



Discourse and Cognitive Analysis of W. H. Auden's Funeral Blues

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Abstract

This study offers a cognitive and discourse analysis of W. H. Auden's "Funeral Blues," examining how linguistic form, conceptual metaphor, and discourse structure converge to construct an experiential representation of grief. Drawing on cognitive poetics, conceptual metaphor theory, and critical discourse analysis, the paper explores how the poem's linguistic patterns evoke embodied emotions and social meanings. Through systematic analysis of directive speech acts, including imperatives such as "Stop all the clocks" and "Prevent the dog from barking," the study demonstrates how Auden transforms private sorrow into a collective ritual of silence. Cognitive mechanisms—particularly image schemas of motion, orientation, and containment—organize the reader's mental simulation of stillness, disorientation, and dissolution, thereby enacting the cognitive structure of bereavement. Discourse analysis further reveals the poem's progression from individual to communal and ultimately cosmic domains, tracing the socialization of grief into public performance and universal negation. The findings suggest that "Funeral Blues" exemplifies how poetic language functions as both a cognitive act and a social discourse, bridging emotional experience with cultural expression. By integrating cognitive and discourse perspectives and engaging with recent scholarship, this study advances understanding of how poetry embodies and communicates human emotion through patterned linguistic organization.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, mourning, conceptual metaphor, speech acts, embodied cognition

1. Introduction

W. H. Auden's "Funeral Blues" (1936; rev. 1938) stands as one of the twentieth century's most iconic poetic expressions of mourning, capturing the tension between public ritual and private sorrow. As an elegy, it exemplifies a genre that has long served as a discursive site where grief is linguistically enacted, socially negotiated, and cognitively conceptualized. Although the poem was initially conceived as a satire of civic ceremony, Auden later revised it into a deeply personal lament, employing directive language, metaphorical imagery, and spatial disorientation to dramatize the totalizing experience of loss.

Traditional literary criticism has often focused on the poem's emotional sincerity and musical structure. However, developments in cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis now allow for a more nuanced understanding of how linguistic and conceptual mechanisms shape the reader's affective experience. While cognitive-poetic readings of canonical poems have become increasingly common (Gavins & Steen, 2003; Stockwell, 2009), the specific contribution of this study lies in its systematic integration of discourse-analytic and cognitive frameworks to examine how "Funeral Blues" constructs grief through the interaction of social performance and mental simulation.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze "Funeral Blues" through an interdisciplinary approach that merges Discourse Analysis (DA) and Cognitive Linguistics (CL). It argues that Auden's poem functions simultaneously as a performative discourse of mourning (Austin, 1962; Maingueneau, 2004) and as an embodied conceptualization of death,

silence, and love (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Johnson, 1987).

The analysis demonstrates how discourse structures—imperatives, deixis, interactional framing, and ritual register—interact with cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor, image schema, and conceptual blending to produce an emotionally resonant and ideologically charged representation of grief. In doing so, the study addresses a gap in existing scholarship by making explicit the methodological procedures through which such integration can be achieved and by critically examining the claims made about reader simulation and emotional effects.

2. Methodology and Main Research Questions

This study integrates frameworks from cognitive poetics (Stockwell, 2002; Gavins & Steen, 2003; Stockwell, 2020) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012) to explore how "Funeral Blues" constructs meaning through patterns of cognition, emotion, and social communication. The methodological approach proceeds through three analytical stages: (1) identification of discourse structures (speech acts, modality, deixis, register); (2) analysis of cognitive mechanisms (conceptual metaphors, image schemas, blending operations); and (3) examination of how these levels interact to produce particular reader effects.

Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do cognitive linguistic mechanisms—conceptual metaphor, image schemas, and construal operations—generate emotional effects in "Funeral Blues," and what evidence supports claims about reader simulation?
2. How does the discourse structure organize grief as a public performance of private loss, and what ideological assumptions underlie this organization?
3. What methodological challenges arise in integrating cognitive and discourse-analytic approaches, and how can these be addressed to produce more rigorous literary analysis?

