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'This' Is Not 'Love': A Cognitive Assessment of the Lyrics and Translations of Jalāl al-Din Rūmī's Ghazal #1919 from the Divān-i Shams

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A COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE LYRICS AND TRANSLATIONS OF

JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ'S *GHAZAL* #1919 FROM THE *DĪVĀN-I SHAMS*

by

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CONTENTS

Preface

This paper begins with a general introduction to the two foci of this study: namely, the poetry of Jalāl al-Din Rūmī and the cognitive sciences. At first glance, these two topics may seem to be strange bedfellows. The time has come, however, to incorporate the revolutionary discoveries in the cognitive sciences into our treatments of Rūmī's lyrics and Persian and Arabic literature more generally. Their introduction, in fact, is long overdue.

Cognitive science has, for the first time, provided us a window into the inner workings of the human mind-brain. This extraordinary opportunity allows us now, as literary scholars, to examine not only language as it is produced (i.e. in texts), but also to examine the exceedingly complex processes by which readers understand texts and language generally. The insights we can glean from this unprecedented access to the source of linguistic production and comprehension have the potential to significantly improve our literary analyses and our translations, as I will demonstrate in this study.

The first half of this work then will introduce the field of cognitive science and its most relevant insights for the analysis of literature generally, and mystical poetry specifically. The second half of this work will be a detailed case study of one of Rūmī's *ghazals* (#1919), in which I will both analyze and critique its translations utilizing cognitive literary criticism.

In the end, I hope that the present "cognitive literary study" of Rūmī's *ghazal* #1919 serves both as a solid introduction to the cognitive approach to literature as well as a catalyst for future cognitive studies in the areas of Persian and Arabic Literature.

INTRODUCTION

Rūmī and the Cognitive Sciences

The Poet, His Poetry, and a New Way Forward

The Poet and His Historical Context

Mowlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Muhammad Balkhī Rūmī was born in the city Balkh (located in present-day Afghanistan) in 1207 CE. However, his stay in the land of his birth was short-lived. Rūmī's father, after some disagreements with the local religious leadership, made the decision to relocate the family, eventually settling in the Anatolian city of Konya, in modern-day Turkey.

From an early age, Rūmī was groomed to take over his father's position in the Konyan community as the head of the local congregation and professor in the madrasa. He was sent to the famous Islamic centers of learning in Aleppo and Damascus for this purpose, where he received the best traditional Islamic education possible in the the areas of Qur'anic Studies, Hadith Studies, and Islamic Law.[1]

The most important influence in Rūmī's spiritual life (and, later, his poetry), however, was the Islamic mystical tradition of Sufism. The traditional accounts of Rūmī's dramatic mid-life conversion to Sufism at the hands of the legendary Shams of Tabrīz are

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[1] Franklin Lewis, *Rūmī, Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2000), 272-274; Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1998), 4-6.

likely misleading. Although Shams gave Rūmī unprecedented levels of mystical inspiration (which should not be dismissed as insignificant), it is nevertheless quite unlikely that Rūmī changed over night from a legalistic Islamic preacher, professor, and judge who did not write any poetry into a "drunken" Sufi who produced tens of thousands of lines of poetry.[2]

In reality, Rūmī's father had always been heavily inclined towards Sufi thought and had many mystical visions and writings of his own. Moreover, Rūmī's mentor after the death of his father, Borhān al-Dīn Termezī, was an adherent of the Sufi path and is likely the one who officially initiated Rūmī into Sufism in his early twenties.[3]

Sufism

Sufism, in brief, is the "major mystical tradition in Islam."[4] It is characterized by an inward, ascetical orientation and a concern for the inner meaning of the phenomenal world. Sufis believe that true knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the "Truth/Reality" (*al-haqq*) is only achievable thorough spiritual (i.e. mystical) experience, which is ultimately what the Sufi path (*tarīqa*) aims to guide its disciples (*murīd*) towards.

The ultimate goal of the Sufi path is, simply stated, mystical union with God. The exact nature of this union between the individual sufi and God, however, is a matter of considerable dispute within Sufism generally. The emphasis on the unity of God (*tawhīd*),

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[2] Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 6-7.

[3] Lewis, *Rūmī*, 104-108, 159-161, 272-275.

[4] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007), 1.

humankind, and the universe generally is very important in Sufism (although its exact nature likewise is bitterly disputed), and particularly so in the writings of Rūmī.[5]

The pinnacle of the Sufi path (i.e. unity with God) can only be achieved when the sufi achieves *fanā'*, which roughly translates as the "dissolution" or "passing away of [lower, human] self-consciousness [*nafs*]."[6] In the view of the Sufis, the "lower (human) self" must be conquered (through ascetical practices) and ultimately recognized for the illusion that it perpetuates—i.e. that there is a reality other than God: "From the perspective of the Sufis, as long as you remain 'yourself' [*nafs,* lower self], you cannot know God: the greatest veil between you and Reality is being 'yourself' [*nafs,* lower human self]."[7]

The process and culmination of *fanā'* is most often—and this is especially true in terms of Rūmī's writings—allegorized as falling madly in love, with special emphasis on the attendant rush of emotions, loss of rationality, and dissolution of the boundaries of selfhood. Even more controversially, some Sufis, and especially Rūmī, employ the metaphor of "drunkenness" and its associated imagery (such as "wine" [*maī, sharāb*]) to describe the feeling of being madly in love with God and the altered state of consciousness and perception that it produces in them.[8]

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[5] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 1-3, 16-21; Javad Nurbakhsh, "The Key Features of Early Persian Sufism," in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origin to Rūmī (700-1300)*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), xxxvi-xl.

[6] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 16-17.

[7] Nurbakhsh, *The Key Features of Early Persian Sufism*, xviii-xxvi.

[8] Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997) 43, 146-172; Nurbakhsh, *The Key Features of Early Persian Sufism*, xix-xxi; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 21; Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 27.

'Divān-i Shams' and the Persian *Ghazal*

For someone who frequently lamented the inadequacy of words, Rūmī sure wrote voluminously. At least sixty thousand verses are attributed to him, spread across his two most important works: the *Masnavī* and the *Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīzi*. While audiences have long appreciated the depth of Rūmī's mystical wisdom clearly on display in his *Masnavi* (a didactical poetic work)—affectionately and appropriately termed, "The Qur'ān in Persian"—Rūmī's poetic genius in the *Divān-i Shams* has traditionally received less attention.[9]

Divān-i Shams is a massive collection of Rūmī's shorter poems (approximately thirty-five thousand verses), primarily of the Persian *ghazal* genre. The Persian *ghazal* was originally a sung poem that usually treated the themes of love and wine. It was also considered to be a less formal poetic form—at least when compared to the *qasīda* form, which was more closely linked to the royal court culture. Traditionally, the *ghazal* had been produced for performances at informal gatherings and wine parties, which made it easily transferable to the informal Sufi prayer sessions (*samā'*), where music, dance, prayer, and poetry all coalesced. All of these factors made it ripe for adoption by the Persian Sufis, and beginning with Sanā'i (d. 1131), this genre became one of the most popular forms for the expression of mystical love poetry.[10]

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[9] Lewis, *Rūmī*, 300-307; Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 1-3.

[10] J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Persian Poem*s (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), 54-57, 63, 68-69; J. Meisami, "Genres of Court Literature," in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. J.T.P de Bruijn (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 244-246; Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 140-145.

In terms of form, the *ghazal* is normally between five and fifteen lines and it utilizes the same rhyme scheme as the *qasīda* form, namely:[11]

...a/...a
...b/...a
...x/...a

The meter of the *ghazal* form, like Persian poetry generally, is highly complex. In fact, there exist over two hundred different possible prosodic patterns in the Persian metrical system. The importance of this aspect of the *ghazal* form cannot be overstated, as Persian Literature scholar and Rūmī specialist, Fatemeh Keshavarz, demonstrates quite convincingly in her study of the "sonic intricacies" of Rūmī's *ghazals*. She concludes that the poetic meter, "sound patterns," and "structural rhythm" of the individual *ghazals* all play a central role in helping communicate the meaning of the poem to the reader/ listener.[12]

With this basic introduction to Rūmī, his historical context, and the works/generic forms under consideration here, we will now move on to discuss the previous scholarship on Rūmī's lyrics.

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[11] Here "x" indicates that it can be any rhyme. This rhyme scheme chart is taken from: Wheeler M. Thackston, *A Millennium of Classical Persian Poetry* (Bethesda: Iran Books, 1994), xxiv.

[12] See, Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 100-137.

The Scholarship on Rūmī:

The Roads Already Taken and A New Way Forward

The modern academic approaches to the study of Rūmī and his works can roughly be divided into three categories.[13] While these categories are not absolute or mutually exclusive, I think that a tripartite division is relatively accurate, provided it is treated only as a flexible outline for viewing the history of Rūmī scholarship.

First Approach: Rūmī as Philological and Historical Artifact

The first category of Rūmī scholarship is the philological and historical approach. The scholars of this school significantly increased our understanding of Rūmī and his works through their meticulous historical accounts of his life and their critical editions, translations, and commentaries on his works. Particularly prominent in this regard are Reynold A. Nicholson (b. 1868), Hellmut Ritter (b. 1892), Badi' al-Zamān Forouzanfar (b. 1900), Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı (b. 1900), A.J. Arberry (b. 1905), Sādeq Gowharin (b. 1914), and Muhammad Este'lāmi (b. 1936).[14] Franklin Lewis' recent encyclopedic overview of the life, works, and scholarship on Rūmī (*Rūmī, Past and Present, East and West*, 2000) should also be mentioned in this category.

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[13] My division of the scholarship on Rūmī into three categories is roughly, although *not* exactly, based on Franklin Lewis' division of the various scholarly treatments of Rūmī and his work in his chapter, entitled "A History of Rūmī Scholarship" in: Lewis, *Rūmī*, 528-563.

[14] This is not intended to serve as a comprehensive introduction to the history of Rūmī scholarship. The purpose of this section is only to provide a general context for the new approach of the present study. Please see Lewis for a comprehensive account of the history of scholarship on Rūmī and his works: Lewis, *Rūmī*, 528-563. Here I am drawing primarily on his study.

Second Approach: Rūmī as a Philosophical/Mystical Teacher

The second scholarly approach to Rūmī has been primarily concerned with understanding and explicating his religious, philosophical, and mystical teachings. The late scholar of Sufism, Annemarie Schimmel (b. 1922), is probably the most prominent representative of this group. However, other scholars such as Shebli No'māni (b. 1857), Khalifa 'Abdul Hakim, Afzal Iqbal (b. 1919), Parviz Morewedge (b. 1934), John Renard, and William Chittick have made equally important contributions.[15] Their approaches share some similarities with the commentary tradition of the scholars of the first approach, and, perhaps, the dividing line between these two categories is not always as neat as I have made it out to be.

Third Approach: Rūmī as a Poet

The third category of scholars is composed of those who have taken a particular interest in the poetics of Rūmī's works—i.e. elements of style and structure, use of literary tropes and metaphor, prosody, etc. Noteworthy here are Gustav Richter (b. 1906), Annemarie Schimmel (b. 1922), Robert Rehder, J.C Bürgel, James Roy King, Gholam Hosein Yousofi, Mehdi Borhāni, Sayyed Hosayn Fātemi, Sirus Shamisā, and Fatemeh Keshavarz.[16] What especially differentiates this third category from the first two is that these scholars, in different ways, answer the basic question: *how* does Rūmī create meaning? *How* does he use language, style, structure, literary tropes, and metaphor to

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[15] Lewis, *Rūmī*, 536-540, 559-560.

[16] Lewis, *Rūmī*, 560-563.

"express the inexpressible" and turn "the funeral of words into a whirling dance?", to quote Fatemeh Keshavarz.[17]

A New Way Forward: Cognitive Literary Criticism

The present work will continue in the tradition of the third approach in examining Rūmī as a poet while utilizing a new theoretical framework for analyzing his poetry. Specifically, I will approach Rūmī's poetry from a cognitive perspective, using theoretical and experimental insights from the field of cognitive science broadly to further illuminate the dynamic ways in which he uses language to express that which he frequently states is inexpressible linguistically.

Some may ask: "why cognitive science? How is this late twentieth/twenty-first century field relevant to the study of the poetry of Rūmī?" The answer is very simple: one of the primary concerns of cognitive science is the question of *how* the human mind produces and understands meaning. Leading cognitive scientist Gilles Fauconnier even claims that cognitive linguistics (a branch of cognitive science) is the first "genuine science of meaning construction."[18]

Cognitive studies of language not only investigate language as it is produced (i.e. the surface or structural level), but they also probe the cognitive processes that produce it and allow it to be understood/assign it meaning (i.e. the cognitive level). In other words, cognitive scientists not only study languages, texts, grammars, meaning, etc., but also

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[17] Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 12, 31.

[18] Gilles Fauconnier, "Methods and Generalizations," in *Cognitive Linguistics: Foundations, Scope, and Methodology*, ed. Theo Janssen and Gisela Redeker (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), 96.

study the complex cognitive processes that create these things in the first place—yielding

better insight into both.[19]

Explorations of the dynamic meaning creation in Rūmī's poetry and the poetry of

other mystical writers is nothing new. However, the approach that I will employ in this

study is simply a new and fascinating way of understanding *how* Rūmī creates meaning

in his poetry and, conversely, *how* the millions (or, perhaps, billions!) of his faithful

readers have understood his mesmerizing verses throughout the ages.

