“HOW CAN WE KNOW THE DANCER FROM THE DANCE?”: COGNITIVE POETICS

AND WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS’S POETRY

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Cognitive poetics, the recently developed field of literary theory which utilizes principles from cognitive science and cognitive linguistics to examine literature, is applied in this study to an exploration of the poetry of William Butler Yeats. The theoretical foundation for this approach is embodiment theory, the concept from cognitive linguistics that language is an embodied phenomenon and that meaning and meaning construction are bodily processes grounded in our sensorimotor experiences. A systematic analysis including conceptual metaphors, image schemas, cognitive mappings, mental spaces, and cognitive grammar is applied here to selected poems of Yeats to discover how these models can inform our readings of these poems. Special attention is devoted to Yeats’s interest in the mind’s eye, his crafting of syntax in stanzaic development, his atemporalization through grammar, and the antinomies which converge in selected symbols from his poems.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s when cognitive linguistics emerged, it has been seeking to explain scientifically the making of meaning in the mind. Cognitive linguistics contends that our minds’ understanding of the abstract, the metaphorical, the imaginary is accomplished through relating those intangible domains to physical ones which we have actually experienced with our corporeal selves; many of the concepts from cognitive linguistics have now been applied to literature by cognitive poetics. Cognitive linguistics presents us with “a reconsideration of the extent to which language use is non-arbitrary” and allows us to reexamine literary studies through a model which has rejected a strictly structuralist approach to language.1 Contrary to the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, the cognitive linguistics model adopted by cognitive poetics views language as an embodied experience, a place where the mind and body merge in the act of cognition. Through much of William Butler Yeats’s work we can likewise perceive frequent, controlling themes of dualities and oppositions—or as Yeats called them, antinomies—such as the self and soul, the objective and subjective, the masculine and feminine, the body and mind, the sun and moon, youth and age, and many others.2 However, to Yeats these oppositional forces are not discrete dualities, but exist as a state of conflict one with the other, dependent upon each other for existence. As Brian Arkins explains, Yeats believed “all things are made of the conflict of two states of consciousness” and drew heavily

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on the Pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus for his use of tensions between binary oppositions.\(^3\)

Excluding Heraclitus, much of classical philosophy, and indeed most of Western culture, perceives the poles of these dualities as mutually exclusive; however, developments in cognitive science and cognitive linguistics over the last several decades have called into question the validity of such philosophy and have challenged Western thought with the concept of the embodied mind. A similar challenge to Cartesian duality is frequently demonstrated in Yeats’s poetry. This study applies a cognitive poetics approach to select poems by Yeats in order to examine how the embodiment theory and corresponding principles from cognitive linguistics might enrich our understanding of his works. This project will explore how interactions between body and mind, the subjective and objective, are represented in Yeats’s metaphors and symbols and how the concept of embodiment contributes to our construction of their meaning. Although cognitive poetics can open up to us potentially new readings and meanings for Yeats’s poems, the aim of cognitive poetics, and therefore of this study, is the how not the what: how we construct meaning as we read selected poems. The controlling questions which this project aims to answer are: What might recent developments in cognitive science, cognitive linguistics, and cognitive poetics contribute to our understanding of metaphorical and symbolic language in Yeats’s poetry? How might the embodiment theory of language apply to selected poems? Can the central symbols and metaphors in some of his poetry be read as locations of embodiment? How might applying cognitive mappings, such as image schemas, to these poems contribute to our understanding of how the metaphors and symbols within them

\(^3\) Qtd. in Brian Arkins, *The Thought of W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), 4. See Arkins’s chapter “All Things Doubled: The Theme of Opposition in Yeats” for further elaboration on the influence of Heraclitus, Plato, Plotinus, and other philosophers on Yeats’s development of binary opposites in his poetry, including his theory of the Mask.
function? This study will seek to apply these concepts and others from cognitive linguistics and cognitive poetics to a selection of Yeats’s poems which rely heavily on symbolism and complex spatial metaphors in order to show how the brain is the site where the real and ideal, the self and the soul, the imagination and the corporeal, the mind and the body merge and the metaphorical nature of language bridges the divides between them. In the application of cognitive poetics to these poems, I hope that we might also find a space to determine the value of such an approach to Yeats’s works.

In his 1900 essay “The Symbolism of Poetry,” Yeats explores some questions of poetry which are very similar to concepts with which cognitive poetics wrestles today. Regarding symbolic writing he asserts, “All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions.” These disembodied powers are given bodies through symbolic language in poetry. Similar to cognitive linguists’ claims of embodiment theory, Yeats asserts that symbolism gives “dumb things voices, and bodiless things bodies.” How might language accomplish such a feat? The mechanism of embodiment is not explained scientifically by Yeats; instead, he attributes the power of symbolism to something beyond scientific understanding, something magical. The master poet or artist or craftsman has the skill to use his art to evoke the disembodied powers and give them voices and bodies. Cognitive science and its recent

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studies of brain activity might afford us a scientific explanation of how this magic works; however, an element of magic still seems to exist, for “literature itself is an artistic enterprise...The literary work is a phenomenon for exploration not comprised solely of the text itself nor solely of the reader or reading themselves but as a heteronymous object involving the interaction of the two.”6 The subtle “fleeting effects” of literature cannot at this time be fully explained by cognitive science; consequently, “[c]ognitive poetics has been described as an ‘artful science.’”7 The magic of the metaphor or symbolism in poetry is not explained away by an analysis based in cognitive linguistics, nor does such an analysis attempt to do so. For, “while MRI scans and anatomical measurements during reading might tell us things about the brain or body, they can tell us little about the particular literary work being read, except in the most general of terms”; and the work itself, the literary text being read, is the central focus of literary studies, even when cognitive poetics is applied to the text.8 Nonetheless, through embodiment theory, cognitive poetics may help us better understand how our minds comprehend the metaphorical language of poetry. The assertion that metaphoric language “emerges from recurring bodily actions suggests” this language is embodied and this embodiment is central not only to language creation and reception, but also to other forms of human expression. 9

8 Ibid.,
9 Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., “Embodied Metaphor” in The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics, eds. Jeannette Littlemore and John R. Taylor (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 168. The role of embodiment in our expressive processes has been extended to creative movement, including dance, as section five of Gibbs’s chapter explores, and which will be examined more closely in chapter 5 of this study.
Not all metaphorical language can equally and effectively accomplish this embodiment though, which raises questions about the quality or type of the metaphor. Might cognitive poetics help us to understand why some language is more engaging or pleasing than other language? Are some metaphors aesthetically superior to others in some way? Are some linguistically superior? Are some “better” than others, and what makes them so? Yeats addresses similar questions when he explains that there are emotional symbols and intellectual ones, and that the intellectual ones are more powerful because they transcend emotion and rise to a level of ideas, ideas which are usually culturally constructed.\(^\text{10}\) In some ways, his use of powerful cultural symbols is quite similar to the cultural foundation of source domains in cognitive linguistics. Raymond Gibbs likewise explains that embodied metaphor is “possibly shaped by culture,” because “[d]ifferences in embodied metaphoric conceptualizations across cultures may depend on variation in ‘experiential focus,’” as “[p]eople in different geographical and social contexts are attuned to different aspects of their bodily experience.”\(^\text{11}\) Much of metaphorical language evokes emotional connotations; however, metaphors which achieve a stronger effect are often rooted in cultural symbolism, such as religious iconography like the Christian cross, national symbols like flags, and even cultural associations with objects like flowers. Yeats explains this symbolic association with flowers when he writes that “the rose, and the lily, and the poppy were so married, by their colour and their odour, and their use, to

\(^{10}\) Yeats, “The Symbolism of Poetry,” 118.

\(^{11}\) Gibbs, “Embodied Metaphor,” 171. Gibbs, psychology professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, provides several examples of cultural situations which might inform a group’s understanding of a conceptual metaphor. One comes from a 2003 study he conducted of women who had survived cancer and who structured their narratives of their experiences through bodily movement, such as getting through it, getting over it, moving on from it, and so on. These metaphorical expressions are based on the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor; however, Gibbs asserts that they are revised somewhat into “CANCER IS AN OBSTACLE ON LIFE’S JOURNEY” (170-171).
love and purity and sleep, or to other symbols of love and purity and sleep, and had been so long a part of the imagination of the world, that a symbolist might use them to help out his meaning.” Some metaphorical language, due to its cultural connotations, might therefore convey greater meaning or conjure deeper associations. Does this mean that not all metaphors are created equal? Literary critics would certainly claim so. Even novice readers of literature might argue that one metaphor is better than another. We know that their effect is not equal; however, with evidence from cognitive science that supports such an assertion, we now can better understand why they are not equal. Conceptual metaphor theory contends in its conventionality argument that “[m]etaphors are not limited to being used in instance of creative writing and speaking (e.g. poetry). Instead, they are pervasively and routinely used in everyday language.” If metaphor is pervasive throughout conventional language, then what makes literary metaphor any different? Why is it any more profound or moving than conventional metaphorical language? Using an example of Robert Burns’s lines “The white moon is setting behind the white wave,/And Time is setting with me, O!” Yeats attempts to explain the qualities which make symbolic language more effective:

[A]nd these lines are perfectly symbolical. Take from them the whiteness of the moon and of the wave, whose relation to the setting of Time is too subtle for the intellect, and you take from them their beauty. But, when all are together, moon and wave and whiteness and setting Time and the melancholy cry, they evoke an emotion which cannot be evoked by any other arrangement of colours and sounds and forms. We may call this metaphorical writing, but it is better to call it symbolical writing, because metaphors are not profound enough to be moving, when they are not symbols, and

when they are symbols they are the most perfect, because the most subtle, outside of pure sound, and through them one can the best find out what symbols are.\textsuperscript{14}

Arguably, truly powerful and profound metaphorical language draws on symbols. Yeats asserts that the metaphorical or symbolic relationship between the moon and waves and time is too “subtle for the intellect” and surpasses a mere emotional response from the reader because the metaphor draws on symbols which hold deeper meaning for most readers. These symbols are the colour white and the common metaphor that life is represented by a day and that the night brings death.\textsuperscript{15} Yeats elevates Burns’s lines to the status of symbol and claims that metaphors which are not symbols are not profound enough to deeply move us. Only metaphorical language which is symbolic is “most perfect” because it is subtle and can allow us to “find out what symbols are.”\textsuperscript{16} That which Yeats is explaining here has likewise been supported by fMRI studies of the brain conducted by neuroscientists who measure how and to what extent activity is linguistically stimulated in various regions of the brain.\textsuperscript{17} Some linguistic metaphors engage our mental simulation processes far more than others; and, interestingly, ones which evoke more elaborate neural responses in our brains are those which are more creative or original.

\textsuperscript{14} Yeats, “The Symbolism of Poetry,” 115.

\textsuperscript{15} This metaphor—LIFE IS A DAY—is listed among the conceptual metaphors in Peter Stockwell, Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction, (NY: Routledge, 2002), 110.

\textsuperscript{16} Yeats, “The Symbolism of Poetry,” 115.

\textsuperscript{17} The test I refer to here, fMRI, is functional magnetic resonance imaging, a new category of MRI which more precisely measures neurological activity in specific regions of the brain which are subjected to stimuli. For additional information on fMRIs, see the University of California’s School of Medicine’s Center for Functional MRI site: http://fmri.ucsd.edu/Research/whatisfmri.html
Much of the scholarship on cognitive linguistics and embodiment theory on which this study draws stems from the foundational texts *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999), both by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Lakoff and Johnson’s work in this field has been expanded upon greatly over the last several decades, and notable contributions have been made in recent years by cognitive science research, such as the studies presented in Benjamin Bergen’s *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (2012). Developments in cognitive linguistics have also been applied to many other fields of study, such as sociolinguistics and cognitive psychology. Recent application of Cognitive Metaphor Theory to poetry, such as work by Margaret Freeman and Peter Stockwell, has sought to apply these discoveries from cognitive science to the field of cognitive poetics. Stockwell asserts that cognitive poetics provides us with a way to achieve a “clear view of text and context, circumstances and uses, knowledge and beliefs” because cognitive poetics “has a linguistic dimension” which enables us to “engage in detailed and precise textual analysis of style and literary craft” and then “offers a means of describing and delineating different types of knowledge and belief in a systematic way.” For instance, Freeman has applied cognitive

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18 See Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning*, (NY: Basic, 2012). Bergen provides scientific data from fMRIs which demonstrate how the embodiment theory is supported by neural scans which track the portions of the brain activated when words are heard or read. His findings provide evidence that sensorimotor regions of the brain are activated when words associated with those sensors or movements are read or heard, even though no actual sense is being used or motor skill is being deployed.


poetics to the poetry of Emily Dickinson to explore a new reading which shows how a
metaphorical structure based on imaginative thinking stemming from bodily experience creates
what she calls “Dickinson’s conceptual universe.”21 Likewise, I contend in this study that these
concepts of cognitive linguistics can be engaged to enrich our understanding of Yeats’s poetry.
The model which I apply to these poems, taken largely from Peter Stockwell’s model analyses in
Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction, provides a systematic method for examining the concept
of embodiment and conceptual metaphor, specifically through embodiment theory and
cognitive mapping. In Stockwell’s method, “[u]nderstanding metaphor as mapping between
cognitive models involves structuring or restructuring the target domain using concepts
transferred from the...source domain”; this mapping or structuring will be accomplished by
comparing the common attributes and predicate relations of domains within the metaphorical
language of the poems. 22 My application of cognitive mappings will then be expanded to
consider the role of embodiment in our comprehension of the grammar and ultimately of the
dominant symbols within selected poems by Yeats.

The Terminology of Cognitive Linguistics:

The language of cognitive poetics relies primarily upon the terminology established by
the fields of cognitive science and cognitive linguistics; therefore, before proceeding, we must
first define some principal terms of this analysis. Lakoff and Johnson, in their seminal text

21 Margaret H. Freeman, “Metaphor Making Meaning: Dickinson’s Conceptual Universe,” Journal of Pragmatics 24 (1995), 647. Freeman argues that Dickinson rejects one of the dominant conceptual metaphors of her time, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, in exchange for the metaphor LIFE IS A VOYAGE IN SPACE (646). Conceptual metaphors are defined below in the terminology section of this introduction.

22 Stockwell, Cognitive, 108.
*Metaphors We Live By* and subsequent *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, set forth most of the foundational concepts and terms of cognitive linguistics, including “embodiment” and “conceptual metaphors,” both foundational to this study. Cognitive poetics has also drawn from cognitive linguistics an array of analytical models and cognitive mappings which I will employ throughout this project, such as “image schemas,” “mental spaces,” and “cognitive grammar.” Following is an introductory explanation of each.

**Embodiment Theory**

Fundamental to all other cognitive linguistic principles and terms explored in this study is the concept that language is an embodied phenomenon; Lakoff and Johnson argue “that human concepts are not just reflections of an external reality, but that they are crucially shaped by our bodies and brains, especially by our sensorimotor system.”23 Our understanding of abstract target domains is constructed primarily through our bodies’ physical experiences with concrete source domains because meaning “isn’t distilled away from our bodily experiences but is instead tightly bound by them.”24 The *embodiment simulation hypothesis* holds that we recreate physical experiences in our brains when we read or hear of them, which is why Bergen’s studies of fMRI results demonstrated activation in motor portions of the brain, even

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24 Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 12. See the next section on conceptual metaphors for additional explanation of target and source domains.
when no motor function was physically being performed.\textsuperscript{25} This means that the sounds or smells or movements are actually being simulated in our brains when we construct the meaning of words. Embodiment theory claims “that you make meaning by creating experiences for yourself that...reflect the experiences that the speaker” or writer intended to communicate; therefore, meaning “isn’t just abstract mental symbols; it’s a creative process, in which people construct virtual experiences—embodied simulations—in their mind’s eye.”\textsuperscript{26} This understanding of meaning suggests that meaning varies for each person and each culture and is a creative experience. When we read or hear a linguistic expression, we are not accessing a meaning for those words that exists in some Platonic realm but are instead creating the meaning for those words based on our prior bodily experiences.

The cognitive linguistic concept of embodiment may be of particular interest in Yeatsian studies because of its commonalities with Yeats’s preoccupation with the “mind’s eye.”\textsuperscript{27} When Bergen at the University of California San Diego’s Language and Cognition Lab writes of the embodied simulations which have been observed in fMRI scans, he recognizes that they are connected to creative processes by which we construct visions in our minds’ eyes. This view of language rejects structuralist linguistics which “has treated language as an autonomous object of study” and instead explores how we might gain “access to the rich meaning constructions upon which language operates.”\textsuperscript{28} In multiple poems and essays, to be explored in chapter 2 of

\textsuperscript{25} See footnote 18 above.
\textsuperscript{26} Bergen, \textit{Louder Than Words}, 16.
\textsuperscript{27} This term can specifically be found used by Yeats in \textit{Per Amica Silentia Lunae}, the essay “Magic,” and multiple poems such as “The Magi,” “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes,” and “Meditations in Time of Civil War.” Chapter 2 will consider the mind’s eye in more depth.
this study, Yeats frequently wrote of the “mind’s eye” as a place of meaning construction, a location of “mind encountering the world through imagination.”29 The manner by which meaning construction occurs in the mind’s eye, according to cognitive linguistics, might enhance our reading of Yeats’s repeated use of this phrase. Through “imaginative mental action” visions and images are conjured before the poet’s mind’s eye; and, as George Bornstein explains, multiple Yeats poems such as “The Tower” lead the reader through a “mind moving from description or ordinary perception to vision and then back again,” in which the vision becomes a “literal summoning of images.”30 Yeats’s understanding of the mind’s eye was founded upon magic, and certainly not neurology; however, the theory of embodied cognition might contribute to our understanding of Yeats’s fascination with the mind’s eye and how images might be summoned before it.

To further explore the concept of embodiment, let us try out an experience of simulating something in our minds. Think of standing on a beach with the sun overhead beaming onto your shoulders, the sound of the ocean roaring in your ears, smelling the salt in the air, your toes sinking in the hot sand, all while drinking a cold, limey margarita. To envision this scene, you probably engaged multiple sensory faculties to conjure up the sound of the ocean’s waves, the radiating of the sun on your neck, perhaps the pucker of your mouth from the lime, or the grittiness of the sand between your toes. You are able to willfully simulate these sounds, tastes, and feelings in your mind, activating those portions of your brain which

30 Ibid., 54-55.
handle those sensory activities. Or try the same mental exercise with an action such as turning a doorknob, or playing a chord on a guitar, or kicking a soccer ball. When you visualise such an action, you can imagine what direction your hand is turning on that doorknob or how your fingertips feel pressing the grooves on the steel strings between the frets of the guitar neck. This is conscious simulation; our minds reenact movements that we have done or tastes we have experienced, even when they are completely virtual and not actually occurring. Likewise, embodiment theory contends that our minds do this at much deeper levels, engaging brain processes continuously and unconsciously to help us construct meaning of linguistic expressions.\textsuperscript{31} This means that our mental “simulation creates echoes in our brains of previous experiences, attenuated resonances of brain patterns that were active during previous perceptual and motor experiences,” even though we are not actually perceiving that stimuli or acting out those motions at that moment.\textsuperscript{32} If the \textit{embodiment simulation hypothesis} holds true, as research from cognitive science thus far seems to support, then language is more than mere symbols, structuralist linguistics is insufficient for explaining the way in which we construct meaning from language, and we must turn instead to embodiment theory for a fuller understanding of meaning construction.

\textbf{Conceptual Metaphors}

Metaphor, as examined in my present study, of course refers not only to “the canonical

\textsuperscript{31} See Bergen’s \textit{Louder Than Words} pages 13-17 for more discussion of the \textit{embodiment simulation hypothesis} and for additional examples from which I draw several of these.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 15.
form of metaphor” in the literary tradition, but also to any metaphorical “language that normally describes a concrete thing (like a container or an organism) being used systematically to describe some other, abstract thing (like society).” Conceptual metaphor, in turn, is the way by which our minds comprehend one domain, the target domain, in terms of another, the source domain. Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory contends that “we not only describe, but also understand one thing in terms of another by transferring, or ‘mapping’ knowledge about one concept...to another.” Evidence of this theory has been drawn from analyses of fMRI data which show activation in “localized, domain-specific cortical areas during the processing of metaphor,” but not during the processing of paraphrases of those same metaphors. Paraphrases that do not incorporate overt metaphorical language do not appear to require as much cognitive mapping of meaning from familiar source domains onto unfamiliar target domains. Regarding metaphorical idioms, Bergen found that the brains of people “reading sentences like Bite the bullet and Kick the bucket” were less activated; consequently, he surmised that “those metaphorical expressions, by dint of their long careers in the language, have come to be bleached of their literal meaning. By comparison, more innovative metaphorical language, like Bite into this idea or Kick this meeting into overdrive might encourage relatively more residual motor simulation.” Therefore, more original or imaginative poetic language requires additional mental processing which engages the cognitive faculties more intensely. Therefore, in conceptual metaphor theory it seems that metaphorical language

36 Bergen, Louder, 205.
is more mentally stimulating, and arguably more aesthetically engaging, when it applies familiar or culturally symbolic source domains in creative and inventive ways to unfamiliar target domains.

For clarification, in literary studies, a metaphor is typically examined in terms of its vehicle and tenor; however, this study complies with the conventions of cognitive linguistics in which the vehicle is referred to as the source domain and the tenor of the metaphor as the target domain. The characteristics of the vehicle are usually attributed by the metaphor to the tenor; for instance, in the metaphor “all the world’s a stage” characteristics of a stage, the vehicle, are transferred to the world, the tenor. Likewise, in cognitive linguistics, the attributes of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain to resolve the metaphor. For instance, in “A Prayer for my Daughter” Yeats ponders his daughter’s future and wishes, “May she become a flourishing hidden tree,” continuing with a description of her being as a “green laurel” that is “[r]ooted” in one place, thereby attributing qualities of the vehicle (source domain)—the tree—onto the tenor (target domain)—his daughter.\(^\text{37}\) He desires that she may flourish as a tree might; when we think of a flourishing tree, we usually imagine one which is strong and healthy, as he hopes his daughter to become. Our minds transfer or map the attributes of a flourishing tree, which we likely have physically seen, onto a person, understanding his wishes for her future in terms of our knowledge of a tree. We must note here that the target domain is not the daughter’s physical body, but her abstract personhood or character. Furthermore, just as a tree is rooted, he prays she might be as well, which conveys

\(^{37}\text{Yeats, “A Prayer for my Daughter” in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, 188-90, ll. 41, 47-48.}\)
his desire that she be well-established by figurative roots, which would also supply her emotional and psychological nourishment and health. In addition, he specifies that she be a laurel tree, which is an evergreen; this not only maps the attribute of a long, sustained life onto her, but also a life of victory and status; for laurels carry such symbolism from Greek and Roman history and mythology, in which wreaths made from laurels were given to victors and represented status. The source domain chosen here by Yeats to represent the target domain of his daughter is one which holds layers of symbolism and conveys multiple positive attributes. From these attributes of a laurel tree, with which most of us are rather familiar, we can form an understanding of what he wishes for his daughter’s future. This is an example of the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS.38 Lakoff and Johnson provide a list of many conceptual metaphors in *Metaphors We Live By*; this list has been built upon over the last several decades by subsequent cognitive linguists and expanded to include the following conceptual metaphors, as well as many more:

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<td>LIFE IS A JOURNEY</td>
<td>LOVE IS WAR</td>
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<td>LIFE IS A DAY</td>
<td>LOVE IS A GAME</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIFE IS A YEAR</td>
<td>THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEATH IS NIGHT</td>
<td>TIME IS MONEY</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEATH IS DEPARTURE</td>
<td>TIME IS SPACE</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIND IS A CONTAINER</td>
<td>GOOD IS UP</td>
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<tr>
<td>LUST IS HUNGER</td>
<td>SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS</td>
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<td>WAR IS A GAME</td>
<td>PEOPLE ARE PLANTS</td>
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<td>COMMUNICATION IS A CONDUIT</td>
<td>IDEAS ARE PLANTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY</td>
<td>IDEAS ARE RESOURCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGUMENT IS WAR</td>
<td>IDEAS ARE OBJECTS39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38 Per the conventions of cognitive linguistics, and therefore of cognitive poetics as well, I will refer to all conceptual metaphors and image schemas in small caps, as I have done here.

39 This list is compiled from longer lists that may be found in Stockwell’s *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*, 110 and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s “The Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System” in *Cognitive Science* 4 (1980), 196-200.
According to conceptual metaphor theory, our understanding of one domain, oftentimes abstract or unfamiliar, is constructed through applying our prior experience with another domain to it. Typically, our cognition of the source domain is sensorimotor, meaning we have physically experienced the source domain through our senses in a bodily way. Conceptual metaphor theory argues that our bodily experience is metaphorically then mapped to the target domain to construct our understanding thereof; our understanding of concepts, abstract ideas, or unfamiliar things, therefore, “depend[s] crucially on the nature of our bodies and the physical environment in which they function,” and the “study of the bodily basis of cognition” has been termed embodied cognition.40

Just as cognitive scientists research the effects and processing of metaphors within the brain, inversely have poets questioned these same processes, but from the perspective of the creator of those metaphors and symbols. Yeats expounds upon this act of poetic creation when he writes:

[When] your words are not quite well chosen, you cannot give a body to something that moves beyond the senses, unless your words are as subtle, as complex, as full of mysterious life, as the body of a flower or of a woman. The form of sincere poetry, unlike the form of the popular poetry, may indeed be sometimes obscure...[and] must have...the subtleties that have a new meaning every day.41

Metaphors which have become idiomatic or cliché appear no longer to allow the imagination to evoke the experience of the source domain, at least not to the extent required by complex and creative metaphors which provoke fresh responses. Likewise, Bergen’s fMRI studies reveal that activation of brain function in motor control regions of the brain is far more elevated with new

41 Yeats, “Symbolism and Poetry,” 120.
and unfamiliar metaphorical language than with common idiomatic language. Recognizing these moments of defamiliarisation evoked by metaphorical language allows us to further examine the way in which our minds make meaning of abstract concepts through embodiment. This nuanced balance between metaphors which employ culturally weighty symbols and metaphors which become overused and trite is explored with “The Rose Tree” in chapter 3 of this study.

Image Schemas

As embodiment is the underlying premise or theory for conceptual metaphors, image schemas are a necessary mechanism of embodiment, a mental structure of cognitive mapping by which language is embodied. Metaphors originate “unconsciously from experiential gestalts relating to the body’s movements, orientation in space and its interactions with objects. These fundamental gestalts reflect recurring dynamic patterns of bodily interaction which structure how we understand the world. Conceptual metaphors extend experiential gestalts to structure and organize concepts,” and in cognitive linguistics these organizational arrangements are called image schemas. The source domains of conceptual metaphors are organized by these image schemas which in turn reflect patterns of our bodily experiences from various senses. Cognitive models have been identified by linguists for spatial relations, demonstrated primarily

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42 In fMRI studies, Bergen found that “when the metaphorical language is less familiar,” more of the participants’ motor systems are activated; conversely, familiar metaphorical idioms” do not “always massively activate the relevant parts of the brain.” Louder Than Words, 206.


44 Ibid., 170.
by prepositions; concepts of bodily movements, shown primarily by verbs; and concepts of
action structure, such as verb tense; these models are mapped in our brains by our
sensorimotor experiences which allow us to understand them in a metaphorical manner. These
metaphorical mappings then provide various conceptual schemas by which we can construct
meaning for words. Some of the spatial-relations concepts that Lakoff and Johnson argue are
central to our conceptual system include: THE CONTAINER SCHEMA, THE SOURCE-PATH-GOAL
SCHEMA, BODILY PROJECTION SCHEMAS, and STRUCTURAL SCHEMAS. Image schemas are
these “locative expressions” of place and time that we are constantly using to construct our
understanding of words or ideas, based on our prior sensorimotor experiences; some of these
image schemas include JOURNEY, CONTAINER, CONDUIT, UP/DOWN, FRONT/BACK,
OVER/UNDER, INTO/OUT OF, and others. Let us take for instance the opening stanza of
Yeats’s “Easter, 1916” to explore both the JOURNEY and CONTAINER schemas.

We construct the meaning of the first line of the stanza, “I have met them at close of
day,” by our prior spatial and structural understanding of a JOURNEY and a CONTAINER. The
speaker is on a path to a destination, which is referred to in cognitive linguistics as a landmark,
and has along the way met “them,” whom we later find out are the martyrs of the Easter
Rising. In a JOURNEY image schema, a trajector travels a path toward a landmark, as this
speaker does throughout the stanza, and which is indicated by the motion verbs “met,”

45 Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, 17.
47 Further explanation of the trajectory-path-landmark JOURNEY schema can be found in chapter two of Stockwell’s *Cognitive Poetics* and chapter 4 of Lakoff and Johnson’s *Philosophy in the Flesh*. 
“coming,” “passed,” and “lingered.”

Therefore, when we read the stanza, we visualise the speaker, or ourselves in the place of the speaker, moving through the city; and that mental motion in which we perceive him commences with the verb “met” in line one. The second image schema which appears in line one is that of the CONTAINER, a day which opens and closes. We understand that the close of day is a metaphorical expression that means dusk or the end of the day, but when we refer to it as closing, we are structuring our understanding of time by the CONTAINER schema, as something which opens and closes. Image schemas like these rely on verbs while others rely on prepositions, such as around and at in line twelve of the same stanza: “Around the fire at the club.”

The poem’s speaker remembers telling tales about these men to others as they sat around a fire at the club, and we understand and can visualise this scene because of our previous experiences with physical spaces which we retain in these prepositions. We mentally structure space as “having bounded regions, paths, centers and peripheries, objects with fronts and backs, regions above, below, and beside things” and our brains’ neural systems create these “image schematic concepts” and construct our understanding of space according to such structures.

We then employ these image schemas both to express and to comprehend spatial relations in language.

Mental Spaces

Another form of cognitive mapping which specifically relies upon embodiment is the

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48 The landmark in “Easter 1916” appears to be the implied landmark of home. The speaker and other figures of the poem have left their places of work and business at the close of day to presumably return to their homes.


50 Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh, 508.
formation of mental spaces to construct the meaning of texts. Mental space theory, a subset of discourse world theory, provides us with a “means of understanding reference, co-reference, and the comprehension of stories and descriptions whether they are currently real, historical, imagined, hypothesized or happening remotely.” This understanding is accomplished through four kinds of mental spaces: time spaces, space spaces, domain spaces, and hypothetical spaces. Time spaces are “indicated by temporal adverbials, tense and aspect” and establish the time as present, past, future, or shifting between them. Space spaces rely heavily on verbs of motion as well as adverbial modifiers which convey geographical space. Domain spaces are locations, usually areas of activity; and hypothetical spaces are those indicated by hypotheticals or presented as conditional or speculative. These four types of spaces are often built through the use of locatives such as the prepositions at, in, and under, and through conditionals like if and would. Gilles Fauconnier is credited in cognitive linguistics with mental spaces theory, but cognitive poetics has recognized how applicable this theory is to literary studies as well, particularly to prose fiction, such as Elena Semino’s analysis of mental spaces in Hemingway. An excellent example of multiple mental spaces constructed by Yeats is in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” when he mentally transports the reader “to Innisfree” and then shifts among various spaces and moves the reader into a new space in the final stanza by returning the reader to “the roadway” and “the pavements grey” of the city.

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51 Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, 96.
52 Ibid.
53 See chapter seven of Stockwell’s *Cognitive Poetics* for further discussion and explanation of these spaces.
of cognitive mappings, will discuss this poem and others to understand how mental spaces are constructed in Yeats’s poetry and how they might contribute to our cognition thereof. His movement from two-dimensional spaces into three-dimensional text worlds in his later poetry, such as in “Coole and Ballylee, 1931,” will particularly be examined, as will the objective or subjective nature of our perspective within those worlds.