The analytical framework draws from contemporary linguistic theories, particularly in pragmatics, discourse analysis, and cognitive semantics. Following recent work in cognitive poetics (Burke, 2019; Harrison et al., 2022), the study adopts a position that treats reader responses as empirically investigable through close analysis of textual features, while acknowledging the need for caution in making claims about actual reader experiences. The specific analytical tools employed include:

- Speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969): examining how expressions carry illocutionary force (commands, declarations, expressives) and how these forces shift across the poem's four stanzas;
- Systemic-functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) : analyzing modality, transitivity, and thematic structure to reveal patterns of interpersonal stance and experiential meaning;
- Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Kövecses, 2020): identifying systematic mappings between source and target domains that structure grief conceptually;
- Image schema analysis (Johnson, 1987; Hampe, 2005): examining how embodied patterns of motion, containment, and orientation organize the poem's spatial and temporal imagery;
- Conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002): tracing how the poem integrates distinct mental spaces (personal, cosmic, temporal) to produce novel emotional meanings.

By combining these methodologies in a systematic sequence, the study aims to reveal how "Funeral Blues" constructs grief simultaneously as a mental simulation and a social ritual—an intersection where private emotion becomes publicly enacted. The methodological contribution lies in making explicit the procedural steps through which such analysis proceeds, addressing the criticism that cognitive-poetic readings often remain descriptive rather than procedural.

3. Literature Review

The field of cognitive poetics, which investigates how literary texts engage the human cognitive system, has expanded significantly since the early 1990s. One of its foundational texts, Reuven Tsur's *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (1992/2008), positioned the discipline as a bridge between formalist stylistic analysis and impressionistic aesthetic criticism, arguing that poetic effects could be explained through cognitive processes such as perception, imagery, and schema activation, thereby laying the groundwork for subsequent empirical and theoretical developments. Building on this foundation, Peter Stockwell's *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (2002) provided a systematic account of the field, emphasizing how literature invites mental simulation, world-construction, and emotional resonance. Stockwell (2002, p. 8) defined cognitive poetics as "a way of thinking about literature," arguing that meaning arises from the interaction between linguistic form, embodied cognition, and cultural knowledge. Later works, including Stockwell's (2009) "The Cognitive Poetics of Literary Resonance" and

his (2020) *Cognitive Poetics: A New Introduction*, placed affective experience—the felt quality of reading—at the core of cognitive poetics while also addressing methodological questions about how such experiences can be studied systematically.

A central tenet of cognitive poetics, derived from Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980/2003), holds that abstract concepts are structured through concrete experiential domains. Lakoff and Johnson's revolutionary claim—that metaphor is not merely decorative but foundational to human thought—has generated extensive research across disciplines. In literary contexts, this implies that spatial, movement, and directional metaphors in poetry are rooted in embodied cognitive schemas. Kövecses (2000, 2015, 2020) has extended this framework to emotion concepts, demonstrating how grief, love, and sadness are systematically structured through metaphor across languages and cultures. Consequently, conceptual metaphor theory helps explain how "Funeral Blues" translates the abstract experience of grief into spatial, temporal, and embodied terms—a principle central to cognitive poetic analysis. However, it is important to acknowledge that cognitive-poetic readings of canonical poems have become a well-established critical practice. Studies by Freeman (2000) on Shakespeare's sonnets, Hamilton (2003) on Keats, and Stockwell (2009) on various poets have demonstrated the productivity of cognitive approaches for literary interpretation. This study engages with this tradition while seeking to make its distinctive contribution through systematic integration with discourse analysis and explicit attention to methodological procedures.