Cognitive Science:

Mapping the Inner Workings of the Human Mind

Background

The term "cognitive science" (often times seen in the plural "cognitive sciences")

refers to a broad interdisciplinary field of study whose uniting concern is understanding

how the human mind works (i.e. human cognition). It has its origins in Chomsky's

rejection of the behaviorist paradigm (which eschewed references to human cognitive

processes in favor of directly observable, external phenomena) in the social sciences and

the rise of the artificial intelligence (AI) enterprise in the computer science. Both of these

movements began in earnest in the 1950s.

While much of Chomskian linguistics would later be rejected by cognitive

linguistics, and the AI field would find it impossible to replicate the human mind's ability

to instantaneously process and create "meaning," their initial reorientation of the social

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[19] Gilles Fauconnier, "Cognitive Science," Vol. 1, in *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, ed. Lynn Nadel (New York: Nature Publishing Group, 2003), 542.

and "hard" sciences towards cognitive approaches was essential for the later development

of cognitive science in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[20]

Since then, the cognitive science enterprise has grown at an astonishing rate,

leading many scholars to talk of the "cognitive revolution" currently underway in the

academy.[21] This is probably not an exaggeration: there are now well-developed cognitive

approaches in many (if not most) of the traditional academic disciplines, such as

psychology, philosophy, neuroscience, anthropology, and literature, which are all united

under the aegis of this broader term, "cognitive science(s)."[22] Making hard distinctions

between these subfields of cognitive science—as their identification with specific,

traditionally quite disparate academic disciplines seems to suggest—however, is

somewhat misleading because all of the subfields deeply interpenetrate one another and

depend on each other's research and discoveries for the collective advancement of the

larger cognitive understanding of the human mind.[23]

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[20] Mary Thomas Crane and Alan Richardson, "Literary Studies and Cognitive Science: Towards a New Interdisciplinarity," *Mosaic* 32, no. 2 (1999): 123-126; Patrick Colm Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 29.

[21] Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts*, 1.

[22] Paul Thagard, "Cognitive Science", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/cognitive-science/>.

[23] While this highly interdisciplinary approach is certainly laudable, it does create a bit of a terminological problem if you try to remain bound to the tradition disciplinary distinctions. For example, this present study utilizes insights from cognitive linguistics, cognitive psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and cognitive philosophy in its discussion of mystical poetry and its analysis of Rūmī's poetry, so then, how do I characterize my approach in this study? Is it a cognitive linguistical approach? A cognitive psychological approach? A cognitive philosophical approach? The most appropriate answer seems to be that it is none of these individually; rather, it is best characterized simply as a cognitive approach to literature. Therefore, in this study I will use the cognitive subfields (such as, cognitive linguistics, cognitive neuroscience, etc.) indiscriminately, with the understanding that these are all a part of my larger cognitive approach to Rūmī's lyrics.

General Principles of Cognitive Science

The single most unifying feature of cognitive studies is this guiding question: *how does the human mind process and/or understand x, y, or z phenomenon?* (As opposed to its immediate predecessor [i.e. behaviorism] which was primarily concerned with "*what happens when...*" [i.e. the observable phenomena that result from the cognitive processes]).

The second common feature in cognitive studies is the method they employ. Regardless of whether the cognitive-oriented researcher is trying to understand how the human mind processes language, creates group identity (ethnic, national, etc.), enjoys music, forms and recalls memories, feels emotion, or understands human agency, all cognitivists are likely to approach their study in a similar three step process:

1) What is the information and/or stimulus being processed?

2) What parts of our "cognitive architecture" (i.e. mental structures, processes, and contents—more on these three elements later) are used in processing this information and/or stimulus?

3) What is the sequence of and interrelation between these various elements of our "cognitive architecture"?[24]

In other words, *how* precisely—even to the molecular level of detail—does our mind do what it does? Cognitive science seeks primarily to fill in the huge gap left by behaviorism: how/why do we respond the way we do to certain information/stimuli?

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[24] This tripartite division is based on Hogan's summary of the basic methodological approach of cognitive studies: Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts*, 29-31.

Discovering exactly how our mind works down to the most minute cellular level

is not just pedantic neuroscience; on the contrary, it has wide-ranging practical

applications in business and politics, and its insights have already begun revolutionizing

other (seemingly unrelated) academic disciplines, such as philosophy, anthropology,

religious studies, and literature. For our purposes here, approaching Rūmī's lyrics from

the perspective of cognitive science could be an exceedingly fruitful enterprise. The fields

of poetics and mysticism studies have long grappled with issues of language, experience,

and meaning—all of which cognitive science has struggled with as well, yielding

significant results that could shine new light on our studies of mystical poetry.

The Emerging Field of Cognitive Literary Criticism/Cognitive Poetics

Since the advent of cognitive science in the late 1970s, a significant number of

literary scholars have incorporated insights from the cognitive sciences into their studies

of literature. While initially scattered, these attempts at forming bridges between the

study of literature and the cognitive revolution underway in the sciences has now

coalesced into a discernible sub-field of literary studies, termed, alternatively, "cognitive

literary criticism" and/or "cognitive poetics." This movement first achieved "official"

recognition in 1998 when the Modern Language Association (MLA) approved the

creation of the "Discussion Group on Cognitive Approaches to Literature" at its annual

convention.[25]

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[25] Alan Richardson and Francis F. Steen, "Literature and the Cognitive Revolution: An Introduction," in *Literature and the Cognitive Revolution*, ed. Alan Richardson and Francis F. Steen (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 7.

This emerging field is very diverse and its proponents have been working in a wide range of areas within literary studies, as illustrated by Lisa Zunshine: literary aesthetics (Elaine Scarry, Gabrielle Starr); feminism and gender studies (Elizabeth Grosz and Elizabeth Hart); postcolonial studies (Patrick Colm Hogan, Frederick Luis Aldama); deconstruction (Ellen Spolsky); cultural historicism (Mary Thomas Crane, Alan Richardson, Blakey Vermeule); and narrative theory (Alan Palmer, David Herman, Uri Margolin, Monika Fludernik, Porter Abbott).[26] Additionally, literary scholars such as Mark Turner and Reuven Tsur, as well as cognitive linguists/psychologists/philosophers, such as George Lakoff, Gilles Fauconnier, Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr, and Mark Johnson, have all made important theoretical contributions to the growing field. It is important to note that the emerging field of cognitive literary criticism seeks to complement and enrich the traditional fields of literary criticism; it does not purport to replace them, nor could it.[27]

One of the biggest hurdles for the incorporation of cognitive approaches to literature into the field of literary studies is that the science and terminology used in its many recent treatments is often quite specialized and foreign to the literary specialist. This situation in many ways has become much worse since George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published their landmark study *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, owing primarily to the larger impact neuroscience and other so-called "hard" cognitive sciences are making in the field. Many of the early foundational works in cognitive linguistics, such as

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[26] This listing of literary scholars working in the sub-field of cognitive literary studies has been adopted from: Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), 36-37.

[27] Ibid., 37; Richardson and Steen, *Literature and the Cognitive Revolution*, 1-3, 6.

Lakoff and Turner's trenchant study of poetic metaphor, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (1989), or even Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.'s (a psychologist by training) *Poetics of the Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (1994), are easily comprehensible to literary scholars. However, the more recent trends in the field towards the extensive use of psychology and neuroscience have made it increasingly difficult for the unacquainted literary scholar to understand the cognitive science literature without considerable independent study.[28]

None of these difficulties, however, should deter literary specialists from venturing into the relevant literature in the cognitive sciences. As I hope to show in this study, the new cognitive understandings of everything from language theory to poetic imagery and metaphor have the potential to revolutionize the way we understand literature, poetry, and translation.

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[28] See the most recent work of Lakoff and Gibbs for examples of the far more extensive incorporation of neuroscience and psychology into the field of cognitive literary theory: George Lakoff, "The Neural Theory of Metaphor," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., "Metaphor and Thought: The State of the Art," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Also see: Jerome A. Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor: A Neural Theory of Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

CHAPTER I

The Cognitive Insights into the Human Mind-Brain and Language

The Foundational Premises of the Cognitive Theory of Language

Basic Premises

The current theory of language in cognitive science is premised on four basic suppositions:

- Conceptual thought and language are "fundamentally metaphoric in nature."

- Thought is composed of "structured neural activity," which occurs mostly in the "cognitive unconscious."

- Language and thought cannot be disassociated from our embodied, sensorimotor experience.

- Ergo, the human mind is inherently embodied—i.e. there is no mind-body dualism.[29]

Language and Metaphor

The basis for the cognitive theory of language began to develop in the late 1970s, when cognitive science was still in its nascent stages of development, and burst onto the

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[29] For this reason, I will use the term "mind-brain," instead of submitting to the dualistic false choice of choosing either the term "mind" or "brain." Sources for "Basic Premises" section: Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 3; Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., *Embodiment and Cognitive Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 276; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and the Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 3-8.

academic scene in a major way with the publication of a book by George Lakoff (a linguist) and Mark Johnson (a philosophy professor), entitled *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). It began with this landmark statement:

> Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.[30]

They astutely observed that even quotidian phrases, such as "I got it" (when meaning: "I understand it"), "Life is going well," "I am feeling kind of down today," or "He is not a close friend," all are predicated on a metaphoric foundation. For example, the phrase "I got it" (when meaning: "I understand it") is based on the primary metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING (AN OBJECT).[31] The corresponding negative phrase "I lost it" or "I did not get it," when used in this context, means "I did not understand" or "I no longer understand," and is also based on this same primary metaphor [see Table A, below this section for more examples].

They identified two types of metaphors: primary and complex metaphors. Primary metaphors, such as UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, CAUSES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES, SIMILIARITY IS CLOSENESS, AFFECTION IS WARMTH, IMPORTANT IS BIG, or TIME IS MOTION, are the building blocks of complex metaphors, such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS NIGHT/LIFE IS DAY, or IDEAS ARE

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[30] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

[31] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 52.

TOOLS. There are literally hundreds of primary metaphors which combine in innummerable ways through the process of "conceptual blending" to form the similarly innumerable number of complex metaphors that together structure much of our language and thought.[32]

The important thing to notice about these and all other metaphors is that they are all fundamentally based on our embodied experiences in the world. In other words, they are "experientially grounded" in the sense that they draw on our sensorimotor experiences for their logic, qualities, imagery, and image-schemas. For example, the primary metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH is derived from the human experience of feeling warm when in a loving embrace, while the primary metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING (AN OBJECT) is based on the experience of possessing and manipulating objects and tools.

If much of both everyday and abstract thought and language is metaphoric, there are two questions that need to be answered here: first, why do we use metaphoric language in the first place? The short answer: it allows us to communicate a tremendous amount of meaning very efficiently because it draws on the experiential resources of the sensorimotor regions of our brain. Secondly, how does metaphoric language do this and how do we understand it, especially when often times what it literally "means" is a physical impossibility (e.g. "grasping" an idea, "kicking" a habit, "running" late)? The short answer is through a process called "semantic simulation." Let us explore this concept in more depth.

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[32] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 49-54.

Table A: Primary Metaphors[33]

UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING
Subjective Judgment: Comprehension
Sensorimotor Domain: Object manipulation
Example: "I've never been able to grasp transfinite numbers."
Primary Experience: Getting information about an object by grasping and manipulating it

STATES ARE LOCATIONS
Subjective Judgment: A subjective state
Sensorimotor Experience: Being in a bounded region of space
Example: "I'm close to being in a depression and the next thing that goes wrong will send me over the edge."
Primary Experience: Experiencing a certain state as correlated with a certain location (e.g. being cool under a tree, feeling secure in bed)

CHANGE IS MOTION
Subjective Judgement: Experiencing a change of state
Sensorimotor Domain: Moving
Example: "My car has gone from bad to worse lately."
Primary Experience: Experiencing the change of state that goes with the change of location as you move

AFFECTION IS WARMTH
Subjective Judgment: Affection
Sensorimotor Domain: Temperature
Example: "They greeted me warmly"
Primary Experience: feeling warm while being held affectionately

IMPORTANT IS BIG
Subjective Judgment: Importance
Sensorimotor Domain: Size
Example: "Tomorrow is a big day"
Primary Experience: As a child, finding that big things, e.g. parents, are important and can exert major forces on you and dominate your visual experience

HAPPY IS UP
Subjective Judgment: Happiness
Sensorimotor Domain: Bodily orientation
Example: "I'm feeling up today."
Primary Experience: Feeling happy and energetic and having an upright posture (correlation between affective state and posture)

KNOWING IS SEEING
Subjective Judgment: Knowledge
Sensorimotor Domain: Vision
Example: "I see what you mean"
Primary Experience: Getting information through vision

CONTROL IS UP
Subjective Judgment: Being in control
Sensorimotor Domain: Vertical orientation
Example: "Don't worry! I'm on top of the situation."
Primary Experience: Finding that it is easier to control another person or exert force on an object from above, where you have gravity working with you

BAD IS STINKY
Subjective Judgement: Evaluation
Sensorimotor Domain: Smell
Example: "This movie stinks."
Primary Experience: Being repelled by foul-smelling objects (correlation between evaluative and olfactory experience)

DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS
Subjective Judgment: Difficulty
Sensorimotor Domain: Muscular exertion
Example: "She's weighed down by responsibilities."
Primary Experience: The discomfort or disabling effect of lifting or carrying heavy objects

Please see Appendix II for an expanded list of primary metaphors.

