A FUNCTIONAL STYLISTIC APPROACH TO STAGE DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary research is twofold: it addresses the dearth of investigation into stage directions as blueprint of production, as well as the lack of functional stylistic analysis of the same. A functional approach to stage directions can decode meaning back to behaviour— a poignant principle of functional grammar when applied to what is enacted text. The transitivity profile of the full complement of stage directions of the English play Lady Audley’s Secret illustrates the plot-crafting experientiality fluctuations across the dramatic arc, as well as the transitivity configurations underlying complex characters and character archetypes. Material, Verbal and Behavioural processes, as well as circumstances of Location, Quality and Means are the most common in this register. Transitivity process analysis in this research reveals the systematic how behind what English stage directions do across literature, performance, and production, while demonstrating the stylistic advantage of analyzing whole texts rather than excerpts. Furthermore, an otherwise rare overview of this register in the English language is afforded in terms that is intelligible to both drama and theatre, and provides a useful teaching approach to playwriting, character study, and studying plays.

KEYWORDS

stage directions, transitivity, elements of drama, functional stylistics, dramatic arc, play texts.

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
1 Introduction

1.1 The problem and its significance

Stage directions are a particular phenomenon that is under-researched in theatrical and stylistics studies (Culpeper et al., 2002). While insightful understandings of dramatic texts have been made for decades through approaches such as schema theory, conversation analysis, speech-act theory, politeness theory, and lexical patterning, these approaches did not fundamentally seek to link the page to the stage and were overall centred on dialogue. In stylistics, plays are known as “the conversation genre” (Short, 1996), where only the characters’ words are analysed. This usual focus is a result of the traditional viewpoint that “speech dominates drama” (Macrae, 2014), no doubt a consequence of the socio-cultural context which saw overt stage directions not being needed in early plays. In early theatre, and before the script dissemination that the printing press enabled in the 1400s, playwrights were on-site to direct and act in their own plays.

However, wider recognition of the role of stage directions in the drama script has been occurring. Aston and Savona’s comprehensive study of the play script traced the historical development of stage directions and argued for their significance in the play script not just as literary text but as, in actuality, a “blueprint for production” (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 75). It is the stage directions that gives the play script its duality of text as literature and text as performance. Theatre philosophers such as Ingarden, Ubersfeld, Prague school theorists such as Veltrusky, and Esslin have over the 20th century weighed in on the role of stage directions in the drama script and its relation to dialogue. Modern plays that contain paragraphs of narrative-like stage directions, or scripts like Beckett’s Act Without Words that contains only stage directions now...
exist, bringing to the forefront the performance and production value of stage direction text. As a result, it is problematic for dramatic theory and the development of theatre that stage directions are still struggling to become a mainstay of stylistics.

Furthermore, a functional approach to play scripts is lacking. Prose fiction and poetry have become mainstays in functional grammar research (Butt, 1987; Lukin & Webster, 2005; Nykänen & Koivisto, 2016; Unsworth, 2002; Ventola, 1991) but the play text, and specifically stage directions, is comparatively underexplored territory in functional stylistics. This gap in register description limits our understanding of the complexity of human creativity and meaning as expressed in one of the oldest human literary traditions (in English).

The lens of functional grammar – an approach to language definition that regards ‘function’ rather than ‘form’ as the primary consideration in interpreting linguistic structures – regards language as behaviour potential in society which has been encoded into linguistic meaning and expression. Such a philosophy takes on new meaning in a register such as stage directions when stage directions are regarded as blueprint for production. The words of play scripts are meant to be converted to action, i.e., performance and production. In other words, linguistic meaning and expression harnessing the vision of the playwright is meant to be decoded (back) to behaviour. A gap in stylistics on the special register of stage directions as a functional entity robs dramatic enquiry of the elusive common language between drama as literature and drama as production.
1.2 Background

1.2.1 The parts of a play

According to Roman Ingarden (1973, p. 208; 377), the basic structure of the play is a division. The two distinct parts are the main text /Haupttext, i.e., what the characters say, and the side text /Nebentext, i.e., supplementary information such as location, time, and accompanying actions and feelings by the characters as revealed by the playwright. The Nebentext is what we would refer to as “stage directions” (or “didascalia” in the French tradition). For Ingarden, the Nebentext is needed in modern theatre to complete the “state of affairs projected by the main text”. The “state of affairs” is defined as the intentional (and derived) reality created by the sentence when the sentence is taken as the meaning unit, “the ultimate source of the various representational modes” (Ingarden, 1973, pp. 197-198). Grammatically, the various sentence types are comprised of clauses. The clause is the main unit of analysis in SFG. For that reason, in this research, the stage directions are treated as (part of) a sentence unit, which it is, despite not appearing to be orthographically so in the typical drama script layout.

1.2.2 Stage directions

Stage directions frame dialogue, first in a very literal sense as in its layout on the page. Stage directions appear before, after and interspersed in the dialogic text, and work with the dialogue to create the drama. For Ingarden, despite his own hierarchical labelling, he sees these two texts as symbiotic. Esslin (1987), however, in the spirit of drama being viewed as ‘mimetic action’, sees Nebentext as the primary text even when some elements are lost or discarded in semiotic translation to performance. A
third semiotic theorist, Veltrusky, believes that despite the semantic importance of Nebentext, it is fundamentally subservient to the dialogue (Veltřuský, 1977, p. 47).

For Brecht though, and other avant garde/revolutionary dramatists and theatre theorists, this longstanding debate between the two approaches – text as literature versus text as theatrical component - defies logic: that “the one does not exclude the other” (Veltruský, 1976, p. 95). Drama ultimately “cannot be defined without regard to its possible staging” (Fischer-Lichte, 1984, p. 138). By this token of having dual status, Manfred Pfister deems the drama text as being not just monomedial (linguistic) but ultimately multimedial (multisemiotic):

There is, however, one criterion which enables us to distinguish between such literary forms and drama: the multimedial nature of dramatic text presentation. As a ‘performed’ text, drama, in contrast to purely literary texts, makes use not only of verbal, but also of acoustic and visual codes. It is a synaesthetic text. This important criterion provides the starting point for any semiotic analysis of drama (Pfister, 1991, p. 7).