While cognitive poetics focuses on mental and embodied dimensions of literary meaning, discourse analysis emphasizes the social, interactive, and ideological dimensions of language use. In *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), Norman Fairclough provided a model linking textual features to broader social relations and ideological structures, arguing that texts function as elements of social practice, produced and interpreted within specific contexts (Fairclough, 1992, p. 259). Fairclough's three-dimensional framework—text, discourse practice, social practice—offers a systematic method for analyzing how linguistic choices reflect and reproduce social relations. In literary studies, this perspective invites scholars to view poems not merely as aesthetic artifacts but as communicative events—involving performers, addressees, ideologies, and cultural repertoires. Recent work in literary discourse analysis (Lambrou & Stockwell, 2007; McIntyre & Busse, 2010) has developed tools for analyzing how literary texts construct reader positions, enact social relationships, and engage with ideological frameworks. For "Funeral Blues," discourse analysis offers insight into how the poem enacts grief not only cognitively but also socially, transforming personal loss into a collective ritual of mourning. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has also evolved significantly since Fairclough's foundational work. Recent contributions by Machin and Mayr (2012), van Leeuwen (2008), and Wodak and Meyer (2016) have refined analytical tools for examining how linguistic choices construct social identities, represent social actors, and naturalize ideological assumptions. These developments are particularly relevant for analyzing how "Funeral Blues" represents mourning as a gendered, classed, and historically situated practice—dimensions that earlier readings have often overlooked.

The convergence of cognitive poetics and discourse analysis has generated increasingly sophisticated accounts of how literary texts operate at the intersection of mind, body, and society. Stockwell (2002, p. 135) acknowledged that cognitive poetics must involve a "textual-world-building" perspective, in which readers project themselves into imagined mental spaces, while Fairclough reminded scholars that such projections occur within the constraints of social practice. The challenge lies in integrating these perspectives without reducing one to the other. Recent scholarship has addressed this challenge productively. Gavins's (2007) *Text World Theory: An Introduction* extended cognitive poetics by incorporating insights from discourse analysis and possible-worlds theory, offering a framework for analyzing how readers construct mental representations of literary texts. Similarly, work by Dancygier (2012) on viewpoint in literature and by Harrison et al. (2022) on cognitive grammar in literary analysis has demonstrated how cognitive and discourse perspectives can be systematically integrated. For "Funeral Blues," this integrated approach enables analysis of how the poem invites readers to simulate grief cognitively while simultaneously scripting a communal mourning performance through imperatives, ritual imagery, and silenced soundscapes. The poem's metaphors, schema disruptions, and temporal manipulations thus emerge as both cognitive and discursive gestures—acts of thinking and acts of saying that bridge emotion and communication. Crucially, however, claims about reader simulation must be advanced with appropriate caution. As Burke (2019) and others have noted, cognitive-poetic analysis identifies *affordances* for particular reader responses rather than predicting actual experiences, which vary across readers and contexts.

4. Discourse Structure of "Funeral Blues"

The discourse structure of W. H. Auden's "Funeral Blues" reveals a carefully organized sequence of communicative acts that dramatize the progression of grief from control to resignation. The poem's four quatrains function not merely as poetic stanzas but as distinct discourse stages, each marked by a shift in illocutionary force, modality, and temporal framing. In this sense, the poem performs mourning linguistically—it is not merely about grief but an enactment of grief through speech.

Following Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) systemic-functional model, the poem's discourse may be analyzed in terms of three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—which respectively organize experience, social stance, and textual coherence. This section examines how each metafunction contributes to the poem's overall discursive construction of mourning.

4.1 Speech Acts and Illocutionary Progression

The opening stanza establishes the poem's illocutionary framework through a series of imperatives:

*"Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone."*

These are not stylistic flourishes but directive speech acts (Austin, 1962, p. 101; Searle, 1969, p. 66) designed to elicit action. The repeated commands—"stop," "cut," "prevent"—encode an attempt to regulate both sound and time, transforming the external world into an extension of the mourner's internal crisis.

As Fairclough (1992, p. 75) observes, discourse is "a form of social action," and here the linguistic directives become performative gestures through which the speaker seeks to restore order amid loss.

This directive mode situates the speaker as an authoritative voice commanding the world to conform to the logic of mourning. Yet, paradoxically, this performative authority conceals profound helplessness. The very excess of control—the multiplication of impossible commands—reveals the impossibility of mastery over death. Thus, from the outset, the poem's discourse functions dialogically, constructing a tension between linguistic agency and existential impotence that anticipates the poem's eventual movement toward resignation.

In the second stanza, the illocutionary force modulates, shifting from direct imperatives to ritualized invitations:

*"Let the aeroplanes circle moaning overhead,
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead."*

The modal shift from "Stop" to "Let" transforms the discourse from coercion to permission, signaling a movement from private command to public ceremony. The register now evokes the formal discourse of civic ritual, complete with symbolic gestures of mourning—the crepe bows, the black gloves, and the funeral drums.