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[33] These examples of primary metaphors are taken from a table in: Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 50-54.

Semantic Simulation and the Theory of Embodied Language and Thought:

If You Cannot Imagine It, You Cannot Understand It

Semantic simulation is the term for the cognitive process by which metaphoric language communicates meaning to the reader/listener. It works by evoking a simulation of the image and/or action embedded in the metaphor, *even* when the metaphoric imagery or action is highly abstract and/or physically impossible (e.g. "grasping" an idea, "kicking" the habit, "running" late, "throwing" a temper tantrum, etc.).[34] This process, discovered by cognitive science, is not only the way we understand metaphoric language, it is also the way we process stories/narratives. In the case of metaphoric language, imagery, and narrative/stories generally, cognitive scientists tell us: "meaning is mental simulation." In other words, if you cannot imagine it, you cannot understand it.[35]

Semantic simulations work and convey a tremendous amount of meaning because of the way our brains process imagery, events, and actions. Recent linguistic and neuroscientific evidence points overwhelmingly to the fact that when reading or hearing language that includes actions, events, and/or imagery, our mind-brain processes them *as if* we were really doing them, seeing them, hearing them, smelling them:

> In fact, the evidence suggests that imagery not only activates visual association areas, but also produces metabolic changes in the primary visual cortex. The evidence provides a compelling case that imagery uses many of the same processes critical for perception. The sights in an image

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[34] Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. and Teenie Matlock, "Metaphor, Imagination, and Simulation," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 165-166, 173; Gibbs Jr., *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, 183-184, 199-201.

[35] Lakoff, *The Neural Theory of Metaphor*, 19.

are likely to activate visual areas of the brain; the sounds, auditory areas; and the smells, olfactory areas.[36]

and:

> Many of the neural circuits used in moving are also used in perceiving motion...imagine you are told a story about someone else kicking. Recent biological evidence suggests that you can understand such stories by imagining yourself kicking (Hauk et al. 2004; Tettamanti et al. 2005)...More generally, we can say the following: Understanding language about perceiving and moving involves much of the same neural circuitry as do perceiving and moving themselves.[37]

Since our brain processes imagery and actions *as if they were real*, imagery and actions in language (text or spoken) *literally* evoke similar sensorimotor imagery, actions, emotions, and sensorimotor stimuli in the mind-brain of the listener/reader. Through this process the reader/listener's mind-brain is able to infer a tremendous amount of meaning on multiple levels (descriptive, emotional, sensorimotor, etc.) from just one image, action, or metaphor that would take paragraphs of purely descriptive language to spell out.

Stated simply, the process of language creation and comprehension works like this: our mind-brain creates language laden with sensorimotor qualities (imagery) and/or

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[36] Michael S. Gazzaniga, Richard B. Ivry, and George R. Mangun, *Cognitive Neuroscience: The Biology of the Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 195.

[37] Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 4-5. The renowned cognitive linguist, George Lakoff, makes this same point in his discussion of the Neural Theory of Language, and the psychologists Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. and Teenie Matlock devote an entire article to further explicating this phenomenon and its radical implications for our understanding of literary imagery and metaphor in the new *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (2008) [Lakoff, *The Neural Theory of Metaphor*, 18-19; Gibbs, Jr. and Matlock, "Metaphor, Imagination, and Simulation, 161-176]. The theory of semantic simulation received a tremendous boost recently from a brand new study that used advanced functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) on study participants who read stories while connected to fMRI machines. The researchers discovered through the fMRI data that when the participants read a story, they created situational simulations matching the situations in the story by drawing on their sensorimotor faculties [Nicole K. Spears, Jeremy R. Reynolds, Khena M. Swallow, and Jeffrey M. Zacks, "Reading Stories Activates Neural Representations of Visual and Motor Experiences," *Physchological Science* 20, no. 8 (2009): 989-999].

actions (metaphoric or literal), which prompt the audience's mind-brains to semantically simulate them, and through this process assign meaning to them in accordance with their previous sensorimotor experiences and cultural conditioning.

This leads us to one of the foundational premises of cognitive science: human language/thought and embodied experience (i.e. sensorimotor experience) are inseparable. We simply could not create nor understand much of human language without semantic simulation and our lived sensorimotor (i.e. embodied) experiences that this cognitive process depends on for actualization and realization. This means that the foundation of human language is not a set of abitrary signs as Saussurean linguistics and its intellectual descendents have claimed; rather, it is based on and restricted by our embodied experiences.[38]

The Cognitive Unconscious

These complex semantic simulations, as well as a dizzying array of other cognitive processes necessary for the comprehension of even the most basic linguistic communication, all take place in fractions of a second in what cognitive scientists have termed, the "cognitive unconscious."[39] According to Lakoff, here is a snapshot of just a few of the cognitive processes that are occurring every second as you process language:

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[38] Gibbs, Jr., *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, 8, 276; Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 259; Gibbs, Jr. and Matlock, *Metaphor, Imagination, and Simulation*, 164. Information regarding relation to Saussurean linguistics: Crane and Richardson, *Literary Studies and Cognitive Science*, 127-128.

[39] The "cognitive unconscious" of cognitive science should not be confused with the Freudian idea of the human subconscious/unconscious and its attendant theories of suppression, dreams, etc. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 10-11.

- Differentiating a stream of sounds; recognizing it as language; dividing it into phonetic segments; identifying phonemes and grouping them into morphemes.
- Recognizing words and assigning them meaning according the larger context.
- Retrieving memories relevant to what is said.
- Recalling relevant cognitive frames.
- Constructing mental images and semantic simulations when prompted and inspecting them.
- Observing and interpreting intonation or body language (if in person), or tone (if text-based).
- Performing conceptual blending for novel images and/or metaphors.
- Accessing relevant knowledge and cultural norms about concepts, events, people, etc. that are mentioned.[40]

While you may be actively aware that you are comprehending a stream of words, these unconscious cognitive processes (and many, many more!) are all occurring continuously and simultaneously as a conversation, story, poem, etc. unfolds, constructing meaning in every instant. Gilles Fauconnier has called this "backstage cognition" because these processes are neither controllable nor even accessible to the conscious mind.[41] Cognitive scientists estimate, in fact, that *at least* ninety-five percent of all thought takes place like this, exclusively in the cognitive unconscious, out of sight and out of our control.[42]

Summary of Cognitive Insights

When we read a text or hear a sentence we almost instantaneously "understand" its meaning, which leads us naturally to locate meaning in the words and their

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[40] This list of cognitive processes was adopted nearly wholesale from: Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 10-11. However, I have made a few additions and subtractions of my own as well.

[41] Fauconnier, *Methods and Generalizations*, 96-99; Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 10-13.

[42] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 10-13.

grammatical arrangement. However, this is a misconception. Words and grammar can only "prompt" meaning creation in the mind of the reader, which is carried out (almost exclusively) by the complex "backstage" cognitive processes of the reader/listener.[43]

The reason language is successful in communicating such an extraordinary amount of information with relatively few words is because it prompts our mind-brains and their universal human faculties (e.g. sensorimotor regions, memory, frames, conceptual blending) to construct meaning, in accordance with our cultural and environmental particularities and embodied experiences. Our mind-brain, thought, and language are all integrally linked with our lived experience and we can neither produce nor comprehend language and meaning without our sensorimotor experiences.[44]

This leads to a radical conclusion: the human mind is embodied—there is no mind-body dualism. Language, thought, and our embodied sensorimotor experience are inseparable. Descartes was wrong, as the celebrated cognitive neuroscientist Antonio R. Damasio has said.[45] This has very important implications for the cognitive understanding of language, texts, and meaning, to which I will turn in the next chapter.

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[43] Fauconnier, *Methods and Generalizations*, 98-99.

[44] Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 259; Fauconnier, *Methods and Generalizations*, 98-99; Gibbs, Jr., *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, 8, 276; Gibbs, Jr. and Matlock, *Metaphor, Imagination, and Simulation*, 164.

[45] See his fascinating book: Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: HarperCollins-Quill), 1994.

Getting Specific:

A Case Study on Language and Human Emotions

In this chapter, we will see how the basic principles of the cognitive theory of language (explicated above) work when applied to a specific problem in linguistics (in this case: *how* does language express emotion and *why* do we have emotional reactions to stories, poems, songs, etc.?). I will also introduce the reader to several cognitive insights on language and emotions, which are important for my later analysis of Rūmī's poem on *love*—perhaps the most difficult of all human emotions to articulate!

How would you *describe* love?

Human emotions/feelings are notoriously hard to articulate.[46] The depth and complexity of the feeling(s) that one experiences when meeting the love of one's life, seeing one's first child born, and/or experiencing the death of a loved one, go beyond the purely literal and descriptive power of even the most accomplished writers. If you were asked what it feels like to fall madly in love with someone, what would you say? You would not, most probably, give a literal, point-by-point, detailed description of the intense emotional high that you felt when you were with your new lover as if, for example, you were describing to a university colleague what transpired at the last faculty meeting. You

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[46] Cognitive scientists make a distinction between "emotions" and "feelings." Emotions, as defined by Damasio, are a "collection of body state and brain state changes connected to particular mental images whose evaluation activated a specific brain system" and "the term *feeling* should be reserved for the private, mental experience of an emotion [emphasis added]" [see, Antonio R. Damasio, "Reflections on the Neurobiology of Emotion and Feeling," in *The Foundations of Cognitive Science*, ed. João Branquinho, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2001), 102-103 and Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 42]. This distinction is not pertinent to the discussion in this paper, therefore the terms "emotion" and "feeling" are used interchangeably here.

almost certainly would resort to metaphoric expressions that in some way *approximate*

the "feeling" of love that pervaded your whole being in those special moments.[47] For

example:

Waves of passion engulfed me.
I was swept off my feet.
I felt like I was flying.[48]

But, why is this? Why must we turn to metaphoric expressions? Why are human

emotional experiences like love so much more difficult to articulate than other human

experiences, such as attending faculty meetings, having the flu, or driving a car? Why are

we not able to literally describe what they *feel* like? Further, why have psychologists

observed that the more "intense" we perceive a feeling to be, the more likely we are to

use metaphoric language to express it?[49]

One of the primary reasons emotions are so difficult to express linguistically is

that human feelings/emotions are complex mental states that have a "diffuse structure"

and involve our sensorimotor apparatus, while the words we use to describe them with

are necessarily compact, "differentiated" conceptual categories.[50] This problem has a

neurological basis too: emotions are primarily processed by the right hemisphere of the

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[47] Zoltán Kövecses, "Metaphor and Emotion," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 380; Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., *The Poetics of the Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 124-127.

[48] Examples one and two here have been adapted from examples in: Gibbs, Jr., *The Poetics of the Mind*, 148.

[49] Gibbs, Jr., *The Poetics of the Mind,* 126.

[50] Reuven Tsur, "Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics," in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, ed. Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002), 280-282.

brain, while the left hemisphere dominates the processing and production of language.[51]

This enables us to categorically (i.e. linguistically) *identify* and *conceptualize* the

emotions/feelings that we feel (i.e. happiness, sadness, love, hate, etc.); however, we

struggle when pressed to literally *describe* their complex and diffuse character.[52]

      There is, however, a way to overcome this seemingly biologically determined

impasse. Literary scholars and cognitive scientists alike have observed that the most

effective way to communicate emotional qualities in literature is through the use of

evocative imagery that literally *induces* or *evokes* the intended emotional state in the

reader.[53] In other words, the author must choose imagery that helps the reader experience

the emotion himself/herself by presenting them with imagery that in some way

structurally or affectively semantically simulates the emotion that the author desires to

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[51] On emotion: Antonio R. Damasio, Ralph Adolphs, and Hanna Damasio, "The Contributions of Legion Method to the Functional Neuroanatomy of Emotion," in *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, ed. Richard J. Davidson Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 73. On language: Gazzaniga, Ivry, and Mangun, *Cognitive Neuroscience*, 333-335, 340, 342. I do not mean to assert that these hemispheric distinctions are absolute, which is why I use the word "primarily." The traditional dichotomous view held that the left hemisphere was *strictly* analytical-verbal while the right hemisphere was *strictly* holistic-spatial. However, the new view is slightly more nuanced. Gazzaniga, Ivry, and Mangun caution us to look at the hemispheric distinction as more one of a difference of "general processing style." They also remind us that rarely (if ever) is a given stimulus able to be processed exclusively by one hemisphere of the brain. Normally the hemispheres work together, although they do process different parts of the given stimulus (344-345).

[52] Tsur, *Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics*, 285; Gibbs, Jr., *The Poetics of the Mind*, 124-126. Although Keith Oatley's point it not quite the same as Tsur's assertion paraphrased above, he also notes that the relation between the experience of *feeling* an emotion and the verbal concept of that emotion is different than the relation between something that has an "external referent like a chair" and its verbal concept [Keith Oatley, *Best Laid Schemes: The Psychology of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 77-78].

