

UDC: 159.9.072.432

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-4665-2017-11-1>**Willie van Peer,**

PhD, professor,

Ludwig Maximilian University,

2, Professor-Huber-Platz, Munich, Germany,

**Anna Chesnokova,**

PhD (Candidate of Philological Sciences), professor,

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University,

18/2, Bulvarno-Kudriavska Str., Kyiv, Ukraine

## LITERARINESS IN READERS' EXPERIENCE. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND THEORY

*In the past, several studies have found empirical support for the psychological notion of foregrounding. In this article we will present the results of a series of reading experiments investigating descriptive and evaluative reader reactions to poems, both in their original form (containing rather heavy foregrounding, both deviation and parallelism) and versions from which all foregrounding has been removed. In this sense the research presents a replication of earlier experiments as well as a comparison with some more recent ones that failed to find empirical evidence for the notion of foregrounding. It will also cast light on Bortolussi and Dixon's (2003) 'rereading paradigm'. The results will be combined with a reconsideration of the concept of literariness, which will be confronted with the variety within a reader population, as well as with the diversity within a text corpus. The latter will be confronted with Van Peer's (1991) effort to develop a descriptive definition of literature, incorporating the heterogeneous nature of the corpus of texts that are regarded as literary. Revisiting these aspects of texts and their reception may illuminate persistent problems in the theory of literariness.*

**Keywords:** *literariness, empirical research, reading experiment, rereading paradigm, foregrounding.*

### 1. Introduction. Theoretical background

Ever since Victor Shklovsky (1917 / 1965) formulated his insights in literariness around the central notion of *ostranenie*, scholars have evaluated his theory at length, first in linguistics (see, for instance, Leech, 1969), but then also through reading experiments confronting theoretical assumptions with actual reading behaviour. Several such studies were indeed able to demonstrate the psychological validity of insights generated by the Russian Formalist, notably Van Peer (1986) and Miall and Kuiken (1994); the thematic issue of *Language and Literature* (2007) gives a good overview of the state of the art. In all these studies, predictions derived from the theory were corroborated.

The method by which this was achieved consisted in highly detailed linguistic and literary analyses of a text, leading to concrete prediction about readers' reactions to the text. Readers were then prompted to react to those texts, whereby various measures ('dependent variables') were probed, such as 'strikingness', 'reading speed', 'emotionality', or 'discussion value'. With the help of such reading experiments, it was possible to uphold the theoretical stance of the theory of 'foregrounding', as it became known in the West. To give one example: Shklovsky (1917 / 1965) speaks of *retardation* of perception as a result of the devices of estrangement, used by artists, leading to aesthetic experiences. Miall and Kuiken (1994) could show this indeed to be the case, in that text passages that contained heavy foregrounding devices were (subconsciously) read significantly slower than non-

foregrounded passages in the text. Since participants in the study were totally unaware of the fact that their reading speed was being monitored (by a computer), these results may be taken as clear proof that literary features like foregrounding indeed slow down perception.

In the present paper, we report on new experiments that, however, failed to replicate earlier results.

### 2. Methods

#### 2.1. Study 1

The experimental material was the famous poem by e e cummings 'anyone lived in a pretty how town', which was presented to the participants in the original as well as in two manipulated versions: one in which deviations had been removed and one in which instances of parallelism had been removed. The first stanzas of the three versions were the following:

#### original

*anyone lived in a pretty how town  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang his didn't he danced his did*

#### deviation deleted

*Someone lived in a pretty old town.  
(With up so many bells ringing down)  
Spring, summer, autumn, winter.  
He sang his song, he danced his dance.*

#### parallelism deleted

*Anyone lived in such a pretty how town  
with up floating down many bells)  
spring summer autumn and winter  
he sang his did not and he danced his did*

Readers read the poem and responded to 7-point Likert scales on a battery of 30 items: 6 dimensions, represented by 5 adjectives each (aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic structure, cognition, emotion, social context, attitudes). The scales (see Appendix) were derived from Van Peer et al. (2007). The reactions were provided at 3 locations in the poem: after line 1; after the 6th stanza (middle) and after the whole poem. So each reader gave us their reactions on 90 scales.

Participants were 206 members of Borys Grinchenko University in Kiev. The sample included three levels: beginning students, advanced students and staff.

The experimental group that read the manipulated version of the poem from which deviation was removed included 65 participants, and the data were compared with those of the control group (71 participants) who were presented with the original of Cummings's text.

As earlier research (Chesnokova and van Peer, 2016: 18) has shown, 'deviation as a foregrounding device by itself has particular effects: when it was removed, readers' responses turned out to be different in a number of cases', which is in line with the general tenets of foregrounding theory. Yet the foregrounding has two forms: deviation and parallelism. Thus, to make our findings more systematic, we decided to repeat the study, but now, instead of deviations, remove all parallelism from Cummings's poem, mainly getting rid of the metre. This task of removing the parallelism from the poem appeared quite cumbersome and considerably harder than removing the deviations. After the experiment was carried out, we invited the participants to comment on the manipulated version they read, and they said it was 'original', 'entertaining to read',

'a bit confusing' and one that 'need[ed] time'. One respondent mentioned that 'something was wrong with it'.

The second part of the experiment was conducted in February 2015 at the same university as the first part. There were 70 participants who read the poem by Cummings from which all parallelism was taken away (65 female; mean age 23; 36 junior students, 25 advanced students and 9 staff members). The data obtained from the experimental group were compared to the ones of the control group from a previous study, who had read the original poem.

The data were analysed with the help of the computer program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in line with the standards of using statistical procedures in the Humanities (Chesnokova, 2011; Van Peer et al., 2012).

At first, Cronbach's alpha for all data was computed and yielded a value of .98. For the 6 dimensions separately the alpha values were the following:

- Aesthetic Appreciation (AA): .91
- Aesthetic Structure (AS): .80.
- Cognitive (C): .91
- Emotive (EM): .93
- Social Context (SC): .88
- Attitudinal (AT): .91

After that, an ANOVA for these six new variables was computed. A statistically significant difference was found for two variables: AS and EM. The difference for AS ( $p = .011$ ) was in the predicted direction (orig = 4.07; no dev = 3.51; no parall = 3.92). For EM the  $p$ -value was .028, but the difference actually went against the predictions by foregrounding theory: orig = 2.91; no dev = 3.22; no parall = 2.65.