Cognitive Grammar

As cognitive poetics has applied principles from cognitive linguistics to literature, one result has been a shift in literary studies back to a focus on the text, to “a close stylistic analysis,” and how meaning is made from the text itself.56 This shift in focus can be seen by the application of cognitive grammar to literary studies; in fact, Stockwell claims that the source for his model of analysis “is cognitive grammar, developed mainly by [Ronald] Langacker.”57 As may already be clear from the focus on verbs, tense, prepositions, and other grammatical forms in the preceding introduction to various cognitive mappings, cognitive grammar is foundational to a cognitive poetics approach. The founder of cognitive grammar, cognitive linguist Ronald Langacker, developed his theories in the late 1980s in opposition to Noam Chomsky’s generative grammar. Langacker views grammar as a symbolic relationship between phonological and semantic structures, a relationship which binds meaning to grammar.58

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57 Ibid.
58 According to Langacker, cognitive grammar “claims that lexicon, morphology, and syntax form a continuum of symbolic units serving to structure conceptual content for expressive purposes. It is incoherent in this view to speak of grammar in isolation from meaning...” *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar Volume 1 Theoretical Prerequisites* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987), 35.
Stockwell finds this meaning in how cognitive grammar explains “how clauses are constructed on the basis of a windowing of attention of different parts of the clause,” by the way that grammar aids “focus, focal adjustment, and viewing position,” and by examination of the force-dynamic image schema that conveys the transference of action in the clause.59 Other interests of literary analysis that relate to cognitive grammar include point of view, subjectivity and objectivity, and passive and active voice. Chapter 4 of this project will consider two primary ways in which cognitive grammar can inform our reading of selected poems by Yeats: the relationship between syntax and stanzaic structure as Yeats developed and expanded his stanzas in his later poetry and the atemporalisation which Yeats accomplishes through grammar.

Trajectory of this Project

In chapter 2 of this study, I first examine embodiment theory through a close reading of “The Wild Swans at Coole” and a portion of “Easter, 1916” including a look at the manuscript of “Easter, 1916.” This is followed by a closer examination at the relationship between embodiment and Yeats’s “mind’s eye” which appears throughout his prose and five volumes of his later poetry, specifically in the poems: “The Magi,” “The Fisherman,” “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes,” “The Second Coming,” “The Tower,” “Meditations in Time of Civil War,” and “All Soul’s Night.” Chapter 3 follows with an application of four kinds of cognitive mappings, ones which are built upon embodiment theory, to various poems; these mappings are

59 Stockwell, Texture, 10. Also see his chapter six for an extended literary analysis through cognitive grammar.
conceptual metaphor in “The Four Ages of Man” and “The Rose Tree”; projection, pragmatic, and schema mappings in “My Table” from “Meditations in Time of Civil War”; image schemas in “My Table” and “The Second Coming,” as well as the manuscript of “The Second Coming”; and mental spaces in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” “Vacillation, IV,” “Lapis Lazuli,” and “Coole and Ballylee, 1931.” Cognitive grammar in chapter 4 moves us into a closer analysis of the role of grammatical structures in the making of meaning. The development of Yeats’s stanzas to coincide with syntax is traced from the quatrains of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” “The Host of the Air,” and “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” to more complex later poems such as “The Tower” and “My House,” specifically examining the disruption of subject-verb order and how it contributes to subjective or objective meaning construal. Chapter 4 also analyzes how Yeats uses grammar to transcend or suspend time in multiple poems, including “The Hosting of the Sidhe,” “The Magi,” “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” “Blood and the Moon,” and “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.” To close chapter 4, I once again consider how manuscript revisions may inform a cognitive poetics analysis, specifically with the grammar of “Leda and the Swan.” Chapter 5 concludes this study with a return to the concept of embodiment to evaluate what contributions a cognitive poetics approach has to offer us when analysing Yeats’s symbols including the tower, the gyres, Byzantium, and the dancer. Specific attention is given in chapter 5 to how embodiment theory functions in these symbols to bridge the dualities or antinomies common in Yeats’s poems. In addition to reflecting on how this project contributes to Yeatsian studies, chapter 5 also considers this project’s contributions to the field of cognitive poetics by its examination of an author heretofore neglected in the field. Other scholars have applied embodiment, conceptual metaphor theory, cognitive mappings, and cognitive grammar to
literary works, including Stockwell’s analysis of surrealist poetry, Elena Semino’s exploration of mental spaces in Ernest Hemingway’s short story “A Very Short Story,” Joanna Gavins’s study of text worlds in Donald Barthelme’s Snow White, and Margaret Freeman’s mapping of conceptual metaphors in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Stockwell has also applied aspects of his cognitive poetics model to Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights, George Herbert’s poetry, the Anglo-Saxon poem “The Dream of the Rood,” John Keats’s poetry, and Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest. However, I seek to apply these methods to Yeats’s poetry because his use of complex symbols and metaphorical language present the reader with a rich linguistic experience which may be further enhanced by the theories of cognitive poetics. In addition, despite the growing number of authors and literary works being examined in this relatively small field, Stockwell’s model has not yet been extended to consider the manuscripts of the texts and how they might be significant in these readings. However, based on my modification of Stockwell’s model to incorporate the manuscripts in my analysis, I contend that the textual variations revealed by Yeats’s manuscripts can deepen our understanding of embodiment and cognitive mapping within his works. Therefore, in this study I have adopted Jerome McGann’s view of the poem as a work, not merely a text, a work which is “a series of specific ‘texts,’ a series of specific acts of production, and the entire process which both of these series


61 These cognitive poetic analyses by Stockwell can be found in Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction.
constitute." This approach enables me to draw on manuscript materials to inform our reading of the metaphorical language of Yeats’s poems. This project’s concluding chapter re-evaluates the contribution that such a method can offer to cognitive poetics and also observes how embodiment may help us navigate the philosophical questions of dualities that arise in some of Yeats’s poems. Through the application of cognitive poetics, I argue we can hope to read his poems anew, discover deeper layers of their textual and cultural meanings, and uncover the function of metaphor in the making of meaning of these poems.

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CHAPTER 2
EMBODIMENT AND THE MIND’S EYE

The principles of cognitive poetics examined in this study are all largely rooted in the theory that language is an embodied phenomenon. Without embodiment, the mechanism for cognition of metaphorical language is lacking. Metaphors and symbols are reliant upon the prior experiences which our bodies have had with the world around us. Lakoff and Johnson’s assertions of the embodied mind in the 1980s have since been substantiated by studies in the field of cognitive science, such as those conducted at the University of California at San Diego’s Cognitive Science Language and Cognition Lab. Cognitive science has uncovered that most of our mental activity occurs “below the level of conscious awareness” as most of our perceptions and cognition are features of the unconscious portion of our minds.\(^{63}\) Therefore, as we read or hear words, we unconsciously simulate them in order to conceptualize their meaning. This simulation can be found, for instance, in sensory and motor imagery. As Langacker explains, without the presence of the physical stimulation, we are still able to “conjure up the visual image of a cat, the auditory image of a baby crying, or the tactile image of sandpaper. Without actually moving, we can imagine what it feels like to walk, swim, or throw a rock.”\(^{64}\) Activating the images that help us to mentally simulate the bodily experiences that they represent is a significant part of apprehending language.

Embodiment simulation hypothesis, I contend, is of particular interest to Yeatsian studies because of the magical powers which he attributed to words. His beliefs that language

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could call down powers to give bodies to the disembodied does not seem fantastical or irrational when considered in light of recent cognitive science studies of brain activity. The mind simulates bodily experiences in the unconscious processes of meaning construction. When brought forth in our minds to a level of conscious simulation, we perceive this process as imagination, another powerful force in Yeats’s theories. In “The Song of the Happy Shepherd,” he even contends that “The very world itself may be / Only a sudden flaming word.” Yeats believed that words are not merely signs of things in a symbolic system, but that these signs are the things themselves, “the stuff from which the universe is made,” and that a relationship exists between language, our imagination, and what we call reality—a relationship that advancements in cognitive science now seem to support. In this way he long anticipated the theories of cognitive science and cognitive linguistics that have developed over the last four decades.

If language is indeed an embodied phenomenon, as cognitive linguistics postulates, and our cognition of language is accomplished through embodied simulation, then we should expect to see embodiment in all use of language, and therefore in all of Yeats’s poetry. However, some of his poems provide us with far more obvious examples; so let us start with an examination of a poem which affords us an easily accessible illustration of how our cognition is embodied: “The Wild Swans at Coole.” During the years that Yeats was writing this volume of

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67 From The Wild Swans at Coole (1919). Coole Park was the estate of Lady Augusta Gregory, patron of Yeats, where he spent many summers writing. Yeats, accompanied by George Russell, had first visited Coole Park in 1896, but his stay in 1897 solidified Coole Park as his new centre and sanctuary. Lady Gregory’s estate became his refuge where he could work uninterrupted on his poetry for two or three months each summer; and, as he wrote in his Memoirs, “I found at last what I had been seeking always, a life of order and of labour” (qtd. in Foster, R. F., W. B.
poetry, many changes had taken place at both a personal and national level, including World War I, the Easter Rising of 1916, Maud and Iseult Gonne’s rejections of Yeats’s romantic entreaties, his marriage to George, the death of Lady Gregory’s son in World War I, and the possibility of the partitioning of Coole Park. Nineteen autumns had passed since Yeats’s first summer stay at Coole Park in 1897; and as he drafted this poem in February of 1917, he recreated his memories of autumn nights by the lake in Coole Park, transforming those memories into words that capture the moment and place and which transport the reader into his experience. Lady Gregory herself quoted a description given by George Moore as he and Yeats observed the swans rising above her lake one day:

> It was then I forgot...everything else in the delight caused by a great clamour of wings, and the snowy plumage of thirty-six great birds rushing down the lake, striving to rise from its surface. At last their wings caught the air, and after floating about the lake they settled in a distant corner where they thought they could rest undisturbed. Thirty-six swans rising out of a lake and floating round it, and settling down in it, is an unusual sight; it conveys a suggestion of fairyland...and it prompted me to turn to Yeats, saying, You’re writing your poem in its natural atmosphere.69

It is this almost magical and fairylike experience which Yeats embodies for the reader in this poem.

Our comprehension of “The Wild Swans at Coole” is through our physical understanding

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69 Lady Gregory added to Moore’s description that “Yeats himself in the volume to which he has given their name tells of an October evening when he made the count of a yet greater number.” Qtd. in A. Norman Jeffares, A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1984), 131.
of sight, sound, and touch; and this is largely accomplished through spatial orientation and sensory details that recall our personal memories from which we then create the meaning of the poem. In reading the first stanza, we construct our cognition of the scene described from the autumn nights which we have before seen. This is the most obvious level of embodiment: the words evoking in our minds the images which we have previously observed in order to comprehend the metaphorical picture painted for us in the poem. However, the more significant level at which our cognition is embodied is that of spatiality, demonstrated particularly by the prepositions which orientate the nouns to one another in these lines:

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.70

Beauty is being understood here as a container, something which may hold or contain trees, and something which is characterized by time, specifically the seasons. Placing the trees in “autumn beauty” likewise shifts the reader into a temporal and spatial location. We understand the abstract concept of beauty as a something that contains, something the trees can exist in, and time is an aspect of this container.71 Just as the autumn trees that we have seen before, the trees we create in our minds bear the various colours of autumn. The scene begins to build around us as we are transported to stand on a dry woodland path at twilight on a crisp October

71 The use of a container metaphor for abstract concepts is an example of the CONTAINER image schema. See the introduction of this study for an explanation of image schemas, as well as the following analysis of embodiment in “Easter, 1916” and the section in chapter two, both which further analyze image schemas in Yeats’s poetry.
evening, looking out upon a body of water that has fifty-nine swans resting upon it. The scene is hereby set for the remainder of the poem.

The foregrounding of location throughout this first stanza is accomplished by not only his speaking of autumn beauty as a metaphorical container, but also by his use of the prepositions “in,” “under,” “upon,” and “among.” These locative prepositions situate us bodily and allow us to construct meaning for the relationship between many of the nouns in the stanza. We form an understanding of the scene which the poem describes for us, an understanding based in our physical experiences, and thereby recreate it mentally for ourselves as well. As we construct this space during the reading process, we begin simulating subjectively through his eyes, instead of objectively as a viewer watching the speaker from outside the scene. Yeats guides us to construct place, time, and location in this poem before bringing into existence the swans, which occurs in the closing line of the sestet. By the placement of temporality and location before object (swan), the poem lends itself to a subjectively construed simulation in the mind of the reader.72 For abstracted notions, Langacker contends that “[i]nstead of presenting a situation to be viewed, it is better described as a manner of viewing...subjectively construed.”73 Yeats further establishes this subjective reading with the reversal of subject-verb order in the closing line, placing “swans” as the final word of the stanza: [at this location and time]”[a]re nine-and-fifty swans.” This poem is about mortality, time, age, and the changes that accompany age; therefore, a subjectively construed simulation would prompt us to imagine ourselves at this place and in this moment, enhancing our

72 Langacker, 537.
73 Ibid.
understanding of not only the words of the poem, but its themes as well. The three conceptual metaphors introduced in this opening stanza likewise contribute to meaning construction throughout the poem: LIFE IS A DAY, LIFE IS A YEAR, and DEATH IS NIGHT.74 Along with the physical location in the poem, the abstract concept of time—established by the season of autumn and the time of day, twilight—connect our comprehension of the poem’s words to its themes of time, age, mortality, and change.

While meaning construction is occurring at the deeper level of spatial orientation and through the subjective experience of time and place, embodied simulation through the sense of sight continues in the poem, as we can see in the mirroring that occurs in lines three and four: “Under the October twilight the water / Mirrors a still sky.” The mirroring evokes our sight, prompting the simulation in our minds of the moonlit sky above being reflected on the water below. The water, an earthly realm, mirrors the sky, a heavenly realm; metaphorically, we can read this as the physical world mirroring the imaginary or spiritual one; and the swans rise then as symbols that traverse these spheres. What we comprehended physically in stanza one, a scene of water and sky, enables us to comprehend metaphorically the symbolism which follows in stanza two:

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.75

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74 Lakoff and Johnson explore the conceptual metaphors commonly used to understand time in Part II, Chapter Ten of *Philosophy in the Flesh*.

In the second stanza time is a thing which comes upon him; autumn has a physical presence, and he comprehends time and age in terms of bodily motion. This bodily motion of age traveling to him is compounded with a series of verbs in the stanza that engage our sense of self in space: “mount,” “scatter,” and “wheeling.” As I read this stanza here again, I feel myself faintly raising my shoulders and head as I read, “All suddenly mount,” followed by a slight splaying of my fingers on this keyboard when I think of the scattering of the swans, and then a reeling in my mind as I picture them climbing in circles from the water, “wheeling” in their rings. These bodily reactions demonstrate the simulation occurring in my mind as I construct the meaning of the poem. We create the meaning of such verbs of motion through embodied cognition constructed out of our prior sensorimotor experiences. Then the stanza closes with an image that parallels Yeats’s symbol of the gyres: the swans mount and wheel about in great rings, circling upward from the water into the sky which it mirrors, evoking for us a vision of swans forming a gyre that connects the mortal and immortal, the physical and the unearthly. As John Unterecker notes, the “still water” is linked to the “still sky” by the circling wheel of swans. This is why our cognition of the poem being grounded in our bodies is so significant. We, in our subjectively construed understanding of the poem, are standing on the ground at one end of that gyre that spans above us over the water, a gyre made of the circling, symbolic swans.

Embodied cognition through the senses of sight, touch, and sound and through verbs of motion continue through stanzas three and four:

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All’s changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold  
Companionable streams or climb the air;  
Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.  

The creatures he describes are “brilliant,” conveying a visual image of their brilliant white; and the sounds of their beating wings mentally evoke our sense of hearing. Tactile sensations are likewise evoked by the “lighter tread” and most importantly by the soreness of his heart. The changes that come with time have caused his heart to ache, and we understand this metaphorical ache through embodiment, through our physical experiences with pain. Stanza four continues our bodily engagement by relying heavily on verbs that convey motion, again comprehended from our sensorimotor experiences, including “paddle,” “climb,” and “wander.” These action verbs which situate our cognition in relation to bodily movement are contrasted with the opening words of the stanza which describe the swans: “Unwearied still.” Their mortality, as well as our mortal bodies by which we understand mortality, is contrasted here with the immortal and unchanging. These symbolic swans remain unchanged, unwearied, with hearts that “have not grown old.” Unterecker explains that “Though in act [the swans] may like Yeats age or like Robert Gregory die, the pattern they establish survives: they give the illusion

of immortality. They even manage to anticipate the structure of eternity, the gyre which Yeats saw as the pattern of all things.”78 The poem closes with unsolved mysteries and an unanswered question:

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake’s edge or pool
Delight men’s eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?79

The questions of mortality and change remain unresolved here. Although Yeats acknowledges his own mortality, he suggests the patterns of nature and of mankind continue. The body through which we have constructed the meaning of the poem will die, but the gyre of history, the patterns of nature, the cycles of time will continue. So what then does cognitive poetics contribute to our reading of this poem? For one, it gives us an understanding of the subjective construal of our cognition, and it also offers us a mechanism for how our minds apprehend the poem itself, how we construct its meaning through embodiment. In addition, cognitive poetics explains the way our experience of meaning construction while reading the poem is tied to the themes and questions of the poem itself—time, age, mortality, and change. Location is significant in “The Wild Swans of Coole,” for Coole Park had been a refuge and sanctuary for him for nearly twenty years, an extremely integral part of his poetic development; therefore, our transport into this location, accomplished by our embodied cognition of the poem, is central in our experience of the poem. And as the poet wrestles with an array of weighty

78 Unterecker, A Reader’s Guide, 132. One of the contextual factors influencing this poem was the death of Lady Gregory’s son Robert Gregory in World War I.

themes in the poem, this location, watching the swans rise by the lake at Coole Park, offers him sanctuary for asking questions of mortality, a sanctuary he extends to us the readers in this poem.

Embodiment in Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas in “Easter, 1916”

As may be seen in the preceding analysis of “The Wild Swans at Coole,” embodiment is the cognitive mechanism for constructing meaning; however, it is accomplished through various linguistic arrangements and devices. Consequently, a thorough cognitive poetics reading of a poem ought to take into account various types of cognitive mappings, four of which will be explored individually in chapter 3. Just as prepositions and verbs of motion are significant aspects of embodied simulation and language cognition in “The Wild Swans at Coole,” so can we better understand embodiment, and arguably Yeats’s poetry, through an examination of conceptual metaphors and image schemas. Drafted in the autumn of 1916, a few months prior to “The Wild Swans at Coole,” “Easter, 1916” addresses themes common to them both: death and change. Lines 41-58 of “Easter, 1916” provide us an ideal text for a reading of embodiment, conceptual metaphors, and image schemas in this poem:

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.  

The central metaphor of these lines compares the heart to a stone; the stone is the source domain and the heart the target domain which means that the characteristics or attributes which we associate with the object stone are being transferred or mapped onto another thing which is literally not a stone: the heart. As an initial step in our mapping, we examine the common attributes between the source and target domains; these attributes are primarily understood through simulation which is based on our prior bodily experience. For instance, the stanza commences with hearts that are firm and resolute in a purpose, like the known physical attribute of firmness common to stones. The hearts maintain their purpose through summer and winter, through the passing of time and seasons, again like a stone which remains unchanged through weather and time. In the first three lines of the stanza we can begin to resolve the incongruities between the domains “heart” and “stone” by recognizing their common attributes. Then we proceed to the first indication of the metaphor: the hearts have become enchanted TO the stone; they have become a stone which troubles “the living stream.” The adjective “living” personifies the stream and gives it a deeper metaphorical meaning which

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81 As previously mentioned, following the conventions of cognitive linguistics, in this project I refer to the vehicle of the metaphor as the source domain and the tenor of the metaphor as the target domain. The characteristics of the tenor are usually attributed by the metaphor to the vehicle. In CL, the attributes of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain to resolve the metaphor. In the case of “Easter, 1916,” the tenor/target domain is the heart, and the vehicle/source domain is the stone.
is expanded in upcoming lines. The hearts turning to a stone is initially presented here as an enchantment, as something imaginary and magical, hereby introducing the beginning of the metaphorical transition from heart to stone. However, the imaginary quickly shifts to the concrete, physical world.

Following the stanza’s initial lines about the heart and stone, we encounter a series of concrete nouns with definite determiners (“the”) which are stacked one upon another before the verb “change” appears in line 48. “The horse…the rider…the birds” are the “they” which change. The spatial relations conceptual metaphors in this stanza help the reader envision or embody this scene, particularly the dominant CONTAINER image schema, as already seen in “The Wild Swans at Coole”; two of those concrete nouns are followed by clauses that have prepositions which situate their location in relation to the “living stream,” and ultimately in relation to the central metaphor of the stone. “The horse that comes from the road” adds a second dimension of horizontal space, while “the birds that range/from cloud to tumbling cloud” draw the reader’s mind’s eyes above, metaphorically creating a third dimension in this mental space. Each of these clauses includes prepositions—“from” and “to”—that our minds conceptually understand through embodiment. These spatial locators situate the nouns in relation to the three-dimensional space being imagined, while the verbs in these clauses—“comes” and “range”—are verbs of motion which are also understood through our sensorimotor experience. The LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor and the JOURNEY

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82 Mental spaces and space building in cognitive poetics will be explored in more depth in chapter two of this study.

83 Barbara Dancygier and Lieven Vandelanotte’s provide in “Judging Distances” a discussion of time and space metaphors and how they often become conflated in verb tense forms. The “comes” in line 45 is a verb which means the horse and rider are physically nearing the intersection of road and stream; however, Dancygier and
image schema can also be seen in this movement of the trajector, the horse and rider, journeying toward a significant intersection, one with the “living stream” at which change occurs. The movement of the approaching horse and rider, the ranging birds, and the tumbling clouds contribute to the constant change in line 47: “Minute by minute they change.” The change is understood as physical, since the nouns are all in motion; but “change” gains a metaphorical meaning here as well, implying a greater change is occurring at this intersection of road and stream. Vendler examines the antagonism between changing and being changed as demonstrated in the stanzas of this poem. Stanzas one, two, and four portray the “passive ‘changed-ness’” of the rebels who have been “transformed by wizardly power, ‘enchanted’ to a stone,” or changed by the British through their martyrdom.84 However, stanza three contains change that is happening, a change that takes place through nature. Examining the nouns thus far in the stanza also reveals an interesting arc: the stanza begins with the abstract nouns “heart” and “purpose,” then two less abstract nouns “summer” and “winter,” followed by eight common, concrete nouns (stone, stream, horse, road, rider, birds, cloud, cloud). This movement from the mental to the physical then retracts momentarily with “A shadow of cloud on the stream/Changes minute by minute,” reintroducing the intangible amid these concrete nouns in lines 49-50. This shadow, however, is metaphorically grounded on the stream, further moving us into a multi-dimensional mental space. Up to this moment our reading of the poem

Vandelanotte also investigate how such verbs invoke a time relation as well. The nearing is experienced both temporally as well as physically. Cognitive Poetics: Goals, Gains and Gaps, Eds. Geert Brone and Jeroen Vandale, (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 319-69.

has been embodied through what we see and physically feel, constructed by our understanding of bodily movement and spatial relations.

The next four lines give us the parallel structure of four concrete nouns with four action verbs in present tense, which moves us into the moment that we have already constructed and mentally simulated:

   A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
   And a horse plashes within it;
   The long-legged moor-hens dive,
   And hens to moor-cocks call;\(^8^5\)

In this place and moment we experience embodied simulation as we virtually see the scene developing in front of the mind’s eye. In addition, the sense of hearing is incorporated by the splashing of the horse and the calling of the moor-cocks, further embodying our reading of this stanza. We are able to create a meaning for the words of the poem because we have previously heard such sounds and can use that prior knowledge to form an understanding of the imaginary scene of the poem through simulation. The CONTAINER image scheme is further developed, but this time we too are situated within this container, as we are able to closely observe and hear the water and birds. The “horse-hoof slides on the brim,” and then the horse splashes “within it,” while the hens dive and cocks call. Line 48 (“Minute by minute they change”), line 50 (“Changes minute by minute”) and line 55 (“Minute by minute they live”) draw our attention by their repetition and structure, particularly the parallel structure which sets up the verbs “change” and “live” in a congruous manner, conveying that to live is to change and that life is a constant state of movement and change; this too is reflected in line 50 by the “living stream”

which is constantly in motion, changing “minute by minute.” Central to this life is a stone, a metaphorical stone which is positioned in the center of this mental location which we have constructed during our reading of this stanza; however, this is not merely a stone but “[t]he stone” which is “in the midst of all.” This is clearly the stone referred to in line 43 into which the hearts have been enchanted; the ordinary people who are rebels have been changed, as Ellmann states, into “their heroic opposites.” The hearts, resolute in their purpose, strong and steadfast, unchanging and constant have become a stone, and this stone is now the new centre in the “living stream.” Common associations with the concept of a stone include those of the cornerstone or a foundation stone; like such a stone, these hearts—the hearts of the martyred rebels—have become the foundation upon which change, and ultimately an Irish Free State, are built. Our cognition of this metaphor is accomplished through the conceptual mapping, through embodiment, and through image schemas within the poem.

In stanza four, Yeats continues the HEART IS STONE conceptual metaphor by revealing the cause of this transformation: “Too long a sacrifice/Can make a stone of the heart.” The most obvious sacrifice which these rebels in the Easter Uprising had made was that of their lives, and here we find the final common attribute which completes our mapping of source domain (stone) onto the target domain (heart): death. The rebels are now dead, like the stone, a lifeless object; and like that stone, they remain unchanged in death, even amid the “living stream” and the constant changes which flow around them “minute by minute.” Turning to the manuscripts for this poem, we can see that this was the one moment of the text with which

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86 Ellmann, Yeats, 220.
Yeats struggled the most, as indicated by the significant revisions and variations to these two lines. Initially, he wrote, “Too long a sacrifice/Can change make a stone seem a heart” and then “like a heart”; this simile is noticeably weaker than the metaphor which he eventually develops. He also drafted two other versions of line 58: “Changes to a stone the heart,” which inverts the metaphor and was discarded, and “Can petrify the heart,” which I find to be the most revealing for our understanding of the HEART IS STONE conceptual metaphor. Although he has not yet reached a metaphor at this point, he has unveiled the common attribute that establishes the metaphor—petrification—which may be read as the metaphorical hardening of their hearts. Notably, petrification is an extreme hardening, and our embodied cognition of this word carries additional connotations which may not be initially associated with the source domain of the stone. To achieve their desired ends, the rebels had resorted to a level of violence to which Yeats was ambivalent. In stanza four, he even questions if their violence and subsequent deaths were really “needless” after all. The manuscript states that petrification of their hearts is caused by “too long a sacrifice”—perhaps the sacrifice of their earlier values or ideas, such as those he reflects on when eulogizing Constance Markievicz, Patrick Pearse, and Thomas MacDonagh in stanza two. The adjective used to describe this sacrifice, “long,” implies a passage of time, drawing on the Time Substance variation of Lakoff and Johnson’s MOVING TIME METAPHOR which maps our understanding of time as something which

87 The facsimile of the “Easter, 1916” manuscript as well as its transcription to which I refer in this paragraph can be found in Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials, Eds. Thomas Parkinson and Anne Brannen, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 73.
89 See the Explanatory Notes 193.17, 193.24-25, and 193.26 in Richard J. Finneran’s The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, 492.
possesses size or substance. The martyrs’ lengthy or substantial sacrifice through time had petrified their hearts, perhaps metaphorically hardening them, but also turning them into stone in their deaths.

To return to one of the opening questions of this study, which binary opposition or duality is being expressed by this HEART IS STONE conceptual metaphor? And, more importantly, how does a cognitive poetics reading contribute to our understanding of Yeats’s treatment of that duality? In order to answer this, we must step back to the larger metaphor, or primary metaphor which dominates the entire poem, that of the terrible beauty which is born. The stone, emblematic of death, is contrasted with the birth of this “terrible beauty,” presenting us with the binary of life and death. The rebels do indeed die and become stone or petrify; but that stone, that sacrifice, becomes the center or foundation for change, for life that continues after them. It is in that three-dimensional meeting place of the sky, the water, the land, the horse, the birds, and the shadows that the inanimate stone rests, and life is built upon it. In lines 16, 40, and 80 Yeats reiterates, “A terrible beauty is born,” the language of which is itself metaphorical and paradoxical; the birth of this terrible beauty is grounded in the stone, the death of those in the uprising. The binary is then no longer an oppositional binary; instead it is joined and merged in the metaphorical stone through the power of words and through the embodied means by which we comprehend them. By mapping the image schemas in this poem, analyzing the conceptual metaphors, and recognizing the ways in which our cognition is accomplished through embodiment, we are able not only to enrich our reading of this poem,
but also able to explore Yeats’s use of language to bridge the oppositional forces which are
“Dying each other’s life, living each other’s death.”91

The Mind’s Eye

If we accept the embodied cognition hypothesis, instead of a formal semantics view of
language, we in turn accept the extent to which our imaginative abilities are employed during
cognition.92 Interestingly, a parallel may be drawn between embodiment theory and Yeats’s
belief in the power of words and of imagination that can be seen in his fascination with the
mind’s eye. The remainder of this chapter will inspect these parallels between embodiment and
this notion of “the mind’s eye” by examining a progression of poems from five volumes of
Yeats’s work which develop the concept of the mind’s eye: “The Magi” from Responsibilities
(1914), “The Fisherman” and “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” from The Wild Swans at
Coole (1919), “The Second Coming” from Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921), and then
“The Tower” sections I and II, “Meditations in Time of Civil War” section VII, and “All Soul’s
Night,” all from The Tower (1928). In addition, I will investigate the manner in which Yeats’s
language in some of these poems relates to the view cognitive poetics has of the nature of
language and the act of meaning construction. His use of language and treatment of words may
reveal several of the basic principles of cognitive poetics, particularly that of embodiment. Here
we will explore how language functions in these poems and ask how we may see Yeats using

91 Yeats paraphrases Heraclitus here in A Vision: A Reissue with the Author’s Final Revisions (NY: Collier, 1966), 68. Note that this is from his second publication of A Vision, hereafter referred to in this study as Vision B (VB), not from his early published version, referred to as Vision A (VA).

language to embody the disembodied. Does he perceive of words and language as capable of
the “magic” that cognitive scientists and linguists attribute to brain activity? Cognitive poetics
adds more to the study of literature than mere fMRI scans and neurological theories from
cognitive science. Cognitive poetics “aims at an account of subjective experience within the
institutional schema of literature. Subjectivity and its personal effects are a central issue for
cognitive poetics,” for individuals may create various meanings and experiences from the same
text.93 One of humanity’s most astounding abilities “is the capacity for metaphorical projection
that allows immediate objects to become transformed into ideas, speculations, rationalisations,
hypotheses, and rich imaginary worlds.”94 This transformation may occur in literature when the
poet masterfully crafts words to give form or body to the vision he sees, and then occur again
as each reader creates meaning in the reading or hearing of those words.

“The mind’s eye” is a peculiar term, one which, when pondered, prompts us to imagine
an eye—a physical eye—somewhere in our minds, visualised perhaps in a vague image of a
physical brain; maybe it appears to our imaginations like a third eye in the centre of the
forehead or as a floating orb like Emerson’s transparent eyeball. To understand the term itself,
we have to imagine it and process it as a metaphor, imposing a physical feature onto something
abstract: the mind. In doing this, we have demonstrated the very principle of embodiment. We
have constructing the meaning of linguistic symbols by drawing on our prior bodily experience
when picturing a physical eye to represent metaphorical “seeing” that occurs in our minds.

93 Harrison and Stockwell, “Cognitive Poetics,” 221. Harrison and Stockwell provide an examination of a case study
of various types of readings from an essay by Keith Oatley, an essay which can be found in Cognitive Poetics in
Practice Eds. Gavins and Steen.
94 Stockwell, Texture, 5.
Yeats made much of the term “the mind’s eye,” and I contend that his conception of this term is in many ways quite similar to cognitive poetics’ understanding of the principle of embodiment. In Peter Stockwell’s *Texture – a Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading*, he explains that “The mind in cognitive science, is an embodied mind...our human size, shape and configuration...provide the framework within which our brains understand the world, and ourselves. The mind is not limited to the brain...but is a combined notion made up of what brains and bodies together do in the world.”\(^9^5\) This conception of the mind as an abstract convergence of the brain and our bodily experience creates a space in which we might likewise locate the mind’s eye.

