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**THE ANATOMY OF LITERARY FIGURATIVENESS.**

**Mapping Metaphoric Coherence in Dylan Thomas's Poetics of Embodiment**

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Tutkielma tarkastelee walesilaisen Dylan Thomasin (1914–1953) runoudessa esiintyviä ruumiillisuudelle rakentuvia kielikuvia. Tavoitteena on osoittaa, että ruumiillistaminen (*embodiment*) on paitsi Raamatun luomiskertomuksen ja syntiinlankeemuksen myytteihin pohjaava teema Thomasin runoissa, myös kielikuvien rakentumista määrittävä tekijä. Teema kytkeytyy olennaisella tavalla tutkielman teoreettiseen kehykseen: kognitiivisessa metaforateoriassa (CMT) sekä yhdistelyteoriassa (*blending theory*) ruumiillisuudella on merkittävä rooli todellisuuden kielellistämisenä. Deskriptiivisen poetiikan hengessä teoria ja kohdetekstit ovat jatkuvassa dialogissa keskenään.

Tutkielman keskeinen käsite, käsitteellinen metafora (*conceptual metaphor*), määritellään skemaattiseen tietoon perustuvaksi yhdistelemisen malliksi. Toisin kuin erityisesti strukturalistisissa metaforakäsityksissä, arkikielen ja poeettisen kielen metaforien välille ei kognitiivisessa metaforateoriassa tehdä merkittävää eroa, vaan metafora on ”kognitiivisen käänteen” myötä ennen kaikkea laaja-alainen ajattelun malli. Toisaalta teorian yleisyys ja monitieteisyys tuottavat runon tulkinnassa sovellettavuuden haasteen: Thomasin monisyiset ja monesti vieraannuttamisefektiä hyödyntävät runot vaativat lukijalta vankkaa kaunokirjallista kompetenssia. Keskeistä onkin metaforan hahmottaminen nimenomaan tulkintaprosessin osana.

Kognitiivisen metaforateorian ongelmakohtiin pureudutaan Thomasin runoista nousevien erityiskysymyksien kautta. Tällaisia kysymyksiä ovat metaforien verkostoituminen suhteessa muihin runokeinoihin, intertekstuaalisuus osana yhdistelyprosessia, puhujan roolin merkitys yhdistelyssä, sekä kerronnallisen koherenssin mahdollisuus metaforien verkoston tulkinnassa. Samalla kun tutkielma tarkentaa kognitiivista metaforateoriaa runojen tulkintaan soveltuvammaksi, tarkoituksena on myös näyttää, miten ruumiillistamisen teema kokee Thomasin runoissa muutoksen kohti kielellisesti vähemmän tiheää mutta semanttisesti monessa mielessä ”vaikeampaa” metaforisuutta.

Kohdetekstit ovat Thomasin tuotantoa läpileikkaavasta *The Collected Poems 1934–1953* -teoksesta (2000), poislukien viimeisessä alaluvussa käsitelty kuunnelma *Under Milk Wood* (1954).

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# 1. Introduction

The photograph is married to the eye  
Grafts on its bride one-sided skins of truth  
(Dylan Thomas, “Our eunuch dreams”)

The discourse which attempts to analyze metaphor does not itself escape metaphor. There is a metalinguistic function—language can discuss language—but there is no metalanguage, only more language piled upon language. (Culler 1983, xi.)

In a recent talk<sup>1</sup> on the metaphoric models employed in cognitive linguistics, Ronald W. Langacker came to the rather discouraging conclusion that our conceptualisations of how language works can only capture an aspect of the issue at hand: metaphors are only metaphors. Even if they really are something we “live by”, and cannot be avoided even in academic discourse, the old idea that metaphors deceive and confuse us from our rational ways lives on and often causes further confusion as well as a sneakingly guilty conscience. However, Langacker also concluded that alternative metaphors can make it easier for us to distinguish the target – be it an everyday utterance or a line from a poem – from its metaphoric construals, provided that we do not confuse the construal with the target. Just as long as we stay aware of the kind of modelling we embrace, metaphoricity does not have to mean living in sin.

The present thesis is about conceptualising metaphoric construal – that is to say the main topic is how metaphors can be interpreted – and it does not attempt to avoid metaphor itself, quite the contrary: the aim is to reflect on the illustrative powers of *Cognitive Metaphor Theory* (CMT), and especially the forms it has taken after the emerging of *blending theory*. This is done hand in hand with the analysis of the embodied metaphoric practices in Dylan Thomas’s (1914–1953) lyric works, with the somewhat idealistic assumption that the two will shed light on each other. *Embodiment* in Cognitive Metaphor Theory refers to the spatiality in metaphoric mappings that is founded in our bodily experience (Fauconnier & Turner 2002,

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<sup>1</sup> Keynote lecture given at the Stockholm Metaphor Festival on 8 September 2011.

377), and I argue that bodily metaphors are central to Thomas's poetics. However to avoid wallowing in metaphors in the sense that Langacker argued so strongly against, the thesis strives to be transparent and self-reflexive in the way it unfolds the metaphoric layers of Thomas's writing, as well as the theoretical mappings of cognitive metaphors.

After all, subscribing to certain metaphors has ethical consequences, as Wayne C. Booth reminds us: when we get into the patterns of figuring in any text, we become figured, and implicitly, that has to be a criticism of other figurings as well.<sup>2</sup> Booth of course illustrates the power of such macro-metaphors using another metaphor: it is always more intimate dancing *with* a partner than dancing *along with* someone who is just looking into the far distance. (1988, 298–299.) Booth's way of fleshing out an issue so persistently present in reading literary texts is directly linked to what is at stake in this thesis. Dylan Thomas's highly constructed poetics of embodiment seems to invite a (critical) application of the physically founded cognitive metaphor theory, but at the same time the convenience of such applicability should be treated with serious reservations: a reading model can only capture one side of the issue. In other words, in order to avoid a one-eyed figurative interpretation, one has to be careful not to get too absorbed in the dance.

As the thesis attempts to describe patterns of metaphoric coherence in Thomas's poetry, the discussion of conceptual metaphor focuses on the one cognitive agent present and graspable in the process: the reader. This focus has its influence on the metaphoric model employed, namely that of a network: the thesis investigates how blends created in metaphoric mapping can evolve within a reading, and reveal a thematic thread, but also how critical self-reflexivity is an integral part of weaving such networks. With the emphasis on readerliness in the cognitive sense of the word<sup>3</sup> and embodiment as a *theme* in Thomas's writing, I try to avoid the by now well-known pitfall of 'discovering' basic metaphors<sup>4</sup> in lyric texts as proof for the fundamental role of metaphor in our thinking and everyday discourse.

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2 See also de Man 1979.

3 Peter Stockwell (2009) uses the term in a 'reversed' sense in comparison to Roland Barthes's original idea.

4 I use the terms conceptual metaphor, cognitive metaphor and basic metaphor interchangeably. All of them refer to the name given to certain conventional metaphors in our everyday thought and discourse, formulated as propositions, "A IS B". More important than the name itself is the "material" involved: mental domains or spaces (also terms that are often used interchangeably) that are based on schematic knowledge.

As has been shown by many critics, for instance Gerard Steen (1994; 2007), Peter Stockwell (1999), Tony E. Jackson (2002) and Bo Pettersson (2005), Cognitive Metaphor Theory has several significant shortcomings, but it has also evolved quite significantly from the initial categorisations and illustrations of metaphoric mapping presented in Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and Lakoff and Turner's *More Than Cool Reason* (1989), most notably towards blending theory (see especially Fauconnier & Turner 2002). Blending adds more emphasis on the dynamic nature of the interpretive process, something that the early writings simplified to some extent. Instead of a mere projection of the source domain onto the target domain<sup>5</sup>, there is “[...] a functional transfer of the generic pattern [...] in which the aspects of both domains begin to coalesce into a new whole” (Fludernik 2011, 4). As informed by the findings of the closely connected *conceptual integration theory* (see Turner 2006), Fauconnier and Turner argue that we “[...] need to face squarely the far greater complexity of integrations that lie behind observable metaphorical systems” (Fauconnier & Turner 2008, 65). Furthermore, they point out that with highly conventional conceptual metaphors we have to “take into account their cultural history” as well as the “emergent structures they produce” (ibid.). This is something whose absence especially Gerard Steen (e.g. 1994, 16–17, see also Eubanks 1999) has criticised the theory for in the past: culturally shared conventions behind the mappings themselves should by no means be taken for granted. While the importance of the (cultural) context in mapping literary metaphors will be discussed in Chapter 2, the role of intertextuality as a crucial part of it will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 3.

However as Gerard Steen and Elena Semino point out (2008, see also Fludernik 2011), such developments have mainly been discussed within cognitive linguistics, and the study of conceptual metaphor in literature is another matter. The interdisciplinary nature of the field inevitably brings about problems of specificity in actual analyses, and applications of CMT to literary interpretation are often marked by the fact that a vast majority of the (mainly linguistic) research is *thought-oriented* and not that interested in the surface structures of texts. Consequently, the existing work is often focused on tracing certain cognitive metaphors in individual texts in order to elaborate the more general system of metaphors (Fludernik

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<sup>5</sup> These concepts refer to mental spaces, that is they are dynamic and unstable; see Chapter 2.

2011, 6). Indeed Mark Turner has explicitly expressed that CMT (and blending) is in fact aiming at creating a kind of a cognitive “grammar”<sup>6</sup> of metaphors (1996, 58). Since CMT emphasises the everyday foundations of metaphoric language use, the inevitable question to ask is, are literary metaphors just realisations of basic metaphors (albeit inventive), or are metaphors in literature somehow special? This debate is of course a variation of the more general, and much older, discussion of literary language versus non-literary language.

Steen and Semino, as well as Peter Stockwell (see for example 2002; 2005), have advocated for a peaceful co-existence of the specificity of the literary study of metaphor and the fundamentally cognitive and experiential nature of CMT (2008, 243–244). Regardless of such a reconciling approach, they point out that often the problem with trying to find proof for the particular nature of literary metaphor ends up in forcing those features out of the object of study (ibid.).<sup>7</sup> Of course this interpretive issue – finding things one sets out to find – does not only apply to literary studies, however the thought (and system) oriented researchers of conceptual metaphor have not been very much concerned with reflecting upon such effects in their own work.

The lack of critical self-reflection is also evident in the fact that CMT approaches often ignore the rhetorical as well as the structuralist tradition of metaphor study. Many critics of CMT have pointed out the relevance of Paul Ricoeur's work in particular.<sup>8</sup> (Biebuyck & Martens 2011, 58; Pettersson 2011.) In fact, the ambition to create a new, ground-breaking framework has even been made explicit in defending CMT *against* 'ornamental' theories of metaphor (see especially Lakoff & Johnson 1999). The traditional criteria for metaphor, as derived from classic rhetoric, feature a cognitive (epistemic, exploratory) function, a ludic function, and an expressive function – corresponding to Cicero's three *officia oratoris*, *docere*, to teach, *delectare*, to please, and *movere*, to move (e.g. 1970). Now the first one, of course, has been the main focus of CMT, whereas the second function has been more central in literary studies underlining the effect of defamiliarisation<sup>9</sup> (although see Coulson 2001). Zoltan Kövecses has done pioneering work in conceptual metaphor and emotionology (e.g. 2000, 2008). However,

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6 Though not in the sense of Langacker's theory (1987).

7 The authors' own suggestion as to how to find evidence for the potential uniqueness of literary metaphor would be conducting more empirical study: comparing and contrasting multiple interpretations.

8 Especially Ricoeur 1978. Ricoeur for example used the concept of “schema” that is so central in Cognitive Metaphor Theory before *Metaphors We Live By* was first published.

9 Most notably scholars like Viktor Shklovsky and Roland Barthes.

the first function in itself contains the potential for complex literary exploitations of metaphor, surely to the extent of moving the reader: epistemic explorations are relevant subject matter in Modernist writing for instance.

A further recent development, with reference to Fauconnier and Turner taking an interest in metaphors' cultural history, is the interplay of conceptual metaphor and creativity (see especially Turner [ed.] 2006: *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*). Even if the ludic features of metaphor use are still almost strictly the territory of (stylistically oriented) literary critics, this area of study opens up broader ways of looking at how literary metaphor might be special, since Lakoff and Turner's original four 'methods' of creating new metaphors – extension, elaboration, reinventing convention and negation (1989, 89) – have turned out to be insufficient in contextually aware literary analysis. However Fludernik argues that due to their emphasis on the practice of artistic creativity, traditional theories of metaphor often fail to say much about the role of metaphor in literature in general (2011, 6–7). While it might be that textually oriented literary criticism is prone to describing individual uses of metaphor rather than creating a general theory of metaphor (like Ricoeur's), I still find bottom-up investigations of metaphor more easily validated than descriptions of a system that pay no attention to textual intricacies. In fact, one of the initial assumptions for this thesis is that the study of Thomas's metaphors can provide valuable insight into the discussion of embodiment. It must be added as well though that this particular new direction Fauconnier and Turner now prioritise is still more an opening than a reality in approaches applying CMT – such principles do not translate into functional transfers in actual interpretation without problems. This is a lacuna that will be addressed in Chapter 2.

With regard to this recent development relating to artistic creativity, some scholars within the cognitive study of poetry have strongly argued for the importance of investigating metaphoric mapping in terms of the actual creative processes of the author. For instance Margaret Freeman has analysed Sylvia Plath's and Emily Dickinson's poetry in the framework of blending by bringing biographical facts to the centre of the process of unpacking figurative language. Freeman sees this as necessary motivation for particular word choices, and ultimately for how a poem resonates when interpreted by the reader. (Freeman 2005a, Freeman 2005b.) However I feel this is one area where the cognitive study of poetry becomes

less effortlessly motivated: we are in the fuzzy realm of interpreting the author's intentions, and what is more, the attempts to reconstruct the poet's creative processes do not constitute cognitive *literary* study. As Stephan Fleissman summarises in a review of the anthology *Cognition and Literary Interpretation in Practice* (2005): "In large parts, Freeman's argument seems to be made on the basis of textual criticism that does not necessitate cognitive approaches to literary studies in order to be successful." (2005, 2.) This is of course an issue that other scholars within CMT have been criticised for too, as was already mentioned.

The issue relates to a bigger debate in cognitive literary studies, not just the study of poetry, namely a tendency of mental modelling generating analytical tools in a somewhat simplistic manner, that is to say verbalising and modelling minds after the theoretical frameworks in cognitive studies. I find Tarja Knuuttila and Harri Veivo's formulation of the issue particularly illustrative, though of course many scholars have written about the same kind of problematics:

In the field of cognitive studies, one customary way to approach mental content has been to suppose, more or less explicitly, that our 'internal representations' resemble external representations. Consequently, what we have in our minds – our 'mental models' – have been modelled after the linguistic, formal or diagrammatic representations we produce. This way of approaching the mind easily runs together the methodological and the ontological. [...] To be sure, the represented is always also a product of the representation [...] but it is still important to be conscious of the difference between the representation and the represented. (Veivo & Knuuttila 2005, 285–286.)

The process Veivo and Knuuttila describe can be seen from the fictional minds' point of view as well: they should not be internalised and taken to be like our minds without caution. Needless to say, this of course goes for poetic speakers too. The debate is taken up in Chapter 4, though the role of the speaker in mapping metaphoric coherence is brought up on several other occasions in the thesis as well.

Furthermore, this kind of modelling links to problems within older discussions of poetic speakers. In the vein of the "experientiality debate", originating in Monika Fludernik's 'natural' narratology (1996), traditional views on lyric poetry have not often problematised the difference between who speaks and who sees, even with complex poems that underline temporal layering or multiple layers of speaking, like those of Thomas's: the speaker is

typically just taken to be an alter-ego of the poet who communicates a piece of their experience made universal (an old idea epitomised e.g. in Phelan 2005). It is as if there is always one all-seeing eye in a poem and unreliability is not an issue for instance. This is of course a generalisation, but still an approach that can be encountered quite often.

The reader's attention is then directed towards the message itself rather than the speaking persona or their 'character-like' qualities, as James Phelan's famous definition of lyricality testifies: "Somebody telling somebody on some occasion for some purpose that something *is*, or what he or she *thought* about something." (2007, 22.) It must be noted, however, that Phelan's interest is mainly in hybrid forms that make use of both lyricality and narrativity, and not lyric poetry as such; similarly also Peter Hühn (2005) has been interested in the relationship of narratives and lyricality. (For an overview, see McHale 2009.) Still, even with lyric poetry such juxtapositions of lyricality and narrativity are not theoretically nor analytically satisfactory: when discussing the poetic speaker's role it is important to pay attention to how the experiencing subject is presented as well as the experiencing or experience itself.

Indeed, the emphasis the thesis puts on literary constructedness – as opposed to an artificial sense of 'naturalness' in the poetic speaker as poet analogy – makes an exception in Thomas criticism: Thomas's poetry has mostly been read biographically, and even though the theme of embodiment with all its variations has been noted by many (for example Olson 1954; Tindall 1962; Ackerman 1964; for a more recent overview see Goodby & Wigginton 2001), no single monograph has been dedicated to it. It is as if the theme has been deemed too obvious in a way, much like cognitive metaphor theory within literary studies: the everyday foundations of the theory are usually acknowledged, but the possibility of analytical application has been disregarded somewhat hastily in my view. This, of course, is due to a lack of convincing arguments on its behalf, as well as a demand for thorough theoretical discussion of the (undeniable) problems within the model. These problems, as more or less implicitly put forward above, form the spine of this thesis: additions and clarifications will be made as the analysis progresses. Similarly, the 'self-evident' metaphoric frame of the human body as cosmos in Thomas's poems turns out to be more complex than what might appear at first glance.

The obviousness of the theme of poetic creation as a kind of potency (and its many consequences) stems from the numerous explanatory statements made by the poet himself. They do not have a central role in this thesis for the same reason: they need no further explanations. Rather, the origins of the idea are treated as a commonplace in the same way as Thomas regarded the role of biblical imagery in his poetry:

All of the Bible that I use in my work is [...] the common property of all who were brought up in English speaking communities. Nowhere, indeed, in all my writing, do I use any knowledge which is not commonplace to any literate person. (“Notes on the Art of Poetry”, 199.)

That said, of course the original metaphor needs to be constructed so that the rewritings and even deconstructed versions can be analysed later on.

This links to my main argument concerning the theme I shall call poetic embodiment from now on – the way in which the biblical myths of creation and the Fall are treated goes through a kind of an evolution within Thomas’s poetry. It could be described as an increased understanding of the various consequences of the Fall. A relevant parallel can be found in William Blake’s (1757–1827) lyric works, namely the shift from the world of *Songs of Innocence* (1789) to the world of *Songs of Experience* (1794). This evolution, however, should not be likened to a journey or a biological metamorphosis, since one step is not a clear antecedent of another. A more appropriate<sup>10</sup> metaphor would be that of a struggle to come to terms with something: linearity and some causalities can be abstracted, but irregularities and set-backs occur too. As with Blake’s *Songs*, experience connotes ambiguity: contradictions that co-exist in metaphoric expression and the extinction of black-and-white binary oppositions.

In order to present a coherent account of the treatment of the theme, the point of origin mentioned needs to be defined first; or, as the narrator of Thomas’s *Under Milk Wood* (1954, 1) says, “[t]o begin at the beginning”. When facing such an “imperialistic” term, as Wayne C.

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<sup>10</sup> One of the criteria for a good metaphor is appropriateness to the task at hand, as Wayne C. Booth points out (1988, 315) – a guideline I hope to stay true to with my own metaphoric construal.

Booth characterises metaphor (1988, 303), the only way to proceed is by investigating kinds; here, then, the physically founded metaphors in Thomas's poems. Of course while looking into a relevantly narrow metaphoric patch I wish to say something of a more general nature via "family resemblance" (as Booth suggests) as well. The rather fundamental nature of the particular metaphoric frame – with its roots in the now commonplace biblical imagery – would support this ambitious aim.

When it comes to the place CMT might take within literary studies, or literary analysis for that matter, I hope not to let metaphor become *the* pattern of conceptualisation at the expense of a figurative sensitivity. However CMT can be said to be in keeping with the classic rhetorical definitions of metaphor<sup>11</sup>, as they are broader than the structuralist counterparts; for instance in Aristotle's discussion, two of the four types of metaphor are in fact *synecdoches* or *metonymies*, as Umberto Eco has illustrated in an analysis of Aristotle's examples (Eco 1984, 91). Even if CMT ignores some of the key terminological debates concerning metaphor by focusing on "seeing correspondences across categories", a notion derived from Aristotle's definition, that is to say by focusing on how different elements can be brought together by a conceptualising mind (in Aristotle's theory this would be the poet, in CMT most commonly the reader), there are still efforts within the paradigm to establish more 'figuratively competent' applications. Bo Pettersson, for one, argues that it is crucial to study metaphor in relation to other tropes (across genres) in order to appreciate the different facets of metaphor better (2011, 95). The thesis touches upon metaphor's relation to symbol (Chapter 2), allegory (Chapter 3), catachresis (Chapter 3), apostrophe (Chapter 4) as well as metonymy (Chapter 5), though not in any systematic sense – the discussion is driven by thematic progression.

Coming back to the theme of poetic embodiment more specifically, for Thomas the body is a cognitive faculty as a result of the Fall: man was created with the power of language as the image of God, but that image was broken due to (physical) temptation. Thus human language was broken when man became aware of his (and her) bodiliness. Poetry, the art of language *par excellence*, is a kind of a doomed attempt to make language all-powerful again, to recover the lost connection with divinity. The poetic speaker takes the creative position of God but can

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11 Elzbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska (2011, 47) also argues that Kenneth Burke is a precursor of Cognitive Metaphor Theory based on the idea that his four main figures are "styles of thinking" in certain genres.

only reflect on the lost cause. This idea links to the way in which we use embodied metaphors to fill in gaps within our conceptualisations according to Paul Werth (things we do not have a literal referent for): “We fill this lack by using metaphor – we find a physical domain that seems to have something in common with the conceptual domain we want to talk about, and then we use the physical language to talk about the conceptual subject-matter.” (Werth 1999, 313.) The idea of correspondences of this kind takes us back to Aristotle, of course, and CMT surely makes ample use of the idea of analogousness.

Indeed, metaphor, due to its traditionally defined ability to contain contradictions in linguistic form, is *the* tool for such a poetic speaker trying to reconcile gaps: it *is* the struggle to come to terms with the loss as it creates something new while maintaining old oppositions, such as the basic binary ones in the myth of creation. The first stanza of the poem “From love’s first fever to her plague” tries to unify what cannot be unified:

From love’s first fever to her plague, from the soft second  
And to the hollow minute of the womb,  
From the unfolding to the scissored caul,  
The time for breast and the green apron age  
When no mouth stirred about the hanging famine,  
All world was one, one windy nothing,  
My world was christened in a stream of milk.  
And earth and sky were as one airy hill.  
The sun and mood shed one white light.  
(*Collected Poems*<sup>12</sup>, 21.)

Even though the speaker’s world goes back to a light place, “love’s plague” has been released, and its consequences are irreversible: “And from the first declension of the flesh / I learnt man’s tongue, to twist the shapes of thoughts / Into the stony idiom of the brain [...] / The root of tongues ends in a spentout cancer” (ibid.). “Love’s plague” is a typical example of the ambiguity of Thomas’s embodied metaphors: in biblical terms, it would be God’s punishment, or, it can refer to a pest in a more general sense, or to one of the most notorious diseases in history, creating a rather unpleasant sense of bodiliness. I attempt to point out and elaborate

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<sup>12</sup> Hereafter *CP*.

on such ambiguities throughout the thesis, rather than presenting any metaphoric mappings as self-evident: they are crucial to literary metaphor.

On that note, Thomas describes the role of metaphor in his writing as follows (though the term is not mentioned):

I make one image – though ‘make’ is not the word; I let, perhaps, an image be ‘made’ emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess – let it breed another, let that image contradict the first, make, of the third image bred out of the other two together, a fourth contradictory image [...] Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction [...] Out of this inevitable conflict of images – inevitable, because of the creative, recreative, destructive, contradictory nature of the motivating centre, the womb of war – I try to make the momentary peace which is a poem. (*Collected Letters*<sup>13</sup> 2000, 281.)