Fairclough's (1992, p. 124) concept of interdiscursivity applies here: Auden fuses the personal discourse of grief with the public discourse of social ritual, blurring the boundary between private lament and communal commemoration.

By the third stanza, the discourse transitions again—from performative command to declarative expression:

"He was my North, my South, my East and West."

This marks a fundamental shift in communicative purpose, from acting upon the world to representing inner experience. The disappearance of imperatives signals a change in discourse type—from directive to expressive. The participant roles also shift (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 47): the speaker ceases addressing the external world and instead turns inward, defining the self through absence. The repetition of "my" personalizes the discourse, constructing a private cognitive frame of reference. These declaratives are evaluative and confessional, aligning with Labov's (1972, p. 366) "evaluation clauses," which reveal emotional stance rather than advance narrative sequence.

Finally, the fourth stanza returns to the imperative form:

"Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun"

but the commands now function as metaphoric or hyperbolic imperatives, expressing despair rather than genuine instruction. The illocutionary force collapses under the weight of impossibility. In speech-act terms, these are expressives masquerading as directives—simulations of agency that acknowledge futility.

The final declarative, "*For nothing now can ever come to any good,*" serves as a coda (Labov, 1972, p. 366), closing the discourse sequence with evaluative finality and restoring the declarative mood as dominant.

4.2 Modality and Interpersonal Stance

Modality, as Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 86) define it, expresses "the speaker's judgment of the probabilities, obligations, or necessities involved in what is being said." In "Funeral Blues," modality performs a central interpersonal function, shaping readers' perception of voice, authority, and certainty.

The poem's language is dominated by deontic modality—the expression of obligation or command—particularly in the opening and closing stanzas. Verbs such as "stop," "cut," "prevent," and "silence" construct a linguistic world governed by necessity rather than possibility. The speaker imposes modal force upon reality, as though grief itself could suspend time or silence nature.

This deontic modality conveys the mourner's psychological attempt to control the uncontrollable. It also defines the speaker's relationship to the reader: the imperative mood positions the audience as participants in the mourning ritual, implicitly invited to share the emotional stance.

Fairclough (1992, pp. 160–162) observes that modality reveals subject positions within discourse. Here, the speaker assumes the role of ritual officiant, directing the communal response to loss.

Notably, the poem lacks epistemic modality—there are no expressions of uncertainty such as *might*, *could*, or *perhaps*. This absence signifies absolute certainty about death and the moral finality of grief. The result is what Simpson (1993, p. 48) calls a "modalized world of conviction," where emotional truth outweighs rational doubt. The absence of epistemic markers contributes to the poem's emotional intensity, constructing a speaker who experiences grief as beyond question or qualification.

As the poem progresses, however, the strength of deontic modality weakens: the middle stanzas substitute the softer "Let" for "Stop," mirroring the cognitive shift from command to concession. The poem thus charts a modality gradient, reflecting the emotional movement from denial toward acceptance. This gradient constitutes what Simpson (1993) terms a "modal-shift pattern," in which changes in modal expression track changes in psychological stance.

4.3 Temporality and the Organization of Time

Temporal structure interacts closely with modality in shaping the poem's discourse. The opening commands—"Stop all the clocks," "cut off the telephone"—attempt to suspend the present moment, creating a discourse world of temporal stasis. Time is not merely referenced but linguistically arrested. The present tense of the imperatives constructs a "now" that the speaker seeks to freeze indefinitely.

In contrast, the third stanza's past tense—"He was my North, my South"—shifts the perspective into retrospection, signaling acceptance of irreversibility. The simple past tense marks the beloved's absence as a completed fact, contrasting with the present tense of ongoing grief. The interplay between imperative mood and past tense encodes a movement from temporal suspension to temporal finality.

Auden's manipulation of tense exemplifies what Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 192) terms the textual metafunction—the organization of discourse into cohesive meaning. The alternation of present imperatives, past declaratives, and timeless hyperboles ("Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun") produces a rhythm of emotional progression that mirrors the cognitive processing of loss. Temporality here is cyclical, oscillating between the desire to halt time and the recognition of its irreversible flow.

