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**Bodies, Spaces, and Cultural Models: On Bridging the Gap
between Culture and Cognition
(Abstract)**

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Over the past two decades cognitive literary studies (CLS) has emerged as a new subfield of literary studies. Despite the success of cognitive theories in some areas of research such as in narratology, however, the impact of CLS on the academic discipline of literary and cultural studies as a whole has not been as profound as predicted. Major schools of research, e.g. postcolonial studies or gender studies, remain virtually untouched, and the vast majority of literary scholars are still sceptical or indifferent towards this area of research. Reasons for this scepticism include, for example, epistemological and methodological uncertainties concerning the interdisciplinary intersection of science and literature. But scholars have also begun to address another lacuna in contemporary research that may prove to be of equal or even more profound consequence: the lack of a solid and widely accepted conceptual and analytical bridge between cognitive approaches and the wide field of cultural studies. It is a well-known fact that the study of culture in its many theoretical guises has taken a lead role in philology departments around the globe. Though not every scholar welcomes this development, it would certainly be unwise to ignore the general impact of cultural studies on philology. For this reason, my paper argues that CLS not only needs to engage in a productive interdisciplinary dialogue between literary scholars and cognitive scientists but it also needs to incorporate cultural studies into this dialogue. In other words, an important challenge lies in making cognitive approaches relevant for cultural analysis.

This paper engages with current attempts to face this challenge. It provides a survey of approaches that aim to build a conceptual bridge between culture and cognition and thus take a step towards extending cognitive approaches into the field of cultural studies. For this purpose, I adopt the distinction between so-called ›first‹ and ›second generation‹ approaches in order to group this research heuristically into two academic camps: (1) approaches that emphatically foreground so-called second generation cognitive science as their prime source of inspiration, i.e. approaches that engage with enactive, embedded, extended, and embodied aspects of cognition; and (2) studies which do not explicitly situate themselves within this paradigm and rather seek innovation by turning to more ›classical‹, foundational ›first generation‹ concepts of mental representation, information- and text processing. By discussing examples from both lines of research, including work by Kukkonen/Caracciolo (2014), Strasen (2013), Sommer (2013), and Hartner/Schneider (2015), my survey attempts to provide an impression of the wealth of creative thinking currently at work in CLS. In this context, the paper discusses some of the major challenges cognitive approaches are facing today; it traces a selection of current developments in the field, including work on the concept of ›cultural models‹, the notion of the ›intercultural mind‹, and the attempt to programmatically ground conceptualizations of cognition in our bodily interactions with culture and the environment.

All in all, I argue that despite the efforts towards a systematic cognitive investigation of culture sketched in this survey, the project of cognitive cultural studies in general is still in its infancy. Its work is conducted by a comparatively small group of enthusiasts and constitutes a highly-specialized academic niche within a multitude of postclassical approaches to literature. Whether

it will be possible to interest the much larger body of ›traditional‹ literary and cultural scholars in cognitive approaches, in my opinion, will to no small degree hinge on the field's ability to move beyond abstract theoretical reflection. While there is obviously nothing intrinsically wrong with specialized fields of research beyond the mainstream, I believe that cognitive approaches have the potential to reach a wider audience. However, this may depend on the ability of CLS to develop concepts and methods capable of analysing concrete cultural phenomena in their social and historical context.

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