# How to Do Things with Things: A Corpus-Stylistics Approach to Objects in Modernist Fiction



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In my research project, I want to stress the interactive aspect of texts and investigate **what readers "do with things"** while reading. I propose a **literary-linguistic** discourse perspective on the textual representation of objects and **readers' comprehension** processes. I will employ digital tools to explore objects as narrative and linguistic strategy in modernist texts using **frequency data from corpora**.

Summary

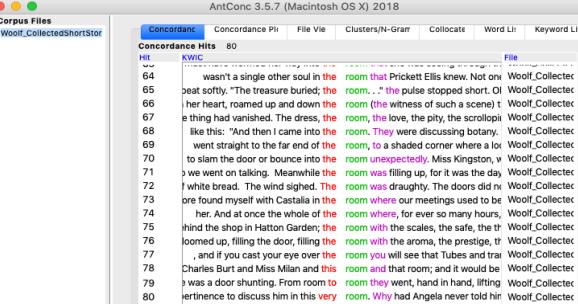
Focusing on linguistic patterns in **noun** hope to find quantitative and phrases, | qualitative evidence provide to а (hypothetical) model for reading objects in modernist fiction. In my analysis, I will focus on frequent lexical choices and patterns, i.e. syntactic argument structure, lexicosemantic aspects and patterns of transitivity. These include aspects such as lexical priming, semantic prosody topic and modelling.

Framework

With a detection of textual patterns I hope to be able to explain further the **"psychopoetic effects"** (Mellmann 2010) of reading, such as ontological categories of narrative character and voice, narrative space and the inference of coherence (plot). I want to provide a fine-grained analysis of linguistic choices in order to provide an **"exploration and testing of literary hypotheses** through mining of narrative [and linguistic] structure from corpora" (Mani 2013).

Framework

Data and Tools



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- a POS-tagged corpus of 30 long and short modernist texts
- a reference corpus of fictional texts bordering on modernism
- a second reference corpus containing

#### non-fictional texts (ARCHER, BNC)

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Long, tall and wide

Wmatrix (Rayson 2009)

Living creatures: animals, birds, etc

## Zooming in on: Fictional Characters at the Syntax-Semantics Interface

### Summary

- How do fictional texts invite readers to imagine a fictional figure? How do readers tap into this "emotional trap"? What are reasons for Mellmann's claim that "it is not character but focalization [that] guides our fictional experience" (416)?
- A corpus stylistics analysis of lexis and syntax will help to shed light on textual and narrative strategies.
- In modernist texts, description is frequently decoupled from a clear deictic centre, i.e. the

## How to Retrieve Data?

- How to provide numbers for a **key aspect** of fictional texts? The aim is to provide exact numbers of explicit and implicit modes of character creation.
- Fictional figures are introduced to stories by:

Location and direction

- referential expressions such as proper names, definite descriptions (i.e. as appositions or adjective-noun patterns) or personal pronouns.
- Machines have learned to automatically retrieve references to names (NER) and parts of speech (POS-tagging).
- The automatic retrieval of **description** is a much
- reference is not clear. In many of these instances **semantic objects** as heads of the noun phrase can be identified instead.
- Carve out the significance of two different modes of writing fictional figures: a mode of explicit reference and a mode of implicit induction. It may also further account for the perceived difficulty of modernism's experiments of representing consciousness.

more complex task for the machine, especially when phrases appear to be "synsemantic" as is often the case in modernism.

- Focus on characterizing effects of lexical choice and placement in syntax (e.g. as head in noun phrase).
- How to **operationalize**?
  - Use Wmatrix to analyze corpus semantically and to retrieve numbers and instances of objects. Zoom into phrase and compare numbers.