On the whole, results were thus not supportive of the theory. Figure 1 below represents both dimensions in their difference. As could be seen from the graph, the effect sizes are quite small.

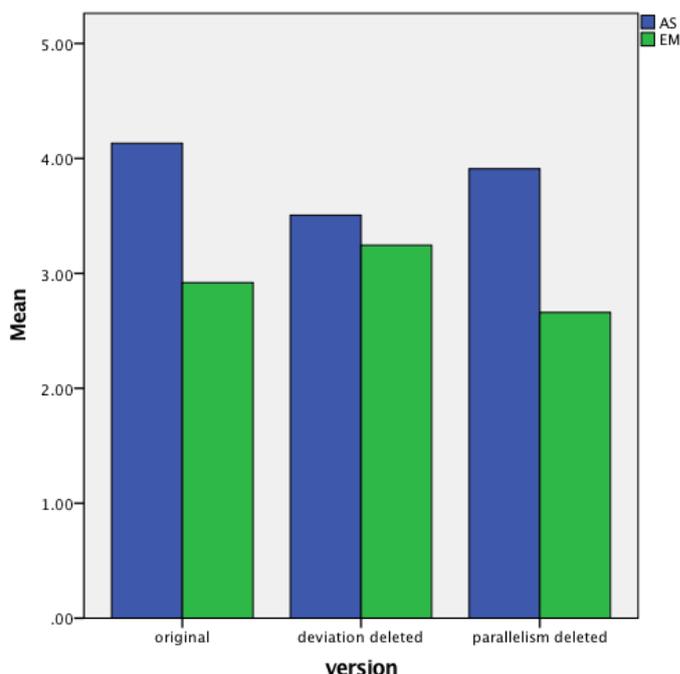


Fig. 1. Variables 'Aesthetic Structure' and 'Emotive' in the three versions

Then a factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation) was carried out, yielding KMO = .902, an indication that the sample size (N = 206) should not give rise to worry.<sup>1</sup> Bartlett's test of sphericity, moreover, was significant at the .000 level, a strong warrant that 'there are some relationships between the variables we hope to include in the analysis' (Field, 2002: 457). All in all, then, the factor analysis carried out fulfilled the necessary statistical requirements.

Three factors with Eigen values larger than 1 were extracted. Since the reliability of factors is dependent on sample size, we followed the usual recommendations in the statistical literature. Because our sample is larger than 150, we therefore considered loadings greater than .40 as reliable, but we gave preference to loading above .60 (see Field, 2002: 443). We will now describe the three factors consecutively. Together they account for 47.41 % of the variance in the data. Factor 1, the strongest one, is responsible for 20.92 % of all variance. It loads high especially on 'emotion': items<sup>2</sup> E1c, E2b, E3b, E3c, E4b, E4c, E5c,

E5b, etc. There were also high loadings on scales for 'attitude': AT1c, AT2c, AT3b, AT3c, AT4c, and AT5c – hence predominantly scoring high after the final line. We have therefore labelled this factor **EMOTION**.

The second factor is more difficult to interpret, as it loaded high on all of the six dimensions. However, since the majority of them (AT1, AT2, AT3, C1, C2, C3, SC4) refer to a difference from initial reactions, it was named **CHANGE**. See, for instance, AT1: 'The sentence makes me more sensitive' or C2: 'It could make a change to my life'.

The third factor, finally, has high loadings especially on 'social context': SC1b, SC1c, SC2c, SC3c, but also on two 'cognitive' items: C4b and C4c. We termed the factor **MEANING**, as it is concerned especially with semantic aspects of readers' reactions.

Entering the three factors into a one-way ANOVA (see Table 1 below) yielded highly significant differences for Factor 1 ('emotion') ( $p=.001$ ) and Factor 3 ('meaning') ( $p=.008$ ).

<sup>1</sup> The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy should be greater than 0.5; see Field (2002: 445). Values above .90 are considered superb; see Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999: 224-5).

<sup>2</sup> The first capital letter, **E**, denotes the Emotion dimension, the first digit denotes the item, and the following letter indicates the location in the poem where the scales were filled out: **a** after the first line, **b** in the middle of the poem (end of stanza 6), and **c** after the final line. Hence E1c means: the first item (1) of the 'emotion' dimension (E), scored at the final location (c). Please refer to the Appendix for the code names and the concomitant items.

Table 1.

**ANOVA test results for the three factors**  
**ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Factor 1 (‘emotion’)	Between Groups	25.324	2	12.662	6.949	<b>.001</b>
	Within Groups	338.917	186	1.822		
	Total	364.241	188			
Factor 2 (‘change’)	Between Groups	2.235	2	1.118	.769	.465
	Within Groups	258.764	178	1.454		
	Total	260.999	180			
Factor 3 (‘meaning’)	Between Groups	18.739	2	9.370	4.949	<b>.008</b>
	Within Groups	372.929	197	1.893		
	Total	391.668	199			

A post-hoc Bonferroni test showed the differences for Factor 1 (‘emotion’) to be significant between the versions from which deviations were deleted compared to the version without parallelism:  $p = .001$ . The difference on this factor between the original and the version without parallelism was marginally significant ( $p = .047$ ). The same difference between the versions without deviation and the one without parallelism were likewise highly significant for Factor 3 (‘meaning’):  $p = .008$ . The difference between the original poem and the version without deviation was only tendentially significant:  $p = .067$ .

However, close inspection of the results reveals something quite astonishing. As can be seen from the table, the version from which deviations had been removed scores (significantly!) higher on ‘emotion’ (Factor 1) and ‘meaning’ (Factor 3). In other words, readers in the experiment experienced the manipulated non-deviational version as more emotional and more meaningful, which totally contradicts predictions by foregrounding theory, according to which it is the foregrounded, original, text that should have been evaluated as more emotional and meaningful. The differences in reactions are shown in Figure 2 below:

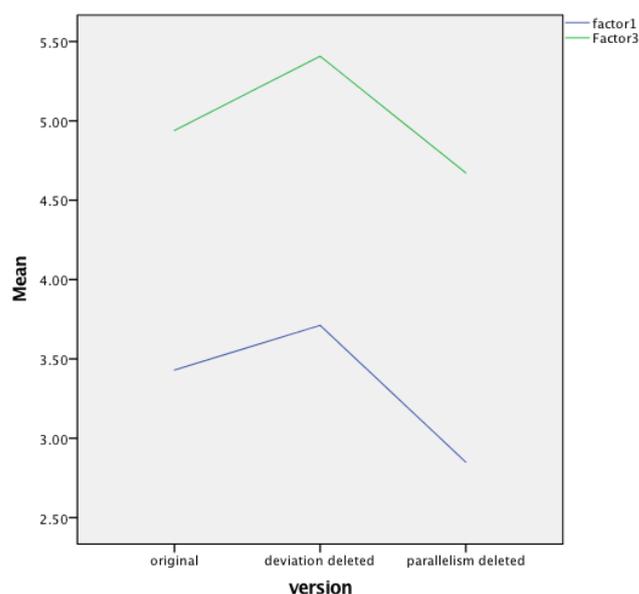


Fig. 2. Readers' reaction to original and manipulated versions: Factor 1 (‘emotion’) and Factor 3 (‘meaning’)

What also transpires from the graph is that the removal of parallelism from the original version resulted in (significantly) lower emotional involvement of readers and (tendentially significant) lowering of a meaningful reading (as defined in our factor descriptions before). Thus it would seem that parallelism contributes both to higher emotional and slightly higher meaningful readings, while deviation decreases such readings significantly.

When the three levels of participants (beginners, advanced, and staff) are compared for each of the three text versions, one notices significant differences for the **original** version between beginners / advanced students for Factor 1 (‘emotion’,  $p = .015$ ), Factor 2 (‘change’,  $p = .026$ ) and Factor 3 (‘meaning’,  $p = .045$ ). Differences between beginners and staff are marginally significant for Factor 3 ( $p = .055$ ). In each case one notices higher values

for advanced than for beginning students, but a remarkable drop in values for staff members, though not signifi-

cantly so in statistical terms. The differences are presented in Figure 3 below:

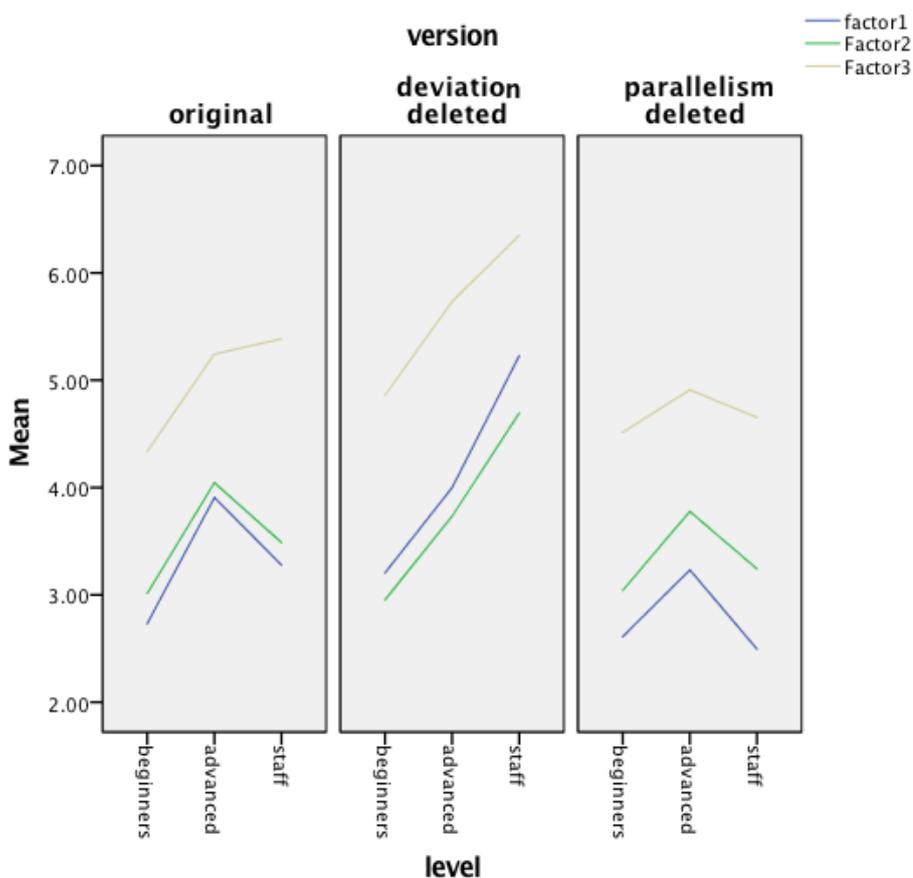


Fig. 3. Readers' reaction to original and manipulated versions across three levels

Maybe the clearest result concerns the version from which all deviation had been cleared. Here we see a continuous rise for all three factors with the level of literary experience. And the differences are highly significant:  $p = .003$  for Factor 1,  $p = .000$  for Factor 2 and  $p = .002$  for Factor 3. But the differences are completely counter-intuitive: one would expect greater involvement in terms

of 'emotion', 'change' and 'meaning' with each increase in experience. Instead, the reverse is the case. Removing deviations has a detrimental effect on involvement with each increase in literary experience. Post-hoc Bonferroni analyses yield the following significant differences, presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2.

*Post-hoc Bonferroni test results for the three factors across the three levels*

	<i>p</i> value beginners / advanced	<i>p</i> value beginners / staff
Factor 1	.083	.005
Factor 2	.013	.001
Factor 3	.006	.038

When we look at the right hand diagram in Figure 3, the one representing the version from which parallelism had been removed, one notices a pattern more or less similar as for the original version, but with less outspoken differences between beginners / advanced learners and staff. More important, however, is the fact that none of differences between the three levels are statistically sig-

nificant.

The clear preference that the staff members gave to the manipulated version of the poem is, in our view, rooted in the peculiarities of the educational system and pedagogical mentality in Ukraine. Educators in the country are very much used to a prescribed rigid norm in their practice (including grammar, wording, syntax, etc.). Conse-

quently, whatever is seen as deviant from the norm they teach might be perceived by them as abnormal and thus less beautiful. This claim, however, needs more empirical verification.

### 2.2. Study 2

In this study, we followed the research by Fricke (2008), who proposed several variants of a poem by Emily Dickinson, with predictions attached of how people will evaluate it. The hypotheses, though, have never been tested empirically, and this is where our research starts.