Jansen and Pagnini (Jansen, 1968; Pagnini, 1970) also distinguish the dramatic text as the “scenically enacted text”. Therefore, a functional theory of language, and specifically an experiential analysis, can theoretically serve to reveal the various types of semiotic modes projected by the linguistic text and the types of action encoded and unfolding in the text which direct the experience of the reader.

Inevitably, it is the stage directions that are at the core of the dramatic text’s dual identity “as literary artefact and as blueprint for production” (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 75). The latter identity is, therefore, the second way that stage directions frame dialogue-theatrically. They relay to the production team the dramatist’s
theatrical vision and provide the reader “the opportunity to read performance action from the text, and so to stage the play in a theatre of her/ his imagination” (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 73).

1.2.3 An experiential view of play texts

When viewed from the starting point of the Prague School Theory of drama and theatre which applied and developed functional, structural and semiotic paradigms to drama and theatre study (Quinn, 1995), a functional stylistic approach is potentially useful to understand, beyond description, the organization, register, context, and style of play texts (Martin, 1997; Quammie-Wallen, 2020). Michael Halliday, the pioneering functional theorist partly influenced by the Prague School, describes the functional perspective of language as such (1978, p. 21):

Language is being regarded as the encoding of a ‘behaviour potential’ into a ‘meaning potential’; that is, as a means of expressing what the human organism ‘can do’, in interacting with other human organisms, by turning it into what he ‘can mean’. What he can mean (the semantic system) is, in turn, encoded into what he ‘can say’ (the lexicogrammatical system, or grammar and vocabulary)…

In that vein, functional stylistics then seems a natural fit for analysing, describing, decoding, and understanding drama texts, as lexicogrammatical transitivity analysis decodes what is said through meaning (experientiality) back out to behaviour in context in a reverse process to text creation.

Indeed, this was one of Aston and Savona’s aims – to decode “the processes of the linguistic sign system [as] a necessary adjunct to furthering analysis of how a dramatic
text operates” (1991, p. 51). Concerning narratives, Nørgaard (2003) put forward the similar view that functional grammar is capable of “bridging the gap between linguistics and literary criticism” (p. 11). Melrose’s pioneering functional exploration of play texts illustrated functional grammar’s suitability to read theatre because it better managed what Anne Ubersfeld called the “combinatory quality of theatre” (Melrose, 1985, p. 215). James and Gomceli (2018, p. 213) concluded in their functional observations of both dialogue and stage directions of the play script The Playboy of the Western World that lexicogrammar is specifically responsible for the encoding of the action of the plot.

This paper puts forward systemic functional grammar (SFG) as an example of a functional framework that, “used judiciously…can show us how such effects are created and prove productive, systematic and informative” (Aston & Savona, 1991, pp. 51-52). It applies transitivity analysis to the entire set of stage directions in Lady Audley’s Secret as an example. From this data, a prototypical experiential profile of stage directions was built and related to the following points of enquiry (RQs):

1/ What is the experiential composition of this play?

2/ How does functional stylistics systematically explain the structure of a play?

3/ How does the functional approach systematically explain character?

Using a full set of stage directions facilitates a comprehensive illustration of this register in contrast to the snapshot view afforded by the admittedly more practical use of excerpts. The hypothesis on the architectural revelations inherent in a functional stylistic approach are poised to be tested not only within dramatic theory of character and plot, but also within stage directions as register. How do play texts achieve or tell what they tell? How are they both a form of literature and a blueprint of production?
How are language choices by the playwright instructive? Through functional stylistics undergirded by the theoretical framework of SFG, we may go beyond describing what a drama text does to explaining systematically how it does what it does, quite apart from, but drawing links to, performance.

2 Literature Review

This section covers the two chief aspects of this study: the theoretical framework of SFG, specifically transitivity, that is utilised for the functional stylistic analysis (Section 2.1), and an overview of the existing functional stylistic analysis of dramatic texts (Section 2.2), focused though they are on dialogue.

2.1 The social semiotic of functional grammar

The premise behind functional grammar is that language should be primarily observed from the point of view of its use rather than its form. It argues that language is developed by, constrained by, and relevant to social need and so, “function” is what “form” ultimately realises and (form) is not the end goal. Language in use works by meaning creation, and that meaning exists because the speaker has in fact made a choice out of an available system of options within his language in order to deliver his point (Eggins, 2004, p. 3). Systemic functional grammar (SFG) is based on these theoretical claims. It is language as social semiotic.

SFG is utilised ‘for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written, in Modern English’ (Halliday, 1994, p. xv). A text, according to functional grammar, ‘does not consist of sentences …[but] is realised by, or encoded in, sentences’ (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
Using a functional stylistic approach with sentences as the meaningful unit of analysis in the text-register of stage directions may thereby decode and provide systematic language as to how a play text achieves its (intended) effects on the reader, not to mention reveal the practical nature of the playwright’s intended performance.

Transitivity is one type of analytical lens available in SFG and is often used as a standalone method of analysis for mapping the semantics of texts. It is one tool of analysis for the ideational metafunction of language and, through lexicogrammar, encodes the “goings-on” in the world. Transitivity directly contributes to and is determined by social context as interpreted through experiential meaning.

2.1.1 Transitivity

As a methodological approach, transitivity is understood “in functional terms as a lexicogrammatical resource for construing our experience of the flow of events” (Matthiessen, 1999, p. 2). Each clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events producing a ‘figure’ – the “configuration of a process, participants involved in it, and any attendant circumstances” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 212). Process is primary in transitivity, first because it is encoded in the element needed to define a clause – the verb (a sentence is a type of clause). Secondly, it identifies the type of action taking place, and lastly, determines the corresponding type of participants that form the experiential centre of the figure, thereafter optionally augmenting the core of the experience with circumstantial elements (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 221).