In *Poetic Remaking: The Art of Browning, Yeats, and Pound*, George Bornstein explains that Yeats summons visions in his mind’s eye, visions which are stirred by passions, intense desires, or deep meditations. Bornstein explains that the mind’s eye could call up or evoke images or symbols which Yeats often referred to in his poems as dreams.\(^9^6\) In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, Yeats discusses the Great Memory or the *Spiritus Mundi* that appears in both “The Tower” and “The Second Coming” as the source of these images which appear before the mind’s eye:

> Before the mind’s eye, whether in sleep or waking, came images that one was to discover presently in some book one had never read...I came to believe in a Great Memory passing on from generation to generation. But that was not enough, for these images showed intention and choice...The thought was again and again before me that this study had created a contact or mingling with minds who had followed a like study in some other age.\(^9^7\)


To Yeats, this great storehouse of memories and images is akin to Henry More’s *Anima Mundi* or Wordsworth’s “immortal sea.” In 1901 Yeats wrote an essay entitled “Magic” which foreshadows the theories he later explores in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*; in “Magic” he affirms his belief in three doctrines including “that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself” and “[t]hat this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.” Although cognitive neuroscience would certainly reject such language, particularly the term *magic*, science is still unable to fully explain the complex manner in which our brains function, which may indeed seem quite magical to many. The conjuring up of images before the mind’s eye is similar to the way in which language is an embodied phenomenon. The reading or hearing of language results in senses and sensations—actual physical ones—to varying degrees. Literary language which draws more heavily on metaphors and symbols can strongly engage the senses and result in “actual physical responses, such as laughter, chuckling, smiling, smirking, or shivering, hairs-prickling, catching of breath, or heart-racing and quickness of breathing, or bodily shying away, moving the book to arm’s length, arousal, a lump in the throat, or crying, and so on. These are all clear physical manifestations of emotions and feelings.” In Margaret Freeman’s studies of metaphor in Emily Dickinson’s poetry, she found that “[p]oetic iconicity creates in language sensations, emotions, and images that enable the mind to encounter them as phenomenally real.” The images visualised in the mind’s eye are real to the reader, as

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98 Ibid.


100 Stockwell, *Texture* 56.

Yeats’s images and visions are in his poetry, such as the “shape with lion body and the head of a man” that troubles his sight in “The Second Coming.” The images seen in the poet’s mind’s eye must then take the form of linguistic symbols to be conveyed to the reader, who will then reconstruct the meaning of those symbols in his own mind’s eye as the words are re-embodied through cognitive mapping. The intentional simulation experienced by the poet in his meditation or ponderings is then, at least in part, recreated by our minds, usually subconsciously, through embodiment in the act of cognition.

Cognitive linguistics has established that when we read or hear words, we construct their meaning through prior bodily experience. As Stockwell asserts: “A key principle of embodiment in cognitive linguistics is the notion that there are continuities between physical experiences and higher level conceptual experiences.” Our minds make meaning by picturing or imagining sights and sounds based on our prior experience with the physical world. These workings of imagination, what Yeats might call “magic,” cognitive linguistics might label embodied cognition. To bridge the divide in terminology we could say that Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphors from cognitive linguistics are housed in what Yeats refers to as the Great Memory and that Yeats’s symbols which evoke the Great Memory are similar to those conceptual metaphors. Embodiment is then the mechanism by which we understand these metaphors and symbols.

Cognitive poetics recognizes the cultural nature of many conceptual metaphors in this Great Memory. Many “[c]ognitive models that are shared become cultural models” which may

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103 Stockwell, *Texture*, 56.
then be shared by a discourse community through time, making common conceptual
metaphors and symbols into a part of a cultural memory.104 Yeats’s belief that memories are
shared is quite similar to Lakoff and Johnson’s claims that “conventional mental images...are
shared across a large proportion of the speakers of a language,” and “a significant part of
cultural knowledge takes the form of conventional images and knowledge about those images.
Each of us appears to have thousands of conventional images as part of our long-term
memory.”105 It is from this reservoir of memory that images often are summoned or appear in
Yeats’s poems. The first explicit instance of Yeats’s use of the “mind’s eye” can be found in his
poem “The Magi” where he writes, “Now as at all times I can see in the mind’s eye, / In their
stiff, painted clothes, the pail unsatisfied ones / Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the
sky...”106 These magi who stand before him in his mental vision are like the character in “The
Fisherman” who recurs throughout many of his poems, the “freckled man” in “grey Connemara
clothes” whom he can see going fishing at dawn, the man he imagines, but who does not exist
but as a dream.107 This dream vision of a common fisherman and the vision of magi who appear
before his mind’s eye progress to an intentional conjuring of spirits in “The Double Vision of
Michael Robartes.” At this point, the mind’s eye is capable of not only receiving images, but
also has the power to summon them:108

105 Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh, 69.
108 This is similar to conscious and unconscious simulation. The engagement of one’s imagination, the conjuring
before the mind’s eye, is a conscious process of embodied simulation. The everyday apprehension of language in
speech or writing, however, is usually an aspect of our unconscious minds
On the grey rock of Cashel the mind’s eye
Has called up the cold spirits that are born...

On the grey rock of Cashel I suddenly saw
A Sphinx with woman breast and lion paw,
A Buddha, hand at rest,
Hand lifted up that blest;

And right between these two a girl at play
That, it may be, had danced her life away...109

We see Yeats explicitly stating “the mind’s eye / Has called up the cold spirits” and that the speaker sees “it all in the mind’s eye...by the moon’s light” during the fifteenth phase, which is one of no earthly existence but pure subjectivity.110 These three poems, “The Magi,” “The Fisherman,” and “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes,” call forth individuals to the mind’s eye; however, in “The Second Coming” images instead are conjured from the vast reservoir of human memory. Bornstein considers “The Second Coming” to be one of Yeats’s Greater Romantic Lyrics, one in which the speaker transitions from description to vision in line eleven, a vision of an image which he sees before his mind’s eye and which proceeds forth from *Spiritus Mundi*.111

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.112


111 Bornstein, *Poetic Remaking*, 63-64.

This “rough beast” that “[s]louches towards Bethlehem to be born” emerges from the storehouse of memory and comes to him when in a meditative state.\textsuperscript{113} He “prepares for vision...by working himself into a prophetic frenzy” and “adopts the stance of seer” describing a metaphoric landscape that appears before his mind’s eye.\textsuperscript{114} Image schemas are used to create spatiality in this landscape, which are examined more closely in chapter 3, and function to build the three-dimensional scene which he sees in his mind, and we in our minds’ eyes as well.

Like the “rough beast” from \textit{Spiritus Mundi} in “The Second Coming,” the “images and memories” which appear to the poet in “The Tower” are the visions conjured before his mind’s eye. Both the second section of “The Tower” and the seventh portion of “Meditations in Time of Civil War” “make the tower top into a symbolic outpost on the border between self and soul.”\textsuperscript{115} It is here at this border that Unity of Being can emerge from the visions which he has. One of the themes of “The Tower” is “mind encountering the world through imagination,” a theme which is demonstrated in the structure of the poem “in which poetic movement follows a special course of imaginative mental action,” cycling from description to vision to evaluation.\textsuperscript{116} In the vision portion of the poem, the poetic movement goes from without to within where we are presented the images and visions which have arisen before the poet’s mind’s eye. First, however, “The Tower” begins without, as Yeats struggles with aging and the decline of his physical body; there the dichotomy is presented to us of the corporeal body and the philosophical mind. His passions and imagination are still fervent, despite his “decrepit

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, ll. 21-22.
\textsuperscript{114} Bornstein, \textit{Poetic Remaking}, 63.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 51, 56.
age,“ even more than when he was a boy, as he claims:

Never had I more  
Excited, passionate, fanatical  
Imagination, nor an ear and eye  
That more expected the impossible—  
No, not in boyhood…\textsuperscript{117}

In the opening stanza, two tensions have been set up: age/youth and mind/body. Yeats’s treatment of these oppositional forces in the lines which follow resolves the opposition at the symbolic tower through two methods: through the embodied mind, via the visions perceived in the mind’s eye, and through the use of language to bridge the seeming gap between the oppositional tensions. Part I of the poem continues:

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,  
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend  
Until imagination, ear and eye,  
Can be content with argument and deal  
In abstract things; or be derided by  
A sort of battered kettle at the heel.\textsuperscript{118}

Choosing Plato and Plotinus, along with argument and abstract things, is the metaphorical ascent of the tower into the mind and philosophy. He wrestles with the choice to set aside the body and be content with dealing in abstractions instead.\textsuperscript{119} This introductory stanza sets the poem up to be about abstract things, opening for the visions which follow next in his mind’s eye.

As section two of “The Tower” begins, the poetic movement shifts within as the poet

\textsuperscript{117} Yeats, “The Tower,” \textit{Collected}, 194, ll 4-8.

\textsuperscript{118} Yeats, \textit{Collected}, 194, ll.11-16.

\textsuperscript{119} By the poem’s conclusion, he has vacillated between Platonic transcendence and the human subjectivity of his aging body and found some measure of peace in his place as a poet. See Holdeman, \textit{Cambridge}, 83-85 for additional discussion.
summons “images and memories.”

II
I pace upon the battlements and stare
On the foundations of a house, or where
Tree, like a sooty finger, starts from earth;
And send imagination forth
Under the day’s declining beam, and call
Images and memories
From ruin or from ancient trees,
For I would ask a question of them all.  

Let us for a moment apply a lens of cognitive poetics more closely to this stanza: The first three lines contain two conceptual metaphors: UP IS GOOD and DOWN IS BAD when guiding the reader’s eyes from the top of the tower, the battlements, down to the base of it and then from the base of the tree at the earth back up the tree. That which is elevated, the battlements and the tree, are symbolically linked to the Platonic ideal, to the abstract, to the mind, as already established by the speaker’s choice in section one of the poem to choose Plato and Plotinus and devote himself to abstractions and argument. The tower is the primary metaphor of the poem, one whose source domain is a physical tower and target domain is a point of union between the self and soul—Unity of Being. The “day’s declining beam” draws on the conceptual metaphor of LIFE IS DAY but also on the oppositions of day and night or sun and moon, which resurface later in the poem and are foundational to Yeats’s philosophical system. These conceptual metaphors are understood by the reader through embodiment; for our bodily experiences with up and down, for instance, assist us in creating a mental space wherein we may construct the meaning of the symbols the poet is presenting. The image schemas of

120 Yeats, Collected, 194, ll. 17-24.
UNDER/ON and TO/FROM likewise enable us to picture imagination, an abstract and bodiless concept, being sent forth, away from his position atop the tower, and then create an understanding of the visions being called from ruin or ancient trees. Once this mental space or text world has been constructed, the speaker next calls “images and memories” forth; this intentional simulation is the summoning to the mind’s eye.

The procession of characters which follows his evocation include Mrs. French, a serving man, an insolent farmer, a beautiful peasant girl named Mary Hynes, farmers driven mad by a song of her beauty, Homer and his Helen, Yeats’s own creation Hanrahan, men-at-arms from the Great Memory, and others. Bornstein explains that these characters are all in contrast to his ascent of the tower, for each of them has carried “over ideal moonlit visions into the actual world and so end in disaster.” They are the visions summoned into his mind’s eye, and they serve as merging points of the ideal and real, the imaginary and the actual, the subjective and objective, the moon and the sun; but they meet their demise by being overpowered by their “ideal moonlit visions.” When Yeats summons them from before his mind’s eye, he is creating them, simulating their existence; for “all language representations involve some degree of simulation, the principle of cognitive projection operating on the traditional notion of linguistic displacement.” However, this simulation also “means that expressions are to a greater or lesser degree attenuated from the direct reality.” Then those images are further attenuated in our minds as we read and construct the meaning of the words of the poem. This attenuation

121 Bornstein, Poetic, 55.
122 Stockwell, Texture, 104.
123 Ibid..
serves as a “thread of connection along which sense and sensibility can be mapped. Some literary works close the simulated distance to a greater degree than others, never becoming identical, but still achieving such minimal attenuation that the difference is barely noticed at all.”\textsuperscript{124} We do not have the vision which the poet sees, but we do experience a version of it as we enter the mental space of the tower and construct the meaning of his lines through embodiment. Unterecker asserts that the symbols of the vision suggest that “the poet’s art always makes men mad,” and that the poet is the “illusion-creating artist who, making ‘the moon and sunlight seem / One inextricable beam,’ will be able in that triumph to rise above his own anguish.”\textsuperscript{125} His final thoughts of the section turn upon his lost love, Maud Gonne, and the metaphor of “the labyrinth of another’s being.”\textsuperscript{126} To understand this metaphor we must map the qualities of a maze or labyrinth upon the concept of a person, not the physical body, but their being. The inherent complexity, the enticing challenge, and perhaps a fear of the labyrinth are all qualities we can transfer from prior bodily experience onto the encounter with another person’s being, such as when entering a relationship with another. Yeats’s use of the labyrinth is a powerful example of how language cognition is an embodied experience; for the physical winding and searching within the labyrinth conjures up images or memories of such bodily movement, along with the possible fear, excitement, confusion, discovery, and danger one may feel in such a maze. These qualities are then applied to a relationship with another human being, one that is navigated and explored with the same emotions as one who seeks to solve a

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{125} Unterecker, \textit{A Reader’s Guide to William Butler Yeats}, 175. \\
\textsuperscript{126} Yeats, \textit{Collected}, 197, ll. 112, 116.
labyrinth. The convergence of the sun and moon into one beam that he seeks in lines 54-55 is not fulfilled by the end of the section though, for it closes with an acknowledgement that too much reflection upon a “woman lost” may cause the moon to eclipse the sun, which could drive him mad as Red Hanrahan or the man drowned in the bog.\textsuperscript{127}

Earlier in this section on the mind’s eye I asserted that the oppositions within these poems are resolved in two ways: through embodiment, as we construct the meaning of the visions in the poet’s mind’s eye by recreating the visions in our own minds’ eyes; and through the function and use of language itself. Speech acts function interestingly in this vision before Yeats’s mind’s eye. Yeats, as he wrote in “The Symbolism of Poetry,” believed that powerful symbols can give bodies to disembodied powers.\textsuperscript{128} We see the poet using a speech act first to bid the Muse farewell, then to command the abstract to appear before him, and then to question them about the struggle of aging. Words are here used to give metaphorical bodies to the visions in his mind. As we read the poem, we too can imagine these figures, not only standing before him, but also fulfilling the various actions which he describes: the serving-man clipping the ears of an insolent farmer, the men toasting the peasant girl’s beauty and one wandering to his death in the bog of Cloone, or Hanrahan stumbling, tumbling, and fumbling drunk. We envision these characters acting out these tales because our brains comprehend these words by processing them through previous sensorimotor experiences, such as the sound of scissors clipping, the clink of the mugs toasting a cheer, the difficulty of seeing through a fog at night, the feeling of stumbling and falling. When Yeats summons them before him, he

\textsuperscript{127} Yeats, \textit{Collected}, 197, l. 114; 196, ll. 71-72; 195, ll. 47-48.

\textsuperscript{128} Yeats, “The Symbolism of Poetry,” 115-16.
likewise calls them to our minds’ eyes. When the men-at-arms arrive shod in iron, we not only see them climbing the stairs, but metaphorically hear their “loud cry and panting breast” because our prior bodily experiences of sight and sound, and even the feeling of panting with exhaustion, are used by our minds to create images and sensations in order to construct the meaning of the words before us.¹²⁹

Other uses of language within the poem are likewise powerful: The song created by the blind man to praise the peasant girl’s beauty has a potentially fatal effect upon the farmers, for they are overcome by the song and “maddened by those rhymes” to the point that they mistake “the brightness of the moon / For the prosaic light of day,” leading one to drown in a bog. The “light of day” is the objective sun which is in opposition to the subjective moon, but Yeats next expresses the desire for the moon and sun to join into “one inextricable beam,” that encompasses “antinomies into which all things fall without kindling a mad lust to live only by the moon.”¹³⁰ Hanrahan too is driven to his death by words, the words of his creator who wrote the poems and plays of his tale and his demise.

The purpose of the spirits’ summoning is finally revealed in stanzas twelve and thirteen when he addresses them directly:

As I would question all, come all who can…
Did all old men and women, rich and poor,
Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,
Whether in public or in secret rage
As I do now against old age?
But I have found an answer in those eyes
That are impatient to be gone;
Go therefore; but leave Hanrahan,

¹²⁹ Yeats, Collected, 196, ll. 81-88.
¹³⁰ Bornstein, Poetic, 55.
For I need all his mighty memories.\textsuperscript{131}

At this moment we realize that his words have summoned up the images not just in his memory, but as if they actually stand before him, as visions in his mind’s eye, for he is seeing them before him and speaking directly to them. He seeks to question them all, asking particularly if all who have gone before him have raged “against old age” as he does now, which reveals one of the primary tensions motivating the poem: youth and age. The answer is not spoken, but he finds it in their eyes; these visions hold the answer to the struggle between youth and age, the subjective and objective, the antithetical and the primary, the body and soul. Amid all of the other speech acts and overt uses of language in the poem, however, the answer is not spoken, but only seen in his mind’s eye. His inquiries bring him to a final question, one of self-evaluation when he asks himself: “Does the imagination dwell the most / Upon a woman won or a woman lost?”\textsuperscript{132} The poet uses language to command the visions, to interact with them and learn from them, to evaluate himself in light of what they have shown him, and then to embody them as he records the visions for us to read.

In the second poem of \textit{The Tower} which refers to the mind’s eye, “Meditations in Time of Civil War, VII,” the speaker climbs to the top of the symbolic tower once again. The initial stanza is quite important for moving the reader into the poem and creating the mental space for embodiment to occur:

\textit{VII. “I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart’s Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness”}

I climb to the tower-top and lean upon broken stone,
A mist that is like blown snow is sweeping over all,

\textsuperscript{131} Yeats, \textit{Collected}, 89, 97-104.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 197, ll. 13-14.
Valley, river, and elms, under the light of a moon
That seems unlike itself, that seems unchangeable,
A glittering sword out of the east.\textsuperscript{133} A puff of wind
And those white glimmering fragments of the mist sweep by.
Frenzies bewilder, reveries perturb the mind;
Monstrous familiar images swim to the mind’s eye.\textsuperscript{134}

Notably, he does not summon the images this time; they swim to his mind’s eye of their own accord. Motion verbs and locative prepositions are used to create spatial understanding; with him we \textit{climb to} the top of the tower, \textit{lean upon} the stone, and see the mist \textit{sweeping over} everything. Image schemas aid our cognition as we map out the mental space described in the opening stanza. \textit{Under} the light of a moon, a symbolic moon which represents the subjective and antithetical, we then enter the vision. The poetic form which Bornstein expounds upon in \textit{Poetic Remaking: The Art of Browning, Yeats, and Pound}, contributes to the effectiveness of this poem by using description to situate us in a mental space to facilitate cognition through embodiment, prior to introducing the vision itself. The stacking of feelings in the final two lines of the stanza builds our anticipation and primes our senses for what will follow. Feelings of frenzy, bewilderment, reverie, and perturbation compound upon us and elicit an emotional and mental reaction as we enter the next stanza. Freeman has argued that “[f]orm and feeling have long been recognized as particular attributes of poetic expression. However, it would be misleading to think of them as separate entities. Form, feeling, and meaning (or, more specifically concept) are rather aspects of the phenomenon that creates ‘meaning’ in the sense

\textsuperscript{133} Sato’s sword. See the second portion of chapter two for a discussion thereof.

\textsuperscript{134} Yeats, \textit{Collected}, 205, ll. 1-8.
of significance or understanding.” The form of the poem, therefore, is integral in the creation of sensation and the construction of meaning.

In the next two stanzas, the images of a troop of murderers and then a procession of beautiful ladies appear before his mind’s eye. The murderers who have killed Jacques Molay, the Grand Master of the Templars, represent the Phantoms of Hatred indicated in the title while the procession of beautiful women upon unicorns, which was taken from a painting, represent the Phantoms of Heart’s Fullness. The contrary visions of hatred and fullness of beauty in these stanzas, both which give way to an apocalyptic vision of the grip of the hawks’ claws, are antithetical and “allow the poet to move toward acceptance of his own nature” and resign himself to “his antithetical role as a poet,” even though he questions what primary role he might have had. He is able to accept “search and incompletion as antithetical necessities.” The vision of these opposites in his mind’s eye enables him to retreat from the visionary world, descend the winding stair, and accept his role as poet in reading the “daemonic” imagery:

I turn away and shut the door, and on the stair
Wonder how many times I could have proved my worth
In something that all others understand or share;
But O! ambitious heart, had such a proof drawn forth
A company of friends, a conscience set at ease,
It had but made us pine the more. The abstract joy,
The half-read wisdom of daemonic images,
Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy.

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135 Freeman, “Minding: Feeling, Form, and Meaning in the Creation of Poetic Iconicity,” 175.
136 For additional explanation of these stanzas, see Bornstein, Poetic Remaking, 66-7 and Hazard Adams’s The Book of Yeats’s Poems (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1990), 164-65.
139 Yeats, Collected, 206 ll.33-40.
Once again following the description-vision-evaluation cycle of poetic movement, this poem travels from the “past through the present to a horrified anticipation of the future,” while also moving “from a meditation on outward things inward to personal circumstance and thence outward again, traversing the route of the Yeatsian gyre.” This poem, however, does not end in a scene of triumph; the poet has seen the cycles of war and art not only in his visions, but also in his own time; and the convergence of the objective and subjective that occurs in the vision is followed by the hawks whose wings “put out the moon.” We can see this poem as a challenge to the conceptual metaphors GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN. The ascension of the tower into purely the soul, into the antithetical, into the subjective is not “good.” Likewise, life at the base of the tower—the body, objectivity, the primary—is not “bad.” Neither exists without the other, and both are parts of human existence and of historical cycles. The tower, with its winding stair representative of the Yeatsian gyres, is the symbol for their union, and the poet’s final ponderings of the poem occur on the stair itself, the path between the tower top and the world below.

The final poem of *The Tower* that references the mind’s eye is the closing poem, “All Souls’ Night,” which Yeats also later made into an epilogue for *A Vision*. Along with the gyres, the wheel, the winding staircase, the spume, and other cyclical metaphors that may be found in the volume, “All Souls’ Night” adds the wound mummy cloth. At the start of the poem, Yeats declares that he needs a listener with a mind that can, despite physical distractions, stay

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141 Yeats, *Collected*, 206, l. 32.
142 Additional examination of the tower and winding stair as symbols will be provided in chapter 5 of this study.
“Wound in mind’s pondering / As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound”; so he calls up three ghosts: William Thomas Horton, a mystical painter and illustrator; an English actress named Florence Farr Emery; and one of the founders of the Order of the Golden Dawn, MacGregor Mathers. The figures of the dead are “dead in a double sense: They had physically died, and they had become artistic images in the poem, part of the artifice of eternity opposed to time…As creations of imagination, they can share Yeats’s own imaginative communications.” The primary technique by which language cognition is an embodied experience in our minds’ eyes in this poem is the repeated imagery of the wound mummy cloth. Unlike “[t]he movement of the falcon in ever-widening circles” in “The Second Coming,” the poet is tightly wound when “meditating antithetically in ‘All Soul’s Night’.” Instead of spiraling out to chaos and “mere anarchy,” the poet’s mind is bound tightly, wound in meditation as he calls forth a sequence of the ghosts before his mind’s eye, seeking another mind akin to his as a listener.

The first in the vision is Horton, whom Yeats believes also saw images in “his mind’s eye,” namely “one sole image” of a woman whom he loved. The second is Emery, who had left for India to teach, but who before her end:

...much had she ravelled out
From a discourse in figurative speech
By some learned Indian
On the soul’s journey. How it is whirled about,
Wherever the orbit of the moon can reach,

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143 See note 329.21, 329.41, and 329.61 in Collected, Ed. Richard Finneran, 498.
144 Borstein, Poetic, 62.
146 Yeats, Collected, 228, ll. 21-35.
Until it plunge into the sun;\textsuperscript{147}

The third he summons is his old friend MacGregor, a fellow occultist with whom he had had a falling out. These three ghosts are the mummies wound in mummy-cloth, the source domain for the metaphor of the mind tightly wound in the knowledge which Yeats wishes to share. Borstein asserts that these ghosts’ quests, their “concentrated intensity,” make them “fit auditor[s] of the poem’s ‘mummy truths’.”\textsuperscript{148} The poet seeks them because he has “a marvelous thing to say, / A certain marvelous thing / None but the living mock.”\textsuperscript{149} The image evoked in our minds by the mummy-clothes is one we have seen in history books of Egyptian mummies or perhaps Halloween mummies from childhood. We can picture the white cloth binding the body tightly, wrapping and encircling it entirely. In our cognition, we map this image, as well as the concentrated sense of tightness and focus which we perhaps feel with the image, onto an intangible concept—the mind. The image of the mummy-clothes closes the poem:

\begin{quote}
I have mummy truths to tell
Whereat the living mock...

Such thought--such thought have I that hold it tight...
Such thought, that in it bound
I need no other thing,
Wound in mind's wandering
As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 229, ll.51-56.

\textsuperscript{148} Borstein, \textit{Poetic}, 59.

\textsuperscript{149} Yeats, \textit{Collected}, 228, ll. 15-17.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, 230, ll. 85-86, 91, 97-100.
In our mind’s eye, through language which is embodied, we are able to create an understanding, to construct a meaning of a metaphor for the mind itself. The poet holds his thought, the knowledge of the mummy truths, tightly, conferring upon himself the role of the mummy-clothes but then inverts the role so that he is bound by the thought; by this the winding becomes even tighter and the two—thought and poet—wind into one.

Through close readings of these poems, we can certainly use cognitive poetics to enrich our appreciation of their aesthetic complexity and acquire a new vocabulary for understanding the mechanism of cognition, of how we create their meaning as we hear or read them. However, we may also see that this study gives a degree of validity to some of Yeats’s magical views of language. Chapter 3 continues this line of inquiry by focusing in more depth on four specific types of cognitive mapping which are based on embodiment theory—conceptual metaphors, projection/pragmatic/schema mappings, image schemas, and mental spaces—to see how they might align with Yeats’s use of language and beliefs about the power of words, while also examining how they contribute to our readings of select poems.
CHAPTER 3

COGNITIVE MAPPINGS AND MENTAL SPACES

Cognitive linguistics has identified multiple forms of mapping which occur in our cognitive processes as we construct the meaning of the words that we hear or the texts that we read. Many of these mappings are of interest to literary critics because of the attention given in them to the details of the text itself. Some of the forms of cognitive mapping include conceptual metaphors, projection and pragmatic function mappings, and image schemas. These and other such cognitive processes work together in what cognitive linguists have termed blending to create comprehension in mental spaces. Even though the field of cognitive linguistics did not exist during his lifetime, and Yeats had no knowledge of these linguistic terms, we can see how the language and metaphors of his poems frequently demonstrate the same principles on which these cognitive processes are founded. A cognitive poetics investigation of his poems, therefore, can give us not only a new vocabulary for speaking about his poetry, but more significantly can also give insight into his treatment of language, metaphors, and symbols in his poems.

Conceptual Metaphor Mappings

All language may be understood as metaphorical in some way; but, as explained in the introduction to this study, Lakoff and Johnson attribute particular importance to a set of metaphors which they termed conceptual metaphors, metaphors which are foundational in

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151 See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities (NY: Basic, 2002) for an exhaustive explanation of blending and the various mappings are understood to overlap in the process of blending, and thereby of meaning construction.
structuring our understanding of language. Conceptual metaphor theory contends that at a structural and systematic level of our cognition we understand unfamiliar and abstract domains through domains with which we have had previous bodily experience, thereby demonstrating the embodied nature of language. As the terms of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain, the ontological correspondences of one domain systematically map onto the other domain, which involves an imaginative process in our meaning construction. As Lakoff explains, “Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, oral practices, and spiritual awareness. These endeavors of the imagination are not devoid of rationality; since they use metaphor, they employ an imaginative rationality.”¹⁵² Yeats likewise engages the reader’s imagination in his poems through metaphorical language, whether it be conceptual metaphors, poetic metaphors, or cultural symbols.

One of the common conceptual metaphors, according to Lakoff, is LIFE IS A STRUGGLE. In “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor” he writes that death is the final defeat in this conceptual metaphor, one which is also seen in Yeats’s poem “The Four Ages of Man”:¹⁵³

He with body waged a fight,
But body won; it walks upright.

Then he struggled with the heart;
Innocence and peace depart.

Then he struggled with the mind;
His proud heart he left behind.


Now his wars on God begin;
At stroke of midnight God shall win.\textsuperscript{154}

Each couplet of the poem is a closed unit, a compete sentence both beginning and ending with an accented syllable and metaphorically representing a stage of life.\textsuperscript{155} The “He” subject of the poem—that is, his existence separate from the bodily frame—wages war with the body, fighting an earthly incarnation; but the body wins, encumbering him with a mortal form. John Unterecker asserts that this poem “records the series of defeats administered to man as he progresses through life.”\textsuperscript{156} The verbs “waged” and “won” in the first stanza specifically evoke characteristics of war, characteristics which the reader subconsciously maps onto the target domain of life or human existence, thereby conceiving of life as a struggle or war. Existence is directly introduced in these terms of war when referred to as “a fight,” and his soul loses that fight when the body wins by his birth in a mortal form. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A STRUGGLE is the dominant metaphor of the poem; nonetheless, each stanza contains its own secondary metaphor which represents one of the ages of man, the first being childhood is body. The second phase of existence is his adolescence, a time of emotions in which he struggles with the heart, and the innocence and peace of his childhood leave him. The stronger language of waging a fight which is found in the first stanza softens somewhat in the second stanza with only one reference to the conceptual metaphor, the “struggle” with the heart. The war of


\textsuperscript{155} The meter of the poem is quite interesting here as well. All but two of the lines in the poem contain seven syllables, both beginning and ending with a stress; however, the line which contains the birth and the one which contains the death each have an eighth syllable, an additional unstressed syllable at the start of the line (lines two and eight), thereby creating iambic tetrameter. In the two lines that contain these moments of his loss—by the body’s victory in birth and God’s victory in death—the meter is complete. In all other lines, the initial and closing syllables start and end the lines forcefully, as continued battles in his existence.

\textsuperscript{156} Unterecker, \textit{A Reader’s Guide}, 250.
existence continues in the next phase of life, the struggle “with the mind,” which occurs during
adulthood. In each age of life, he must leave something behind; adolescence leaves behind
peace and innocence, just as adulthood leaves the heart and pride behind. These are
understood as losses suffered in battle, as parts of the self which fall victim to the ongoing war
of existence. The final age, that of one’s later years, is framed as wars on God; these are the
struggles with mortality or with the spiritual that often come in old age. The war against dying
will be lost though, as he will die at midnight when God wins. The compounded metaphors of
the final stanza include old age as soul or spirit, LIFE AS A STRUGGLE, and the additional
conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A DAY, as midnight represents the end of this age in his death. The
cycles of time in this poem are reinforced by the plural form of the word “wars” in the final
stanza. Since Yeats believed in reincarnation, the ages of man would repeat with each bodily
reincarnation, and the wars against God renew again and again in the final age of each life.

In a letter to Olivia Shakespear on August 7, 1934, Yeats wrote of this poem: “They are
the four ages of individual man, but they are also the four ages of civilization. First age, earth,
vegetative functions. Second age, water, blood, sex. Third age, air, breath, intellect. Fourth age,
fire, soul etc.”\textsuperscript{157} This insight opens to us an expanded understanding of the conceptual
metaphor that LIFE IS A STRUGGLE. As Vendler explains, the perpetual defeat of man in this
poem is simultaneously “a victory for man’s expanding consciousness. Because learning to walk
upright, finding passion, and gaining intellectual capacity have one by one superseded helpless
infancy, we suspect that man’s last defeat will also, paradoxically, be a victory, as man, dying, at

\textsuperscript{157} Qt. in Unterecker, \textit{A Reader’s Guide}, 251.
last knows his life as a completed whole.”¹⁵⁸ We already comprehend that the stages of life are metaphorically represented in the poem by body, heart, mind, and soul; and in our cognitive processes, we have subconsciously mapped the attributes of war onto the struggle for existence in these stages of life.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, especially when we more closely examine the title itself, we can understand the broader implications of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A STRUGGLE when we consider the “Ages of Man” as referring to the ages of humanity and civilization, not just the individual. From the source domain of war and struggle, we can then construct a meaning for an ongoing struggle in the progression of humankind which is revealed in this poem.

