Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*: Negotiating worldviews through narrative fiction

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The paper centres on the ways in which Cognitive Linguistic analytical tools can be employed to analyse changing worldviews in historical narratives. The linguistic material used in the analysis comes from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*, a cautionary tale about how imprudent trust may lead to tarnished reputation. The paper explores the problem of how narrative can serve as a cognitive tool for shaping worldviews held within cultural communities. In particular, it sets out to discuss the cognitive-cultural underpinnings of the poet's strategies used to tell a fragmentary version of the ancient narrative about Dido and Aeneas. The article investigates how the author's epistemic stance influences the expression of selected social-cultural categories in the story. Finally, the paper delineates potential contributions of cognitive-cultural research into the field of narrative studies, urging for a more comprehensive recognition of the human factor in both linguistic and literary scholarship.

Keywords: cognitive-diachronic approach to narratives; epistemic perspective; morality; narrative gaps; perspective-taking; worldview

1. The diachronic study of narrative in light of Cognitive Linguistics

One of the central tenets of Cognitive Linguistics (CL) holds that linguistic structure emerges from usage. The usage-based thesis implies that language acquisition occurs through cultural transmission. In this way, community members tend to share a specific worldview, broadly defined as a particular way of constructing reality, which presupposes common origins of the

community's knowledge distributed not only across individual minds, but also stored in various material resources. To claim that a worldview entails a historical continuity is to argue that the diachronic dimension implies the evolution of the community's conceptual order, negotiated across space and time. Hence, connected with the notion of the worldview is the idea of the common ground, which is rendered in terms of beliefs and assumptions (presumably) shared between individuals engaged in an act of communication.

Natural language is most prominent among cultural tools for imparting knowledge. Often linguistic communication depends on the use of other, complementary means of storing and conveying information, as, for instance, the reliance on the gesture of pointing in everyday situations. However, some resources (sometimes also referred to as material anchors or memory carriers) may be used as repositories of knowledge. Whether linguistic or imagistic in nature, such tools share the propensity for telling stories about the community's past, a capacity conducive to the sustenance of collective memory, identity, and worldview.

The problem of methodology is one important issue pertinent to a cognitive-linguistic analysis of historical narratives. In a cognitively-informed, diachronic approach to narratives, the researcher may rely on a methodology safeguarding against the imposition of present-day conceptual frames onto a past worldview. At issue is how to avoid the dangers of skewing former conceptual order by (unknowingly) bending it to fit modern outlooks. As a set of theoretical approaches to language, CL is based on the methodological principle of convergent evidence, which implies that cognitive-linguistic models should be consistent with what is known about the human mind in cognitive science, including cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience (see also Evans & Green 2006). Although not entirely without reservations (see Gibbs 2007), it is generally assumed that CL offers analytical tools that satisfy the requirement of maintaining the psychological reality of linguistic phenomena under study. This opens unique vistas on research problems potentially relevant to a cognitively-based, diachronic analysis of narratives such as, for instance, categorisation in the realm of social cognition.

Over the recent years, there have been calls for the adoption of cognitive-linguistic tools not only in the domain of diachronic research (see Winters 2010), but also in the field of broadly defined narrative theory.[1] As Albert &

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[1] CL is an umbrella term for a loosely-knit cluster of theories. Some approaches and analytical tools from CL have been used extensively in literature studies. The

Olson (2018: 2) point out, in the case of narratology this tendency derives from Fludernik's idea of experientiality, "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" (Fludernik 1996: 12, in Albert & Olson 2017: 2). It is posited that the common denominator for the historically-oriented, cognitively-informed linguistic and narrative studies is the need to account for the human factor behind linguistic structures. What the study of historical narratives should not ignore is the lived experience of the individual and how it may influence the construal of conceptual content by the author, as well as the ways in which it may impact meaning construction on the part of the reader.

It is the embodied, socio-culturally embedded nature of human experience that foregrounds the problem shared by the two approaches: the issue of the psychological plausibility of claims concerning historical narratives. The large and ever-increasing body of empirical research into cognitive underpinnings of language (see Bergen 2012, Barsalou 2017) demonstrates that language is not an autonomous module in the human mind. Since language is integral to cognition, meaning construction may be viewed as a matter of conceptual processes. As prompts for meaning construction, linguistic units should not be regarded as "containers" or "vessels" carrying semantic features. In CL, meaning construction is equated with conceptualisation, which, in turn, underscores the dynamic, context-dependent nature of narrative interpretation. As Fauconnier has it,

> language, along with other aspects of expression and contextual framing, serves as a powerful means of prompting dynamic on-line constructions of meaning that go far beyond anything explicitly provided by the lexical and grammatical forms. This is not a matter of vagueness or ambiguity; it is in the very nature of our systems of thought. [...] What we are conscious of, to a high degree, is language form on one hand, and experiencing 'meaning' on the other. The effect is magical; as soon as we have form, we also have meaning, with no awareness of the intervening cognition. (Fauconnier 2014: 230)

It is important to note that a great deal of what is expressed linguistically is underspecified. Typically, when interlocutors construct meaning, they also rely on what constitutes the relevant common ground. Taylor (2012: 168) observes

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development of cognitive poetics testifies to the depth of the influence of CL on literary theorising. The (ongoing) emergence of cognitive/cognitivist narratology also hints at the importance of cognitively-informed research.

that "[w]ord meanings are the creations of context, where the 'context' ranges over conceptual structure, the linguistic environment, and embodied cultural practices". Importantly, in some research strands of cognitive science cognition is viewed as grounded, not merely embodied. Barsalou explains that "[t]he crux of the grounded approach is understanding how the modalities, the physical environment, the social environment, *and* the body *contribute* to cognition, playing central roles in the diverse forms it takes" (2016: 1124, original italics). Considering mental activity as grounded implies that cognition and culture are mutually constitutive. While the bond entails that our minds are shaped culturally, it is equally important that individuals mentally construct the world and negotiate their conceptualisations in interaction occurring in particular socio-cultural milieu, which contributes to the emergence of an intersubjective conceptual order. Therefore, in a cognitive-diachronic analysis of a narrative, it is indispensable to consider the socio-cultural context in which meaning construction is embedded.