There are six process types in transitivity – Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioural, Verbal and Existential. The first three occur the most frequently in English and are akin to tripartite cardinal points in the transitivity system. Material processes are of the “external world” (e.g., to skate). Mental processes are “processes of
consciousness” (e.g., to like). Relational processes identify and classify phenomena by comparison (e.g., “this is that” or “this has that attribute”). The latter three processes blend characteristics of pairs of cardinal processes. Behavioural processes externalise processes of consciousness and physiological states (e.g., to laugh, to sleep) and so blend material and mental characteristics. Verbal processes are a combination of mental and relational processes (e.g., to say) and the existential process type is a combination of relational and material features that enact the state of being (to be) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 214-215). Each of the six processes carry their own specific participant roles. The following clauses from this paper’s data set provide one example of each process type, supplemented by their major accompanying participant roles:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Lady Audley</td>
<td>pushes</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>LADY A.</td>
<td>(says)</td>
<td>[aside]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sayer</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Circumstance- Manner Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>She</td>
<td>speaks</td>
<td>through music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaver</td>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>Circumstance: Extent Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Phoebe</td>
<td>is heard</td>
<td>without.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Circumstance: Location Place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 **Functional stylistics of dramatic texts**

There is little transitivity research on plays and virtually none of such on stage directions in particular. In Melrose’s (1985) study of excerpts of *No Man’s Land*, degree of movement on stage is linked to transitivity. She argued that mental processes may normally require stillness and material processes comparatively more movement. However, her analysis contends only with characters’ lines. Another drama script exploration applied transitivity analysis to dialogue extracts from Pygmalion in order to reveal the portrayal of gender in the play (Gallardo, 2006). The analysed extracts revealed that women are presented as emotional beings while men are presented as cognitive. Again, no attention was paid to stage directions. A further PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS...
corpus driven (UAMCT) study on transitivity in the dramatic text of *Waiting for Godot* (Bhatti, 2019) did use data from the entire play, as opposed to excerpts. However, once more, only dialogue was retained in the .txt data files.

At the same time, there have been some non-functional stylistic explorations and defences of Nebentext over the years: (Carlson, 1991; Ceynowa, 1981; Li, 2007; Min, 2005; Poe, 2003; Short, 1998; Wales, 1994). This is in conjunction with the ever-burgeoning body of work on transitivity profiles of other discourses ranging from learner scripts, narratives, and scientific journal extracts to newspaper articles, textbooks, speeches and biblical scripture. The overlap of transitivity analysis and a functional stylistics look at stage directions remains significantly underexplored (Quammie-Wallen, 2018a, 2018b).

The core of this argument for the rich suitability of functional grammar for understanding stage directions and by extension the drama text rests in the philosophy of functional grammar itself. If, in functional grammar, language is the encoding of behaviour into meaning and wording and grammar (Halliday, 1978), working backwards from wording and grammar to meaning to desired behaviour makes logical sense (Hasan, 2010). In that regard, stage directions are a uniquely suited text type for such a hypothesis and exploration, as the play text, when treated as a blueprint for production, becomes a playwright’s construal guide for actor expression, plot dynamics, director goals, technical theatre effects, and the like. It is enacted text, meant to be expressed as behaviour. SFG can help to practically explain the intentions and parameters in the lexicogrammar brought about by playwright choice.
3 Methods

In this Methods section I describe the data, research design and procedures, and specifics on my data preparation for this special register to facilitate functional stylistic analysis.

3.1 Data

The data for this exploration of transitivity in stage directions comes from the 1889 play *Lady Audley’s Secret* (LA) by Colin Henry Hazlewood (1889). The play is a drama in 2 Acts derived from the wildly successful 1862 novel of the same name by Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Braddon’s Victorian sensation novel surrounding ‘accidental bigamy’ is regarded as one of the finest examples of the genre, featuring a heroine who “deserts her child, pushes husband number one down a well, thinks about poisoning husband number two and sets fire to a hotel in which her other male acquaintances are residing” (Showalter, 1977, p. 163). More specifically, Hazlewood’s dramatic adaptation examples an age of emerging Nebentext that resembles the modern-day play script. This, coupled with its brevity and accessibility, made The LA script an appropriate option for this illustration.

The unit of analysis for the data is the clause of which there were 321 amidst approximately 2000 words of stage directions.

3.2 Research Design

This functional stylistic approach to the data occurred in five stages. In Stage 1 the data underwent transitivity analysis, and in Stage 2, descriptive statistics of process types and circumstantial tokens in the full data set were tabulated. In Stage 3,
identification and demarcation of the drama episodes relevant to the play’s dramatic arc took place, and in Stage 4 the process type configurations for each of those key episodes were tabulated. Finally, character transitivity profiles were also tabulated in Stage 5.

These procedures were suited to answer the research questions (RQs) outlined in the introduction. Stages 1 and 2 provide the results to illustrate the experiential profile of the stage directions as register (RQ1), Stages 3 and 4 link the functional analysis of the Nebentext to the dramatic element of plot, thus providing a functional stylistic explanation for the structure and effects of the plot (RQ2), while Stage 5 conflates the experiential profile of the stage directions with the corresponding characters, providing systematic, stylistic explanations for character types and archetypes (RQ3). Altogether, the results of the five steps form the basis to hypothesize on the how of the play text experience, the combinatory quality of theatre, and the possibility of bridging text as literature and text as performance with common language.