The description shows, first of all, the abstract and introverted nature of Thomas’s poetics. Second of all, and more importantly, it labels the source of poetic embodiment, man, as contradicted by definition. The “womb of war”, with its obvious Freudian echoes, is not only a reoccurring metaphor in Thomas’s poetry (see Ackerman 1964; Tritschler 1963) but also a structural concept: it gives life to a lyric ‘narrative’ which Thomas characterises as “[...] a progressive line, or theme, of movement in every poem” (*CL*, 281). Since the very foundations of Thomas’s poetry are so strongly dynamic, it also makes perfect sense that the embodied metaphoric frame is not stable in the poems. Consequently, the way in which metaphor can create dynamics within a text and *across* texts is the focal point of this thesis – be it narrative dynamics or something else (this issue will be taken up later).

Many scholars have pointed out the relevance of this narrative to analysing Thomas’s poems, and have also been quick to mention that the term is not equivalent to usual uses of the word, but few have offered a more appropriate definition or application. Chris Wigginton (2001, 99) however brings out possible implications for the reader: Thomas’s chain of contradictory images is a principle that shows us how the theme of the poem opens up in the reading process. Moreover, Wigginton argues that Thomas’s poetic language is foregrounded as

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13 Hereafter *CL*.

heavily as it is for thematic reasons: to reflect the co-existence of life and death in our everyday experience. Language becomes almost self-sufficient:

[...] the drive towards unification (of body, spirit, cosmos, etc.) leads directly to a language-use in which the materiality and autonomy of the signifier is a given. Thomas grants images almost the same degree of 'literalness' and autonomy, such that poems are not only not sustained by external reference, but that they seem to be generated by the self-evolving dynamic of images, in narratives whose linguistic events frequently exceed any abstractable sense. (Wigginton 2001, 100.)

Further on Wigginton goes as far as to suggest that the autonomy Thomas grants his images is comparable to the way in which surrealist poets worked. However, even though the figurative language of Thomas's poems *is* highly estranging throughout, there are certain degrees to it as well: my hypothesis with the evolution of the embodiment theme mentioned is that when it comes to abstraction and difficulty of interpretation, there is a shift towards simpler yet bleaker language towards the later poems. In keeping with the struggle metaphor, this shift does not occur in a smooth temporal line of progression, but is nevertheless abstractable. Furthermore I would say that the chain of progression that is always present is never purely associative, meaning that even if Thomas's images receive some kind of *autonomy*, his writing is never *automatic*. In more ways than one Thomas's poetry can be seen to represent the classic Modernist tradition (see especially Chapter 2).

Wigginton's argument brings me to my own line of progression in relation to the hypothesis presented. Comparable to the way in which Thomas's embodied metaphors are arranged with varying dynamics and obscurity, there *is* no single unifying materiality within Cognitive Metaphor Theory either. There might be a drive towards unification, but the inherent contradictions of the target cannot be reconciled without sacrifice. This is the first issue within Cognitive Metaphor Theory I intend to address (Chapter 2): the way in which multiple metaphoric mappings help to abstract a thematic thread is far more complicated a process than what some of the analyses within the framework have shown. My key argument here is that complex metaphors require a whole host of interpretive manoeuvres from a competent reader with experience beyond everyday metaphors – a point that seems perfectly obvious but has

not been discussed adequately as yet since many have rushed to the conclusion that Cognitive Metaphor Theory is not particularly applicable to literary analysis, or indeed an interpretive move in the first place (see Pettersson 2011, 94).

My second addition to the discussion on conceptual metaphor is trying to place external reference in the poetics of embodiment (Chapter 3). As has been mentioned, so far intertextuality or the exploitation of genre conventions have not featured in any central role within the theory. I think this is a crucial aspect to bring into both CMT discussion and Thomas criticism: Thomas himself maintains that all of the background knowledge needed to interpret his writings is commonplace to any “literate person” (see page 8), but here we have to understand the word “literate” not literally but referring to a person who knows something about literature. Among central references are, in addition to the Bible, William Blake, William Wordsworth, John Donne and James Joyce, all of whom will feature in the analyses. However this leads us to another relevant question: when is the knowledge needed for the mapping of a metaphor unquestionable and schematically fixed in a cultural, shared sense? When does the reader’s competence step into play? Certainly with Thomas’s most frequently occurring metaphoric expressions interpretation becomes in a sense intuitive quite quickly, but what about ambiguities and possible deliberate distractions from these expectations? Chapter 4 will deal with such founding features of a “figurative mind”, formulated as a (critical) extension of Mark Turner’s idea of the “literary mind” (1996).

Finally, even though Thomas’s lyric narrative does not correspond to any traditional notion of the term narrative, the word is nevertheless often used in describing how Thomas’s poetry on occasions moves beyond the reader’s understanding (as in Wigginton’s description of Thomas’s figurative language on page 12).<sup>14</sup> The multiple connotations of narrative are of particular interest in the two final chapters of the thesis. First of all, in the sense of self-contradicting metaphoric coherence, as Thomas puts it, narrative can be linked to the idea of the poetic speaker as comparable to a narrator in two ways. One, is there an implied author or a similar construct behind the back of the lyric ‘I’, responsible for the coherence among

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, Wigginton links narrative with sense-making in a challenging lyric environment – possibly revealing an underlying distinction often made between narrative as comprehensive and often shared and lyric as estranging and introverted.

metaphors and pointing to inconsistencies or traces of unreliability? Two, how do we construe a figuring mind needed for the cognitive interpretation if the speaker's position is extremely artificial, anonymous and non-human-like even? These questions are discussed in Chapter 4. Thomas's "less obscure" poems present recognisable, resonating scenarios (childhood memories, grieving the death of a loved one), but the naturalisation of the poetic speaker as the poet or the poet's alter-ego does not quite work here: there are contradictory elements left unresolved with this kind of approach. The figurative distractions in these poems offer an interesting angle to the experientiality debate in cognitive literary studies.

Second of all, I will be looking at how conceptual metaphor can create narrative dynamics when figuring is foregrounded through complex patterns of negation, in other words what kind of consequences follow when a metaphoric frame is established and then pulled down? This is the main topic of Chapter 5: it investigates how embodiment can become distorted and to what ends. A natural result of the Fall in terms of embodied metaphors is the inadequacy integrated into such expressions, but a more bitter way of perceiving man appears in the so called "war elegies" towards the end of Thomas's career. The original light and airy place is revisited with a very bleak frame of mind: "Darkness kindled back into beginning / When the caught tongue nodded blind" (*CP*, 107). As with Chapter 4, there is added emphasis on the rhetoric in terms of metaphoric construal, and the narrativity discussed in the chapter is focused around the concept of *figurative negotiation* (see Biebuyck & Martens 2011). As a genre-boundary crossing move I shall also extend the analysis of impaired embodiment into one of Thomas's radio plays, *Under Milk Wood*, as the organisational principles of (negative) metaphoric coherence get another twist from the narrative structure of the text as well as the text's playful take on the concept of voice.

How could the functions of embodiment in Thomas's poetry be summarised then, and how do they relate to "everyday" cognitive metaphors? First and foremost embodied metaphors animate static things, and bring ideas closer to home, as it were. This is one of the main claims of Cognitive Metaphor Theory, but the tendency is of course one that has been around for much longer. Within the classic rhetoric tradition Demetrius writes: "Good metaphors are *active*, lending the energy of more animated things to whatever is less energetic or personal,

or more abstract and passive.” (“On style”, 2–81.) The words “personal” and “passive” are of particular interest here: it is assumed that embodied metaphors humanise and bring things closer to us. This is sometimes the case with Thomas, but a particular way embodiment works in many of his poems, especially the later ones, is that it can be an *attempt* to humanise only to fail on purpose (cf. the consequences of the Fall), or that the ruined body can signal a kind of an ultimate estrangement and exclusion, as in the so called war elegies. This impaired embodiment is in line with the ways in which conceptual metaphors work according to George Lakoff and Mark Turner – negating existing cognitive metaphors to create new meanings. However the effect that recurring impaired metaphoricity creates goes beyond that: I want to investigate how these metaphors cumulate to create lacunae structure, a (further) struggle in the reading process.

The evolution of the embodiment theme is also behind the logic for my material selection: I have chosen texts that exemplify the embodiment theme from the whole spectrum of Thomas’s lyric works. However, I do not try not cling onto linearity in terms of temporality too strongly, even though a certain line of progression is abstracted. I will focus on selected key poems – and will also elaborate on what makes them key poems. A cluster of such poems, for instance, is formed by the so called “birthday poems”. They were written at different phases of the poet’s career, and all of them look back on past experiences from different points of view. In my view there is a clear shift from the first to the last with how embodiment functions in these poems, and what it might signify. All of the poems feature an embodied natural scene, but the tone in which the relationship between the speaker and his surroundings is presented changes significantly, though not in a clear-cut linear way. “Especially when the October wind” is quite inward and literary, whereas “Poem in October” is almost pantheistic in how it projects holiness and childhood nostalgia onto the visible scene. “Poem on his birthday”, in turn, is rather pessimistic and more resistant to interpretation, featuring a quarrel with the past and the present, and no nostalgia occurs. Finally, “Fern hill” returns to the idea of the innocence of childhood but with an added knowledge of the world of experience.

Interestingly enough, when the composer John Corigliano decided to write a piece of music with the idea of construing a “memory play” out of Thomas's works, he chose these particular

poems. In his commentary on his creative process he says that he faced significant problems by the time he got to “Poem on his birthday” (in his initial version, “Poem in October” and “Fern hill” came first):

I realized that the *bel canto* vocalism of the previous pieces couldn't contain this character's midlife madness [...]. The sunny chorus of “Fern Hill” needed to return, transfigured, as demons of the poet's mind. Only the largest symphonic forces could support, lead, and color these voices. What I didn't yet know was how my musical means could encompass every emotion of Thomas's character. (Introductory leaflet to *A Dylan Thomas Trilogy*, Corigliano 2008.)

As a solution to the dilemma Corigliano decided to portray with “quasi-operatic delineation of character” how a grown-up person can interpret his future through his past. To me, the way Corigliano worked with his interpretation of these poems, the “memory play”, makes a certain contiguity in the poems' interconnectedness visible. The problem of the “midlife madness” in “Poem on his birthday” manifests itself in the diction of the poem, as Chapter 3 shows, and it is absorbed into and assimilated in the viewpoint of the speaker of “Fern hill”. This deceptively straight-forward assimilated recounting is the topic of Chapter 4. Beyond these particular poems, I argue that the tendency can be seen in the shift from Thomas's rather obscure early poetry to the later poetry that is less dense but by no means less complex in terms of thematic insights.

This progression is set alongside the critical application and amending of CMT. However while proceeding with my discussion on the processes of metaphoric mapping in CMT in a problem-driven manner, I do strive to highlight the theory's most significant strength as well: the explanatory power it (potentially) contains with understanding the way metaphors work. By approaching the theoretical debates in a bottom-up manner, departing from Thomas's particular figurative language, that is, I hope to develop analytical tools that are more sensitive towards the specificity of literary texts, and lyric poetry in particular. In short, I aim to take into account all levels in the following goals set by Gerard Steen:

[...] metaphors must be analyzed as expressions, by investigating their vocabulary and grammar; as ideas, by analyzing their propositional content and knowledge structure; and as messages, by examining their pragmatic structure and function [...] (Steen 1999, 501).

Inevitably, though, the emphasis is on the first and the last aspect, since the scope of the thesis is limited to *literary* studies.

## 2. Static into dynamic: conception

In this chapter I describe what made Thomas famous as a poet in the early years of his career: his treatment of life as a complex and contradictory dynamics of conception and decay. At the same time I discuss the role of embodiment in Conceptual Metaphor Theory, or blending theory more prominently, and how the theory can be adapted to the analysis of very literary metaphors. More specifically, I ask how the conventionality of conceptual metaphors can be characterised as *symbolic* in nature in two different senses: 1) In the context of descriptive poetics, in that I attempt to portray Thomas's poetics of embodiment;<sup>15</sup> 2) In terms of intertextuality, as according to my hypothesis the embodiment in Thomas's poetry is founded on highly conventional biblical schemata, albeit with an estranging twist. The cultural constants of the myths of creation and the Fall<sup>16</sup> are often utilised in Thomas's poetry in a process that turns something generic personal, which is not only reminiscent of how a symbol works (in reverse), but is also at the heart of the concept of embodiment in CMT.<sup>17</sup>

To begin with the first aspect, Thomas himself formulates one of the basic principles of his poetics as follows:

All thoughts and actions emanate from the body. Therefore the description of a thought or action [...] can be beaten home by bringing it onto a physical level. Every idea, intuitive or intellectual, can be imagined and translated in terms of the body, its flesh, skin, blood, sinews, veins, glands, organs, cells, or senses. (*CL*, 56.)

In the sense I approach descriptive poetics, the author's explications of his works or technique can only act as a heuristic tool, and indeed, the above statement correlates strongly with Lakoff and Johnson's original description of the physical foundations of conceptual metaphor (1980, 14). The expression "beaten home" can be seen to communicate exactly what

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15 As has been mentioned, there is no full-length study on this topic, even though the theme is noted by many critics. However relevant physical author-specific symbols have been listed from a statistic point of view, for instance the frequency with which such expressions as "man", "eye", "blood", "hand", "heart", "death" occur in Thomas's early works (Kershner 1976, 220).

16 A fundamental study into this topic in literature is Northrop Frye's *The Great Code* (1982). Cf. also the concept of collective memory (e.g. Todorov 1983, 67).

17 In a literary historical sense, the notion of the Romantic symbol is also relevant: these "symbols embody the general in the particular" (Eco 1984, 142).

Fauconnier and Turner (2002) mean when they say embodiment brings abstract things onto the human scale. It is good to note, however, that such lines of thought are already present in earlier theories of figurative language, for example in Paul Ricoeur's discussion of the relation of metaphor and symbol. Ricoeur writes:

There is a triple correspondence between the body, houses, and the cosmos, which makes the pillars of a temple and our spinal columns symbolic of one another, just as there are correspondences between a roof and the skull, breath and wind, etc. (Ricoeur 1976, 62.)

Now the idea that the “inexpressible” quality of (human) nature necessitates symbolic language is obviously not one of a kind either. Umberto Eco (1984, 147) criticises the view for being too opaque and ignoring a whole history of variation, and for example phenomenological notions of the body as the locus of the senses have described that history well before CMT (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962; Bourdieu 1979; Nancy 1996).<sup>18</sup> Physically motivated metaphors inevitably echo these kind of age-old, intuitive correspondences (Armstrong 1998, 6–7): such schemata lay the foundation to any spatial orientation, and are especially relevant if some kind of divinity is in the equation.

My argument is not, however, that the foundations of conceptual metaphor should be discussed in the context of symbolic language (this would also open up another discussion on the way language signifies in general), since as regards terminology, CMT does not present its main principles in relation to rhetoric or structuralist notions of figurative language. Such traditional views would say that whereas metaphor is distinctly discourse-bound, symbol bears the weight of cultural knowledge and experience (Ricoeur 1976, 61). In order to reconcile these views with the broader idea of metaphor in CMT we can say that the power of experientiality that is present in symbolic expression (Ricoeur 1976, 69) *can be activated* in metaphoric mapping. In fact, Paul Ricoeur states that imagery more broadly lays the foundation for *quasi-experience*, or virtual experience as it were, through their *quasi-observational* qualities, and thus help to create the poetic illusion<sup>19</sup> (1978, 210). The detailed analysis of actual linguistic evidence constitutes another level in interpretation.

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<sup>18</sup> The idea can be taken even further: Peter Stockwell (2002, 47) points out that the interpretation of deictic elements in literary texts always entails embodiment.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. mimesis.



Tim Armstrong argues (1998, 6) that man's idea of bodiliness changed in a fundamental way during the first half of the twentieth century due to the emergence of such ideas as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, as well as due to technological innovations. In Armstrong's view, this change is reflected in Modernist literature. Even though I do not specifically aim to locate Thomas's poetry within the (literary) historical context of its time of conception, Armstrong makes a point about the figurativeness of Modernist poetry that seems very relevant to pick out: "We see [...] concepts which seem like embodied metaphors; but also others which take metaphor and its bodily location as subject. [...] Modernist writing does not simply incorporate bodily metaphors, it operates on them." (Ibid., 7.) As with Thomas's description of ideas being "beaten home" in bodily expressions, Armstrong's pun ("operate" as opposed to "incorporate") summarises the highly literary idea of embodiment that is present in typically Modernist writing. Of course his characterisation is a metaphor in itself, but rather apt: Thomas's metaphors is very constructed indeed, and such dissections of poetic language that Armstrong hints at with the verb "operate" are frequent throughout Thomas's works.

Similarly, the source of a large part of Thomas's poetic embodiment is the grand narrative of the Bible, but precisely as a narrative, a story. Many of Thomas's poems rewrite Genesis by comparing and contrasting cosmic processes with the functions of the human body in a markedly literary way. A very fitting example is the poem "In the beginning". It opens:

In the beginning was the three-pointed star,  
One smile of light across the empty face;  
One bough of bone across the rooting air,  
The substance forked that marrowed the first sun;  
And, burning ciphers on the round space,  
Heaven and hell mixed as they spun.  
(*CP*, 22.)

The first two lines are almost a direct reformulation of the beginning of the Old Testament: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face

of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” (1. Mos. 1:1-3.)<sup>20</sup> The “three-pointed star” can be read as the Holy Trinity, but also as the star of Betlehem, or the fig-leaf covering the crucial body parts after the Fall as Ralph Maud suggests (2003, 155). My argument throughout this thesis is that Thomas's metaphors are characterised by the co-existence of multiple potential interpretations. In “In the beginning” such simultaneity (also present in the idea of the Holy Trinity) is strengthened with expressions like “three-syllabled”, “three-eyed” and “all the letters of the void”.<sup>21</sup>

Metaphors that operate not only on embodiment but also on ambivalence offer valuable insight into analysing the processes of metaphoric mapping. Let us for instance take the second line “[o]ne smile of light across the empty face”. When considering the line without the context of the myth of creation, it is hardly striking, but it is still metaphoric. The *input spaces*, comparable to tenor and vehicle in structuralist models of metaphor, are: something empty, a container (*source*) and face (*target*). They are then *projected* against one another, in which process the reader constructs, based on schematic knowledge, a *generic space* that brings together common features of the source and the target, and ultimately a *blended space* in which the actual interpretation emerges.<sup>22</sup> (Turner 1996, 57.) In this case the qualities of a container are projected onto those of a face: in the generic space we contrast the flatness of a face with the three dimensions of a container. Based on our knowledge of conventions, as well as the “smile” of the same line, we can say that the face is something that represents a person's mood and thus their mind, typically seen as a container. The emerging interpretation would then be that the person's mind in fact is empty, not filled with thoughts or emotions – the person in question is a *tabula rasa*.

However only when we add Genesis as an intertext to the equation do we see the *significance* of such a metaphor. The metaphor MIND IS A CONTAINER is in fact cleverly played with in relation to the beginning of the Old Testament: “the face of the deep” that refers to the surface of the sea becomes an actual face representing man in all his three-dimensionality. “One smile of light”, then, is the light that created life, but quite concretely putting a smile on man's face. Furthermore, the “empty face” also refers to the “void” in the story of creation. Thus the way

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20 Bible references are to the so called King James translation.

21 “Three-syllabled” can be seen to refer to God's name in Hebrew.

22 All of these spaces, or domains as they are called by some, are based on schematic knowledge embedded in our sensory and motoric experience (Turner 1996, 16; see also Stockwell 2002, 27).

life is said to have begun in Genesis is paralleled with the signs of life in man. The sun, or the “greater light” (1. Mos. 1:16), consists of “forked” matter, the division of night and day, as well as marrow: it is the backbone of man. Again the line carries many possible referents: “forked” means divided in general, but it can be linked to the conventional metaphor of speaking with a “forked tongue”, originating in the snake that led Eve to temptation.<sup>23</sup> Of course such details are not all necessarily needed for understanding the metaphoricity of the line, but they do link to other metaphors in the poem, and thus the poem's overall construction; in fact, “forked” can be seen to add significance to the expression “marrowed” as well since marrow is part of human spine, often used to describe man's morality in a metaphoric sense.

Mark Turner does remind us that since all the spaces involved, and especially the blend the mapping process culminates in, are mental categories and as such fuzzy and unstable. That is to say, blending is not a simple projection of A onto B: sometimes the source and target are initially contradictory, and as soon as the blended space is created it is subject to further mappings (1996, 83–84) – even within a single text. Here a link has to be made to one of the basic ideas of the traditional discourse-bound metaphor: Paul Ricoeur for example emphasises the tension that is created in a metaphor in how it combines a new aspect to a familiar way of categorising reality (Ricoeur 1976, 56). The contradiction that is present on the denotative level is “solved” on the level of connotation, something that Monroe C. Beardsley calls “the metaphorical twist” (1962, 299). Now Ricoeur points out a crucial problem with this “solving”: the reader must decide which of the connotations of the vehicle are most likely in the context of the text in which the metaphor occurs (1978, 95), that is the reader has to choose the most likely out of the *potential range of connotation* (Beardsley 1962, 300). CMT has been criticised for insufficient discussion of what actually determines what is brought into the generic space and thus into the blend itself. The role of genre, other poetic means within a text, intertextual references and even cultural knowledge have not been addressed within the theory thoroughly enough, as was mentioned in the Introduction. The previous example showed the significance of intertextuality, but even on a more strictly “projection-internal” level the question of what qualities are chosen for the mapping arises.

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<sup>23</sup> For example in Shakespeare's works the word “forked” often refers to the wounding forked tongue, i.e. lying, although in *King Lear* Lear describes (the thought-to-be) Edgar as a “bare, forked animal”, where “forked” refers to the loins; another possible link between biblical imagery and bodiliness in “In the beginning”.

The qualities that bring the input spaces together can be likened to the *genus of reference* of Umberto Eco's semiotic metaphor theory (1984, 93), and Eco has aptly described the co-existence of similarity as well as difference in interpreting a metaphor with the term “back-and-forth features”, as opposed to the *transfer features* of Harald Weinrich's theory for example (1976). The line “[t]he substance forked that marrowed the first sun” surely makes one wonder how to abstract the genus of reference: the line's syntax is quite challenging and forces one to ask, what *is* the basic predication here? Through the already established pattern of paralleling the vital signs of the human body with the way life begun according to the Bible we can identify the word “marrowed” as representing man, and the rest of the line as representing the cosmic scenario of creation. Which one is the source and which one the target, though, and what are the shared qualities if looked at in more detail?

The subject/predicate combination “the substance forked” most likely refers to how the earth and sky were divided in Genesis, and “the first sun” signifies how night and day were separated, leaving “marrowed” as the only clear representative of man. The syntax of the line must then somehow provide further connection between the two input spaces. Grossly paraphrased the line could be read as something like this: the divided matter is (also) responsible for the substance that is the live part of our bones forming the division of night and day. This awkward formulation of what the line might “state” reveals something crucial: the human element is in fact a kind of a hinging point in a sentence that is in effect a tautology (something that is part of something is part of this something). This symmetry suggests that it is relevant to assume that “marrowed” reflects back both ways, making it a crucial part of “the substance forked” too. Indeed, this definite yet mysteriously vague matter could be seen as a biological reference to cells dividing in the beginning of human life as well. The heart of the metaphor is of course the unconventional use of the word “marrow” – such a verb does not exist. We must imagine what the verb could mean based on the existing noun, and this activating in the metaphoric mapping further highlights the point of the whole paralleling: the beginning of life. Indeed, bone marrow provides blood cells that have a fundamental role in our existence.

However I have not yet described what exactly determines what we include in the blend, and

even the roles of source and target are blurred by the symmetrical sentence structure. It is clear that the words in themselves do not easily render to categorisation into input spaces, except for “the first sun” that can arguably be linked to the dawn of the world without the context of the rest of the poem. We must then conclude that the most probable links are defined by an intertext prompted by the preceding lines of the poem, and only then can we say that the way God divided night and day, as well as heaven and earth, is projected onto how human life in concrete terms comes to be. The key shared quality is division whose double significance is revealed by the syntactic structure of the metaphoric line as well as the anti-categorical use of the word “marrow”.

Such a tangled example is of course a little bit unfair: Lakoff, Johnson and Turner's original theory is not aimed as an interpretive framework in the same sense as Ricoeur and Eco's arguments for instance. As Turner points out, often the blended space is in a way an invisible stepping stone: when an interpretation has been reached, there is no need to dwell on the correspondences made. The blend is more visible when the projection is more unconventional, or even contradictory – either in terms of the projection or even the actual linguistic material. (Turner 1996, 89.) These two aspects are essentially linked though, as when a projection becomes more conventional, so do the expressions related to the projection as well: the initial input space is extended, and the blended space fades into the background again and is more like an extension itself (*ibid.*).