4.4 Discourse Function and Reader Positioning

Overall, the discourse structure of "Funeral Blues" enacts a progression from linguistic control to cognitive surrender. Each stanza reconfigures the relationship between speaker, world, and reader.

In the opening, the speaker addresses the world as a responsive agent; in the second, society; in the third, the self; and in the fourth, the cosmos. This expanding deictic scope corresponds to what cognitive psychologists describe as the generalization of grief (cf. Mandler, 1984), in which personal emotion expands into universal recognition.

Through these shifts in speech act, modality, and temporality, Auden constructs a discourse that moves from performative command to reflective closure. The reader—alternately participant and witness—is positioned to experience mourning as both social ritual and private cognition. However, claims about reader positioning must be advanced with appropriate caution: textual analysis identifies the *implied reader* position constructed by the poem (Iser, 1978), not the actual responses of empirical readers. This distinction, often blurred in cognitive-poetic analysis, deserves explicit acknowledgment.

As Fairclough (1992, p. 226) reminds us, discourse is "a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon

the world and upon each other." In "*Funeral Blues*," the act performed is mourning itself—a speech act that simultaneously commands, confesses, and concedes.

Maigneueau's (2004) notion of the scene of saying further illuminates this structure: the poem constructs a paratopic voice—both inside and outside the world it addresses. The speaker occupies the liminal zone between life and death, intimacy and public ritual, allowing Auden to universalize private grief while maintaining emotional immediacy.

4.5 Cognitive and Metaphorical Analysis of "*Funeral Blues*"

W. H. Auden's "*Funeral Blues*" presents grief not merely as a thematic concern but as a cognitive structure embodied in linguistic form. The poem translates the emotional disorientation of mourning into conceptual patterns grounded in bodily experience, drawing on image schemas, conceptual metaphors, and conceptual blending to shape both the speaker's and the reader's understanding of loss. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Johnson, 1987; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Kövecses, 2020), "*Funeral Blues*" can be read as a text in which fundamental cognitive schemas—motion, orientation, and containment—are systematically disrupted to dramatize the psychological impact of bereavement.

4.6 Image Schemas: Motion, Orientation, and Containment

The poem opens by invoking and immediately subverting the MOTION schema, one of the most basic cognitive structures through which humans perceive continuity and life. Commands such as "Stop all the clocks" and "cut off the telephone" impose a linguistic and conceptual stillness on the world. As Johnson (1987, pp. 113–114) notes, the motion schema emerges from embodied experience—our constant movement through space and experience of others' movement. Auden's repeated injunctions to halt activity invert this schema, rendering the absence of motion a metaphor for death. In doing so, emotional paralysis is mapped onto physical immobility, making stillness a cognitive correlate of mourning. While claims about reader simulation must be advanced cautiously, research in embodied cognition (Gibbs, 2006; Barsalou, 2008) suggests that readers may partially simulate these halting actions, contributing to the poem's affective power.

Closely related is the CONTAINMENT schema, which structures experience in terms of inside/outside boundaries. In the first stanza, the mourner seeks to block all channels of communication—"cut off the telephone," "silence the pianos." These imperatives enact the cognitive act of enclosing the self, shielding the mourner from a world that continues despite the beloved's absence. Johnson (1987, p. 32) observes that containment underlies concepts of protection and isolation; in Auden's poem, it represents the emotional enclosure of grief. The poem's sensory field progressively narrows inward toward a muted center, constructing what Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007) would term a "world-switch" from public space to private enclosure.

The third stanza—"He was my North, my South, my East and West"—activates the ORIENTATION schema, linking emotional stability to spatial directionality. Orientation schemas arise from embodied interaction with gravity and space (Johnson, 1987, p. 124). The beloved functions as the *axis mundi*, the spatial and moral compass of the speaker's world. When this orienting presence is removed, the schema collapses, producing the metaphor LOSS IS DISORIENTATION. Grief is conceptualized as a loss of cognitive balance and direction, mirroring the embodied experience of vertigo or being "off-center." Readers may engage proprioceptive and spatial imagination, potentially generating empathy through the sensation of lost orientation—though again, this claim identifies an affordance rather than a universal response.