3.3 Data Preparation

In mapping the clauses, I treated the disparate stage direction elements as the sentence elements they are, bearing in mind the specific field contextual reality of stage directions in the script, in production and in performance:

- The “says” that is inherently understood between speaker identified and their projection (words spoken) is acknowledged and inserted as an elided element wherever there are stage directions occurring within that turn. By this interpretation, CHARACTER (says) becomes the independent main clause
anchoring whatever non-finite, dependent, hypotactic, stage direction clause present within the spoken turn. The chief participant in the non-finite clause is recovered from the main clause, but only the non-finite clause is analysed as a stage direction. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>LADY A.</th>
<th>(says)...</th>
<th>[patting his cheek](^1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Textually, the subject of the non-finite clause is “typically ellipsed” and “generally co-referential with the Subject of the dominant clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 454).

The elided “says” is the verbal transformation of the semiotic space, punctuation, font differentiation, or line indentation that play texts use to separate the indication of the character and the character’s words. The text of LA uses bold common font, which contrasts, for example, with the script of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (Thorne et al., 2017) which uses all caps. Both are recognized as legitimate conventions of what Wales (1994, p. 242) calls the “special register” and “metalanguage” that is stage directions.

- Character name and elided “says” is also included and analysed when a lexical/phrasal circumstance directly relating to the characters’ words occurs. In this case *(says)* functions in its Verbal capacity as the process type to which the paralinguistic circumstance is attached:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>LADY A.</th>
<th>(says)...</th>
<th>[aside]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sayer</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Circumstance: Manner Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If the default independent clause, which is verbal, has a clearly indicated Receiver as stage direction, the independent clause is also recognized in its full sentence form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>ROBERT</th>
<th>(says)...</th>
<th>[to Lady Audley]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sayer</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Receiver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-dialogue stage directions that are not non-finite clauses, that is, not initiated by a present or past participle, or a lexical circumstance, but rather presents as a finite verb, are treated as a full independent clause, with the finite verb being analysed instead of “says”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(10)</th>
<th>(SIR M.)</th>
<th>[sighs]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaver</td>
<td>Behavioural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from existential process verbs, all elided elements in the data are annotated. Existential processes occur at the beginning of scenes, illustrating who and what the audience is seeing on the stage. They also, however, appear during, and at the end of scenes, and are conventionally expressed clause-wise as a single participant (e.g., An ancient Hall). In this data, the “there is/there are” is understood, and the Existents count as Existential tokens.

In general, in-dialogue stage directions appearing in the form of non-finite dependent clauses are treated as circumstantial in principle related to the default dominant clause of CHARACTER (says) at a clause-complex level:
In this way the seemingly disjointed sentence elements in a play are unified and the non-finites fall into their role of providing “background information for what is depicted in the main clause” (Lin, 2015, p. 6) as adverbials do. In the context of plays, background information could be more correctly termed as “parallel information”, a term more favourable to the philosophical standpoint that the play text is a blueprint of production. While the typical circumstance in Transitivity augments the process and is an adverbial (e.g., Circumstance of Location Place: in the well), Halliday (1985) does argue that relationships between clauses work the same. Dreyfus and Bennett (2017) agree, seeking to formally establish in SFG theory these and other circumstance types existing across the rank levels in grammar. They would agree that the clause “patting his cheek” in example 11 is functioning as a circumstance to the main clause, LADY A. (says).

* Exits and entrances are treated as circumstances of Manner -Means rather than of Location -Place. In the context of play texts, such instructions indicate which exit the actors use to leave the stage, rather than the actual location they are vacating. They are not exiting R. or C. – they are exiting the stage via R. or C. This use here is indicated by the punctuation (,) between the instruction and stage point:
The absence of the comma indicates the stage location is indeed to be read as

Place:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(13)</th>
<th>PHOEBE</th>
<th>(says)...</th>
<th>[going]</th>
<th>R.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Circumstance: Location Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Results

4.1 The experiential composition of the play

4.1.1 Process types in the Stage Directions of Lady Audley's Secret

In total 321 stage direction clauses (n= 321) were extracted from the entire play. Table 1 gives the relative frequencies of the six process types as instantiated. In decreasing order, the instantiation of process types in the stage directions of LA are Material, Verbal, Behavioural, Existential, Relational and Mental. The entrance and exit cues function as Material processes in the play (enter- 23, exit – 21, exeunt- 3) and have been made distinct in the Material tallies, comprising 14.33 percent (46) of the 147 instantiations of Material process types. Material processes, even without entrance and exit contributions, still occurs over 50 percent more than the near equivalent Verbal and Behavioural instantiations:
TABLE 1 Process type frequencies in Lady Audley’s Secret

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCESS TYPE</th>
<th>TALLY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATERIAL</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTAL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATIONAL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEHAVIOURAL</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERBAL</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXISTENTIAL</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 *Clausal Circumstantial*

Within n-321 are 74 non-finite clause *circumstantial* that form a clause complex with the default clause (and the Verbiage), as exampled below:

(14) **LADY A.** *(says)*… *[looking towards R. door]*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LADY A.</th>
<th>(says)…</th>
<th>looking</th>
<th>towards R. door</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behave</td>
<td>Circumstance -Behavioural</td>
<td>Circumstance: Location Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these 74 present participle and past participle non-finite clauses, 34 are Material processes, 28 are Behavioural processes, 11 are Relational processes and 1 is a Verbal process. In this prototypical play script subconstruct the Material-Behavioural ratio is much closer (34:28) than overall tallies suggest (147:60). The Material process types remain consistent in proportion in that subconstruct when compared to the whole text (45.95:45.79 percent) but the Behavioural proportion takes a noticeable leap up of roughly 100 percent (37.84:18.69 percent).
Because a non-finite verb does not show tense, as clausal circumstantialis their action is not precisely anchored in time, but can freely occur during, before, after, intermittently, or throughout a character’s words. The contrast to this is the time-restricted instructions suggested in simple present processes, such as Behavioural “sighs” and Material “lights” (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014):

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(LADY A.)</td>
<td>[sighs]</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaver</td>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(PHOEBE)</td>
<td>[lights another candle...]</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the playwright seems to instruct the actor to begin and complete a particular action at a designated point in the speaker turn, i.e., before speech.