#### 2.2.1. Study 2.1

The experimental material was the poem J 1146 by Emily Dickinson, which we labelled O (for the “original”):

**O**

*When Etna basks and purrs  
Naples is more afraid  
Than when she shows her Garnet Tooth —  
Security is loud —*

The poem is very dense and also complicated. The Russian translations demonstrate that even professional translators seem to have struggle with what Dickinson was trying to convey. For ‘Security is loud’, for example, they have various alternatives, such as: ‘the guards will shout’, ‘Silence is dangerous’, ‘Danger speaks for itself’, or simply skip the image, having, in fact, re-written the poem, leaving nothing more than the idea of a volcano.

For experimental purposes, apart from the original version of the poem, we used two manipulated ones (E and F) proposed by Fricke. Version E leaves everything intact, except the final word – which is the very notion around which the poem revolves, replacing it by ‘lax’, thus producing a phrase that is completely predictable in everyday conversation, ‘security is lax’. Version F leaves the final line intact, but removes the foregrounding from lines 1-2. Additionally, the feline metaphor was removed and ‘her garnet tooth’ was replaced by ‘her fiery corona’ (which was debated in a group discussion that took place after the experiment). Thus the manipulated versions used in the experiment were:

**E**

*When Etna basks and purrs  
Naples is more afraid  
Than when she shows her Garnet Tooth —  
Security is lax —*

**F**

*When Etna sleeps  
Naples is more afraid  
Than when she shows her fiery corona —  
Security is loud —*

The study was conducted in February 2016. Participants were 41 members (predominantly students, all female, mean age 23 years) of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv

University in Kiev, Ukraine. They filled out the specifically designed questionnaires in which they rated on 7-point Likert scales their reactions to the three versions of the poem on the same aesthetic dimensions we used in Study 1 (see Appendix).

In the first part of the questionnaire, we introduced the poem with reading instructions and also gave the textual explanations: the poems were supplied with a brief glossary of some lexical units and their Ukrainian translations, in order to guarantee full understanding of the texts both conceptually and linguistically by non-native speakers. These elucidations were in the form of a short list, and were not attached to the text of the poems.

In the main part of the questionnaire, readers read the three versions of Dickinson’s poem, but the order of presentation had been counterbalanced, in order to avoid any learning or concentration effects: OEF, OFE, EFO, EOF, FEO and FOE.

Each of these 3 versions of the poem was followed by the 30 Likert scales, so we obtained 90 reactions per person per questionnaire version. The scales used were again based on categories previously developed by van Peer et al. (2007) and identical to those employed in Chesnokova and van Peer (2016). This time their order was not randomised, and the scales were grouped according to the six ‘dimensions’.

Finally, we asked participants to rank order the three versions of Dickinson’s poem according to how poetic they found them. This was done in the ratio level of measurement, in giving readers the following instruction: ‘If you have 100 points at your disposal, how many would you give to each version in terms of how poetic you experience each of them?’.

The research was conducted in a conventional academic setting during a lecture by one of the authors. The printed questionnaires were distributed, and participants had not been warned that they would be reading three versions of the same text. After the questionnaires were filled in and collected, respondents were invited to share their personal reactions in a group discussion, led by one of the experimenters.

The discussion demonstrated that Dickinson’s foregrounded images were mostly lost on the respondents. Many confessed that they had been attracted to the ‘fiery corona’ metaphor in version F and that they liked the image very much and found it really beautiful. This seems to have distracted them from the security issue, and actually overrode it.

There was an observation that the poem portrayed the volcano like ‘a cat, which is quiet at first and later becomes angry and then loud. This is a single image, and “loud” is its part. It’s like a movie when an animal is roaring at you, and then you roar back and it flees away’.

The data collected were analysed with the help of the SPSS programme. The descriptive statistics of the poeticity level demonstrated that the original version was rated the lowest, but a paired sample T-test showed that none of the differences were statistically significant.

Next, we had to make sure that the items in each of the six dimensions indeed measured the same thing. For this purpose, a reliability analysis was carried out. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all six dimensions in the three versions of the poem – first separately, and then for all three versions together. The results were above .96 for the poems together and above .72 for separate dimensions (except 'aesthetic structure' for Version E), thus allowing the construction of new variables out of the individual scales.

Thus, new variables were computed for each of the six dimensions. An ANOVA test on these new six variables yielded no significant results either.

### 2.2.2. Study 2.2

Assuming that Study 2.1 yielded no significant results because most students did not understand the original of Dickinson's poem, we decided to additionally run a test for 'literary sensitivity'. So that the respondents were less influenced by the other version, we now decided to offer the subjects read only one poem; thus this time we used a between-subjects design.

Participants consisted of two groups. Group 1 (26 participants) read the original of Dickinson's poem, while Group 2 (25 participants) were exposed to version F (as the one that is less metaphoric, and where there was no longer the feline field of metaphor). The groups consisted of almost exclusively female undergraduate students of English at the same university as the previous study.

As a preamble to the questionnaire, we added a note that we were after their own, personal opinion, and that they should not think of what teachers of literature would expect them to think. A brief glossary explaining the meaning of less usual words was supplied, for example:

*bask*: 'enjoy lying in the sun'

*purr*: 'the sound made by a cat'

*Garnet*: 'blood red'

*lax*: 'weak'.

After reading the poem, respondents were asked to express their opinion on the following 7-point scales:

1. There are very deep reasons why I love poetry a lot.
2. It is not very important that people read poetry.
3. Personally, I read poetry a good deal.
4. When I read a poem, I am totally immersed in it.
5. I regularly write poetry myself.
6. I find it difficult to concentrate on poetry.
7. It is important for society to have people read poetry.
8. I don't think that reading poetry is interesting.
9. I often get deep and sharp insights when I read poetry.
10. You don't miss anything if you don't read poetry.

Additionally, we asked them to write down in a few words the essence of what they thought the meaning of the poem was.

A final question was presented to those participants who read the original:

Now we would like you to evaluate the poem according to your own feelings and ideas. Now suppose you replace the final word of the poem by the word 'lax'. You have 100 points at your disposal to evaluate the poem: how many points would you give to the poem you read, AND to the poem with the word 'lax' as the final word. Divide the 100 points across these two versions.

For Group 2 participants, who read version F, the final task was to replace 'fiery corona' with 'Garnet Tooth' (which was explained there, but not before they read the poem) and to evaluate the two versions by way of distributing 100 points between them.

Results were tabulated on the basis of responses to the 'literary sensitivity' questionnaire, and they yet again go against the predictions by the foregrounding theory. The ANOVA test yielded no significant differences between readers.