4.7 Conceptual Metaphors and Emotional Mapping

Through these schemas, "*Funeral Blues*" constructs a network of conceptual metaphors that allow abstract emotional experiences to be comprehended via more concrete domains. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003, pp. 5–9) argue, metaphors are not mere rhetorical devices but essential cognitive tools structuring thought. Auden's poem deploys several interrelated metaphors that map emotion onto embodiment, space, and sound.

The most pervasive metaphor is GRIEF IS STILLNESS, which informs the poem's imagery and syntax. Imperatives such as "Stop all the clocks," "silence the pianos," and "muffle the drum" enact a cognitive equation between emotional paralysis and sensory cessation. The stillness of the external world mirrors internal stagnation; what cannot move cannot feel or live. Kövecses (2000, p. 21; 2020, p. 45) notes that sadness is often conceptualized as physical immobility, rooted in physiological slowing during mourning. Auden exploits this mapping to produce emotional authenticity, allowing readers to experience loss as a deceleration of the world itself.

A related metaphor, LIFE IS MOTION / DEATH IS THE CESSATION OF MOTION, interacts with the motion schema. By commanding clocks to stop and dogs to be silenced, the poem systematically negates the cognitive frame of vitality—movement, sound, and time—reflecting the perception of timelessness common in grief (Mandler, 1984, p. 63; cf.

Earles, 2017, on temporality in elegy).

The third stanza introduces LOVE IS ORIENTATION / LOSS IS DISORIENTATION, with the beloved defining the speaker's cardinal directions. Spatial order substitutes for emotional order; the absence of the beloved destabilizes the speaker's cognitive and affective framework. Readers participate by activating their own spatial schemas, empathically sensing the disruption of the world's coordinates. This metaphor draws on the conventional mapping IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL, but extends it through the specific domain of geographical orientation, producing an unusually systematic elaboration of the source domain.

The final stanza embodies PERSONAL LOSS IS COSMIC DESTRUCTION: "Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun." Through conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 42), Auden merges the personal space of mourning with the cosmic order, producing a blended space in which grief collapses both internal and universal domains. This blend draws on conventional metaphors for emotional intensity (EMOTION IS FORCE, IMPORTANT IS LARGE) but combines them in a novel configuration that produces the poem's characteristic emotional hyperbole.

4.8 *Metaphorical Network and Conceptual Integration*

These metaphors form an interconnected network, producing a coherent cognitive model of mourning:

- GRIEF IS STILLNESS emerges from the inversion of the MOTION schema.
- LOSS IS DISORIENTATION arises from the breakdown of the ORIENTATION schema.
- MOURNING IS ENCLOSURE develops from the CONTAINMENT schema.
- PERSONAL LOSS IS COSMIC DESTRUCTION results from blending emotional and universal domains.

In this integrated framework, grief is represented as the progressive narrowing and collapse of cognitive and spatial domains: motion becomes stillness, orientation collapses, containment becomes isolation, and the external world is annihilated. Each metaphor reinforces the others, constructing an escalating cognitive model of loss that mirrors the psychological experience of mourning. The systematicity of this network—the way each metaphor supports and extends the others—contributes to the poem's coherence and emotional power.

Stockwell (2002, p. 112; 2020, p. 145) observes that poetic meaning emerges from the interaction of linguistic form, conceptual structure, and embodied simulation. In "Funeral Blues," metaphors do more than describe grief—they enact it through the systematic deployment of linguistic forms that engage readers' cognitive resources. Imperatives address the reader's action-understanding systems; orientation metaphors activate spatial cognition; cosmic blends stimulate visual and emotional simulation. The poem becomes, in this view, a cognitive performance of grief—though one whose actual effects on readers require empirical investigation beyond the scope of textual analysis.

4.9 *Register, Interdiscursivity, and Social Meaning*

The poem blends elegiac, civic, and domestic registers. Urban references—"traffic policemen," "public doves"—situate the mourner within a collective space, while domestic imagery grounds grief in the everyday. This interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1992) mirrors the hybrid nature of modern mourning: private sorrow enacted in public. The register shifts from instruction to proclamation, reflecting the mourner's movement from external control to internal realization.