[53] Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr, John S. Legitt, and Elizabeth A. Turner, "What's special About figurative Language in emotional Communication" in *The Verbal Communication of Emotions*, ed. Susan R. Fussell. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002), 125-126, 130, 139; Reuven Tsur, *Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics*, 286-287; Fatemeh Keshavarz and Habibollah Ghassemzadeh, "Life as a Stream and the Psychology of "Moment" in Hafiz's Verse: Application of Blending Theory," Journal of Pragmatics 40 (2008), 1782.

communicate to the reader.[54] In this way the reader *feels* the emotion because of the

"emotional atmosphere" embedded in the poem's imagery.[55] But, how does this work?

Can poetic imagery *really* induce emotions in a reader? The answer, according to

cognitive science, is 'yes.' Poetic imagery can and *does* induce emotions in the reader

because of the way our brain processes imagery—i.e. semantic simulation.

Damasio argues that "virtually every image, actually perceived or recalled, is

accompanied by some reaction from the apparatus of emotion."[56] This would seem to

follow logically from what Gazzaniga, Lakoff, Feldman, Gibbs, Jr., and Speer have

observed in regards to imagery and the way the human mind processes it in an "as if it

were real" manner.

In light of these recent insights, the difference between vapid and dynamic poetic

imagery is like the difference between the experience of walking into a dimly lit, lifeless,

stale, and abandoned tool shed and the experience of stepping into your family's home on

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[54] When I use the term "structural" I am referring to the diffuse and complex nature of human emotional states as opposed to the highly differentiated and reified conceptual categories necessarily created by the mind to identify the collections of various mental and physical changes that they affect in the mind and body. When I use the term "affective" I am referring to the "feelings" or "emotions" that we normally associate with different imagery. Here I am drawing on the work of Gibbs, Tsur, and Oatley cited above in note 51.

[55] Tsur, *Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics*, 285, 287.

[56] Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 58. Keith Oatley makes a similar point in regards to fictional stories. He discusses how we project ourselves into stories and begin to experience emotion based on the character we identify with. Most people, if they are interested at all in the movie, will experience sadness when a beloved character dies. Oatley's point is that while the stories may be fictional (and we know they are!), the emotions that are induced in us are very real [Keith Oatley, "Creative Expression and Communication of Emotions in the Visual and Narrative Arts," in *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, ed. Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 498-499]. It is also important to note that you do not have to be actively conscious that a particular image is affecting you emotional in order for it to actually do so, as Damasio states: "We do not need to be conscious of the inducer of an emotion and often are not..The actual cause may have been the image of an event, an image that had the potential to be conscious but just was not because you did not attend to it while you where attending to another...In other words, the representations which induce emotions and lead to subsequent feelings need not be attended, regardless of whether they signify something external to the organism or something recalled internally" [Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 47-48].

Thanksgiving Day, with all the accompanying smells, colors, screaming kids, loving

relatives, and attendant emotions. Just imagine the difference between your sensorimotor

and emotion reactions to these two scenes and you will understand why the quality of

imagery and metaphoric language is so central in effectively communicating meaning and

in the quality of the text/speech generally. We use imagery and metaphoric language to

express emotions linguistically not for rhetorical flourish but for a very practical reason:

namely, complex emotional experiences/feelings cannot be literally described in an

effective manner. They must be evoked in the reader/listener through dynamic imagery.

Imagery, Imagination, and Cognitive Processing

This discussion of imagery and emotions/feelings is not a point to be passed over

lightly. The inducement of different emotional states can dramatically alter the way our

brain processes information (including, poetry). When a new emotional state is induced,

the hypothalamus, basal forebrain, and brain stem release hormones (such as cortisol),

peptides (such as B-endorphin, oxytocin, etc.), and neurotransmitters (such as

monoamines, norepinephrine, serotonin, dopamine, etc.), and in the process, "temporarily

transform the mode of working for many neural circuits," which fundamentally changes

our "mode of cognitive processing."[57] For example, Joseph P. Forgas cites a number of

studies that indicate that "Happy people [i.e. those in a temporary emotional state of

"happiness"] are more likely to adopt more creative, open, and inclusive thinking styles,

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[57] Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 60, 80, 282.

use broader categories, and show greater mental flexibility...".[58] As you can imagine, this (or the inverse) will significantly affect the way we read and interpret a text and the openness we have to its many potential meanings.

A similar, and equally important, effect of our "imaginative mind" has been demonstrated in another recent study where researchers observed that *imagining* oneself doing different actions (such as, assuming a different posture, which is what they had their study participants do) can actually significantly change how we process information. This research, the study's authors claim, points to the fact that "imagination has the extraordinary capacity to shape reality."[59]

This understanding of the way our brain processes imagery has profound implications for the field of literary studies. When considered in the aggregate, all of this points to the fact that we must take imagery very seriously, not only for its lyrical beauty, but also for its central role in communicating meaning at the cognitive level and its ability to cognitively affect the way a reader processes a poem or a story.

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[58] Joseph P. Forgas, "Affective Influences on Attitudes and Judgments," in *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, ed. Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 601.

[59] Christopher C. Davoli and Richard A. Abrams, "Reaching Out with the Imagination," *Psychological Science* 20, no. 3 (2009): 293-295.

CHAPTER II

Cognitive Science(s) and Literary Studies

New Insights into the Old Questions of Literary Studies

Before we proceed to discuss Rūmī's poetry, it is important to discuss how the insights of cognitive science have impacted the traditional understandings of literary studies in the areas most relevant to the present study: specifically, language, texts, literary imagery, and meaning. Our view of the interrelation of these basic elements of communication is essential for our larger understanding of literature from the role of literary tropes to the process of translation.

Language, Texts, and Meaning

The cognitive insights into the nature of language, thought, and the human mind-brain have had a very important effect on the way language, texts, and meaning are conceptualized in cognitive studies:

> Cognitive linguistics recognizes that the study of language is the study of language use...Language does not "represent" meaning; it prompts for the construction of meaning in particular contexts with particular cultural models and cognitive resources. Very sparse grammar guides us along the same rich mental paths, by prompting us to perform complex cognitive operations. Thus, a large part of cognitive linguistics centers on the creative on-line construction of meaning as discourse unfolds in context. The dividing line between semantics and pragmatics dissolves and truth-conditional compositionality disappears.[60]

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[60] Fauconnier, *Cognitive Science*, 539-540.

This approach to language redefines the nature of texts altogether—no longer is a text simply a repository of static meaning that can be extracted by the keen scholarly eye and catalogued as a philological artifact. On the contrary, a text is a re-occuring performance that is a catalyst for "creative on-line creation of meaning" for every new audience member. Each constituent element of language and texts—grammar, structure, prosody, metaphor, imagery, image schemas, etc.—become the individual actors in this performance, each with a unique role to play in the larger production and each worthy of closer examination for the particular role they play in "prompting" meaning creation in the reader's mind. Scott Delancey summarizes this position pithly: "In its communicative function, language is a set of tools with which we attempt to guide another mind to create within itself a mental representation that approximates one we have."[61]

Meaning, therefore, according to cognitivists, is "emergent" and interactive—i.e. not fixed or catalogable. It is located in the reader's mind, subjectively defined by the complex intersections of their previous knowledge, associations, memories, and emotions evoked by the text and its constituent parts.[62] This understanding of language, texts, and meaning shifts the focus from the texts and their supposedly stable and inherent meaning, and focuses instead on the reader and their "creative on-line construction of meaning." This shift in perspective, amongst other things, necessitates new approaches to the different elements of language and texts, literary tropes, and translation.

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[61] Quoted in: Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 259. Although Delancey uses the phrase "create...mental representation[s]" above, it is actually more accurate, cognitively-speaking, to say "evoke mental simulations." This latter terminology is considered the dominant view in cognitive science.

[62] Herbert Simon, "Literary Criticism: A Cognitive Approach," *Stanford Humanities Review* 4, no. 1 (1995); Fauconnier, *Methods and Generalizations*, 98-100, 123-124.

Literary Imagery

If the primary role of language is to evoke mental simulations in the mind of the reader that in some way correspond to the experience the writer is trying to articulate, then literary imagery becomes one of the most important tools (if not *the* most important tool) at the disposal of the writer. Indeed, since the cognitive view of language maintains that most of language is predicated on metaphor, it is not a stretch to say that literary imagery may be the most significant purveyor of meaning in all of language.

The study of metaphoric imagery in literature and poetry is, of course, nothing new or revolutionary. Literary scholars have long considered the quality and dynamism of a literary work's imagery to be an important part of its broader aesthetic appeal. What cognitive science has revealed, however, is *why* the nature of the imagery in a work is so important. Imagery, according to cognitive science, is not important so much for what it "represents," but, rather, for what it cognitively evokes in the reader.

In the scholarship on Rūmī's works, too often his dynamic imagery is treated simply as representations of this or that Sufi idea, as Fatemeh Keshavarz has noted in her recent study of Rūmī's poetry.[63] The standard accounts of Rūmī's poetic imagery usually go something like this: wine *represents* the intoxication of love that the sufis experience in their union with the Beloved (God); fire *represents* the intense passion of the lovers; the ocean *represents* God and God's infiniteness; etc. The problem with philological catalogues of imagery like this is not that they are inherently incorrect; rather, their fault lies in that they completely ignore the important role that imagery plays in

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[63] Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 72-77.

communicating meaning to the reader.[64] Studies like this are so concerned with finding

the pure and immutable meaning of each piece of imagery that they ignore its

performative aspects.[65]

Their "referential" or "representational" approach is anathema to the cognitive

understanding of imagery because it both fundamentally misinterprets the purpose of

poetic imagery and fails to consider how our minds process imagery. As discussed in the

preceding sections, authors employ metaphoric imagery to express experiences, thoughts,

feelings, etc. that go beyond the descriptive power of purely discursive language. They

utilize imagery, therefore, not to "refer to" or "represent" something, but, rather, to *evoke*

meaning creation through semantic simulations and to *induce* emotive and sensual

atmosphere(s) in the mind-brain of the reader, which, together, communicate far more

meaning than would be possible by purely representational discursive language.

In cognitive science, imagery is a catalyst that catapults the reader beyond the

limitations of literal and purely descriptive language and into an emergent world (termed,

a "mental space") that is formed through a dialectic between the cognitive unconscious of

the reader and the textual "prompts" provided by the imagery, grammar, and image-

schemas of the text.[66] Here, in this emergent world, the reader experiences the imagery

themselves in the same (or at least similar) way as if they were really seeing it or doing it,

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[64] There are times however, when they are incorrect, as Keshavarz points out in her study. She notes that in many critical works on the *Divan-i Shams* the authors try to "reach a single fixed interpretation for each image" which "reduces them to a conventional hard core" (Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 72).

[65] Keshavarz makes this point in her trenchant study of Rūmī's lyrics: Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 72-77. Her study is a notable exception to this general trend.

[66] Keshavarz uses the concept of "emergent world" in her fascinating study on 'Attar's *Mantiq al-Tayr*: Fatemeh Keshavarz, "Flight of the Birds: The Poetic Animating the Spiritual in 'Attar's 'Mantiq al-Tayr'," in *'Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 116, 129.

and, through this complex cognitive simulation that occurs in a fraction of a second (and usually unconsciously), the reader is able to assign meaning to it.[67] This is the purpose of poetic imagery and this is where the meaning of poetic imagery is generated—not in dusty dictionaries nor the annals of philologists. The meaning of imagery is not in the words, it is in the dynamic mental simulations that they evoke in the reader. This is an essential point for all literary scholars to keep in mind while analyzing and translating literature (a topic which I will return to in the next chapter).

The 'Meaning Event'

The cognitive view of language, texts, imagery, and meaning discussed in the last two sections corresponds closely with the concept of mystical writings as "meaning events," a concept which has been elaborated previously by Sells, Keshavarz and Tsur. They have all demonstrated in their studies of mystical literature of Greek/Christian/ Islamic/Jewish/Secular-Mystical origin that mystical texts often semantically enact (i.e. as opposed to literally describe) the mystical experience/meaning they are seeking to communicate.[68] Sells has termed this phenomenon the "meaning event":

> Meaning event indicates that moment when the meaning has become identical or fused with the act of predication. In metaphysical terms, essence is identical with existence, but such identity is not only asserted, it is performed...It is the semantic analogue to the experience of mystical

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[67] Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 4-5.

