being tricked and robbed by Odysseus as a representative of a more advanced, more civilized people, the Greeks. But this is how British, French and other European colonizing powers treated the advanced nations of 'the Orient', despising them while robbing them of their culture and possessions. The Cyclops represent the whole class of victims of Greek rape, pillage and colonization.

In spite of turning Polyphemus into a monster, Homer provides traces of the opposite position. He transmits his name accurately from the tradition. It means 'wide in fame, very famous'. Homer adds the information that he is son of a God, Poseidon. Homer does not remove either of these parts of the tradition but he negates them as far as he can.

In spite of negating Poseidon's divine status (which signifies greater importance than Odysseus' own) it remains structural in the plot. Odysseus's many troubles are attributed to the offence he gave Poseidon, mainly from the Cyclops affair. To use a term from Freud's influential theories, Homer as ideologue of Greek colonizers faces 'the return of the repressed' (1925).

This position adds another layer of complexity to the role of negation, in politics as in discourse. Attempts at removing people or ideas are not guaranteed to be as successful as the powerful intend and wish, as Said's critical work implies. Not only is resistance and deflection always possible, but the dominance of the dominant can be challenged later as well as sooner.

Such traces of respect and even reverence for the abused Cyclops preserved in Homer's text are the rule in postcolonial experience. Outside this passage of Homer, the Cyclops, whoever

they were, had a positive image in myth. For instance, the Cyclops played a notable role in the Olympian War in Heaven against the supporters of Cronus, the former king. The monumental walls built by Mycenaean Greeks to fortify the Acropolis were called ‘Cyclopean’ by the classical Athenians, honouring a technology and level of civilization they knew they had lost.

4.2 Negation in Linguistics

I will apply these ideas to linguistics, to create a stronger more flexible and connected theory of negation. Here the key work is the magisterial *Natural history of negation* (1989) by metadisciplinary linguist Laurence Horn. As linguist Horn spanned mainstream theoretical linguistics and sociolinguistics, and brought both together in his synthesis. He also spanned the diverse philosophical tradition, including some of the authors I discussed above: Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Freud.

Linguistics since the 1960s has been dominated by Noam Chomsky (1957), who saw negation as an operation or transformation which could be applied many times affecting the truth value (Klima, 1964). Jackendoff (1969) adopted this model, but emphasized that this was a meaningful operation on meaning. The 1995 Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar repeats this limited model of negation: 'The grammatical process by which the truth of an *Affirmative* clause or sentence is denied' (Chalker & Weiner, 1995, p. 254). In this definition negation is only a grammatical process, limited to only a few specific words, acting only on clauses or sentences.

In the Systemic-Functional tradition Halliday (1985) emphasized the social function of negation, and saw it as part of the system of modality. Modality as a term comes from earlier linguistic traditions, focused especially on operators like 'may' and 'can', referring to processes of checking on the reality-status of utterances. Halliday brought out the importance of this function, and stressed the variety of forms it could take, including the use of everyday words to supplement grammatical words. In this perspective, negation belongs to the system of modality.

From the tensions Horn identified between linguistics and his other sources he came up with a powerful generalization which in effect describes the terms of a binocular disciplinary vision: the paradox of the contrast between the linear, structuralist treatment of a set of linear operators, as described in logic and linguistics, and the extreme complexity of the forms, functions and meanings found in negative sentences in natural languages.

Thirty years later, Horn's analysis of linguistics still holds. Most grammatical studies make little connection with complex functions and meanings outside syntactic theory. Here I use work I did with Gunther Kress (Hodge & Kress, 1993; Hodge, 2017) which developed a

theory of negation that addresses Horn's paradox. Like Horn we aimed to elaborate this syntactic analysis and connect it with other disciplines, including philosophy. I describe and develop it through a binocular interdisciplinary reading of this part of Homer.

This theory built on these ideas to develop an analysis of negation that was as concerned with syntactic operations as Chomsky or Klima, to cover the range of functions and meanings independently identified by Horn and more, incorporating these two fundamental aspects of negation, internal and external. I summarize five key points:

1. Negation is inseparable from systems of modality. All systems of modality are forms of partial negation, just as all acts of negation produce complex specifications of the relation to reality. So 'may' partly negates the truth status of any statement it is attached to, while also partly affirming it; 'someone' partly negates the referent's identity as it transmits it; and a sarcastic sneer detracts from the truth of whatever is said while repeating it. Conversely, 'No, I don't admit anything' is usually interpreted as a sign of guilt.

2. Multiple acts of partial negation have meanings, in themselves and in supposed sequences, whether signified by traces or assumed from common knowledge. So the Orientalist sentence I looked at earlier, 'characters as bizarre as they are unforgettable' negates the characters as unworthy of serious attention but then with no surface traces in the syntax negates that implicit judgement with a positive statement, which is built up by an incorporated negative ('un') cancelling a lexicalized negation ('forget' is 'not remember').

