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## Text World Analysis of A. K. Ramanujan's "*Of Mothers: among other things*"

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### Abstract

This paper presents a Text World Analysis of A.K. Ramanujan's poem "Of Mothers: among other things" while viewing it as a discourse situation to explore the mechanics of flashback technique in the poem. This involves analysis of the viewpoints and voices and the text-worlds constructed by the voices. The observation that the poem employs flashback technique is a product of impressionistic literary criticism. This observation about the poem is further substantiated using a cognitive poetic analysis of Text World Theory with special emphasis on the world construction and world switches using cognitive deixis. Therefore, it also draws upon Peter Stockwell's Deictic Shift Theory (DST).

**Keywords:** A K Ramanujan, Cognitive Poetics, Deixis, Indian Poetry in English, Text World Theory

### Introduction

In twentieth-century literary criticism, there exist impressionist critics, who, according to Reuven Tsur, "indulge in the effects of literary texts, but have difficulties in relating them to their structures" (1). Therefore, Peter Stockwell, echoing the perspectives of Tsur, posits a need for cognitive poetics, which he defines as the "science of reading" (2) or a "way of thinking of literature rather than a framework in itself" (6). He throws light on the term reading by differentiating it from interpretation thus:

Interpretation is what readers do as soon as (perhaps even partly before) they begin to move through a text. Their general sense of the impact of the experience could range over many different impressions and senses, some of which are refined or rejected. It is this later, more analytical process that produces a reading. Some interpretations (especially those rejected early) can be simply wrong: mistakes, errors, miscues that are demonstrably not supported by any textual evidence at all. Readings, however, are the process of arriving at a sense of the text that is personally acceptable. (8)

Thus, Cognitive Poetics deals with the readings of a text, which is more of an analytical and a scientific process. It helps to arrive at readings of a literary text by ascertaining which reported interpretation “may legitimately be related to the structures in question, and which may not” (Tsur 1).

This claim of cognitive poetics shall be illustrated using the study of A. K. Ramanujan's poem “Of Mothers: among other things”, published in the poetry collection entitled *Relations* (1971). This particular poem is often interpreted as a representation of the contrast between the poetic persona's mother's past and her present (Tiwari, 2014) (Seeta, 2018). In other words, it is a juxtaposition of the mother's past with her present. It is possible to come to a conclusion that this poem is the poetic persona's recollection of his mother's past as he goes into a flashback, where the reader is taken back to another place and time. However, It is only a close reading of the poem that can explain, in a principled manner, how the techniques of flashback and juxtaposition really operate in this poem. Further, such an exploration that focuses on the process of literary interpretation while analysing the mechanics of the techniques will facilitate in understanding the “text-drivenness” of the poem or the ability of the poem itself in determining the degree of background knowledge participants draw on when engaging in discourse (Werth 149). And the tools of cognitive poetics will aid this involved reading.

This paper presents my ‘reading’ of A K Ramanujan's “Of Mothers: among other things” using the Text World Theory along with Stockwell's Deictic Shift Theory (DST) wherein the deictic projection of me, the reader into the space and time of the enactor or the poetic persona, brings to fore an increased awareness of the connection between my background knowledge of A K Ramanujan and this particular poem, and the linguistic patterning of the poetic text. The paper adopts a systematic method to illustrate how the flashback technique operates in the poem and the bearings it has on the theme of the poem itself.

The sections ahead will provide an overview of cognitive poetics, a brief explanation of the Text World Theory and DST, emphasising on cognitive deixis as an analytical tool that facilitates the creation of the text world. This will be followed by a discussion on the insights such an analysis offers about the poem.