[68] Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994); Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*; Keshavarz, *Flight of the Birds*; Tsur, *Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics*; and Reuven Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness: Space, Rhythm, an Semantic Structure in Religious Poetry and its Mystic-Secular Counterpart* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2003).

union. It does not describe or refer to mystical union but effects a semantic union that re-creates or imitates the mystical union.[69]

Tsur makes a similar point, but he characterizes it as the difference between "telling" and "showing" meaning, and explicitly links it to the cognitive aspects of understanding meaning in poetry.[70] Keshavarz, in her recent study of Rūmī's poetics, cites Sells approvingly and argues that we must "observe the poems in action" to fully comprehend the dynamic ways in which Rūmī creates meaning because he expresses meaning "not through description and explication but by letting the reader share [the] experience in his/her role as the reader of [the] lyrics."[71]

The similarity between the cognitive perspective on language and meaning and the concept of the "meaning event" as elucidated by Sells, Keshavarz and Tsur is quite striking. In fact, in essence, they are almost identical. The important point in both the studies of the cognitive scientists and these innovative literary scholars is that language communicates meaning not simply by referring to something, but rather, by semantically enacting it, or evoking it, for the reader. Cognitive science may, however, aid in expanding the concept of the "meaning event" and help corroborate its basic premises by answering the fundamental question: *how* does language do this? *how* does language create "a semantic union that re-creates or imitates the mystical union," as Sells suggests?

As we saw in the last chapter, our ability to both formulate and comprehend language is directly tied to our embodied experiences and sensorimotor regions of our

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[69] Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 9.

[70] Tsur, Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics, 287; Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness*, 234.

[71] Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 20, 36-39, 77.

brain. It logically follows that mystical experience and mystical language are in some sense inseparable. When mystics discuss their mystical experience, they will inevitably draw on the sensorimotor experiences they felt during their mystical experience and choose metaphoric language/imagery that in some way communicates these same sensorimotor experiences to the reader. The reader then reads the mystical writing, which evokes similar mental simulations and their attendant sensorimotor sensations and emotional responses within their own mind.[72] In some sense then, the reader too is able to experience aspects of the mystical experience of the author.

When considered in this view, all images, metaphors, etc. become meaning events because each (in their own limited way) are a moment of fusion between the mystical experience, its meaning, and its predication. In these moments, meaning is not only asserted or performed, it is also experienced in a very real way by the reader through the cognitive process of semantic simulation.

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[72] These mental simulations and their attendant sensorimotor sensations and emotional responses are all, of course, limited by the conceptual frameworks and experiential history that the individual reader possesses.

CHAPTER III

Rūmī's *Ghazal #1919*

A Literary Analysis and a New Translation

It should come as little surprise that this poem has been very popular with Rūmī scholars and translators. Although no scholarly work has been done on it specifically, it has appeared in all three of the major English translations of Rūmī's poetry from his *Dīvān-i Shams*. Its dynamic and interlocking imagery leaves a powerful impression in the mind of the reader.

After reviewing the previous translations of this poem, I decided to provide the reader with a new one.[73] This was necessary because, as I will argue in the next chapter, the old translations by Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel simply fail to capture the magic of Rūmī's original Persian verses. While no translation may be able to do justice to this *ghazal*, I hope mine captures better some of the dynamic imagery and word plays that are clearly present in the original.

On Translating Mystical Lyrics:

The Meaning Event and Cogno-Erotic Translation

In translating mystical poetry, particular care must be taken to translate not only the literally meaning, but also the "meaning events" and their cognitive features (imagery,

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[73] The full translations by Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel can be found in Appendix I.

metaphor, image schemas, structure, etc.) that are interwoven into the linguistic fabric of the poem. The awareness of these "meaning events" and their centrality in communicating the meaning of the mystical texts necessitates new approaches to translation as an academic enterprise. It demands, above all, that we reject the view of translation as a mechanical act of substituting "arbitrary signs" that "represent" or "refer" to the same objects or actions according to our trusty multilingual dictionaries and philological catalogues of metaphor and imagery. Indeed, it is imperative—particularly in our rapidly globalizing world—that translation advance beyond the "substitution method" derived from the Saussurean understanding of linguistics.

The literary scholar and translator, Gayatri Spivak, has made a similar plea for a fundamental reorientation in our approach to translation. She argues for what she calls an "erotic" approach to translation, which requires the translator to "surrender themselves to the text" and "intimately" engage it, in order to go beyond the superficial level of words and their syntactical structures.[74] Her argument (and mine) is not that meticulous attention to the linguistical and syntactical details in the texts we are translating is unimportant. Rather, her point, and mine in my cognitive approach here, is that "meaning" goes beyond words and their structure. Just as the language of lovers (mystical or mundane)—the language of the heart—goes beyond words, so too must we as translators go beyond the surface level of what words "mean" or "represent," and *feel* how they speak to our hearts (or, mind-brains).

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[74] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, ed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 179-200 (New York: Routledge, 1993): 180-183.

This "erotic" approach to translation fits very well, I believe, with the cognitive approach to translation, which also insists that we look beyond what words "represent" to see *how* they literally *feel* to us. Far from being just pedantic literary theory, cognitive science tells us that this is quite literally how our mind-brain processes language and texts.

If there is any hope for a true translation of Rūmī's poetry, I believe we, as translators, must surrender ourselves to our texts and go beyond their words by intimately engaging them at one of the "hundred thousand" levels of the heart, or in modern parlance, at one of the "hundred thousand" cognitive levels of the human mind-brain.[75] This requires a "cogno-erotic translation." Perhaps this is what Rūmī meant when he said:

> *Without considering the words of this poem see in the heart what it means!*[76]

To the extent that this is possible, this is my overriding modus operandi in my own translation here.[77]

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[75] Quote from Rumi : Masnavi 1:1216. This translation is from Fatemeh Keshavarz.

[76] This is the author's translation. Persian text from: Forouzanfar Collection Ghazal #1077; Nicholson Collection Ghazal #XXVI.

[77] I am significantly indebted to extensive conversations with both Dr. Fatemeh Keshavarz and Parisa Dianati for helping me refine this translation and offering clarification on particularly difficult verses.

Translation

1	*Love is flying in the sky* *every breath tearing a hundred veils*	عشق است در آسمان پریدن صد پرده به هر نفس دریدن
2	*the first breath, renouncing self* *the last step, renouncing feet*	اول نفس از نفس گسستن آخر قدم از قدم بریدن
3	*being indifferent to this world* *even not seeing what one's own eyes see!*	نادیده گرفتن این جهان را مر دیده خویش را ندیدن
4	*I said: heart be blessed* *upon being received in the circle of lovers*	گفتم که دلا مبارکت باد در حلقه عاشقان رسیدن
5	*seeing farther than the eye* *running in the alleys of the bosom.*	ز آن سوی نظر نظاره کردن در کوچه سینه ها دویدن
6	*O Soul! from where came this breath?* *O Heart! from where is this beating?*	ای جان ز کجا رسیدت این دم ای دل ز کجاست این طپیدن
7	*O Bird! speak the language of the birds!* *I know how to hear your secret.*	ای مرغ بگو زبان مرغان من دانم رمز تو شنیدن
8	*The Heart said: I was occupied with the work of the house* *baking the house of water and clay*	دل گفت به کار خانه بودم تا خانه آب و گل پزیدن
9	*from the house of creation I was flying* *so to create the house of creation.*	از خانه صنع می پریدم تا خانه صنع آفریدن
10	*When foot remained not, they were pulling me* *how can I say how they were pulling?!?!*	چون پای نماند می کشیدند چون گویم صورتی کشیدن

A Literary Analysis

This poem starts in the air—for love (*'eshq*) is not grounded, it is exhilarating and unbound by earthly rules, distinctions, boundaries, etc. Immediately we, as readers, are flying with love from our earthly existence into the sky (*āsemān*) (line one). The sky is the known, unknown—the domain we can always see but cannot reach under normal human conditions—at least, according to the laws of "the house of creation" (*khāne-ye son'*) (line nine). You cannot get there on foot, nor if you cling to your (lower) self (*nafs*)

and this world (line two). The sky is the domain of the *morq*—the mystical bird who speaks only the language of the heart (line seven). It is where the "house of creation" is created and it is also the poetic environment that Rūmī chose for his poetic creation on love (line nine).

Rūmī tells us that we too can fly with love in the unbounded expanses of the sky and join the circle of lovers (line four)! However, we must take the first step—in fact, we must jump and put ourselves at the complete mercy of the overwhelming force called love. If we are scared to leave our feet or lose ourself (*nafs*) (line two), we will instead cling like a frightened child to this world of "water and clay" (line three and eight).

However, if we throw ourselves with complete reckless abandonment towards the sky, love will carry us ("pull" us) the rest of the way (line ten). It is only love that can carry us there, and it is only love that can tear the veils that blind us from seeing "farther than the eye" and clear our ears so that we may hear and understand the secrets of the mystical birds (line one, five, and seven).

And what is their secret? What does the "circle of lovers" know that those on the ground do not? Line nine tell us: somehow, through the mysterious force of love, we too can participate in the creation of the world (*tā khāne-ye son' āfarīdan*).

General Cognitive Observations

While the next chapter will focus specifically on a cognitive analysis of a few selected parts of this poem, I will begin here with couple of general cognitive observations about this poem.

First, it is important to note that while the central character of this poem is love

(*'eshq*), it is never described literally, but rather, it is treated only in a series of metaphors

throughout the poem.[78] Love is "flying in the sky"(line one); love is "tearing a hundred

veils" (line one); and love is "pulling" (line ten). Notice that these metaphors all are

based on the same primary metaphor (namely, EMOTIONS ARE FORCES) and all derive

their meaning from embodied and sensorimotor experiences (i.e. flying, tearing, and

pulling).[79]

Love is also treated indirectly using metaphors, in the sense that we are told that

love *compels* one to do certain things—e.g. to "renounc[e]" our (lower) self (*nafs*) and to

"[be] indifferent to the world." While both "renouncing" and "being indifferent" to

something may not seem at first to be related to the EMOTIONS ARE FORCES primary

metaphor, upon closer examination, they in fact are.

Both "renouncing" and "being indifferent" to something requires the *force* of a

human's will power to be accomplished. In this sense, human will power is conceived of

metaphorically as a tool that we wield and manipulate (i.e. the embodied sensorimotor

basis of the metaphor) to *force* our body to do things that we may not do naturally

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[78] In the context of Rūmī's mystical poetry, love can be thought of as both the human emotion and as the dominant characteristic or feature of union with God.

[79] The one exception to my observation that all of the metaphors for love are based on the primary metaphor EMOTIONS ARE FORCES is in the second part of line three ("*even not seeing what one's own eyes see!*"). While one could make a tortured argument for the inclusion of this within the framework of the EMOTIONS ARE FORCES primary metaphor, arguing for example that you must *force* yourself to not see what your eyes see or that you must *force* yourself to see beyond external appearances, I think it may be better to avoid such tortured explanations and instead just regard this as an exception that proves the general rule: namely, emotions are usually conceptualized as forces in human language (see the next chapter for more on this). The discussion of emotions as forces is based on the work of Zoltán Kövecses. See: Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 57-58, 61, 85, 192 and Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion* (2008), 385. His work will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

otherwise.[80] When considered this way, "love" is the force that leads the lovers to *willfully* renounce themselves and be indifferent to the world.

So while "renouncing" ourselves and our feet and "being indifferent to the world" may not seem to be based on embodied sensorimotor experiences and the primary metaphor EMOTIONS ARE FORCES at first glance, upon further examination and a bit of cognitive dissection, we discover that at the most basic levels they very much are. The point to remember here is not these pedantic details; rather, what is important is the central metaphoric thread that is running through this entire poem: LOVE IS A FORCE (I will discuss this further in the next chapter).

The second important point to note here is that there are *at least* two other even more basic primary metaphors that together with LOVE IS A FORCE form the foundation of this poem: namely, STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE IS MOTION.[81] These two primary metaphors conceptually blend with the LOVE IS A FORCE metaphor to form the linguistic framework for the entire poem. Let us look closer at how exactly this works.

Throughout the poem, there are clearly two "locations" which are in opposition to one another and sharply contrasted with each other. First, there is the sky (or, the air), which is where love is flying (line one), the circle of lovers is located (line four), the "house of creation is being created" (line nine), and love is pulling Rūmī (line ten). Secondly, in opposition, there is the ground, which is never explicitly mentioned but is

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[80] Here are a couple more mundane examples, for clarity sake: if someone is fasting, they will use their will power to *force themselves* not to eat, or someone really wants to go to a party on Friday night but they have homework to do, they will (hopefully) use their will power to *force themselves* to stay home and finish their work.

[81] These two primary metaphors are listed in the table of common primary metaphors in: Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 52.

easily inferred by the mention of "feet" in lines two and ten, "this world" (line three), the

"house of water and clay" (line eight), and the "house of creation" (line nine). These two

locations are clearly identified by Rūmī with two different emotional *states*: namely, the

sky is the domain of love and the ground is the domain of "not-love" (for lack of a better

word).[82]

Why would Rūmī choose these two *locations* to be the metaphoric images for the

emotional *states* of love and not-love? The answer is simply (no tortured Freudian

psychologizing of Rūmī needed!): the everyday human embodied, sensorimotor

experience of walking on the firm ground, with its conspicuous mundanity, evokes

feelings of stability, security, and control (all paramount concerns of the ego and the

lower self, the *nafs*). Further, the action of walking is a very deliberate and ego-controlled

action, in the sense that normally you, as director of your body, decide and order your

feet where to take you next.

However, in stark contrast to these characteristics of our "grounded" experience,

the embodied, sensorimotor experience of being in the air (whether accidentally falling or

deliberately jumping) is completely the opposite: uncertain, incontrollable, and

simultaneously both exhilarating and frightening. It is precisely because these two

different *locations* would evoke these two very different sets of sensorimotor experiences

and emotional states in the reader that Rūmī likely chose them.