Like “The Four Ages of Man,” Yeats’s earlier poem “The Rose Tree,” written in 1917 shortly after the failed Easter Rising, lends itself well to a cognitive poetics reading because not only is it an easily accessible poem, but it also contains a very clear conceptual metaphor which afford us ample material for a closer investigation of conceptual metaphor theory. Furthermore, “The Rose Tree,” one in a series of political poems in Yeats’s Micahel Robartes and the Dancer, portrays multiple levels of cultural symbolism which contribute to the conceptual metaphor of the poem:

“The Rose Tree”

'O words are lightly spoken,'
Said Pearse to Connolly,

¹⁵⁸ Vendler, Our Secret Discipline, 338.

¹⁵⁹ For further discussion of this poem and its place in the “Supernatural Songs,” as well as its connection to Yeats’s cyclical theories of life, human existence, and historical cycles, see Helen Vendler’s chapter “Primitivism and the Grotesque: ‘Supernatural Songs’” in Our Secret Discipline. She considers this unit of poems—either about or spoken by Ribh, an imaginary monk of Druidic Christianity—as arranged “in a ‘concentric’ shape, to stand for the primacy...of what Yeats referred to as his ‘centric form,’ the ambivalent sexual conjunction of woman and man, moon and sun” (321).
'Maybe a breath of politic words
Has withered our Rose Tree;
Or maybe but a wind that blows
Across the bitter sea.'

'It needs to be but watered,'
James Connolly replied,
'To make the green come out again
And spread on every side,
And shake the blossom from the bud
To be the garden's pride.'

'But where can we draw water,'
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'When all the wells are parched away?
O plain as plain can be
There's nothing but our own red blood
Can make a right Rose Tree.'

The conceptual metaphor of “The Rose Tree” is SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS in which the source domain is a rose tree and the target domain is the nation of Ireland. As Steen explains, “Our concepts of time, ideas, arguments, or organizations are partly structured by metaphorical projections, or ‘mapping’, from the knowledge we have about motion, food, war or plants: time can fly, ideas need to be digested, arguments can be won or lost and organizations can grow or need to be pruned.” Through this metaphor that Ireland is the rose tree, Yeats reframes our understanding according to our knowledge of plants, likening the survival of the nation in multiple ways to the tending of a dying rose tree. Let us examine in detail how such a mapping occurs.

The target domain is acted upon by various forces including a wind which withers it, the

hypothetical water which could revive the tree, and the waterers who could make it a “right
Rose Tree” again. The rose tree is the receiver or intended receiver of all action in the poem as
a plant would be the receiver of a blowing wind or of watering. The conceptual metaphor of the
poem is furthered by the secondary metaphors which aid in our cognitive mapping of one
domain onto the next. The wind is a politic breath coming across the sea from England which
has (once again, figuratively) withered Ireland; the water is the blood of Irish martyrs, as Pearse
overtly states in the poem’s closing lines; the wells are sources of the metaphorical water; and
the watering is the dying or sacrificing which the Irishmen must do to revive the rose tree.162 In
each of these smaller metaphors, our cognition of Ireland as the target domain, a rose tree, is
aided by our prior knowledge of our interactions with these other source domains: wind, wells,
and water.

Furthermore, this watering, according to the speaker James Connolly, will accomplish
four infinitive phrases: to make, to spread, to shake, to be. Each of these phrases introduces a
new element of the cognitive mapping. The water will “make the green come out again,” as
water actually brings forth green in plants; however, Yeats’s diction here is significant, for it
holds dual symbolism. Most obviously, the rose tree will grow green again as it revives, thereby
reinforcing the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS; for with watering,
the nation will likewise grow, regain health, become productive, and flourish. However, the

162 Patrick Pearse and James Connolly, the two speakers in the poem, were two of the leaders of the Easter Rising
of 1916 who led the rebels to take possession of the Post Office in Dublin and issue “The Proclamation of the Irish
Republic.” Although the Rising fell to British forces and most of the rebels were executed, the sacrifice of those
martyrs stirred again the fight for an Irish Republic, instead of simply the Home Rule Bill promised by England.
Additional historical context and Yeats’s response to those events are provided by Terrance Brown in his biography
green that comes forth from the watering evokes additional symbolism, and here is where we see the cultural foundation of many conceptual metaphors. The colour green is widely associated with Ireland and Irish identity, providing further commonalities whereby this source domain of a green tree is mapped onto the target domain of the rose tree, which is representing the identity of Ireland herself in this conceptual metaphor. As the rose tree is watered, the water makes it green again, which represents a revival of the Irish culture and spirit; this green spreads on every side, evoking an implied spatial metaphor that likens the expanse of the tree to Irish geography. The eastern coast of Ireland had been more heavily Anglicised by English influence by the wind from across the bitter sea; and for green to spread there again would metaphorically mean that Irish culture and identity would thrive on that side of the nation once again. The third action accomplished by the watering will be that the spreading green will shake the blossom from the bud, causing the roses to emerge. As we read this second stanza, we can take the prior knowledge which we possess of watering a plant which turns green and then blossoms, and we can then transfer or map those attributes onto the country of Ireland, which will turn green again, growing and spreading, reviving its identity and culture, and leading to the budding of the rose. This choice of rose tree holds great connotation in the same manner that Yeats’s choice of the colour green is significant. As Yeats wrote, “[M]etaphors are not profound enough to be moving, when they are not symbols, and when they are symbols they are the most perfect...”163 The cultural symbol on which Yeats is drawing is one entrenched in Irish folklore and mythology: the symbol of the rose representing

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Ireland. In his early poetry, Yeats frequently used the rose to portray Ireland; and in his explanatory notes to the poem “The Poet Pleads with the Elemental Powers” from *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), Yeats discusses this symbol of the rose:

> The Rose has been for many centuries a symbol of spiritual love and supreme beauty...a religious symbol...a symbol of woman’s beauty, and a symbol of Ireland...one may feel pretty certain that the ancient Celts associated the Rose with Eire, or Fotla, or Banba—goddesses who gave their names to Ireland—or with some principal god or goddess, for such symbols are not suddenly adopted or invented, but come out of mythology.164

In choosing the culturally significant colour of green and the cultural symbol of the rose, Yeats builds a central metaphor which resonates on multiple levels with his audience. The conceptual metaphor **SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS** conveys additional meaning to the reader by his use of this cultural symbolism.

However, far more is going on linguistically in this poem than just a comparison of Ireland to a rose tree; the poem is commemorating the Irish martyrs who were willing to water the tree metaphorically with their blood. It also portrays the perspective of Pearse, Connolly, and the other martyrs that Ireland could only be made right, made green again, by their sacrifice.165 Norman Jefferies explains that Yeats drew on Pearse’s political views when writing the poem, including that “the blood of the sons of Ireland” was the sacrifice needed to “redeem

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165 Although Yeats devotes several poems in this volume to remembering the Irish martyrs of the Easter Rising, it is important to note his personal reservations about effecting political change through such violent means. He was very aware of the complexities of the political situation and was not convinced that the sacrifice of the Easter Rising was entirely necessary. He even questions in “Easter, 1916” if “it [was] needless death after all” (l. 67). See David Holdeman’s *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*, chapter 4, pages 70-78, for a discussion of Yeats’s response to the Easter Rising.
Ireland.”166 The passive verb construction throughout the poem—has withered, to be watered, has parched—creates a void. No actor or agency is present, which implies the need for one. Throughout the poem, the rose tree remains inactive; never does it take action or even call for action, but is instead acted upon, as shown through the verbs. The “breath...has withered” the Rose Tree; and it needs to be watered by some other agent and made right by such watering, which situates the power away from the tree and onto those who either harm or tend it. The infinitives in the second stanza—“to make...spread...shake...to be”—are not actually done by the tree either, but are contingent upon the watering done by others. If the hypothetical watering were to occur, the tree itself would not do the spreading and shaking actions of the second stanza; but the “green” would be the agent, that which comes out, spreads, and shakes “the blossom from the bud”; the bud in turn would become “the garden’s pride.” The rose tree would remain inactive, even if watered. The blood of the martyrs must be the water to initiate the chain of events in stanza two. The sacrifice of martyrs' blood restores health to the nation and revives the Irish culture and spirit, which in turn causes the Irish rose to blossom again and become the pride of the garden, thereby restoring its status among nations. The rose does not bloom of its own volition; the green causes it to emerge. Who then does the initial action of watering which leads to this causal sequence? The “we”—Pearse, Connolly, and the martyrs who sacrifice their lives for this watering while the rose tree remains the receiver of the action throughout. Structurally, this framing of the social organization, which is the nation of Ireland, as a passive receiver shifts the agency in the poem onto those which act upon the tree—the

Irish citizens—who are also the readers of the poem. This process which we have done here, the process of transferring qualities, attributes, symbolic associations, and syntactical structure from one domain of a primary metaphor or secondary metaphors onto another domain is the process of mapping in cognitive poetics. By this mapping and through the conceptual metaphor of SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS, we are constructing the meaning of the central metaphor of the poem, that the Rose Tree is Ireland, and are construing the complexities inherent in that symbolism.

“The Rose Tree” has never been deemed one of Yeats’s greater or more profound poems, and few would consider it to be so. As Helen Vendler asserts, the ballad is marred by “sentimental nationalism,” which is only somewhat redeemed by the poem’s positioning in the volume at the center of five poems addressing Ireland’s political situation from a variety of perspectives: “Easter, 1916,” “Sixteen Dead Men,” “The Rose Tree,” “On a Political Prisoner,” and “The Leaders of the Crowd.” When we read the poem standing alone, however, the metaphors may feel somewhat cliché, somewhat obvious. In this moment of dissatisfaction we may find a way in which cognitive poetics contributes to our reading of poetry; here we can perhaps gain an understanding of why some poems are more or less aesthetically engaging than others. The conceptual metaphor of the poem, SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS, successfully maps the attributes of the source domain onto the target domain, but the poem remains less satisfying than more complex poems like “Easter, 1916.” Does a lack of complexity

167 Vendler claims the poem’s weakness is “sentimental nationalism,” which is a misstep that mars the ballad, but that the poem functions in a dialogue among the other political poems of this volume as “a tribute to Pearse’s mysticism of blood-sacrifice.” Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 120, 144.
alone explain why the poem is aesthetically less pleasing than others might be? Or could developments in cognitive neuroscience reveal how our minds process metaphors and language in a way that influences our enjoyment or reception of metaphorical language? If imaginative language constructions are neurologically more engaging than common or trite ones, as cognitive science and cognitive linguistics contend, then conceptual metaphors which require more engaging imaginative processes trigger additional neurological activity in the portions of the brain corresponding to the context of the metaphor—sight, sounds, smells, tactile responses, or other senses. The reception of language then becomes a creative process, as Bergen asserts, of meaning construction. Conversely, the more cliché or idiomatic the language of a poem is, the less neural processing is needed to unpack its meaning, which is arguably the case with “The Rose Tree.” The cultural symbolism of the rose and the color green strengthens the poem and adds depth to its meaning, but does not elevate it to the level of Yeats’s great metaphors like the tower or the gyre, particularly for readers outside of the Irish culture. In its historical moment, the poem’s use of the culturally symbolic rose might have been more effective to its particular audience, even though that efficacy may seem diminished to modern readers reading in a context that lacks the *kairos* of the poem’s own time. Must the reader be familiar with the cultural symbolism of the poem in order for its conceptual metaphor to evoke the greatest imaginative effect? To what extent then is meaning construction tied to a cultural foundation of metaphorical language? Perhaps cognitive poetics can help us explore some of these questions.

*Projection, Pragmatic, and Schema Mappings*
In the introduction of this study, we examined several of the primary techniques of cognitive linguistics, including conceptual metaphors, embodiment, and image schemas. Gilles Fauconnier has built upon Johnson and Lakoff’s cognitive mappings to explore three kinds of mappings used in language processing to achieve meaning construction: projection mappings, pragmatic function mappings, and schema mappings. To begin our inspection of these mappings, let us turn to a poem which uses metaphors and metaphorical language, but contains no clear conceptual metaphors. In the third section of “Meditations in Time of Civil War” we find the poem “My Table,” which initially appears to be about a table in Yeats’s home; however, the poem’s focus is actually on the sword which rests upon the table, a Japanese sword gifted to Yeats in 1920 by Junzo Sato. Unterecker claims that this sword “symbolizes the art product produced by a stable society which had genuine Unity of Being” and that this poem “re-examines the relationship between the perishable artist and his imperishable art.” Sato’s sword then is the source domain which we use to construct an understanding of the target domain of artistic creation, while simultaneously existing as a work of art itself:

III. My Table
Two heavy trestles, and a board
Where Sato's gift, a changeless sword,
By pen and paper lies,
That it may moralise
My days out of their aimlessness.
A bit of an embroidered dress
Covers its wooden sheath.
Chaucer had not drawn breath
When it was forged. In Sato's house,

168 Fauconnier, Mappings in Thought and Language, 9-11.
Curved like new moon, moon-luminous
It lay five hundred years.
Yet if no change appears
No moon; only an aching heart
Conceives a changeless work of art.
Our learned men have urged
That when and where 'twas forged
A marvellous accomplishment,
In painting or in pottery, went
From father unto son
And through the centuries ran
And seemed unchanging like the sword.
Soul's beauty being most adored,
Men and their business took
The soul's unchanging look;
For the most rich inheritor,
Knowing that none could pass Heaven's door
That loved inferior art,
Had such an aching heart
That he, although a country's talk
For silken clothes and stately walk,
Had waking wits; it seemed
Juno's peacock screamed. 171

The sword by its nature is a tool of war and death, yet in this poem it “reflects...[a] conjunction of violence and artistry” and “exemplify[ies] what Yeats had once called masks: they are emblems of adversity that lure us into fulfilling our destinies by simultaneously calling up the passions of our mortal hearts and calling down the daemonic energies that act as those passions’ Blakean contraries.” 172 Chapter 4 will examine further layers of the symbolism of Sato’s sword in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”; but for our purposes now, let us explore the cognitive mappings within the poem.

Projection mappings transfer qualities from the source to target domains, projecting

171 Yeats, “My Table” in *Collected Poems*, 202-203.
attributes of one onto the other. It is important to note here that conceptual metaphors also
project attributes of the source domain onto the target domain; however, projection mapping
is distinct from conceptual metaphors because it pertains to mappings of other metaphorical
language, not just those classified as conceptual metaphors by cognitive linguists. In “My
Table,” the quality of changelessness is mapped from the sword onto works of art. The sword is
repeatedly characterized as “changeless” (line 2) and “unchanging” (line 21). The transferring of
this quality of changelessness occurs in two locations in this poem: subtly in lines 13-14 and
overtly in line 21. The description of the sword that precedes lines 13-14 situates the lines in
relation to the sword, indicating the sword is both a work of art and was conceived by an
artist’s “aching heart.” Line 21 is far less subtle, employing a simile that likens works of art—the
marvellous painting and poetry—to the sword by directly stating that they seem “unchanging
like the sword.” As changeless and ancient, the sword “lay for five hundred years” just as the
painting or pottery is passed from “father unto son” through the centuries. Hazard Adams
elaborates on this symbol:

[T]he poet meditates on the symbol of a unified culture that embodied simplicity, ritual,
and a tradition of artistry passed on from father to son. It seems in his mind to be the
antithesis of an ascetic primary discipline. Imagining the culture that produced the
sword, he sees the sword itself as a symbol of antithetical transcendence...The
unchanging sword expresses in a single symbol violence, beauty, sexuality, and the
always changing moon.173

Since Yeats believed in a Great Memory or Spiritus Mundi from which such symbols are drawn,
even if a work of art were created at a moment in time, if it drew on these archetypal symbols,
it would tap into that unchanging symbol and likewise be timeless and unchanging, even if the

physical form of the work aged. 174 Like the golden bird in “Sailing to Byzantium,” the sword is a symbol of art produced by a society with Unity of Being, one by which the artist may be gathered “[i]nto the artifice of eternity.”175

Another quality given to the sword is that it was created, in this case forged, as art is created. The connotations of labour and fire that are evoked with the word “forged” may also be mapped onto works of art like the “marvellous accomplishment, / In painting or in poetry” which is also “forged” in the following lines. The created—the sword, the painting, the pottery, the poem—requires the existence of a creator, the artist who has “an aching heart” and might conceive “a changeless work of art.” The passive voice used to describe the creation of the sword, “it was forged,” parallels the creation of the works of art: “That when and where ‘twas forged / A marvellous accomplishment.” The void created by the passive voice leaves a space in the poem for the creator, the artist, to exist without overshadowing the primary sword-art metaphor, while still mapping the quality of being created onto the target domain. In conjunction with these projection mappings of attributes from source to target domains, we also find pragmatic function and image schema mappings throughout this poem.

According to Fauconnier, pragmatic function mappings correspond in function, “structuring our knowledge base” and providing “means of identifying elements of one domain via their counterparts in the other.”176 Pragmatic function mappings are concerned less with

174 I wish to note here that I am intentionally neglecting the simile in line 10 which likens the sword to the moon, which hold significance in Yeats’s cycle, but will address it in more depth when analyzing “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” in the chapter 5.


176 Fauconnier, Mappings, 11.
the attributes of the domains than with the corresponding functions thereof; therefore, shared characteristics such as changelessness remain projection mappings while similar activities, structures, or functions are classified by Fauconnier as pragmatic function mappings. In “My Table” the sword may appear to do no more than lie upon the table beside his pen and paper, as it had lain for five hundred years in Sato’s family home. However, the sword also moralizes his “days out of their aimlessness,” giving purpose to them. If the poem is setting up the sword as a metaphor for ideal artistic production, then this might also be read as a function of art: to moralise or improve with direction and purpose. Another example of a pragmatic function mapping which we have already seen in “All Souls’ Night” is the dually metaphorical function of the mummy-clothes. As the clothes bind the body tightly, the thoughts which they represent likewise wrap about him, firmly wound; inversely, he holds his thoughts tightly, as the clothes hold the mummy securely. The mapping of the mummy-clothes’ functions onto both him, the thinker, and the thoughts he has are examples of Fauconnier’s pragmatic function mappings, like those of the Sato’s sword.

The third form of mapping in “My Table” involves image schemas which we have already examined somewhat in the introduction and preceding chapter. Image schemas are mechanisms by which we construct meaning of location, placement, movement, directional relationships, spatial relationships, and other such embodied experiences. For instance, image schemas often rely on adverbs and prepositions such as in, out, within, and without in the CONTAINER SCHEMA. 177 Likewise, the JOURNEY SCHEMA frequently employs the prepositions

177 See the introduction and preceding chapter for an explanation and examples of image schemes.
from and to, creating a trajectory of motion. The first locative expression we encounter in the poem is the location of Sato’s sword “by pen and paper” in the third line. Its placement beside the pen and paper upon the poet’s table, in conjunction with the “embroidered dress” which covers the sheath and the mention of Chaucer, link the sword to various forms of art, further supporting the dominant metaphor. The CONTAINER SCHEMA appears multiple times in the poem, the first of which situates aimlessness as a container, one which surrounds or engulfs his days and “out of” which the sword moralizes his days. Since aimlessness—the lack of purpose or path—is an abstract idea, conceptualizing it as a container which might encompass or hold our days (time, another abstract concept) gives us a mechanism for constructing meaning for this line. The container preposition in is used three times in the poem; the first is to place the sword in Sato’s house, which is actual, not metaphorical language. However, the next two instances place “A marvellous accomplishment, / In painting or in poetry.” Painting and poetry are conceived of as physical spaces here, as metaphorical fields of painting and poetry in which a thing may exist. The JOURNEY SCHEMA traces the path of the work of art as it travelled “[f]rom father unto son / And through the centuries.” From, to, and through depict the work of art as travelling on a journey, even though the journey is one through time, not through a physical space. Fauconnier uses these three kinds of mappings—projection mappings, pragmatic function mappings, and schema mappings—to examine cognitive construction through mental spaces, which are imaginary places we construct to visualise and comprehend what we read or hear.178

178 For an explanation and example of mental spaces in cognitive poetics, see Elena Semino’s “Possible Worlds and Mental Spaces in Hemmingway’s ‘A Very Short Story’” in Cognitive Poetics in Practice, eds. Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen (London: Routledge, 2003), 83-98.
“The Second Coming”: Complications of Image Schemas and Metaphors

One of the primary issues that may arise when attempting to map cognitive metaphors, image schemas and other cognitive mappings in a poem is that we might encounter a source domain which is so unfamiliar that extensive mapping must first be done onto it in order for us to construct a meaning for that domain, and then in turn create one for its target domain. This can be complicated even further when we lack a cultural basis or experiential basis through which to understand the source domain. One of Yeats’s most widely anthologized poems, “The Second Coming,” allows us to explore some of these complexities:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert;
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?¹⁷⁹

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The central symbol of the poem, the metaphor’s source domain, is the gyre which represents the target domain of a rather complex philosophical view which Yeats explains in his 1938 version of *A Vision*.

![Figure 3.1: Double Gyres](image)

Yeats refers to this gyre as a “double cone or vortex” made of line and plane: “A line is a movement without extension, and so symbolical of time—subjectivity...and a plane cutting it at right angles is symbolical of space or objectivity. Line and plane are combined in a gyre which must expand or contract according to whether mind grows in objectivity or subjectivity.”\(^{181}\) One cone of the gyre is “attributed to Discord as formed by circles diminishing until they are nothing,” and the inverse cone of the gyre, “the opposing vortex,” is “attributed to Concord.”\(^{182}\) As one increases, the other decreases, a principle founded on Heraclitus’s “Dying each other’s life, living each other’s death.”\(^{183}\) In his discussion of the gyre, Yeats quotes Empedocles as well to explain how Discord reaches the “lowest depths of the vortex,” “the extreme boundary,” as

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180 This sketch may be found in both versions of *A Vision*; however, this digital file is taken from Neil Mann’s website *The System of W. B. Yeats’s A Vision,* located at [http://www.yeatsvision.com/geometry.html#Gyres](http://www.yeatsvision.com/geometry.html#Gyres).

181 Yeats, *VB*, 70.

182 Ibid., 68.

183 Yeats paraphrases Heraclitus here in *VB*, 68.
Concord reaches the centre. In the case of this poem, we have a target domain, an abstract concept—oppositional forces of subjectivity and objectivity throughout time and historical eras—being represented by a gyre, a symbol with which many people are rather unfamiliar and with which they likely have limited experiential knowledge. Furthermore, the common reader’s knowledge of Yeats’s complex, metaphysical philosophies is likely nonexistent. Therefore, the qualities of one domain cannot easily be mapped onto another, for we have little personal experiences with or cultural reference for the qualities of Yeats’s gyre. Consequently, Yeats needs to construct attributes for the gyre, primarily through other metaphors, in order for us readers to have a reference of what we ought to then map upon the target domain. Amazingly, however, despite its inaccessibility, this poem is still one of Yeats’s most anthologized and widely recognized works. Perhaps this is because throughout the poem, metaphors, embodiment, and image schemas assist our understanding of the gyre’s qualities, which in turn aids us in constructing a meaning for this philosophical concept that the gyre represents.

Immediately in the poem, we are directly provided with two characteristics of the gyre in line one: turning and widening. An image of a spiral is perhaps evoked in the mind of the reader, and we begin to create a meaning for this symbol. Verbs of motion, in this case participial forms, are understood through our sensorimotor experience; therefore, our understanding of what it is to turn or widen is mapped onto this gyre and our initial cognition of it is embodied. Yeats’s choice of participial forms of the verb here was intention and quite meaningful, as we can discover when we turn to the manuscript of “The Second Coming.”

184 Ibid., 67.
which underwent extensive revision. Examining some of the key changes there might further assist in our understanding of the central metaphor of the gyre. The earliest draft of the poem began, “Ever more wide sweeps the gyre,” which then became, “Broader & broader is the...Every more wide...The gyres sweep wider...” and then finally, “Turning and turning in the widening gyre.” In the first two versions, the subject of the clause in line one is the gyre, which is doing the wider and broader sweeping. In the final revision, we end up with a participial phrase that sets up the location for all that follows it—the entire poem—to be occurring in this widening gyre. By shifting from a closed or complete syntactical unit of an action done by a noun, to an adjective phrase which modifies the remainder of the poem, Yeats is situating the poem’s entire context within the gyre, characterizing the gyre as time, which demonstrates the TIME IS MOTION metaphor and further portrays his belief that line is movement and therefore symbolic of time. This contributes to the reader’s comprehension of the megametaphor because the seven lines which follow this opening participial phrase contain attributes of the gyre or descriptions of occurrences within this temporal cycle. Let us examine each line in stanza one to explore what characteristics it might provide us from its metaphors and image schemas that we might then map upon the gyre to further construct our meaning of it.

185 The manuscript materials to which I refer are held in the National Library of Ireland, 13,588 (14), 2r, 3v, 4r. They may also be found on pages 147-65 of Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials. These specific quotes are from pages 151, 153, 155.

186 In Cognitive Poetics, Stockwell defines megametaphor as a conceptual metaphor that occurs “repeatedly throughout a text, often at pivotal moments and often in the form of thematically significant extended metaphors” (111). The megametaphor refers to the dominant metaphor of the poem, such as a conceit or significant recurring motif, to which the smaller conceptual metaphors may connect as the HEART IS STONE metaphor functioned in “Easter, 1916” and as the gyre functions here.
In line two, we are informed that “The falcon cannot hear the falconer,” which is a reference to falconry, a sport typically associated with the aristocracy or ruling class. If the falconer is a metaphor for authority and order, the falcon not hearing the falconer might represent a disruption to that order and a fracturing of the relationship between nature and man, as George Bornstein in his analysis of this poem as a Greater Romantic Lyric asserts that the emblem of the falcon and falconer signifies “loss of control.” The present tense of the verbs throughout this stanza are also noteworthy, for they establish the occurrence of these lines during the gyre, which represents an historical cycle. We can infer from line two that disorder and chaos are happening in this gyre and the image of a falcon circling overhead might further reinforce the spiraling image of the gyre in our minds as we construct its meaning. Line three contains two powerful, declarative clauses: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.” This fragmentation and chaos is the condition of the world in the widening gyre; furthermore, we discover from this line that the gyre has a centre, albeit one which is too weak to hold it intact as it unravels. “Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” describes the gyre as a time of social rebellion and also reminds us that the gyre encompasses the entire world. Spatial relations are demonstrated in the previous line and this line in the prepositions apart and upon, contributing to our visualisation of what is occurring within the gyre. In addition, the CONTAINER image schema allows us to picture anarchy as something which has been contained but is now released upon the world, along with the “blood-dimmed tide” that is loosed in line five. If we look again at the manuscripts, we can see that the early drafts referred to specific

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historical occasions, such as the French Revolution and World War I, which allow us to understand that this gyre spans centuries and encompasses countries. Line six uses personification, which the Stockwell model of cognitive poetics views as a form of metaphor: “The ceremony of innocence is drowned,” which is followed by the closing lines of the stanza: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity.” In our creation of the gyre’s meaning, we can add multiple elements to our understanding based on these lines; those who are best among us are weak while the worst are zealous and passionate in this gyre. The CONTAINER image schema is once again used in these lines by the verb lack and the adjective full, which situate human characters as containers and conviction and intensity as physical things which might fill a container, such as fluid fills a glass. By the end of the first stanza, we have been able to identify what is transpiring in the gyre, the chaos and disorder which characterizes it, and the general attributes of this source domain of the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MOTION.

The second stanza of “The Second Coming” provides us with multiple examples of how our comprehension of the gyre is embodied. The revelation, which will be the turning or reversal of the gyre, is “at hand,” characterizing time as a location which we understand as near or far from us. The “vast image out of Spiritus Mundi” once again calls up the CONTAINER image schema to allow us to perceive Spiritus Mundi as a receptacle or reservoir out of which archetypal symbols emerge, again structuring our comprehension through “mental pictures that we use as basic templates,” to construct meaning “on the basis of our local bodily

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188 The manuscript can be found in the National Library of Ireland and on pages 147-65 of Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials.
interaction with the world.”¹⁸⁹ This second stanza also provides us with a complex spatial metaphor in the image of the beast in the desert. The beast of “The Second Coming” symbolizes the end of the Christian era and the beginning of a new era; this is the reversal of the gyre from Discord to Concord. The effectiveness of this symbolism is accomplished through spatial metaphors that construct a three-dimensional image in the mind of the reader, primarily through embodiment.

We are presented with an image of a beast in the desert sands (CONTAINER), a beast which “[i]s moving its slow thighs,” indicating directional movement across a horizontal plane (TRAJECTOR-PATH-LANDMARK). The reeling of the shadows “all about” the beast adds the dimension of movement that incorporates a vertical plane. The fact that these are shadows of the desert birds creates a vertical dimension with the actual birds above, the sun beyond them, and the shadows from them cast upon the sand, moving the reader into a three-dimensional space, as Yeats did to us with the stone in the stream in “Easter, 1916.” At this point of the poem, our visualisation and comprehension of the scene is structured by the body’s sense of space and location. As the beast rises in our view and “slouches toward Bethlehem to be born,” the trajector moves toward the landmark of Bethlehem (another symbol packed with religious connotations). The movement in this image scheme is organized through verbs of motion, such as “is moving” and “reel,” as well as through prepositions like “in” and “about” which orient us in the space we have constructed in minds. The image schemas throughout this poem include CONTAINER, JOURNEY, UP/DOWN, FRONT/BACK, OVER/UNDER, INTO/OUT OF, TRAJECTOR-

¹⁸⁹ Stockwell, Cognitive Poetics, 16.
PATH-LANDMARK, and others, all which require the experiences of our physical bodies for us to comprehend.

Although the beast is the main metaphor of the second stanza, it is described through other metaphorical language which Stockwell classifies stylistically from “most visible to least invisible.”¹⁹⁰ The “lion body,” an adjective metaphor, is premodification, a modifier before the noun which maps characteristics of a lion onto the beast. Likewise, the adjective “head of man” maps a human characteristic onto the beast, enabling us to create an understanding of this creature as both mythological and somehow human. Its gaze is described as “blank and pitiless” as the sun, which is a simile, classified by Stockwell as the most visible of metaphorical language due to the overt use of like or as to construct it. The closing line of the poem refers to the metaphorical birth of this beast, which demonstrates the conceptual metaphor TIME IS AN EVENT. The birth of the beast will be the turning of the gyre from the objective cycle of the last “twenty centuries of stony sleep” to the inverse, subjective cone. Despite the complications which this poem initially presents to the reader, by the conclusion of the poem, we have been able to mentally construct an image of the Second Coming and create a meaning for the target domain of the TIME IS MOTION conceptual metaphor of the poem.

As we examine Yeats’s poetry which developed more complex symbolism throughout his later period, we might look to how the theory of embodiment and the structure of image schemas in the metaphorical language of the poems guide us in creating an understanding of the unfamiliar. Such a reading of metaphorical language in poetry “is consistent with the

cognitive science view which claims that human psychological processes all derive at some fundamental level from the embodied human condition."  

Since our "...creating, interpreting and appreciating literary metaphors involve the same cognitive processes and mappings that structure our conventional understanding of the world," if we can learn from cognitive science and cognitive linguistics the mechanisms of how we assemble our conventional understanding of the world, then we can use that knowledge to explore how we create meaning from literary metaphors as well.  

Mental Spaces and Space Building:

In addition to the various forms of mapping, a significant aspect of the comprehension of texts is the mental construction of the world represented by the text, a world in which mappings may occur and form cognitive representations. Such a world is linguistically represented by the author in a manner from which we can then construct a space where we build the meaning of the text. In Fauconnier’s mental spaces theory, which has become an accepted part of cognitive linguistics, mental spaces “are defined as short-term cognitive representations of states of affairs, constructed on the basis of the textual input on the one hand, and the comprehender’s background knowledge on the other.”  