The results indicate that the original of Dickinson's poem was literally understood, but somehow too far 'away' from the respondents' experiential world. At the same time, 'the fiery corona' metaphor has triggered a much better understanding of the poem by the respondents.

This was the 2nd study in which the foregrounding theory was not confirmed by the data, and this, we found, was worrying for the theory. With this idea in mind, we decided to carry out Study 3 described further on.

### 2.3. Study 3

For this experiment we formulated a negative hypothesis, namely that the manipulated version of a poem would be preferred over the original text.

The poem we worked with was '40 – Love' by the British author Roger McGough:

<i>Middle</i>	<i>aged</i>
<i>couple</i>	<i>playing</i>
<i>ten</i>	<i>nis</i>
<i>when</i>	<i>the</i>
<i>game</i>	<i>ends</i>
<i>and</i>	<i>they</i>
<i>go</i>	<i>home</i>
<i>the</i>	<i>net</i>
<i>will</i>	<i>still</i>
<i>be</i>	<i>be</i>
<i>tween</i>	<i>them</i>

The poem was a subject of literary and stylistic analysis several times (including Simpson, 2014: 97), and the

critics were largely discussing the author's conceptual metaphor MARRIAGE IS SPORT. As in a game of tennis 'love' means 'zero', the title is remarkable, as it sounds like a score. We nevertheless were not certain whether the respondents would be sensitive to that.

The poem is rich in foregrounding devices, predominantly of a typographic nature. To the best of our knowledge, not much work has been done on this kind of deviation (with the exception of Van Peer, 1993). The layout is deviant and parallel at the same time, in the sense that the text is arranged in two columns, both having one-word lines of approximately the same length. Additionally, the penultimate 'line' has the same word 'be', repeated twice.

For experimental purposes, we have manipulated the poem, arranging it into regular lines, not columns, thus taking away both deviation and parallelism. We have in a sense produced a version which is simpler and more explicit. On a conceptual level, in the manipulated version, the conceptual metaphor MARRIAGE IS SPORT was still there, so the only difference lied in the foregrounding.

*A middle aged couple  
Playing tennis.  
When the game ends  
And they go home,  
The net will still be  
Between them.*

The experiment was conducted in November 2016 at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University. Out of 58 participants, 6 were junior students, 26 advanced students enrolled in MA programs in English Philology or Translation Studies, and 26, PhD students or faculty members. The mean age of participants was 28.3 (median = 23).

Participants constituted two experimental groups: Group 1 (29 participants) read the original poem by McGough while Group 2 (29 participants) worked with the manipulated version. The name of the author was omitted, but not the title. The language of the questionnaire was Ukrainian to ensure that all participants clearly understood the tasks.

The questions in the first part of the questionnaire were the same as those previously used in Bortolussi and Dixon's *Psychonarratology* (2003) in their 'rereading paradigm':

- (1) Is this text an example of good literature?
- (2) Did you enjoy reading it?
- (3) Would you recommend it to a friend?

In the second part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to evaluate the poem on the same 7-point Likert scales as in Studies 1 and 2. They were also grouped by the same six dimensions we used in those previous studies.

Participants read their version twice, and then answered the questions and evaluated the poem after each reading. The time between the two readings was taken by

a brief lecture by the first author on Karl Popper's philosophy of science. In the second reading the participants first evaluated the poem on the 30 scales and then answered the Bortolussi and Dixon's questions.

The research was conducted in a conventional academic setting during lectures of one of the experimenters. We distributed the (printed) poems, without participants realizing that there were two versions of the text. After having read the text, having filled out the questionnaire and having collected the questionnaires, respondents were encouraged to share with the class their personal reactions in a group discussion, led by one of the experimenters. The initial voting on which of the two versions was the authentic one was, much to our surprise, almost 50 / 50, which means that for the participants both indeed looked like real poems.

Yet in the discussion of the original version participants noticed absence of articles, punctuation marks, capitals – an indication that they must have noticed the strongly deviational character of the original text. They also noted that 'the players were divided' by the imaginary net. Alternatively, in the manipulated text 'there were phrases' and 'rhythm', while 'the players were not separated' any more.

After analysis the results yield no significant differences between the groups: neither between the 1st and 2nd evaluation, nor between the six dimensions on the 1st and 2nd reading, and not between the original / manipulated version. Reactions were against predictions by foregrounding theory and statistically significant at that. When contemplating why the group appeared to be not sensitive to heavy foregrounding in the text, the respondents mentioned that that had to do with educational traditions in the country when students are instructed not to pay attention to the form while concentrating on the issues of meaning and implication. They also noted that in digital age form stops being important.

So we are yet again faced with an anomaly, which we must try to explain in Section 3 of this article.

### 3. Discussion. Literariness. A recourse to hermeneutics?

Steven Weinberg (2001: 141) recounts the fate of a close friend who was about to die who told him he found consolation in the fact that soon he would never have to hear the word hermeneutics again. This implies a tendency to discount interpretive processes, or even better – to integrate them into our work and to show our colleagues that what they often do is just not hermeneutics at all. But this will mean to change hermeneutics from within: from 'verstehende' to an 'erklärende' form of hermeneutics.

Yet it remains crucial to explain the negative results in the three experiments reported above, which are surprising, as the differences between the textual versions were, in our view, quite outspoken, and the participants involved were by default frequent readers. On an organisational level, it is important that all three studies were carried out among the same population: female students of language at the same university in Kiev, so we might

be dealing with a population effect, where such characteristics as gender, culture, age and foreign language proficiency have played a role.

On a more theoretical level, we might speculate whether the world changed since Shklovsky's seminal essay (1917 / 1965) and whether different reading patterns, instruction methods and cultural background have come to play. The time may be ripe to reflect (albeit refer-

ring to the practice of hermeneutics) on the concept of literariness *per se*.

Building on Van Peer (1991), literariness is a feature of language, predominantly occurring in texts of a homiletical type. 'Predominantly' here means that boundaries are fuzzy. In Figure 4 below, literariness is mainly located in the double shaded area of the lower right quadrant.