Theoretical Background

### **Cognitive Poetics/Cognitive Stylistics**

“Cognitive poetics is the application of cognitive science to literary reading” (Stockwell 2). The term ‘cognitive poetics’ was first coined by Reuven Tsur in 1983 to characterise his personal cognitive approach to literary texts (Freeman 17). Tsur's approach was rooted in the empirical tradition, heavily drawing upon neuroscience (Stockwell 4). However, subsequent developments in cognitive science, and especially cognitive psychology and cognitive

linguistics, led to the development of cognitive poetics as a further development within stylistics. Peter Stockwell and Margaret Freeman's Cognitive Poetics is rooted in the stylistic tradition. It aims to pay close attention to the linguistic patterning of textuality. It is primarily concerned with getting to the root of intuitive interpretative practices rather than adding to yet another interpretation of a text (Hamilton 2). In this sense it is known as cognitive poetics as it engages with the poetics of hermeneutics. Also, according to both Freeman and Stockwell, Cognitive Poetics developed within linguistics allows one an access to even better tools to explain the process and effects of literary reading (Stockwell 3). Thus, owing to the stylistic grounding of Cognitive Poetics, it is also popularly known as cognitive stylistics. Further, Semino and Culpeper state:

Cognitive stylistics combines the kind of explicit, rigorous and detailed linguistic analysis of literary texts that is typical of the stylistics tradition with a systematic and theoretically informed consideration of the cognitive structures and processes that underlie the production and reception of language (ix).

It is now clear that Cognitive Stylistics is based on the notion that an encounter with a literary work leads to the formation of mental representation in a reader. In order to understand such a process in detail, Cognitive Stylistics has a toolkit that is cross-validated within the disciplines of cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology. Of these, the Text

World Theory (TWT) "offers a holistic framework through which to analyse how discourse is conceptually constructed and negotiated by discourse participants." (Canning 173). The model of TWT is fundamentally concerned with the building of a coherent text world using deictic parameters and referential elements.

### **Text World Theory (TWT)**

According to the Text World Theory developed by Paul Werth during the 1980s and 1990s, humans process and understand both factual and fictional discourse by constructing mental representations in their minds. The significance of the theory, first, lies in the fact that it specifies how contextual knowledge is managed economically. Second, it places the text and the context inseparably together as a part of the cognitive process. Third, it is founded on the analysis of entire texts and the worlds that they create in the minds of the readers, and not on the analysis of sentences.

Text World Theory (Werth)(Gavins)(E Semino) is not an entirely new concept; within the discipline of cognitive psychology, it is termed as mental models and narrative worlds; in cognitive linguistics, it is called mental spaces, and in cognitive poetics, it is called text worlds, owing to the stylistic framework that cognitive poetics subscribes to.

A TWT analysis of any text, literary or non-literary, involves dividing the given discourse into three interconnected worlds, namely— discourse-world, text-

world and sub-world. The three worlds are explained below:

**Discourse-world** – It contains two or more participants engaged in a language event, where participants mutually agree to perform coherent communication. The participants negotiate against the background of their intentions, memories, motivations and knowledge.

**Text-world** – It is the mental representation constructed by each participant as the negotiation progresses. It is constructed based on linguistic indicators and inferences drawn based on the background knowledge of the participants. Text-world is made up of world-building elements and function-advancing propositions. While the world-building elements define the background against which the main events in the discourse will be set, the function-advancing propositions include the events, actions, states and processes that propel the discourse forward.

**Sub-world** - It is constructed as the text-world progresses and forms other worlds. According to Werth, sub-worlds are created either by the characters in the text-worlds or by the discourse participants. Additionally, Gavins (262) posits that sub-worlds are constructed using the world switches. Also, according to her, world switches happen with shifts in time or location (deictic sub-worlds), shifts in desires, beliefs or purposes (attitudinal sub-worlds), and shifts in probabilities and possibilities (epistemic sub-worlds)

Having looked at the Text World Theory, it is important to see how a reader's text-world is built. The deictic and referential elements in the text are crucial building blocks of a reader's text-world. Werth defines a text-world as "a deictic space, defined initially by the discourse itself, and specifically by the deictic and referential elements in it." (180). He calls these deictic and referential elements as world-building elements. These elements are classified into time, location and entities. It is a change in these elements that results in one of the deictic shifts explained previously. According to Werth, a shift could either lead to a creation of a sub-world or go back to the discourse world, which in Stockwell's parlance is called 'pop' and 'push'. (47). The Deictic Shift Theory is elaborated further in the following section.

