After decades of little to no contact between linguistics and literary studies, the recent rise of cognitive poetics has led to a considerable increase in interdisciplinary research which combines insights from (stylistic) literary criticism, on the one hand, and cognitive linguistics and psychology, on the other hand. Along this line of research, this book presents a cognitive poetic analysis of the experiential quality of textuality, that is, ‘the outcome of the workings of shared cognitive mechanics, evident in texts and readings’ (1).

As Peter Stockwell points out in Ch. 1, ‘Text, textuality and texture’ (1–16), ‘a close stylistic analysis forms the main method of this book’ (9), which is also informed by insights from cognitive poetic principles (such as experientialism, generalization, continuity, embodiment, and ecology) and draws on cognitive models (such as text worlds, prototype theory, projection, and cognitive grammar). In Ch. 2, ‘Resonance and intensity’ (17–55), based on the cognitive psychology of attention, S outlines ‘a general model of resonance’ (54) to explain the ‘prolonged response’ and ‘aura of significance’ effects that a literary reading can have (19).

In Ch. 3, ‘Sensation and empathy’ (56–105), S shifts the discussion of intensity to the physical and higher-level conceptual experiences of reading. Taking all physical and virtual sensation to be cognitively embodied, he outlines how readerly empathy and sympathy can be explained by his approach. Ch. 4, ‘Voice and mind’ (106–33), focuses on ‘the cognitive mechanics that readers must engage in when experiencing fictional literary works and the beings which inhabit them’ (106). Central to S’s analysis is the claim that individuals construct a cognitive sense of identity which forms the basis for cognitively forming relationships with other people. Here it is important that the cognitive mechanics (characterization, point of view, and deictic positioning) that are employed to interact with people in the ‘real’ world are essentially the same as the ones that are used to establish relationships with fictional characters.

The role of the personality of the reader is further elaborated on in Ch. 5, ‘Identification and resistance’ (134–57). Adapting a psychological projection account of mind-modeling that incorporates notions such as the text world, S outlines a cognitive account of how readers identify with characters (or why they resist such identification). In the final chapter, ‘Texture and meaning’ (168–92), S then heavily draws on principles of cognitive grammar (namely construal, image-schema, and trajectory-landmark) to account for ‘cohesion and coherence in literary texture’ (15) (giving, for example, an analysis of narrative pace and action chaining).

While the choice of cognitive linguistic principles discussed in this book occasionally appears somewhat eclectic, it is, nevertheless, a book that opens up many new research avenues for future interdisciplinary work between linguistics and literary studies. It should therefore be of great interest to researchers from such diverse fields as stylistics, literary criticism, and cognitive linguists, as well as cognitive scientists.