Perhaps another example can better illustrate the role of the blend and the difficulty of defining the generic features: “The force that through the green fuse” is based on a similar analogy as “In the beginning” but presented in a less cosmic tone. Natural (botanical) processes are paralleled with the life-cycle of man: “The force that through the green fuse drives the flower / Drives my green age” (*CP*, 13). The underlying basic metaphor here is PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, and the shared qualities of people and plants are of course that both are organic and (usually) dependent on nutrition, oxygen, water, sunlight. However the metaphor is further developed with the expression “green fuse” that poses a contradiction: “fuse” is not organic but something created by man meant for lighting up and (usually) destroying things. Yet the visual qualities of a fuse link with a plant's roots; furthermore, in a similar way as the roots provide water and nutrition to a plant, the fuse is responsible for the explosives it is

attached to getting the spark they require to explode. Thus in the generic space we find both opposite (organic/non-organic, vital/destroying) and similar features (the root of a plant/fuse as visual entities). The emerging blend is then that living things carry in them the seed of destruction, a thematic point that is elaborated even further with the fact that both the similarities and the differences exist side by side in the generic space.

This theme is also present in “In the beginning” – and indeed in a vast majority of Thomas's poems. If we still turn to the first stanza of “In the beginning”, “[b]urning cipher” is a highly complex metaphor in that there is little conventionality to grab onto: “cipher” can mean zero, or secret code, either of which cannot really be on fire. The expression in itself seems to be an example of some kind of incomprehensible code: a mystery is left unsolved, or unwritten in any kind of understandable language. At the same time heaven and hell become one (presumably temporarily before being separated again): “And, burning ciphers on the round space, / Heaven and hell mixed as they spun.” This mixing brings to mind William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), another rewriting of Genesis, in which the Devil argues the following:

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors.

1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.

[...]

(Blake 1966, 149.)

Elsewhere in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* the famous statement “without contraries is no progression” is made, and such a driving force is certainly present in Thomas's writing; here it of course refers to the Bible's basic dichotomy of good and evil. “Energy” is linked to sensual, bodily, pleasures, and is deemed morally corrupt, something that Thomas's poems featuring biblical embodiment also rebel against.

In my reading this mystical code brings an added meta-level into the basic analogy, something that has already been highlighted by ambiguities in the metaphoric expressions. To summarise, the links to the Bible were as follows:

In the beginning → Genesis  
Three-pointed star → Holy Trinity  
Light → creation  
Empty face → the first sea (void)  
Forked → (synecdoche for) the catalyst of the Fall

These expressions let us build further links to the main embodied parallels:

Three-pointed star → phallus  
Smile of light → physical human ability expressing emotions  
Empty face → lifeless person (blank canvas)  
Forked → dividing cells

The unifying power of the secret code brings these poles together, the analogy between the spiritual and the physical is compressed into one, much like the basic dichotomy of the body and the soul in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The tautology around the expression “marrowed” is then not really a mere tautology, but evidence for the undivided nature of the basic framework.

The poem continues with similar metaphoric comparisons throughout, each stanza beginning with “[i]n the beginning”. The way in which the overall analogy is built is according to Ralph Maud so obvious that it is too banal to be considered the theme of the poem (2003, 154–155); many critics have said the same about Thomas's early poems in general. Maud characterises the poem with an almost mocking use of appropriate embodied metaphoricity: “The rest of the stanzas follow suit in this repeated metaphoric act. It is a simple bending of an articulated muscle, each time lifting an image from human anatomy into a space denoting the beginning of things.” (2003, 155.) However Maud does not offer an alternative, a more interesting thematic reading, and as far as I can see, the poem is not a “simple bending of an articulated muscle” as there is a meta-level that subtly builds almost like a declaration of Thomas's

poetics. In my view, overlooking the very foundations of Thomas's use of metaphor is to read his poetry in a top-down manner – to use the terms “early” and “mature” period in an evaluative tone, a tendency that is present in the tradition of Thomas studies as mentioned (see Introduction).

The theme comes to a climax in the last stanza, but in a way I would not call very obvious:

In the beginning was the word, the word  
That from the solid bases of the light  
Abstracted all the letters of the void;  
And from the cloudy bases of the breath  
The word flowed up, translating to the heart  
First characters of birth and death.  
(*CP*, 23.)

The first three lines of the stanza refer to the beginning of the gospel of John which in its turn recalls the very beginning of Genesis: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1.) This is the ultimate metaphor for creation and poetic creativity alike: God created the world with the power of word, and God *is* word. In the poem, then, the use of this “Word” in an embodied context suggests a ground-laying understanding: “The word flowed up, translating to the heart / First characters of birth and death.” Furthermore, the way this word flows in the blood hints at a crucial link between God and man in Christian faith, Jesus. Earlier on in the poem he is referred to with “[t]he blood that touched the crosstree and the grail”, and another reference ends the poem: “Blood shot and scattered to the winds of light / The ribbed original of love.” (*CP*, 23.) “The winds of light” is a metaphor that combines the light of creation as well as the breath of life given to man, an act with spiritual as well as physical meaning (breathing).

If we look at the 'spatial' relationships, or *topology*, of the input spaces (Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 327) in more detail, however, we can see that the movement is *away* from the conventionally assumed object in this line: the blood that signifies vitality as well as Jesus's sacrifice spurts “the ribbed original of love” back to where the vitality originally came from.

“[T]he ribbed original of love” is the key metaphor here. The word “ribbed”, another one of Thomas's neologisms (cf. “marrowed”), refers to how God in Genesis created Eve out of Adam's rib. Love, on the other hand, can refer to divine love, or love between people, hinting at the outcome of Genesis, the beginning of bodiliness. Instead of choosing one of these alternatives as the more probable one to take into the blend, I would argue that both are relevant. Namely, “the ribbed original of love” with the use of the word “original” links to “original sin”, which Eve, the “ribbed” one, was responsible for, and which also brought about a change in God's love for man. This kind of metaphoric integration (Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 329) where multiple spaces create a blend with its very structure emphasises the thematic point that “the ribbed original of love” preserves the link to God, the source of life with his love for man, while recounting the reasons behind man's weakness and fall from being the image of God.

The ending of the poem seems then to be in direct dialogue with Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: virtue and sense and evil and sensuous pleasures should not be paired without reservation.<sup>24</sup> Without contraries, however, is no progression, and therefore no meanings either. In this light Maud's evaluation of the banality of the grand metaphor in “In the beginning” is rather one-eyed: “The metaphor [...] does not have two fixed points in the usual way, but only one: the notion of the beginning so vague that the significance is almost entirely in the image which images the metaphor.” (2003, 155.) The way in which the metaphor always through a loop returns to the point of origin *is* the point: it still flows both ways and allows contradictions to exist side by side. The difficulty of choosing only one option into the blend highlights the dynamics of the process of metaphoric mapping in the sense discussed with Thomas's method of “beating things home” through human analogy.

However such peaceful co-existence of contradictions is not always this easy to justify. The blended space as an “effortless” extension of the input spaces (Turner 1996, 89) cannot in turn be extended to some of the more defamiliarising metaphors that twist and turn conventions or operate on negation. As we have seen, even drawing out the source and target spaces can be challenging, a process whose strongly intuitive nature Peter Stockwell for example has

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<sup>24</sup> The God of Blake's mythology, “Nobodaddy”, is characterised as a figure who created *both* the innocent lamb and the fierce tiger.

pointed out (1999, 130). In actual literary practice the larger context as well as the context of the text inevitably bring anticipation and analytical cumulateness into the mapping (ibid., 130–131), and often with readings applying CMT it is hard to say what exactly is brought into the blend based on literary competence and what can be accounted for with the locating and fleshing out of basic metaphors.<sup>25</sup> This, of course, is in reality a variation of an age-old problem in literary criticism (as argued by for example Johansen 2005): how does one produce a convincing reading with the help of a certain theoretical apparatus, in other words how to avoid coming up with a competent reading with only vague links to theory?<sup>26</sup>

Let me take an example from a poem that continues the theme of “In the beginning” but with a twist to the metaphoric structure. In the poem “All all and all” the world is human-shaped, and the creation of the world is revisited from the angle of human fertility: “All all and all the dry worlds couple, / Ghost with her ghost, contagious man / With the womb of his shapeless people.” (CP, 29.) The projection includes a discrepancy in that to the domains of 'man' and 'world' another contradictory element, namely disease, is added: man can surely have different diseases but here man *is* one, as specified by the apposition in the second line. Lakoff argues that in the mapping of a metaphor the schematic nature, or cognitive typology, of the input spaces must be preserved – this restriction is called the *invariance principle* (Lakoff 1990, 54). Turner specifies that the projecting of material from source to target is not arbitrary, but is guided by a strive towards avoiding contradictions (1996, 31). In practice this means that presenting the world as a human that is also a disease is self-contradicting and the reader may fail to find coherence here. However the kinship between the source and the added input space of disease (implicitly evoked by the word “contagious”) can be read as a specific kind of bodiliness projected onto the world we know: man's urges appear in a negative light, the need to reproduce is like a disease though it is a life-preserving instinct at the same time. Indeed Peter Stockwell argues that the invariance principle makes interpretation in a way a one-way street: the cumulateness effect often present in literary metaphors is not taken into account (1999, 132). The principle is in fact formulated with conventional everyday metaphors in mind.

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25 This fuzziness that I would call inevitable contrasts with the kind of diagrams usually presented in such readings: they portray mental processes as clear-lined arrows or circles.

26 Cf. also Stephan Fleissman's critique of Margaret Freeman's cognitive literary approach (Introduction).

The poem “From love’s first fever to her plague” offers an even more mundane version of the creation theme. The biblical schemata are activated in a subtle way and they remain more in the background: again the word “love” mentioned in the title can be both divine and person-to-person love. The word “fever” would suggest more the latter, but the syntactic movement in the title (“from [...] to”) points to the more biblical sense of the word “plague”, the labour pains given as a curse to woman in the Fall, or more generally the kind of inflictions God sends as punishment to man in the Old Testament. The double reference is in effect very similar to “In the beginning”, however also a more personalised life-span is built here with a pronounced “I” (something “In the beginning” does not have). In addition, the use of the double meaning of “Word” – God’s creation as well as the language of man and his ability to create – is more prominent, which is something that obviously links with the emergence of the “I” as well.

The beginning that depicts birth is, however, almost as cosmic as in “In the beginning”:

From love’s first fever to her plague, from the soft second

And to the hollow minute of the womb,

From the unfolding to the scissored caul,

[...]

All world was one, one windy nothing,

[...]

The sun and moon shed one white light.

(*CP*, 21.)

Significantly, the “from [...] to” structure is only present in the first two stanzas that are about birth and that are also more generic and biblical in tone: here we are still close to the time when man was not tainted yet. The structure brings together divine love, the mythical origin of man that is, and the biology of how human life comes to be. Expressions linked to Genesis, like “void”, are contrasted with embodied metaphors like “hanging famine”. Whereas “the earth and sky were one airy hill”, as before creation, the reality of birth is more harsh: “from the soft second / And to the hollow minute of the womb”. The contrast could suggest

lamenting the irreversibility of the Fall.

The second stanza parallels hints of man's divine origins with significant events in a person's life: "[...] And to the miracle of the first rounded word, / From the first secret of the heart, [...] / And to the first dumb wonder at the flesh [...]" (CP, 21). The metaphor "the first rounded word" refers to a child learning to speak, but more generally it can also refer back to the divine meaning of "Word". "The first secret of the heart", too, has this double reference: the miracle of creation "written" in the flesh, and perhaps also how Adam and Eve tried to keep the eating of the forbidden fruit a secret from God, as well as a young person's first crush, which then leads to "the first dumb wonder at the flesh". In this series of firsts it is rather striking that the first words are a "miracle", underlining the mythical origin of such an ability, but with the first secret no such qualificatory word occurs, and, with the discovery of sexuality the word "dumb" is added to "wonder". This might suggest that the connection to the divine point of origin, or one's understanding of it, fades away. What is left is a "dumb wonder": why do these kind of feelings emerge? Significantly the word "dumb" can mean both stupid and unable to speak, and both qualities seem to come from the same source here.<sup>27</sup>

Sexuality as a kind of a driving force for change is articulated even more clearly in the fourth stanza: "The boy she dropped from darkness at her side / [...] Was muscled, matted, wise to the crying thigh / And to the voice that, like a voice of hunger, / Itched in the noise of wind and sun." (CP, 22.) The boy, the speaker of the poem (as an adult, probably), has become wise "to the crying thigh" and knows a hunger that "[i]tched in the noise of wind and sun": there is a contradiction to the original "one windy nothing" in which the "sun and moon shed one white light". The contradiction can be read as separation from the divine origins, in which case the "crying thigh" can also refer to the labour pains inflicted on women in the Fall.<sup>28</sup> Significantly, the wind and sun make noise, a sound the speaker (most likely) finds bothersome.

The use of the original metaphorical "Word" also shifts into a more worldly context in the

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<sup>27</sup> This use of the word "dumb" appears on several occasions in Thomas's works, for instance in the already mentioned poem "The force that through the green fuse", but most notably in the later ones where it also gains more thematic relevance through impaired embodiment (see Chapter 5).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. also Blake's "Proverbs of Hell": "The nakedness of woman is the work of God." (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1966, 151.)

fifth stanza:

And from the first declension of the flesh  
I learnt man's tongue, to twist the shapes of thoughts  
Into the stony idiom of the brain,  
To shade and knit anew the patch of words  
Left by the dead who, in their moonless acre,  
Need no word's warmth.  
[...] (CP, 22.)

The discovering of one's sexuality leads into learning “man's tongue” which, in turn, means transforming thoughts into “the stony idiom of the brain”. This suggests operating on learned conventions, “[l]eft by the dead”: a sharp contrast to the “miracle of the first rounded word”. Reaching such an understanding is to accept what makes us human, the consequences of original sin: “[...] From the divorcing sky I learned the double, / The two-framed globe that spun into a score; / A million minds gave suck to such a bud / As forks my eye [...]” (CP, 22). The sky divorcing its spouse activates once again the reference to the artificiality of moral dichotomies argued in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; it is also noteworthy that “heaven” has been replaced with “sky”.

People's minds giving “suck to such a bud / As forks my eye” again emphasises the convention-bound reality of life, but what kind of “bud” is it that “forks” one's eye, that is to say deceives the eye?<sup>29</sup> These two expressions strongly associate to the metaphors of Shakespeare's works<sup>30</sup>; for example in Sonnet 35 a bud is plagued by a disease caused by a parasite. The comparison has everything to do with the problem of sexuality in relation to moral codes – the tainting of innocence:

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:  
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;  
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,  
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.

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29 See the previous analysis of use of the word “fork” on page 23.

30 Compare also with Blake's “O rose, thou art sick”.

All men make faults, and even I in this,  
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,  
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,  
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are;  
[...]  
Such civil war is in my love and hate,  
That I an accessory needs must be,  
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.  
(Shakespeare 1982, 1011.)

This is a specific use of the very common metaphor of a rose (or another flower) as a human being, which, of course is a variation of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor: the worm causing the problem is part of the natural world, too, and the organic feel of the comparison underlines the naturalness of such a dilemma. Often the parasite living in the bud signifies man's mortality, the knowledge of one's inevitable death already at an early age – a theme that is certainly very prevalent in Thomas's poetry.

This portrayal of man's mortality could be seen to be supported by the TIME IS A THIEF metaphor that occurs later.<sup>31</sup> However the thief is “sweet”, as is the bud, which seems to create a positive frame around the problem: sexuality is a source of pleasure, yet there is something wrongful about it. The thematic contradiction is further highlighted with the use of the word “sourly” (compare also with “[s]uch civil war is in my love and hate”, an realisation of the LOVE IS WAR metaphor). Now in the context of “From love's first fever to her plague”, the naturalness of the comparison is disputed in that the bud prevents one from seeing clearly – sexuality is a distraction, *and* it makes us common. To overcome this, the speaker resorts to the comfort of a unifying religion, leaving the troubles in the past: “Youth did condense; [...] / One sun, one manna, warmed and fed.” (*CP*, 22.) The line could, however, be seen to be overly nostalgic as well, especially when read alongside an alternative ending that Thomas eventually cut out:

Now that drugged youth is waking from its stupor,  
The nervous hand rehearsing on the thigh

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31 A personifying metaphor used, in turn, by Thomas for example in “Fern hill”, see 4.1.

Acts with a woman, one sum remains in cipher:

Five senses and the frozen brain

Are one with the wind, and itching in the sun.

Stone is my mate? who shall brass be?

What seed to me?

The soldered world debates.

(*Notebook Poems*, 205.)

The ending then goes back to the original contradiction with sexuality and ends with a sense of inconclusiveness. The “itch” here connects to another poem varying the same theme. In addition to this particular physical metaphor, “If I were tickled by the rub of love” also has a repeated syntactic structure similar to the one in “From love's first fever to her plague”, “If x, then y”, bringing further insight into the thematisation of the cosmos/body analogy. The hypothetical tone created by this structure is contrasted by the speaker's polemical argumentation, and in this poem the mythical early moments of the world are skipped almost altogether: the poem jumps straight to a scenario in which a “rooking girl who stole me for her side / Broke through her straws” (*CP*, 15).

Moreover, the central expression “rub of love” illustrates this attitude's many sides as well as adds yet another level of earthliness to the original metaphor. “Rub” can be read as the friction between opposites like good and evil in the biblical sense, and as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which case “love” would be divine love like in “From love's first fever to her plague”. However, “rub” associates even more strongly with masturbation or intercourse as a physical phenomenon causing friction, which of course would make “love” pronouncedly sexual. What is more, based on further occurrences of the word (“And what's the rub? [...]”), “rub” could also be seen as a reference to Hamlet's (more noble) dilemma, as put forward in the famous monologue: “To be, or not to be--that is the question [...] To die, to sleep-- / To sleep--perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub” (Shakespeare 1982, 812).<sup>32</sup> Such a profound intertext in the context of the poem would highlight the not just (superficially) physical nature of the key problem articulated, as well as the way human morals are in general contradicted

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32 Among Thomas scholars at least Tindall sees the link (1962, 46).

by real life scenarios (though of course presented in a highly poetic way).

If we, then, consider this poem as the speaker's articulation of his own profound dilemma, which one is it more, spiritual or pragmatic? What defines the blend? The first stanza makes a physical round-trip only to end up defying the Fall: "If I were tickled by the rub of love, / [...] I would not fear the apple nor the flood" (*CP*, 15). The speaker rejects the original temptation of the Fall as well as the punishment God sent out to put an end to the corruptness of man. A key word in deciding what the speaker's real argument is is "tickle": it not only refers to a physical itch, most likely that of sexuality, but also to the reaction of being amused, pleased or convinced by something. If, then, one *either* embraces the physical itch or responds to it with amusement, it ceases to be a threat.

However in the third stanza the hypothesis leads solely to the bodily truth: "I would not fear the muscling-in of love / If I were tickled by the urching hungers / Rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve. / I would not fear the devil in the loin / Nor the outspoken grave." (*CP*, 15.) As with "From love's first fever to her plague", hunger signifies sexual desire, although in that poem it was in a way satisfied with the manna from God; here the expression "outspoken grave" reminds us of such moral codes as Shakespeare's Sonnet 35 dealt with, and more specifically the old idea of masturbation as a sin. Namely the word "outspoken" brings a collective tone to the metaphor: masturbation is hardly a deadly sin, but there is a hint to the idiom "die of shame" here, and being shamed would not be possible without the judgment of others. "Devil in the loin", on the other hand, reminds us of the argument of the devil in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: bodily "energy" is (falsely) seen as the source of evil. Thus there is no room for the first unified cosmos of Genesis; these metaphoric expressions defy conventional ideas of bodiliness as guided by religious morals.

The fourth stanza generalises this point, with a slightly ironic tone:

If I were tickled by the lovers' rub

[...]

Time and the crabs and the sweethearting crib

Would leave me cold as butter for the flies,  
The sea of scums could drown me as it broke  
Dead on the sweethearts' toes.  
(CP, 16.)

Sexuality, then, brings about concrete physical problems in the form of “crabs” and a “sea of scums”<sup>33</sup>, but as Ralph Maud points out (2003, 127), the speaker's attitude does not seem worried at all, on the contrary it is quite light, “tickled”. “The sea of scums” of course links with the flood that God meant to destroy man with, but it is essential to notice that this is not a generic rub that the speaker could accept anymore, it is “the lovers' rub”. The speaker then seems to be saying that if he accepted this *version* of that rub, in many ways tainted, “[t]ime and the crabs [...] / Would leave [him] cold as butter for the flies”.

Significantly, the up until now repeated, and slightly varied, hypothetical syntactic structure does not occur after this, but instead a more direct mode of speech brings with it strong assertions: “And that’s the rub, the only rub that tickles. [...] // [...] The words of death are dryer than his stiff, / My wordy wounds are printed with your hair. / I would be tickled by the rub that is: / Man be my metaphor.” (CP, 16.) The bodily “rub” *is* generic and inevitable, just like death, but it is private and meaningful in the way one chooses to see it: “Man be my metaphor.” William York Tindall argues that if the ending of the poem is interpreted with emphasis on the possessive “my”, this famous line would then communicate a strong desire to be a sexual creature, a man (1962, 48) – the private aspect would be emphasised in a physical sense. However I would be more inclined to read the statement with emphasis on the word “metaphor”: man is the only available measure of things, and it has to be enough to describe one's own micro-cosmos. The ending is very typical of Thomas's poems in its doubleness (of possible interpretations), and also in that it links to very resonant, shared schemata without committing to an ideological standpoint: “[...] in this final line, Thomas is both final and ambiguous, a combination as pleasing to twentieth-century ears as to those of the seventeenth

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33 Again we could make a link to *Hamlet*: “Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / Or to take arms against **a sea of troubles** / And by opposing end them.” (Shakespeare 1982, 812, emphasis added.) In the light of the speaker's tone of speaking in this stanza, the reference can be said to be quite ironic.

century.” (Tindall 1962, 49.)

A similar notion of doubleness can be found in the already briefly discussed poem “All all and all”, in which the idea of fertility is dealt with using a mix of embodied metaphors and the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor: “All all and all the dry worlds couple, / Ghost with her ghost, contagious man / [...] Stroke of mechanical flesh on mine [...] // Flower, flower the people's fusion, / O light in the zenith, the coupled bud” (CP, 29–30). Embodied worlds cross, spreading the “disease” of man, the shared need to reproduce. What is more, this disease is banal in that it is also portrayed as something *mechanical*; as Tim Armstrong points out, in Modernist writing hybrids combining man and technology often serve the function of bridging the gap between introverted artistic creativity (metaphorically paralleled with fertility) and the world around the artist (1998, 90). The natural appeal in the previously used man as a flower metaphor (compare with Shakespeare's Sonnet 35) is tainted in the process of this fusion.

By this point the original metaphor of creation as physical as well as poetic conception has become sort of a given<sup>34</sup>, the biblical origin of the these embodied metaphors has become a *staple connotation* (Beardsley 1962, 300–302), or like a basic metaphor in the context of Thomas's writing. When such a conventionalisation of a metaphor occurs, it renders itself to new variations, ready to be integrated to other blends. “If I were tickled by the rub of love” builds in its dialectic of generic/personal a kind of a defiance, most notably reflected in the multiple connotations of the central verb “tickle”. The body is then a starting point for new projections: the biblical origin of sexuality and bodiliness is detached from its original context, in the sense what it signified, and the difference that came to be in the Fall is paralleled with making a difference to the origo of the Bible's idea of man. This is reflected for example in the shift in the “firsts” in “From love's first fever to her plague”: from “the miracle of the first rounded word” to “the first secret of the heart” and to the “dumb wonder” at the sexual urges.

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34 Here we could characterise the connection between the body and creation as symbolic: it does not need to be underlined with striking metaphors all the time any more. Peter Crisp's cognitive view on symbolic expressions is quite fitting: “[...] they prototypically apply to works that continuously activate a cross-domain mapping without overtly referring to its target domain.” (2003, 106.)