In short, the metaphoric foundation of this poem looks like this: in order to get

from the ground (location #1) to the sky (location #2) requires a *change* of *state* (i.e. from

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[82] I am not, of course, suggesting that Rūmī is asserting that earthly love is not true love or anything along
this line. Rather, my point is that he is using this imagery of the sky and the ground for metaphoric effect.

"not-love" to "love"). *Change* occurs with *motion*, which needs a *force* (here, "love") to be actualized. What is the importance of all of this? In sum, what has been discussed in this section is the metaphoric skeleton of *ghazal* #1919. It is the framing for the rest of the poem and the cognitive foundation for its imagery and metaphoric language. Without these initial building blocks (i.e. these primary metaphors discussed above) our brains would not be able to comprehend most of the poem because it would be unable to map the sensorimotor experiences of "flying", "running", "pulling", being in the air (i.e. the sky), etc. onto the conceptual idea of love. And, to return to a question I asked earlier, without the ability to map these and other sensorimotor experiences onto the concept of love, *how* would you describe love?

The Two Versions of the Original Persian Text:

The Extant Manuscripts and the Printed Editions of the "Dīvān-i Shams"

Before we proceed to delve more deeply into the cognitive analysis of this poem and some of its translations, I need to say a word about the differences between its two most prominent printed editions.

This issue cannot be passed over without comment because words and word order are extremely important in cognitive poetics. A simple preposition, a definite article, or even a tense shift can dramatically change the way we perceive and process a poem and the poetic environment that it creates in our mind (as we will see in an example from this poem discussed in the next chapter). Therefore, any cognitive analysis of a pre-modern literary work must first begin by taking a serious look at the manuscript evidence. Is there

more than one version of the work? If there are, what are the differences? How

significant are they for our cognitive understanding of the text? These issues are

particularly acute in the examination of short poems, where individual lines contain few

words and the meanings of their lines, at times, can be playful enigmatic and change

significantly with only the slightest alteration in the text.

The poem under consideration here has at least two printed versions (in Persian),

both of which were prepared by major scholars in the field of Rūmī studies (R.A.

Nicholson and Badi' al-Zamān Forouzanfar). The differences between the two versions

are not major, but do include a few notable discrepancies:

1. Line 1: **dar/in** (Nicholson) / **bar/on** (Forouzanfar)
2. Line 2: **ākhar/last** (Nicholson) / **āvval/first** (Forouzanfar)
3. Line 3: **nadīdan/not seeing** (Nicholson) / **bedīdan/seeing** (Forouzanfar)
4. Line 6: **jān/soul** (Nicholson) / **del/heart** (Forouzanfar)
5. Line 6: **resīdan/arriving** (Nicholson) / **resīd/arrived** (Forouzanfar)
6. Line 8: **pazīdan/cooking, baking** (Nicholson) / **parīdan/flying** (Forouzanfar)
7. Line 10: **sūratī/the way** (Nicholson) / **sūrat-i/the way** (Forouzanfar)

While Forouzanfar's edition is generally considered to be the standard Persian

text in academic circles, it is not perfect and indeed it is known to have a few problems,

as Rūmī scholar Franklin Lewis notes:

> [Forouzanfar's] edition is not definitive; several spurious poems likely
> remain in the text and occasionally Forouzanfar chooses readings that
> could be improved upon. A.J. Arberry, for example, collated Forouzanfar's
> edition with the Chester Beatty manuscript (which Forouzanfar had access
> to in a microfilm which Arberry had prepared for him) and felt that
> Forouzanfar had not fully taken it into consideration.[83]

I include this caveat not to disparage Forouzanfar's tremendous work and his

generally superior edition of the *Dīvān-i Shams*, but rather to explain why I have decided

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[83] Lewis, *Rūmī*, 301-303.

to use Nicholson's text for *ghazal* #1919. It is not within the scope of this study to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the extant manuscript evidence. My preference for Nicholson's Persian text of *ghazal* #1919 is based solely on my literary analysis of the two versions.[84]

As I discussed in the last section, the metaphoric frame of this poem is predicated on the opposition between the domains of the sky and the ground ("love is flying in the sky," must "renounce" feet, etc.). One of the differences noted above between Nicholson's and Forouzanfar's text is in line two, where Nicholson chooses the reading with *ākhar* (last) and Forouzanfar chooses *āvval* (first). Since the metaphoric frame of this poem is about flight (i.e. leaving the earth), I would argue that Nicholson's reading of "the last (*ākhar)* step, renouncing feet" makes more sense here because the "last step" before you can fly is "renouncing feet." Imagine for a second that you could fly. If you were running, and about to take off, what would be the *last step* before you ascended into the sky? Precisely, the "last step" would be "renouncing feet" (i.e. leaving the earth). Thus, I would argue that Nicholson's reading here of *ākhar gadam āz qadam gosastan* is superior to Forouzanfar's reading of *āvval gadam āz qadam gosastan* because it fits the metaphoric frame better.

This, of course, is only a literary argument, and, perhaps, there is manuscript evidence to the contrary. However, for this and similar literary reasons in the cases of the other discrepancies in the manuscripts (which I do not have the space to discuss in depth), I have decided to utilize Nicholson's text of Rūmī's original Persian poem.

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[84] I hope raising this issue will lead someone with access to the various extant manuscripts and the requisite expertise in this area to investigate the manuscript evidence further in order to confirm or refute my literary assessment.

CHAPTER IV

'This' is not 'Love'

Approaching Ghazal #1919 and its Translations from a Cogno-Erotic Perspective

The late preeminent scholar of Islamic Studies, Anne Marie Schimmel, recently edited and translated a short collection of poems from the *Dīvān-i Shams* of the now world famous Persian mystical poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, entitled *Look! This is Love: Poems of Rūmī* (Shambhala, 1996). The title of this collection, containing some of Rūmī's most famous poems, is derived from the first line of *ghazal* #1919, to which Schimmel gives pride of place as the first poem in her book. This particularly famous *ghazal* has also appeared in the two other major collections of Rūmī's poems translated and edited by R.A. Nicholson (*Selected Poems from the Dīvān-e Shams-e Tabrizi of Jalāluddīn Rūmī*) and A.J. Arberry (*Mystical Poems of Rūmī: Poems 201-400*).

This chapter will focus specifically on *ghazal* #1919, examining some of its most prominent verses with the critical lens of cognitive literary criticism, while also critiquing how these same verses have been handled by the most recognized translators of Rūmī (i.e. Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel). While at first these two aims may seem disparate and difficult to reconcile, in reality they have a symbiotic relationship in the sense that through critiquing the existing translations I will be able to demonstrate both why cognitive analysis of literature is vitally important for understanding meaning

creation and also how failing to understand the cognitive dimensions of literature can lead to some very real problems in translation. As will be demonstrated, understanding *how* Rūmī's original lyrics communicate meaning at the cognitive level is absolutely essential for translating them correctly.

In this chapter, I will argue that the translations of *ghazal* #1919 by Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel have failed to capture the dynamic ways in which Rūmī creates meaning at the cognitive level.[85] In the end, the problem with their translations is that while translating the poem *literally* correctly, they have destroyed central elements of the cognitive meaning of the poem, and in the process, the poem has ceased to be a "meaning event."

Why 'This' Cannot Be 'Love'

The problems begin with the first word. In the original Persian poem, Rūmī begins *'eshq āst dar āsimān parīdan* (literally, "Love is in the sky flying"). The first word here, *'eshq*, is an abstract human emotional state, meaning "love" in English. *'eshq* is not, despite how it has been rendered into English verse, modified by the demonstrative adjective *this* (persian, *īn*) in the original, nor is it followed by a colon (i.e. as Nicholson et al. have translated it: "This is love: to fly..."). Cognitively-speaking, the difference for the English reader is enormous.

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[85] I want to state categorically that my intent in this paper is not to disparage the tremendous scholarly work that all of these scholars did during their lifetime. I enormously respect all of them, and I owe an enormous intellectual debt to them for my own intellectual understanding of Islam, and specifically Islamic mysticism. However, I do believe that we must critically assess their work using the newest advancements in any number of fields, including cognitive approaches to literature. It is only in the spirit of deepest respect for them that I approach this critique of their work. I do believe that they would be pleased with any study that advances a more complete understanding of the life and works of Rūmī.

In the original Persian, Rūmī welcomes us into his poetic environment with the diffuse and abstract (i.e. non-reified) human emotion of "love," which would immediately evoke emotive imagery of waves of warmth, surrender of self, etc. in the reader's mind. This is all the more important because it is the first word and, as such, it sets the "emotional atmosphere" for the rest of the poem. Cognitively speaking, this is no small matter. The emotional state in which one reads a poem can dramatically change the way one processes its content (as discussed in chapter I).

It is also significant that Rūmī chooses to begin his poem simply with the word "love," because, as Tsur has observed, abstract emotional states are one of the primary poetic devices for constructing poetic environments in which divisions and boundaries between defined entities cease to exist [note: in his analysis he includes "emotions" under the larger category of "abstractions"]:

> From the point of view of available verbal techniques... abstractions, gases and liquids are among the most prototypical natural symbols in our conceptual system to suggest a state in which the boundaries between objects are suspended.[86]

Thus, by placing the abstract quality "love" first, Rūmī immediately creates, and welcomes us into, a poetic environment that is both affectively characterized by "love" (and its associated emotive feelings) and structurally characterized by a lack of divisions and borders. This is meaning that the reader *feels*, but may not necessarily be conscious of (see footnote fifty-six on conscious and unconscious induction of emotion). In this way, Rūmī communicates a tremendous amount of meaning, which, despite its

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[86] Quote from: Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness*, 233. Also see the rest of this from more on this topic, as well as: Reuven Tsur, "'Oceanic' Dedifferentiation and Poetic Metaphor," Journal of Pragmatics 12 (1988): 711-24.

discrete cognitive nature, is nevertheless clearly present in the first word (*'ishq*) of the original poem.

The overflowing meaning that emanates from the first word of Rūmī's original poem is in sharp contrast to the English translations by Nicholson, Arberry, Schimmel (i.e. "This is love: to fly..."). In their translations, the reader is met with the delimiting demonstrative adjective "this," which divides and reifies the warm, inviting, and boundary-less poetic atmosphere Rūmī has created into a cold, conceptual, and differentiated environment. Moreover, immediately following the word "love," the reader of the translation is also treated to an abrupt punctuation mark, a colon, which is used to "mark boundaries within a sentence."[87] This further divides and differentiates the flowing and undifferentiated environment that we enjoy in the original Persian.

Both of these interpretative decisions undermine Rūmī's dynamic creation of meaning in the original Persian. Erecting poetic divisions and cognitive barriers belies the unbounded exhilaration of love ("flying in the sky") and the union between lovers ("every breath tearing a hundred veils") that is the principal concern of this poem. When the reader is presented with *'eshq āst* ("love is") in Rūmī's original poem, s/he constructs a starkly different poetic environment than when presented with the sharply differentiating "This is love:" in the English translations. "Love" leads us to commune with Rūmī's warm, nurturing, and undifferentiated poetic environment, in the same way that Rūmī communes with the "circle of lovers" in line four. In fact, we may even feel like we are "being pulled" into the poem in the same indescribable way that Rūmī

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[87] Geoffrey Nunberg, Ted Briscoe, and Rodney Huddleston, "Punctuation," in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, ed Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1735.

exclaims in the final verse: "how can I say how they were pulling!?!?". Perhaps this is his

poetic way to invite us into the "circle of lovers"? If so, beginning the translation with

"love" would be far more inviting to the reader than the harsher "This is love: to fly...".

Cognitive Schemas, Metaphoric Forms, and Oceanic Dedifferentiation

I would like to now turn to another poetic feature in the opening line of Rūmī's

ghazal we are exploring, namely his use of the IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION metaphor

form (i.e. "Love is flying IN the sky"). Tsur has observed in a number of studies that

poets frequently use metaphors of the IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION form when

writing about their emotional high points of mystical or romantic union.[88] He suggests

that metaphors of this form are particularly felicitous for communicating the intense

feelings of "peak experiences" because they cognitively evoke a sense of "oceanic

dedifferentiation" in the reader, where boundaries and distinctions between differentiated

objects cease to exist.[89] The level of "oceanic dedifferentiation" may vary according to

the exact imagery used; however, at the very least, metaphors of this type create a poetic

environment that is perceived by the reader as less differentiated.[90] He bases this on the

same principle quoted above, namely:

> From the point of view of available verbal techniques... abstractions, gases
> and liquids are among the most prototypical natural symbols in our

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[88] Tsur, *'Oceanic' Dedifferentiation and Poetic Metaphor*, 711, 718-719; Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness*, 234. The first example is taken from: Tsur, *'Oceanic' Dedifferentiation and Poetic Metaphor*, 716.

[89] Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness*, 233-234.