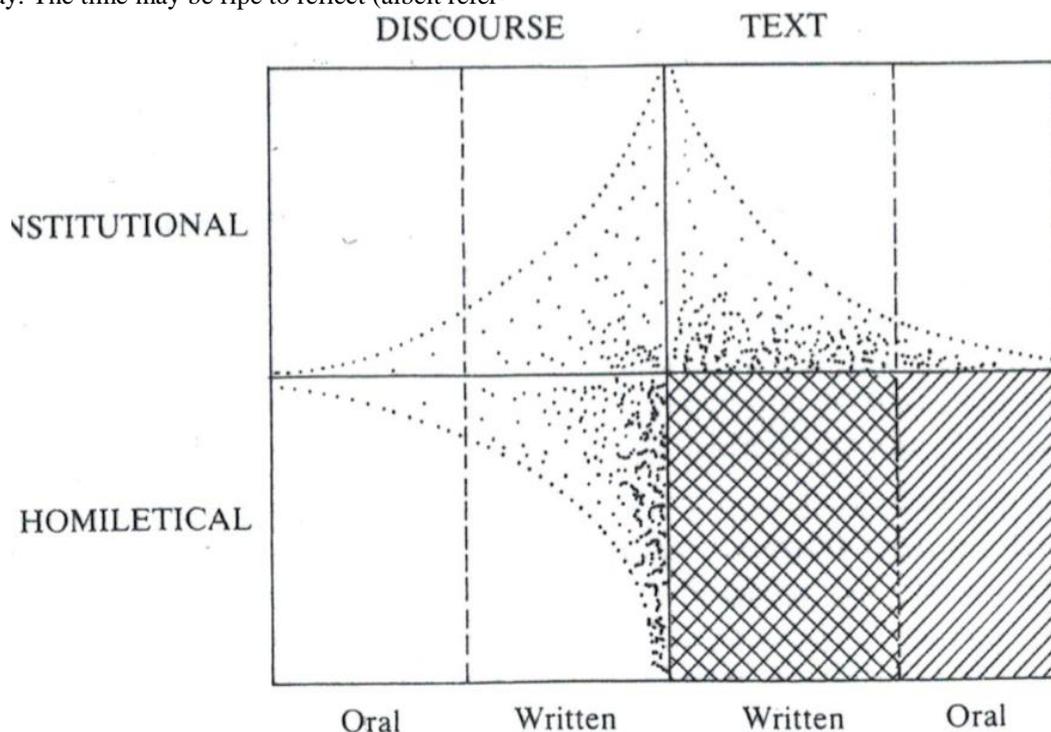


Fig. 4. Literariness: European norm (1500 – 2000)

The nature of homiletical texts implies the following six major characteristics:

1. a **distance** from everyday economic and institutional concerns, with no immediate practical relevance (division of labour, professional activities, institutional tasks, acquiring wealth, exerting power, etc.);

2. promoting **emotional** involvement and providing momentary delight;

3. creating **group cohesion**: between originator / narrator / characters and spectator / reader as well as between (sub)groups of participants in the homiletical event;

4. offering **reflective** possibilities through the creation of possible worlds that differ from the actual, known world;

5. display of formal **elaboration** that includes phonetic types of parallelism, grammatical deviation and symmetry, typographic experiments, etc.;

6. frequent influence by **islands** in the canon (if any).

We may illustrate the differences in literary systems with the following graphs below. Consider, first, Figure 5.

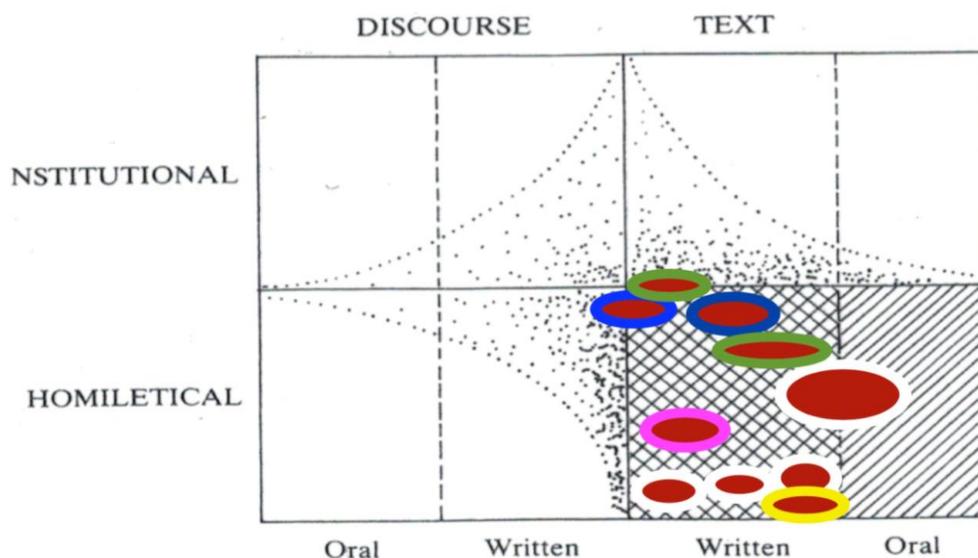


Fig. 5. Literariness: Classical Greece

The major works in classical Greek literature are predominantly *written*, but for the large red ‘island’, which represents the works by Homer. The oval representing this work is large, because of the enormous influence it exerted on all subsequent literary creations. But it is still grounded in oral tradition, shown by the extension to the single shaded area. Then there are further ancient islands (represented here by green ovals with a red heart): Pindar (517 – 438 BCE) and Sappho (630 – 580 BCE), there are the three great tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, here shown as white oval with red hearts) or the comedy writer Aristophanes (yellow with red interior), the works of the historians Herodotus and Thucydides and Xenophon (red heart in blue oval), or of the orator Demosthenes (brown in pink), all 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In

other words, classical Greek literature is full of towering figures that deeply influenced minor writers as well as later authors of a period of millennia.

Looking at English literature, one finds only three such towering figures: Shakespeare, Milton and Chaucer. The history of French literature, by contrast, is studded with innumerable great authors, but without any figure totally overshadowing others. Thus such representations visually illustrate basic differences between literary systems. (For illustrations of similar graphical representations, see Moretti, 2005).

Now let us look at a non-European literature, for instance that of Mali in West-Africa, as rendered in Figure 6 below.