Now we must note that from a cognitive point of view, the way in which the biblical metaphors derived from Genesis are used in Thomas's poems is on a different level than the conventional schemata we have of the Bible's myth of creation<sup>35</sup>: the activated schemas act as an interpretive aid in figuring out what we make to be the most probable qualities taken into each blend. What is more, these schemas are not fundamentally textual in nature since within the Western culture the grand narrative of the Bible is deeply conventionalised and thus fragmented into variations as a result of countless instantiations. In further analyses in this thesis the relationship between the metaphors that 'use' basic metaphors and the underlying cognitive frameworks will be problematised more than has been done so far. As has been stated by many critics of CMT, pointing out relevant basic metaphors does not in itself constitute interpretation, and often drawing these kind of links could be extracted from the analysis without the reading itself suffering in any significant way (see for example Johansen 2005). Lakoff, Johnson and Turner have indisputably shown how metaphors are part of our everyday thought, but this also means that no theoretical categorisation of basic metaphors is necessarily needed in interpretation in order for these intuitive categories to be activated. So far I have been discussing the role of such things as intertextuality and ambivalence in addition to knowledge of conventional metaphors, but on a rather general level. However since a high level of self-awareness and defamiliarisation is present even in the most "straight-forward" of Thomas's metaphors, more suggestive links need to be drawn: I will next look at the metaphoric build-up of three of Thomas's poems in more detail.

## **2.2. From metaphoric commonplaces to complex blends**

Thomas's poems are often characterised as metaphorically dense, even to the point where they are hard to understand (see Chapter 3); for example David Lodge calls Thomas "a metaphoric writer if ever there was one" (1977, 213). The reader of Thomas's poetry needs not only a stretch of patience in order to trace the movement of metaphors, but also knowledge of literary conventions, more specifically *tropological competence*. This section aims at

35 Peter Stockwell, for example, has emphasised the importance of making the distinction between discourse level metaphors and conceptual metaphor (2002, 105).

shedding more light on how a chain of metaphors might be constructed in the interpretation of a poem, and what exactly might be needed to open up individual metaphors *in the context of the whole poem*.

Even though it has already been established that Lakoff, Johnson and Turner have not intended their theory as a tool for literary interpretation, Lakoff and Turner offer insight into how conceptual metaphors can function within a poem:

The coherence among metaphors is a major source of the power of poetry. By forming a composition of several basic metaphors, a poet draws upon the grounding of those metaphors in common experience and knowledge. When that experience and knowledge cohere, the metaphors seem all the more natural and compelling. Complex metaphors grip us partly because they awake in us the experience and knowledge that form the grounding of those metaphors, partly because they make the coherence of that experience and knowledge resonate, and partly because they lead us to form new coherences in what we know and experience. (Lakoff & Turner 1989, 89.)

The statement proposes something that would make literary metaphors special: the way in which metaphors link to each other and our experience through extending, elaborating and challenging. Thus a coherence based on recognisability and therefore identifiability would have a strong part in explaining the appeal of poetry. Now the most obvious first reaction to the statement is perhaps that complex, estranging poetic metaphors do not necessarily resonate (at least with all readers) this effortlessly. John Ackerman characterised Thomas's imagery as thoroughly penetrated by a sense of paradox, that is to say his poetry is filled with discordant images and oppositions (1964, 7), not to mention Thomas's own definition of his poetic narrative consisting of contradictory images. However certainly even in Thomas's model a principle of interconnectedness is present, and the resonance created in such a contradictory progression can be compared to Lakoff and Turner's characterisation; an emerging idea is set into dialogue with another one, that is to say blended spaces interact with one another in interpretation.

Such an idea of how metaphors function within a text is of course present in other, earlier theories of metaphor as well. An interesting parallel can be found in Benjamin Hrushovski's

(1984) model of metaphor.<sup>36</sup> He sees metaphor first and foremost as a semantic *pattern*, as opposed to a linguistic unit taken out of the context of the real world and/or the context of the poem. This, of course, corresponds to CMT's idea of metaphor being an element of thought. For Hrushovski, metaphor is more particularly something that keeps “[...] changing in the text continuum, context-sensitive, relating to specific (fictional or real) frames of reference and dependent of interpretations.” (Hrushovski 1984, 6–7.) What Hrushovski calls “integrational semantics” is, as far as I can see, close to how Peter Stockwell (2005, 280) sees the practice of cognitive poetics: he stresses the importance of a stylistic analysis alongside a cognitive poetic one.

More specifically, though, Hrushovski's model defines metaphor as a *frame of reference* that is a construction pieced together from clues in the text. The frame of reference is a higher level organisational principle than words or sentences, and it is constructed based on our knowledge of the world, which would be comparable with schematic knowledge. What is more, multiple frames of reference form a metaphoric network into a text: metaphor is something between the lines, filling in gaps, and this network then lays the groundwork for a *field of reference*, something that links the text to the real world. (Hrushovski 1984, 11–12.) Such a characterisation can of course be compared with the idea of metaphoric coherence resonating with our experience of the world. However Hrushovski's model allows a broader scope for such reference patterns:

An *fr* [frame of reference] is any continuum of two or more referents to which parts of a text or its interpretations may relate: either referring directly or simply mentioning, implying, or evoking. It may indicate an object, a scene, a situation, a person, a state of affairs, a mental state, a history, a theory; it may be real, hypothetical, or fictional. (Hrushovski 1984, 12, italics original.)

The referentiality of a poem's metaphoric structure can then be internal (symbolic in the sense of descriptive poetics) or interconnectedness with other texts. The fictional world of the text, the *internal field of reference*, may or may not be strongly connected with an external field of reference, and Hrushovski emphasises how all these referentialities are built in interpretation and thus can vary (*ibid.*, 14–15). A similar flexibility should, in my opinion, be adopted into CMT as well, if and when it is applied to the interpretation of literary texts.

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<sup>36</sup> Quite recently reissued in a collection called *Explorations in Poetics* (2007).

The idea of a grand metaphor that is stretched out in a poem is of course much older than CMT or Hrushovski's writings. The term *metaphora continuata* can be found already in classic rhetoric (e.g. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* bk. VIII, ch. 6, par. 44), and Homer's extended metaphors have been written about at length. Furthermore, the metaphysical poets, of which John Donne is an important influence for Thomas, are credited with the idea of the *conceit*, a specific kind of extended metaphor.<sup>37</sup> The term “metaphysical poetry” was originally, as is often the case, derogatory in tone, first used by the poet Samuel Johnson, however for intriguing reasons. Johnson criticised metaphysical poets for their use of the conceit in the following manner: “The most heterogenous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions [...] they were not successful in representing or moving the affections.” (Johnson 1990, 678.) The beginning of the description is very similar to John Ackerman's definition of Thomas's poetic language (see Introduction); metaphoric discordance is a primary source of dynamics in his poems.

Moreover, Thomas has also been criticised for a similar lack of affection in his works (especially with the radio play *Under Milk Wood*, see 5.2.). However, in my view, such an impersonal mode of dealing with the theme of bodily creation is *part of the way the argument of the 'disjointed' Genesis is built* in Thomas's early poems. I will now discuss how this hypothesis can be supported in the analysis of three key poems. First I will look at the poem “A saint about to fall”, focusing on what could be called the main conceit in the poem. Then I will move on to analyse “I see the boys of summer”, paralleling its discursive progression with William Blake's *Songs of Experience* contra *Songs of Innocence*. Finally, I shall try to make sense of one of Thomas's most complex poems, “I, in my intricate image”, which is often described as the culmination of his poetics (of embodiment).

The title of “A saint about to fall” initially brings to mind the theme of man's fall from grace, but the poem turns out to be far less spiritual than this. In fact, it disguises what could be called a poetic glorification of sex beneath the kind of biblical imagery we have come to

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<sup>37</sup> The term's etymology is also interesting in terms of metaphoric mapping – it refers to a certain kind of “sustained imagining”.

expect from Thomas. Such a pairing, shocking to some, is very reminiscent of some of John Donne's poems. In Donne's "The flea" (1635) the speaker argues for the naturalness of a sexual union with the help of a flea that has bitten the speaker and his object of desire. As opposed to the social norms of the time, sex outside of marriage is made to appear holy in the way two can become one in this flea, an argument that is not entirely convincing:

Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead;  
[...]  
O stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where we almost, yea, more than married are.  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is.  
(Donne 1992, 25.)

The Bible speaks about the sanctity of life in all its forms, here taken quite literally since fleas and people would not usually be compared to each other in worth. Sin is then separated from the proposed sexual act with the help of the same codex that disapproves of pre-marital sex. However, the argument fails to convince the addressee who crushes the flea.

"A saint about to fall" does something similar but in a more subtle progression than this. At first the metaphors in the first stanza do not in any obvious way link to intercourse, but after the first line of the second stanza, "[g]lory cracked like a flea", the build-up has to be re-evaluated:

A saint about to fall,  
**The stained flats of heaven hit and razed**  
To the kissed kite hems of his shawl,  
On the last street wave praised  
The unwinding, song by rock,  
Of the woven wall  
Of his father's house in the sands,  
The vanishing of the musical ship-work and the chucked bells,

**The wound-down cough of the blood-counting clock**  
**Behind a face of hands,**  
**On the angelic etna of the last whirring featherlands,**  
**Wind-heeled foot in the hole of a fireball,**  
 Hymned his shrivelling flock,  
 On the last rick's tip by spilled wine-wells  
**Sang heaven hungry and the quick**  
**Cut Christbread spitting vinegar** and all  
 The mazes of his praise and envious tongue were worked in  
 flames and shells.

**Glory cracked like a flea.**  
 [...] (*CP*, 78-79, emphasis added.)

As fallen from grace as the world of Thomas's poems often is, here it is quite striking how the heaven the speaker is referring to seems to be the one reached through bodily pleasures. Of course if looking for sexual innuendo, one is likely to find it everywhere, but at this point glory cracking “like a flea” seems to be most naturally understood as a physical metaphor referring to Donne's poem.

In order to justify how the main comparison of bodily pleasures and divine experience can be seen as a kind of a conceit within the poem – we can simplify it to be a variation of THE BODY IS A COGNITIVE FACULTY for now – I will look at how the two input spaces are represented throughout the poem and what kind of progression might occur. Instead of going through all of the metaphors of a figuratively very dense poem, I will pick out the most prominent metaphors from all stanzas. Additionally, a number of other factors than just these metaphoric instances need to be considered if we are to construct a whole field of reference, but let us first simply outline how the main metaphor is expressed in the poem:

<b>body</b>	<b>divinity</b>
(1a) the wound-down cough of the blood-counting clock	(1b) a saint about to fall
(2a) a face of hands	(2b) the stained flats of heaven
(3a) Wind-heeled foot in the hole of a fireball	(3b) the angelic etna of the last whirring

	featherlands
(4a) Sang heaven hungry and the quick / Cut Christbread spitting vinegar	(4b) Sang heaven hungry and the quick / Cut Christbread spitting vinegar
(5a) in a bed of sores / The scudding base of the familiar sky	(5b) Glory cracked like a flea
(6a) The skull of the earth is barbed with a war of burning brains / and hair	(6b) Heaven fell with his fall
(7a) The stocked heart is forced, and agony has another mouth to feed	(7b) O wake to see, after a noble fall [...]
(8) Cry joy that this witchlike midwife second / [...] makes with a flick of the thumb and sun / A thundering bullring of your silent and girl-circled island	

Three observations can be made straight away: 1) The divine side is not as represented towards the end of the poem, which happens in conjunction with a pattern linking with the main verb of the title, “about to fall – fell – after a noble fall”; 2) Around half-way through the poem the tone of the bodily metaphors becomes more sinister, even violent; 3) There is one example of a very clear overlapping of the two input spaces, meaning that this example can be put on both sides (4a and 4b). Upon closer inspection there is ambiguity in many of the examples, meaning one could connect them to both sides, for example 3b follows directly after 2b, and “the angelic etna” certainly has a strong feel of physicality as the volcano reference has no obvious biblical explanation. The eruption image is repeated in the already mentioned double example 4, “the quick [...] spitting vinegar”. The hunger that has a heavenly origin is satisfied in an unholy communion where the body of Christ is cut but the wine has gone sour and is spat out.

After what definitely seems to be a sexual climax the puzzling line “[g]lory cracked like a flea” occurs, and the saint that was about to fall now falls, and the heaven falls with him; this could be read as a reference to *the* Fall in the Bible, but also to the moments of “falling” after the climax. But why a saint, why not just man in general as in many of Thomas's poems? A previous title of the poem gives a clue: it was published under the name “Poem in the ninth month” in *Poetry (London)* in September 1939. This, together with the “saint” being connected with “his father's house in the sands”<sup>38</sup>, suggests that this figure “about to fall” is an

38 Otherwise, of course, the “father's house” could refer to God – although the earthly location is in slight

unborn child. There is, in fact, a related comment by the author that should not be left without mention. Thomas writes in a letter to Vernon Watkins: “Remember this is a poem written to a child about to be born – you know I’m going to be a father in January – and telling it what a world it will see, what horrors and hells” (*CL*, 328). Now this world is the one that takes over the bodily metaphors in the second half of the poem, after the fall. As such we can of course relate this pattern to the irreversibility of original sin. Critics have also noted how yet another working title, “September”, links the poem’s horrors to current affairs, the Munich Pact and the Spanish Civil War (Davies & Maud, “Notes” to the *Collected Poems*, 230). However even without such references we can see that the world the child is about face is relentless, a “thundering bullring” or “rough seas”. This new person’s “island” is circled with girls, hinting that the cycle driven by man’s desires will go on.

What can we say about the extended metaphor in more detail, and more specifically its conceit-like qualities? Certainly embodiment is present throughout the poem, but it goes through a change in what it seems to signify. At first the body is linked with heaven, thus having a grasp of something divine, most clearly exhibited in the line “[b]ehind a face of hands, / On the angelic etna of the last whirring featherlands”. This is not only linked to the state before original sin, but also to the moment of (physical) conception. The fall then occurs, in the same moment as “[g]lory cracked like a flea”. Now this simile is only physical if we connect it with Donne’s “The flea” in which the flea represents the holiness of sexual union. If we read this line without the intertext, it remains unconventional however not too estranging to comprehend; it could be likened to the idiomatic phrase “to squash something like a fly”. There is quite a lot of authorial commentary relating to this poem, and of this particular line Thomas writes, again to Vernon Watkins: “Does ‘Glory cracked like a flea’ shock you? I think you’ll see it *must* come there, or some equally grotesque contrast” (*CL*, 328, italics original). In addition to this comment Thomas has described at length how the contrast between the original heaven and the looming real world was his main focus in this poem. Such a progression based on contradictions is certainly characteristic of a conceit.

Whether the “flea”-line is meant to be shocking in the way it echoes Donne, or merely as an

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conflict with this reading as God should conventionally speaking be up in heaven.

abrupt fall from grace in its metaphoric unconventionality, does not really matter. The bottom line is the change that occurs, and that change in itself communicates a message: a fall from the divine understanding of the beginning (the very first one and/or a new child's) is inevitable. *The ruin's inevitability is there right from the start*, as the point with the saint being *on the verge of falling* testifies: it is inscribed in our flesh even though moments of (bodily) pleasure might tell us differently for a short while. A similar idea is reflected in the change that occurs in William Blake's concept of "divinity in human form" (see *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1966, 153), most notably in the contrast between the worlds of the *Songs*. William T. Moynihan summarises the link between Blake's and Thomas's re-writings of Genesis as a "world that is already falling into sin at the moment of creation" (1964, 632). After the initial conception, the more brutal reality of sin is stronger than any divine force.

For instance, the idea of man as the image of God goes through a radical change in the "Innocence" and "Experience" versions of the poem "The divine image":

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is God, our father dear,  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,  
Pity a human face,  
And Love, the human form divine,  
And Peace, the human dress.  
(*Songs of Innocence*, 1966, 117.)

Cruelty has a Human Heart,  
And Jealousy a Human Face;  
Terror the Human Form Divine,  
And Secrecy the Human Dress.

The Human Dress is forged Iron,  
The Human Form a fiery Forge,  
The Human Face a Furnace seal'd,

The Human Heart is hungry Gorge.  
(*Songs of Experience*, 1966, 221.)

In the harsh reality of *The Songs of Experience* man is a “fiery Forge”, a description that brings to mind the mechanical idea of man in Thomas's “All all and all”, and more prominently “I, in my intricate image” that will be discussed in a moment. This new reality is however not the last stop, an apocalypse, it is rather like the starting point for coping, portraying how the difficulties and challenges originating in free will make or break a man.

Thomas's “I see the boys of summer” depicts human decay in a progression that condenses the movement from a unified, generic, impersonal world (as exemplified in “In the beginning”) towards the personalised reality of life after the creation and the Fall. This is reflected in how the speaker's stand shifts slightly in each of the three parts of the poem. In the first part the speaker describes the ruin of “the boys of summer” from outside, as if through an all-seeing eye, and in the second part he places himself among the people through the use of the pronoun “we”, and finally, in the third part, he states that he *is* them.<sup>39</sup>

I see you boys of summer in your ruin.  
Man in his maggot's barren.  
And boys are full and foreign in the pouch.  
I am the man your father was.  
We are the sons of flint and pitch.  
O see the poles are kissing as they cross.  
(*CP*, 8.)

The first line echoes the standpoint of the speaker in the earlier parts, and for that reason the fourth line is something of a surprise: “I am the man your father was.” The speaker states that between generations nothing has changed (“flint” and “pitch” are needed for making a fire – thus the line activates the friction of opposites in Genesis as well as the schematic frame of

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<sup>39</sup> The progression can be related to how God comes closer to man in the form of Jesus in the Bible, cf. Blake: “Thinking as I do that the Creator of this World is a very Cruel Being, & being a Worshipper of Christ, I cannot help saying: 'the Son, O how unlike the Father!' First God Almighty comes with a Thump on the Head. Then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it.” (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, 1966, 617.)

evolution). “Man in his maggot’s barren” is a key line in the same sense as “[g]lory cracked like a flea” in “A saint about to fall”. The line is not only grammatically unorthodox but also quite opaque due to the negativity it contains: even the worm that ensures the cycle of life as a decomposer (and is also able to reproduce effortlessly) is barren.<sup>40</sup> Therefore the human body is beyond all hope, an interpretation that is further strengthened if we see the maggot as a phallic symbol as well.

A similarly sinister outcome can be found in Blake's “The human abstract”, though not quite as hopeless:

Soon spreads the dismal shade  
Of Mystery over his head;  
And the Catterpillar and Fly  
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,  
Ruddy and sweet to eat; [...]

The Gods of the earth and sea  
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;  
But their search was all in vain:  
There grows one in the Human Brain.  
(Blake 1966, 217.)

The tree of knowledge signifies free will: “There grows one in the Human Brain”. “[T]he Mystery” of it feeds the caterpillar and the fly; the poem is quite abstract, but this macabre image of decay seems to speak of the result of grabbing the forbidden fruit repeatedly. It is interesting in terms of a metaphor becoming symbolic how the gods look for such a tree in nature, as if it were literally a fruit tree, even though in schematic terms the reader is hardly likely to think of it as a real tree existing somewhere in this world.<sup>41</sup>

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40 The negativity of embodied metaphors is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

41 Compare with Bo Pettersson's evaluation of the symbolic tree in “A poison tree”: “Blake took great care not to make his moral too explicit or simplistic. Painting the tree in his illustration as rather barren and leafless was apparently Blake's way of pointing to an ironic condemnation of the poem's speaker” (2011, 102).

The two poems, then, also share the use of the basic PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor. While the setting of “The human abstract” is a modified Garden of Eden, “I see the boys of summer” portrays the ruin of man in more concrete rural surroundings:

I see the boys of summer in their ruin  
**Lay the gold tithings barren,**  
**Setting no store by harvest, freeze the soils;**  
There in their heat the winter floods  
Of frozen loves they fetch their girls,  
And drown the cargoed apples in their tides.

These boys of light are curdlers in their folly,  
**Sour the boiling honey;**  
[...]

I see the summer children in their mothers  
Split up the brawned womb's weathers,  
Divide the night and day with fairy thumbs;  
[...]

I see that from these boys shall men of nothing  
Stature by **seedy shifting,**  
**Or lame the air with leaping from its hearts;**  
There from their hearts the dogdayed pulse  
Of love and light bursts in their throats.  
O see the pulse of summer in the ice.  
(*CP*, 7, emphasis added.)

The farming-related expressions “harvest” and “soil” are made negative: no crops are to be claimed, the soil is frozen. This is a typical way of forming a metaphoric field of reference for Thomas, and as such is in keeping with Lakoff and Turner's principles of metaphor formation: the negation makes “the boys of summer” appear in a sad light, their “gold tithings”<sup>42</sup> are wasted, a point that is further emphasised with the fact that these young people are icy and

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42 The word “tithing” refers to a share, more specifically a charitable donation or a field patch. In addition, the verb “lay” is interesting here: it could be referring to the saying “to lay gold eggs”, but through negation.

infertile at a time of year that is in terms of natural processes highly productive. The blended space(s) stays in the foreground as the two input spaces often overlap in expressions that keep up the tension, like the word “barren” as it can refer to both the sterility of man and the fruitlessness of the soil. Infertility is then something that seems to transfer in the projection, like a disease (compare with “All all and all”): the very presence of the boys of summer makes the air “lame”.

This extended metaphor is accompanied with more abstract physical metaphors as well, for example in the lines “I see the summer children in their mothers / Split up the browed womb’s weathers” (*CP*, 7). As with many of Thomas's layered embodied metaphors, the active core, the verb, is difficult to make sense of. How can either the womb or the weather be split up? Which one is the splitting more likely to refer to (more), which one in “the browed womb's weathers” is the target and which one the source? What are the shared generic qualities? If we hold the verb as the key, the splitting up could refer to a child growing in a mother's womb since biologically growth is cells dividing; the way weather can be divided is tricky, but perhaps the most natural interpretation would be seasonal changes in weather.

However as is also typical of Thomas, the causalities in a metaphoric expression are complicated as well: the “summer children” are responsible for this splitting, meaning that the same no-good boys are already making the weather turn within their mothers, and furthermore, the speaker *sees* this happening. Such an unnatural scenario is of course by no means strange in the context of lyric poetry operating on (embodied) metaphors, but I would argue that with this poem it is especially important to pay attention to the speaker's stand, as in not only considering the poem as a dramatised argument. In my view, whether we see the speaker as a god-like figure with an all-seeing eye, like an omniscient narrator, or as a character who *thinks* he sees something through the lens of imagination is *part of the thematic build-up of the poem*. To simplify the issue a little bit, we are then to decide between a reading that sees the speaker as God and a reading in which the whole line is concretely physical in feel but simply abstractly metaphorical in meaning.

When we come to the second part of the poem, the latter interpretation is supported in how

the speaker contradicts his own negativity in the first part: “But seasons must be challenged or they totter / Into a chiming quarter” (*CP*, 8). The natural order of things, which, in turn, was turned upside down in the “womb” metaphor, is then to be challenged. Furthermore, the barrenness of the first part is replaced with a more conventional spring setting, and man has regained his vitality, even to the extent of godliness:

We summer boys in this four-winded spinning,  
Green of the seaweed's iron,  
Hold up the noisy sea and drop her birds,  
Pick the world's ball of wave and froth  
To choke the deserts with her tides,  
And comb the county gardens for a wreath.  
(*CP*, 8.)

The pronoun “we” of course would speak for seeing the speaker as a mere human being, however as I pointed out earlier, it could also be seen as a thematisation of how God took on human form as Jesus. With both possibilities it is noteworthy how man does not seem to be completely doomed after all: “O see the poles of promise in the boys.”

The poem then falls back on the negativity of the beginning in the line “[m]an in his maggot's barren” quoted earlier. “I am the man your father was” can now be re-interpreted through the progression of the parts and the speaker's positioning: it can simply be a comment made by a bitter man, seeing the change in generations and thus projecting negativity onto the young boys who have their lives ahead of them. In this light the second part could be seen as a temporary trip down memory lane, cherishing the bygone days of youth. However the possibility of seeing the speaker as God (or god-like) is still there as well: the divine origin of man, hinted at with such earlier expressions as “[d]ivide the night and day with fairy thumbs”, “[p]ick the world's ball of wave and froth”, is then foregrounded in how the speaker is a (genealogical) link to this origin. Both readings are natural in how they are present in the embodied expressions reflecting the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor. The way the input spaces overlap and these metaphors hinge on verbs made physical (“split up the brawned womb's

weathers”, “lame the air”) seems to suggest that both readings are equally plausible.