To conclude the introductory section, it must be reminded that the scope of the paper is limited. Therefore, the paper cannot embrace all the potentially relevant theoretical issues and examples. The paper focuses on some selected problems and excerpts from Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*, which are deemed most pertinent to the present study. Of utmost importance is the research question of whether, and, if so, how, an individual can contribute to the negotiation of a collective worldview.

2. Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*: Narrative in the nexus of the mind, language, and culture

The further one looks into the past, the more opaque it transpires. Where sufficient and reliable information about the dim and distant, if not mythical, past cannot be found, human imagination may come to the rescue, filling in the blank spaces with fictional scenarios. In such cases, narratives of ancient origin could serve as building blocks used in the construction of collective worldviews best tailored to the needs of the day.

In the Middle Ages, the production of a new version of an old tale in the vernacular often entailed the translation and/or adaptation of the source text. From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, the translation of an older text might be regarded as a usage event, "actual instance of language use, in the full detail of its contextual understanding" (Langacker 2014: 30; see also Halverson

2013). With the dawn of early humanism in Europe, ancient stories such as Ovid's *Heroides* were recovered as sources of narratives which could be used to discuss the moral and ethical questions of the time (Collette 2014). From a cognitively-based perspective, the palimpsests of meanings retrievable from the medieval versions of ancient texts consist of layers of intermingling older and newer conceptualisations. From a cognitive-linguistic viewpoint, what occurred during the translational usage events could be described as the conceptual integration of ancient and medieval ideas, which gave rise to an altered view of old notions.[2] The resulting re-conceptualisation of the old was contextualised in the space-time of a local culture.

Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* seems to be a good example of the process. The re-conceptualisation might involve the negotiation of old ideas so that they could permit the re-categorisation of some aspects of the contemporaneous social world. The somewhat bizarre selection of the heroines in the *Legend of Good Women* might have been designed to serve that purpose. In choosing the figures as diverse as Dido, Lucretia, Medea, and Cleopatra, the poet could create an ad-hoc category serving the purposes of his storytelling. An ad-hoc category is

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[2] In CL the problem of how concepts combine can be approached from the viewpoint of the theory of mental spaces and conceptual blending. Although the scope of the paper does not allow to provide a fuller treatment of mental spaces and conceptual integration, it seems worth explaining that mental spaces are "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action" (Fauconnier 2014: 231), while conceptual integration "consists in setting up networks of mental spaces that map onto each other and blend into new spaces in various ways" (2014: 247). For illustration, one might think of the cognitive-linguistic classic example *This surgeon is a butcher*, indicating that at the conceptual level a new blended structure emerges such that allows us to conclude that the surgeon must be incompetent. Other examples include sentences such as *Max thinks Harry's name is Joe*, in which "even though *Harry* is the appropriate name in one [mental] space, it can be used to access the corresponding element in another space, where another name is appropriate" (2014: 233). To a large extent, the outcome of conceptual integration depends on the cognitive resources on the interpreter. A more recent account of the approaches to mental spaces and blending can be found in Birdsell (2015) or Turner (2015).

> a novel category constructed spontaneously to achieve a goal relevant in the current situation (e.g., constructing *tourist activities to perform in Beijing* while planning a vacation). These categories are novel because they typically have not been entertained previously. They are constructed spontaneously because they do not reside as knowledge structures in long-term memory waiting to be retrieved. [...] Ad hoc categories constitute a subset of role categories, where roles provide arguments for verbs, relations, and schemata. Some role categories are so familiar that they become lexicalized (e.g. *seller, buyer, merchandise,* and *payment* name the agent, recipient, theme, and instrument roles of *buy*). When the conceptualization of a role is novel, however, an ad hoc category results (e.g. *potential sellers of gypsy jazz guitars*). Pursuing goals requires the constant specification and instantiation of roles necessary for achieving them. When a well-established category for a role doesn't exist, an ad hoc category is constructed to represent it. (Barsalou 2010: 86)

Although Chaucer's true *entente* may not be entirely clear, we know that the theme interconnecting the stories is the notion of GOOD WOMEN. Subsuming under the same umbrella term Lucretia, Dido, and Medea might have been a creative device employed to show the moral relativity of social evaluations.

The poet's reliance on the common ground of his day might go unnoticed. Indeed, it may seem veiled to the extent that one is tempted to assert that in Virgil's, Ovid's, and Chaucer's versions of the story about the Queen of Carthage, "Dido is the same Dido: the point of reference is always the same (pseudo-historical) figure" (van Contzen 2018: 81). However, the problem is much more intricate than may seem at first glance. First, in the words of Bernárdez (2013: 334), who comments on the role of culture in translation, "[p]utting language in direct relation to cognition without the intermediary of culture can lead to unsolvable problems"; he continues: "[a]ssumming *a priori* the universality of processes, concepts, etc., is a serious danger for translators" (2013: 335). Second, as Colette has it,

> the age in which Chaucer wrote, with its recurrent descriptions of *translatio studii* as the transfer of learned classical culture to the European West, cited classical texts as representatives of a different and not entirely familiar culture, and valued them for what they might offer the present, particularly in regard to moral and ethical conduct. (Colette 2014: 156)

Boundaries between cultural communities often prove to be porous, and the conceptualisations resulting from interaction across the borders via different

vehicles such as narratives may be conceptual blends. Although the figure of Dido-Elissa was a reference point for the many versions of the story, which did ensure a sense of its continuity over time, one of the crucial differences between ancient and late medieval approaches to the tale inheres in the contents of category knowledge necessary for making sense of the narrative.