These spaces are necessary because “text processing involves the incremental construction of networks of

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interconnected mental spaces.” Since language is embodied and we create its meaning through our prior bodily experiences, mental spaces facilitate a domain in which metaphors and mappings may occur; within one text, we may construct not only the base world, but other hypothetical worlds which mentally exist in relation to the base world either physically or temporally, or which are conditionally constructed from the foundation of the base world. In her studies of Hemingway’s writing, Elena Semino asserts that these mental spaces set the “states of affairs, events and relationships that the text refers to.” Semino analyzes the types of relationships that might exist between the spaces, such as temporal relationships between them and epistemic distances between them, which she considers the “ontological or ‘reality’ status of one space in relation to another.” Mental spaces begin with a base space and build upon them with construction of additional spaces using what cognitive linguistics calls space builders. These space builders are “linguistic expressions which trigger the construction of new spaces, and indicate the nature of the connection between each new space and the one from which it is constructed.” Semino’s assessment of Fauconnier’s mental space theory claims that “it tries to account for the way in which the series of factual spaces is projected by means of linguistic space builders.” Fauconnier claims that grammatical devices are used in cognitive construction to build and connect mental spaces. These device include the following:

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194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 Semino, 90.
197 In Mappings in Thought and Language, Gilles Fauconnier explains base spaces of discourse, using an example of Romeo and Juliet possibly being in love. He explores epistemic or hypothetical spaces in his discussion.
198 Semino, 90.
199 Ibid., 91.
1) Space builders, which are “grammatical expression[s] that either open[s] a new space or shift focus[es] to an existing place,” and which may take the form of “prepositional phrases, adverbials, subject-verb complexes,” and conjunctions with clauses.200

2) Names and descriptions that take the form of noun phrases, which create new elements within the mental space, “point to existing elements in the discourse construction,” or associate those elements with certain properties within the discourse.201

3) Verb tenses and moods, which shift focus within spaces, connect elements to the base, and locate parts of the space.

4) Trans-spatial operators, verbs like be, remain, and become, which work as connectors between mental spaces.202

From these and other grammatical devices, the reader builds at minimum a Base, a Viewpoint, and a Focus space; the three may all exist in one space, or be divided amongst multiple spaces.203

Throughout Yeats’s earlier writings, we can certainly imagine the mental spaces which he describes in his poems, even though these spaces may often appear rather two-dimensional, similar to paintings. The scenes he presents to us in much of his early poetry are frequently beautifully described and often masterfully employ imagery and sensory appeals to evoke the picture of the scene which he wishes to present to us. One such poem is his famous “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” from his 1893 volume *The Rose*. Let us examine the mental spaces constructed in the poem stanza by stanza:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:

201 Ibid.
202 Fauconnier, *Mappings*, 41. Additional grammatical devices that aid in meaning construction also include presuppositional constructions and the Access (or Identification) Principle. See pp. 40-42 for discuss of these.
203 See Fauconnier, “3.2 Discourse Management: Base, Viewpoint, Focus, and Access” in *Mappings*, chapter two.
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.204

The movements of arising and going which are stated in the first line begin the creation of the reader’s Base mental space. The second line contains two significant verbs which further this construction, both being verbs of construction or creation themselves: build and made. The location on Innisfree is painted as a plot of land with a cabin, garden rows, and bee hives. The first stanza serves to establish the physical location and the elements within that location; however, the second stanza builds the qualities of that mental space:

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet’s wings.205

The peace, the slow pace of life, and the beauty of nature are characteristics of this space which he describes in the poem and for which we create a mental space. By this point in the poem, we can visualise the location and have an impression of the life he desires there; this is the Base space and the Viewpoint from which the other spaces of the poem will be accessed and constructed. However, as we have read the poem, a second mental space has already formed in relation to the base space. This additional space has a temporal relationship with the Base space, and we cognitively construct this new space by the modal auxiliaries “will” and “shall,” situating it mentally in future tense while it occurs simultaneously in our cognitive process.

Stanza three further confounds our imaginings with the realization that he actually does not go to this place, but that the place is a mental one for him as well, constructed from his memories

205 Ibid. ll. 5-8.
of the actual locale. Our Focus space shifts from the first two onto this third space as he goes “now” to the lake isle while he is still standing on the roads or pavements of the city. The travelling to this location is a mental traveling, a transporting of the self to a memory, similar in some ways to the treatment of memory by Wordsworth and other romantic poets.206

I will arise and go now, for always night and day I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey, I hear it in the deep heart’s core.207

In this stanza, the poem’s third mental space is constructed as a place in the speaker’s own imagination, a mental space of his own, one which he situates in “the deep heart’s core.” We understand his construction of this third space in relation to our construction of the Base/Viewpoint space. The Base space contains the elements of island, cabin, bean rows, and garden, as well as the characteristic of peace. We construct our understanding of the second space in temporal relation to the Base/Viewpoint space, as well as the third space in ontological relation to the Base/Viewpoint. The third, which exists in the poem in the speaker’s mind and memory, is the most ontologically distant from us readers and must be cognitively constructed from the Base/Viewpoint which we have already pictured in our minds. In this way, the Base space is the foundation for meaning construction of the second and third mental spaces.

Then we encounter a fourth space, spatially distant from the base space, a place within a city where the speaker stands on “the roadway” and “pavements grey.” The conjunctive adverb “while” along with the grounded present tense verb “stand” and the two instances of

206 See William Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” for an example of this. The narrator writes of transporting himself through memory back to a particular location, one which gives him peace and solace in his current struggles.

the locative preposition “on” reinforce this fourth mental space as the most “real” of the poem, but certainly not the most important and only tangentially built from the Base/Viewpoint. Our Focus shifts as it is constructed very swiftly in only one line, the penultimate line, situated at nearly the close of the poem. Nonetheless, it is the actual location from which the speaker is creating his mental space, one in which he, and by extension we, hear the “low sounds” of the “lake water lapping.” We might visualise the relationship of these mental spaces (MS1, MS2, MS3, MS4) in this way:

![Figure 3.2: Mental Spaces in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”](image)

Our cognition of the relationships of temporal, spatial, and epistemic distances between these four mental spaces can be better understood through Fauconnier’s mental spaces theory. We can see that the dominant image of the poem, the scene on the island, functions as both the Base and Viewpoint for our understanding of future space as well as the speaker’s imaginary space; one relationship has temporal distance in the future and the other epistemic distance as (further) imaginary. The fourth mental space is of an altogether different location (city, not Innisfree), so it has a spatially discrete relationship to the Base, but a relationship nonetheless, one connected to the base by MS3.

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208 I abbreviate and number the mental spaces in this and the poems which follow in the order which the reader constructs them while reading the poem, MS standing for “mental space.”
As previously asserted, many of Yeats’s earlier poems, including “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” create mental spaces which are presented to the reader as almost two-dimensional paintings or as scenes to be viewed. However, in his later poetry, Yeats develops a common technique of constructing mental spaces which are often far more three-dimensional than the scenes in his earlier poems. Since we have established the basic concepts of mental space construction and their relationships to one another, let us proceed to examine in closer detail how cognitive mappings contribute to mental space construction in several of Yeats’s poems with three-dimensional spaces, such as the café scene in “Vacillation, IV,” the Chinamen in “Lapis Lazuli,” and Lady Gregory’s house in “Coole and Ballylee, 1931.”

In “Vacillation, IV” we find an example of what appears to be a simply-constructed mental space which transports the reader into its midst to experience the events of the poem. Yeats uses space builders, prepositional phrases, and nouns to construct a mental space for the moment which occurs in the second and third stanzas:

My fiftieth year had come and gone,  
I sat, a solitary man,  
In a crowded London shop,  
An open book and empty cup  
On the marble table-top.

While on the shop and street I gazed  
My body of a sudden blazed;  
And twenty minutes more or less  
It seemed, so great my happiness,  
That I was blessed and could bless.209

Time is understood by the JOURNEY image schema in which time is conceived in spatial

relations, moving as a trajector does to and from a location. The temporal space is established not by stating he is over fifty years old, but by treating time as a space (the conceptual metaphor TIME IS SPACE) and establishing the first element of the mental space as a temporal one. The description of the narrator as a “solitary man” in contrast to the “crowded London shop” creates a tension in the space between the self and others, evoking an image of an isolated man sitting in a café accompanied by a feeling of that isolation. The physical space then builds up around us as a shop in London, but it is not merely presented to us as a scene; it is constructed with us at center in the position of the narrator. Several techniques accomplish this dimensional move: the view is being described from the speaker’s perspective, which places our mental view there as well. We see the crowded shop, the book open in front of us, our cup empty—which would most certainly take proximity and perspective to see—and the marble table-top before us. The looking out upon the crowd, looking down upon the book/cup/table, and the movement of time established in the first line all contribute to a mental space which surrounds us, not one upon which we look from an outside position. In the second stanza, we continue in this space and from his view gaze out upon the shop and street, extending the horizontal dimension of the poem. What is the significance of the reader experiencing this moment instead of being shown it merely as a scene or picture of a man in a café? I contend that the answer to that question rests in the last three lines of the poem. The speaker’s body metaphorically blazes and he is filled with an intense happiness, one which the reader too can sense or relate to if they are submersed in the mental space of the poem.\footnote{Unterecker, A Reader’s Guide, 222 explains the connection between this burning happiness and the figure of Attis on tree earlier in “Vacillation, III,” drawing on the source material for this poem which can be found in Per Amica Silentia Lunae.} By situating us
within the mental space that we construct, our cognition is not limited to a scene that transpires before us, but is expanded to an experience of this “unaccountable happiness.”

Yeats's use of three-dimensional mental spaces can be examined in many of his later poems, including the stone in the midst of the stream in “Easter, 1916” and the Sphinx rising in the desert in “The Second Coming.” Likewise, we can see the building of four mental spaces in a portion of “Lapis Lazuli” when he describes a carving that he observes in a piece of Lapis Lazuli:

Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
Are carved in Lapis Lazuli,
Over them flies a long-legged bird
A symbol of longevity;
The third, doubtless a serving-man,
Carries a musical instrument.

The mental space initially constructed is one that depicts the story of the work of art, the carving on the blue stone. Although this is a three-dimensional object with carvings upon it, we do not construct the space from within, but as viewed from without, similar to how we saw the cabin and bean-rows in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree.” The first piece of this mental space is a noun, the two Chinamen, followed by a third man who is “behind” them; this preposition, understood bodily through the IN FRONT OF/BEHIND image schema, signals the first creation of space. The passive structure of the first clause places the artistic creation as the subject of the sentence, and we know that the meaning we are making is of a carving, something we look upon. This Base space is expanded vertically in line 39 by “a long-legged bird” that flies over them, evoking the ABOVE/BELOW image schema as well. Our cognition of the scene that is

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211 Ibid.

carved in stone requires the construction of this first mental space, in order that we might understand what is transpiring in the mental spaces formed throughout the next stanza:

Every discolouration of the stone,
Every accidental crack or dent
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
Or lofty slope where it still snows
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch
Sweetens the little half-way house
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I
Delight to imagine them seated there;
There, on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scene they stare.
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.213

Focus shifts outside of the stone for two lines, situating the reader as the observer who is inspecting the colour and texture of the stone; this mental space is comprised of reader as viewer and stone as object being viewed, but nothing else. A transformation then occurs between MS2 and MS3 with the trans-spatial operator “seems”; this begins the construction of our third mental space that we build from the elements of the Base, MS1, but from the Viewpoint of MS2. In MS3, the discolourations, cracks, and dents observed by the viewer on the stone transform into waterways, avalanches, and slopes where “it still snows.” These new nouns are elements introduced into MS3 by the viewer’s choice to evoke his imagination and create them from the physical characteristics of the stone in MS2. In the new space of MS3, the nouns and verb (“snows”) all convey action and motion, which bring a static image from MS1 to life in MS3. Our cognition of MS3 is accomplished through the JOURNEY image schema as the

Chinamen become trajectors on a journey toward a landmark, the half-way house. Their upward climbing motion continues the vertical dimension of this mental space, as do our understandings of avalanches, slopes, and the downward motion of falling snow; these combined with the presumed flowing of water in the water-courses on the horizontal plane and the depth implied by “crack or dent” all contribute to our understanding of this three-dimensional mental space and what is transpiring within it.

The Focus then shifts to a fourth space, one in which the three men have completed their climb, reached the house, and sit together on the mountain, looking out upon the landscape and listening to melodies played by their serving man, relishing a moment of happiness. An epistemic distancing occurs as the ontological status of the “realities” in each successive mental space shift. The most “real” is MS2, then MS1, then MS3, and finally MS4:

- MS1—The artistic creation, which is the scene carved on the stone, a physical work of art depicting an imagined scene, and for the comprehension of which we create the Base mental space.
- MS2—The most “real,” which is us looking upon the blue stone which has engravings in it. This is the Viewpoint from which all other mental spaces are understood.
- MS3—The imagined scene of MS1 coming to life, seeing the three men in motion climbing on the mountain. This is less “real” than MS1 because it is not actually depicted on the stone, as confirmed by the word “doubtless” in line 46.
- MS4—The farthest removed from reality, which is even referred to as the speaker’s imagination in the poem. This space is not merely a construct of our imagination, but of us imagining the speaker imagining it.

In addition to the epistemic distance of MS4 from the Base space, MS4 is also distanced

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214 See the discussion of “Easter, 1916” in the introduction to this study for additional explanation of the JOURNEY image schema. Peter Stockwell also provides an extensive analysis of trajectors in chapter six of Texture—a Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading.
spatially and temporally, for the location of MS4 is not an element of MS1, and the temporal moment of MS4 is one projected from the future of the Base. If it were to occur, it would have to take place after MS1 and MS3, after the men have reached the landmark, the hut. We understand that the landmark has been reached by placement of the men in it, accomplished by the locator “there”; and despite its apparent future existence, this space is constructed by present tense verbs: “stare,” “asks,” “begin,” and “are.” Being the only space temporally distanced from the Base, it also closes with references to time and aging, such as the Chinamen’s many wrinkles and their ancient eyes. Amazingly, our minds are able to construct all four of these spaces and then shift Focus between them, transferring comprehension of elements from one into the others, even when the location, time, and ontological status of each differ.

Thus far we have explored three rather different poems which show various ways in which mental spaces contribute to our construction of meaning in Yeats’s poetry. “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” constructs spaces we observe from without; “Vacillation, IV” demonstrates how the reader can be transported into the experience of the poem when the mental space is constructed around him; and in “Lapis Lazuli” we inspected how image schemas, verb tense, and different states of reality within mental spaces work in unison to construct mental spaces where the meanings of the text can then be understood. In our final close reading of this chapter, we will examine mental spaces which are about an actual physical space that held great significance in Yeats’s life. “Coole and Ballylee, 1931” is a poem about Coole Park, the
estate of Lady Gregory, Yeats’s benefactress. In this poem we can trace how movement between mental spaces is an embodied experience and how elements can connect the various mental spaces and carry constructed meaning with them. The opening stanza establishes the Base space:

Under my window-ledge the waters race,
Otters below and moor-hens on the top,
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven’s face
Then darkening through ‘dark’ Raftery’s ‘cellar’ drop,
Run underground, rise in a rocky place
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up
Spread to a lake and drop into a hole.
What’s water but the generated soul?216

From a location presumably in his room at Coole Park, Yeats looks out the window and describes for us the scene which we begin to construct. The first space builder, “under,” positions us looking out the window at the water below, moving us into his first-person perspective like “Vacillation, IV” did. Image schemas use prepositions like “under,” “below,” “on,” “in,” “through,” and “into” to situate us bodily in the scene and build the terrain and landscape about us. We apprehend the placement of the otters, the moor-hens, the lake, and other nouns of the stanza through an embodied understanding of the prepositions which show the relationship of the nouns to one another. The path of the water from Ballylee, underground, and then to the lake at Coole Park is the focus of this space: and we are moved along the waterway by a series of present-tense verbs of action: “race,” “run,” “rise,” “finish,” “spread,” and “drop.” The water’s flow is characterized in terms which we understand from our

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215 See footnote 66 for an explanation of Yeats’s relationship with Lady Gregory and the important role that both she and her home had in his life and artistic development.

bodily experiences with motion. As the water ends in the lake, the mental space expands yet further to encompass a wood at the border of the lake and the sun above. A rich landscape has been constructed for us when we are suddenly shifted into a new mental space, one which is temporally distanced from MS1, as shown by the shift in line 11 into past tense:

Upon the border of that lake's a wood
Now all dry sticks under a wintry sun,
And in a copse of beeches there I stood,
For Nature's pulled her tragic buskin on
And all the rant's a mirror of my mood:
At sudden thunder of the mounting swan
I turned about and looked where branches break
The glittering reaches of the flooded lake.\textsuperscript{217}

We are moved into a memory of a time when he stood in those same woods by the lake. In the Base space we already constructed the lake and woods, and the elements of that space are now shifted into a new space which had previously occurred in the speaker’s experience. In this second space he stood “there” “in” a small thicket of beech trees, an element transferred from MS1 but existing at a different moment in time. He recalls a sudden thundering of the swans as they mounted into the air, a sound which we can metaphorically hear as well, and then he turned and looked about the lake where the swans were rising. The use of past tense—“stood,” “pulled,” “turned,” and “looked”—lead us to construct the events of this stanza in a mental space temporally but not spatially distant from the Base.

The third stanza jolts our Focus space back to the Base mental space in which an emblem, a swan, sails through the sky:

Another emblem there! That stormy white
But seems a concentration of the sky;

\textsuperscript{217} Yeats, “Coole and Ballylee, 1931” in \textit{The Collected Poems}, 243-245 ll. 9-16.
And, like the soul, it sails into the sight
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why;
And is so lovely that it sets to right
What knowledge or its lack had set awry,
So arrogantly pure, a child might think
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.218

Unterecker asserts that the rising swan is another emblem for the soul, like the water in stanza one which Yeats compares the “generated soul” to in line eight.219 Although this sky is a part of MS1, a symbolic space is created by the use of “emblem,” “seems,” the simile “like the soul,” and the metaphorical language of murdering its purity with a spot of ink. We can understand this emblematic mental space as we map characteristics of the source domain swan onto the target domain of the soul. The symbolic space of MS3 is constructed from the Base space elements in conjunction with elements from MS2.

The most significant embodied shift in mental spaces occurs in the movement to MS4 in stanza four and is accomplished through sound. Everything we have read, mentally constructed, and apprehended thus far in the poem has been outside of the room where the speaker is standing, but a sudden sound behind him from within pivots our attention inward, drawing it from the distant water and skies into the inner space of the room:

Sound of a stick upon the floor, a sound
From somebody that toils from chair to chair;
Beloved books that famous hands have bound,
Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere;
Great rooms where travelled men and children found
Content or joy; a last inheritor
Where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame
Or out of folly into folly came.220

As we hear the movement from the room within, the stick or cane striking the floor, a person moving about from chair to chair, we construct an understanding that this is Lady Gregory. In this moment our cognition experiences what literary critics have termed *delayed decoding*, but which has been explained “by neuroscientists’ discovery of the short delay between sensory stimuli and full cognition of them” 221 The delay which occurs between our sensory simulation and our cognition of those sensory impressions is extended in this scene as our decoding of the “somebody” is delayed until four lines later when she is identified as the “last inheritor” of Coole Park.222 In this space of books and picture, rooms rich with art and humanity, a new mental space is then created, rich with the history of life and art that had thrived in that house for all those years. The elements of this stanza are listed as noun phrases but with very few verbs and prepositions, unlike the abundant image schemas of earlier stanzas. The books, marble busts, and statues have no verbs; nor do the rooms or the last inheritor. This stacking of nouns alongside spatial locators of “everywhere,” “where,” and “where” situate us in the room as the space builds around us filled with these elements. Without prepositions to orient the nouns one with another or verbs to give action or motion to the dominant nouns of the stanza,

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221 Thomas R. Smith, “literature and consciousness” in *Oxford Companion to Consciousness*, Edited by Tim Bayne, et al. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 413. Delayed decoding was coined by Ian Watt in his 1972 lecture “Pink Toads and Yellow Curs: An Impressionist Narrative Device in *Lord Jim*, and explained as the presentation of a sense impression while direct knowledge or identification of the thing being conveyed by the impression is withheld, not named, and often not even explained until later.

222 In the last two decades, much study has been done on Sensory Processing Disorder and Sensory Integration Dysfunction, particularly in people who autistic. Extended delays in sensory processing and the over-sensitivity to sensory stimuli have been of significant interest in these studies and have contributed to the documentation of normal sensory cognition which involves a slight processing delay, as referred to by Smith above. For additional information see “Autism and Sensory Processing Disorders: Shared White Matter Disruption in Sensory Pathways but Divergent Connectivity in Social-Emotional Pathways” by Yi-Shin Change, et al. in *PLoS ONE* 9.7 (July 2014): 1-17 as well as “Evidence for Diminished Multisensory Integration in Autism Spectrum Disorders” by Ryan Stevenson, et al. in *Journal of Autism &Developmental Disorders* 44/12 (Dec 2014): 3161-3167.
the mental space seems as fractured as the clauses of the stanza. The last two stanzas of the poem are in a way an elegy for what Coole Park once was and had been to him. As Lady Gregory lay on her deathbed, the ancestral estate’s future was in question; moreover, the artistic space Lady Gregory had created was in many ways coming to an end. The symbols or emblems of water and swan that connect the mental spaces move from the Base MS1, to the temporally distanced MS2, to the symbolic space of MS3, and eventually to the closing line of the poem “[w]here the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.”223 The comparison of the waters to “the generated soul” in the first stanza and the likening of the soul to a swan in the third stanza cycle back and merge in the closing line to suggest “that, if life’s waters are allowed to run their course, another swanlike version of the soul will eventually rise out” of the waters.224 An understanding of such a reincarnated soul as a swan seems to portray a metaphorical representation of Lady’s Gregory’s soul positioned to rise out of the darkened waters into the form of a swan.

The purpose of this chapter has been to investigate the way which Yeats uses language in his poems to create metaphorical spaces or represent literal ones, particularly by applying cognitive mappings and mental space theory from cognitive linguistics to select poems of his. From these readings, we can conclude that his poems are rich with language that guides us in meaning construction. Conceptual metaphors and culturally significant symbols were explored in “The Four Ages of Man” and “The Rose Tree.” “My Table” gave us examples of projection, pragmatic function, and image schema mappings. “The Second Coming” provided additional

223 Ibid. l. 48.
analysis of image schemas in conjunction with conceptual metaphors and unfamiliar source domains. Then we inspected the construction of mental spaces in multiple poems, first by considering two-dimensional spaces in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” and then progressing to three-dimensional metaphorical spaces in several of his later works: “Vacillation, IV,” “Lapis Lazuli,” and “Coole and Ballylee, 1931.” In these cognitive poetics readings, we saw the various forms of mappings working within constructed mental spaces to make meaning and transfer meaning among spaces within the same poem. As we now move to chapter 4 and examine cognitive grammar even more closely, we will continue to use these mappings and mental spaces in our analyses, but with a closer eye on grammatical construction to see what it too may contribute to our readings of Yeats’s poetry.
CHAPTER 4

COGNITIVE GRAMMAR: SYNTAX AND TIME

At the onset of this study, the cognitive linguistic theory of embodiment was examined as foundational to a cognitive poetics analysis of Yeats’s poetry. Chapter 2 explored embodiment by examining its connection to Yeats’s use of the mind’s eye throughout his poems and prose. Chapter 3 continued an investigation of embodiment as the mechanism by which cognitive mappings are accomplished as we construct meaning. In chapter 3 we also saw that multiple mental spaces are created as we read or hear Yeats’s poems and that in those spaces, we construct the meaning of the words through our previously embodied experiences with spatial and temporal relationships. Here in chapter 4, we move into a particular field of cognitive linguistics which applies the principles of embodiment not only to words, but also to grammar. Cognitive linguists attribute the founding of cognitive grammar to Ronald Langacker with his 1987 publication of *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, Volume 1, Theoretical Prerequisites* (Stanford UP), followed by his *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, Volume 2, Descriptive Application* (1991). Cognitive grammar was founded by Langacker as an extension of cognitive linguistics, extending embodiment theory from words to the grammar of those words.\(^{225}\) Cognitive linguists largely agree on the symbolic nature of words; however, cognitive grammar asserts that not only are words symbolic, but grammatical constructions are as well. Instead of a standard, formalist view of linguistics which sees grammar as a set of mere artificial structures which are applied to symbols, cognitive grammar argues that grammar too is

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\(^{225}\) Although Ronald Langacker capitalizes cognitive grammar throughout his writing, I will be referring to it with the lowercase as most cognitive linguistics and cognitive poetics scholars do.
symbolic and therefore inherently meaningful. Cognitive grammar equates meaning not with an objective truth that can be logically deduced, but with conceptualization itself, with the cognitive processing that occurs when we read or hear language. Instead of believing in a grammar that exists as an autonomous, fixed system, cognitive grammar claims that grammar is an integral part of the process of cognition. In addition to understanding what cognitive grammar is, as literary scholars and critics, we must also understand the difference between what we typically call grammar and how grammar is used by cognitive grammar. To us, grammar includes syntax, morphology, tense, sentence structure—the set of rules that governs our use of words and the composition of clauses and phrases. Cognitive grammar, however, looks beyond grammar as a set of rules and perceives it as a symbolic system, a part of the “conceptual apparatus through which we apprehend and engage the world.” A cognitive poetics approach to Yeats’s poetry, therefore, will ask how his grammatical choices themselves convey meaning and how a poem’s meaning is accomplished or contributed to by its grammar.

Much indirect attention has been given to the grammar of Yeats’s poems, whether in examination of his frequent revisions or in close readings of his works. Yeats’s intentional revision and selection of grammatical nuances in his poetry has, for instance, been studied by critics such as George Bornstein, Richard Finneran, and others, while Helen Vendler, John Unterecker, and other scholars have closely analyzed the grammar of Yeats’s poems in relation to structure, form, and poetic techniques. However, cognitive grammar, as a subset of

226 Langacker, *Basic 4.*

227 Richard Finneran, for instance, examines the change of line of “Ribh denounces Patrick” from “Recall that masculine Trinity” to “A Trinity that is wholly masculine” as a revision “which places the emphasis where it belongs—not on the doctrine of the Trinity...but on its sexuality” (33). Finneran, “Text and Interpretation in the
cognitive linguistics, seeks to study the meaning which is made by the grammar itself and how this meaning is part of and interacts with the meaning construal in overall language apprehension. Cognitive grammar explores how syntactical information can encode meaning and how the way in which we arrange words can convey additional meaning that the words themselves do not alone convey. The various grammatical arrangements of words “represent basic human experiences through structures which correspond to basic general events such as location, cause, transfer, result, and so on.” As we explore the meaning of grammar as a facet of the meaning of the poems themselves, we continue to build upon the foundation of the embodied simulation hypothesis. As Bergen explains in Louder Than Words, embodiment involves the activation of the vision, motor, auditory, and other systems in the brain to “make meaning by creating experiences” that reflect the experience which the author describes. Bergen provides us with a helpful analogy to explain how grammar embodies meaning in the way that words do: sentences as plants. If we understand the words of a sentence as the leaves of a plant, then we can think of grammar as the stems and branches that give them structure and support. In the same way that leaves are responsible for performing the primary life function of photosynthesis, “words perform the primary linguistic function of conveying


meaning.” Grammar operates as the structure of a linguistic expression, just as the branches and stems of the plant give it support and form; however, stems do also perform a degree of photosynthesis; or as the analogy goes, grammar does also make meaning. In fact, in some plants, such as cacti, the stems perform the majority of the photosynthesis in the same way that “grammatical structures can be responsible for a large part of an utterance’s meaning.” Embodied simulation is not merely a simulation of words but of the structure and organization of those words as well; grammar contributes to embodied cognition by directing how to simulate meaning, not just what to simulate. That “how” in cognitive grammar encompasses a wide array of topics, including the symbolic nature of grammar, various types of construal, grammatical classes and subclasses, characterizations of grammatical constructions, and the general structures of grammar. Despite the wide purview of cognitive grammar, for the sake of time and space this chapter will be specifically limited to an examination of the subjective/objective construal, nominal and clausal grounding, noun modifiers, subject and object structure, clause types, complex verbs, ordination, and clausal connections in relation to two primary objectives: first to investigate in selected poems the effect of some of these grammatical factors on meaning construction in relation to stanzaic form, and second to examine how grammar may work to achieve temporal suspension in Yeats’s poetry.

Foundational to the discussion of cognitive grammar are several terms related to construal. Construal, the way in which the meaning of linguistic content is construed, relies on four particular phenomena enumerated by Langacker: specificity, focusing, prominence, and

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231 Ibid., 98.

232 Ibid., 99-100.
perspective. **Specificity** is the degree of “precision and detail at which a situation is characterized” by the author.\(^{233}\) For example, the weather might be described as *cold*, or more specifically as *27 degrees*. Conversely, less specificity or lower resolution can be conveyed as well, such as using *feline* instead of *Russian Blue*. Although most literary scholars would consider this sort of specificity to be simply precise or imprecise diction, cognitive grammar includes specificity—or its inverse schematicity—in the examination of an expression’s grammar. The second cognitive grammar term explained by Langacker is *focusing* which “includes the selection of conceptual content for linguistic presentation, as well as its arrangement into what can broadly be described (metaphorically) as foreground vs. background.”\(^{234}\) Our focus may be drawn to a particular part of an expression by placement, foregrounding, backgrounding, emphasis, and structure. Focusing not only “includes the initial selection of conceptual content for linguistic presentation,” but also how “an expression’s composite meaning relates to those of its components” at various levels of organization, which is called its compositional path.\(^{235}\) For instance, the use of the passive voice shifts the subject of a sentence away from the doer of the action, moving the reader’s focus onto the action or some other foregrounded element instead of on the actor. *The mirror was shattered* instead of *Stephanie shattered the mirror* foregrounds the object and action in one’s focus, whereas the active voice foregrounds the subject in the reader’s focus. This focusing can be useful in negating agency, emphasizing the receiver of the action or the action itself over the actor, and

\(^{233}\) Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 55.

\(^{234}\) Ibid, 57.

\(^{235}\) Ibid, 61, 62.
many other such implications which affect meaning construal. Closely connected to focus, Langacker’s phenomenon of prominence includes the trajector/landmark alignment previously seen in this study when we examined image schemas. The direction in which actions and relationships are aligned by the grammatical structure situate particular elements in greater or lesser prominence. Prominence may be conceived of as a type of focusing, but one particularly in regards to spatial orientation. In his fMRI studies at UCSD, Dr. Bergen has concluded that brain activity experiments “show that people are engaging mental representations of the locations of the things that are described.” Furthermore, he finds that the direction of the action, not merely the location thereof, affects how motor simulation occurs during comprehension. In part two of “The Tower” when Yeats calls “Images and memories / From ruin or from ancient trees” to the Tower so he might question them, we see the various trajectors, such as Mrs. French, Mary Hines, and Hanrahan, move from their landmarks, the ruins and trees, to a destination, the Tower. This directional movement brings them into prominence as they come forth, while the Tower itself, as their destination or target maintains greatest prominence. The fourth phenomenon explored by Langacker is perspective, a term common to literary critics, but defined by Langacker as the “viewing arrangement” of a scene, “the most obvious aspect of which is the vantage point assumed.” Viewing is of course a conceptual viewing, a perspective from which linguistic expressions are apprehended. In his fMRI studies of how grammar impacts meaning construction, Bergen gives the example of how

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236 Bergen, Louder Than Words 81.

237 For additional examples from his experiments and studies about motor simulation, see chapter 5 of Bergen’s More Than Words, 73-92.

238 Langacker, Cognitive Grammar, 73.
grammatical person leads the reader to simulate the information from either a participant or observer perspective. Linguistic expressions written in first and second person lead the reader to mentally simulate from a first person perspective, creating a subjective meaning as opposed to an objective one. These four terms—specificity, focus, prominence, and perspective—will be used throughout this cognitive grammar analysis of Yeats’s poems as I examine the importance of his syntax in meaning construction.

**Sentence and Stanza**

In 1937 Yeats wrote “A General Introduction for my Work” in which he reflects upon the style which he had developed in his poetry throughout the years. He wrote that he “planned to write short lyrics...where every speech would be short and concentrated, knit by dramatic tension,” and that he “tried to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate, normal speech”; however, he then confesses, “It was a long time before I had made a language to my liking; I began to make it when I discovered some twenty years ago that I must seek, not...words in common use, but a powerful and passionate syntax, and a complete coincidence between period and stanza.” If we consider that this was written in 1937, we can intentionally examine his poetry approximately twenty years prior to this essay, such as *Responsibilities* (1914) and *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), to see if we may detect the stanzaic shift beginning to occur and then developing after that time. In doing so, we see a progressive

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240 For a fuller explanation of these four phenomenon from cognitive grammar, see Langacker’s Chapter 3 “Construal” in *Cognitive Grammar: A Brief Introduction*, pp. 55-89.

move away from the conventional quatrains of ballads and other traditional lyric forms toward an elaborately structured syntax in longer and longer stanzaic forms, ones which become significantly more common in his final volumes.