### **Deictic Shift Theory (DST)**

Stockwell's Deictic Shift Theory (DST) as is found in *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*, fundamentally views the concept of deictic projection as a cognitive process that results in the reader's understanding of the spatio-temporal change, thereby accounting "for the perception and creation of coherence across a literary text" (Stockwell 47). Cognitive interpretation of deixis encodes varied contexts and experiences of the encoder, within an utterance. Primarily, cognitive deixis is based on the concept of deixis in pragmatics and discourse analysis, where (Green 123) deixis refers to the use of words and phrases as a pointing device to anchor a time, place or a situation within a context. Keith Green

defines it as “a phenomenon whereby the tripartite relationship between the language system, the encoder’s subjectivity and various contextual factors is foregrounded grammatically or lexically” (122). He differentiates between ‘deictic terms’ and ‘deictic elements. While ‘deictic terms’ are a set of grammatically closed words including demonstrative and personal pronouns, adverbials, vocative particles, definite referring expressions, ‘deictic elements’ are those syntactic or semantic elements that function deictically. Cognitive deixis fundamentally studies “the tripartite relationship” and these deictic terms and elements to understand the cognitive process of projection of a reader’s mind into the text world. More specifically, it is a device used by a reader in an attempt to conscientiously track the poetic persona in the poem and access the text-world of the poetic persona.

Most cognitive analyses of deixis have been able to account for a scenario involving the past and the present in narratives, especially in “flashbacks, dreams or plays within plays” (Stockwell 47). However, in a poem like the one chosen for study, wherein, one can superficially conclude that the poet uses flashback with a mere mention of the past, a closer analysis is required; an effective analysis that tracks the spatio-temporal orientation in the poem while slipping into the shoes of the perceiving consciousness/poetic persona. Cognitive deixis succeeds in this kind of tracking with its potential to “account for the readers’ ability to project their mind into

the text-world and perceive from a narrator’s or a character’s view” (47), here, the poetic persona’s viewpoint.

Stockwell presents a list of various kinds of cognitive deictic shifts that can occur in a literary text, namely, - perceptual shift, spatial shift, temporal shift, relational shift, textual shift and compositional shift. However, this essay only analyses three kinds of deictic shifts that are prominent in the poem. These are explained below as posited by Stockwell, in his book:

1. Perceptual shift: It is marked by the introduction of poetic/literary voices using presentative structures and noun phrases. A perceptual deixis is maintained by using definite noun phrases in the subject position, by frequently mentioning the perceptual voice and by using perception and mental predicates. The shifting of perceptual deixis is marked by a spatial shift prior to it.

2. Spatial shift: This is marked by movement predicates such as verbs of motion, proposed locative adverbials and spatial adverbs. Spatial deictic shift is maintained by conjoining co-ordinate clauses to maintain co-reference. Also, Stockwell observes that spatial shifts are resistant to the effect of perception, i.e., the current location will remain the same.

3. Temporal shift: Temporal deictic shifts occur with a shift in tense and aspect. Also, the consistency of tense and aspect maintains the temporal deictic centre.

Thus, the above discussion sets the stage for the analysis that is to follow. In the present study, the poem is analysed



as a discourse situation by dividing it into discourse-world, text-world and sub-world. The journey from a discourse-world to the sub-world is described using the TWT. Further, DST is used to explore how the worlds are created, to track the poetic persona while simulating a natural reading process, and to ascertain the operation of juxtaposition of the past and present of the mother of the poetic persona.