Without category knowledge supported by structures such as exemplars, prototypes, or schemata human life would consist of a chaotic flux of experience depriving us of the ability to form expectations about the world and pursue goals. In cognitive science, Barsalou (2007: 181) argues for a dynamic representation of knowledge, "the ability of the cognitive system to construct, and call on as necessary many different representations of a category, each emphasizing the category knowledge currently most relevant" (ibid.). As Barsalou further explains,

> [w]hen processing the concept of *water* in the context of a Norwegian pond during winter, the property of *freezes* becomes active, although it would not become active normally (e.g. in the context of drinking *water* in a Norwegian restaurant). In other cases, varying content appears to originate in background situations [...]. When conceptualizing *chair*, for example, people might include chairs as occurring in offices. Similarly, when conceptualizing *truth*, people might represent truth as it occurs in courts of law. In general, considerable amounts of information in conceptual representations appear to originate in the background situation in which a concept is currently represented, including the setting, related objects, other agents, actions, and variety of internal states (e.g. goals, evaluations, affect, motivation, reward, mentalizing). (Barsalou 2017: 13)

Thus, conceptual, and by implication, language change may result from the dynamic nature of the coupling between the mind and the world. With changing individual and collective experience, the encyclopaedic knowledge of a community member changes as well. As category knowledge is prone to change across space and time, Chaucer's Dido is inevitably different from Virgil's or Ovid's Queen of Carthage.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer famously remarks "Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is change" (Book II, l. 22). The statement itself seems surprisingly consistent with the implications following from the assumption of the usage-based thesis, whereby language use is seen as the source of linguistic evolution. Bybee (2010: 6) poses the question "[whether] the processes that give us linguistic structure [are] specific to language or [...] also apply in other

cognitive domains". The processes include categorisation, chunking, and analogy, which gives emphasis to the cognitive foundations of changing worldviews. Arguing for a socially enriched pragmatic onomasiological approach to language change, Geeraerts contends that

> [l]inguistic changes are always mediated through onomasiological choices made on the level of actual language use. Words and constructions die out because speakers refuse to choose them, and expressions are added to the inventory of a language because some speakers introduce them and others imitate these speakers; similarly, expressions change their value within the language because people start using them in different circumstances. (Geeraerts 2010: 350)

However, it seems that, despite playing a pivotal role in promoting language change, the frequency of usage is not the ultimate answer to the question of why (and how) worldviews change. Human communication cannot be reduced to speakers' onomasiological choices that express intended categorisations. The ability to construct stretches of narrative discourse arises, in part, from the development of the grammar of sharing, or "fancy syntax" (Tomasello 2008: 282–284). A cognitive-diachronic study of historical narratives should duly account for relevant linguistic phenomena. However, seeking answers to the problem of changing worldviews cannot be restricted to the exploration of linguistic structures insofar as the approach does not explain the experiential reasons for linguistic change: why "people start using [expressions] "in different circumstances" (ibid., citing Geeraerts 2010: 350) in the first place. Focusing squarely on linguistic structures, we can ignore the obvious: the lived experience of a particular individual that motivates his/her linguistic choices. The intended conceptualisation might not be (fully) verbalised due to the availability of the cultural common ground, "an epistemic dimension of shared skills, knowledge, and beliefs" (Tomasello 2016: 93). A lot may be left unsaid, which nevertheless will not impede communication as long as the interlocutors share sufficient knowledge how to fill in the gaps. Attending either to the cognitive underpinnings of changing worldviews or their linguistic aspect cannot fully explain the problem of how individuals may contribute to the re-negotiation of collective views of the world. Specifically, the cognitive-linguistic usage-based account of language structure implies that "all units are learned through interaction in a physical, social, cultural, and discourse context. In this respect, all aspects of language structure have a cultural basis" (Langacker 2014: 30). To use Langacker's idea of domain, defined by Taylor as "any coherent network of knowledge which provides the

necessary background for understanding a concept" (2012: 158), it may be argued that in the Middle Ages the proper noun *Dido* might have profiled cognitive domains different from the domains that could have been central for ancient audiences. The salience of specific domains could change over time. For instance, Chaucer repeatedly describes Dido as *sely*, with the adjective meaning embracing, as the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) specifies, the senses of 'holy', 'innocent', but also 'foolish', 'defenceless', and 'unfortunate' or 'miserable'. What the semantic evolution of the Middle English lexeme *sely* > Present-day English *silly* indicates is that semantic change is not random, but follows certain conceptualisation pathways.

Narratives can be used as powerful weapons of spreading ideologies. As we read in Hagedorn,

> [Dido's] narrative resembles that of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other women in literature —not to mention in real life. [...] [T]he sense of pain and loss that abandoned women pour out in their laments offers a challenge to traditional social structures, values, and even poetic genres that enshrine and celebrate male dominance and male exploits. The voice of the abandoned women, left behind and left out, calls attention to the darker side of these social and poetic traditions, just as Virgil's story of Dido casts a shadow on the martial exploits of his hero Aeneas. (Hagedorn 2004: 9)

Narrating an alternate version of a story can be viewed as a site for the exploration of what has been excluded from the mainstream worldview that dominates various discourses in a community. The point raises the question of the moral foundations of fostering specific worldviews. In particular, at stake is what Chaucer explicitly verbalises in his tale of Dido, as well as what the poet omits to mention, and why he chooses to do so.

The issue of human morality is fraught with "complexity and perhaps even unavoidable contradictions" (Tomasello 2016: 128). "Human beings", Tomasello says, "enter into each and every social interaction with selfish me-motives, sympathetic you-motives, egalitarian motives, group-minded we-motives, and a tendency to follow whatever cultural norms are in effect" (ibid.). Storytelling can foster the ability to adopt the other's viewpoint, encouraging empathy by creating a "we-centric" (mentally shared) space, a "self-other space" (Gallese & Cuccio 2015). Herman (2013: 13) observes that narratives used as a means for making sense "do not merely evoke worlds but also intervene in a field of discourse, a range of representational strategies, a constellation of ways of seeing". Following the construction of multiple

viewpoints co-existing in a narrative, we can learn about the social costs of our actions, which saves us from seeking answers to moral dilemmas by trial-and-error. Along these lines, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* could be seen as a collection of cautionary tales, created for a similar, "didactic" purpose.