“I, in my intricate image” contains a lot of familiar embodied metaphoricity but takes both the extension of a macro-metaphor and the heterogeneity of material brought together in blends to their borderline. The poem is often seen as one of the hallmarks of Thomas's obscurity, and the poet himself wrote at the time of composing the poem: “I like things that are difficult to write and difficult to understand” (*CL*, 208). If the metaphoric coherence of the poem seems to be lost at times, the reader has to be particularly patient, as William York Tindall argues: “To interpret the poem we must leave the dazzling surface for logical interior and return to the surface with what we guess.” (1962, 80.) However one does not have to go as far as to guess since there is continuity to be found within the poem. I shall simplify the poem's progression a little bit by looking at the main metaphoric frames present.

There are six major input spaces in the poem between which the metaphors of the poem are constructed: “Word”, as in creation and writing; doubleness, as in simultaneity; bodiliness; nature; spirituality; technology, most notably war-related. The two first ones are typically linked to each other, as are bodiliness and nature. All input spaces are connected at some point. I have collected the most prominent examples from each category into the following table, the numbers refer to stanzas:

WORD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) intricate image</li> <li>3) image of images</li> <li>5) my images (stalk)</li> <li>6) the symbolized harbour</li> <li>11) (Dead Sea scale), tongues of burial</li> <li>12) stylus</li> <li>14) bodiless image, Hamlet</li> <li>18) images roared and rose on heaven's hill</li> </ul>	NATURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) minerals</li> <li>2) spring, season, world of petals</li> <li>3) my man of leaves and bronze root</li> <li>4) (natural peril, natural death, natural parallel)</li> <li>7) winds, pasture, mounted meadows, corral</li> <li>11) conjured soil</li> <li>16) a wind on fire</li> <li>18) windily, rotten, mineral, (heaven's) hill</li> </ul>
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DOUBL E	1) (I) stride on two levels, this twin world, double 3) mortal, unmortal; fusion of rose and male motion, twin miracle 4) parallel 6) two farewells 9) splitting the long eye open 13) topsy-turvies, a double angel <sup>43</sup>	NATURE/ SEA	6) harbour, final water, sail, sea-blown arrival 8) (dive) highroad of water, long sea 11) (drown) spindrift (Dead Sea scale), triton 13) (undead) water, sea-stuck towers, thimble 15) fin, ships' sea broken...anchored, (voyage), shipwreck of muscle, seawax struggle 17) (rush) sea-hatched skull 18) metal neptune, intricate seawhirl
MAN	1) man's minerals, my man-iron sidle 2) (spring raising) man like a mountain 3) my man of leaves and bronze root (my fusion of rose and male motion) 5) mount on man's footfall 6) intricate manhood (of ending) 16) Adam's cradle – no man more magical 17) man was the scales, all-hollowed man 18) man was Cadaver's masker, master of man, forged in man's mineral	SPIRIT	1) (orator) my ghost / half-ghost 3) doom in the ghost, phantom, miracle 8) turning a face 10) Lazarus, saviour 11) (Dead Sea scale) tongues of burial 14) <b>one</b> ghost, vision 16) Adam's cradle, magical 17) flying grail, all-hollowed man, white apparel 18) ghost, god of beginning, heaven's hill
MAN/ BODY	2) colic, blood, naked 8) cadaverous, arterial, face, blind 9) eye, bloody 12) face 13) carnal skull, cell-stepped 14) bodiless image, tom-thumb 15) bones' voyage, shipwreck of muscle 16) my great blood's [...] 17) (sea-hatched) skull	TECHNO LOGY/ WAR	1) forged [...] minerals, the brassy [...] laying my ghost in metal, armour, man-iron 2) spinning-wheel 3) metal phantom, bronze root 8) (highroad) petrol face, enemy 9) mask, knives <sup>44</sup> 10) patrol, officers, army, garrisoned 14) ferrule, brass, iron mile 15) pincer, instrument, iron 17) harnessing, metal (neptune), forged in [...]

This listing enables us to locate expressions that clearly join two or more input spaces together. Such expressions include for example “colic season”, “metal phantom” and “my man of leaves and bronze root”. “[C]olic season” embodies the difficulties involved in something beginning: the condition that babies can have is brought into nature's order. “[M]etal phantom” combines spirituality with technology, and “my man of leaves and bronze root” connects man with nature but also hides him away with a metallic shield. As such the metaphors feel quite novel and striking, but as William T. Moynihan points out, we can

43 The primacy of this frame is further highlighted by the fact that there are plenty of paired expressions like “sap and needles”, “blood and bubble”, “navel and nipple”, “monstrous officers and decaying army”, “brass and bodiless image” – expressions from all the categories I have listed.

44 The technology frame has a further specific sub-field within it, medical metaphors operating on embodiment (cf. Tim Armstrong's argument on page 24): “Splitting the long eye open, [...] Under the mask and the ether, they making bloody / The tray of knives, the antiseptic funeral” (CP, 34).

actually see them in the context of conventional Christian beliefs in that the body is a prison or an armour for the soul (1964, 634). The way the body is then covered with an artificial armour too in a way doubles up this shielding of the soul (linking to the frame of doubleness).

Let us now try to place individual examples of the input spaces coming together into the larger context of the poem. The most frequent input space seems to be the one linking creation and writing in the concept of the biblical “Word”, and more often than not this frame connects to the one that has to do with the “doubleness” of our experiences. This hierarchy is supported by a whole host of expressions, starting from the title of the poem that names the intricacies of (a writing) man as the topic; for example the metaphors “the brassy orator” and “the stylus of lightning” link the idea of writing as creation to the “metallic” nature of reality as well as to the romantically charged context of nature (pantheism in Romantic poetry, see 4.1.). The primacy of the extended metaphor WRITING IS CREATION is supported by the fact that the poem's speaker comes on quite strongly with the frequent use of the pronoun “I” as well as possessives (“my images”, “my ghost”) and imperatives in a highly artificial communicational situation. Also, the poem is quite carefully structured with a lot of alliteration, for example, which further strengthens the artificiality of the poem and thus the meta-level of the writing metaphor. An additional curious detail is the repetition of the sound “I” (according to Tindall it occurs 72 times, 1962, 79).

Examples of key expressions within the “doubleness” input space include “face” and “scale” or “scales”. The former can occur in many so called dead metaphors, as in the “face of the earth”, but in “I, in my intricate image” it links to not only the surface of the earth and the sea (compare with “In the beginning”), but also to “surfaces” in the sense of facades, and, to divinity in the line “[t]urning a petrol face blind to the enemy”. This particular line contains multiple possibilities for links in the blend: firstly, God turning his face towards man as a sign of grace, as well as Jesus teaching about turning the other cheek; secondly, the more harsh reality of life in the form of war (“petrol face”, “enemy”); thirdly, the idiom “to turn a blind eye”<sup>45</sup>, meaning looking away, not facing something. Here the last possibility would take the metaphor more towards a reading of seemingness, or charades, whereas the first one is its

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45 To go even further with seeing links between the input spaces, we can note that the origin of the saying is in stories about the blind eye of the famous Captain Nelson (the sea can be seen as part of the nature frame).

direct opposite. Which one is the key one in the blend? This remains undecided, and it seems as if on purpose.

“Scales” on the other hand refers to a continuum – micro- and macro-levels and everything in between – as well as to the texture of skin for example on fish, linking the expression with “face” as in some kind of mask or armour. Of course also the frames of bodiliness and nature are present. In fact, on closer inspection we find that the expression links to all of the input spaces:

(1) [...] the brassy orator  
Laying my ghost in metal,  
**The scales of this twin world tread on the double** [...]

(2) Sweetly the diver's bell in the steeple of spindrift  
Rings out **the Dea Sea scale**; [...]

(3) They suffer the undead water where the turtle nibbles,  
Come unto sea-stuck towers, **at the fibre scaling**,  
The flight of the carnal skull  
And the cell-stepped thimble; [...]

(4) **Man was the scales**, the death birds on enamel, [...]

In the first instance, (1) “scales” is in plural and is made definite in “the scales of this twin world”. This seems to link to the doubleness frame in that there are two simultaneous levels of the world with their own laws and codes. On the other hand the technology and spirituality frames can be seen here too: the speaker's “ghost” is in a metallic suit, making the twin “scales” point to a contradiction between the two in that they are on different levels but still inseparable. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that in metallurgy, “scale” refers to oxides that are created when metal is warmed up. Therefore “scale” is also the by-product of putting man's ghost in an armour, the result of the two coming together. Furthermore, “the scales” is made active: “The scales of this twin world tread on the double”. The doubleness then points back to itself in that it underlines its own existence by trampling

on the division of spirit and body.

The second example (2) is about the scale that is a tool in projecting meaning to things, here further specified to be nature-bound and spiritual as well as textual in nature (the theological significance as well as the literariness of the Dead Sea scrolls). The human and technological scales are combined in “the steeple of spindrift” since “steeple” is most likely referring to a metallic man-made structure, a “needle” on top a building. The third example (3) is more bodily, quite strongly manifested in the fact that now “scale” is used as a verb signifying coming out of a shell. Yet once more the other frames are present as well: nature and technology (“sea-stuck towers”) and spirituality in the way “the undead water” is “suffered”. The fourth example (4) develops the idea that man changes the world around him into the statement that man is the measure of things, the means of making meaning, adding weight to things and placing things onto *any* scale. The progression that materialises in the different uses of the expression can be summarised as how the doubleness of the reality actualised in writing shows the artificiality of the division of body and soul; only against and through the human body and its mythical origins can reality be portrayed.

What Tindall called the “dazzling surface” of the poem can now be analysed through the primacy of the writing as creation metaphor: the work of man's hand (often destructive) can be seen in nature, and natural phenomena are understood through verbal conceptualising. This duality reminds us of the natural co-existence of life and death, a theme very typical of Thomas's poetry – in a similar way the body and the soul exist in the same reality, though filled with more than just the usual suspects as threats. The tone of the poem is prophetic, which brings to mind Blake's works, but also William Butler Yeats's, particularly “Sailing to Byzantium” (1928). The poem features a tension between a pastoral idyll occupied by young people and the weakness of old age: “Those dying generations [...] commend all summer long / Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.” (1990, 199.) Whereas the spirit of the speaker in “I, in my intricate image” is covered by a metallic shield, in “Sailing to Byzantium” the old man is only wearing a “tattered jacket”, and what is more the man *is* the jacket: “An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick” (ibid.) (cf. also Thomas's “all-hollowed man wept for his white apparel”).

The same kind of emptiness is also present in Yeats's metaphor “mortal dress”, understood as the fragility of the human body. Of course the schematic background here is a variation of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor: youth as virility and old age as withering away. As a result the speaker turns away, to the mystical Byzantium, a turn similar to the one in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (see 4.1.). In “Sailing to Byzantium” the wish for holiness and being made immortal, into some kind of monument, reflects the lasting power of fiction, whereas in “I, in my intricate image” the mortality and “immortality” exist in the same embodied shield due to the power of words: “my metal phantom [...] / My man of leaves and the bronze root, mortal, immortal”. Compare the last stanzas of the two poems:

Once out of nature I shall never take  
 My bodily form from any natural thing,  
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come.  
 (Yeats 1990, 200.)

Man was Cadaver's<sup>46</sup> masker, the harnessing mantle,  
 Windily master of man was the rotten fathom,  
 My ghost in his metal neptune  
 Forged in man's mineral.  
 This was the god of beginning in the intricate seawhirl,  
 And my images roared and rose on heaven's hill.  
 (CP, 36.)

The speaker of Yeats's poem separates the immortalising function of art from the physical and/or natural reality, while Thomas's “metallic” poetic speaker says that man knowingly denies the body's fragility through all sorts of mythologies, “master of man was the rotten fathom”. Both poems end with an elevated note. Yeats's speaker sees himself as a statue

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46 The word “Cadaver” refers to a corpse, used for instance in medical contexts, however here personified with the capital 'C'. Cf. also the earlier expression “cadaverous gravels”. The rather peculiar bodily reference also features in “When, like a running grave”: “Heart of Cadaver's candle waxes thin.” (CP, 19.)

singing eternal truths, while the self-aware speaker of Thomas's poem poses as an omniscient narrator and ends the tale with matching prophetic certainty: "This was [...]", "my images roared and rose [...]". Especially the last line reflects the literariness of the poem: the last event narrated is highly metaphoric.<sup>47</sup>

Along with the similarities in the tone of speaking and the use of imperatives there is also one major difference between the poems, and one that plays an important part in how embodiment functions: in "I, in my intricate image" we can trace events whereas in Yeats's poem the speaker is more directly a visionary projecting a possible scenario. "Sailing to Byzantium" only contains two verb constructions that have any activity in them: the depiction of youth at the beginning and the speaker's travelling to Byzantium. The surface of "I, in my intricate image" however can and should also be read "literally" as a progression (compare with 3.2.), otherwise the making sense of the metaphoric dazzling would stall the reading altogether. The key pattern is projecting life onto something lifeless, using the human scale mostly that is, which creates a sense of dynamics into the poem.

The coherence of the poem is then in metaphoric events that have everything to do with writing, the speaker addresses his own images from time to time: "My images stalk the trees and the slant sap's tunnel, / No tread more perilous, the green steps and spire / Mount on man's footfall [...]", "Suffer, my topsy-turvies, that a double angel / Sprout from the stony lockers like a tree on Aran". In the first example images are personified and they perform active functions, they follow man's footsteps in nature, a process that has its risks. "Footfall" as steps is an obvious first interpretation, but the word choice is more significant than that: the falling contained in it links to an overall pattern of descending in the stanza, "steps and spire", "Hearing the weather fall". Considering the prophetic tone of the poem, also the biblical Fall can be read into the passage.

However the descending movement, often in conjunction with spiralling, is also linked to

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Blake: "The Last Judgment is not Fable or Allegory, but Vision. Fable or Allegory is a totally distinct & inferior kind of Poetry. Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists [...] This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite & Temporal." (1966, 604–605.)

Yeats's metaphoric “gyre”. The “gyre” is an abstract construction linked with apocalypse and Blakean vision, but in “I, in my intricate image” it seems to be internalised into the fictional world as a textual entity. The speaker is able to control all the elements through the use of his language and can thus also define God (“they” in the first passage refers to his images):

(1) They see [...] / A quarrel of weathers and trees in the windy spiral [...]

(2) Your corkscrew grave centred in navel and nipple [...] / Under the mask and the ether [...]

(3) [...] in the pincers of the boiling circle,  
The sea and instrument, nicked in the locks of time,  
My great blood's iron single  
In the pouring town,  
I, in a wind on fire [...]

(4) This was the god of beginning in the intricate seawhirl [...]

Indeed the motion in the verb “spin” is ambiguous here, as William T. Moynihan points out (1964, 637): it can refer to spinning raw material into finer fibre, which would link to how the poet works with words, that is creates a thread that unfolds. In the first example the speaker is on a godly level and can thus detect natural contradictions in the scene (1). Images gain autonomy through distancing them from the speaker. At the same time these words cover up the fact that the body's fate is decay, no matter how shielded it is through advanced technology or through focusing on spiritual matters (2). The third example elevates the speaker from the technical reality with “my great blood's iron single” – the power of words can join contradictory elements once more. Here the relevance of “Sailing to Byzantium” is more evident than anywhere else: “boiling circle” and “wind on fire” link to Yeats's holy fire, and the “pouring town” can be seen as the Holy City based on the other spiritual expressions in the passage. The spiral then returns to the sea (4) and thus to the point of origin in the myth of creation (as well as in evolution). The writing as creation metaphor is present in how the “intricate seawhirl” links to the title that named literariness and man as the poem's main framework. The seawhirl is “intricate” for the same reason as man (and his language) is: due to the divine origins, the world being created through the Word that is God. The sea also links to stories of mythical sea voyages in the literary canon, a variation of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY

metaphor, which is something I will discuss in the next chapter.

### 3. Poem as parable: elaboration

In arguing that many of the mechanisms at work in literature are very much present in our everyday thought, Mark Turner names *parable*, “the projection of story”, as the very basic form of narrative imagining. The argument is not restricted to strictly narrative texts in the traditional sense since the imagining Turner describes brings together stories as elements that are activated in the process of blending. Such a view of course is part of a larger theoretical movement seeing narrative as a broad concept extending across disciplines.<sup>48</sup> This chapter investigates how poems can make use of the potential in stories in the processes of metaphoric mapping. Indeed, parable, as defined by Turner, condenses and outlines the implications of the “literariness of the mind” in analytical practice: it conveniently exemplifies the kind of mental projections CMT and especially blending theory are based on. More specifically, Turner lists quite a few mental patterns of parable of which three are particularly relevant in trying to find solutions to some of the already encountered issues with metaphoric mapping. Summarised very briefly, these are the role of metonymic association in blending, the breakdown of the difficult process of locating counterparts, and projecting action onto events. The first of these I shall discuss more in Chapter 5, while the two latter ones are essential to the main arguments in this chapter.

The issue with the difficulty of determining what goes into the blend has already been raised, but in the first section of this chapter I shall approach it from the angle of intertextuality more specifically, while also focusing on the meta-level of the writing as creation metaphor (as established in Chapter 2) and the role of the speaker in making such metaphoric projections. In the second section I shall explore the dynamics of the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor, again in conjunction with intertextuality as Thomas employs “borrowed” figures as actors (another proponent in Turner's parable) in a poem that has been the topic of much discussion, “Altarwise by owl-light”. Thomas insisted these figures be read *literally* in the context of the poem, and this insistence has been the source of methodological controversy as the poem's

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48 For an overview, see Fludernik & Alber (ed.) 2010. Turner's argument has been criticised for the same reason, for example David Herman has said that in *The Literary Mind*, narrative (or parable) functions as an undefined term that is not put into (theoretical) context (Herman 1999, 25; see also Jackson 2000, 333–334). The same problems are, of course, present in CMT and the ‘imperialistic’ nature of metaphor as Wayne Booth has earlier called it.

events can hardly be understood literally in a literal sense, and yet critics have attempted to do this – however in my view what one needs to do instead is to read the figurative events as *particular* to the poem, as opposed to reading allegorically. I argue that the poem makes use of the basic metaphor GENERIC IS SPECIFIC with the recruitment of intertextual references, and here parable will serve as an interpretive aid. The section asks, how is it possible to project well-known literary figures (and the stories attached to them) onto a highly estranging metaphorical poem, and what kind of dynamics emerge in the process? The discussion then touches on the creation of fictional worlds in lyric texts as well.

### **3.1. The well-read preacher of the self: “Poem on his birthday”**

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.  
[...]  
My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their  
parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.  
(From “Song of myself”, Whitman 1961, 23.)

Walt Whitman’s iconic “Song of myself” (1855) is the prototype of a poem about a poet meditating on writing poetry. Although its ‘message’ could well be attributed to an implied author as in Phelan’s poetry reading model (see Introduction and Chapter 4), it still serves as an apt parallel to the much more disobedient “Poem on his birthday” by Dylan Thomas. Sure enough, the poem can be called a democratic manifesto in which Whitman sees all men as equal and worth celebrating. However it can also be read more like a commentary about writing and reading poetry: the speaker’s tongue and body are lined up next to each other and

they “belong” to an addressed “you” who is in the context of the poem the reader.<sup>49</sup> More specifically, the speaker’s celebrations are situated within a certain time in life (aged thirty-seven), which links to “Poem on his birthday” – however the speaker of that poem turns the positive attitude of “Song of myself” into pessimism with birds and other creatures celebrating around the speaker. Moreover, whereas the speaker in Whitman’s poem seems to be omnipotent in his use of language<sup>50</sup>, Thomas’s poem features a broken language that has failed the speaker. With the preacher-like central figures these two poems present different prophecies, but discuss an everlasting theme with similar self-awareness.

“Poem on his birthday” is one of Thomas’s so called birthday poems.<sup>51</sup> They deal with the questions of getting older and choices made by offering a *summa summarum* from a certain viewpoint. This viewpoint, in other words how the speaker’s perspective colours experience, is of particular interest. To most Thomas scholars, the speaker of “Poem on his birthday” is the poet himself, however the setting is more complex than a poet cherishing good moments and lamenting death drawing nearer.<sup>52</sup> The poem is negative and dark in tone, but not in a way that would indicate simple self-pity of a middle-aged man. Rather, the intertextual references and ambivalent expressions in the poem hint towards a very self-aware way of speaking within a continuum. Thus the speaker is somehow highly constructed to begin with, which directs the focus of a cognitive reading away from the author’s creative processes.<sup>53</sup> Consider the highlighted expressions in the following passages:

He celebrates and spurns  
**His driftwood thirty-fifth wind turned age;**  
 [...]
   
 And **the rhymer** in the long tongued room,  
**Who tolls his birthday bell,**  
 Toils towards **the ambush of his wounds;**  
 [...]

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49 However as Harold Bloom illustrates in his discussion of Whitman's poetics (1994), the communicational structure of the poem is not really this straight-forward.

50 Again this is a more complex question than this, though, as shown in Bloom's analysis: the distinctions between the soul, the self, the 'real' me and the 'me myself' form a rather philosophical constellation (Bloom 1994, 270–271).

51 The other birthday poems are “Especially when the October wind”, “Poem in October” and “Fern hill” (of which the two latter ones are discussed in 4.1.).

52 An approach that is especially relevant due to its reductiveness with poems like “Do not go gentle into that good night”, as discussed in Chapter 4.

53 This an aspect of CMT that is dealt with in detail in Chapter 4.

Thirty-five bells sing struck  
On skull and scar **where his loves lie wrecked**,  
Steered by the falling stars.  
[...]  
And freely he goes lost  
In the **unknown, famous light** of great  
And **fabulous, dear God**.  
[...]  
Yet, though I cry with **tumbledown tongue**,  
Count my blessings aloud:

Four elements and five  
Senses, and man a spirit in love  
Tangling through this spun slime  
To his nimbus bell **cool kingdom come**  
And the lost, moonshine domes,  
And **the sea that hides his secret selves**  
(*CP*, 43–45, emphasis added).

The passage is filled with phrases that echo biblical language and conventional epic poetry. For instance “tumbledown tongue” is a typical metaphoric expression by Thomas: human language has been broken since the Fall, and man can only desperately reach for a godlike creative ability in his words. The speaker even mocks (Christian) faith with expressions like “fabulous, dear God”. Furthermore, the “tumbledown language” also hints to mythical stories about Jericho, Babylon and Atlantis and the like when interpreted alongside other expressions in the poem, for instance “kingdom come”. The desperate navigating and loves lost at sea bring to mind the most famous unlucky sailor in the canon of Western literature, Ulysses.

What is even more interesting however is how the speaker refers to himself. The poem is called “Poem on *his* birthday”, but at times “he” turns into “I” without any clear signs pointing out motivation for the shifts. Moreover, “the rhymer” is responsible for the toll of the “birthday bell”, which would indicate that there is a quarrel between the speaking “I” and the experiencing “I”.<sup>54</sup> The experiencing “I”, however, is on a metaphorical voyage, that is to say

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54 The distinctions here essentially link to the way in which Dorrit Cohn (1978) uses the concepts of the “narrating I” and “experiencing I”, though the terms are not completely transferrable of course. These terms originally come from Spitzer (1964, 478).

the past or present of the poem are not graspable sequences in the first place. A layer of mythical distraction blocks access to any “real me”, as in Whitman's poetics: “the sea hides his secret selves”. This could be characterised as a variation of the A THINKER IS A MOVER AND A MANIPULATOR metaphor, often used to create parabolic stories of mental events, that is to say to present the “journey of the soul” (Turner 1996, 43–44).<sup>55</sup> The journey is a contradictory one: the thinker cannot agree with himself how to manipulate the story elements.

In order to elaborate on how the projection works, a more detailed analysis of the metaphoric coherence building the theme of the poem is needed. Is the kind of interpretation already presented abstractable from the ‘narrative’ of the metaphors? My hypothesis is that we need to work from the biblical metaphors towards an intertextual reading: the poem invokes John Donne’s “Meditation XVII” (1624) – the “no man is an island” text – very strongly and all of the levels of meaning cannot be understood without knowing this text. However as has been mentioned, blending as a model does not accommodate intertextuality specifically, and even the culturally fixed schemata behind basic cognitive metaphors is something that has not been mapped properly as yet, though in more recent writings Fauconnier and Turner have stressed the importance of this endeavour (2008, see Introduction).