[90] Tsur, *'Oceanic' Dedifferentiation and Poetic Metaphor*, 713.

conceptual system to suggest a state in which the boundaries between objects are suspended.[91]

In the original Persian, Rūmī's first line is a perfect example of a metaphor of the IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION schema: "flying *IN* [immersion] the *SKY* [abstraction]." The sky is a seemingly infinite, abstract space without the borders and distinctions that characterize earthly life. The mental imagery and feelings evoked while imagining oneself flying effortlessly in the wide expanses of an endless sky is certainly different from the imagery evoked by the English translations of Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel.

In translating *'eshq āst dar āsemān parīdan* (or even *'eshq āst bar āsemān parīdan*, as it appears in the Forouzanfar text) as "This is love: to fly heavenward" (Nicholson), "This is love: to fly to heaven" (Arberry), and " Look! This is love – to fly toward the heavens" (Schimmel), they have all translated this line as if the underlying metaphoric form was of the SOURCE - PATH -GOAL schema variety. This obviously is not the metaphoric structure underlying the original Persian verse whose basic IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION schema has effectively been destroyed by this seemingly small and innocuous decision to translate *dar* ("in") as "to" or "toward." This is not an insignificant decision cognitively-speaking, because every word—even small prepositions like *to* or *in*—has the potential to radically change the way we process poetic imagery and its meaning: in fact, even "[d]eceptively simple looking prepositions like *in*,

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[91] Quote from: Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness*, 233. Also see the rest of this from more on this topic, as well as: Tsur, *'Oceanic' Dedifferentiation and Poetic Metaphor*, 711-24.

out, over, define elaborate networks of spatial meaning with hundreds of linked schemas, some of which are prototypical and central."[92]

All of the translators also provide a definite destination for the flight (i.e. "heaven"), which reinforces the SOURCE - PATH -GOAL schema that was initially evoked by the use of the preposition *to*. Rūmī, however, does not indicate that love is like flying *to somewhere* or *towards something*; rather, he says that love is like *flying in the sky* (IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION with no definitive destination).

The two very different metaphoric forms that underlie Rūmī's original verse and its translations evoke different cognitive schemas, and thus fundamentally alter our understanding of the meaning communicated by the imagery. Setting out on a journey *to/ towards* a known location (a JOURNEY metaphor of the SOURCE - PATH -GOAL schema) is very different than immersing oneself *in* something vast and unknown (IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION schema). More concretely, it is like the difference between *journeying* to the sea shore [known, finite] and *exploring* the ocean [unknown, infinite]. The rest of the *ghazal* seems to indicate that Rūmī would certainly not want his reader to stop at the seashore when the ocean is there waiting for him/her to explore![93]

Clearly, the decision of Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel to use " heavenward," "to heaven," and "toward heaven" instead of the original "in the sky" (*dar/bar āsemān*) not only undermines the "oceanic" and "dedifferentiated" poetic environment in the original poem, but it also radically changes the metaphoric structure/cognitive schema of the first line from IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION to SOURCE - PATH - DESTINATION.

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[92] Fauconnier, *Cognitive Science*, 541.

[93] Rūmī frequently uses the image of the "ocean" to symbolize the soul, God, love, etc.

Ultimately, these small changes of just a few words fundamentally alter the understanding of the nature of love as expressed in the first line of the poem: "love" as exploration in an infinite, division-less environment in the original Persian becomes "love" as a limited journey with a defined destination in the English translations.

The Metaphoric Structure of Emotions and the Translation of Persian Verbs:
Active Processes versus Reified Concepts

Much has been said in this work about the role of human emotions and their linguistic expression. I have frequently referred to "human emotional states." This expression, however, may not be entirely appropriate. As discussed above, emotions are dynamic and diffuse processes that affect change within our bodies, both physiologically and cognitively. They also play a powerful role in prompting all sorts of active emotional responses (e.g. crying, screaming, displays of affection). It is, therefore, more appropriate to refer to emotions not as "states of being," but rather as "forces" that animate our lives.

The cognitive linguist, Zoltán Kövecses, makes this exact point in his detailed study of the expression of emotion in metaphor. In a wide-ranging study of the use of "emotional metaphors" in several languages, he concludes that the "master metaphor" underlying the linguistic expression of emotion is: EMOTIONS ARE FORCES. In other words, emotions are cognitively understood and expressed as events (e.g. "love knocked me off my feet," "he was overcome with sadness"); *not* as states of being, as often

thought by both scholars and non-academics.[94] Not surprisingly, this results in the

expression of emotions almost exclusively with motion verbs.[95] (Incidentally, Rūmī

advocated just such a view of emotions. See his "Discourse Eleven" in the *Fīhi ma Fīhi*

for Rūmī's perspective on the overwhelming *force* of emotions, and particularly of *love*.

Here he says that the "drowned person" [i.e. "a mystical lover of God," in this context]

has no independent motion. Any motion of the lover is really from the beloved [i.e. God]

—in other words, God/Love is the force that moves the true lovers).[96]

Kövecses' observation about the fundamental connection between "emotions" and

"motion" has also been corroborated in recent studies by other cognitive scientists. In his

most recent book on emotions, Damasio reports that in lab studies participants of all ages,

when shown a video of geometric shapes moving on a computer screen at varying rates,

assigned emotional values to the shapes' different rates of movement. He tells us "jagged

fast movements" were considered "angry;" "explosive but harmonious" movements

appeared "joyous;" and "recoiling motions" seemed "fearful" to the participants. Why do

humans imbue movement with emotional qualities? Because, Damasio explains

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[94] Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion* (2000), 57-58, 61, 85, 192; Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion* 2008), 385. The reader may object that frequently one will see emotions expressed with common phrases such as "I am *in* love" or "He is *in* depression," etc. However, as Kövecses notes, underlying this these phrases is the fact that in order to "be *in*" love" you must move into that state in the first place. The move is occasioned by the emotion; otherwise you would not be in that particular state. This linguistical expression of "being in x, y, z" emotional state is also why emotions are almost always conceived of by both scholars and non-scholars as "states," instead of "forces" [Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion* (2000), 51-53].

[95] Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion* (2000), 57-58.

[96] Jalāluddīn Rūmī, *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalāluddīn Rūmī*, tr. Thackston M. Wheeler, Jr (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 44-54.

"emotion, as the word indicates, is about movement, about externalized behavior, about certain orchestrations of reactions to a given cause, within a given environment."[97]

Both Kövecses and Damasio's analyses indicate that motion, and its precise nature, is crucial in communicating "emotional meaning," especially at the cognitive level. In poetry, motion is primarily created through dynamic imagery.[98] The mind's processing of imagery "as if it were real" (see chapter I, pp. 21-22) actually makes the creation of "motion" (and, therefore, "emotion") in poetry easy (for the creative poets!).

In the context of this study, the relevant question is: have Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel translated the "motion" which animates the original Persian texts? I would argue that they have not. In the first line of all of their translations, they translate *parīdan* (a verb in the form traditionally referred to as the "Persian infinitive") with the English infinitive "to fly." This is an interesting choice and it could have been made for a number of reasons (likely, stylistic). As the Persian language specialist Wheeler M. Thackston notes, however, "Although in quoting items of vocabulary the Persian infinitive is equated with the English infinitive, in fact their uses hardly ever coincide."[99] Normally, in fact, the Persian infinitive (*parīdan*) is translated into English using the English gerund (*flying*).[100]

In the case of Persian poetry, this is an especially important point. The infinitive form of Persian verbs (e.g. *parīdan*) is frequently used in Persian poetry, at least partially,

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[97] Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 70.

[98] It would also be interesting to investigate if the human mind perceives different rhyme schemes as "motion" as well.

[99] Wheeler M. Thackston, *An Introduction to Persian* (3rd ed. Bethesda, Md.: Ibex Publishers, 1993), 31.

[100] Thackston, *An Introduction to Persian*, 144.

to preserve poetic rhyme. Since all Persian verbs in the infinitive form end in either *-dan* or *-tan*, poetic rhyme can be easily maintained if the Persian verbs are left unconjugated. The Persian reader, however, naturally understands that these verbs, while unconjugated, still clearly indicate unfolding *action* (i.e. an active process; *not* a reified concept). This perception of "motion" in the original Persian is no small matter; indeed, as seen above, it is essential in communicating the emotional quality embedded in the imagery of the first line. For this reason, it is unfortunate that Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel decide to use the English infinitive form "to fly."

The full English infinitive (e.g. "to fly") can indicate motion, depending on its position in the sentence and the context. At the same time, it is well known as the "citation form" of English verbs (i.e. what you would see in a dictionary entry, for example, "Scream (v) - *to yell* loudly").[101] The citation form of a verb is necessarily understood as the reified concept of the active verb. In other words, it is not understood cognitively as an *active process*; but rather as the distilled (non-active) essence of the active process.

At the very least, this raises the distinct possibility that some readers will process Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel's translation of the first line in a purely conceptual, non-active sense. It is also quite possible that the insertion of the demonstrative adjective *this* and the colon after "love" in "This is love: to fly..." would facilitate the cognitive classification of "to fly" as a concept rather than an active process due to the way they

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[101] Rodney Huddleston, "The Verb," in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, ed Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 81. Thackston mentions this as well, *see* notes ninety-nine and one hundred.

both immediately restrict and delimit the poetic environment, and in my opinion, turn it into something that reads more like an entry in a dictionary than dynamic imagery.

Ultimately, whether the reader processes "to fly" in an active or conceptual sense is likely to vary from reader to reader.[102] However, even the possibility that a reader will understand "to fly" as a reified conceptual category warrants a new translational approach to this first line. My alternative translation of the first line is "Love is flying in the sky." I have opted for the English gerund because it better communicates the active and unfolding nature of the Persian verb, and thus preserves the emotive dimension of this line. I realize that in translating it this way I have created ambiguity as to whether "love" is: a. *doing* the flying, or b. is being compared to the action of "flying" in the sky. Regardless of the understanding the reader adopts, my translation preserves the motive/emotive dimension of the Persian verb, and thus, I would argue, better translates the dynamism of the imagery and meaning creation in Rūmī's original verse *'ishq āst dar āsimān parīdan*.

"Creating the House of Creation" and the Cognitive Inversion Effect

In this final section, I would like to briefly touch on an interpretive phenomenon which cognitive scientist Yeshayahu Shen has termed the "inversion effect." Michael Sells discusses, what I would describe as, a variety of this phenomenon in his trenchant comparative study of apophatic discourse. He opens his book with one of the most

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[102] The reader's choice to process the English infinitive "to fly" as either an active process or a reified concept could be linked to what Tsur describes as "rapid" versus "delayed" categorization styles of processing [for his discussion of this, please see: Tsur, *Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics* and Tsur, *On the Shores of Nothingness*.

famous and enigmatic passages from the legendary fourteenth century German Catholic

mystic Meister Eckhart:

> Were it the case that a fly had reason and could rationally seek out the
> eternal abyss of divine being, from which it came forth, we say that God,
> insofar as he is God, could not fulfill or satisfy the fly. Therefore pray God
> that we may be free of God.[103]

Sells explains, however, that one is not likely to find this passage in most editions

and translations of Eckhart's works because most modern editors and translators have

made an "interpretative decision" to place inverted commas around the second "God" in

the above passage or, alternatively, to make it into a lower-case "god." Thus, this passage

most often appears with one of the following combinations of editorial interpolations:

"we say that God, in so far as he is 'God'/god" and "Let us pray God that we may be free

of 'God'/god." These interpretative distinctions differentiating God from 'God'/god

(which do not appear in the original German text produced by Eckhart) are still employed

by most modern editors, translators, and commentators in their effort to make Eckhart's

apophatic discourse "make more sense" to the reader. As Sells states, however, this

"amounts to a censorship of the fundamental principle of apophatic discourse. That

principle...is the refusal to resolve the apophatic dilemma by posing a distinction between

two kinds of names."[104]

In a recent work, cognitive linguist Yeshayahu Shen reports results from a recent

lab study that demonstrates a somewhat similar human tendency for "editorial

interpretative decisions," which he calls the "inversion effect." His study examines the

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[103] Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 1.

[104] Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 1, 188-189, 294 n33.

way in which the human mind processes and interprets different types of abstract similes. Strikingly, he discovers, when the human mind is confronted with similes that require the mapping of "less accessible domains" onto "more accessible domains" (e.g. "an anchor is like a friend"), our minds have a cognitive "tendency" to automatically and unconsciously flip the direction of the conceptual blending (i.e. "a friend is like an anchor") in order to make it more "natural or easier to comprehend."

This heavy-handed (although unconscious) cognitive editing, however, not only changes the word order but, more importantly, "radical[ly]" inverts the meaning of the expression![105] The human "tendency" to make extraordinary "interpretative decisions," whether due to theological predispositions or natural cognitive tendencies, can, as Sells and Shen's studies both demonstrate, drastically change the meaning expressed by the original words.

In the English translations of the rather enigmatic line nine of *ghazal* #1919, I would argue, there is another clear example of this interpretive phenomenon:

Rūmī's Persian original:

āz khāne-ye son' mi-parīdan
tā khāne-ye son' āfarīdan

Which is translated by Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel as follows:

Nicholson:
I was flying away from the (material) workshop
While the workshop was being created.

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[105] Yeshayahu Shen, "Metaphor and Poetic Figures," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 299, 305-306.

Arberry:
I was flying from the workshop whilst the workshop was
being created.