3. Complex sequences of partial negation (the 'Hegelian dialectic) at every scale (from descriptions of sequences of epochs to the succession of words or clauses in a sentence can produce an ambiguous set of possible outcomes, including unreal forms ('transcendence',) contradiction ('double think') and radical uncertainty.

4. The uncertainty produced by complex negation can include the persistence of statements after they have been negated, a Freudian 'return of the repressed' as a normal outcome of normal interaction.

5. As Horn and Halliday in their different ways remind us, these forms of language always derive from and reflect social forces and conditions in their contexts of action, immediate (e.g. Odysseus interacting with Cyclops) or mediated (e.g. Homer interacting with

his original or later audiences, or Geoffrey Lewis packaging Turkish culture for his intended English-speaking audience).

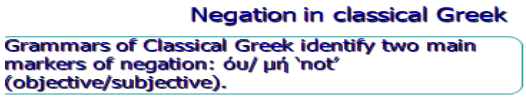
4.3 Negation in Homer

In this article I urge everyone studying any text in any language, their own or another, should look as well as they can at relevant grammars. This may be too technical, or restricted in scope, but it provides valuable material to incorporate in a fuller interpretation.

A recent Grammar of classical Greek (Boas et al, 2019, p. 648-51) has a brief description, primarily concerned with the two main particles signifying negation (see figure below). *Ou* is the normal form, equivalent to English 'not'. *Me* is used in sentences with hypothetical status. Understood in terms of the discussion above, this means that Classical Greek grammar explicitly includes a connection between modality and negation. In this respect, *me* can be interpreted as part of a double process of negation, acting on the hypothetical picture created by the subjunctive. At the same time the two together create a doubly unreal world, in which things are possible and can be asserted that would be simply denied in affirmations in the indicative.

Figure 3

Forms of negation in Classical Greek.



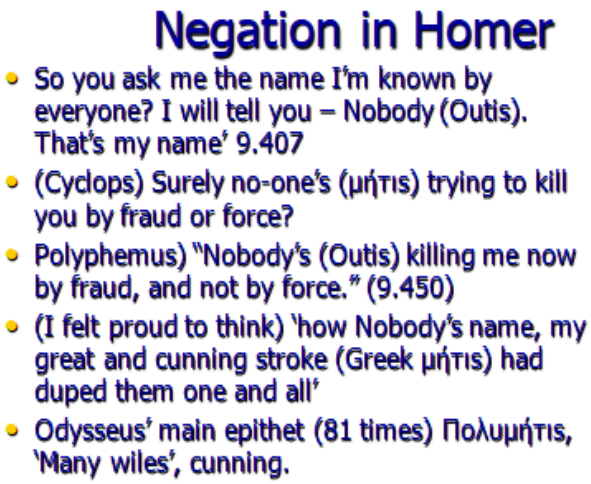
Following Auerbach's philological method I treat the whole Cyclops text as a corpus, to identify Homer's normal patterns of negation. There are many instances of both kinds of negative, all conforming to normal usage. That establishes the usage in Homer's key phrase

as significantly aberrant, intended by the author, against a background where the 'author' is the language itself, speaking collective meanings through Homer.

I summarize the key linguistic features in the figure below:

Figure 4.

Negation in the Cyclops text



I explicate the meanings carried by the grammatical points in this narrative. I begin with the issue of names. The grammar of names is not usually included in traditional grammars but is part of interdisciplinary grammars where the intersection of social and linguistic categories is always important.

Homeric society and the language which reflected and mediated it reflected hierarchies of power within a genealogical framework, and names were part of the system. Odysseus' real name was part of that, as was reference to his father, Laertes. In a full, rule-governed exchange which does not happen in this text, Polyphemus is the name, and his father is Poseidon, a high-ranking god, far higher in status than a minor mortal king.

Odysseus breaks the social and linguistic rule about names, in effect negating that whole system. In this way he has already treated himself and Polyphemus as outside society, without social identity. This dehumanizes Polyphemus, allowing him to be treated unjustly. It

has also declared himself as outside the normal social rules of his society, and that is how he acts. Calling himself *Outis*, a name which is not a name, is already an offence against social and linguistic practices of identity.

Tis, an indefinite pronoun, is close to the range of meanings of English 'someone, anyone.' This is part of the system of modality, distancing the object from the modality of certainty, thus making it part of the modality system. With the definite negative *ou* added to it, it has a complex double negative, an identity which is true but not true.

When the other Cyclops hear Polyphemus say 'Outis', Homer through Odysseus reports them using a hypothetical form, turning his 'Outis' into the different, grammatically correct 'Metis'. This demonstrates that the Cyclops as a Greek-speaking people interpret the negative as a negative and change the form accordingly. Only Polyphemus is deceived, because he trusted that Odysseus was reporting a name.