With regard to the problems encountered when accommodating such additions in the mapping process, Philip Eubanks makes the crucial point (though his research is not chiefly on literary texts) that conceptual metaphors are not just “available to be instantiated”: if they were, new uses would not influence the way they are mapped (1999, 423–424). There can be competing schemas, literal or figurative. Eubanks tackles the issue by coming up with something called *licensing stories*. They are “[...] narratively structured representations of an individual's ideologically inflected construal of the world.” (Ibid., 437.) He finds his argument in how Aristotle and others<sup>56</sup> have seen metaphors as something that can be turned into mini-narrations (cf. “bringing-before-the-eyes”, Aristotle 1968, 247). Though calling these motivations narratives is slightly problematic terminology-wise<sup>57</sup>, I find Eubanks’s idea an important addition in terms of how we structure the process of mapping metaphors; although

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55 Famous literary examples Turner mentions are Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but of course also *Odyssey* fits into this category.

56 For a recent overview of the study of metaphor in relation to narrative see Pettersson 2011.

57 Cf. David Herman's (1999) criticism of Turner's *The Literary Mind* (Jackson 2002).

Turner states that not just any qualities from the input spaces are likely to be projected, and that “the recruitment of [a] conventional metaphor to the blend is partial, selective and transforming” (1996, 81–82), he does not elaborate on *how* to follow the cues the input spaces provide.

The task of a 'full-scale' cognitive interpretation of “Poem on his birthday” would then be seeing how Donne’s text, and naturally the Bible as a source of that text, can act as a licensing story when mapping the metaphorical language of the poem. Furthermore, while trying to interpret the speaker's internal conflict, we need to consider if this subtext (and its subtext)<sup>58</sup> is enough to bring about necessary coherence into the reading, or if the licensing story has more gaps than continuity. I quote the relevant passage from Donne’s “Meditation XVII”:

All mankind is of one author, and is **one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language;** and every chapter must be so translated [...] As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so **this bell calls us all:** but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness [...] **No man is an island, entire of itself** [...] any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore **never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.** (Donne 1987, 125–126, emphasis added.)

To start with, “Poem on his birthday” seems to form a contrast to Donne’s “book of life”: the unified approach of Donne’s religious discourse is negated by the very notion of language failing the speaker. Also, God’s light is unknown and famous at the same time, creating a skeptical opposition. The quarrel between the experiencing self and the one writing experience down suggests a pessimism that is not present in Donne’s “Meditation”. In order to see contrasts and parallels more clearly, I have noted down the realisations of the main conceptual metaphors in operation in both texts:

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>“Poem on his birthday”</b>	<b>“Meditation XVII”</b>
LIFE IS A JOURNEY (including the more specific)	driftwood thirty-fifth wind turned age; Thirty-five bells sing [...] / [...] where his loves lie wrecked, / Steered by the falling stars;	the bell that rings to a sermon, calls [...] upon the congregation to come; No man is an island

58 On the concept of subtext see Taranovsky 1976. For an application see Tammi 1999. The term is not applied in any systematic sense here.

sailing metaphor)	And freely he goes lost / In the unknown, famous light of great / And fabulous, dear God. / Dark is a way and light is a place; mansouled fiery islands; dark is a long way; The voyage to ruin I must run; I sail out to die	
LIFE IS A STORY	the rhymer in the long tongued room, / Who tolls his birthday bell; I cry with tumbledown tongue, / Count my blessings aloud; every wave of the way [...] I tackle, the whole world then, / With more triumphant faith / That ever was since the world was said	All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language
GOD IS WORD	I cry with tumbledown tongue, / Count my blessings aloud; since the world was said	All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language

Though my approach is a bottom-up one, here I think that instead of mapping each of these realisations separately, the overlappings in the poems' expressions should be mapped against one another: all of these metaphors are essentially linked to the main metaphor of A THINKER IS A MOVER AND MANIPULATOR. Expressions that operate in more than one category are then of particular interest. However since the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is more obviously present in "Poem on his birthday", I want to first look at one realisation of that in Thomas's figurative language as it is of particular interest in terms of blending. To do this, another licensing story, the adventures of Ulysses, needs to be projected to the poem's "journey of the soul".

It is obvious that the life as a journey metaphor in the context of sailing links to *Odyssey*. In fact, the text is so well-known that I would argue that it is not a subtext in the same sense as Donne's "Meditation". The stories associated with Ulysses are like fixed cultural schemata in the same sense as the stories in the Bible are. The link to *Odyssey* highlights the literariness of the poem, but also creates important associations when considering the poem's tone: the pessimism and gloominess seem to be results of the speaker being tossed around by fate, much like Ulysses, but without gods being active participants in the course of the events. In fact the recruitment of the projected story is transforming throughout, like a counter-reaction. God's value is negated on many occasions, but God is still present in the poem; it is as if God

is blamed for the misfortunes since admitting responsibility for the course of one's own life is too big a task. The speaker claims: "The voyage to ruin I must run", and he sails "out to die", though he is only thirty-five years old. Looking at the expression "driftwood thirty-fifth wind turned age" in more detail will specify the schemata at work here.

The expression is a good example of how one metaphor can require multiple blended input spaces until an interpretation emerges. At first glance the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is only elliptically present, in "driftwood" and "wind". The speaker's age is not straightforwardly stated either: it is "wind turned age". How is age, here a metonymy for human life, wind? Since the Bible is invoked elsewhere in the poem, this could be interpreted as a reference to the myth of creation, where God breathes life into man. Thus the idea of man as the image of God is brought into play. However since the *Odyssey* connection has been activated too, there could be a parallel to when Ulysses receives a bag full of captured winds from the god Aeolus. He was supposed to get home with the bag's help, but it was opened prematurely, which resulted in a big storm. So we have a positive licensing story and a negative one: divine creation and getting lost through human error. Which one should be mapped into the metaphor? To decide let us take a look at the surrounding lines: "He celebrates and spurns / His driftwood thirty-fifth wind turned age". The speaker (significantly in third person here) both celebrates and spurns, is joyous *and* regards his age (representing his life) with contempt, in other words has mixed feelings. In this light *both* the licensing stories could be seen to be present in the metaphor: flattened down they could be seen to represent gratitude for being alive and bitterness about getting lost in life due to reasons not always in one's own hands.

The fact that we need multiple outside additions to the generic space in order to make the mapping work is symptomatic of the as yet unsettled questions within blending theory. The blended space would be crippled without the clarifications that have been added through licensing stories: the age as wind comparison would not make much sense otherwise. (I do see that wind as nothingness, something with no value, is a possible way out, however it does not explain the simultaneous joy and regret.) Thus the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is not enough of a motivation for the blend as such, and the blend is delayed until it is fully motivated. Now of course the added intertextual references are on another level as they are deduced and not in the actual words of the metaphor. They make very visible that the model is not as

straightforwardly 'scientific' as Fauconnier and Turner like to suggest (made evident in the diagrams usually presented with each mapping): the reader's input plays a very important role.

Gerard Steen has criticised CMT and its reformulations in blending theory on several occasions (for example 1994, 2007) for not bridging the gap between the underlying conceptual metaphors and their linguistic realisations properly, and quite recently he has proposed a five-step framework for structuring the process in more detail (2009). The five steps are as follows: 1) identifying metaphor-related words, that is words that indicate the source domain, 2) formulating the linguistic evidence into propositions, 3) proceeding from the correspondences found to an open comparison, 4) closing the comparison, that is assuming the formal structure of an analogy, and 5) fleshing out the mapping structure between the domains, locating precise correspondences and possibly adding enriching elements (2009, 202–205). However even though the five steps indisputably add systematisation into the process, the problem of how to actually decide on the particular correspondences (step 5) remains unsolved. Steen writes: "The fact that I have left the inferences undecided suggest that this is the most problematic part of doing this type of metaphor identification." (Ibid., 219.) The problem only escalates when we are dealing with a series of mappings, as is the case in this chapter particularly. Outside of cognitive literary studies the topic has been addressed by for instance Semino et al. (2004), but the particular challenge with lyric texts is only elementally explored so far (although see Tsur 1992; 2003).

The complex blend presented above is only one of a host of equally complex ones connecting to the same basic metaphors. It can be seen as a starting point for a network of metaphors. In general I would say the strong existence – and modification – of conventional biblical metaphors in the poem supports the somewhat high-flying blend illustrated just before. GOD IS LIGHT<sup>59</sup> is one prominent one, and it links to the life as a journey metaphor. The traditional connotations of light, are activated through the description of the voyage, and combined with a sense of spatiality: "Dark is a way and light is a place". However, read alongside the later statement "[b]ut dark is a long way", the emergent meaning could be something like the road towards the light (a point of reaching something divine, or enlightenment), is paved with feelings of desperation.

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59 A variation of the LIFE IS LIGHT metaphor in Lakoff & Turner's categorisations (1989).

This brings us back to what I called the main licensing story for the poem. What activates the connection to Donne's "Meditation" in the first place is the ominous toll of the bell. It links to the dark tone of Thomas's poem, however in Donne's text it is associated with hope: God's word is for everyone, the church bells call us all, and near the moment of death it is something that creates comfort. The bell in itself is not important, then, but the significance of the sound is: it reminds us of what is important, as there is no knowing when death comes. Of course the question that arises with Thomas's poem is whether the speaker believes in this message of the tolling bell. At the end of the day, is the despair of the sailing man just a momentary dark patch and does he believe in finding the light place?

The poem does not resolve the speaker's attitude. It is contradictory from the beginning to the very end. Here I find the main parallel to Donne's text: its argument is built on a series of metaphors of part and whole, that is making use of metonymic relations, but Thomas's poem does not commit to any single, unifying view. According to the "Meditation", a man's life is a chapter in the greater book of life, the church bells bring believing people together, no man is an island – people must form a congregation, a community. "Poem on his birthday" speaks about God, Donne's single author, but while conventional schemata about God are invoked, a shadow of suspicion is cast on them as well. It is as if there is a want or a need to believe, but no certainty. The speaker relies on the blessings of "[f]our elements and five / Senses", that is to say concrete, earthly things. So there is definitely no one author like in Donne's text, and this is reflected in the quarrel of the speaking and experiencing "I's", the simultaneous joy and despair of the driftwood metaphor, in the broken language and even broken communities of "tumbledown tongue".

Donne's LIFE IS A STORY metaphor climaxes in man being "translated into a better language", but it is unclear what triumphs at the end of "Poem on his birthday". Language certainly does not offer all-explaining comfort. Halfway through the poem the speaker says:

There he might wander bare  
[...]  
With blessed, unborn God and His Ghost,  
And every soul his priest,

[...]

But dark is a long way.  
He, on the earth of the night, alone  
With all the living, prays,  
Who knows [...]  
(CP, 146).

God is a possibility here, but just that. There seems to be nothing lighting the path, and the speaker is alone in the night although he is surrounded by life (cf. Donne's island metaphor, every soul is in fact their own priest). Yet the speaker prays, since who knows what might come to be. There are possibilities and a link to a potential community (congregation even), but no clear way forward. However near the end of the poem, when the speaker says he is moving closer to death, he tackles "the whole world then / With more triumphant faith / Than ever was since the world was said". This pompous declaration is ambivalent: it refers to the metaphor GOD IS WORD and says there is faith, but is the faith triumphing *over* Christian beliefs or demonstrating them?

In the same way we could ask if this faith truly is triumphant or whether this is just the rhetoric of a person approaching a predicament, trying to convince himself – the rhetorical quarrel between the speaking and experiencing "I's" is so prominent. I think reading the very end of the poem alongside Donne's "Meditation" gives us some kind of conclusion. Right after the quoted declaration the speaker hears, not a bell, but "the bouncing hills" and sees how "mansouled fiery islands" ride with angels. The faith bound to the bell is negated, in fact it is replaced with material reality, nature. The same goes for the statement "no man is an island": islands have human souls here.<sup>60</sup> Thus the comfort faith gives in thinking about death is rejected, and no link to a community is formed. The speaker remains singular. However in his vision nature reflects humanity, which is a kind of a religious idea in itself, and there are angels and souls still in existence. Thus the material reality is not all there is, or rather, the material reality of a person contains possibilities.

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60 Compare also with the "girl-circled island" in "A saint about to fall", and the curiously (dis)embodied island in "Ears in the turrets hair": "Beyond this island bound / By a thin sea of flesh / And a bone coast, / The land lies out of sound / And the hills out of mind." (CP, 49–50.)

What makes this parallel to Donne particularly interesting is the literariness of the building of metaphoric coherence. The metaphors GOD IS WORD and LIFE IS A STORY are closely connected through the use of the A THINKER IS A MOVER AND MANIPULATOR metaphor. While Donne's text is about a comforting, unifying story by God, Thomas's poem creates an ongoing contradiction between the two, illustrating the big debate that a person faces in life: how are God's goodness, or more general blessings, and a dark reality reconcilable. To support the issue the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is very literary in the poem as well: links to *Odyssey* and the Bible are activated. It is characterised by ambivalence and the co-existence of contradictory elements through the different licensing stories. The speaker's varying distance highlights the role of interpretation and uncertainty.

Furthermore, this difference is reflected on the level of embodied imagery as well. While the life of man in Donne's view is only fully realised in the after-life, for Thomas the body is the location of divinity, though it is different compared to that of "In the beginning", for example:

[...] from the cloudy bases of the breath  
The word flowed up, translating to the heart  
First characters of birth and death.  
("In the beginning", *CP*, 23.)

And the sea that hides his secret selves  
Deep in its black, base bones,  
Lulling of spheres in the seashell flesh  
[...]  
("Poem on his birthday", *CP*, 147).

However occasionally in Donne's writings the reality of life after the Fall is more clearly present as well, for example in the last sermon, "Death's Duell". Donne writes: "Wee have a winding-sheet in our mother's womb which grows with us from our conception, and we come into the world wound up in that winding-sheet, for we come to seek a grave." (1987, 313.) The links to Thomas's early writing, the time which he himself called the "womb-tomb" period, are evident. The significant difference between Thomas and Donne's treatment of this particular embodied view of the world<sup>61</sup> is that Thomas's is more inherently contradicted in

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61 See also Habermann 2011.

that there is no comfort in it; the “I” of “Poem on his birthday” does not complete his journey at the end of the poem either.

An even more explicit use of the A THINKER IS A MOVER AND A MANIPULATOR metaphor can be found in “Today, this insect”. The poem combines the specificity of time (“today”) and person (an “I” that seems to be the poet) with very conventional allusions:

Today, this insect, and the world I breathe,  
Now that my symbols have outelbowed space, [...]  
In trust and tale have I divided sense,  
Slapped down the guillotine, the blood-red double  
Of head and tail made witnesses to this  
Murder of Eden and green genesis.

The insect certain is the plague of fables.  
[...]  
Death: death of Hamlet and the nightmare madmen,  
An air-drawn windmill on a wooden horse,  
John’s beast, Job’s patience, and the fibs of vision,  
Greek in the Irish sea the ageless voice:  
'Adam I love, my madmen’s love is endless,  
No tell-tale lover has an end more certain,  
All legends’ sweethearts on a tree of stories,  
My cross of tales behind the fabulous curtain.'  
(CP, 38.)

The biblical references (“Eden”, “genesis”) occur side by side with expressions connected to the writing of fiction (“symbol”, “tale”, “fable”). The “grand narrative” of the Bible is then lined up with the creative work of the speaker (“my symbols”, “I have divided [...]"). From this point of view we can assume that all the allusions to fictional characters – Adam, Job, Hamlet – are distinctly *literary*, as opposed to bringing in the licensing stories of revenge or pious religiousness for instance. Another allusion, “Greek in the Irish sea”, adds further literariness in one metaphor: Greek sailors link to *Odyssey*, but the word “Irish” layers the much later *Ulysses* by Joyce on top of the reference. This simplifying grouping of very diverse literary characters is supported by the line “[a]ll legends’ sweethearts on a tree of

stories”.

It is striking how the speaker of “Today, this insect” is precisely a manipulator of experience activated in the knowledge of literary conventions: the tone of the poem is even more abstract and pompous than that of “Poem on his birthday”. There is no distance (as in “Poem on his birthday”) between the experiential matter and the speaker's narrating of it, as all of it is on a poetic, highly abstract level. The word “fable” is key here: it is ambivalent in that it can refer to a literary genre as well as fabricated things, in other words lies – something that fiction can be seen to promote too. The punning metaphor “head and tail” sustains all these connotations: it refers to the far ends of an animal, the idiomatic saying about lying (“no head or tail”) and fiction as “tail” is a homonym of “tale”. There is then no limit to how the speaker can manipulate his literary material: a poet is god-like in how he can line up characters from different eras and bend the fictional truth according to his own purposes. The biblical references make no exception: whereas Christians treat the Bible as the word of God, as unquestionable truth, Thomas detaches the stories from the ideological context and plays with the associations these licensing stories might prompt in the reader's mind (cf. “My *cross of tales* behind the fabulous curtain”).

In the same way that I have been treating embodiment as a technical *and* a thematic feature in Thomas's writing, the term “fable” has been seen as an important principle of organisation in Thomas's poems: the layering of conventional references<sup>62</sup> is according to J. M. Kertzer responsible for a heightened significance of the senses in reading Thomas's poems, as well as a hint towards a “hidden meaning” (comparable to activated licensing stories) or a moral (1979, 301). Kertzer calls this the “mythologising of experience” (ibid., 302), which has certain biographical connotations<sup>63</sup>, but is without a doubt also a thematic element in the poems. “Today, this insect”, for example, adds a mythical layer to the process of writing in certain condensed expressions: “The insect certain is the plague of fables.” (CP, 38.) The difficulty here is to decide what “insect” is referring to – how can it be certain? It has its biblical connotations when read alongside “plague”, but it also means dissected, divided – a motif that surfaces in the poem on many occasions.<sup>64</sup> The line then hints at unpleasant

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62 Compare also with Thomas's comment about him being a “Symbol Simon” (CL, 136).

63 This links with the experientiality focus of cognitive narratology as well, see Introduction and Chapter 4.

64 The motif is, in fact, something that occurs elsewhere in Thomas's poetry too, for example in the poem “My

consequences comparable to the plagues sent by God in the Bible. Considering the predication, we might be reminded of how the word of God is to a Christian a certain truth, so perhaps such a notion has negative effects on “fables”, fiction. If we bring in the already mentioned pun “head and tail”, we can note it seems to strangely embody a similar one-eyed view on things:

In trust and tale have I divided sense,  
Slapped down the guillotine, the blood-red double  
Of head and tail made witnesses to this  
Murder of Eden and green genesis.  
(*CP*, 38.)

The bloody “murder” of dividing sense for artistic purposes has a brutal feel to it though there is no mention of writing actually costing any lives. Such passages though seem to underline the power the poet has: to make the reader shudder for no apparent reason. In fact, the reformulation of “[t]he insect certain is a plague of fables” into “[t]he insect fable is a certain promise” further down the line in the poem manifests in a prophetic tone how the divided (biblical) fable, fiction, is what will last.

### **3.2. Taking metaphor literally: “Altarwise by owl-light”**

To sum up, the use of biblical characters and the narratives related to them, detached from their ideological context, man's progression from birth to death, often lined up with the fate of Jesus, as well as the Fall and the end of the *lingua adamica* constitute the intertextual foundations of Thomas's poetics of embodiment in that they bring about a *borrowed dynamic*. This can be paralleled with the way in which time is personified in many of Thomas's poems, with reference to the concept of fable as defined by Kertzer (1979, 302): time can be both a character in the text world *and* a thematic thread, and furthermore, the temporality of the reading process is often foregrounded too. The human form of time is in a way very natural to Thomas's poetics: mortality is inscribed in the body, meaning that the inevitable limits of a world is pyramid”: “Bisected shadows on the thunder's bone, / Bolt for the salt unborn.” (*CP*, 27.)

person's time are present from the very moment of conception. The generic is made particular by means of embodiment.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, Kertzer sees fable as fundamentally hereditary in that the grand narrative of the Bible is passed on from generation to generation (1979, 302). Thomas deals with the dualities inherent in the many forms of this grand narrative with a particular difficulty of expression: as Kertzer writes, “[t]hrough [...] puns and paradoxes, Thomas likes to compress the beginning and end of a fable into one phrase” (ibid., 303). This of course correlates with Thomas's own formulation of how his imagery works. Such a technique can surely be called merely a way of instantiating conceptual metaphors, however here the distinctions between the concepts of metaphor and *catachresis* seem relevant: in the vein of the metaphysical conceit, Thomas's metaphors can often be called catachrestic in how they foreground the reading process by being abusive even, and in how they can still stretch across whole texts, even a cluster of texts (see Kertzer 1979). In the anthology *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory* (2011), Elzbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska discusses whether catachresis is a figure in its own right, that is separate from metaphor, and although her analysis does not really present conclusive evidence, I think the relations between tropes should not be completely put aside from discussion within the cognitive paradigm just because conceptual metaphor can in a way account for them all. This is also something whose importance Bo Pettersson (2011) as well as Benjamin Biebuyck and Gunther Martens (2011) have stressed when it comes to literary approaches to CMT.

In fact, the abusiveness that is present in many of Thomas's catachrestic metaphors is in my view reminiscent of the way in which “fable” is the witness to a brutal yet abstract murder in “Today, this insect”, a form of embodiment of its own. It is the multiplication of metaphors of this kind that earned Thomas the reputation of being a difficult poet, and similarly to Samuel Johnson who disapproved of the metaphysical poets' methods, critics have deemed some of Thomas's poems impossible to interpret due to the thematic thread getting lost in the difficulty (see for instance McKay 1986, 379–380). As recently as in 2007, Terry Eagleton deems a particular line in the poem “After the funeral” as a failure. The metaphoric sentence “her fist of a face died clenched on a round pain” is according to Eagleton *just* difficult, in other words

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65 Cf. also the tongue-in-cheek way time is personified in the poem “When, like a running grave”: “When like a running grave, time tracks you down [...]”; “Time is a foolish fancy, time and fool.” (CP, 19–20.)

it does not succeed in bringing unexpected input spaces together in an illuminating manner. Eagleton does of course depart from the assumption that poetic language often works through estrangement, but in his opinion the parameters of the 'real world', our schematic knowledge that is, are violated too bluntly:

[...] pains are plainly not round. The image only works if we subscribe to a version of the way the world is which we know to be false. As a result, the line is more grotesque than illuminating. Though it is meant to be abrasively physical, it is conceived in the head rather than the guts. It is the kind of conceit that might occur to you after a hard night on the town, one you might even scribble down excitedly at two o'clock in the morning; but to commit it to paper in the sober light of day and release it to the general public betrays an alarming lack of judgement. This is not to say that while reading literary works we do not sometimes provisionally accept assumptions or hypotheses which we would not readily sign up to real life. This is known as the suspension of disbelief. But there are limits to our disbelief, just as there are to our faith. (Eagleton 2007, 30.)

The claim that pains cannot be round seems a bit odd to begin with: pains can certainly be the opposite of round, sharp. Thus the first part of the metaphor functions through one of the basic patterns Lakoff and Turner mention, negation: the speaker makes the point that the pain in question *cannot* be characterised as sharp or strong.

If we look at the context this line is placed in, the round pain seems to be a parallel to how the life of Ann Jones, Thomas's deceased aunt, was: something that does not leave a significant mark or a legacy. The poem is then not a conventional elegy, and an awareness of this twist is certainly needed when reading the text. The unsettling line occurs near the end of the poem:

I know her scrubbed and sour humble hands  
Lie with religion in their cramp, her threadbare  
Whisper in a damp word, her wits dried hollow,  
Her fist of a face died clenched on a round pain;  
And sculptured Ann is seventy years of stone.  
These cloud-sopped, marble hands, this monumental  
Argument of the hewn voice, gesture and psalm,  
Storm me forever over her grave [...]  
(CP, 74.)

As Eagleton points out, the metaphor all in all is very difficult to make sense of, or, to speak in cognitive terms, to break down into a single blend. It has an embodied feel to it, much like the decapitation of “sense” in “Today, this insect”, but it is impossible to identify a single basic metaphor that it is a realisation of, which seems to correlate with Eagleton's view of the line as “more grotesque than illuminating.” (Eagleton 2007, 30.) How can we then project the source, the clenched fist, onto the face, and how does the round pain fit into the equation? Initial features that might be placed into the generic space include the roundness of the face and the fist, and possible links between the pain and the “fist of a face”. However there is no evidence of actual violence connecting the face and the fist, therefore the motivation for the clenched face must lie elsewhere.