4.1.3 Distribution of Circumstances

Table 2 summarizes the frequencies of established circumstance types (i.e, adverbials that augment the verb) at “three steps in delicacy” (Matthiessen, 1999, p. 20). Among the 321 clauses there are 210 such circumstances present:
### TABLE 2 Circumstance frequencies in Lady Audley's Secret

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPANSION</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SUB-TYPE</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENHANCING</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>95.24%</td>
<td>Extent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
<td>distance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>duration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>36.67%</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>36.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>55.71%</td>
<td>means</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>quality</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>comparison</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cause</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>purpose</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>behalf</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>condition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>default</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>concession</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTENDING</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.28%</td>
<td>Accompaniment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.28%</td>
<td>comitative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>additive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELABORATING</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>guise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>product</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECTION</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Matter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>source</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Angle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>viewpoint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circumstances of Place, Quality and Means are the most prevalent in the text, showing a preference for highlighting *where* on stage someone or something is (Place), *how* an action or behaviour is executed (Quality), and *in what way* (Means) a result was achieved. All but 7 instances of Means (7/51) are concerned with characters moving about, entering, and leaving the stage *via* certain locations- hence categorized as Means, rather than location, as described in Section 3.3.
There are no Cause, Contingency, Matter or Angle circumstances in the stage directions, as is the case in other text types (e.g., newspaper reports) and perhaps even other plays.

4.1.4 *Circumstantial Adjuncts and the Stage*

From a performance point of view the circumstantials have practical theatrical application. Place and Means guides movement, set design, and use of props, and Manner guides character portrayal. Furthermore, each circumstance of Duration provides instructions for directors, technical theatre, and actors in staging key dramatic stage units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(17)</th>
<th>(ROBERT)</th>
<th>Exit, C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Circumstance: Manner Means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(18)</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>(she)</th>
<th>speaks</th>
<th>through music.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conjunction</td>
<td>(Behaver)</td>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>Circumstance: Extent Duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(19)</th>
<th>[Music, piano to end of act]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existent</td>
<td>Circumstance: Extent Duration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(20)</th>
<th>(LADY A.)</th>
<th>[trims flowers on stand during this scene.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
Such stage directions that bring attention to the play as theatricality has become more common in contemporary theatre, incorporating greater details on lighting, sound, props, audience etc.

4.1.5 Circumstantial Adjuncts and their Process Types

53/65 of the Quality circumstances are attached to Verbal processes, meaning that most Quality circumstances in *Lady Audley’s Secret* speak to *how* characters should deliver lines, i.e., paralinguistic instructions. Of these 53, 48 are asides and alouds as illustrated in Figure 1:

**FIGURE 1** Circumstantial Elements attached to Verbal Process types

It is interesting to note that a text type almost exclusively analysed historically for speech, includes in one script roughly only 25 percent Verbal circumstantial elements (53/210) and 20 percent Verbal process tokens overall (64/321) in its stage directions. While these are not insignificant, having 75 percent of circumstantial adjuncts attach themselves to non-Verbal process types and 80 percent of process
types themselves not be Verbal is a demonstration of the work that stage directions do to capture other semiotic facets of stage production that make the theatre script the hybrid it is. Playwrights are not writing a narrative (solely); they are crafting a multimodal experience that is at first encoded in language in parallel systems of Haupttext and Nebentext, and eventually realized in production and performance. Functional grammar can help articulate the semiotic workload encoded in the playwright’s lexicogrammatical choices.

Place circumstances occur the most, augmenting all but Verbal processes, and referring to a range of theatrical matter, including scenic arrangements and the proxemics, physiognomy, and gesture of actors. Quite surprisingly, Behavioural processes prefer circumstances of Place over that of Quality (17:5) in this text; I had the expectation that all plays would use Quality circumstances liberally to qualify Behaviourals. Table 3 shows the interaction of process types with Circumstances in the play:4

**TABLE 3** Intersection of Process types and Circumstances in Lady Audley’s Secret

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>A/ment</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROCESS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distance</td>
<td>duration</td>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiential analysis showcases the clause as *representation*. Because of this, patterns of transitivity (process type) “are the clausal realization of contextual choices. In selecting which process type to use, and what configuration of participants to express, participants are actively choosing to represent experience in a particular way” (Eggins, 2004, p. 253). Each process selection, along with the relevant participants, creates different effects in the experience of what is going on. The inclusion or exclusion of attendant circumstances also contributes to the effects created. This experiential profile of stage directions, then, reveals the kind of theatre experience being crafted for the playscript audiences. The next sections look at two of those experiences – that of play structure (plot), and characterization: the chief two of Aristotle’s six elements of drama.

4.2 *Elements of drama: plot and the structure of the play*

Aristotle is a popular starting point when discussing theatre theory. His “Poetics” famously introduced the six elements of drama (tragedy): plot, characterization, diction, thought, music, and spectacle, as well as highlighting anagnorisis (recognition), peripeteia (reversal), and pathos (suffering) as essential components of a complex plot ("Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)," 1991, pp. 43-44, 47-48). Aristotle is also known for his outline of dramatic structure (beginning- middle-end; complication & unravelling), which forms not only the core of Gustav Freytag’s five-act dramatic arc (Freytag, 1900), but is regarded as the structure of the well-made play, and in modern times, the well-made movie (Romanska, 2014, p. 442). The dramatic arc of the plot of *Lady Audley’s Secret* is thus segmented as follows in Figure 2:
Process type tallies are here bracketed within whichever of the eight plot divisions they fall, creating a transitivity configuration for each episode. The conceptual framework at play is that it is the shifting configurations of process types that creates the dramatic flow of experiences moving through the play—a Prague School drama principle—rather than the frequency of any one element. Figures 3-10 illustrate the transitivity configurations of the eight episodes – Exposition (Figure 3) ^ Complication (Figure 4) ^ Luke’s Blackmail (Figure 5) ^ Robert’s Threat (Figure 6) ^ Robert Framed (Figure 7) ^ Climax (Figure 8) ^ Phoebe’s Recognition (Figure 9) ^ Resolution (Figure 10).²⁵