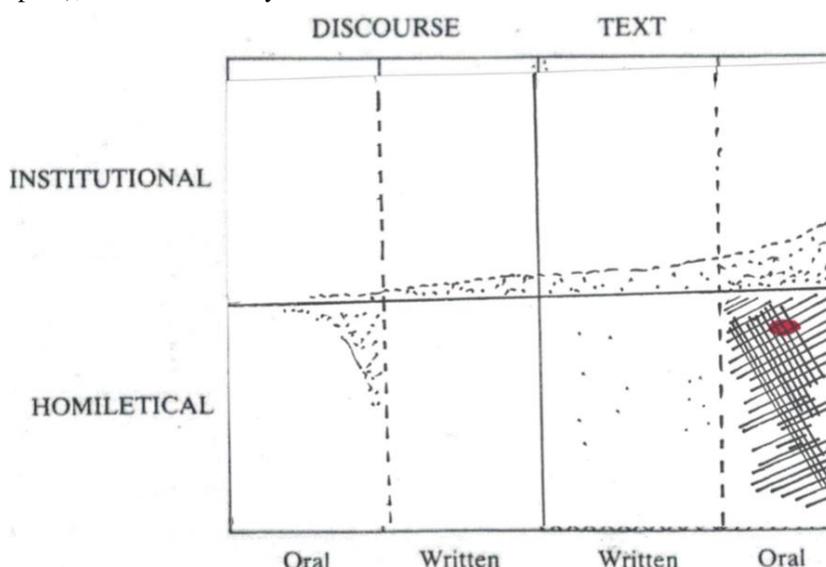


Fig. 6. Literariness: Mali

The first thing to notice about Malian literature is that it is almost exclusively *oral* in nature, having little or no relationship with written / printed literature. Then it is centred around one major ‘island’, the *Sunjata*, an epic that has come down to us by oral tradition of the *jaliw* (professional singers) from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The graph thus illustrates the profound differences in literary cultures.

But if we adopt the culture-dependent view on literariness, then we may ask whether the whole literary system is not in the process of shifting, thanks to current mass media and the extreme commercialization of the system. Thus in Figure 7 below we propose the following representation on the direction in which literariness is currently evolving.

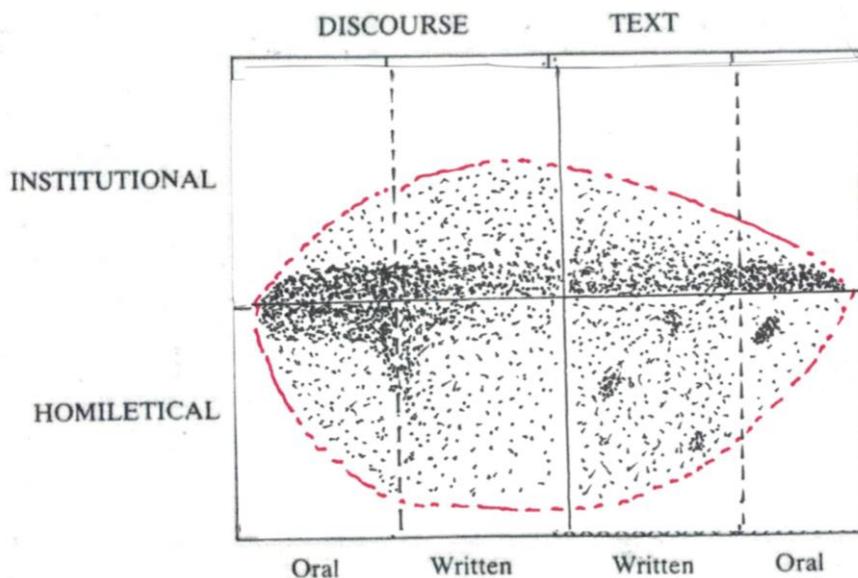


Fig. 7. Literariness: current situation

One aspect of present-day literature in western societies is the influence of institutions and media. In Figure 7, this is made clear by the fact that a large proportion of the literary system plays in institutional and homiletic forms of oral media, especially television programs, such as the ones by Oprah Winfrey and the like, but also through lectures at universities, libraries, festivals, extramural studies, adult educations, and so forth. Then there are the prestigious institutions like the Nobel Prize, the Man Booker and Goncourt prizes (next to some hundred other ones), as well as literary criticism in traditional journals such as the *New York Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, etc. Maybe considerably more impact may be expected from online criticism such as *Goodreads*, which boasts a readership of over 55 million. Then poetry

has shifted largely from the printed to the oral medium, for instance in *poetry slams*, with regularly over 10,000 participants. Youtube video clips of such happenings may go viral on the internet and be watched by, in one case, almost 2 million people: see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Soazvqpr53U&feature=youtu.be>. Then there are reading groups, book clubs, and so on. In sum, the picture of present-day literature is to a large part dominated by media that traditionally did not play a role – simply because they did not yet exist.

To come back to our considerations of literariness in general, we must conclude that it must be (in part, at least) culture-dependent and hence historically fluid, and Table 3 below offers the summary of our observations.

Table 3.

<i>Literariness characteristics</i>				
	European norm	Classical Greek	Mali	Current situation
Distance	++	-	+++	-
Emotion	+++	+++	++	+++
Group cohesion	++	+++	+	?
Reflection	+++	+++	--	--
Elaboration	+++	+++	+++	--
(Islands)	++	+++	+	---

#### 4. Conclusion

The experiments we have reported above present us with a serious problem: a range of previous studies had found diverse and powerful support for the theory of foregrounding. But our efforts to replicate the results have been unsuccessful. Also unsuccessful was the replication of the rereading hypothesis. Of course, it is too early to leave the theory altogether. Especially in the absence of better alternatives, that would be a very unwise decision.

We would like to emphasize that no other general literary theories have been put to a serious test, let alone a whole battery of falsification procedures. Thus it would seem wise to further adhere to the theory, but at the same time to be aware of the difficulties of replicating some results, as we have outlined above. A wholesale refutation of these results cannot be (see Popper, 1972: 13). On the other hand, we will have to look for a theory, presumably starting from the present one, that is guarded against refutation of the non-replicability kind. In any case the com-

parison of foregrounding theory (and its explanatory content) with any other theory must lead to a preference for Shklovsky's conjectures and their subsequent further development.

What caused the difference with earlier empirical tests remains unclear at the moment. Could it be a 'population effect'? After all, the studies reported here were all carried out with samples from roughly the same population: young, female students of language at one university in Kiev. Or was it the case that the amount of foregrounding manipulated was far too low to cause a clear effect. Recently Koopman (2016: 91) has pointed to this danger: "literariness" needs to be quite high to cause detectable differences on this type of empathic response'. Or, finally, it could be the case that the system of literariness has changed since Shklovsky formulated his theory for the first time.

Be that as it may, it will be clear that a good deal of further work awaits us here.