This motivation can be found in the surrounding lines: earlier on Ann Jones's hands are described as “scrubbed”, “sour” and “humble” as well as cramped due to religion. Thus the hands seem to have a conceit-like significance to them, they represent (metonymically) something more: in being scrubbed and humble they suggest a life-time of hard work as well as a piously religious world-view. On the other hand the hands are “sour” too, which can be read as a concrete outcome of hard work, but also as (possibly) hidden sourness of character, a feeling of discontentment in general. The hands are also as if tied by faith, communicating that something was denied from Ann. Similarly, the mind is “dried hollow”, as if sucked dry of thoughts. With all this added up, the “round pain” is then round in the sense that there is nothing left behind, no opinions of one's own or anything causing a meaningful reaction. The face is clenched due to frustration brought on by a life spent working hard and characterised by unrewarded (Christian) humility.

In terms of embodiment the poem is much more down to earth than some of Thomas's earlier work, however the tone the speaker takes is preacher-like as in “Poem on his birthday”:

After the feast of tear-stuffed time and thistles

[...]

I stand, for this memorial's sake, alone

[...] with dead, humped Ann

Whose hooded, fountain heart once fell in puddles  
Round the parched worlds of Wales and drowned each sun  
(CP, 73).

The basic metaphor here is of course the body as a container, combined with the metaphor VITALITY IS A SUBSTANCE: the image of Ann's heart as over-flowing contrasts sharply with the later hollow mind, and the mode of speaking here paints almost a divine picture of the person described. Ann provides the dry landscape the water it needs, but also drowns like the flood in the Bible. There are then several contrasting images of this vitality (“fountain”, “puddle”, “drown”). Furthermore, the heart as a container metaphor contrasts with how the occasion of mourning is “the feast of tear-stuffed time”, a metaphor that suggests that this container is not over-flowing in vitality and cannot thus be released. The word “feast” in combination with “stuffed” also blends in a more concrete image of the situation, and in an ironic tone: the mourners are there to pay their respects to Ann Jones, but also stuff themselves with food.

Even more contrast is provided in how the idealised, metonymic use of the heart (conventionally the locus of emotions) clashes with the description of Ann as “humped”, an expression that can refer to either her appearance, or to her being impaired in a metaphorical sense (cf. the humility expressed by the hands). Both readings seem very relevant, and the hypothesis that they can be present simultaneously is further supported by how there are *several worlds* the heart drowns with its vitality. All of this seems to point to the idea that everyone filters things through their own perspective and thus builds their own view of the world; similarly, at a wake every visitor says goodbye to the person *they* knew, an image created by themselves, thus in a way always to a different person. The contrasting use of embodiment – either with a body-internal (e.g. Ann's face and heart) or body-external (e.g. “fiercely mourning house”) target space, with biblical or more mundane tones – at least suggests that such perspectivism cannot be avoided.

In terms of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor, it is crucial to also pay attention to the contrast between the somewhat grotesque tone of the embodiment in the poem, as noted by Eagleton as well, and the idealising conventions of elegy that are clearly treated with a certain ironic

stance. The way in which the prophet-like tone of the speaker comes together with quite a tangible sense of physicalness seems to be a play on the conventional idea that an elegy brings the person who is being remembered close to the speaker, as if they were alive for that moment again. As a parallel, conventional metaphors are treated with a very visible contradictoriness. The key metaphoric frame is the metonymous use of the hands. The hands portray both the outward and inward markers of what Ann Jones's life was like, but also the speaker's attempts of paying homage in his poetic language: "These cloud-sopped, marble hands, this monumental / Argument of the hewn voice" (*CP*, 73). In other words the speaker articulates the wish that his singing in Ann Jones's praise means that her life (or a person's life in general) will not be forgotten, but is at the same time faced with the more harsh, concrete reality of a loved one's absence. Such a scenario is of course another realisation of the tragedy of man falling from the image of God, man's mortality, reflected in the insufficiency of human language (in relation to the metaphor GOD IS WORD).

This unsolvable conflict is made particularly evident through the use of the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor, in other words turning something static into dynamic. The poem portrays the atmosphere at the wake as follows:

[after the] Morning smack of the spade that wakes up sleep,  
Shakes a desolate boy who slits his throat  
In the dark of the coffin and sheds dry leaves,  
That breaks one bone to light with a judgment clout  
(*CP*, 73).

Another point of criticism with some of Thomas's poems – in addition to the already mentioned difficulty of metaphoric expression – has been the lack of any 'happening' that one can grab onto (see for example Maud 2003, 1). The first active verb here occurs as late as line twelve ("I stand"). However, precisely the way in which the static situation is made dynamic through the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor highlights the artificiality of the situation at hand: as the mourners stand by the body, grief is made visible in how an everyday sound, the "morning smack of the spade", simultaneously a pun on "mourning", makes a "desolate boy" (arguably the speaker seen from outside, from a temporal distance) snap out of his inward despair and into a very drastic act of sadness (the metaphorical slitting of the throat in the

coffin).

The dynamic is so hyperbolic and constructed that it is evident we are not dealing with conventional elegiac reminiscing, but rather with the mourners themselves imprisoned by their own personal dramas – a parallel to the different worlds drowned by Ann Jones's heart. Technically speaking, the “morning smack of the spade” becomes an active agent that makes the boy perform his act of grief (in his mind, if we want to naturalise the situation slightly). This private drama is further emphasised by the fact that instead of actual blood-shed, or indeed crying, the boy can only shed “dry leaves” – an instance of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor – in other words there are no “real” emotions to be shown. This obviously also links with the container metaphors in conjunction with Ann's heart as well as the mind that had dried hollow. Moreover, Ralph Maud compares the morning sound to the slapping gesture a doctor gives to a newborn child (2003, 4), which would strengthen the imposed dynamic in the situation even further. What is more, such a banal metaphoric linking of birth as dawn with death highlights the sense of artificiality, even hypocrisy, present here.<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, the dynamic then links with the distance created between the experience of mourning and the remembrance in words, taken even further in a metaphor that can be seen to violate the invariance principle: “[...] this monumental / Argument [...], gesture and psalm / Storm me forever over her grave” (*CP*, 74). The metaphor that could be formulated as CREATIVITY IS A FORCE OF NATURE transforms the nature of the target into something it is not, that is something eternal instead of a temporary natural phenomenon. This transformation is the crux of these lines: it exemplifies the conflict between the limited time a person has and the wish for human life to be eternal. In fiction this kind of effect can be reached of course, but the in-built contradictions in the metaphors used, as well as a whole layer of ambiguity, remind us of the dynamic of the actual experience at hand. The kind of iterative patterns and hyperbole the speaker uses bring the artificiality forth; there is not really much room for identification in terms of reading experientially. In effect the embodiment used, then, does not really contribute to bringing the content onto the human scale – rather, the dynamic that is created estranges the reader from any chance of personalised grief.

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<sup>66</sup> A similar use of this conventional metaphor can be found in the very famous “Do not go gentle into that good night”, see 4.2.

Though “After the funeral” is certainly literary in how it is a highly self-aware and unconventional elegy, the example of Thomas's figurative difficulty *par excellence* is the poem sequence “Altarwise by owl-light”. It became the topic of rather strangely coloured discussion when Thomas himself responded to a reading presented by the critic Edith Sitwell: “She doesn't take the literal meaning: that a world-devouring ghost creature bit out the horror of tomorrow from a gentleman's loins.” (CL, 302.) Sitwell had read the poem as an allegory of the hectic pace of modern life, and in this light it would be easy to just see Thomas's statement as an objection to an allegorical reading, as opposed to proposing some kind of invented sense of 'literalness'. However, some critics, most notably John Bayley, have attempted to read the poem literally – Bayley's “follow-up” method (1957) avoids overt interpretation – but this approach is very challenging indeed if one is supposed to find any coherence in the actual diction of the poem. Monroe C. Beardsley and Sam Hynes (1960) have, in fact, discussed the general problems of poetry interpretation using this poem as an example, and they are not convinced by Bayley's method at all. The crucial question with this poem's figurativeness then seems to be, what kind of a textual world do the metaphors actually build if it is easier to over-interpret what is going on?<sup>67</sup>

In my view, the starting point for interpreting the poem sequence should be in analysing how the speaker makes the generic specific by establishing an evasive yet detectable metaphoric continuity. I argue that a continuity *is* nevertheless present although for instance Don McKay states that a “[...] strong centralizing symbol [...] is not provided” (1986, 385). Sure enough, any single conceptual metaphor that the poem is building on cannot be easily found. This is due to the rather overwhelming density of images and allusions, and I would argue the effect is that of piling it on *on purpose*. The speaker is almost transparent, which, too, seems deliberate: as McKay points out (*ibid.*, 380–381), there is a certain everyman quality to him. (Biblical) myths as well as idioms and puns seem to be merely material for metaphoric playing around, and most of the time for doing so in a very over-the-top manner. This makes it futile to slow the reading down every time a figurative expression is encountered in order to decode hidden meanings, which is obviously why Bayley opted for an alternative way of proceeding with the interpretation; just the sheer complexity of the syntax makes this

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<sup>67</sup> David L. Hoover mentions that in Marie-Laure Ryan's typology, or approaches building on it, this kind of presenting of abnormal things as 'normal' would create an *alternative fictional world* (2004, 104), but the problem that inevitably follows is of course defining *normal compared to what*. The creation of lyric worlds will be discussed in more detail shortly.

impossible.<sup>68</sup>

For instance, it is hard to locate a subject or a predicate in the following passage, which must have interpretive consequences:

The horizontal cross-bones of Abaddon,  
You by the cavern over the black stairs,  
Rung bone and blade, the verticals of Adam,  
And, manned by midnight, Jacob to the stars.  
(*CP*, 59.)

Still, since the sonnets *are* placed under a common heading, a reading of the whole sequence only naturally aims to build coherence<sup>69</sup>; however one should be careful not to get tricked into a blind search of a macro-metaphor either. The point of departure should be the building of a text-world that can contain contradictory elements but does not destroy itself regardless of discrepancies.<sup>70</sup> Having said that, the world of “Altarwise by owl-light” if any exemplifies Umberto Eco's (1984, 156) idea of the impossibility of the fictional world: it can be named but not construed as such. Thus for instance the rather idealistic way of reading John Bayley tries to carry out with “Altarwise by owl-light” does not actually constitute an analysis of the poem. We cannot take the poet literally when he says that his work should be read literally, but we can certainly ask *why* such a distinction should be made in the first place.

Indeed, it is precisely with this poem that the already discussed catachrestic use of extended metaphor is most relevant according to Don McKay: “We might well nominate catachresis as the paradigm figure of speech for all Thomas's obscure poems, and especially the sonnets.” (1986, 377.) The poem sequence is often seen as marking the end of the early (complex)

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68 Even though I have said Thomas's writing is never automatic though it is often complex and obscure, here “Altarwise by owl-light” links interestingly to Peter Stockwell's cognitive analysis of a poem by the surrealist poet André Breton: “The poem attempts to obliterate figural distinctions, coming to rest in an eternal state of potential by presenting verbless phrases.” (2003, 21.)

69 The kind of interpretive problems Beardsley and Hynes discuss with this poem have even called into question whether the sequence can be read as a coherent whole; for example Elder Olson and H. H. Kleinman have come to the conclusion that the poem is unsuccessful due to its obscurity (McKay 1986, 380).

70 An apt metaphoric parallel can be found in popular culture: the TV show *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* featured a sketch character called Captain Punishment whose mission was to punish people for using bad puns. The sketch ended the same way every time (and it was repeated on many occasions without any decrease in humorousness): an outsider points out to the hero that his name (Captain *Punishment*) is also a pun, and the hero is destroyed.

period, and for good reason, as the poet himself writes:

[...] I'm not sorry that, in that Work in Progress thing ["Altarwise by owl-light"], I did carry 'certain features to their logical conclusion'. It had, I think, to be done; the result had to be, in many of the lines and verses anyway, mad parody; and I'm glad that I parodied those features so soon after making them, and that I didn't leave it to anyone else (*CL*, 243).

The features Thomas is talking about here are of course his use of the kind of embodied imagery established in poems like "If I were tickled by the rub of love", as well as a certain complexity of expression. Even though I would not draw a straight-forward parallel between the speaker of "Altarwise by owl-light" and Thomas, I do agree with McKay's analysis that often in Thomas's poems we encounter a certain kind of persona that could be called a *trickster* (1986, 376).<sup>71</sup> This character plays poetic tricks on the reader, and always fails to be caught. Echoes of the persona can be heard in Thomas's above statement as well: carrying "certain features to their logical conclusion" is in quotation marks, and logically enough so as the kind of things Thomas is referring to, the cycle of life and death in fleshy form, cannot really be concluded in a thematic sense. Thus attempting to read "Altarwise by owl-light" as parody would be equally dubious as trying to read the poem literally.

Despite the manipulateness of the speaking persona, and Thomas's characterisation of the sonnets being linked by a "certain obscure narrative" (*CL*, 264), the sequence should not be treated as narrative as such I think. Rather, we are dealing with the dynamic of the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor again. J. M. Kertzer makes an important point about Thomas's more narrative poems (we could call them weakly narrative in McHale's terms):

Instead of stories [...] these poems present dramatic situations, moments of insight or conflict in a narrative whose pattern they suggest [...]. Or they show through temporal clauses that they are parts of a more extensive narrative [...]. Other poems employ a rhetorical structure that indicates the shape of an adventure [...]. (Kertzer 1979, 299–300.)

All of these ways of hinting towards narrativity are of course features of parable – how exactly such projections are made in the reading process is another issue however. They are also all tendencies that can be generalised across the metaphors of Thomas's works,

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71 Cf. Jung's four archetypes: *mother*, *rebirth*, *spirit* and *trickster* (1972).

including the short stories and dramas.<sup>72</sup> As Thomas himself has remarked, “All poetic impulses are towards the creation of adventure. And adventure is movement” (*Quite Early One Morning* 1967, 149). In my view, such projected movement is a tendency that is relevant when reading *any* text by Thomas.

This takes us back to the initial debate with the literal reading of the poem's metaphoric narrative. The poet insists: “This poem is a particular incident in a particular adventure” (*CL*, 301). In other words we should not take it to argue a general point through the voice of the implied author as in James Phelan's definition of lyric texts (see page 7). Since we are not looking for a narrator or trying to construct a plot, either, we should then ask, how can the rhetorical structure “that indicates the shape of an adventure” be described? The projection of borrowed stories is highly self-aware, that is the rhetorical structure of the poem is playful to begin with: as Don McKay points out, a key indicator of the trickster's perverse games<sup>73</sup> is how certain actors, with stories attached to them, are taken from the canon of epic poetry as well as from the Bible, but the form used, the sonnet, is paradigmatically lyric (1986, 383).<sup>74</sup> What is more, the sonnet form traditionally entails the formulation of an argument, something that is obviously absent from “Altarwise by owl-light”.

J. M. Kertzer presents a similar point about the use of mythical elements in the poem, but argues that these borrowed figures are placed in the poem to mythologise the “actuality” of the poem (1979, 301–302). Indeed, Kertzer sees this particular function of fable as a way of distancing the poet from his actual experiences<sup>75</sup>; regardless of the here rather unhelpful biographic evaluation<sup>76</sup>, I see analytical value in Kertzer's idea of how fable is an organisational principle ensuring that the metaphoric events exist in their own right. If we just turn the focus away from the author and towards the speaker, then the idea of mythologising events for the sake of creating *fabula*, a spectacle that is exhausting to interpret, emerges as

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72 This, however, is an area of inquiry that will not be pursued at length in the present undertaking (although see section 5.2.), but will be taken up in my doctoral thesis.

73 Harold Bloom has presented an intriguing literary historical idea according to which “perverseness” is a shared quality of great lyric works: “Strong poets necessarily are perverse, 'necessarily' here meaning as if obsessed, as if manifesting repetition compulsion.” (1973, 85.)

74 This hinting towards the tradition of epic poetry but not committing to it in form and style could be labelled as weak narrativity in Brian McHale's terms (2001), however it is very weak indeed due to the pattern of turning things upside down that is prominent throughout.

75 This could be seen as a lyric take on the notion of experientiality that is at the heart of narrativity as put forth by Fludernik (1996).

76 Compare with the discussion in Chapter 4.

the link between the poem's tone of speech and an added layer of narrativity that is established via the figurative negotiation.

In fact this is all we have to grab onto anyway, since the “actuality” of the text that is allegedly being mythologised cannot be pinned down anywhere. As Benjamin Biebuyck and Gunther Martens argue, “[b]ecause of its connectedness with literal and non-literal parts alike, a literary metaphor disrupts the primary chronology at work in the literary text and transforms the reader [...] into a collaborator in the communicative transaction.” (2011, 63.) The way in which the process of reading itself is thematised through the metaphoric tricks played by the speaker seems to be a counter-argument to another claim they make, however: that the figurative network of a text forms an *auto-poetic* layer of narrativity – in other words a network we should not attribute to a consistent narrator. Even if we replace the word “narrator” with “speaker” here, the relationship between the speaking and a higher level of organisation is not to be seen as clear-cut, that is they are not to be separated into distinct spaces that do not overlap.

Biebuyck and Martens's figurative negotiation resembles Benjamin Hrushovski's idea of the interconnectedness between text-internal and external fields of reference, built on metaphors (frames of reference). In Hrushovski's model, frames of reference can (on the linguistic level) through a repetitive pattern establish something literally not possible (against real-world principles) as 'realistic' to that particular text; according to Hrushovski, this is particularly frequent in Modernist poetry (1984, 26). Mick Short, too, makes a note of this kind of phenomenon in Modernist poetry: “We are constantly involved [...] in framing interpretations which make sense of apparent non-sense and providing pattern and consistency where at first none can be seen. It is this fact that makes much modern poetry so difficult to understand [...]” (1996, 45). Interestingly enough, Short uses the expression “framing” for describing what goes on in the interpretive process; in fact this particular metaphor is very common indeed outside the cognitive paradigm as well (and Hrushovski's model).

In principle Hrushovski's notion of metaphoric realism within a text resembles possible worlds theorising in literature: a poem's figurative build-up can in fact make something that does not make sense against our schematic knowledge literal, accepted as the new paradigm

as it were (1984, 36). However Hrushovski sees the concepts of frame of reference and field of reference more suitable for his particular model of reading as they do not form any fixed parameters for the world but can be contradictory even (ibid., 12). Turning back to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Margaret Freeman makes the claim that CMT and possible worlds theory are not compatible precisely due to the fixed world parameters in the latter. With the analysis of conceptual metaphors, Freeman argues, the authorial filter needs to be taken into account, and this is something possible worlds theory does not accommodate. (Freeman 2005b, 28.) However as far as I can see there is no contradiction here if one approaches the issue from the point of view of the insights in Hrushovski's model: the external field of reference can also be seen as a schematic frame. Furthermore, the legitimacy issues inevitable in the authorial readings within Conceptual Metaphor Theory<sup>77</sup> are avoided with this adjusted approach.

In Hrushovski's model, then, metaphor can then have a particular function in the creation of a fictional world, as summarised by the following equation. In the equation, *m* refers to metaphorical function, *e* to event and *me* to metaphorical event:

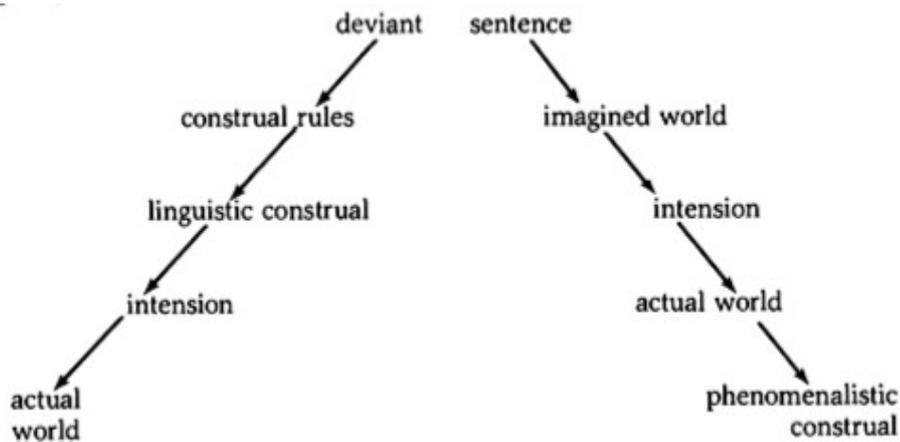
$$me_1 + me_2 + me_3 + m (e_1 + e_2 + e_3)$$

(Hrushovski 1984, 36.)

According to the summarisation, metaphoricity simultaneously functions as a relation between certain frames of reference within a poem's field of reference *and* as a relation between the poem's internal field of reference and the external field of reference, the 'world' that is (ibid.). The idea can be linked to Samuel Levin's metaphor theory in which the notions of literal and figurative gain yet another layer of significance: according to Levin, texts invite the reader in with a 'surface' metaphoricity which then becomes the one and only metaphor in the text, that is to say the only figure that requires interpretation. Thus the originally metaphoric-striking content is shifted into another angle. (Levin 1979, 125.) Levin calls this kind of metaphoricity that a text is built on *phenomenalistic*, and summarises the two alternative ways of perceiving metaphor as follows (ibid., 137):

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<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 4.



Levin illustrates the difference between the two alternative paths of interpretation with the example of a talking cat: if this is considered personification within the text world, then we project real-world principles onto it, which makes the text metaphoric in relation to the world we know, not the fictional world itself (ibid., 124). Of course this path is not helpful with texts that actually do operate on metaphor; we should opt for the phenomenalistic alternative whenever cued by certain foregrounded features, for instance the artificial rhetoric situation of “Altarwise by owl-light”. A parallel could be drawn to Gerard Steen's five-step framework: Steen (2009, 207) argues that when identifying metaphor-related linguistic material in a text, some elements may be only related to a metaphor and not metaphorical as such (the argument is especially relevant with reference to simile and allegory, though I do not claim either of these should be taken as the main figure in “Altarwise by owl-light”). A semantic transfer occurring based on similarity need not always be metaphorical even if the link is based on an underlying conceptual metaphor.

Due to its dynamism, Paul Werth's (1999) cognitive concept of *text world* is also very applicable here. It can be characterised as a conceptual stage onto which the events of the text are placed when reading. Moreover, conceptual metaphor can make the elements in the text world cohere:

[...] it [metaphor] works by opening up an area of experience in terms of which the discourse topic can be (partially) interpreted [...] [It is] an overarching structure, just as the function-advancing propositions in a world indirectly reveal the ‘macro-structure’ of a text (Werth 1999, 323–324).

The parallel to the “function-advancing propositions” emphasises the progression shared by both: the notion of *event* structures not only things taking place on the level of the text's content, but also on the level of the conceptualising the reader is engaged in (an idea similar to the one Hrushovski presents). Two kinds of elements structure the text world: *world-building* as well as function-advancing, of which the latter ones can be formulated into propositions. The truth value of the propositions can then be evaluated. (Ibid., 181, 190.) The evaluation of the propositions abstracted is done against something called *common ground*, that is the reader's schematic knowledge. This process is characterised by a strive towards coherence (ibid., 51): propositions are either accepted or denied a role in the world-building. However, the common ground must essentially be linked with knowledge of literary conventions in the case of “Altarwise by owl-light”: its world is in constant interaction with what the reader might anticipate.

In terms of the figurative negotiation with this kind of anticipatory reading of “Altarwise by owl-light”, a more detailed breakdown of the poem's rhetorical structure is of utmost importance. Elena Semino stresses in her book *Language and World Creation in Poems and Other Texts* (1997, 4) that lyric worlds as well as the schematic processing of texts in general are framed by the discourse situation. The striking artificiality of “Altarwise by owl-light” directs the reader towards a metaphorically oriented chaining of content as opposed to “sense-making” as such. A parallel can be drawn to fantastical fictional worlds. However the principle of causality has to be left almost completely aside here. Semino writes: “[...] it is in the nature of poetry to remain ambiguous as to its faithfulness to actual-world detail” (1997, 95) (cf. Roman Jakobson's idea of the inbuilt ambiguity in poetry, 1994, 85). This ambiguity is one the key threads to stay aware of while proceeding with the reading of “Altarwise by owl-light”.