Odysseus reflects deeply on his linguistic trick. He connects the grammatical form, which could not be a Greek name, into a noun, Metis, a kind of wisdom or intelligence, which could be. He praises himself for having this quality, such that it could be his name. And indeed, in a sense it is. Homer's recurring epithet for Odysseus, 'polymetis', 'many wiles,' is repeated 81 times in this text, a kind of definition which could count as a name.

Odysseus (Homer) connects this name with both the trick and the grammatical meaning of the name. Scholars do not accept this as a true derivation. It is made up by Homer/Odysseus. However, Homer/Odysseus actually says it in the poem, so it can be accepted as a statement about meanings, either from Homer (untrue but strongly affirmed) or from a character constructed by Homer as an 'unreliable narrator' (untrue but not strongly affirmed).

What Homer seems to be saying, with either modality, is that there is a connection between the kind of intelligence that defines the Odysseus figure (deceptive, twisty, manipulative, an agent of Greek imperialism) and the use of complex modalities (complex patterns of negation, complex relations to reality) that such an agent and such a people developed. Since Homer does not try to conceal how deceptive and manipulative Odysseus is, it is plausible to suggest that this is a counter-Orientalist judgement he makes on Odysseus' actions and characteristics.

This quality fits in different ways into different versions of the meaning of Homer. At one extreme he is an ideologue for the Greeks as colonizing invaders of proto-Turkish Troy, and many other sites in Africa, and the Middle East. He transmits not only representative actions but also the Orientalizing mindset. At the other extreme he repeats damaging details with remarkable and useful precision, just as his account of the war itself was so accurate Heinrich Schliemann was able to use it to discover the site of Troy.

One part of this picture of Homer is the superficial consciousness Auerbach like many others saw in him, with no depths of meaning behind the polished, elaborate words. The other part is the poet who created the inexhaustively complex identity of Odysseus, in a work that reworks ancient materials and vanished stages of culture into a postmodern literary masterpiece.

Neither version of Homer is adequate. A binocular form of criticism is needed to bring these conflicting views into an alignment that will help us glimpse stages in the origins of civilization, 'Western' and 'Eastern,' that are otherwise beyond our reach. That form of criticism goes beyond any combination of the disciplines of linguistics and literary studies, in their present and past incarnations. Yet many of their limitations are transcended when they are held together in disciplined interrogation of complex problems, coming from the past and affecting the present, as all complex problems do. Linguistics and literary studies in this framework are more adequate and more relevant in this interdisciplinary framework than either can be on their own about their primary object of study.

5. CONCLUSION

This article aims to contribute to debates about a fundamental principle of pedagogy and method, interdisciplinarity, especially between the two major traditions, linguistics as the study of language and literature as the study of works of the imagination in a variety of modes, written, spoken and embodied. It considered three main forms. One, the most common and least productive, is limited to some overlap between two disciplines, leaving the main disciplines unaffected.

This article argued for two much stronger forms of interdisciplinarity, both of which can go far beyond the limitations of disciplinary knowledge. *Metadisciplinarity* not only includes

more than either of the two on their own, it develops a unitary framework which includes more than the two individual disciplines and also reflects on their relationship with each other and with the world they seek to explain. *Binocular interdisciplinarity* is a new concept discussed at greater length in this article which introduces it. Like binocular perception, binocular interdisciplinarity creates a depth of perception in time or space that cannot be perceived from either discipline on its own.

The article makes its methodological points by engaging with disciplinary forms from the past, specifically philology, a tradition which brought together a kind of literary studies and a kind of linguistics, exemplified through a major work, *Mimesis* and Auerbach, its author, writing in Turkey, during World War 2. Homer's work is used as the object of analysis, intended to be interesting in its own right as well as demonstration and vindication of my methodological claims.

There have been many interesting readings of Homer over many years from many perspectives, and there will be many more. It is the methodological issues that I believe are more important to everyone who attended the conference and who will be part of the ongoing enterprise the conference set in motion. Metadisciplines are a powerful instrument for every scholar who participates in the *Englishers* innovative project, whether they are senior or junior, whether they locate themselves more in literature or in linguistics or somewhere else, whether they grapple with problems in the present or in the past, however they use the English language, as a medium or an object in its own right.

Binocular vision can usefully complement a metadisciplinary framework, and metadisciplinary frameworks can produce deeper insights through this strategy. The price for the power of this method is the demands it makes. It requires roughly equal expertise in two disciplines or approaches, plus a capacity to bring them together mindfully. That takes work and dedication. Fortunately it does not need a lifetime. Younger scholars can use what they know and can learn of two disciplines, and still acquire a cyclopean eye. They will see less than an Auerbach, but more than and different from more seasoned scholars who look with only one eye.

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