This blending of registers carries ideological implications that deserve explicit attention. The poem's assumption that grief warrants public ceremony, that mourning should silence ordinary life, and that the beloved's death justifies cosmic destruction—these are not universal truths but culturally and historically specific constructions. The poem participates in what Ramazani (1994) terms the "modern elegy's" negotiation between public and private, conventional and authentic expressions of grief. By making these ideological dimensions visible, discourse analysis complements cognitive approaches that might otherwise treat the poem's emotional structures as universal rather than culturally situated.

4.10 *Embodied Cognition and Reader Simulation*

From the perspective of cognitive poetics, the reader participates actively through what might be termed affordances for embodied simulation. Barsalou (2008, p. 620) and Gibbs (2006, p. 78) note that understanding figurative language engages perceptual and motor systems. In reading "Funeral Blues," readers may mentally enact the imperatives, imagine losing orientation, and simulate cosmic disruption, creating what Stockwell (2009) calls a "cognitive performance" of grief. This process may foster what cognitive poetics terms conceptual empathy (Stockwell, 2002, p. 88)—the ability to experience, within safe imaginative boundaries, the disintegration of motion, space, and meaning accompanying mourning.

However, several caveats are necessary. First, claims about reader simulation identify potential responses based on textual structure and cognitive theory, not empirically verified reader experiences. Second, actual reader responses vary significantly based on individual differences, cultural background, and reading context (Burke, 2019). Third, the relationship between textual features and emotional effects is mediated by numerous factors that cognitive-poetic analysis cannot fully capture. Future research might productively combine the kind of textual analysis offered here with empirical methods such as reader response studies or neurocognitive experimentation.

With these caveats acknowledged, the cognitive analysis demonstrates how Auden's elegy maps the ineffable onto the embodied, transforming personal emotion into linguistically mediated experience. The poem's power lies partly in its systematic engagement with fundamental cognitive structures, inviting readers to share, within the protected space of aesthetic experience, something of grief's disorienting force.

5. Conclusion

Through the integrated lenses of discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, "Funeral Blues" emerges as both a performative act and a cognitive model of mourning. Directive syntax, ritualized register, and enunciative positioning construct grief as a discursive performance, while conceptual metaphors, image schemas, and blends render grief an embodied experience. By silencing the world, dismantling the cosmos, and reorienting love as loss, the poem invites readers to inhabit the mental and discursive space of mourning, where emotion becomes simultaneously felt, spoken, personal, and universal.

The study has addressed three research questions. First, regarding cognitive mechanisms: the analysis demonstrates how image schemas (motion, containment, orientation) and conceptual metaphors (GRIEF IS STILLNESS, LOSS IS DISORIENTATION, PERSONAL LOSS IS COSMIC DESTRUCTION) systematically structure the poem's representation of grief, providing affordances for readers' embodied simulation. Second, regarding discourse structure: the poem organizes grief as a public performance through progressive shifts in speech acts (from directive to expressive), modality (deontic dominance modulating to concession), and deictic scope (expanding from personal to cosmic). Third, regarding methodological integration: the study demonstrates that combining cognitive and discourse-analytic approaches requires explicit attention to procedural steps and careful qualification of claims about reader effects.

The literature reviewed provides a foundation for analyzing "Funeral Blues" cognitively and discursively. Cognitive poetics highlights how imperatives, orientation metaphors, and schema disruptions enact grief internally; discourse theory emphasizes the poem's construction of mourning rituals and its performance of grief within social space. The dual focus enables richer understanding of how Auden's poem shapes the reader's construction of mourning—though future research should extend this analysis through empirical investigation of actual reader responses and through comparative study of other elegiac texts.

In sum, the cognitive mechanisms underpinning "Funeral Blues"—embodied image schemas, conceptual metaphors, and blending operations—interact with discourse structures to guide readers in constructing and experiencing the speaker's emotional world. Through these processes, the poem transcends mere expression, becoming what Stockwell (2020) would term a "jointly enacted" experience of grief—one that bridges the cognitive and the discursive, the personal and the social, the felt and the spoken.

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