Discussion

Poem

I smell upon this twisted  
blackbone tree the silk and white  
petal of my mother's youth.  
From her earrings three diamonds

splash a handful of needles,  
and I see my mother run back  
from rain to the crying cradles.  
The rains tack and sew

with broken threads the rags  
of the tree tasseled light.  
But her hands are a wet eagle's  
two black-pink crinkled feet,

one talon crippled in a garden-  
trap set for a mouse. Her saris  
do not cling: they hang, loose  
feather of a onetime wing.

My cold parchment tongue licks bark  
in the mouth when I see her four  
still sensible fingers slowly flex  
to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen  
floor. (Ramanujan 61)

“Of Mothers: Among Other Things” by A K Ramanujan is a much-

anthologised poem. However, it has not been subject to a closer analysis, especially using cognitive poetics. This poem, as recorded in the footnotes in Ramanujan's diary entries collection titled, *Journeys: A Poet's Diary*, “pays homage to AKR's mother, who is a prominent figure in his poetry” (Ramanujan et al. 232). It is against this background that the poem is often read.

This biographical context is crucial and such an approach focuses on the context in which it was written. However, substantial attention to the poem itself and the context in which it might be read, have been compromised in accounts discussing the poem.

A fine focus on the context for reading this Anglophone poem is provided by Anjali Nerlekar in her essay “Converting Past Time into Present Spaces: A K Ramanujan's Poetry (1929-1993)”. She writes:

Ramanujan paints a picture of the mother who is an incessantly hard-working woman, one who sews, and takes care of babies and cooks and cleans. Her hand is deformed and the poet compares it to an eagle's claw – it is not a disability, because the mother still demonstrates the skill and artistry involved in picking up three grains of rice from the floor. And the poet now is lost and to him is also lost that world of fulfilment. (144)

Further, quoting the last stanza of the poem, Nerlekar makes a point or two about the sense of loss of the past and guilt that the mother evokes in the speaker of the lines. She emphasises how this poem, like Ramanujan's poems on

mother and father, deals with the question of source and origin, of parentage. According to her, these poetic concerns “animate the seemingly connected images” (128) of “parchment” “bark” and “mouth”.

Nerlekar's description of the poem, with its grounding in biographical criticism, brings forth valuable insights from the poem, especially Ramanujan's way of tying the sense of mother to a sense of past. However, an account of how such a past is linguistically realised, will enrich the aesthetic value of the poem.

### **Analysis**

In order to understand the first few lines of the poem, it is required that the reader leaves their time and place in the real world while reading the poem and imagines a time and place of the speaker/poetic persona's perspective/perceiving consciousness. This is known as a deictic shift into the text world of the poem which is as Segal says, taking “a cognitive stance” (qtd. in Stockwell 46) within the world of a poem and attempting to interpret the poem from that perspective. So, this approach looks at the poetic text world as a discourse situation. Thus, the first level of the text world is the discourse world that contains two participants- the reader and the poetic voice. Elena Semino observes that “the interpretation of deixis in poetry requires that readers construct an image of a speaking subject functioning as deictic center, whether or not this presence is made explicit by the occurrence of first person pronouns inside the text”(38). In

the first three lines of the first stanza, the perceptual shift happens when there is a shift of deictic centre from the reader to the poetic voice, with the introduction of a personal pronoun “I”. utterance. Also, there is no explicit addressee other than the narrator himself. Although “this”, looks like a demonstrative determiner, modifying the noun phrase “twisted backbone tree”, it functions as a deictic word due to two reasons—first, because it locates the deictic centre (I) in close proximity to the “twisted backbone tree”, and second, the context in which “the twisted backbone tree” is used and which referent (tenor) it serves as a vehicle of is unknown at this point in the poem. Though it implies that the referent is physically a part of the deictic field of the deictic centre/origo or the perceiving consciousness, the context in which this metaphor is used becomes evident only in the subsequent lines.