As Yeats’s stanzaic structure changes, the grammar of his poems also changes; however, in his earlier works we can likewise detect shifts in focus and prominence accomplished by grammatical changes, and we can see that these shifts in focus and prominence participate in our meaning construal. Early in Yeats’s career he regularly constructed his poetry in quatrains of closed syntactical units. This lyric form characterizes much of his early poetry including “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” “The Host of the Air,” and many others. The majority of the quatrains in these poems guide our focus by leading with subject and then verb, followed by subordinate clauses and adverbial phrases. For instance, stanza one of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” (from The Rose, 1893) begins with “I will arise,” presenting the reader with a very clear subject and future tense verb at the poem’s onset:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

The reader instantly apprehends the speaker and the initial actions of the poem, which are “will arise” and “[will] build.” The declarative tone in which the stanza begins, in conjunction with the immediate subject-verbs, brings the scene of Innisfree swiftly into sharp focus in the mind’s

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eye, even though the actions are not actually occurring in the image. The future tense is overshadowed by the presentness of the image, particularly by the use of the adverb “now” and the past tense verb “made” functioning as a passive past participle to describe the cabin as if it were already made. The clause’s syntax has foregrounded the subject “I,” and thus far the poem has created a scene in which we perceive a clear actor and action, as well as a mental space with a setting which has already been established before the end of the second line. Our apprehension is very direct and very swift; however, despite the foregrounding of the subject, the focusing begins to shift away from it. Refocusing begins with the first reversal of subject-verb order that appears in line three with “Nine bean-rows will I have there,” restructuring the direct object before the subject, which itself splits the auxiliary from the main verb, and with the second part of this compound verb trailing into the fourth line. The doer’s action is thereby reduced in prominence, and by foregrounding the direct object instead of the subject Yeats shifts our focus from the actor and action of the first two lines onto the place, the location, which is being emphasized in the remainder of the stanza and into the next, and which consequently becomes central to the meaning we are creating as we continue reading the poem.

In the second stanza a shifting in focus between the speaker/actor and the location occurs again. As in the first stanza, the second likewise contains a complete syntactical unit led by a subject-verb-direct object sequence, one which briefly returns our focus to the doer of the action:
And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet’s wings.\textsuperscript{244}

We are initially brought back to the primary subject “I,” but Yeats’s repeated use of the locative
adverb “there” in conjunction with the increased specificity describing the scene re-emphasize
the location in our mental space, so that the reader’s meaning construal focuses more intensely
on the place, the Lake Isle of Innisfree. In addition, the backgrounding of tense again occurs
when the future perfect “shall have” gives way in line six to present tense in the participle
“dropping” and the contracted “midnight’s” in line seven. The poem’s final stanza continues the
established syntax with a string of four subject-verb clauses, two of which are intransitive verbs
lacking direct objects that might detract from the focus on the speaker:

\begin{quote}
I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart’s core.\textsuperscript{245}
\end{quote}

This shift of focus back onto the “I” is appropriate at this moment for it contributes to our
construction of meaning; for it is in this stanza that we comprehend the actual location of the
two previous stanzas—the speaker’s memory and mind’s eye, not the physical isle.

A similar syntax is demonstrated throughout most of Yeats’s quatrain poems during his
early years, such as “The Host of the Air” from \textit{The Wind Among the Reeds} (1899) in which
almost every stanza closes with a period and follows a subject-verb-object construction:

\begin{quote}
O’Driscoll drove with a song
The wild duck and the drake
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{244} Yeats, \textit{The Collected Poems}, 39, ll. 5-8.
\textsuperscript{245} Yeats, \textit{The Collected Poems}, 39, ll. 9-12.
From the tall and the tufted reeds
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark
At the coming of night-tide,
And dreamed of the long dim hair
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls
Who danced on a level place,
And Bridget his bride among them,
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him
And many a sweet thing said,
And a young man brought him red wine
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve
Away from the merry bands,
To old men playing at cards
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,
For these were the host of the air;
He sat and played in a dream
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men
And thought not of evil chance,
Until one bore Bridget his bride
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,
The handsomest young man there,
And his neck and his breast and his arms
Were drowned in her long dim hair.
O'Driscoll scattered the cards  
And out of his dream awoke:  
Old men and young men and young girls  
Were gone like a drifting smoke;  

But he heard high up in the air  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad,  
And never was piping so gay.246

The subject-verb-object pattern which we see in this poem appears in the first clause of each stanza as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>O'Driscoll</td>
<td>drove</td>
<td>duck and drake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>saw</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>heard</td>
<td>piper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>saw</td>
<td>men and girls and Bridget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>dancers</td>
<td>crowded</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>drew</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>bread and wine</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>Doom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>played</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>bore</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>heard</td>
<td>piper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: Subject-Verb-Object Pattern in “The Cap and the Bells”

Examining the first stanza as an example, we swiftly construe the actor and action of the stanza as we did in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”: “O’Driscoll drove.” However, what he drove, “the wild duck and the drake,” and from whence he drove them, “the tall and tufted reeds” of the lake, are delayed until after we know the means by which he drove them. The positioning of the prepositional phrase “with a song” immediately after the subject-verb places focus and prominence on the actor, action, and method while diminishing the focus on the direct object, despite the specificity of what is driven and from whence it is driven. Likewise, almost every

stanza of the poem maintains this focus on the leading subject-verb, often by folding the rest of the stanza into prepositional phrases or independent clauses joined by causal connectors. An example of the function of prepositional phrases can be seen in an image schema in the sixth stanza when the direct object “him” becomes the trajector on a path “away from” the landmark of the singing crowd, moving “to old men” at a game of cards who are playing “with a twinkling of ancient hands.” The reader apprehends the motion of the trajector through the piling on of prepositional phrases, but it is a motion enacted by the subject Bridget, not by the trajector himself. As we construct the meaning of this syntax, we may realize that Bridget has intentionally guided the speaker away from the dancing so that she might then be led away by another dancer. Although this is the only stanza in which she functions as the subject, she does not become the focus because the image schema aligns the direct object with the landmark, giving it greater prominence than the subject and leading us to construct an image of him going to play cards with the old men as the central meaning of the stanza.247

Stanzas three, five, and eleven rely heavily on causal connectors to join independent clauses; however, the coordinating of these clauses, although grammatically equal, is not construed as equal when we read them.248 Here Yeats cascades these clauses one after another, but all hinging upon the first. The prominence of the leading subject-verb, “The dancers crowded” in stanza five for example, provides the nominal grounding for the remaining clauses. Although a man brings him wine and a girl brings him bread, these occur against a

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247 Additional explanation of how landmark/trajectory alignment can direct prominence and focus can be found in section 3.3 “Prominence” of Chapter 3 “Construal” in Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar: A Brief Introduction, 66-72.

248 For a detailed discussion of conjoining, disjoining, coordination, subordination, and types of connectors, see Langacker’s Chapter 12 “Complex Sentences” in Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction, pp. 406-453.
backdrop of him in the midst of a crowd of dancers. The foregrounding of the first clause gives it greater focus and prominence, relegating the following clauses, although made grammatically equal by the causal connector and, to a subordinate position in our meaning construction.249 We understand them in relation to the ground established in the first line. Through Yeats’s Responsibilities (1914), we see this recurring pattern in his poetry written with a coincidence of sentence and stanza, concluding nearly every quatrains with a period and leading each with a foregrounded subject-verb. The result is typically a clear construction of meaning in the reader’s mind, a construction built upon actor and action and supplemented by modifiers, spatial organization, and subordination.

However, in The Wild Swans at Coole (1919), Yeats seems to begin shifting the structure of his traditional quatrains, which would align with his 1937 assertion that “some twenty years” earlier he had begun to develop a new kind of syntax. For instance, we can see that the quatrains of “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” demonstrate a syntax quite different from the ballad form of his earlier poetry. Instead of following the subject-verb-object pattern, most stanzas begin with a prepositional phrase or other adjective phrase which the reader encounters prior to the subject-verb of the stanza, thereby delaying our apprehension of the actor and action of each linguistic expression. For instance, every stanza in part one of the poem begins with something other than the primary subject-verb of the stanza:

249 Langacker specifically explores the cognitive function of the causal connector “and” in section 12.1.1 “Conjoining” of chapter 12 “Complex Sentences” of Cognitive Grammar: A Brief Introduction, 406-412. He states that the most typical conjoiner is and “which is minimal and fundamental. Its essential import—inherent in the very notion of coordination—consists in the mental juxtaposition of coequal elements” (409). Although the clauses are coequal, the placement of one before the other in the stanza positions one clause above the other in significance.
On the grey rock of Cashel the mind’s eye
Has called up the cold spirits that are born
When the old moon is vanished from the sky
And the new still hides her horn.

Under blank eyes and fingers never still
The particular is pounded till it is man,
When had I my own will?
Oh, not since life began.

Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent and unbent
By these wire-jointed jaws and limbs of wood,
Themselves obedient,
Knowing not evil and good;

Obedient to some hidden magical breath.
They do not even feel, so abstract are they,
So dead beyond our death,
Triumph that we obey.250

The subject-verb of stanza one, “mind’s eye/Has called,” is placed after the adverbial
prepositional phrase “On the grey rock of Cashel.” This constructional schema does not follow
the conventionally established pattern of subject-verb-object, and therefore draws our
attention to the opening phrase as our minds begin the process of meaning construction.

Location is foregrounded over actor and action. Furthermore, our understanding of location
relies on embodiment, for we comprehend the opening of the poem through the ON/UNDER
image schema. Stanza two begins in the same manner: “Under blank eyes and fingers never still
/ The particular is pounded till it is man.” Embodied location precedes the action of the clause.
In this case, we additionally find a passive verb that obscures the stanza’s subject entirely.

Unlike the conventional syntax of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” and “The Host of the Air,” the

arrangement of this stanza hinders the construal of objective meaning. In both of the earlier poems, we experienced objective construal which situates the reader/viewer in a position to observe and comprehend the scene described in the poem from outside of that scene, as opposed to subjective construal which creates a scene that the reader/viewer comprehends as an experience from within.\textsuperscript{251}

As Yeats moves in “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” into an embodied subjective experience for the reader, he also delays our decoding of the stanza’s subject-verb, which may be omitted altogether as in stanza three:

Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent and unbent
By these wire-jointed jaws and limbs of wood,
Themselves obedient,
Knowing not evil and good;\textsuperscript{252}

The string of participles in line nine is modifying the “particular” from stanza two which is being fashioned into men. The lack of specificity in “man” reduces the object of the pounding into less focus and prominence, while the process of the shaping and pounding is instead emphasized in prominence. The reader construes the meaning of this process through, once again, an embodied understanding of the participles “[c]onstrained...bent and unbent,” which are comprehended through the FORCE/RESTRAINT image schema. Our subjective construal of meaning is therefore accomplished by multiple syntactical factors: the prominence of embodied location over subject-verb, the lack of specificity of the object undergoing the shaping, the passive voice of the verb in line six, and the embodied cognition of the participles

\textsuperscript{251} Subjective and objective construal is an aspect of the cognitive grammar phenomenon perspective. Section 3.4 “Perspective” of chapter 3 “Construal” in Langacker’s \textit{Cognitive Grammar: A Brief Introduction}, 73-85, explains this further.

of line nine. By the end of the fourth stanza, we still do not know what is doing the pounding referred to in line six, and our comprehension remains incomplete, as we presume some power or force is shaping these spirits. However, the “what” is less important than the “how” and is not necessary for us to form an understanding of the poem. This is quite a contrast from the conventional structure of Yeats’s earlier quatrains that enable direct, objective construal.

This syntactical reorganization which we see Yeats experimenting with in his stanzas is just beginning with his quatrains. Around this time Yeats also began expanding his stanzas from quatrains into quintains, sestets, and eventually octaves and the lengthy ten-line, decima stanzas of his later years. In the midst of this expansion, he, however, seeks to maintain the complete coincidence between sentence and stanza. Almost every stanza contains a primary clause with subordinate clauses and modifying clauses and phrases often piled upon it, preceding the moment of cognition with limited, subjective construal. Yeats’s sestets in “Running to Paradise” (from Responsibilities 1914) and quintains in “The Wild Swans at Coole” (1919) primarily demonstrate the conventional subject-verb organization; but in both of these volumes we also find quatrains, sestets, and even longer stanza forms with clauses and phrases before actor and action, even omitting the action entirely at times. Some of these poems employ dialogue that relocates the subject-verb later in the stanza, such as in “Beggar to Beggar Cried” and here in the first stanza of “Under the Round Tower”:

‘Although I’d lie lapped up in linen  
A deal I’d sweat and little earn  
If I should live as live the neighbours,’

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253 For additional examples of seven-line stanzas which demonstrate Yeats’s coincidence of sentence and stanza form, see “Running to Paradise” and “A Memory of Youth.” For eight line stanzas, see “September, 1913,” “In Memory of Major Robert Gregory,” “The Collor-bone of a Hare,” and “Solomon and Sheba.” These can be found in The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats edited by Richard Finneran.
Cried the beggar, Billy Byrne;
‘Stretch bones till the daylight come
On great-grandfather’s battered tomb.’\textsuperscript{254}

The subordinate clause that opens “Under the Round Tower” sets up a conditional mental space which we encounter before we apprehend the speaker of the stanza in the fourth line. In this arrangement, we have object-verb-subject, a reversal of the conventional order. Aside from using the technique of dialogue to rearrange the syntax of his stanzas, Yeats also develops a piling or culminating of information that builds up to the subject-verb of clauses. An example of this may be seen in the second stanza of “Under the Round Tower”:

\begin{center}
Upon a grey old battered tombstone
In Glendalough beside the stream,
Where the O’Byrnes and Byrnes are buried,
He stretched his bones and fell in a dream
Of sun and moon that a good hour
Bellowed and pranced in the round tower;\textsuperscript{255}
\end{center}

As in lines one and five of “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes,” the first three lines of this poem situate the reader in a scene, orientating us through images schemas accomplished by the prepositions \textit{upon}, \textit{in}, and \textit{beside}. The precision and specificity narrows to the subject-verb “He stretched...and fell” in line four and then expands back out from that center with another string of prepositional phrases: “in a dream,” “[o]f sun and moon,” and “in the round tower.” Conceptually like Yeats’s gyre, this pattern of contracting and expanding guides the reader through a scene that is understood through embodiment. This subjective construal places us within the scene, even though a clear subject-verb is eventually revealed to us. This delayed

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{255} Yeats, “Under the Round Tower” ll. 7-12.
\end{flushright}
decoding hinders our typical cognitive process and engages us in an embodied experience instead.256

Yeats continues his coinciding of sentence and stanza with more and more complex structures in his later years, a complexity which lengthens stanzas into elaborately crafted masterpieces. By the time Yeats composes “The Tower” he has developed octaves that master the compounding of verb as in the first stanza of Part II:

I pace upon the battlements and stare
On the foundation of a house, or where
Tree, like a sooty finger, starts from the earth;
And send imagination forth
Under the day’s declining beam, and call
Images and memories
From ruin or from ancient trees,
For I would ask a question of them all.257

The stanza consists of two clauses, both with an “I” subject and connected in the final line by the coordinator for, establishing the second clause as the reason for the first, more complex clause. This delay of the reason or cause until line twenty-four likewise delays our understanding of his purpose for the actions done in the first seven lines of the stanza. The four verbs of the first clause are spread out in lines seventeen, twenty, and twenty-one: “I pace…and stare…and send…and call.” The coordinator and joins the compound verbs as coequals, each with its own set of modifiers. Objective construal of actor and multiple actions is balanced with a subjective construal of location accomplished once more through the image schemas of spatial prepositions. The location where the speaker paces is upon the tower’s battlements; his

256 Ian Watts coined this term “delayed decoding” in a 1972 lecture entitled “Pink Toads and Yellow Curs: an Impressionist Narrative Device in Lord Jim.” Delayed decoding has extensively been examined by Conrad scholars to explore the influence of Impressionist aesthetic theories on the narrative form of modernist texts.

gaze is on the house’s foundation and the place where a tree rises from the ground; he sends his imagination out under the setting sun; and he calls “images and memories” from places of ruin and “ancient trees.” Our understanding of this scene is structured by the ON/UNDER and TO/FROM image schemas. The layering of verb after verb, each with its own modifying phrases, mounts into a crescendo which ends with the purpose of those actions: to ask them a question. This swelling and intensifying of verbs and phrases is an example of the “passionate syntax” to which Yeats aspired. As the lines of the stanza build one upon another, our embodied cognition is layering as well, mounting toward the final moment of apprehension within the stanza, the moment in line twenty-four when we construe the reason for the actions of the preceding lines.

Yeats accomplishes a similar intensity in other poems by a compounding of nouns and phrases that lack action throughout, as in “My House” from “Meditations in Time of Civil War.” The listing of elements of the scene depicted within the first stanza stacks them one upon another:

An ancient bridge, and a more ancient tower,
A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall,
An acre of stony ground,
Where the symbolic rose can break in flower,
Old ragged elms, old thorns innumerable,
The sound of the rain or sound
Of every wind that blows;
The stilted water-hen
Crossing Stream again
Scared by the splashing of a dozen cows;258

Langacker refers to such a listing as nominal grounding and the modifiers for each noun as

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grounding quantifiers, which includes articles, demonstratives, and other adjectives. Nominal grounding elements “occupy a peripheral position in the structure of a nominal” moving from most to least extrinsic quality of the nominal. These nominal quantifiers contribute to the specificity of our construal of the linguistic expression as well. For example, “a more ancient tower” appears in line one. The tower is not merely a tower, but one which is ancient, more ancient than the ancient bridge that syntactically proceeds it. We initially conceive of an ancient bridge, perhaps a bit decrepit and crumbling at places, followed by the emphasis on the tower being “more ancient” which pushes our conception of the tower into an even older image than what we had constructed for the bridge. Each noun of this stanza is presented to the reader with nominal modifiers that ground the noun in our cognition through specificity, comparison, and quantification.

Throughout many poems from The Tower (1928) and The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933) Yeats continues developing the complex syntax of his lengthy stanzas, such as in the octaves of “Among School Children,” the decimas of “All Soul’s Night,” and the octaves of “A Dialogue of Self and Soul.” Often these poems display a syntactical complexity which delays the reader’s decoding significantly, imposing a subjective construal which is of course achieved primarily through embodiment. Based on his 1937 “A General Introduction for my Work,” Yeats saw these changes as a move toward “passionate syntax.” And this does make sense when we understand the embodied nature of subjective construal which occurs far more intensely in his


later syntax. For clarification, I do not assert that the conventional subject-verb-object order followed by modifiers and subordinate clauses is inferior to Yeats’s later syntax; for many of his earlier ballads and lyric poems beautifully build scenes that are presented to the reader/viewer for objective construal. One method of construal is not necessarily better than the other or even more aesthetically pleasing; however, the cognitive processes engaged by these differing patterns of syntax certainly reveal a different experience in the reader’s meaning construction. In “An Introduction for my Plays” (1937), Yeats writes, “I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye, and bringing all back to syntax that is for ear alone...As I altered my syntax I altered my intellect...I had begun to get rid of everything that is not...in some sense character in action; a pause in the midst of action perhaps, but action always its end and theme.”261 Altered syntax does indeed alter our intellect in a way, or at least the cognitive processes of meaning construction in our minds.

Grammar that Defies Time

Another aspect of Yeats’s poems which cognitive grammar can lend insight to is his manipulation of time through his syntactical choices. James VanOosting particularly sees the importance of these choices in Yeats’s visionary poetry: “Every English sentence demands a predicate, every predicate needs a verb, and every verb includes a tense—past, present, future, or one of those extra-credit, pluperfect variants. William Butler Yeats discovered this to his chagrin when trying to compose his visionary poems.”262 In Yeats’s visionary works, VanOosting

261 Yeats, “An Introduction for my Plays,” in Essays and Introductions, 530.

explains that Yeats sought “to describe mystical experiences that occurred outside time. But he found the English language hampers communicating such ecstasy because it insists on the use of tense.” In order to address this problem of tense, Yeats “disguise[es] verbs as gerunds, adding -ing, and sneaking his action words into syntactic slots usually reserved for nouns...Yeats's visionary poems represent the best effort by an English-language writer to escape time, but he did it only by eschewing verbs.” Yeats does indeed transcend or suspend time in his poems through the use of gerunds, participles, and other verb forms, but not only in his visionary poems. We can find instances of this technique in the grammar of Yeats’s earlier works as well, even though it is certainly more pronounced in his later works. In his visionary poems we can see the aesthetic use of grammatical structures as “syntactical strategies for dealing with timeless moments” An early example of such strategies appears in “The Hosting of the Sidhe” from *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899):

The host is riding from Knocknarea  
And over the grave of Clooth-na-Bare;  
Caoilte tossing his burning hair,  
And Niamh calling Away, come away:  
Empty your heart of its mortal dream.  
The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,  
Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,  
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are agleam,  
Our arms are waving, our lips are apart;  
And if any gaze on our rushing band,  
We come between him and the deed of his hand,  
We come between him and the hope of his heart.  
The host is rushing ‘twixt night and day,

263 Ibid.  
264 Ibid.  
And where is there hope or deed as fair?
Caoilte tossing his burning hair,
And Niamh calling Away, come away.266

The gerund “hosting” which appears in the title establishes the tense immediately as one which is perpetual and ongoing, one suitable for a supernatural topic. Yeats constructs a scene before us which we apprehend as in process, in the midst of action, when we encounter the present perfect “is riding” early in line one. By the preposition from, we perceive ourselves to be situated in a perspective that views the approach of the host as it comes toward us from the mountain. The next two subject-verb pairs lack complete verbs as Yeats drops the “is” and shifts what seems to be present perfect verb tense into two –ing participles, one describing Caoilte as “tossing his burning hair,” and the other describing Niamh as calling out. By the end of line four we have encountered four –ing verb forms aside from the gerund in the title: (is) riding, tossing, burning, and calling. Three of these are functioning as adjectives, denoting action, but not bound by the temporal constraints of tense. Langacker explains that such participle forms of verbs are “stative-adjectival,” the formation of which “has the effect of atemporalizing the process designated by the verb it derives from.”267 Therefore, by using participle forms Yeats removes the host from time, and we in turn construct the meaning of these words as situating outside of time in an ongoing state of being. The mental image evoked in the mind’s eye is one in the midst of happening. The present tense verbs in the subsequent lines reinforce the ongoing action: awaken, whirl, are, is, are heaving, are waving, and come; Additionally, several of the adjectives imply action as well: unbound, agleam, apart, rushing. In

267 Langacker, Cognitive Grammar, 122.
this poem we can see in application what Yeats wrote of in 1937: that he had begun to work to alter his syntax “to get rid of everything that is not...in some sense character in action; a pause in the midst of action perhaps, but action always its end and theme.”268 A perpetual state of action is achieved throughout “The Hosting of the Sidhe” by his use of present perfect tense, gerunds, participles, and by the rotational structure of the poem itself. Lines three and four are repeated identically in lines fifteen and sixteen, circling the action within the poem back upon itself.

Two additional examples from The Wind Among the Reeds of Yeats’s development of participle forms to escape time are “He bids His Beloved be at Peace” and “The Valley of the Black Pig.” Both of these continue what we saw Yeats experimenting with in “The Hosting of the Sidhe.” In “He bids His Beloved be at Peace” Yeats particularly explores adjective forms of verbs, primarily –ing forms, and placing them immediately before or after the nouns which they modify:

I hear the Shadowy Horses, their long manes a-shake,
Their hoofs heavy with tumult, their eyes glimmering white;
The North unfolds above them clinging, creeping night,
The East her hidden joy before the morning break,
The West weeps in pale dew and sighs passing away,
The South is pouring down roses of crimson fire:
O vanity of Sleep, Hope, Dream, endless Desire,
The Horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy clay:
Beloved, let your eyes half close, and your heart beat
Over my heart, and your hair fall over my breast,
Drowning love's lonely hour in deep twilight of rest,
And hiding their tossing manes and their tumultuous feet.269

268 Yeats, “An Introduction for my Plays,” in Essays and Introductions, 530.

269 W. B. Yeats, “He bids his Beloved be at Peace” in The Collected Works 62.
The bolded adjectives above (emphasis mine) lead the reader to construct the meaning of these nouns as if they are suspended in action. The poem itself is largely about time—“the morning break” and the “lonely hour in deep twilight of rest”—but also achieves a transcending of this time through the enacted nouns as well as our embodied understanding of them. As we subjectively construe their meaning, we are placed in the moment of action. This happens in “The Valley of the Black Pig” as well, but in conjunction with a negation of action:

The dews drop slowly and dreams gather; unknown spears
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.
We who still labour by the cromlech on the shore,
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,
Being weary of the world's empires, bow down to you,
Master of the still stars and of the flaming door. 270

The verb forms which function as adjectives in this poem are a combination of physical and mental action; awakened, fallen, perishing, drowned, and flaming are actions which have occurred or are occurring to the nominal expressions which they modify; however, we also encounter an aspect of this poem which is beyond apprehension, one which is dream-like and parallels the topic of the poem itself. Our cognition is clouded, just as our understanding of a dream might be. Yeats’s use of “unknown” twice in the pome, once to describe the spears and once to describe the armies in the dream, actually hinders our meaning construction. We cannot know what is unknown; as we read these lines, we perceive them as a dream, not fully comprehended and visualised. The lack of specificity and resolution in these descriptions situate the battle scene of the first four lines in the background of our focus, allowing our focus

to foreground the remainder of the poem instead. If we examine this volume closely, we find the extensive use of this syntactical experimentation in many of the poems, one which develops in subsequent volumes as well.

The atemporalization achieved by participles functions in a fascinating manner in our construal of meaning. Langacker explains that the use of perfect, usually ending in –ed, “indicates that the profiled relationship is prior to a time of reference” and “[i]ts apprehension from this posterior vantage point provides a connection to the meanings exhibited by –ed,” for they “all highlight the end of the verbal process, focusing prominence on the final participant or the final state.”271 Therefore, -ed confers a greater emphasis or prominence on the final state of the nominal expression that it modifies, whereas –ing confers prominence on an immediate, ongoing temporal focus.272 For an example of this, let us turn to “The Magi,” from Responsibilities:

Now as at all times I can see in the mind’s eye,  
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones  
Appear and disappear in the blue depths of the sky  
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,  
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,  
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,  
Being by Calvary’s turbulence unsatisfied,  
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.273

By opening with “Now as at all times,” Yeats introduces a complicated temporality. “Now” situates us in the present, while “at all times” encompasses the past and even future. The image evoked before his, and in turn before our, mind’s eye is one that transcends time, one

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271 Langacker, Cognitive Grammar 121.
272 Ibid., 120.
which he describes with both perfect -ed and ongoing –ing participles. The clothes are “painted” which emphasizes a completed state; the modifiers for the ones who “appear and disappear” in the sky are likewise participles of completed action: “unsatisfied ones” with faces that are like “rain-beaten stones.” Following these lines we encounter a shift back to the “now” of the opening line; their helms “hovering” and eyes “hoping” return us to a present moment. However, Yeats conflates the prominence of ended action with ongoing action in specific instances in lines six and seven. He writes of their “eyes still fixed...[b]eing unsatisfied.” In each of these nominal modifiers we first construe the meaning as in the present, “still” and “being,” but then as focused in the past by “fixed” and “unsatisfied.” Langacker claims that these verb forms constrict the nominal expression, in this case the Magi, “to a single state.” However, I contend that Yeats actually accomplishes more by crafting these various verb forms which conflate past and present, thereby characterizing his subject beyond time, much like the nature of memory and thought in the mind’s eye which transcends time.

Another way in which we see Yeats employing syntax that defies temporal constraints is in his descriptions of works of art, works which he believed transcended time. In the second stanza of “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” the Self replies to the Soul with a description of Sato’s sword:

My Self. The consecrated blade upon my knees
Is Sato’s ancient blade, still as it was,
Still razor-keen, still like a looking glass
Unspotted by the centuries;
That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn
From some court-lady’s dress and round

274 Langacker, Cognitive Grammar, 122.
The wooden scabbard bound and would,  
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn.\(^{275}\)

The blade is described by the Self as “consecrated” which directs our focus to the concluded action of consecration as a modifier of the blade. Lines two and three, however, decrease the prominence of the past action and shift us into the present, as we saw accomplished in “The Magi.” In many of these we see Yeats using the adverb *still*, a word which likewise continues an action or existence from the past into the present. Yeats uses it three times in these two lines, “still as it was, / Still razor-keen, still like a looking glass,” to emphasize its unchanged state which has escaped time. The addition of “looking” to describe the simile of the glass contributes further to our construal of the sword in the present. Then, as he did in “The Magi,” Yeats crafts a balancing act between past perfect and present participles that suspends our apprehension of the work of art in an atemporal place, outside of time. He moves us from the present “still” to the concluded modifier “unspotted” and then back to the present “flowering” which describes the piece of a fine dress in which the sword is wrapped. While existing in the present state of “flowering,” the cloth is simultaneously described by a past action: “torn.” Our cognitive processes must move forward and backward again and again between temporally distant mental spaces while constructing this image. The concluding lines demonstrate this once more; the cloth is around the sword’s scabbard “bound and wound” although it is “tattered” and “faded”—all completed participle forms; yet, it “[c]an...still protect...adorn.” The present tense verbs here combined with a final assertion of “still” convey the ongoing state of

the image before us. Art, although its creation is completed in the past, continues into the present and escapes time.

Having developed his use of verb forms to transcend or escape time throughout The Wind Among the Reeds and Responsibilities, we see that Yeats applies these techniques quite regularly in The Tower (1928), The Winding Stair (1929). “Sailing to Byzantium” is rife with them, such as the “dying generations,” “unaging intellect,” “sages standing in God’s holy fire,” a “tattered coat,” and “hammered gold.” Most beautifully, we find all three verb forms in the closing line of the poem when he describes what he would like to sing for all of eternity: “what is past, or passing, or to come.” The participle past is used to denote the past, the present tense participle passing to show the present, and the future infinitive to come to convey the future. The three verb forms themselves are here used to represent the very temporal moment that they cognitively convey. In a poem about the afterlife, Yeats manipulates his syntax to collapse temporal dimensions. We see him use the infinitive in “Among School Children” as well when he writes, “The children learn to cipher and to sing, / To study reading-books and history, / To cut and sew, be neat in everything.” Acutely aware of his sixty years as he stands among the school children, he characterizes what they learn as infinitive phrases. Infinitives would seem to be the least temporal of verb forms; however, Langacker contends that to describe them as “atemporal would be insufficient,” for they “saliently invoke conceived time” without expressing when in time they occur; therefore, according to Langacker, they are “conceived as

277 Ibid l. 32.
extending through time.”279 The students’ learning of these skills is an extended learning through time as well. An additional example of atemporalisation from “Among School Children” can be found in the closing couplet: “O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?”280 The ontological and epistemological questions posed here—how we know the concept of being from the act of being, or how we know the work of art from its production, or how we know language from an embodied experience of language—are all evoked following two participles modifying nominal expressions in a manner that obscures time. The body is described as “swayed” and the glance as “brightening,” which leads the reader to construct an image of a dancer caught between a past movement and present expression. The construal of meaning is blurred and complicated, just as it is in the final question of the stanza.

Aside from gerunds, participles, and infinitives to convey temporality or atemporality, Yeats also explores relative clauses as nominal modifiers to introduce tense shifts within a primary clause, such as in part two of “Blood and the Moon” from The Winding Stair:

Alexandria’s was a beacon tower, and Babylon’s
An image of the moving heavens, a log-book of the sun’s journey and the moon’s;
And Shelley had his towers, thought’s crowned powers he called them once.

I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare
This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my ancestral stair;
That Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have travelled there.

Swift beating on his breast in sibylline frenzy blind
Because the heart in his blood-sodden breast had dragged him down into mankind,
Goldsmith deliberately sipping at the honey-pot of his mind,

279 Langacker, Cognitive Grammar 118.

280 W. B. Yeats, “Among School Children” in The Collected Poems, 217, ll. 63-64. Chapter 5 will examine the symbolism of these lines in greater depth.
And haughtier-headed Burke that proved the State a tree,
That this unconquerable labyrinth of the birds, century after century,
Cast but dead leaves to mathematical equality;

And God-appointed Berkeley that proved all things a dream,
That this pragmatical, preposterous pig of a world, its farrow that so solid seem,
Must vanish on the instant if the mind but change its theme;

Saeva Indignatio and the labourer’s hire,
The strength that gives our blood and state magnanimity of its own desire;
Everything that is not God consumed with intellectual fire.  