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
FIGURE 3 EXPOSITION Transitivity Configuration N=48

FIGURE 4 COMPLICATION Transitivity Configuration N=61

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
FIGURE 5 LUKE’S BLACKMAIL Transitivity Configuration N=21

FIGURE 6 ROBERT’S THREAT Transitivity Configuration N=18
**FIGURE 7** ROBERT FRAMED Transitivity Configuration N=16

**FIGURE 8** CLIMAX Transitivity Configuration N=59

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
FIGURE 9 PHOEBE’S RECOGNITION Transitivity Configuration N=9

FIGURE 10 RESOLUTION Transitivity Configuration N=41

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
4.2.1 Process Types and their Episodes

First, observe that Enter/Exit tallies were separated from overall Material process type tokens, even though they are Material subtypes of happening (intransitives). If we count those two groups together, the true Material transitivity proportions are much higher - 44, 48, 42, 33, 56, 40, 67, and 49 percent respectively. However, when Enter/Exit comprise the bulk of Material process, (Figure 8), or do not figure at all in the highest proportion of Material processes in the play (Figure 10) it is worth separating these elements in order to capture a more accurate picture of plot-driving action, while still having the capacity to assess their contribution to the same.

**Existentials**

Existentials seem to be a tool operationalised here in the heights of plot action along with Material processes rather than occurring primarily at the beginning of a story or a scene. They are at their largest proportion in the climax (19 percent) and maintain relatively high proportions throughout falling action. They have no presence in the rising action that presents conflict and builds tension (Figure 6, 7, 8) and make up only 6 percent of Exposition. They introduce other elements of drama, namely Music, into the action and painstakingly set the scene for the climax episode. This defies reasonable expectation that Existentials would figure prominently at the opening of a play, or even at the opening of every scene, in much the same way that Placement of a story, according to Generic Structure Potential (GSP), “is often dominated by ‘existential’ and ‘relational’ clauses”,6 and decrease with the increase of Material tokens that build the plot (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 220). The “contextual configuration”- to borrow a term from Hasan (1985) - of plays are already showing some difference to that of novels.
Verbals

Where Existentials are at their highest in Figures 9, 10, and 11, Verbals are at their lowest. Existentials here actually increase with the height of action – climax to resolution – whereas Verbals decrease with the height of action in the play. In fact, Verbals are at their proportionate lowest at the Climax (7 percent). This is on the heels of a steady and significant presence in the episodes before, with some fluctuation that will be discussed later. Verbal transitivity here is used to build the story and build the characters, but then gives way to greater focus on action and other theatrical emphases once the story has been established. This point indicates again how much of a play’s experience is dependent on non-verbal semiotics.

Behaviourals

Behavioural proportions are lowest in the Exposition (8 percent) and maintain higher and generally stable representation through to the climax episode, whereafter they fall to their next lowest numbers (8, 23, 29, 28, 19, 29, 11, and 15 percent). There is therefore a higher degree of physiological focus on character while the conflict of the plot is being developed (chuckling, weeping), providing character nuance to plot development. This differs from things characters do (seize, point) that drive the action of the plot where Behaviourals are fewer (Figure 10, 11).

Materials

As perhaps anticipated, Material process types occupy large portions of configurations throughout the play (23, 43, 33, 22, 25, 30, 67, 37 percent). While the Complication (43 percent) and the Resolution (37 percent) involve large numbers of Material tokens, the biggest proportion occurs in Phoebe’s Recognition (67 percent).
(Figure 10). This is the anagnorisis, a turning point in the plot where two characters realise a connection between themselves. It is part of the falling action, where we have already observed an increase in action-correlated Existentials. Phoebe’s Recognition involves one of the more brutal physical altercations of the play – Lady Audley takes captive of and drags away a screaming Phoebe who had realized the truth of Lady Audley’s guilt. In fact, these scenes with the higher proportions of Material tokens are scenes of intense physical action: in the Complication, Lady A. pushes George Talboys down a well, and in the Resolution, Robert Audley violently rescues Phoebe. However, it is the Material process subtype of ‘Happening’ (intransitive verbs) that outnumber the Material process subtype of ‘Doing’ (transitive verbs) in these episodes, showing that the focus, just like with Behaviourals, still lies with the machinations of actors, rather than things they affect. Only the Climax shows starkly disproportionate favouring of Doing transitivity, explaining thus the nature-the how-of the unique and contrasting experience for the reader at the Climax of the play.

The data also reveals that the lowest proportions of Material tokens occur in Robert’s Threat (22 percent) while simultaneously the highest proportions of Verbals occur in the same (33 percent). This observation will also be further construed in the context of characterization. Generally, what I will informally term here as the ‘Big 3’-Material, Verbal, and Behavioural-process types in stage directions display some dialectic properties across the play.

Of final note is the fact that all seven process types occur only in the Exposition, Climax and Resolution. For the others, either two (Figures 6, 7, 10) or three (Figure 8) process types are unrepresented, with Mentals being consistently absent across all episodes save for the Exposition, Climax and Resolution. ‘The Big 3’, however, appear
across all episodes. Aristotle’s Beginning, Middle and End of the dramatic arc is here the most richly encoded.