The perceiving consciousness smells the “silk and white petal” of his “mother's youth”. Firstly, there is an introduction of another element ‘mother’ in the deictic field of the deictic centre or poetic persona, though we do not yet know if the mother is physically a part of the deictic field of the poetic persona just like the “twisted backbone tree” that is physically in the presence of the poetic persona, marked by the proximal deixis ‘this’. Also, the use of the word “youth” refers to a period in time. Therefore, a mention of the word “youth” ought to indicate a temporal shift. So, one could expect the rest of the poem to move into the past and use the temporal deictic shift

markers like past tense. However, the poem continues thus, "From her ear-rings three diamonds/ splash a handful of needles,/ and I see my mother run back/ from rain to the crying cradles." Note that the poetic voice continues to be the deictic centre with the maintenance of the perceptual deixis "I", without the perceiving "I" itself making either a physical spatial shift or temporal shift. However, the poetic persona creates a sub-world of the "mother" who is located in a point in time "youth" and who the poetic persona "sees" making a spatial shift by running "from rain to the crying cradles". Note that the perception verb of "see" in the line "I see my mother run back/ from rain to the crying cradles" continues to be in the present tense, suggesting that poetic voice is speaking from here and now. Therefore, there is no change in the deictic centre. Therefore, we see that the deictic field of the perceiving consciousness or the poetic voice remains even as the deictic field of the mother in her youth is activated as it is perceived by the poetic voice within his here and now. This kind of deictic shift resulting in the creation of a sub-world is known as push (Stockwell 47). The sub-world here is created using a deictic world-switch as there seems to be a switch in the time and location. So, the reader has moved from simply tracking the perception of the poetic voice and is now in the process of tracking the movements of the character "mother", as perceived by the poetic voice.

Moving further along the poem, the "rains" mentioned in the previous

lines "tack and sew/ with broken thread the rags/ of the tree-tasselled light". The metaphorical rains are suggestive of the spirit-dampening trials and tribulations. This leads us to question as to whom do these trials and tribulations belong? It belongs to the "tree-tasselled light", as the line reads. Additionally, the word "tree" here, might remind one of the "twisted backbone tree", the vehicle of metaphor used by the poetic voice in the initial lines of the poem. Note that at this point in the poem, the deictic centre is the poetic persona through whose origo, we understand the character of the mother who is also the subject of this poem. Perhaps, the "tree-tasseled light" and "twisted backbone tree" are metaphors the poetic voice uses for their mother. Therefore, the reader's, i.e, my cognitive model or the schemata of MOTHER gets challenged. This is known as schema refreshment. (Semino)

The subsequent lines begin with "But her hands are a wet eagle's/ two black pink-crinkled feet,". The stylistic realisation of the perceptual deixis is the pronoun 'her', used to refer to the mother who is being perceived by the poetic voice. This also confirms that the "tree-tasselled light" and "twisted backbone tree" are indeed vehicles used to convey the metaphor of mother (tenor). But it isn't clear if the poetic voice is still perceiving the mother in her "youth" or in the present, because the entire poem is situated in the here and now of the poetic voice. Significantly, there is no temporal shift in the form of tense or aspect change



in the rest of the poem. The poem continues thus:

one talon crippled in a garden –  
trap set for a mouse. Her sarees  
do not cling: they hang, loose  
feather of a onetime wing. (Ramanujan  
61)

How can one possibly clarify if the poetic voice is still perceiving the mother in her “youth” or in the present at this point in the poem? An important observation regarding metaphors might be brought to the surface at this point. In the beginning of the poem, the poetic voice, situated in the here and now, pointed to the proximal “twisted backbone tree”. This metaphor has been traced to be a one used for the mother in the present. It is upon this “twisted backbone tree” (whom the poetic voice is physically seeing) that the poetic voice perceives (smells) “the silk and white petal” of his mother’s “youth”. The metaphor of silk and white petal is attributed to the mother situated in the past, an abstraction. So, when the word “tree” appears in the expression “tree-tasselled light”, it might be appropriate to understand that the poetic voice is once again describing the mother in his here and now, a spatio-temporal setting shared by the mother. Therefore, the rest of the poem is an account provided by the perceiving consciousness or the poetic voice of the mother who is physically in front of him. This kind of shift from the past (youth) of the mother, back to the present in which both the poetic voice and the mother are situated, the spatio-

temporal setting in which the poem began, is known as pop. (Stockwell 47)

The reader has popped out of the sub-world of the mother in her past, back to the text-world of the poetic voice.