The symbol of the winding stair is clearly of great significance in this volume of poetry, entitled
*The Winding Stair and Other Poems*; and the string of –*ing* modifiers used here to describe it
bestows an ongoing and perpetual characteristic to this powerful symbol. The winding stair is
located within the tower at Thoor Ballylee, Yeats’s home and a symbolic source of much of
writing at this time.

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282 Personal photograph taken 26 May 2011 of the winding stair in Thoor Ballylee.
This section of the poem begins with images of towers from the past and then moves into the present of the speaker’s tower and the symbolic stair within it. The “winding, gyring, spiring” stair, which is also of the past since it is ancestral, appears almost in motion in the mind’s eye when we apprehend it. Being blatantly likened to the gyre, we also cannot ignore the implications that comparison conveys; the gyre represents the cycles of humanity which spiral, expanding and contracting through time. No sooner than we have subjectively construed an image of this spiraling symbol of time, Yeats follows with a list of four men from the past, the ancestors who “have travelled there,” who have metaphorically climbed the winding stair before him. Swift is described as “beating on his breast,” a modifier which moves a figure from the past into our present view, followed by Goldsmith “sipping at the honey-pot of his mind,” also rendering the past in the current moment. With these descriptions, we can visualise them in action climbing the stair before us. However, Yeats shifts in his description of Burke and Berkeley, substituting relative clauses which contain past tense verbs instead of continuing with –ing participles as he has with Swift and Goldsmith. Burke is one “that proved the State a tree, / That this unconquerable labyrinth of the birds, century after century, / Cast but dead leaves to mathematical equality”; and Berkeley is described as a man “that proved all things a dream, / That this pragmatical, preposterous pig of a world, its farrow that so solid seem, / Must vanish on the instant if the mind but change its theme.” Both of these relative clauses are grammatically complex and require the reader to pause the construal of the winding stair with ancestors climbing upon it in order to decode the meaning of the clauses presented to modify these two men. Notably, Yeats uses these moments to shift back into past tense for both of them as well. These relative clauses must be “apprehended in a second window of attention,”
in additional mental spaces, and thereby maintain a higher degree of prominence in meaning construction.\(^{283}\) This means we notice the temporal shift more distinctly and our focus is moved from the initial subject of the stair to the new subject-verb constructions of the relative clauses. A relative clause introduces a grammatical structure which Langacker explains necessitates the accessing of a second “window of attention” in order to be apprehended independently, whereas when reading the description of Swift and Goldsmith our focus remains on their act of ascending the winding stair, a very ongoing and present mental space. We may think of these windows of attention or mental spaces as tabs that we open on our computer screen. To access new or additional information or search a new website, we first open a new tab; but the tabs are existing simultaneously, and we may switch back and forth between them as needed. In this poem we do the same; we move between the tab constructing the symbol of the winding stair before our mind’s eye and the tab which depicts past events performed by Burke and Berkeley. Interestingly, Yeats uses the same technique that he employs here of opening relative clauses to create two more in the final stanza that shift us back into the present tense. It would seem that Yeats understood how language and syntax work long before cognitive grammarians and cognitive linguists devised their theories.

As he does with the winding stair and the tower, Yeats manipulates time when he writes of symbols, for philosophically he believed that archetypal symbols from Spiritus Mundi transcend time. One symbol which recurs often in Yeats’s poetry and drama is the symbol of

\(^{283}\) Langacker explains the function of relative clauses further in section 12.2.2 “Relative Clauses” in *Cognitive Grammar* 423-429.
the swan, which extends through many volumes of his work and draws largely on his time at Lady Gregory’s Coole Park, as we saw in “The Wild Swans at Coole” in chapter 2.

In the third portion of “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen” from *The Tower* (1928), Yeats writes again of the swan and expressly examines the metaphor of the soul as a swan, depicting it as two separate images which are shown to itself in a mirror. These two versions of the swan are separated by a grammatical differentiation which situates the first in a moment before ascension and the second image in a moment just after it has risen:

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Some moralist or mythological poet
Compares the solitary soul to a swan;
I am satisfied with that,
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285 Yeats writes that he drew the symbol in part from Thomas Sturge Moore’s poem “Dying Swan” in which the swan represents the soul. See note on page 460 of *Collected Poems*, ed. Finneran.
Satisfied if a troubled mirror show it,
Before that brief gleam of its life be gone,
An image of its state;
The wings half spread for flight,
The breast thrust out in pride
Whether to play, or to ride
Those winds that clamour of approaching night...

The swan has leaped into the desolate heaven:
That image can bring wildness, bring a rage
To end all things, to end
What my laborious life imagined, even
The half-imagined, the half-written page;
O but we dreamed to mend
Whatever mischief seemed
To afflict mankind, but now
That winds of winter blow
Learn that we were crack-pated when we dreamed. 286

The first image of the swan is one frozen as its wings are “half spread for flight,” in the moment before ascension. The next is of the swan likewise frozen in a present perfect form of the verb, “has leaped.” In the metaphor of the swan, lines 61-68 portray the swan, and thereby the soul, as a receiver of the stanza’s action: a poet compares it to a soul, and a mirror shows it an image of its state. The action of the swan/soul is stationary, reflected in an image, not actually occurring in the stanza; its wings are motionless and its breast thrust forward, but in no clause of the stanza does the swan/soul function as the agent. Suspended in time, the mirrored image of the swan transcends the temporal constraints that verb tense would impose by avoiding verbs and moving the action of the swan into an active participle. For instance, the wings do not spread; they exist in a state that is “half spread for flight.” Likewise, the breast does not thrust forward; instead, “thrust” functions as an adjective to describe the posture of the breast.

What is accomplished by these linguistic evasions? Cognitively, our construction of the meaning of these lines is guided by Yeats’s word choice to create an understanding of a moment outside of time. Lines 79-80 depict the swan after action has occurred, but this time the swan is the subject of the clause, even though this is merely an image of the leaping which was already done by it. What meaning can be constructed for it, when the reader is only provided two still shots of images of the swan? Bloom asserts that “the swan is the poem’s image of poetry,” but the poem itself claims the swan is comparison to the soul. What the images do provide the reader is an opportunity for contrast, for seeing difference not only in the content of the words—an image of anticipation, of pride, of play, of desire and then an image of a “desolate heaven” followed by wildness and rage—but also a difference in the grammatical construction. Holdeman sees the poem as an “explanation of how earthly triumph can ‘mar’ the afterlife’s solitude between two slightly different comparisons of the ‘the solitary soul’ to a swan…an image of the living swan in the process of lifting in flight” and the next “after it ‘has leaped into the desolate heaven.’ The poet strains to satisfy himself with the first, associating the second with a rage against mortal existence that implicates him the era’s violence.” To assist in constructing this understanding of the stanzas, we may shift our focus from the swan to the noun image and the role it grammatically has in the two scenes. The first image is a direct object, shown to the swan by an unknown agent. The image contains nouns that have no verbs, but only atemporal verbal modifiers (“wings half spread,” “breast thrust out,” and “approaching

287 Bloom, Yeats, 360.
288 Holdeman, Cambridge, 88-89.
night”) and infinitives (“to play” and “to ride”). The effect of this syntax is certainly a softer image, a texture that contrasts starkly with the declarative that follows:

That image can bring wildness, bring a rage
To end all things, to end
What my laborious life imagined, even
The half-imagined, the half-written page;

The second image is imbued with frightening power, not only because of the horrors that may follow it, but also because of the position of agency it is given in the sentence. Cognitive grammar functions here to explain how our attention is focused on portions of clauses and how the energy of the clause is generated and transmitted, which in turn contributes to our cognition of the poem.289

Grammar, Time, and Manuscript Revisions

Another instance of the swan in a very different context can be found in Yeats’s retelling of the Greek myth of Leda and swan, in which Zeus assumes the form of a swan to rape her. As we have with many other poems in this chapter, we may examine in “Leda and the Swan” the coincidence of sentence and stanza here, the use of participles to escape time, the reversal of subject-object order to delay decoding, and other syntactical acrobatics. However, we may additionally explore how the manuscript revisions and multiple drafts of this poem can offer us insight into Yeats’s construction of meaning. The poem opens with a moment that forces us immediately into a mode of subjective construal:

289 Peter Stockwell provides a much more thorough analysis of cognitive grammar in his chapter “Texture and Meaning” in Texture – a Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading, 168-92, applying it particularly to Wordsworth’s “Daffodils.”
A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.290

We feel the speed and force conveyed in the opening line and are oriented by the

ABOVE/BELOW image schema to a perspective in the poem looking up at the swan above us.

This positioning of our perspective intensifies our construal of the rape scene which follows. As
with other stanzas that we have already examined in this study, the subject-verb is delayed
until the closing line, likewise delaying our construal of the stanza’s full meaning. In early drafts
of this poem, Yeats repeatedly began with a foregrounding of the subject-verb-object, and,
more notably, the verb consisted of a complete verb phrase, one which he eventually revised
into verb forms functioning as adjectives and adverbs. For instance, “Now can the swooping
Godhead have his will” was the first draft of his opening line.291 The verb phrase “can have” is
split by the subject, and the subject is modified by “swooping,” an –ing participle which denotes
a state of ongoing action; but a syntactically complete expression clearly exists here, one which
would be objectively construed had it remained in the poem. The second revision of the line
likewise has a complete subject-verb: “The swooping godhead is half hovering still.”292 His third
revision moves the “swooping” from its modifying position into a fractured noun phrase: “A
swoop upon great wings & hovering still” which transforms into “A rush, a sudden wheel and
hovering still” followed by a move of the subject-verb-object into line two: “The bird sinks down

290 Yeats, “Leda and the Swan” in The Collected Works 214, ll. 1-4
291 Drafts and manuscript materials of this poem may be found in The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials eds. Richard J. Finneran et al (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007), 328-351. For this draft, see pg. 331.
and her frail thighs are pressed.” In one of the last revisions, Yeats converts the opening line into, “A sudden blow; the great wings beating still” which completely displaces the conventional subject-verb pattern and substitutes two nominal expressions in its stead. The first noun is an act, the “blow,” and the second noun is “wings” described as “beating still.” We have already noticed how these –ing participles function, particularly in conjunction with the adverb “still,” to capture action in a moment of time. The doer of the action is absent through the second and third lines as well; meanwhile, the object of the action, the girl, receives prominence and focus in our construal of the scene. Situated below the wings which are “above,” the reader/viewer/construer constructs meaning somewhat from the victim’s perspective. The three nominal expressions which follow all use participles as nominal descriptors: “staggering girl,” “thighs caressed,” and “nape caught.” In all three of these implied actions, the girl is a receiver, not an actor, which syntactically reinforces her victimization. Looking at the manuscripts we see that, despite multiple revisions of these lines, all of Yeats’s drafts maintain her passive position as receiver of action.

The remainder of the poem presents two complete questions in stanza two and a subject-verb-object declarative followed by a question in the third stanza:

   How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

   A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.  
   Being so caught up,

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293 Ibid., 337.
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?\textsuperscript{294}

These grammatically complete syntactical units are for the most part questions, which means that questions are being used to tell the story of the poem instead of declarative statements. Interestingly, only the first of the three questions appears in the early drafts; the remaining questions form through the process of revision throughout the manuscripts.\textsuperscript{295} During this process Yeats removes the questions, changes the first to an exclamation, and then returns finally to three questions. Questions create an epistemic space for a reader/listener who is already in the midst of constructing meaning to further construct an answer to the question posed. In questioning, the speaker/writer is subjecting the hearer/reader to a psychological force, obliging “the hearer to act, specifically by answering the question.”\textsuperscript{296} By choosing the interrogative form repeatedly in these stanzas, and the manuscripts show it was indeed an intention choice, Yeats puts us in a position to do more than construct the meaning of the story. He obligates us to answer a larger question about the role of violence in the development of society. By framing the narrative as questions, we are prompted to construct much more than just the meaning of the poem itself.

Consideration of manuscript revisions and how they might contribute to a cognitive grammar examination is an entirely unexplored field. Cognitive linguists traditionally study the end products or final texts of language output and how meaning is constructed by the

\textsuperscript{294} Yeats, “Leda and the Swan” in \textit{The Collected Works}, ll. 5-12.

\textsuperscript{295} Yeats, \textit{The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials} 333, 343, 347.

\textsuperscript{296} Langacker, \textit{Cognitive Grammar} 475. For additional explanation of how cognitive grammar defines and classifies the varying types of speech acts, see chapter 13 “Discourse,” section 13.2.3 “Speech Acts” 470-473
reader/listener/receiver from those texts. However, I contend here that our understanding of works may be expanded by an examination of the drafts of the manuscripts or the previous versions of the texts’ publications. As John Bryant asserts, authors “revise words to make them more closely approximate [their] thoughts,” and “if we are to understand how writing...operate[s] in the processes of meaning making,” we must recognize the role that revisions have in the meaning of texts.297 Although I acknowledge that the goal of cognitive linguistics is to understand meaning construction by the receiver in the moment of reading or hearing a text, and that this by its very nature precludes prior drafts or versions of the text, cognitive poetics and cognitive grammar have an opportunity for application in fields of literary criticism which may explore beyond the moment of cognition into the author’s construction of that language, the language which in turn creates that cognition.

As Stockwell has argued, cognitive grammar contributes to the field of cognitive poetics particularly because “It offers one way of rooting stylistic exploration in embodied experience; validating some of the readerly intuitions through stylistic analysis in a theory of understanding” and placing “practical analysis of literary texture...at the forefront of study.”298 I agree that an emphasis on systematic studying of grammar can help explain readers’ aesthetic responses to texts and that it certainly can expand the field of cognitive poetics; but it can do far more. Cognitive linguistics, cognitive poetics, and cognitive grammar all view language as an essential part of cognition and in turn view that cognition as “being both physically grounded”


in embodiment and “symbolic in nature.” Langacker urges a study of cognitive grammar as a way to explore how “conceptualization transcends immediate experience,” because the “world we live in and talk about is mentally constructed through” grammatical processes like abstraction and subjectification. Grammar allows us to conceptualize, symbolize, and construct meaning through linguistic representations of the world around us, and a study of cognitive grammar can allow us “the most complete description possible of those aspects of cognitive processing which constitute the mental representation of a linguistic system.”

Studying literature or poetry is studying language, and studying language conceptualization necessarily involves grammar. When we read Yeats’s poetry or other works of literature with an understanding of cognitive grammar, we are better able to comprehend the processes by which our minds construct the meaning of the words that have been crafted by the poet.

299 Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar* 539.
300 Ibid.
CHAPTER 5
ANTINOMIES AND CONCLUSIONS

This project has examined various facets of cognitive poetics and the foundation of embodiment upon which they are built. After exploring conceptual metaphors, image schemas, cognitive mappings, mental spaces, and cognitive grammar, we now will ask what these methods—cognitive poetics as a whole—can offer us in our reading of a particular topic within Yeats’s poems: dualities. Symbols are powerful to Yeats, magically so. Yeats wrote that there exists a “symbolical syntax wherein we may write the History of the World.”302 And in his essay “The Symbolism of Poetry” he asserted, “All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions” and “call down among us certain disembodied powers.”303 Therefore, I ask in this chapter how Yeats uses the symbols of words and grammar to embody meaning, examining specifically how symbols function as the loci for the bridging of antinomies, the merging of seemingly oppositional forces, particularly in relation to classical philosophy. The tensions of dualities—masculine and feminine, sun and moon, objective and subjective, self and soul, and many others—are often embodied by symbols in Yeats’s writing, including the swan, the gyres and winding stair, the tower, the dancer, and others. As a short case study for how cognitive poetics might enhance or supplement our reading of Yeats, this chapter will briefly examine the symbols of the gyre and winding stair, the tower, Attis, the city of Byzantium, and the dancer to explore what cognitive poetics may reveal about Yeats’s symbols.

302 Yeats, “The Holy Mountain” in Essays and Introductions, 471.
Yeats’s tower, the central symbol of the volume *The Tower* and its title poem “The Tower,” was based on the medieval tower Thoor Ballylee which Yeats bought and restored for his wife George in 1917 and where they lived off and on in his later years. As we saw in chapter 4, Yeats “declare[d] this tower is my symbol” and the “winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my ancestral stair”; and by his grammatical choices when describing these symbols, Yeats elevates them beyond the constraints of time to a realm of atemporalised symbols.304 This analysis will treat the symbols of the tower and the winding stair as interrelated, for the winding stair is within the tower itself and is the means by which one ascends or descends the tower; conversely, the tower is structurally necessary for the winding stair to exist. This examination of the gyre and the tower will consider how cognitive poetics contributes to our understanding of how classical philosophy relates to these powerful symbols. As one might suspect from the references to Plato already encountered in our discussion of the mind’s eye in chapter 3, the philosophical influences on Yeats are many and include pre-Socratic philosophers such as Heroclitus and Empedocles; Plato and Plotinus; the Cambridge Platonists; the Theosophists of the Order of the Golden Dawn; the poets Shelley, Wordsworth, and most certainly Blake; as well as various strains of Indian thought. However, as Brian Arkins claims, “One of the central frames of reference in Yeats’s thought is Greek philosophy” and the “Platonic tradition with its stress on the existence of a transcendent reality and the immortality of the soul.”305 After his brief encounters with philosophical schooling earlier in life, in the

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304 Yeats, “Blood and the Moon” ll. 16-17.
305 Arkins, *Builders*, 12.
1920s Yeats for the first time devoted himself to the reading and study of Greek philosophy. In a letter to Thomas Sturge Moore in March of 1926, he admits, “I could not read philosophy till my big book [A Vision] was written...When it was written I started to read. I read for months every day Plato and Plotinus.”306 The first version of A Vision was published in 1925, after which he began more intensely studying Plato as well as his friend Stephen MacKenna’s translations of Plotinus. During the years of 1922-1927, and overlapping somewhat with his study of classical philosophy, Yeats was writing many of the poems which appear in The Tower; therefore, it is not surprising to see Yeats grappling with philosophical issues in this volume and the subsequent The Winding Stair and Other Poems and to see those issues represented in the symbols of these poems.

One way in which we can see a classical influence on Yeats’s poetry is through his choice of the gyre, and its corresponding winding stair in the tower, as one of his primary symbols. Yeats acknowledges in his revised version of A Vision, published in 1937, that Plato’s Timaeus provided him with the symbol of the gyres, and that the gyres are “a symbol and not reality” that have a “symbolic relation to spaceless reality”.”307 Yeats’s use of the gyre, however, was not merely as a Platonic symbol; even more foundational perhaps to Yeats’s development of the symbolic gyres was Heraclitus and his “theory of opposites, in which conflict between the opposites is regarded as essential to the unity of the One,” as well as Empedocles’ “theory of

307 Arkins, Builders, 31, quoting Yeats’s VB 69-70.
life as a cyclic alternation between concord and strife.” Yeats’s gyre, therefore, becomes a symbol of the convergence and conflict of oppositional forces. As we saw in the examination of “The Second Coming” in chapter 3 of this project, Yeats called his gyre a “double cone or vortex” which was comprised of two geometrical elements: the line and the plane. He wrote that the “line is a movement without extension, and so symbolical of time—subjectivity...and a plane cutting it at right angles is symbolical of space or objectivity. Line and plane are combined in a gyre which must expand or contract according to whether mind grows in objectivity or subjectivity.” Therefore, in the symbol of the gyre, the duality of objectivity and subjectivity are represented as one. Furthermore, he denotes one cone of the gyre as “Discord...formed by circles diminishing until they are nothing,” and the inverse cone as “the opposing vortex” of Concord. Without the oppositional forces of the subjective and objective or Discord/Concord, Unity of Being cannot be found; the shifts between poles of the gyres are necessary for unity to exist. Likewise, embodiment contends that the meaning of language does not exist separate from the location of meaning construal, the body. The abstract ideas or forms which are represented by the symbols of words and grammar require grounding in the corporeal body for their meaning. The fluctuating nature of our existence and how we may know this existence is commented upon further by Heraclitus when he states: “Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing stays fixed. You cannot step twice into

308 Ibid, 16. Arkins expands on Yeats’s relationship with the Classics and the extent of their influence upon him in chapters I (“Yeats’s Knowledge of Classics”) and II (“Philosophy”). The section “Complications and ‘The Second Coming’” in chapter 2 of this study also summarizes the gyre in more detail.

309 Yeats, VB, 70.

310 Ibid., 68.
the same river, for other waters and yet others go ever flowing on.”\textsuperscript{311} Here Heraclitus raises a philosophical problem which the cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson point out: In Plato, “Being is assumed to be unchangeable, and knowledge of Being, like any general knowledge, was assumed to be stable. How can Being, which is unchanging, reveal itself through perceptions and experiences that are always in flux?”\textsuperscript{312} Does the changing nature of our bodily existence which perceives and reveals a supposedly changeless Being undermine the notion that Being is constant? Or perhaps Being is not discrete from the body with its perceptions and experiences, as embodiment would contend. These are questions which are have been tackled by cognitive linguistics, particularly by the \textit{embodiment simulation hypothesis}, the implications of which have, in turn, impacted cognitive poetics and which can inform our reading of Yeats and what his poems reflect about classical philosophy.

Nothing was very tidy about Yeats’s adaptations of the aforementioned philosophers, and he arguably misunderstood or misinterpreted them at times, as pointed out by Thomas Sturge Moore in their correspondence. Part of the vacillation that we see in Yeats results from his belief in an immortal soul as well as a transcendent reality but a belief “that strongly endorses created matter, the ordinary world of sense perception, since this creation participates in the transcendent world.”\textsuperscript{313} His view of Platonic dualism demonstrates a “tension between the transcendent and the immanent, between spirit and body...soul and self; a tension that may, at any one moment, be resolved in favour of either component, or not be

\textsuperscript{311} Qtd. in Lakoff and Johnson, \textit{Philosophy}, 356.

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{313} Arkins, \textit{Builders}, 24.
This tension often is revealed in the symbols he uses to negotiate dualities or oppositions. Indeed, oftentimes the tension may seem resolved for Yeats in a poem, only to be swiftly followed by a rejection of one component for the other. Arkins does not flatly assert that Yeats is a Platonist but that “the philosophical system with which Yeats is most closely aligned is Platonism” and that he could not completely accept any system. However, throughout his poetry, and perhaps most notably in the volumes *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair*, we can see Yeats reject Platonism but then seemingly return to the three key doctrines of it: “transcendent reality, the immortality of the soul, and reincarnation.” This ambivalence can be somewhat understood through an examination of the symbols he uses to embody the oppositional forces in his poems.

For cognitive poetics, one of the greatest concerns about classical philosophy is the dualism of mind and body, a concern Yeats appears to have had as well. Plato claims that ideas that are present in one’s mind “have more reality than the objects themselves” which do not exist in the mind, creating a hierarchy of reality from the most real, which are ideas, to physical objects next, and to images of objects last. Metaphors are among those images or representations of objects which he deemed least real. Plato believed “that the world of sense-perception, of Becoming, is real only in so far as it participates in the transcendent world of the Forms, of Being,” and Yeats did reflect this Platonic dualism in some of his early work and even

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314 Ibid.
315 Ibid.
316 Arkins, *Builders*, 24. The first two doctrines appear more clearly in *The Tower*; however, we will see the doctrine of reincarnation in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” and “Byzantium” from *The Winding Stair*.
wrote to Moore an admission of “Platonic ideas, and so a pre-natal division of the ‘unconscious’ into two forms of mind”; however, we can also see that Yeats frequently rejects this Platonic hierarchy of reality. In the Platonic view, ideas exist in the world of forms, but what has cognitive science said about such dualism? Cognitive scientists and linguists have scientifically demonstrated that thought occurs in the body and through the body; meaning construction is based on bodily structures of cognition. Lakoff and Johnson argue that “everyday human reasoning does not fit [the] classical view of rationality at all,” because most of our everyday thought is “metaphoric, and hence not literal...It is not transcendent, but fundamentally embodied,” and our basic cognition comes “partly from the spatial logic characterized by image schemas which in turn are characterized in terms of the...structures of human brains and bodies.”

Cognitive poetics has been built upon (IDEAS ARE BUILDINGS—conceptual metaphor there) the foundation that human cognition is embodied. This runs against the grain of classical philosophy and even structuralist linguistics. Ever since the Greeks, a tension has existed in “Western culture...between truth, on the one hand, and art, on the other.” Cognitive poetics can be a way by which that tension is resolved. Yeats too wrote, “My special experience has shown me that the barrier...between images of sense and of the mind does not exist.” To the mind/body dichotomy, cognitive science, and as an extension cognitive linguistics and poetics, offers a third choice to objectivism and subjectivism which Lakoff and

318 From a letter to TSM dated 05 February 1926, # 61, pg 69 in W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence 1901-1937, Ed. Bridge; Arkins, Builders of My Soul, 30.

319 Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh, 514.

320 Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By, 189.

Johnson term “an experientialist synthesis” with a focus on metaphor or symbol because “it unites reason and imagination” and is thus “imaginative rationality.” In *Texture – A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading*, Stockwell concludes:

> [T]he physical material and sensible world and the abstract idealized and conceptual world are intimately bound together: mind/body dualism is rejected, other false discontinuities such as rationalism and emotion, form and function, literal and metaphorical, real and fictional, and so on...[T]he connection between the physical and the conceptual does not reduce intellect to a simply material correlate...

For Yeats, the tension of these dualities—the mind and the body—meet in the symbol of the tower where he “has surrounded himself with actual embodiments of his favorite symbols,” the rose, Sato’s sword, the tower itself, and the winding stair. In a 1930 review of *The Winding Stair*, the *Times Literary Supplement* quoted Yeats saying that the winding stair is “where I have written most of my poems of recent years. My poems attribute to it most of the meanings attributed in the past to the tower—whether watch tower or pharos, and to its winding stair those attributed to gyre or whorl”...but “what those meanings are...let the poems say.” Yeats instructs us to turn to the poems themselves for the meaning of the tower and stair, so let us do just that.

In “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” Yeats sets up the duality of Self and Soul in a conversation, and the Soul commences the poem with the symbol of the stair, the spiraling ascent to the Platonic:

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322 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 192-93.
My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done:
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul? 326

We construct the meaning of the first stanza through the series of locative prepositions which evoke the TO/FROM and UPON/UNDER image schemas. First we are called to the stair where our minds are then set first upon the ascent, then higher upon the battlements atop the tower, then upon the air above, then upon the stars, and finally upon the place “where all thought is done.”327 The progression of elevating targets upon which the trajector, the mind, is set rises higher and higher into the abstract and constructs a mental space that simulates physical elevation as well. Through this ascent, the Soul is asserting the UP IS GOOD conceptual metaphor; however, the Self counters with a return to the physical by focusing repeatedly on Sato’s sword, a concrete object which symbolizes the union of physical violence and art. The Self argues the need for the physical realm and the body and sets the blade and the cloth wherein it is wound as “emblems of the day against the tower / Emblematical of the night.”328 Wound in the symbols of the stair and sword, we find the dualities of Self and Soul, mind and body, and day and night. “Transcendent reality” and “the immortality of the soul,” two key doctrines of Platonism, are met here by the third: reincarnation.329 In part two of the poem, the

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327 Ibid. ll. 1-8.
328 Ibid. ll. 9-16, 25-32.
329 Arkins, Builders, 24.
Self alone speaks and is “content to live it all again,” to continue the cycles of reincarnation into “[t]hat defiling and disfigured shape” of the body. For it is in the completion of this cycle that “sweetness” and blessing are finally found and the oppositional tensions balanced. Here at the winding stair, “Yeats explicitly chooses for his soul reincarnation rather than a resting place in the artifice of eternity” which he desires in “Sailing to Byzantium.” The ascension of the symbolic winding stair is a spiraling out of the subjective gyre which is a tension that must be balanced by a descent of the tower back to the earth below, which leads us to our next symbol for examination, the tower itself.

Figure 5.1: The Tower

330 Yeats, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” ll. 57, 51.
331 Ibid., ll. 69-72.
333 Personal photograph taken 26 May 2011 of Thoor Ballylee.
In the second portion of “Meditations in Time of Civil War,” entitled “My House,” Yeats focuses on the controlling metaphor of the tower. We have already seen in our examination of the mind’s eye in chapter 2 how powerful of a symbol this is, as it represents the juncture of so many oppositional forces within Yeats’s poetry. In contrast to the ancestral houses in section one of “Meditations in Time of Civil War,” “My House” turns to a place of solitude where he may gather his symbols about him and cultivate the rose of poetry:

II. My House

An ancient bridge, and a more ancient tower,
A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall,
An acre of stony ground,
Where the symbolic rose can break in flower,
Old ragged elms, old thorns innumerable,
The sound of the rain or sound
Of every wind that blows;
The stilted water-hen
Crossing Stream again
Scared by the splashing of a dozen cows;

A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,
A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,
A candle and written page.
Il Penseroso's Platonist toiled on
In some like chamber, shadowing forth
How the daemonic rage
Imagined everything.
Benighted travellers
From markets and from fairs
Have seen his midnight candle glimmering.

Two men have founded here. A man-at-arms
Gathered a score of horse and spent his days
In this tumultuous spot,
Where through long wars and sudden night alarms
His dwindling score and he seemed castaways
Forgetting and forgot;
And I, that after me
My bodily heirs may find,
To exalt a lonely mind,  
Befitting emblems of adversity.\textsuperscript{334}

After the nominal grounding accomplished in stanza one by the stacking of nouns, an aspect of cognitive grammar which we explored in chapter 4, we can clearly see that the tower is the dominant symbol of the poem, a place at which two men metaphorical converge across the boundaries of time: a man of arms and a man of poetry. These two men, the first owner of the tower and the poet himself, represent the duality of the body and the mind. The “man-at-arms” was a man of action, of the body, who gathered horses, suffered tumult, and fought wars. As we read of the man-at-arms, we construct a mental space that is first introduced with the word “here” in line 21. The prominence of the location, the tower with its winding stair, is maintained in this mental space throughout the final stanza by the CONTAINER image schema. The spot, the location of the tower, is understood as a container into which the man-at-arms gathered his horses and where he spent his days at war. The tower was of course literally a container, a house in which he lived, but it also serves here as a metaphorical location in which the body and mind may unite. To transition from the man-at-arms to himself, Yeats writes that the man and his force “seemed castaways / Forgetting and forgot.” Careful attention should be given to the verb \textit{seemed}, for this is a mental action, as are \textit{forgetting} and \textit{forgot}; and this action implies that the man-at-arms is actually not forgotten, but only seemed forgotten; he still exists in the mind in this mental space of a symbolic tower which we have constructed when reading the poem. The first occupant of the tower is physically gone, but still exists in the poet’s mind and poetry; and by extension he still exists in our embodied cognition of poem. Further reinforcing

\textsuperscript{334} Yeats, \textit{Collected,} 201-202.
the poet as symbolic of the mind, Yeats likens himself to Milton’s Platonist, a poet in “Il Penseroso” who from his own tower states:

Or let my Lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in som high lonely Towr,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unspear
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.335

Yeats’s allusion to Milton contains another allusion buried within it: Plato’s idea from the Phaedo that the mind or soul is trapped in our bodies, the “fleshly nook.”336 In the tower of solitary meditation, “the strength of artistic sweetness must come,” as Bloom contends, out of a merging with “bitterness and violence.”337 Yeats, a man of the mind, is metaphorically joined with the man of war in the symbol of the tower from the Great Memory; and this merging produces the “artistic sweetness” of the poem itself; the duality of mind and body is resolved in the poem by our reading of the poem. By that I mean that the body and mind represented by the two owners of the tower merge in this mental space that we create of the tower as we read the poem. Our cognition of the symbol is an embodied experience, one which requires us to construct meaning for symbols of language through embodied simulation. The manuscripts of this poem reveal an additional stanza which further establishes the tower as a symbol drawn from the Great Memory:

What Median, Persian, Babylonian
In revery or in symbol saw vision

336 See note 41 in The Riverside Milton, 75.
337 Bloom, Yeats, 353.
Symbols of the soul
Mind from mind caught:
The subterranean streams,
Tower where a candle gleams,
A suffering passion and a laboring thought.338

Yeats believed that symbols were powerful, even more powerful than metaphors, and wrote, “We may call this metaphorical writing, but it is better to call it symbolical writing, because metaphors are not profound enough to be moving, when they are not symbols, and when they are symbols they are the most perfect, because the most subtle, outside of pure sound, and through them one can the best find out what symbols are.”339 He asserts here in the manuscript that this tower has been a “symbol of the soul” throughout the ages that transfers from mind to mind in the Great Memory. The oppositional forces of body and mind meet here in this symbol, and he closes the poem with a return to the body, a recognition of his mortality, and a desire that his “bodily heirs” may be exalted by the “emblems of adversity” left to them at the tower.