3. *The Legend of Dido*: Insights from the dialogue between narrative research and Cognitive Linguistics

The current state-of-research in cognitive science, embracing CL and its akin fields of study, allows to explore narratives from a wide array of disciplinary perspectives, each with its own interest. It is argued that not only narrative scholarship, but also CL can benefit from an even closer co-operation. Hence, we set out to build on the burgeoning cross-disciplinary dialogue. Following Herman (2013), one can distinguish the processes of worlding the story, whereby narrative is considered as a target of interpretation, and storying the world, whereby narrative is regarded as a means for interpreting experience. The conception of a two-way relation seems significant in that it encourages a more balanced collaboration, in which cognitive linguists not only contribute to narrative enquiry, but also draw on insights from the scholarship.

In cognitively-based research into events and narratives, it is often said that narratives help organise the flux of experience into manageable chunks by carving our spatial-temporal units, events and situations, featuring entities such as participants and the relations between them. Narratives are also believed to foster human reasoning about the social world, for instance, by construing different versions of causal chains related to the same event. As tools for thinking, narratives help us modify how we make sense of experience inasmuch as storytelling permits the manipulation of various perspectives on events: spatial, temporal, or epistemic ("who knew enough to tell the story in this way, a crucial consideration with respect to the embedded novel", Dancygier 2012: 48). One important process is viewpoint compression, which enables the author to give more salience to the selected aspects of the story, with "the specific compression choices [leading] to narratives of different kind" (Dancygier 2012: 59). Compression makes the multitude of information manageable by allowing the author to leave out some of it.

Lexical-grammatical aspects of narrative are unquestionably important. The cognitive-linguistic notion of construal (imagery) explains why our linguistic choices can shape the conceptual content we want to express. Grammar is

symbolic (meaningful) in nature, although its meaning is schematic. Attempts to link tools from Langacker's theory of construal in terms of focal adjustment (FA) have been made. One of the most recent approaches, Herman (2013) correlates the idea of focalisation with the three FA parameters: selection (the scope of predication), perspective (figure-ground alignment, viewpoint, deixis, subjectivity/objectivity of construal), and abstraction (granularity, or the degree to which meaning is schematic). In the paper, the subjective-objective construal will be used to explain the positioning of the narrator and some of the characters relative to the ground, or the situation of the utterance.

How does Chaucer use language so as to construct his own version of the tale about Dido? From the opening lines of *Legend* the reader learns that it is the God of Love that, at Alceste's request, assigns the poet-narrator the task of writing about "good women". Hence, Chaucer effectively compresses the mentally calibrated spatial-temporal distance between the poet-narrator and his predecessors. The format of story-within-story introduces a specific epistemic viewpoint, whereby the reader knows well in advance how the events will unfold. The main question remains how they are going to be told. Chaucer's selection of linguistic techniques enables him to guide the reader's attention, and thus activate the relevant background knowledge, as the need arises.

The compression may seemingly align Chaucer's version with the stories of Virgil and Ovid. This may give rise to a belief that "[o]nce the text becomes a shared cultural artifact, it participates in the system of distributed cognition and is no longer treated as one speaker's communicative contribution" (Dancygier 2012: 18). However, the conception of collective, distributed cognition does not preclude person-level cognition. Isn't Chaucer's story about the Queen of Carthage indicative of his own evaluation of the culture of the time? The perspective is important in that it helps account for the role of Chaucer's story about Dido in the transmission of the abandoned woman figure. In Chaucer's case, the point seems to be his authorial freedom from the sources: [3]

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[3] All quotations concerning Chaucer's work are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer* (1987).

> But natheles, oure autour telleth us,
> That Cupido, that is the god of love,
> At preyere of his moder hye above,
> Hadde the liknesse of the child ytake,
> This noble queen enamored to make
> On Eneas; but, as of that scripture,
> Be as be may, I take of it no cure.
> LD, ll. 1139–1145

The poet-narrator makes it clear that the sources appear patchy as well, and thus he cannot be blamed for an incomplete account of Dido's love affair, as in the case of the cave scene:

> And shortly, from the tempest hire to save,
> She fledde hireself into a litel cave,
> And with hire wente this Eneas also.
> I not, with hem if there wente any mo;
> The autour maketh of it no mencioun.
> LD, ll. 1224–1228

In the poet's version of Dido's story narrative gaps result partially from his use of the literary device known as *occupatio/occultatio* (whereby the author draws attention to what he leaves out by saying that he takes shortcuts). This indicates the extent of Chaucer's reliance on the cultural common ground. However, some other places of indeterminacy are the result of the underspecified nature of linguistic structures, used as prompts for meaning construction. This also implicates how deeply the narrative was embedded in the context of the time. To conclude, it is precisely because the individual minds are grounded in the body, the physical reality, as well as the social-cultural world that knowledge can circulate within the cognitive system of a broader community.

On our account, concepts are viewed as situated, tailored to the specific demands of the context. Therefore, the paper explores the possibility that narratives provide situational constraints on the conceptual content to be represented. Culturally-embedded templates of such event sequences are recyclable, which makes them malleable to cross-generational transfer. Significantly, in the case of Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*, it seems ancient stories offer schematic background situations that, on the one hand, promote conceptual continuity, but, on the other, do not preclude the existence of

narrative gaps, which can be completed according to the current needs of the members of a given society. The key to this balance lies in the vast space left for the chunking of human experience into tellable events such that they carry the weight of the social import. Our claim is that it is the epistemic stance of the author that tells him where to delineate the (fine or coarse) boundaries of the narrated events (see Tversky & Zacks 2013), and what to leave out of the storyline. It is the author who decides which perspective to opt for: that of selfish me-motives, sympathetic you-motives, egalitarian motives, group-minded we-motives. It is also the author's experience that tells him which of the perspectives might be most useful in negotiating those aspects of the worldview that he finds inadequate. The problem entails the tug-of-war between the lived experience of an individual and the authority of the received view of the world.