The perceptual deixis “I” is maintained using the frequent mention of the perceptual/ poetic voice in the subject position in the following lines:

My cold parchment tongue licks bark  
in the mouth when I see her four  
still sensible fingers slowly flex  
to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen  
floor. (Ramanujan 61)

The poem concludes with the unchanging deictic centre, the poetic voice watching the spatial shift of the mother who is now certainly within the deictic field of the poetic persona. This spatial shift is marked by the verb of motion “flex” and “pick”, and the adverb “slowly”, along a space “the kitchen floor”.

#### Interpretation of the Analysis

My analysis has shown that deictic projection aids in the construction of the text world of the reader. In tracking the deictic centre and their shifts, first, I have been able to explain how flashback operates in the poem. Second, I have shown the mechanics of such a juxtaposition by accounting for the linguistic realisation of the past simultaneously in the present of the poetic persona.

The poem is a discourse world with two participants – the reader and the speaker of the poem. The text world of the poem is inhabited primarily by the

speaker of the poem. It is within this text world that the sub-worlds of past and present of the speaker's mother are built. Therefore, in Werth's terms, this poem facilitates building of a complex text world by giving rise to a sub-world (205).

The deictic centre is the poet persona or speaker who is situated in the present. The reader assumes the role of the poetic voice, resulting in a shift known as push, wherein the reader from his actual world enters the actual world of the poet persona, resulting in the construction of a text world. Thereafter, the poetic voice perceives (smells) the mother's past, even as he sees his mother at present. The abstraction of the memory of the mother in her past is juxtaposed with the concreteness of the mother in her present— that this is a juxtaposition and not a flashback can be said with certainty because the spatio-temporal orientation of the poetic voice remains unchanged. In contrast, a flashback will have the deictic centre (the perceiving consciousness), seeing himself in another space and time. Even after the introduction of the temporal marker "youth", it is the youth of his mother that the poetic voice is seeing. The poetic voice does not, in relation to his mother's youth, see himself as a baby; though there is a mention of "crying cradles", there is no linguistic cue substantiating the deictic projection of the poetic voice into the transferred epithet "crying cradles".

Having thus shown that this poem does not involve a flashback technique, I shall now endeavour to interpret the significance of the juxtaposition in the

poem based on my analysis and support it using Anjali Nerlekar's reading of A K Ramanujan's poems with women characters, especially mothers, which includes "Of Mothers, Among Other Things".

As mentioned earlier, there is only one deictic centre or perceiving consciousness in the poem, that is the son or the poet persona. Despite the physical presence of the mother within the deictic field of the poet persona, there is no real conversation that takes place between the mother and the son. Significantly, the mother is not a dominant participant in the process of world-building. Talking in terms of the Deictic Shift Theory (DST), there is no perceptual shift in the poem. The sub-world of the mother's past, is built by the poet persona, i.e, a reader's understanding of the mother is primarily based on the perceiving consciousness's perspective that is linguistically realised in the poem. Of course, the reader's background knowledge will interact with these linguistic cues to arrive at an understanding of what Ramanujan conveys about mothers in this poem. However, the reader's understanding of the mother is based on what the poet persona says. This lack of voice of the mother, both in her present and the past mirrors the content of the poem that paints a portrait of the mother as a stereotypical woman who works tirelessly and silently against all odds, ensuring that she provides for her children and family. Along similar lines, Nerlekar observes, "By representing the voiceless in their myriad forms in Ramanujan's life, the

mother becomes the epitome of the subaltern – and, despite the persistent efforts of the poet in his work, neither Ramanujan nor the reader can hear this subaltern woman speak.” (128)

Ramanujan makes persistent efforts to make the mother and her otherwise barely understood life, the locus of the poem. He does this using the title of the poem “Of Mothers, Among Other Things”. Then, he then activates her presence using metaphors and constructs a sub-world of the past that is inhabited by her. However, neither Ramanujan nor the reader can hear the mother speak.