The oscillation between body and mind continues in the symbol of the tower throughout—not surprisingly—the poem “The Tower.” As we have already seen in chapter 2, the poet climbs to the top to ponder the abstract and argument, but then summons to his mind’s eye images and memories of the body, of people who once lived below on the ground. In many of his later works, Yeats seems quite ambivalent about this dualism, oscillating between an emphasis on the importance of the body and then of the soul, upon occasion even


explicitly rejecting Plato. His struggle with Platonic dualism can be seen further in his contrasting attitudes toward Plato in sections one and three of “The Tower.” To open the poem, he writes:

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
Until imagination, ear and eye,
Can be content with argument and deal
In abstract things; or be derided by
A sort of battered kettle at the heel.340

We should note that he does not actually “bid the Muse go pack” and “choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend”; he inserts two qualifiers: “It seems that I must bid…” As he is aging, a choice is before him, one which he faces after seeing much violence in Ireland and after he has “reflected further on George’s harshly fatalistic prophecies” which contributed to A Vision.341

The poet here appears to choose Plato and Plotinus, opting for the subjective and antithetical, a solitary existence of meditation and “abstract things.” However, after the embodied conjuring of visions before his mind’s eye in section two of the poem, his tone shifts substantially in part three when he returns to the body and writes his will. In the midst of it, he declares:

I mock Plotinus’ thought
And cry in Plato’s teeth,
Death and life were not
Till man made up the whole,
Made lock, stock and barrel
Out of his bitter soul,
Aye, sun and moon and star, all,
And further add to that
That, being dead, we rise,

340 Yeats, Collected, 194, ll. 11-16.
341 Holdeman, Cambridge, 82
Dream and so create
Translunar Paradise. 342

This turnabout might seem startling when contrasted with the opening lines of the poem, but it reveals his internal struggle with this duality. When thinking of his death, he rejects the “Platonic notion of the reality of the pure idea, and for good measure he rejects Plotinus, insisting that both life and death are human creations and declaring that the primary realms of external force are themselves projections of human thought” that we create. 343 Cognitive scientist Dr. Bergen, as we have already seen, certainly agrees that we create meaning through the process of cognition. In our embodied cognition we construct meaning for the abstract; therefore, man does make up the whole as Yeats claims here. Meaning cannot exist without the body to construct that meaning and the embodied experiences through which it is understood. Yeats shows a bitter gesture of defiance in his mockery of Plato and his “assertions about radical creativity” which are “insistent and exaggerated, as befits deliberate resistance to growing primary power.” 344 As the aging poet wrestles with the tensions of youth and age, of body and mind, of objective and subjective in the winding gyre of existence, he comes to a conclusion in his symbolic tower in his final stanza:

Now shall I make my soul,
Compelling it to study
In a learned school
Till the wreck of body,
Slow decay of blood,
Testy delirium
Or dull decrepitude,
Or what worse evil come—

342 Yeats, Collected, 198, ll. 144-56.
344 Adams, The Book of Yeats’s Poems, 158.
The death of friends, or death
Of every brilliant eye
That made a catch in the breath—
Seem but the clouds of the sky
When the horizon fades,
Or a bird’s sleepy cry
Among the deepening shades.345

Cognitive poetics leads us to take notice of how we construct the meaning of these lines.

Opening with the temporal deictic now foregrounds this moment in the poem as a conclusion of that which precedes it. Oddly, however, what the poet is now doing is making his soul, as if it did not exist prior to this moment. The soul which he makes, and by extension which we construe at this moment, is a soul that is contrasted with the decaying body and approaching death of the physical world. However, the two—soul and body—exist in the mental space of his mind, and in turn in our minds as we recreate the meaning of these lines. The “wreck of body” which we assume will pass away with death continues its existence with the word seem; the body continues its being in the mind. This interweaving of where and how the soul and body are existing can be understood through embodiment theory. Written in 1926, “The Tower” reflects Yeats’s simultaneous readings of Plato and Plotinus who were clearly in the foreground of his thoughts when he penned this poem. The pattern of the poem follows the Yeatsian gyre, a without-within-without cycle, just as his Greater Romantic lyrics, according to Bornstein, flow from description to vision to evaluation; we may read this section of the poem, therefore, as his final evaluation of the visions and ponderings which have proceeded it. He has rejected “what he takes to be Plato’s and Plotinus’ belief in a reality transcending human subjectivity,” for to

345 Yeats, Collected, 199-200, ll.181-195.
him “all spiritual and material realities proceed out of...Spiritus Mundi.” In the tower and its winding stair, he has wrestled with his age and with the transcendence of mind over body and has found a symbol to embody the merging of those tensions. As we construct the meaning of this symbol in our minds, we too are metaphorically ascending and descending the symbolic stair, climbing to the top of the tower to access the abstract and descending to the bottom to form meaning for the abstract. Without that which is below, the body, we cannot comprehend that which is above. The symbol of the tower functions in some ways like the mechanisms in our brain which process linguistic expressions, uniting the subjective and objective spheres into meaning.

The Sacrifice of Attis

In his aptly titled poem “Vacillation” Yeats writes of the same vacillation between the tensions of physicality and spirituality which he demonstrates in the gyre and the tower; however, his junction of these tensions in this poem occurs in a symbolic body, in the same manner that our understanding of the abstract and concrete occurs in the location of the brain. These dualities cannot exist discretely, for our comprehension of the abstract is accomplished through embodied simulation, causing meaning to be an embodied phenomenon. Yeats’s direct treatment of the antinomies of the physical and spiritual find their symbolic unity in the image of Attis; but before we reach this resolution, we are presented with other oppositional forces in part one:

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346 Holdeman, Cambridge, 84-85.
Between extremities
Man runs his course;
A brand, or flaming breath,
Comes to destroy
All those antinomies
Of day and night;
The body calls it death,
The heart remorse.
But if these be right
What is joy?\textsuperscript{347}

The extremities of life and death, day and night, remorse and joy, and “[a]ll those antinomies” are introduced in this stanza; and, as we might expect, the grammatical structure of these opening clauses contributes to their meaning construction. Beginning with a locative preposition guides the reader’s focus to the location first and foremost and then situates the subject and verb of the first clause in \textit{between} the extremities and oppositional forces; our existence is between these extremities, as in Heraclitus’ theory of opposites and Empedocles’ belief in life as a cycle of “concord and strife.”\textsuperscript{348} What we understand as death seems to destroy this existence and end these antimonies; but Yeats asserts this “death” is perceived by the heart as remorse, which leads to the question, “What is joy?” Perhaps we should remember at this point that the poet believes in reincarnation and a continuing of the cyclical alternation of concord and strife. Death does not end existence to him; therefore, what the body knows as life and death, the heart or spirit knows as joy and remorse. How do these contraries find resolution? In the body of Attis hanging between the two halves of a tree:

\begin{quote}
A tree there is that from its topmost bough
Is half all glittering flame and half all green
Abounding foliage moistened with the dew;
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{348} Qtd in Yeats, \textit{VB}, 68-69.
And half is half and yet is all the scene;
And half and half consume what they renew,
And he that Attis' image hangs between
That staring fury and the blind lush leaf
May know not what he knows, but knows not grief.349

Drawn from Greek mythology, Attis symbolizes the cycles of nature as well as the duality of masculinity and femininity. In answer to the question “What is joy?” the poet describes an image of a tree that is aflame with spiritual fire on one side and lush with green foliage on the other. The word “half” is repeated six times in this stanza, very strongly reiterating the oppositional forces of body and spirit which make up the whole. As we picture this tree, we construct an image of it before us, the word “topmost” giving it height in our mind’s eye. The use of present tense verbs (is, consume, renew, hangs) and of participles (glittering, abounding, moistened, staring) suspends the image we have in our minds of the tree in an ongoing state of existence. The flame and the green both consume and renew simultaneously, and the body of Attis hangs in the meeting place of the two halves, uniting the spiritual and physical in his sacrifice. Like in the symbol of the tower, we find the joining of dualities in the symbol of Attis, but most significantly in the location of his body. The body is the apparatus by which the physical and spiritual worlds are united.

Byzantium

A consideration of Yeats’s symbols and their relation to classical philosophy would be quite incomplete without the consideration of Byzantium. Byzantium recurs throughout Yeats’s

writing to represent his ideal place where the objective and subjective are in proper balance. In
the 1937 revision of *A Vision*, Yeats writes about Byzantium:

> I think that in early Byzantium...religious aesthetic and practical life were one, that
architect and artificers...spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the
mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books,
were...absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people. They
could...weave all into a vast design, the work of many that seemed the work of one, that
made building, picture, pattern, metal-work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image.350

This city appears most notably in the poem “Sailing to Byzantium” from *The Tower* and
“Byzantium” from *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*. When we consider “Sailing to
Byzantium,” we should note that the cyclical pattern of the winding stair and rotating gyre also
reveals itself in the cyclical organization of poems within *The Tower*. Although placed first in the
1928 version of this volume, the poem was actually written the latest, in 1927. If we were to
read “Sailing to Byzantium” after “The Tower” instead of the order in which we now find them,
we would see the cycling of soul-body-soul even more prominently. 351 Hazard Adams contends
that the poems in *The Tower* are mostly arranged in reverse chronological order, just as a gyre
spiraling inward, and that the first reverse movement is from “Sailing to Byzantium,” to “The
Tower,” to “Meditations in Time of Civil War,” to “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,” which “is a
willful ‘dreaming back’ and ‘returning’ through events.”352 The “dreaming back” of “Sailing to
Byzantium” transports us into a metaphysical world modeled after sixth century Byzantium, a
highly symbolic place for Yeats. James Notopoulos contends that this era of Yeats’s poetry
“shows how sick he was of the flesh, an impotent old man, too sensual to find any escape but

350 Yeats, *VB*, 279.
351 The order referred to here is from Finneran’s *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*.
into the sensuous; ...he yearned to escape from that sensual music so vividly described in the first stanza” into a world of the spirit.\(^{353}\) In “Sailing to Byzantium” the poet sets up a protagonist who is an old man who rejects the world of youth because he feels he does not belong to it anymore and is frustrated that “Monuments of unageing intellect” are neglected in this world.\(^{354}\) Instead he yearns for Byzantium, the city of great art. Yeats had come to see the Byzantium of the sixth century “as a city in which the waxing subjective gyre had fostered ‘Unity of Culture’,” and that this subjective world had “been forged into unity by spiritually inspired artists.”\(^{355}\) This was a unity which Yeats had also wished to accomplish with his art and even through his work with the Abbey Theatre. Yeats’s struggle with Platonic dualism is seldom as clear as in this poem. Stanza one begins:

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\begin{align*}
\text{That is no country for old men. The young} \\
\text{In one another’s arms, birds in the trees,} \\
\text{—Those dying generations—at their song,} \\
\text{The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,} \\
\text{Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long} \\
\text{Whatever is begotten, born, and dies,} \\
\text{Caught in that sensual music all neglect} \\
\text{Monuments of unageing intellect.}\(^{356}\)
\end{align*}
\]

Written in ottava rima, the poem employs one of the longer stanzaic forms which we see Yeats develop through his later years, which prompts us to examine the stanza’s grammar. Beginning


\(^{355}\) Holdeman, *Cambridge*, 82.

\(^{356}\) Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” ll. 1-8.
the poem we encounter the demonstrative pronoun *that*, a distal deictic, which functions as the first space builder of the text world or mental space which we are entering in the poem. *That* situates the speaker, as well as the reader, at a distance from the world he is actually in, demonstrating a desire to distance himself from it. By asserting that is not a place for old men, he creates a space for the young and places the aged body, including himself, outside of that place. This distancing of self from *that* realm necessitates the creation of a second mental space in which his aged self can exist. The use of negation to create the mental space of Byzantium throughout this poem affects meaning construal because, as explained by Gavins and Stockwell, negation works by requiring the reader to “conceptualise the content of negated text-worlds before being able to understand their negative ontological status,” which in turn causes these negated worlds to “become highly prominent and conceptually resonant,” leaving us not only with what *is* but also the sense of loss of what is *not*.  

The second stanza continues our construction of this negated and therefore highly resonant mental space:

An aged man is **but** a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, **unless**
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
**Nor** is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.  

The negated world continues to be constructed in our mind’s eye with the adverbs and conjunctions *but, unless, and nor*, until that world is identified as Byzantium in the final line of

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358 Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” ll. 2-16, emphasis mine.
the stanza. The material world of the tattered body is meaningless and paltry without the soul that sings, and the soul’s attention to “studying [m]onuments” contrasts with the neglect of “[m]onuments of unageing intellect” in the previous stanza. By contrast and negation we build a mental space which the poet declares is the “holy city of Byzantium.” As a result of the negation used to construct it, we understand Byzantium to be a representation of what does not exist in the physical realm; therefore, it is the abstract, the realm of the spirit to which he wishes to sail. The JOURNEY conceptual metaphor and LANDMARK/TRAJECTOR/TARGET image schema are both utilized in our cognition of this space, and consequently in the cognition of the poem’s meaning. The speaker or trajector desires to depart from the physical world, the landmark, and sail to an afterlife in the spiritual realm of Byzantium, the target. By framing physical life and spiritual afterlife as a journey, the poem reinforces the cycle referred to in line six of “[w]hatever is begotten, born, and dies” as simply a part of the journey of existence. The speaker expresses his desire to “perne” in the gyre, be released from his body, and be taken to an afterlife in Byzantium:

O sages standing in God’s holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.359

He believes his soul is bound to the dying animal of his temporal body, a body that does not know what it really is. He desires to be transformed into a part of eternity by being made into a

work of art, an artifice, a truly Platonic immortal soul; but the body cannot be denied:

    Once out of nature I shall never take
    My bodily form from any natural thing,
    But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
    Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
    To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
    Or set upon a golden bough to sing
    To lords and ladies of Byzantium
    Of what is past, or passing, or to come.360

Here Yeats continues the creation of mental spaces through negation; he will never take a bodily form but or except that of a work of art. In this line he reveals that when this body is gone, he will still long for another body. He wishes his immortal soul to exist in Plato’s transcendent reality as the golden body of a bird, a work of art, but freed from the restraints of our human bodies. Arkins claims the works of art in Byzantium are “conceived of as Platonic essences, constituting the intellectual achievements of man, and in their exquisite quality reflecting the grandeur of the soul.”361 This desire of the aged man to be free of the body and become fully soul is met in the final stanza with his contrary desire to still have a bodily form. This desire to escape the body and yet paradoxically retain the body which “lets him sing of flesh yet be freed from its limitations” reintroduces the physical realm from stanza one.362 The physical birds in the first stanza sing their songs through the cycle of life and death, just as his soul in the form of a golden bird wishes to sing throughout eternity “of what is past, or passing, or to come.” The mental space we construct of bodily existence in the place of the young and the negated mental space of spiritual existence in Byzantium are complements one of the

360 Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” ll. 25-32.
361 Arkins, Builders, 184.
other. The atemporalisation “[o]f what is past, or passing, or to come,” already examined in chapter 4, echoes the cyclical rotation of the gyres and embeds the negated text world inside of another text world; one does not exist without the other. Although the poem initially seems heavily Platonic, by the end, the poet is “taking a position that seems opposite that of the early quasi-Platonic searches of his youth” and “the ‘dreaming back’ and ‘return’ chart a dismissal of the Platonic.”

We do not actually reach a full dismissal of the Platonic and a complete return to the body within the poem, but the cycle toward that return has begun in the closing stanza. In this poem, three states exist: the world where the young live but he no longer belongs; death; and existence as an artifice, “which the poet attempts to imagine as a contrary to the negating opposition of the first two.”

Even though we may be initially tempted to read “Sailing to Byzantium” as a triumphant, Platonic conclusion, “It is instead an antithetical conclusion, which means that it is also a going-on, a process...which is always a primary condition gained by negation.” The cycle of reincarnation must continue and indeed does when the poet chooses “to live it all again” in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul.”

The symbol of Byzantium as merging place of the dualities of body and soul, however, is not fully demonstrated in “Sailing to Byzantium.” From our reading of “Sailing,” we are only able to construct a partial understanding of the symbol, one which is accomplished primarily through negation. If we wish to understand this symbolic city, however, “Sailing to Byzantium”

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363 Adams, Book, 148.
364 Ibid., 151.
365 Adams, Book, 151.
ought not be inspected without its parallel “Byzantium” which reflects the inverse of the first poem:

The unpurged images of day recede;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
After great cathedral gong;
A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
May unwind the winding path;
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
Breathless mouths may summon;
I hail the superhuman;

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the starlit golden bough,
Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.366

Whereas “Sailing” depicts the journey of a soul out of the physical realm and into the immortal realm of the afterlife, “Byzantium” takes the perspective from within the city, observing the process of reincarnation.367 As we saw in chapter 4, the perspective from which the poem is written greatly impacts the way in which the reader construes meaning. “Sailing,” written from the view of one who is outside of Byzantium and desiring to journey there, offers us a limited perspective of the symbol. The narrator of “Byzantium,” however, speaks from within the immaterial world about his first-hand observations of the soul’s journey through reincarnation. The order of narration is even reversed from within the Emperor’s chamber where the golden bird and other artifices exist, to the purgatorial flames, to the dancing place where the complexities of life must be stripped away, and finally out to the sea that the incoming souls are crossing. The souls which have been carried across the sea by dolphins must dance away “all complexities of mire or blood” in order to be unwound and wound again in Plato’s Spindle of Necessity or Yeats’s mummy-cloth in the cycle of reincarnation.368 Arkins argues that the “essential point about ‘Byzantium’” which “sets it in opposition to ‘Sailing to Byzantium’” is the “elaborate tension” between the transcendent soul and “passionate, tortured life of the body.”369 Where we saw the narrator of “Sailing” travelling the JOURNEY conceptual metaphor

367 See Unterecker pp. 217-220 for additional analysis of this inverted pattern.
368 Arkins, Builders, 188.
369 Ibid..
toward the immaterial world, we see now a “dreaming back” in “Byzantium” toward the material body. The balance of these tensions is not resolved in “Sailing”; however, “Byzantium” does provide us with the way in which the body and soul converge: during the dance.

The soul reaches its reincarnation in Byzantium, but only after the purging fire and dance which strip away the residual mire of the soul’s material incarnation. In this dance, mortal existence is reversed and the soul is purified of it until “all complexities of fury leave, / Dying into a dance.” The objective gyre dwindles as the subjective gyre expands; the cycle starts anew, and the Heraclitean flux continues in Yeats’s vacillation between antinomies. The perpetual nature of this cycle is demonstrated by the present tense verbs and participles throughout the poem; the actions are ongoing: recede, disdains, floats, scorn, flit, disturbs, come, dying, and other present tense verb forms. Likewise, when we create the meaning of this poem, we picture the actions in progress before our mind’s eye. The dance continues; the flames burn; the mummy-cloth unwinds continuously; and the images we see beget new images, not just in the cycle of reincarnation but also in the mental space we have constructed. Just like the glittering flame and flourishing green of Attis’ tree that consume and renew perpetually in our minds when we read “Vacillation,” the cycle of the arriving souls and their purging of complexities in the dance and fire is suspended in time by the tense Yeats uses. The souls neither fully live nor fully die in the poem, but instead retain elements of both body and

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370 Adams, Book, 146.
371 Adams, Readers, 219; Yeats, “Byzantium” ll. 29-30.
372 Arkins, Builders, 191.
soul. There in the city of Byzantium during the purging dance, Yeats portrays a mingling of material and immaterial worlds. If we consider our cognition of this symbolic city and how we make its meaning, we realize that Yeats has constructed in his imagination his own mental space or text world, one where he has imagined these images and embodied them with the metaphors of language and the symbols of *The Vision*. After mentally constructing them, he has given them form on the page, the form of a work of art, one which then conveys through symbolic language and grammar the images he pictured when creating Byzantium in his imagination. The meaning we create is a recreation of the mental space of his imagination. The text world is the poem, the artifice of eternity imagined by Yeats, which we then create in our minds’ eyes by our cognition of the poem.

The Dancer

Many more of Yeats’s symbols undoubtedly merit closer examination by cognitive poetics than can be accomplished here, but our discussion of “Byzantium” leads us to the final symbol of this chapter’s exploration into cognitive poetics: Yeats’s dancer, a symbol which recurs often in his poems as well as plays. When he experimented with Noh Drama, the role of the dancer was a prominent feature within his plays, such as in the ones in his collection *Four Plays for Dancers: At the Hawks’ Well, The Only Jealousy of Emer, The Dreaming of the Bones*, and *Calvary*. In the plays, actors would wear masks, the chorus would announce “that all is set within the mind’s eye,” and the climax would be “a symbolic dance.”373 Dance as an artistic

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medium is not confined, however, to his plays; it is a powerful symbol in his poetry as well, such as the dancer in “The Double Vision Michael Robartes” who “had outdanced thought”; the one who debates with Michael Robartes in “Michael Robartes and the Dancer”; the Chinese dancers in “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen, II”; the souls which dance away their “complexities of mire or blood” in “Byzantium”; and the dancer who becomes one with the dance at the close of “Among School Children.” A dancer literally embodies the form of the art and becomes one with it, an ultimate example of artistic creation giving body to disembodied powers. In his study of embodied metaphors, cognitive linguist Raymond Gibbs contends that symbols and metaphors arise in language “from experiential gestalts relating to the body’s movements, orientation in space, and its interactions with objects” and that these gestalts demonstrate recurring patterns of “bodily interactions which structure how we understand the world” and from which we then create metaphors to comprehend abstract concepts.\(^{374}\) In exploring embodied metaphor, Gibbs compiled studies of creative movement—specifically, various forms of dancing—to better understand how the body and its movements relate to the construction of meaning. He concluded that dancing is a “metaphoric process of meaning construction which oscillates between verbal, gestural, and verbo-gestural realizations of metaphoric content.”\(^{375}\) He found that in dance, body movements coincided with the metaphors of conceptual metaphor theory. For instance, when dancers were asked to express certain emotions or experiences in their dance, their motions conveyed the HAPPINESS IS UP, SADNESS IS DOWN, FALLING IS FAILURE, LIFE IS A JOURNEY and other conceptual metaphors. The movements of

\(^{374}\) Gibbs, “Embodied Metaphor” 168.

the dancers corresponded with the conceptual metaphors which cognitive linguistics claims are basic to the cognition of language. Gibbs found that metaphors or symbols are not limited to language but that our experiences of embodied metaphor in language may shape our understanding of bodily action like the dance.\

The dancer appears at the close of “Among School Children” from The Tower, a poem which initially sets up a contrast of the youth of the pupils and the age of the poet. When he was sixty years old, Yeats toured a Montessori school and recounts his visit in the poem, but slips into memories of a young Maud Gonne as well as other images of youth contrasted with his age. Throughout the poem, Yeats “declares that only images escape the disintegration of age...Only such images are real...and they are the symbols of heavenly glory,” which he imagines as a heavenly state of glory “where body and soul are united.” This union is represented in the final stanza by the chestnut-tree and ultimately by the symbol of the dancer. He concludes the poem with:

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?\

The answer is that we cannot distinguish them; the dancer and the dance become one, joining

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376 Gibbs, “Embodied Metaphor,” 182. See section five, “Embodied Metaphor in Creative Movement” of this chapter for specific examples that he found in his research of dances which demonstrated conceptual metaphors.

377 Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks, 256

the oppositional forces of the objective and subjective, the body and soul, into Unity of Being. Helen Vendler explains that the eighth stanza questions what “would a realm be like where soul and body could equally take pleasure, where wisdom did not destroy the bright gaze of youth, where beauty could grow from love, not from love’s despair?” The poem concludes that the dancer is the only human symbol which can occupy a place where the “speculative plane” and “earthly being...can converge on the human plane.” The tower, the winding stair, the sword, the swan, the mummy-cloth, and the many other symbols and metaphors in Yeats’s poems embody ideas and visions in order to transmit them from Yeats’s mind to the page and then to our minds where their meaning is again recreated through embodied language. However, the dancer is the supreme instance of embodiment; for the dance is literally an action of the body while also a work of art; and our understanding of the question, “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” challenges us to unweave an embodied concept, an entangled image that cannot be separated. If we part the body from the art, the body is no longer a dancer, and the dance no longer exists, for the art requires the body to be a dance. Likewise, if we part the embodied processing of language from language itself, that language no longer has meaning. In the dance, “Yeats has been able to find...an image for the continuum of life occupying the extended space between birth and death...the necessary evolution of our consciousness throughout our life time.” The dancer and the dance become the symbol for the merging of many dualities and tensions which are present throughout Yeats’s writing; and, as we saw in

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379 Vendler, Our Secret Discipline, 283.
380 Ibid.
381 Ibid, 286.
Gibbs’s studies, the conceptual metaphors that we use to understand language are likewise the metaphors of movement in dance. Perhaps this is why the dance is the ritual through which the dolphin-borne souls arriving in Byzantium are purged of their material existence and prepared for reincarnation. Without bodies, no dance exists; yet the souls must paradoxically dance until they become pure, bodiless soul. The dualities of body and soul, the material and immaterial, life and death converge in the dance, a dance “which indivisibility exists” and into which the dancer is “indissolubly integrated.”382 Like Lakoff and Johnson’s experiential synthesis alternative to subjectivity and objectivity, the unity of the dance and dancer joins the primary and antithetical into one. We cannot know the dancer from the dance, for the two are one; instead, we know the dancer as the dance.

Conclusions

This project set out to evaluate how cognitive poetics might contribute to Yeatsian studies while also expanding the field of cognitive poetics with a heretofore largely unexamined poet in that field. The foundation of this project has been the theory of embodiment from cognitive linguistics, a theory that asserts that language is an embodied phenomenon, one whose meaning is constructed through mental simulation of prior bodily experiences. Metaphors and symbols then serve as a place where dualities merge, where the mind and body converge to make meaning. In the introduction of this study, I discussed Yeats’s interest in dualities and oppositional tensions as well as his thoughts regarding the power of symbols.

382 Unterecker, Reader’s, 192.
Then I provided definitions and explanations of terms from cognitive linguistics and cognitive poetics which would be central to my study; these terms included embodiment, conceptual metaphors, image schemas, mental spaces, and cognitive grammar. Chapter 2 was devoted primarily to embodiment theory and its commonalities with Yeats’s fascination with the mind’s eye. Chapter 2 traced his use of this term throughout his poetry and discovered it to be extremely similar to cognitive science’s embodied simulation hypothesis. Meaning is created through an embodied simulation of our prior sensorimotor experiences; therefore, language is an embodied phenomenon, and we do indeed “see” the meaning that is being simulated before a metaphorical mind’s eye. Chapter 3 used embodiment to consider a variety of conceptual metaphors, various types of cognitive mapping, image schemas, and mental spaces within Yeats’s poems. Cognitive grammar was the focus of chapter 4, as I investigated the relationship between syntax and the changes in stanzaic structure in Yeats’s poems and how they determine objective or subjective construal during cognition; this was followed by an exploration of how Yeats uses grammar to atemporalise the meaning that we construct when reading his poems. Finally, here in chapter 5, I applied cognitive poetics to evaluate what it might contribute to an analysis of dualities and symbols in selected poems from The Tower and The Winding Stair and Other Poems and determined that cognitive poetics enables us to understand how his symbols cognitively function as sites where dualities merge and oppositional tensions are resolved. That leaves us with the question of what exactly cognitive poetics has to offer us in the overall study of Yeats’s poetry.

One significant contribution of cognitive poetics which this project reveals is that it gives literary scholars a new vocabulary and method with which to approach literature. With this
method, we gain an understanding not so much of the what but of the how. Cognitive poetics may afford us some insights into what Yeats’s poetry means, but those insights are enhanced by the understanding of how we construct the poem’s meaning. Cognition is a process; therefore, it is not surprising that cognitive poetics rewards us with an understanding of the process of meaning construction in Yeats. Cognitive grammar encourages us to view his syntax and stanzaic structure as facets of the meaning of his poems; conceptual metaphor theory may help us understand the power of the cultural symbols which he believed he drew from the Great Memory; and embodiment theory explains how Yeats evoked images before his mind’s eye, and likewise how his poems evoke images in our minds as we construct their meaning. Furthermore, since we know that Yeats believed that language is magical and that symbols and metaphors could literally call down powers and give them embodied forms, gaining an understanding from cognitive poetics of just how language does embody the disembodied can contribute to our reading of Yeats’s symbols. In addition, an understanding of the emerging science behind cognitive poetics may even lead us to reevaluate our opinion of some of Yeats’s more nonconventional beliefs. Many of the ideas that he puts forth in The Vision, which he called his philosophy, are what some might call irrational or, yes, even crazy. Yeats’s belief in magic and his involvement with the occult may indeed cast him in a rather irrational light. However, if we reconsider some of the concepts behind his ideas, we might find that cognitive science has actually developed theories that parallel those concepts, although certainly not with the same terminology that he used. The embodied simulation hypothesis may then lend some credibility to what Yeats considered to be the magical quality of words and symbols.
Symbols do indeed embody disembodied powers, giving them the form of words, words which only have meaning through our embodied understanding of them.

Cognitive poetics also returns us to the text itself and a close analysis thereof, and this can be deemed a benefit of this approach as well, especially among formalist literary critics. Much attention in recent years has been given to cultural theories of literary study, but cognitive poetics returns the critic to an analysis of the text as the primary point of inquiry. Cognitive poetics shift us back to “a close stylistic analysis” of the literary craft and how meaning is made from it. Unlike formalism, however, cognitive poetics does still take into account cultural influences, since language is a social phenomenon and conceptual metaphor theory is based on central metaphors developed by given cultures. Therefore, cognitive poetics can be an approach that appeals to both the formalists and the cultural theorists among us. As this project demonstrates, cognitive poetics relies most heavily on close readings but integrates cultural factors that contribute to the meaning constructed by symbols and metaphors, such as the Irish rose of “The Rose Tree.” According to Stockwell, a “detailed and principled cognitive poetic exploration” enables the reader to better “appreciate the writerly skill or the readerly sensitivity, or simply the brilliance of the literary work itself as an object of art in the world.” When we apply principles of cognitive grammar, conceptual mapping, image schemas, or embodiment to powerful symbols like the dancer in Yeats’s poems, we are rewarded with a richer reading of his works and a greater appreciation for not only his skill and the quality of the poems, but also for our own readerly experience.

In addition, this project contributes to the field of cognitive poetics by applying some of the methods of analysis from cognitive poetics to a poet who has received very little attention in that field. Like Margaret Freeman’s work with metaphors in Emily Dickinson’s poetry, this study has applied embodiment theory to a poet who draws heavily on powerful symbols and metaphors, and I contend that there is much yet to be explored by cognitive poetics in Yeats’s poems and plays. The complexity of Yeats’s symbolic system and the power that he attributed to language situate his works as ideal for additional analysis of how meaning is made within them. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that manuscript revisions can supplement cognitive poetics. Although cognitive linguistics, and by extension cognitive poetics, concerns itself primarily with the final form of a linguistic expression, whether spoken or written, this study has demonstrated that an examination of textual revisions can enlighten a critical analysis and even reaffirm or validate the interpretations made by cognitive poetics.

Clearly, cognitive poetics is a relatively new field and will most certainly continue to develop as cognitive linguistics and cognitive science uncover more of how the mind makes meaning. As new technology enables scientists to better trace neurological paths in the brain and develop a more precise picture of what the fMRI scans are telling them, cognitive science may eventually be able to reveal to us the secrets of how we learn grammar, how our minds differentiate between actual and simulated experiences in the sensory regions of the brain, and how words first develop their symbolic quality in early childhood. Once science uncovers more secrets of how the brain works, cognitive linguists will be able to better understand the intricate and complex mechanisms of how language works in the brain. Then we will have new models and principles which we may likewise apply to cognitive poetics and grammar in our
study of literature. This field of cognitive poetics is in its early stages, a fact which should leave us excited and eager for the implications that this has on the study of Yeats’s works. If the small amount we currently know about how the brain functions and how meaning is construed can provide us with this innovative method for literary analysis and supplement our current understanding of Yeats’s poetry, then we can eagerly anticipate what will come next.
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