4.3 Elements of drama: character

Characterization in the source text resembles the dichotomy of early plays: juxtaposition of the high and mighty, and the low. Luke and Phoebe exist in sharp contrast to the high society Audleys, and this contrast is achieved in experiential choices in stage directions. If we are to take speech as indicative of education, ‘high breeding’ and power in this context, this explains why Verbals are more heavily weighted in the aristocracy as it were than with the working class, and usually to the detriment of Behaviourals. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in Lady Audley’s confrontation with the two men who threaten her future- Luke, who knows her secret (Figure 6) and Robert Audley, who suspects it (Figure 7). It is here that the Verbal fluctuations and simultaneous increase of Verbals and decrease of Materials /Behaviourals in certain scenes mentioned earlier come into focus.

Luke’s Blackmail scene shows dominance of Behavioural processes, along with the lowest proportion of Verbals in the rising action of the plot. By contrast, Robert’s Threat has the highest proportion of Verbals in the entire play, with requisite reductions in Behavioural processes. Therefore, it is worth observing that in Figure 11 (Luke’s Transitivity Profile), Figure 12 (Robert’s Transitivity Profile), and Figure 13 (Lady Audley’s Transitivity Profile), the overall process configurations for these characters respectively reflect these tendencies, with Lady Audley’s configuration displaying competence in these ‘Big 3’:
FIGURE 11 LUKE’s Transitivity Profile N=47

FIGURE 12 ROBERT’s Transitivity Profile N=42

PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
Luke, far more than any other character, is presented through his physiological behaviour in addition to his comparative paucity of Verbals, reminiscent perhaps of the classic ‘brute’ archetype. Robert, conversely, is dominated by Verbal presentation (just like Alicia, his fiancée), analogous to education, privilege and intelligence. This contrast is made starker by the fact that these two men are crafted with near equal Material proportions (30/29), and that Luke is assigned more Attribute descriptors than Robert. The script audience experiences Lady Audley as a more balanced character, capable of functioning in both worlds, an indication of her humble beginnings and lofty aspirations made true.

One theoretical question here is whether the plot crafted these characters, or if the flavour of the character shaped the experience of the plot (or if both weaved PQW – FUNCTIONAL STYLISTICS OF STAGE DIRECTIONS
simultaneously). Aristotle would claim the first, as “it is the action which is the object of the imitation [mimesis]; the individual characters are subsidiary to it” (“Aristotle (384-322 B.C.),” 1991). Yet, here we see patterns in characterization. Plus, it is the characters who enact various transitivities. At the very least, character in *Lady Audley’s Secret* seems to have a strong, shaping influence on rising action of this plot. The tension builds as it does because of who Luke is as a character. The tension builds and morphs as it does because of who Robert is as a character. The interaction of characters, and not just the presence or absence of any one character, contributes to this *how*.

Finally, linked to the drama element of character is the ratio of animate to inanimate actors in the script. Only 5 out of the 296 primary participant instantiations (Actor, Behaver, Sayer, Carrier, Senser) are attributed to inanimate entities, with 4 further instantiations implying the audience as Senser (e.g., *The great bell of the Castle is now heard tolling*). *Lady Audley’s Secret* as an early modern script places overwhelming emphasis on what characters do, say, and physiologically are in its stage directions. Perhaps expectedly, participants that are acted on (e.g., Goal) contain a substantially higher percentage of inanimate entities (e.g., props). Extrapolating beyond this, it may be reasonable to expect that contemporary radical plays, which make a bigger investment in presenting theatre as theatre, contain a greater number of inanimate entities as primary participant in its script clauses.

5 **Discussion**

This paper seeks to demonstrate functional grammar going beyond description and revealing *how* texts do what they do. Here I will contextualize the results with this main question in mind.
5.1 The how of the play text experience

The how of transitivity analysis in stage directions is initially twofold: first there is the functional class of verbs chosen and figures produced, and second, the configuration of process types within and across units (episodes). The flow and change in process types, the “quantum of change” in the stage directions, define the pacing, tensions, dynamisms and emphases experienced as the drama unfolds. For example, Robert’s Threat’s tension derives from emphasised covert verbal sparring (aside, aloud) while the Complication’s dynamism stems from explosive transitive and intransitive action (striking, pushes). Each is action, and, like Melrose’s research with character speech, potentially indicates variations in dynamism in stage movement in performance.

Movement, however, is not the only aspect; the changes are changes of kind that explain the intended experience for the reader. The experiential clauses shape the dramatic arc by not only configuring those cardinal episodes of Exposition, Climax, and Resolution richly- they contain all the process types - but by crafting the other episode configurations. The Climax in this play, for example, is the episode with transitive Material verbs (Doings- involving a Goal) being proportionally greater than intransitive Material verbs (Happenings – absence of a Goal), apart from also containing the greatest number of such tokens, as seen in Table 4:
In this way a unique, fresh feeling of action through prop and set manipulation is generated, distinguishing the play’s highpoint.

A second example is found in the Exposition – this episode contains the highest proportion of Entrances and Exits spread across characters, as seen in Table 4. This constant appearance and disappearance of characters, coupled with the highest proportion of Relational process verbs used for character description and movement, does not occur again in the play. Readers experience a clear play introduction via a virtual parade of characters. Figures 4-11 visually display the nuances of experience morphing across episodes through shifting proportions of process types (cf. James & Gomceli, 2018). In Prague School Drama philosophy each part is only fully actualized when standing in relief to other parts.
5.2 The combinatory quality of theatre

Melrose’s notion that functional grammar can better handle what Anne Ubersfeld called “the combinatory quality of theatre” finds support here in the breakdown of the playscript clause as it relates to aspects of theatre. Choice in transitivity figure elements (process + participants + circumstances) favours particular aspects of production and performance. Table 5 illustrates these connections:

TABLE 5 Some Transitivity Figure elements and matching theatrical counterparts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitivity Figure Element</th>
<th>Theatre Element</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material process, Doings/Happenings</td>
<td>Actors, technicians (for inanimate actors), stage movement</td>
<td>the drop falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural process</td>
<td>Actors (physiology)</td>
<td>Sir M. sighs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal process</td>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Luke, repeating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential process</td>
<td>Music, set, lighting, staging</td>
<td>A divided scene of two rooms – Existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>The reflection of the fire is seen within (by audience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Staging, costuming, characterization</td>
<td>the lime trees form an avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means (Circumstantial)</td>
<td>Staging, stage movement</td>
<td>Re-enter Phoebe, R. door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (Circumstantial)</td>
<td>Stage sound, Actor</td>
<td>Lady A. says, with fury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (Circumstantial)</td>
<td>stage movement, props, set</td>
<td>a candle on table</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Straight away we see the ‘Big 3’ being very much actor/character focused, with the other process types and the circumstantials providing instruction for other semiotic theatre phenomenon. Unlike Melrose’s deconstructing of experientiality in drama dialogue, analysis of experientiality in stage directions discusses a wider range of
theatrical elements. The fact that a play is meant to be experienced in front of a live audience is a key point in describing its context and the effects on the semantics of the clause (cf. Furlong, 2020). Peacock’s Status-Interaction theoretical model is a potentially useful tool for reading drama script as performance without assuming one-to-one translation across semiotic modes (Peacock, 1984). Functional grammar is an appropriate bridge between text and production when activated by the Peacock Model (Quammie-Wallen, 2020, p. 92).

5.3 *Text as literature, text as performance*

Table 5 also outlines how the play script is synaesthetic. It begins to dissect how the semiotic load of this theatrical composition is shared in the text, and further challenges the idea that stage directions are throw-away, accompanying, secondary or inconsequential addendums to characters’ speech. If circumstantial elements and processes enshrined in the clause semantically speak to the totality of production and performance, then verbal aspects cannot be deemed the only worthwhile and recoverable element of the text. Despite orthographical and some grammatical support for stage directions as subsidiary, when taken from the functional view of register as influenced by context, it is impossible to ignore these meaningful elements of a drama script that are meant to be staged, and so there is no battle for supremacy between Hauptext and Nebentext (Fischer-Lichte, 1984; Jansen, 1968; Pagnini, 1970; Pfister, 1991).

Understanding the play text from the point of view of context is understanding the play text as register. According to Halliday, register unlocks the (meaning) principles accounting for the language variety and is thus a semantic construct (Lukin et al., 2008). Each text is a token of its register of language and so, for stage directions,
this interpretative lens constructs its register which bridges the text and its socio-semiotic context.

Halliday considered circumstantial elements of the group/ phrase kind (Place, Means, Quality, etc.) “minor processes” that embody Relational and Verbal processes. This bears extra significance in drama scripts because group and phrase-type demarcated stage directions then stand much closer than expected to the major process types. This also lends weight to Dreyfus and Bennett’s categorizing non-finite clauses as a type of circumstantial at the clause complex level. Viewing from above, from context (field) and from roundabout from semantics via lexicogrammar (from below) the playscript itself argues against the dismissal of stage directions that some in the professional theatrical world encourage (Catron, n.d.).

6 Conclusion

Play texts are unique in that they are a hybrid type of registerial text; not meant for simple reading but designed as a component of theatre. The language, then, of stage directions invites complex semiotic interpretation when decoded from a functional stylistic perspective. SFG has not extensively been applied to stage directions as a discourse type, and so this interdisciplinary approach worked to simultaneously address a dearth of research in two fields. After introducing stage directions, transitivity, and my conventions for analysing this type of data, the results of the transitivity analysis of the full complement of stage directions of Lady Audley’s Secret (n=321 clauses) were revealed and insights put forward.

Stage directions in this play are dominated by Material processes (45.79 percent), followed by Verbals (19.94 percent) and Behaviourals (18.69 percent) - the
“Big 3” – and are the only process types that contribute to all the key episodes of the dramatic structure of the play. The top three circumstantials are Circumstances of Place (n=76), Quality (n=65) and Means (n=51), making Manner circumstantials the most frequent. All processes and circumstances give visual and acoustic guides to performance and production to everyone from actors to audience (Table 5). Stage directions cover a wider range of theatrical elements than dialogue.

The transitivity configurations of key episodes in the dramatic arc – the how of the play - revealed the flow of experience throughout the play. The configurations are transitivity prototypes of each stage of the dramatic episodes of the play as espoused by Aristotle and advanced by Freytag. This is one of the critical advantages of analysing a work in its entirety – one can craft the full picture and appreciate the whole canvas rather than utilize only a moment (extract) and generalize it to the entire work.

The configuration flux across the play in the stage directions demonstrates that it would be erroneous or at least significantly incomplete to take the experience crafted at one stage and apply it to the whole, as the experience in the Exposition can be different from the Climax, and the rising action different from the denouement. These and character transitivity configurations illustrate how a character is crafted as a stringent archetype (Luke) or as complex and flexible (Lady Audley).

The results here offer systematic reasoning and shared and definitive language for our ‘impressions’ of a character or entire play that is otherwise only expressed through post-descriptions of the performance. It provides common language for drama and theatre. The experiential profiles are a useful tool for comparison with other text types and for teaching the specialized discourse of playwriting. As more complete sets of stage directions are analysed, it will be of great interest to ascertain how these
experiential profiles differ within and across genres, eras, nationalities, languages, playwrights etc. and just as significantly, how they remain the same.

Notes

1. Square brackets [ ] surround stage directions that were originally in regular brackets in the play script. In this study’s data set, regular brackets ( ) surround elided elements.

2. Table categories here coincide with Introduction to Functional Grammar 2014 (4th edition)

3. The remaining 11 elements fall under the category ‘Receiver’ (e.g., [to PHOEBE]) which is treated, in Verbal processes, not as a circumstance but as a participant: the direct, intended audience of the utterance.

4. Note that some clauses may only have Participant(s) and Process, and no Circumstance.

5. Notation convention indicating sequence (i.e., followed by) typically used for realization statements in SFG.

6. Relational tokens do occur in largest proportion here in the stage directions of the Exposition.
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