Schimmel:
I fled from yonder workshop at a moment
Before the workshop was made and created.

There is, however, a major problem with their translations: the Persian verb

āfarīdan ("to create") is not passive as they have translated it ("being created/made"); it

is an active verb. This line should, I suggest, be translated as follows:

from the house of creation I was flying
so to create the house of creation.

"Flying from the house of creation" in order "to create the house of creation" (and

by extension, participating in the process of creation itself!), appears cognitively

incoherent and theologically daunting. It seems that in order to reduce the incoherence

that the literal Persian translation must have produced, Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel

decided to interpret the verb *āfarīdan* in a passive sense ("being created"). As in the

examples of Shen's "inversion effect" we saw above, this "interpretative decision," to

translate *āfarīdan* as a passive verb, *drastically* changes the radical meaning of the

original Persian, which, has very interesting implications indeed!

Conclusion

Michael Sells defines the "meaning event" as "that moment when the meaning

has become identical or fused with the act of predication..."[106] The cognitive

understanding of the way the human mind processes language, texts, and their constituent

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[106] Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 9.

parts (imagery, metaphor, image schemas, grammar, etc.) adds many new possible dimensions in which the "meaning" of a text can become fused with its "predication." In this chapter, I have discussed several examples of such instances, as well as the ways in which these instances of "cognitive meaning event creation" have been undermined by the translations of Nicholson, Arberry, and Schimmel of Rūmī's *ghazal* #1919.

      To briefly recap, my primary assertions are:

- The use of "this" reifies, delimits, and restricts the dedifferentiated, diffuse, and warm poetic environment intended in the original Persian text, which begins simply with the abstract human emotion *'eshq* ("love"). Moreover, the placement of a colon after "love" in their translations ("This is love: to fly...) further divides the diffuse, boundary-less, and oceanic environment evoked by "love."

- The translation of the Persian preposition *dar* (or, *bar*, in Forouzanfar's text) as the English prepositions "to" or "toward," or adverbially as "heavenward" (in the case of Nicholson), destroys the IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION metaphor form/image schema that is clearly present in the persian original (*'eshq dar/bar āsemān parīdan*). In changing the foundational metaphor form in the first line, the poetic environment Rūmī creates is drastically altered and the cognitive schema evoked in the reader's mind changes from IMMERSION IN ABSTRACTION to SOURCE - PATH - DESTINATION. When the cognitive schema is changed, the understanding of the attendant imagery is fundamentally altered as well. Both these significantly undermine Rūmī's dynamic poetic environment and creation of meaning in the original text.

- The decision to translate the Persian ("poetic") infinitive *parīdan* with the English infinitive "to fly" creates the distinct possibility that the English reader may process the first line of the poem in a conceptual (i.e. non-active, reified) manner, instead of in the dynamic and active sense implied in the original Persian verse. As I discussed in detail, this would fundamentally change the cognitive understanding of the verse; the poetic environment created by it; and, especially, the emotive quality perceived by the reader.

- Finally, the interpretative decision to translate *āfarīdan* in line nine of *ghazal* #1919 as a passive verb (i.e. the workshop was "being created") destroys the original and radical meaning of the Persian, which, I argue, should be translated as "so to create the house of creation." This, I have argued, is an example of our natural human cognitive tendency to interpolate editorial changes into language/texts in order to reduce cognitive dissonance and to facilitate comprehension.

All of these translation decisions significantly change the cognitive understanding of this poem, and thus, undermine the dynamic way in which Rūmī has created meaning in the original Persian verses. Whether taken individually or in the aggregate, all of these problems demonstrate the considerable utility of cognitive approaches to literature and their potential to improve both our ability to analyze and translate literature. Moreover, they highlight the need for a new type of translation—what I have termed here a "cogno-erotic" approach to translation—that recognizes, explores, and takes into account the deeper cogno-poetic processes that animate the poem and turn "the funeral of words into

a whirling dance." [107] We must, as literary scholars and translators, utilize the insights

from the cognitive sciences that provide us for the first time a glimpse into the inner

workings of the human mind-brain and its complex "backstage" cognitive processes that

produce language, literature, and meaning. A tool of such great utility cannot afford to be

ignored.

   This is an especially important point for those of us working in Persian and Arabic

literature, which have remained almost untouched by cognitive literary theory.[108] The

present study then is also a call for those of us in these disciplines to engage this new

body of theory seriously.

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[107] Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 12, 31. I also indebted to Keshavarz's work in *Flight of the Birds* for the concept of the poem being "animated" by cogno-poetic processes.

[108] The lone exception to this general observation is the innovative work of Fatemeh Keshavarz. See Keshavarz's landmark work in *Reading Mystical Lyric*, *Flight of the Birds*, and *Life as a Stream and the Psychology of "Moment" in Hafiz's Verse.*

Rūmī, Jalāluddīn. *Selected Poems from the Dīvān-e Shams-e Tabrizi of Jalāluddīn Rūmī.* **Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. Bethesda: Ibex, 2001, pp. 136-139.**

This is Love: to fly heavenward,
To rend, every instant, a hundred veils.
The first moment, to renounce life;
The last step, to fare without feet.
To regard this world as invisible,
Not to see what appears to one's self.

'O heart,' I said, 'may it bless thee
To have entered the circle of lovers,
To look beyond the range of the eye,
To penetrate the windings of the bosom!
Whence did this breath come to thee, O my soul,
Whence this throbbing, O my heart?
O bird, speak the language of birds:
I can understand thy hidden meaning.'

The soul answered: 'I was in the (divine) Factory
While the house of water and clay was a-baking.
I was flying away from the (material) workshop
While the workshop was being created.

When I could resist no more, they dragged me
To mould me into shape like a ball.'

Rūmī, Jalāluddīn. *Mystical Poems of Rūmī: Poems 201-400*. Translated by A.J Arberry. Vol. 2. Westview Press: Boulder, 1979, pp. 31.

This is love: to fly to heaven,
every moment to rend a hundred veils;

 At first instance, to break away from breath --
first step, to renounce feet;
To disregard this world,
to see only that which you yourself have seen*.

 I said, "Heart, congratulations on entering the circle of lovers,
"On gazing beyond the range of the eye, on running into the
alley of the breasts."

 Whence came this breath, O heart?
Whence came this throbbing, O heart?
 Bird, speak the tongue of birds:
I can heed your cipher!

The heart said, "I was in the factory whilst the home of water
and clay was abaking.

 "I was flying from the workshop whilst the workshop was
being created.

"When I could no more resist, they dragged me; how shall I
tell the manner of that dragging?"

Rūmī, Jalāluddīn. *Look! This is Love: Poems of Rūmī*. Translated by Annemarie Schimmel. Boston: Shambhala, 1996, pp. 15-16.

Look! This is love – to fly toward the heavens,
To tear a hundred veils in ev'ry wink,

To tear a hundred veils at the beginning,
To travel in the end without a foot,
And to regard this world as something hidden
And not to see with one's own seeing eye!

I said: "O heart, may it for you be blessed
To enter in the circle of the lovers,
To look from far beyond the range of eyesight,
To wander in the corners of the bosom!

O soul, from where has come to you this new breath?
O heart, from where has come this heavy throbbing?
O bird, speak now the language of the birds
Because I know to understand your secret!"

The soul replied: "Know, I was in God's workshop
While He still baked the 'house of clay and water.'

I fled from yonder workshop at a moment
Before the workshop was made and created.

I could resist no more. They dragged me hither
And they began to shape me like a ball!

Appendix II:
Lakoff and Johnson's Table of Primary Metaphors[109]

AFFECTION IS WARMTH
Subjective Judgment: Affection
Sensorimotor Domain: Temperature
Example: "They greeted me warmly"
Primary Experience: feeling warm while being held affectionately

IMPORTANT IS BIG
Subjective Judgment: Importance
Sensorimotor Domain: Size
Example: "Tomorrow is a big day"
Primary Experience: As a child, finding that big things, e.g. parents, are important and can exert major forces on you and dominate your visual experience

HAPPY IS UP
Subjective Judgment: Happiness
Sensorimotor Domain: Bodily orientation
Example: "I'm feeling up today."
Primary Experience: Feeling happy and energetic and having an upright posture (correlation between affective state and posture)

INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS
Subjective Judgment: Intimacy
Sensorimotor Experience: Being physically close
Example: "We've been close for years, but we're beginning to drift apart."
Primary Experience: Being physically close to people you are intimate with

BAD IS STINKY
Subjective Judgement: Evaluation
Sensorimotor Domain: Smell
Example: "This movie stinks."
Primary Experience: Being repelled by foul-smelling objects (correlation between evaluative and olfactory experience)

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[109] This table is taken from Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 50-54.

DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS
Subjective Judgment: Difficulty
Sensorimotor Domain: Muscular exertion
Example: "She's weighed down by responsibilities."
Primary Experience: The discomfort or disabling effect of lifting or carrying heavy objects

MORE IS UP
Subjective Judgment: Quantity
Sensorimotor Domain: Vertical orientation
Example: "Prices are high."
Primary Experience: Observing rise and fall of levels of piles and fluids as more is added or subtracted

CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS
Subjective Judgment: Perception of kinds
Sensorimotor Domain: Space
Example: "Are tomatoes in the fruit or vegetable category?"
Primary Experience: Observing that things that go together tend to be in he same bounded region (correlation between common location and common properties, functions, or origins)

SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS
Subjective Judgement: Similarity
Sensorimotor Domain: Proximity in space
Example: "These colors aren't quite the same, but they're close."
Primary Experience: Observing similar objects clustered together (flowers, trees, rocks, building, dishes)

LINEAR SCALES ARE PATHS
Subjective Judgment: Degree
Sensorimotor Domain: Motion
Example: "John's intelligence goes way beyond Bill's."
Primary Experience: Observing the amount of progress made by an object in motion (correlation between motion and scalar notion of degree)

ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE
Subjective Judgement: Abstract unifying relationships
Sensorimotor Domain: Experience of physical objects
Example: "How do the pieces of this theory fit together?"
Primary Experience: Interacting with complex objects and attending to their structure (correlation between observing part-whole structure and forming cognitive representations of logical relationships)

HELP IS SUPPORT
Subjective Judgment: Assistance
Sensorimotor Domain: Physical support
Example: "Support your local charities."
Primary Experience: Observing that some entities and people require physical support in order to continue functioning

TIME IS MOTION
Subjective Judgment: The passage of time
Sensorimotor Domain: Motion
Example: "Time flies."
Primary Experience: Experiencing the passage of time as one moves or observes motion

STATES ARE LOCATIONS
Subjective Judgment: A subjective state
Sensorimotor Experience: Being in a bounded region of space
Example: "I'm close to being in a depression and the next thing that goes wrong will send me over the edge."
Primary Experience: Experiencing a certain state as correlated with a certain location (e.g. being cool under a tree, feeling secure in bed)

CHANGE IS MOTION
Subjective Judgement: Experiencing a change of state
Sensorimotor Domain: Moving
Example: "My car has gone from bad to worse lately."
Primary Experience: Experiencing the change of state that goes with the change of location as you move

ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOTIONS
Subjective Judgement: Action
Sensorimotor Experience: Moving your body through space
Example: "I'm moving right along on the project."
Primary Experience: The common action of moving yourself through space, especially in the early years of life

PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS
Subjective Judgement: Achieving a purpose
Sensorimotor Experience: Reaching a destination
Example: "He'll ultimately be successful but he isn't there yet."
Primary Experience: Reaching destinations throughout everyday life and thereby achieving purposes (e.g. if you want a drink, you have to go to the water cooler)

PURPOSES ARE DESIRED OBJECTS
Subjective Judgment: Achieving a purpose
Sensorimotor Domain: Object manipulation
Example: "I saw an opportunity for success and grabbed it."
Primary Experience: Grasping a desired object (correlation between satisfaction and holding a desired physical object)

CAUSES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES
Subjective Judgement: Achieving results
Sensorimotor Domain: Exertion of force
Example: "They pushed the bill through Congress."
Primary Experience: Achieving results by exerting forces on physical objects to move or change them

RELATIONSHIPS ARE ENCLOSURES
Subjective Experience: An interpersonal relationship
Sensorimotor Experience: Being in an enclosure
Example: "We've been in a close relationship for years, but it's beginning to seem confining."
Primary Experience: Living in the same enclosed physical space with the people you are most closely related to

CONTROL IS UP
Subjective Judgment: Being in control
Sensorimotor Domain: Vertical orientation
Example: "Don't worry! I'm on top of the situation."
Primary Experience: Finding that it is easier to control another person or exert force on an object from above, where you have gravity working with you

KNOWING IS SEEING
Subjective Judgment: Knowledge
Sensorimotor Domain: Vision
Example: "I see what you mean"
Primary Experience: Getting information through vision

UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING
Subjective Judgment: Comprehension
Sensorimotor Domain: Object manipulation
Example: "I've never been able to grasp transfinite numbers."
Primary Experience: Getting information about an object by grasping and manipulating it

SEEING IS TOUCHING

Subjective Judgment: Visual perception

Sensorimotor Domain: Touch

Example: "She picked my face out of the crowd."

Primary Experience: Correlation between the visual and tactile exploration of objects

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