4. Morality and worldview: Chaucerian *trouthe*

How do the issues discussed so far converge and inform the discussion of negotiating worldviews via narratives? To the extent that worldviews are translatable into social norms, they are bound up with morality. Tomasello (2016) differentiates natural (second-personal) morality from cultural ("objective") morality. The scholar offers some invaluable insights that shed light onto how being part of a cultural community may affect the selection of the epistemic stance and its expression in a narrative. First, the researcher hints at the need for a proper contextualisation of social norms vis-à-vis morality:

> [b]y themselves, social norms are not moral. Many conventional norms have nothing to do with morality directly. But they may, in the appropriate circumstance, be moralized precisely by being connected to natural morality. [...] Along these same lines, it is important that many social norms considered as moral by their practitioners are considered immoral by members of other cultures. This is due in most cases to different perceptions of what the dictates of natural morality require in particular circumstances. (Tomasello 2016: 126)

Does this mean that norms are fixed forever? Tomasello's answer is clear and self-explanatory:

the cultural sense of good and right is what 'we' consider to be the ways of treating others with sympathy and fairness within our cultural contexts. This cultural morality, as all culturally transmitted things, is mostly conservative. But there is cultural creation as well. As new circumstances arise, cultural groups adapt by conventionalizing new social norms and formalizing new institutions. (Tomasello 2016: 127)

On this account, the issue of negotiating the worldview is inextricably linked to the question of human morality. The opening lines of the *Legend of Good Women* offer humorous musings over the relation between experience and authority, helping us to glean a late medieval understanding of how they are correlated with morality:

> A thousand tymes have I herd men telle
> That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle,
> And I acorde wel that it ys so;
> But, natheles, yet wot I wel also
> That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree
> That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,
> Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen
> But as he hath herd seyd or founde it writen;
> For by assay ther may no man it preve.
> But God forbede but men shulde leve
> Wel more thing than men han seen with ye!
> Men shal not wenen every thing a lye
> But yf himself yt seeth or elles dooth.
> For, God wot, thing is never the lasse sooth,
> Thogh every wight ne may it nat ysee.
> Prologue F, ll. 1–15

Chaucer's text forms part of the chain transmitting "the figure of the forsaken woman during the Middle Ages" (Hagedorn 2004: 10). Aware of the tradition, the poet does not promise to tell a 'true' version of the story about Dido. Not only does he lack any direct experience, but also the narrative itself is part of the larger body of cultural legacy, mediated through *olde bookes*, the keys to *remembraunce* ('reflection', 'consideration', 'the present consciousness of a past event', and 'recollection'). Chaucerian *bibliophilia* situates him in courtly circles, and thus indicates a specific kind of readership/audiences he might have had in mind while composing his *Legend of Good Women*, and simultaneously the kind of knowledge necessary for meaning construction.

It might be argued that Chaucer purposefully compresses the temporal viewpoint at the higher-level of the story's structure by a straightforward identification of his two sources: Virgil and Ovid. The specification provided at the beginning of the tale helps foster the emergence of a new, blended figure of Dido, where the characterisation of the queen owes a lot to the ancient stories,

> Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan,
> Be to thy name! and I shal, as I can,
> Folwe thy lanterne, as thow gost byforn,
> How Eneas to Dido was forsworn.
> In thyn Eneyde and Naso wol I take
> The tenor, and the grete effectes make.
> LD, ll. 924–929

However, Chaucer's Dido is not "the same Dido". This has been already implied by the use of the story-within-story format. To some extent, leaving out the sources entails downplaying their importance, which can be gleaned from Chaucer's version of Dido's letter to Aeneas. The poet cuts it off sharply, which could imply that his Dido is his own artistic creation, and thus he will not deal with the unnecessary details provided in Ovid's story:

> 'I may wel lese on yow a word or letter,
> Al be it that I shal ben nevere the better;
> For thilke wynd that blew youre ship awey,
> The same wynd hath blowe awey youre fey.'
> But who wol al this letter have in mynde,
> Rede Ovyde, and in hym he shal it fynde.
> LD, ll. 1362–1367

As the title of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* suggests, the poem is an example of the legend genre, the term subsuming accounts of stories about saints' lives. Implicit in this spiritually-minded conception of the poet's work is an evaluation of morality sustaining the late medieval cultural milieu of the poet's day. To say that it is concerned with Christian beliefs and norms shaping Chaucer's epistemic stance that shows through the narrative's (linguistic) structures is to oversimplify the point. Yet, marking the epistemic distance between himself and his predecessors, the poet seems to hint at the faulty morality of the ancient culture as well. To a large extent, the motives

underlying human moral behaviour are derivative of social cognition, or "how people make sense of other people and themselves in order to coordinate with their social world" (Taylor & Fiske 2017: 17). The point is that people are "activated actors, influenced by their social environments" (2017: 17). Perhaps, the (un)saintly heroines of the ancient world indicate the kind of virtues that could be expected of non-Christian role models. The irony might be turned against the tradition set by *Heroides* and similar works. In short, the ancient stories of the heroines provide the late medieval audiences with a distorting mirror, in which good is excessively magnified, whereas evil is stunted. Given the popularity of his philosophy at the time, Aristotle's ideas of the mean and moderation (Colette 2014) could thus be explored by telling stories about the excess of both good and evil.

If so, what can we learn from Chaucer's legend of Dido about the degree of the moral responsibility for the other? At stake is the fundamental problem of the truth in the social world. In the poet's *œuvre*, the question of the truth is often intertwined with other issues from the realm of social relations, where individuals either mistakenly ascribe intentions to the other (e.g. *Merchant's Tale*) or fall victim to their own pledges (e.g. *Clerk's Tale*). Hence, since at stake are moral aspects of linguistic behaviour, and human responsibility for their conduct, the area of our investigation is not delineated by the bi-polar relation between the notions of TRUTH and FALSITY, as they are understood today. To adopt a medieval lens, let us consider how the MED defines the notion of *trouthe*. As it tells us, *treuth/trouth*, etc. (n.) can be defined thus:

> **1.** (a) Fidelity to one's country, kin, friends, etc., loyalty; allegiance; also, genuine friendship; also, faithfulness; (b) fidelity or constancy in love, devotion; also *person.;* sincerity in love; also, genuine love; (d) faithfulness to God, piety; **2.** (a) A promise; an undertaking; a commitment; a pledge of loyalty; also, an oath, esp. of fealty; also, a covenant; (b) a marriage or betrothal vow; a promise of marriage; (c) a concrete token of a promise; also, ?a written pledge; **3.** (a) Honor, integrity; adherence to one's plighted word; also, nobility of character, knightly honor, adherence to the chivalric ideal; also used metonymically for a person of honor [quot. a1500]; **4.** (a) Honesty in the conduct of one's business, work, etc.; the practice of honesty in one's occupation, etc.; also *person;* also, honest dealing; (b) integrity in the performance of an office or a task; **5.** (a) A vaguely specified but implicitly comprehensive virtue: goodness or rectitude of character; fidelity to principle

or moral law; integrity, (b) a vaguely specified social virtue entailing constancy, trustworthiness, and decency toward others. (MED s.v. *treuth*)

The degree of conceptual intricacy is high, and the definition seems to suggest that the situational, predominantly social, constraints are vital for an apt construal of TROUTHE. Thus, what falls within the ambit of the paper is the poet's conception of TROUTHE, one of the core notions in Chaucer's literary pursuits. Clearly, the MED definition indicates that there used to be a tight connection between the truth and moral behaviour, as construed in the English culture of the late Middle Ages. At issue is the perspective from which Chaucer constructs the notion of truth, and hence the aspects of the truth which could receive increased attention of medieval audiences.

5.   Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*: A cognitive-linguistic analysis

This section combines a cognitive-linguistic analysis of selected examples from Chaucer's *Legend of Dido* with a simultaneous overview of some theoretical problems that arise when the use of the selected cognitive-linguistic tools is considered in light of recent research in cognitive science.

5.1.   The reading mind and the emergence of meaning in a storytelling context

Commenting on the patchy nature of narratives in general, Auyoung (2013) underlines the cognitive aspects of reading. As in our everyday lives, where we draw inferences on the basis of limited, often minimal, cues, the reader fills in gaps in narratives without too much effort. Naturally, the reader's knowledge and experience are called on each time no explicit information is available (Bernaerts et al. 2013). Since a lot of what narratives tell us about concerns other people, it stands to reason to suggest that the reader's mind derives from social cognition. No attempt is made to differentiate between the individual's mind and the social mind. From a grounded cognition perspective, the human mind forms a unity.

One of the crucial problems in social cognition research pertains to the distinction between humans and objects. Other people are a challenge for us in that, although social cognition is mutual cognition (the other is more similar to you than any object), we often do poorly with respect to the accuracy with

which we predict other people's motivation and behaviour (Taylor & Fiske 2017). What conceptual structures may underlie social cognition in reading fictional narratives? As already explained, these will include the same kind of structures as people employ in their everyday, real-life interactions with others. One of the key notions is the SELF-concept.

Viewed as an abstract notion, the SELF can be conceptualised differently, many of the conceptualisations taking the form of conceptual metaphors, founded on the mappings between concrete and abstract domains. Hence, in cognitive-linguistic research, it is commonplace to discuss the notion of the SELF in terms of the metaphors THE SELF IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT (don't be too *hard on yourself*, you are now comparing your efforts with the work of skilled professionals!, *British National Corpus*, 31 December 2017). The SELF can be regarded as a CONTAINER (He was so *beside himself* she had to laugh, *British National Corpus*, 31 December 2017). Likewise, personal relations can be understood metaphorically.

In the *Legend of Dido,* the feminine SELF inheres in the projection onto the domain of CONTAINER (THE SELF IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS: *O sely wemen, ful of innocence, Ful of pite, of trouthe and conscience*, ll. 1254–1255). In Chaucer's work, LOVE is presented as AN OBJECT TO BE SHARED BETWEEN LOVERS (e.g. *the depe affeccioun betwixe hem two*, ll. 1229–1230). Often, mental states can be constructed metaphorically, as in Chaucer's lines from Dido's Letter (MENTAL STATES ARE MOVABLE OBJECTS: *For thilke wynd that blew youre ship awey, The same wynd hath blowe awey youre fey*, ll. 1364–1365). The pending question that deserves a separate treatment is whether the diverse metaphors related to the same concept may be indicative of the situated nature of the notion. If yes, to what extent could this be conducive to the argument that the physical situation constrains the represented conceptual content (see Barsalou 2017)?

5.2. Medieval TROUTHE as a conceptual prism: Epistemic stance, morality, and changing worldviews in *The Legend of Dido*

In this section, we explore how Chaucer shapes the epistemic viewpoint in the *Legend of Dido* so as to conjure up in the reader's mind the desired conceptual frames against which meaning construction should occur. As already mentioned, the format of story-within-story shapes the epistemic stance affecting how the whole narrative about Dido is told. The poet-narrator indicates that it is he who is in control of the events in the narrative. He does

so by manipulating the story's spatial and temporal dimensions, often speeding up the pace of narration or zooming in on specific events he wishes to make salient. This is indicated by the relatively frequent appearance of the poet-narrator 'on-stage'. Langacker's notion of objective construal involves the idea that by a direct linguistic reference to an entity one puts it 'on-stage', i.e. renders it conceptually salient. This phenomenon can be exemplified using lines from the *Prologue*, in which the poet-narrator refers to himself using the personal pronouns *I* and *me*, as well as the determiner *my*:

> Allas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryme or prose,
> Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght!
> But helpeth, ye that han konnyng and myght,
> Ye lovers that kan make of sentement;
> In this cas oghte ye be diligent
> To forthren me somwhat in my labour,
> Whethir ye ben with the leef or with the flour
> Prologue F, ll. 66–72

Interestingly, the poet-narrator plucks out his implied audiences from the ground by using the polite form *ye*. He is implying even more, given the use of *ye lovers,* providing hints as to who might be interested in the subject of the story. At a glance Chaucer steers clear of signalling reliance on any Christian truths and moral norms of Christianity.

Following Herman (2013) on his idea that humans make sense of narratives by ascribing intentions to the authors of stories, it is argued that the salience was a signal for the late medieval reader that the authorial choice had to be meaningful. In this way, the audiences could actively participate in the co-construction of the world presented in the narrative. This implies that it was not only Chaucer's sense of morality that was at stake. That is, the negotiation of meaning occurred in the 'we-centric' space, mediated by the story's linguistic structures.