In fact, the poet persona, while creating the sub-world of the mother and while perceiving her in the here and now, uses verbs of action like “run”, “flex” and “pick” for the mother. This, perhaps explains how the mother is a subaltern, constantly doing so much, not for herself but for the people around her, silently.

While the mother is voiceless, she is given an “individualised, distinctive existence” (140) using metaphor of “blackbone tree” and “tree-tasselled light” to refer to her spent physical frame and sparkling spirit. Her tree-like inner strength is her ornament. Her spirit is like that of a weathered tree that silently witnesses all the events in its lifetime, continues to stand still and does its own bit with a sense of responsibility.

However, despite being successful in bringing out the strength of the mother, the last stanza of the poem, bears a tone

of loss, discomfort and guilt, for Nerlekar states:

The scraping and bruising image of a tongue licking bark is striking – it not only demonstrates the fight between the sensitive and delicate nature of the poet and the harsh implacable pastness of the past; it is also a parchment tongue reaching out to the bark of its origin, trying to reach back to its source of creation. But the journey from the source of bark to the product of parchment is only one way and cannot be reversed. (145)

There is a tone of guilt and a sense of loss as the past that made his mother the bruised and crippled self now, cannot be reversed.

The poem, then, is a product of converting the past time into a present space in order to come to terms with such a loss. Nerlekar points out:

A.K. Ramanujan’s poetry is one of self-proclaimed failures – of the failure to find the mother, the lover, the perfect translation, the past, the nation/home, the self. But it is also poetry of luminous success, of finding a home in language practices and in translation, of creating a resting place in them when none is available outside – of creating on the space of the page what is lost in the irretrievable past of his life (128).

So, at the first reading of the poem, the presence of the mother was attributed to the instantiation of her past in the sub-world. However, interpreted retrospectively, it is not only the presence

of the mother that triggers a flashback, but also the poet persona's overwhelming feeling of experiencing her absence in her presence.

### **Conclusion**

A cognitive poetic analysis such as this is necessary to sift valid from invalid interpretations, in a literary critical scenario where meaning-making is the preoccupation. The art of cognitive poetic analysis is essential more than ever now, during this post-Truth era, when emotions and beliefs supersede objectivity. However, a principled reading of any literary text may be achieved when not only are the effects of literary texts related to their structures, but also when structuralist critics are able to describe the perceived effects of the particular regularities that occur in literary texts. (Tsur 1). This "perceived effect" is also called "felt experience" in Stockwell's terminology.

This particular cognitive poetic study of "Of Mothers: among other things" explores the possibility of Text World Theory to validate the claim that the poem uses a flashback technique with temporal alternation without spatial alternation necessarily being a marker. This is done by juxtaposing the past and the present.

### **Scope for Further Study**

This article is just one possible cognitive poetic exploration of the poem, opening avenues to more such meaningful explorations. There exists a scope to further explore the particular effects of deictic projection in the poem, on Indian readers as well as readers

across various cultures based on their notions of subaltern feminism.

Additionally, the role of metaphor in tracking the deictic centre has been marginally explored in the analysis as a full-blown cognitive metaphor analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. However, this poem, in which metaphors aid the conversion of the past time into present space, renders itself amenable to a cognitive poetics analysis backed by conceptual blending theory and cognitive metaphor theory.

Finally, Elena Semino's idea that schema theory has implications for the analysis of the text world is reinforced in the analysis of the poem. However, the application of schema theory as such, to illustrate its implication in the creation of the text-world is beyond the scope of the article. An application of schema theory might account for the interpretative variability as differences in the selection or variability of schemata may lead to differences in the text-worlds of the same text, created by different readers.

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