#### REFERENCES

1. Bortolussi, M. & Dixon, P. (2003). *Psychonarratology. Foundations for the empirical study of literary response*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Chesnokova, A.V. (2011). *Yak vymiryaty vrazhennya vid poeziyi abo Vstup do empyrychnyh metodiv doslidzhennya u movoznavstvi [Measuring the impression of poetry: Introduction to empirical research methods in linguistics]*. Kiev: Lenvit [in Ukrainian].
3. Chesnokova, A. & van Peer, W. (2016). Anyone came to live here some time ago: A cognitive semiotics approach to deviation as a foregrounding device. *Versus: Quaderni di studi semiotici* 122, 5-22.
4. Field, A. (2002). *Discovering statistics using SPSS for Windows*. London: Sage.
5. Fricke, H. (2008). How scientific can literary evaluation be? Arguments and experiments. *The quality of literature: Linguistic studies in literary evaluation*. W. van Peer (Ed.). (pp. 191–207). Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, .
6. Hutcheson, G. & Sofroniou, N. (1999). *The multivariate social scientist*. London: Sage.
7. Koopman, E. (2016). *Reading suffering. An empirical inquiry into empathic and reflective responses to literary narratives*. Rotterdam: ERNeCC.
8. *Language and Literature* 16 (2). (2007). (= Thematic issue on 'foregrounding').
9. Leech, G.N. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. London: Longman.
10. Miall, D. S. & Kuiken, D. (1994). Foregrounding, defamiliarization, and affect: Responses to literary stories. *Poetics* 22 (5), 389-407.
11. Moretti, F. (2005). *Graphs, maps, trees. Abstract models for a literary history*. London / New York: Verso.
12. Popper, K.R. (1972). *Objective knowledge. An evolutionary approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
13. Shklovsky, V. (1917 / 1965). Art as technique. *Russian Formalist criticism: Four essays*. L.T. Lemon & M.J. Reis (Eds.). (pp. 3-57). Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press,
14. Simpson, P. (2014). *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Routledge.
15. van Peer, W. (1986). *Stylistics and psychology. Investigations of foregrounding*. London: Croom Helm.
16. van Peer, W. (1991). But what is literature? Toward a descriptive definition of literary texts. *Literary pragmatics*, R.D. Sell (Ed.). (pp. 127-141). London: Routledge.
17. van Peer, W. (1993). Typographic foregrounding. *Language and Literature* 2 (1), 49-61.
18. van Peer, W., Hakemulder, F. & Zyngier, S. (2007). Lines on feeling: Foregrounding, aesthetic appreciation, and meaning. *Language and Literature* 16 (2), 197-213.
19. van Peer, W., Hakemulder, F. & Zyngier, S. (2012). *Scientific methods for the Humanities*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
20. Weinberg, S. (2001). *Facing Up. Science and its cultural adversaries*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

#### APPENDIX: Dimensions of foregrounding effects

##### 1. Aesthetic appreciation AA

- AA1 I think this line is musical.
- AA2 I think the sentence is beautiful
- AA3 I found it striking
- AA4 I would like to read it again

- AA5 I find it so good that I feel like memorizing it
- 2. Aesthetic structure **AS**
  - AS1 The sentence does not have a practical application
  - AS2 The line is complex
  - AS3 The sentence is elaborate
  - AS4 The wording is unique
  - AS5 This is written in a very special style
- 3. Cognitive **C**
  - C1 It makes me stop and think
  - C2 It could make a change to my life
  - C3 I am learning something from it
  - C4 The line has a deep meaning
  - C5 It opens up new perspectives
- 4. Emotive **E**
  - E1 I find this line moving
  - E2 I am touched by it
  - E3 It makes me shiver
  - E4 Such wording gets under my skin
  - E5 Reading this gives me gooseflesh
- 5. Social context **SC**
  - SC1 This is the sort of sentence by means of which people would write about their deepest concerns
  - SC2 This comes probably from an anthology
  - SC3 This is the sort of sentence discussed in a literature class
  - SC4 Maybe such language may change something in people
    - SC5 I would like to see such utterances more in my daily environment
- 6. Attitudinal **AT**
  - AT1 The sentence makes me more sensitive
  - AT2 I think it introduces a new attitude
  - AT3 It makes me look at things differently
  - AT4 The line diminishes the distance to other people
  - AT5 My point of view is questioned by these words

**Віллі ван Пір,**  
доктор наук, професор,  
Університет Людвіга Максиміліана,  
Профессор-Хубер Платц, 2, м. Мюнхен, Німеччина,  
**Ганна Вадимівна Чеснокова,**  
кандидат філологічних наук, професор,  
Київський університет імені Бориса Грінченка,  
вул. Бульварно-Кудрявська, 18/2, м. Київ, Україна

### ЛІТЕРАТУРНІСТЬ У ДОСВІДІ ЧИТАЧА.

#### РОЗБУДОВА ЕМПІРИЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ ХУДОЖНЬОГО ТЕКСТУ І ТЕОРІЇ

У минулому ціла низка досліджень надала емпіричного підтвердження психологічному феномену висунення. У запропонованій статті автори презентують результати серії експериментів, що були спрямовані на вивчення описових і оцінних реакцій читача на поетичні тексти – як в їх оригінальному варіанті, сповненому експліцитного висунення у формі девіації та паралелізму, так і зманіпульованих версій, у яких таке висунення було вилучено. У цьому сенсі презентоване дослідження є реплікацією попередніх експериментів. Воно також має на меті порівняння отриманих результатів із висновками інших розвідок, що, на відміну від попередніх, не знайшли емпіричного підтвердження феномену висунення. Додатково розвідка покликана стати внеском у розбудову ідеї про «парадигму повторного читання» М. Бортолуссі і П. Діксона (2003). Автори поєднують презентацію результатів експериментів із теоретичним переосмисленням концепту літературності, який буде проаналізовано на прикладах різних читацьких спільнот і текстів. Такий підхід буде співвіднесено із спробою В. ван Піра (1991) розробити універсальне визначення літератури, яке б урахувало гетерогенну природу всього корпусу текстів, що вважаються літературними. Переосмислення таких аспектів художніх текстів та їх рецепції може певною мірою пролити світло на існуючі проблеми теорії літературності.

**Ключові слова:** літературність, емпіричне дослідження, читацький експеримент, парадигма повторного читання, висунення.

*Submitted on August, 21, 2017*