The significance of the meaning of the truth in the social world for the analysis of Chaucerian story about the queen of Carthage can be readily grasped from the excerpt, showing the parting of the lovers. Importantly, direct speech is used for the expression of Aeneas's and Dido's thoughts. Aeneas's glib excuses can hardly conceal his falsity and intended deception (e.g. *certes, brosten is myn herte*). He also makes some assertions based on the presumed will of some remote gods (e.g. *That nedes to the conquest of Ytayle / My destine is sone for to sayle*, ll. 1298–1299). Yet, the epistemic viewpoint is

founded rather poorly, on some visions and dreams Aeneas presumably had: no-one can assert he is telling the truth. In contrast, Dido's utterances are full of innermost love, sorrow, and disbelief (e.g. *"Is that in ernest?" quod she; "Wole ye so?*, l. 1303). The swift shifts between the private and public spheres in her argument reveal Dido's frantic efforts to keep Aeneas by her side. Knowing his intent to leave her, Dido pleads with Aeneas for mercy, as she fears she and her unborn child might die as a result of human malice when he is gone.

> 'Certes,' quod he, 'this nyght my faderes gost
> Hath in my slep so sore me tormented,
> And ek Mercurye his message hath presented,
> That nedes to the conquest of Ytayle
> My destine is sone for to sayle;
> For which, me thynketh, brosten is myn herte!'
> Therwith his false teres out they sterte,
> And taketh hire withinne his armes two.
> 'Is that in ernest?' quod she; 'Wole ye so?
> Have ye nat sworn to wyve me to take?
> Allas, what woman wole ye of me make?
> I am a gentil woman and a queen.
> Ye wole nat from youre wif thus foule fleen?
> That I was born, allas! What shal I do?'
> [...]
> And seyth, 'Have mercy; let me with yow ryde!
> These lordes, which that wonen me besyde,
> Wole me distroyen only for youre sake.
> And, so ye wole me now to wive take,
> As ye han sworn, thanne wol I yeve yow leve
> To slen me with youre swerd now sone at eve!
> For thanne yit shal I deyen as youre wif.
> I am with childe, and yeve my child his lyf!
> Mercy, lord! Have pite in youre thought!'
> LD, ll. 1295–1324

The scene is viewed in close-up, or seen in the high granularity of the details provided by the poet-narrator (e.g. *Therwith his false teres out they sterte, / And taketh hire withinne his armes two*, l. 1301). Thanks to the capacity for mental imagery (including the capacity for simulation), the reader is given a quasi-equivalent of modern films telling us tragic love stories. The high granularity of the scene captures the reader's attention, thus activates the operation of

mental imagery, and makes him/her ponder over the conflict of motivations on both sides.

In the excerpt, a few conceptual metaphors for the SELF can be discerned. These (presumably) include: THE SOCIAL SELF IS A THREE-DIMENSIONAL OBJECT THAT CAN BE RESHAPED (*what woman wole ye of me make?*, 1305), SOCIAL ROLES ARE THE PERCEIVABLE OUTSIDE PARTS OF THE OBJECT (*I am a gentil woman and a queen*, l. 1306), THE SELF IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT THAT CAN BE DESTROYED (*These lordes, which that wonen me beside, / Wole me distroyen only for youre sake*, ll. 1317–1318).

The Langacker's notions of subjective/objective construal are useful in explaining the kind of morality, hence the aspect of the truth, Chaucer may have had in mind when composing these lines. It seems that the deictic use of first- and second-person pronouns puts Dido and Aeneas on stage, i.e. turns both into the objects of conception, hinting at natural (second-person) morality (*As ye han sworn, thanne wol I yeve yow leve / To slen me with youre swerd now sone at eve! / For thanne yit shal I deyen as youre wif*, ll. 1320–1322). Dido's words *I am with childe* profile the domain of male social responsibilities, all the more pressing in the case of an unborn child. Dido's innocence is thus twofold: at stake is not only her own life, but also the life of the innocent child. Presumably, no cultural norms can make the man shed the responsibility for the life of his offspring. Interestingly, the recurring use of *wol(e)* in the excerpt seems to signal the significance of free will underlying moral choices, whether made within the realm of personal/intimate relations or the domain of public life.

Is Chaucer's Dido a character the author imbued with moral authority? The analysis of the excerpt below resumes the point discussed earlier, and permits an attempt at addressing this question. As argued by Schmid (2018: 73), fictional minds are not identical with real ones inasmuch as they are expressions of a certain artistic design. Indeed, the recurrent phrase *sely Dido* appears in the narrative in different contexts. The first occurrence contextualises the use of *sely* in the domain of *desyr* 'longing for something', 'yearning', 'pleasure', but also 'physical desire', 'lust'. Not irrelevant is the air of mystery and novelty surrounding Aeneas, Dido's new guest. Driven by emotions she does not fully understand, the queen cannot suppress them, falling into the trap the gods have prepared for her. Thus, the *sely* ('helpless, defenseless') Dido is unable to escape her destiny:

> That sely Dido hath now swich desyr
> With Eneas, hire newe gest, to dele
> LD, ll. 1157–1158

The second occurrence implicates a consequence of misguided trust. Blinded by love, Dido falls victim to her own gullibility, a conduct unbecoming to the queen:

> And as a fals lovere so wel can pleyne,
> That sely Dido rewede on his peyne
> LD, ll. 1236–1237

The third occurrence appears to imply the woeful end of the *sely* ('unfortunate') Dido. Not fully responsible for the love kindled in her heart by the gods, the queen was driven by emotions much stronger than her free will:

> A cloth he lafte, and ek his swerd stondynge,
> Whan he from Dido stal in hire slepynge
> Ryght at hire beddes hed, so gan he hie,
> Whan that he stal awey to his navye;
> Which cloth, whan sely Dido gan awake,
> She hath it kyst ful ofte for his sake
> LD, ll. 1332–1137

What links the three occurrences of *sely Dido* is a certain conceptualisation pattern, in which the individual cannot fully account for his/her deeds. In this construal, an element of an overpowering, external force overwhelming the queen can be detected. Indeed, this conceptualisation stems in part from the earlier versions of the story. Virgil tells us that Dido "was dying a death not fated or deserved, no, tormented, before her day, in a blaze of passion" (Virgil/Fragles 2006: 152). As in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, where Walter played with Griselda's emotions, Dido was a toy in the hands of Aeneas and the gods. Why could this point be relevant to the problem of negotiating worldviews? Given the correspondences constructed mentally by the reader, the story might be a site for the exploration of the relation between God's providence and the degree to which humans could exercise their free will. In the Middle Ages, the issue caused a lot of philosophical debates, and recurs in Chaucer's works, with *Boece*, *Knight's Tale*, and *Troilus* having pride of place.

A careful consideration of the lines opening the *Prologue* may offer revealing insights. The *Prologue* opens with the poet-narrator's direct reference to the Christian belief in the existence of heaven and hell, which invokes the domain of Christian morality. Hence, the epistemic viewpoint assumed by the poet-narrator is one that is fixed in the reality of the late medieval Christendom. It is from this epistemic perspective that Chaucer considers all of the stories in the *Good Women* collection, including the narrative about Dido. The reference to heaven and hell is significant inasmuch as it establishes a set of correspondences between the storyworld of Dido's tale and the poet-narrator's Christian world. While mentally configuring the narrative world, the medieval reader could follow the parallels at various levels, including the characters' motivations, and evaluate their moral choices. To the extent that the argument of the correspondences between the ancient and the medieval worlds holds true, Chaucer seems to be saying that the morality of his present-day, Christian world is equally rotten. Not because the values, whether ancient or medieval, are to blame for the corruption and moral decay. Rather, conformity in following social norms has superseded natural morality, inclined towards the other. Dido did conform to the social norms, as instantiated by her ardent welcome extended to Aeneas the guest and showering him with gifts. Still, it was his faked reciprocity, combined with the gods' intent to use her as a tool to achieve their goals, that ultimately led Dido astray.

Chaucer's construal of the events gives a great deal of emphasis to his own epistemic stance, which presumably means that the story should be constructed against the conceptual frames of his day. This gives the reader an opportunity to consider the various epistemic viewpoints within the story, and rethink the motivations guiding the particular characters. The linguistic structures mediate in the process, but in themselves are insufficient for the fully contextualised meaning construction. What helps fill in various narrative gaps is the careful consideration of the social-cultural aspects of linguistic choices.

6. Conclusions

The paper has addressed the usefulness of cognitive-linguistic theoretical models and methodological tools in the analysis of historical narratives. The cognitively-oriented research has contributed many helpful ideas that may well contribute to the further advances in the field of the broadly defined narrative

study, particularly the research oriented towards the exploration of the interplay between narrative and the mind. A cognitive-diachronic approach to narratives is a challenge in that the researcher's role goes beyond the typically linguistic endeavour. What can foster such analyses is a closer co-operation between the sciences of the mind, including CL, and narrative study. In particular, both parties must view the co-operation as mutually beneficial. To be so, CL and cognitively-oriented narrative research should care more about the empirical foundations of their theories. Ultimately, this involves the strengthening of the capacity to account for the human factor underlying the linguistic expression of an individual's conceptualisations. Significantly, new horizons for mutual support have opened up in the realm of multimodal narratives.

Increased attention has been devoted to the embedding of cognitive-linguistic tools in recent findings in cognitive science. Among the cognitive-linguistic theories invoked in the paper is Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, but some references to the theories of mental spaces and conceptual blending have been made as well. It seems that all of the approaches need a stronger empirical basis. For instance, it is easy to notice that the phenomenon of perspective-taking in CL can be rendered in terms of mental imagery and simulation, and Langacker (2008) has acknowledged this fact. Still, Cognitive Grammar might benefit from adopting a broader definition of cognition, not only as embodied, but as grounded (see also Barsalou 2008). This could facilitate a shift in research perspective in that Langacker usually analyses relatively isolated examples, for instance, *They're looking for a smart woman with a PhD, not one with just a masters* vis-à-vis *A smart woman with a PhD is happier than a brilliant one with just a masters* (discussed relative to the problem of non-prototypical constructions in Langacker 2009: 16–28). Yet, these sentences are narratives in miniature, and what might be useful for a more comprehensive linguistic analysis is the embedding of such examples in longer stretches of real discourse. As to cognitive-linguistic approaches to narrative phenomena, one distinctive account is Dancygier (2012), in which the scholar uses the conception of mental spaces and conceptual blending. The author says "it would seem unreasonable to assume that all cognitive work on literary texts has to be supported with in-depth considerations of their historical context" (2012: 9). Indeed, Dancygier's (2012) approach to narratives pays little attention to the sociocultural embedding of the stories under study inasmuch as centres on the mental construction of storyworlds on the basis of linguistic cues. We, however, indicate that narrative studies can provide

cognitive linguists with eye-opening research findings, as well as excellent sites for seeking new challenges to the cognitive enterprise and the subsequent refining of the already existing theoretical models. Grounded cognition is an ever-developing field, trying to find the most accurate and most plausible solutions to the questions concerning the human mind. It does not claim that it offers the ultimate answers. All scholars involved in cognitively-oriented studies should remain alert to the possibility of redefining their research problems.

Finally, the investigation of the ways in which the worldview can be negotiated through narratives has shown that human morality is a research area that should receive a much more thorough treatment in CL. It is not enough to subsume it under the umbrella term of ideology insofar as this kind of cognitive-linguistic strain leads us back to the answers offered by conceptual metaphor research and speakers' onomasiological choices (see also Koller 2014). These ideas, however, are not fully grounded in empirical findings from cognitive science. Besides, human morality is not synonymous with ideology, even though they may have a lot in common.

In sum, the paper shows that linguistic choices are made in specific spatial-temporal contexts. Literary and linguistic scholars must not cease to update their theoretical models so as to account for the individual's lived experience behind language use in the most comprehensive way possible, or else we run the risk of glossing over the human factor in humanistic studies.

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