Semino's approach combines Marie-Laure Ryan's typology of possible worlds (1991) with the linguistic analysis of lyric texts. Ryan's *principle of minimal departure* and for instance Lubomír Doležel's theory of possible worlds (1998) are however distinctly bound to the idea of mimesis and world-building parameters, which in poetry analysis is not that fruitful a starting point. Doležel does still refer to Hrushovski, and comes close to cognitive

conceptions of readerliness with the following statement: “Having reconstructed the fictional world as a mental image, the reader can ponder it and make it a part of his experience, just as he experientially appropriates the actual world.” (1998, 21.) The nature of fictional worlds as entities that cannot be actualised, as well as the reader's way of testing fictional worlds according to their own experience are common features (Doležel 1998, 16, 21).<sup>78</sup>

Semino, however, creates an approach of her own from many different theoretical elements. Her most relevant analytical points in terms of the world of “Altarwise by owl-light” are *the use of deixis, the definite article and modality*. The two former ones are essentially linked with how a poem can be situational, as in containing events and dynamics. Semino writes that the use of both deixis and the definite article are characterised by a sense of definiteness: they refer to elements the reader should be able to abstract from the text, or elsewhere based on their knowledge of conventions (1997, 15). In lyric texts this kind of definiteness is usually unanchored, resulting in the effect of having been drawn in the middle of things quite abruptly (ibid., 16, 23). There is no clear-cut communicative situation to “Altarwise by owl-light”, and if we go with McKay's idea of the speaker's everyman quality, this is quite natural even. There are still certain discursive levels that need to be investigated.

First, however, I would like to take a look at any definiteness in relation to the progression and dynamic situation in the opening sonnet:

Altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house  
The gentleman lay graveward with his furies;  
Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam,  
And, from his fork, a dog among the fairies,  
The atlas-eater with a jaw for news,  
Bit out the mandrake with to-morrow's scream.  
Then, penny-eyed, that gentlemen of wounds,  
Old cock from nowheres and the heaven's egg,  
With bones unbuttoned to the half-way winds,  
Hatched from the windy salvage on one leg,  
Scraped at my cradle in a walking word

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78 A third shared feature of possible worlds in lyric and narrative texts is the incompleteness of the fictional world, a certain kind of ambivalence that is – a fictional world can only be accessed via semiotic paths (Doležel 1998, 20).

That night of time under the Christward shelter:  
 I am the long world's gentleman, he said,  
 And share my bed with Capricorn and Cancer.  
 (CP, 58.)

We can ignore any definiteness that is merely grammatical genericness, as well as definiteness based on fixed cultural conventions, as these examples are not relevant in terms of poetic unanchoredness. Since all activity is of interest, here are the main subjects and predicates in the first sonnet:

S	P
the gentleman	lay graveward
Abaddon	cracked from Adam
the atlas-eater	[...] bit out the mandrake
that gentleman of wounds	[...] hatched [...]; scraped
he	said

A quick look at the subjects tells us that there are characters in the poem with which the definite article is used without clearly motivating the use in the text (“the gentleman”, “the atlas-eater”). This truly creates the effect of *in medias res*, which is further emphasised by the use of Abaddon and Adam as “casual” actors in the poem. We then have to consider the instances of definiteness in relation to each other as well as in relation to any contextual knowledge. First we encounter “the gentleman” who can be seen as “that gentleman of wounds” and “he” as well. This person is also described with the epithet “old cock from nowhere and the heaven's egg”, and in the last two lines (comparable to the rhyming couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet) the character speaks. In fact this 'character' turns out to be one of the factors that create continuity into the whole poem sequence. Of course it follows that the reader might see the character also where it is not, but on the other hand this ambiguity can again be seen as the ways of the trickster.

Most of the events turned into actions are strikingly physical, yet highly metaphorical: the main character lays “graveward”, Abaddon “cracks” from Adam, the debated ghost character bites the “mandrake” (presumably) out of the mysterious gentleman's loins (“fork”). It should

be noted that the syntax makes it very difficult to say who exactly did what to whom, while the actual actions are equally obscure. When lined up next to each other, the events clearly form a dialectic of birth (creation) and death (destruction): Adam and the “hatching gentleman” represent the former, Abaddon and the “atlas-eater” the latter.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the on-going contradiction between the two keeps up a tension in the poem, a metaphoric progression in itself. The figurative actions highlight the artificiality of the discourse situation: the fact that the actors are well-known (and thus heavily charged in terms of interpretation) forms a contrast to the “everyman quality” of the anonymous trickster of a speaker. The speaker manipulates the biblical frames of creation and destruction with a speaking mode borrowed from epic poetry, with the use of the past tense, epithets, (deictic) temporal references and reported speech. At the same time, the speaker remains in the background when it comes to the actual events, and is paradoxically a young child, though of course the discourse situation could be (to some extent) naturalised through retrospect.

There are also strikingly many directional metaphors throughout the poem, a feature whose cognitive interpretation especially Peter Stockwell has discussed with his take on the concepts of *figure* and *ground* (e.g. 2002; 2003; 2009a). Some examples include “graveward” (complemented with “Christward”), “the horizontal cross cross-bones of Abaddon”, “the verticals of Adam”, “three dead seasons on a climbing grave”, “the resurrection in the desert”. Even without looking into the contexts each of these expressions occur in, it is obvious they all have something to do with death and overcoming it, that is the story of Christ: ascension (escape) from the materiality of this world is a recurring motif. Death is presented as the opposite, being absorbed into the earth. Moreover, the directionality is often linked to ladders or trees, which refers to Jesus's death on the cross. This links interestingly to a recurring image in Thomas's works: the “X”. As Matthias Bauer (2002) has demonstrated, though his analysis focuses on the iconicity of the shape poem sequence “Vision and prayer”<sup>80</sup>, the “X” links to not only the centre of the human body, the crotch, but also to Christ's crucifixion (to name a few suggested meanings). Again the inevitability of multiple meanings is very prominent.

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<sup>79</sup> Abaddon is the angel of the bottomless pit in Revelation 9:11.

<sup>80</sup> Bauer's approach is a take on basic figure and ground analysis (with no cognitive affinities). “Vision and prayer” is similar to “Altarwise by owl-light” in terms of the difficulty of finding coherence across the different parts, but it is also an anomaly in Thomas's works: he did not write other shape poems.

In my view, a coherent reading of “Altarwise by owl-light” can be reached by mapping the metaphoric frame of embodied movement across the whole sequence. Thus instead of drawing on individual metaphors (as realisations of basic metaphors), their relation to each other should be addressed as in Hrushovski's idea of the field of reference. In the following I have listed expressions exemplifying the frames of action, the Bible, and the body:

- (II) ACTION: (then) said the hollow agent  
 THE BIBLE: Abaddon, the verticals of Adam, Jacob to the stars  
 THE BODY: artery, gender, bone, manned, hairs of your head
- (III) ACTION: I took my marrow-ladle [...], Rip Van Winkle [...] dipped me breast-deep in **the** descended bone  
 THE BIBLE: the lamb, Adam's wether, the tree-tailed worm that mounted Eve, the garden time  
 THE BODY: knocking knees, climbing grave, skullfoot, the skull of toes, marrow-ladle, bone
- (IV) ACTION: -  
 THE BIBLE: genesis, ark-lamped, the cutting flood  
 THE BODY: the wounded whisper, hunchback, (corset) the boneyards (for a crooked boy), a hump of splinters, (love's reflection of the) mushroom features, the marrow
- (V) ACTION: [...] trumped up the king of spots, [...] came two-gunned Gabriel, [...] said the fake gentleman, [...] rose my Byzantine Adam, I fell on [...], [...] slew my hunger, a climbing sea from Asia had me down, Jonah's Moby snatched me by the hair  
 THE BIBLE: Gabriel, Jesu, Byzantine Adam, Ishmael's plain, Jonah's Moby, salt Adam, frozen angel, salvation's bottle  
 THE BODY: black-tongued, blood, hunger, by the hair, pin-legged
- (VI) ACTION: he [...] split through & burned sea silence, [...] said medusa's scripture, [...] said the pin-hilled nettle, love plucked out the stinging siren's eye, old cock from nowhere's lopped the minstrel tongue, Adam, time's joker, [...] spelt out the seven seas, the bagpipe-breasted ladies [...] blew out the blood gauze  
 THE BIBLE: (a book of water, scripture)  
 THE BODY: tallow-eyed, my sea eye, my fork tongue, the siren's eye, the minstrel tongue, bagpipe-breasted, blood gauze, the wound of manwax
- (VII) ACTION: time tracks the sound of shape on man and cloud  
 THE BIBLE: the Lord's prayer, a Bible-leaved, genesis in the root, the bell-voiced Adam (the book of trees, the scarecrow word)  
 THE BODY: a naked sponge, bald pavilions, the sound of shape on man and cloud, the ringing handprint

- (VIII) ACTION: I wept, each minstrel angle drove in the heaven-driven of the nails, [...] the three-coloured rainbow from my nipples [...] leapt, I [...] unsex the skeletons & [...] suffer the heaven's children through my heartbeat  
 THE BIBLE: crucifixion on the mountain, thorns, God's Mary, Jack Christ, heaven-driven, the heaven's children  
 THE BODY: blood, wound, nails, my nipples, heartbeat
- (IX) ACTION: the lamped calligrapher, the queen of splints, buckle to lint and cloth their natron footsteps & draw on the glove of prints & pour like a halo on the caps and serpents, the linen spirit weds my long world's gentleman to dust and furies & with priest and pharaoh bed my gentle wound  
 THE BIBLE: prophets, a halo, serpents, resurrection (the linen spirit)  
 THE BODY: footsteps, glove of prints, features, wound, my neck
- (X) ACTION: Spot the blown word, I image december's thorn [...]  
 THE BIBLE: Christian voyage, gospel, the first Peter, the bible east, the garden (the blown word, the tall fish, Day)  
 THE BODY: -

Sonnets II, IV, VII and X contain very little action, and they are characterised by different discursive situations: the speaker is delivering a kind of a prophecy (II, VII, X) or posing philosophical (rhetorical) questions (IV). At times the tone is very abstract (e.g. “what is the size of genesis?”), at other times the adventure dynamics take over again. There are also instances of the use of imperative, but no single addressee can be construed.

These kinds of changes in the discourse level can be seen as a kind of modality, which is an important feature in the creation of a lyric world in Semino's model: the speaker in a way turns away from the “actuality” of the text world. The rhetorical effect, heavily dependent on the contradictoriness inherent in metaphoric expression, establishes a continuity between parts within the sonnets as well as the whole sequence: tensions are built across the poem. From this perspective precisely the culturally significant characters make sense as the subjects carrying out the outrageous events in the poem: they function like generic exemplifiers whereas the speaker manipulates the layers of reference and is thus inevitably ambiguous. This links to a point Walford Davies has made about Thomas's 'obscure' writing: “His images are also themselves energetic actors, locations or events in that narrative [...] and come from strange landscapes.” (2001, 115.) Thus what is at stake in “Altarwise by owl-light” is borrowed actors becoming energetic image-actors in a very strange landscape.

Furthermore, J. M. Kertzer's idea of fable can be applied onto the larger discursive scale:

Thomas delights in interweaving fables [...], developing a poem by increasing its range of reference and thereby making its texture increasingly rich. Its logic depends on the discovery of **correspondences between adventures**. (1979, 303, emphasis added.)

We can evaluate this statement from the point of view of the reader as well: the metaphoric coherence of the poem can be found in the joint effort of the “piling up effect” the speaker is responsible for and the adventurous correspondences. The speaker's stand is then as if in opposition towards the traditional meditative poetic speaker. This coherence can be likened to McHale's idea of weak narrativity: the figurative tricks played on the reader establish the speaker's strong hold on the text world and what goes on in it, but he then retreats from the events himself. Furthermore, the biblical allusions in this equation point to the same theme as in “Today, this insect”: the literary nature of the Bible as opposed to taking it as literal truth. In the second to last sonnet this function of the speaker is articulated through the main character: “the linen spirit / Weds my long world's gentleman to dust and furies” (*CP*, 62). Based on the preceding sonnets, the “linen spirit” can be seen to metonymically represent Jesus, and this spirit that is at the same time Jesus's (alleged) material remains on earth, “weds” the hero of the poem to this world through mortality (cf. “dust to dust, ashes to ashes”), but also to furies, divine characters that in Greek mythology represent *simultaneously* creativity and destruction.

To return to the table presented above, the pattern of correspondences between adventures can be seen more clearly when contrasting some of the actions (and actors) across different parts, while still keeping the rhetoric structure of each part in mind. Part II is (partially) spoken by “the hollow agent”, that is the mysterious gentleman of the first sonnet, and the way it is left open-ended if it indeed is this character's meditations throughout extends the mystery of the character as well as hides the speaker's identity. Part III is much like first one, whereas part IV stalls the action by giving way to unanswered questions that seem like a divertive move. By the time we get to part V, the borrowed figures have been well established as characters in the text world. In part V we encounter a person posing as the “long world's gentleman”, “the fake gentleman”: not only have we come to regard these figures as 'normal' characters, we can also

construe doppelgängers for them now. However whether or not this character is a new acquaintance or still the original gentleman is left ambiguous: the situation in part V is a card game<sup>81</sup> and the “fake gentleman” is wearing a “suit of spades”. Therefore it could just be that he has taken on a 'mask' for the card game.

What is more, even further correspondences between borrowed stories are made: this fake gentleman tells us about “two-gunned Gabriel”, coming from “the windy West”, as well as about “Jesu” cheating at cards. They may or may not be the same person: the punctuation and syntax leave this open. There are multiple implications of such a constellation. First of all, both Gabriel and Jesus are placed in the context of the wild west, something far more mundane and specific than anything we have encountered so far: has the poem come down to earth as it were? Should these characters be considered mere mortals, then, and spirituality (thoroughly) abolished? Second of all, the feeling of things not being what they seem is very strong here. This feeling stems from how stories attached to these borrowed figures are altered, that is their parabolic recruitment is transforming. Gabriel the messenger angel from the Bible, often seen as androgynous in visual portrayals, is all of a sudden a gun-slinger with weapons in both hands. The message this character is bringing, then, is most likely not from God, and not joyous news to the people he meets either. Moreover, the guns<sup>82</sup> could be paralleled with the trumpet that Gabriel is conventionally thought to have blown in the Bible<sup>83</sup> to mark the end of days. The end is nigh in one way or another, but here there seems to be little faith in redemption, as Jesus, in turn, is a deceptive card player, as opposed to a preacher of truths and moral values who has trusting followers.

Similarly, there are two Adams in Sonnet V (distinct from the Adams encountered in the previous parts): “my Byzantine Adam” and “salt Adam”. The former, likened to the speaker, goes through a series of abstract hardships, whereas the latter swims a long way to meet a frozen angel and a polar bear quoting Virgil. Both seem to be doing these things instead of someone else, as surrogates, most likely the speaker's (cf. “**my** Byzantine Adam”). This would link these two events to the first part of the poem: other than that, the leaps are quite big, though of course the frozen angel could be Gabriel, and hints towards a crucifixion can be

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81 Cf. “A game of chess” in Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

82 The two guns could also hint to how all the main actors seem to have “two faces”, as in the expression.

83 This is a persistent myth: the angel in question is not named.

seen at the end of the sonnet as well (the angel is “[p]in-legged on pole-hills”). The correspondences in part V are then those of posing as someone (else) and acting as someone's surrogate (cf. Christ). Moreover, we cannot be sure which ones are characters in their own right and which ones alter-egos or impostors, which underlines the process of reading and the on-going figurative negation. Ultimately, all of this can be interpreted under the heading of a loss of faith and/or a crisis of identity, which in turn could be seen as highlighted by the contrast between the rhetoric frames of part IV and part V: the unanswered philosophical (and spiritual) questions of part IV are followed by the doings of a cheating Jesus and Adam who has ended up quite far away from the Garden of Eden.

In part VI, we still meet the gentleman, here “[o]ld cock from nowheres” and Adam, but the actions become more violent, and, as Ralph Maud puts it, “the obscurity intensifies” (2003, 26). In addition, the embodiment in this part has clear sexual undertones (the “fats of midnight” blown out of “the wax's tower”, “the wound of manwax”), something that could be seen as a hint in the more univocally death-centered Sonnet V with the two-gunned Gabriel. The two sides of the same coin – Eros and Thanatos – come together here in an obscure but unmistakable manner. The speaker also hints towards writing in such a context, and part VII is an abstract statement about the task of a poet. Furthermore, the whole sonnet is in present tense, as opposed to the weakly epic mode of (most) of the previous parts.

This is taken even further in part VIII that, according to Tindall, depicts the poet's crucifixion (1962, 138) – perhaps all the other crucifixions so far (or, “crucifixions”, as Tindall calls them) have been leading up to this one. Certainly there is a strong 'I' in this sonnet, and as we can see from the table above, the action here is focused around the idea of (Christ's) sacrifice. However a curious anomaly in the otherwise sacrifice-oriented actions in this part is “unsex”, a neologism that we can only guess the meaning of; perhaps it refers to a point in time where a person ceases to be a man (or a woman) and perhaps becomes something else (as in the son of God). Furthermore, there is an important shift in time in this sonnet, turning away from the recounted events and into the modality of the speaking I's meditations: after the crucifixion, the speaker “suffer[s] the heavens children through [his] heartbeat” (*CP*, 62). Maud calls the tone in this latter part of the sonnet epiphanic (2003, 29), and sure enough, as opposed to the surrogate Adam in part V, for instance, this is a clear change indeed. The speaker steps up and

takes the center stage. The obvious question that emerges after all this is, has the speaker's sacrifice made a difference, is he now (more) permanently visible to us, the central figure we have been wanting to find, and what will happen in the two last parts?

The “resurrection in the desert” portrayed in part IX does not represent a triumphing faith: instead ambiguities prevail (see the “linen spirit” example above). The last part takes the “tale's sailor” (whoever that is) on a “Christian voyage”, but the sailor is “[a]tlaswise” and “halfway off”, suggesting that the person is still bound to this world and ambiguous about his relationship to religion. The ending is then very similar to that of “Poem on his birthday” in its take on the THE MIND IS A BODY MOVING IN SPACE metaphor. Action-wise the ending is interesting: there are active verbs, but they are taken under the creative powers of the speaker with the repeated phrasing “let x do y”. This then links the BODY MOVING IN SPACE metaphor to the A THINKER IS A MOVER AND A MANIPULATOR metaphor. The last part also seems to be void of embodied expressions, however this is only seeming: there is a pattern of hinting at phallic imagery, finally expressed more clearly in how “the worm” builds “my nest of mercies” in the “rude, red tree” in the last lines. The embodiment is thus body-external and elliptic, a parallel to the ambiguous attitude towards spirituality, “a flying garden” is sown in “her [the sea's] foam-blue channel”. An inescapable sense of regeneration is present here: perhaps not triumphing faith, but certainly something “green” in a half-spiritual context.

#### 4. The figurative mind: reinventing convention

In this chapter I will look at metaphoric coherence in poems that thematise writing in different ways: through a very literary retrospect and an intriguing use of apostrophe. I want to see how the building of this coherence creates the illusion of a mind embodying experience in words. At the same time, by focusing on the complex embodied imagery, I want to illustrate the problems with the idea of the verbalised mind in cognitive literary studies (see Introduction). The issue is much larger than what the chapter can address since it extends across genres, being especially central with the study of “mind-relevance” in cognitive narratology (see for example Herman 2003 and 2011). One of the things that has been seen as a breakthrough feature of cognitive narratology is its adaptability to different kinds of narratives due to the more flexible definition of what a narrative is: a mode of representing the felt quality of experiences, *qualia* (Fludernik 1996, Herman 2009). However as regards narrativity and mind-relevance in lyric texts, the flexibility is yet to be taken up in a larger scale.<sup>84</sup> It seems the few analyses there are do not take into account the implications of the lyric more to the narrativity (e.g. Herman 2010, Vallins 2011). Regardless, the kind of problematic modellings I am referring to in this chapter apply to more than just lyric texts.

The two problems based on the metaphoric modelling of the mind in cognitive literary studies can be summarised as follows. First of all, the way metaphoric mapping is modelled in key studies of Cognitive Metaphor Theory as well as blending theory assumes an idealised form for the process that *has* to be more complex and varied than that. The “spaces” that are treated as naturally emerging in metaphoric mapping are abstracted from a much fuzzier process than the model presents to us. Second of all, there is a tendency with some of the applications of CMT to read poetic speakers as minds that are directly linked to actual authors. (Most notably Margaret Freeman’s work, see Introduction.) These two points are closely linked as well. As I analyse three poems by Thomas that clearly create the illusion of human presence and authenticity I take a look at how the most artificial of Thomas's poetic techniques, his use of

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<sup>84</sup> Fludernik and Alber, for example, do not see the relevance of poetry as great at all in the introduction to *Postclassical Narratology* (2010), regardless of Fludernik's own ventures into this area of study (e.g. 2009). The recent anthology *The Emergence of Mind* (2011), edited by Herman, takes examples from poetry as well, but does not address any generic issues as such.

metaphor, acts as part of this illusion. The kind of mind-relevance, and emotional relevance in particular, that we find in these poems calls for a more literary and canon-aware approach than is usually present in approaches applying Cognitive Metaphor Theory.

Since self-reflexivity is such a crucial attitude to note with Thomas's poetics, I would like to take onboard a definition of lyric mimesis *by* a poet, namely Sir Philip Sidney: "Poesy [...] is an art of imitation [...], that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or **figuring forth**" ("The defence of poesy", 1989, 217, emphasis added). "Figuring forth" suggests not only something brought about in writing, but also that the medium is central, an idea encapsulated in the notion of literariness as well as in the figure/ground thinking of cognitive poetics.<sup>85</sup> It also links to Benjamin Hrushovski's model of metaphor as a frame of reference (1984) which explores metaphoric realism in poetry, as discussed in the previous chapter. However while in Chapter 3 I analysed some of the most literary and obscure of Thomas's poems, featuring poetic speakers seeming deliberately resistant to interpretation, in what follows I will be looking into poems that allow for an experiencing mind to be construed much more readily. This does not, however, mean that their figurative build-up is by any means straight-forward, as we shall see.

The treatment of these issues is divided into two main parts. First of all, I will analyse poetic speakers manipulating experience through nostalgic retrospect. To do this I will briefly discuss the foundations of Romantic metaphor. Figurative language is seen here as evidence of temporal layering, and in addition, slightly paradoxically, as a kind of a tool of distraction. The main question then is: does the reader believe the embodied past, and how is this coherence built? I argue that reading these two poems as autobiographical idealisations of childhood is too simplifying an approach. Second of all, I will look at the speakers in two poems that are usually held closest to Thomas as a poet. These speakers create a sense of spontaneity and presence in speaking to a loved one, but they also bring an artificiality into the rather tragic situation of loss by directing the speaking to a defined addressee, as well as using metaphoric patterns of expression. Poetic language then poses as a direct pathway to emotions, an everyday communication channel.

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85 See Stockwell 2002.

#### 4.1. Nostalgic retrospect: “Fern hill”

“Fern Hill”, one of Thomas's most popular poems, deals with a very resonant topic, the joys of childhood. It serves as a good example for illustrating the key problems of mental modelling in cognitive literary studies for two reasons. Firstly, the cognitive nature of the poem is highly artificial, though there is a relatable authenticity present. This is visible in the ways the experiencing 'I' and the reciting or narrating 'I' correlate in the nostalgic retrospect, and it becomes particularly evident in the use of figurative language. Very much like with Romantic poetics that is briefly discussed in this section, the frames of EXPERIENCING, TELLING and REFLECTING (Fludernik 1996) overlap precisely in the area of figurative expression: formulated in terms from Cognitive Metaphor Theory, the basic LIFE IS A STORY metaphor is treated in a very self-aware manner. This is emphasised by biblical references that feature embodiment. An important tendency in the poem seems to be creating coherence and continuity to life through verbal reminiscing, but this process is presented as something that is artificial and includes contradictions, which is a parallel to the recurring theme of the co-existence of vitality and decay in many of Thomas's poems.

Secondly, the poem is usually read autobiographically as a heart-felt description of Thomas's childhood in Wales. This is a fair enough approach, but does not take into consideration all the complexities in the poem, which is also a crucial problem with some of the applications of Cognitive Metaphor Theory that stress the importance of tracing artistic creation in texts. “Fern hill” is not all “ecchoing greens”, nor does knowing about Thomas's childhood add that much to the interpretation. Now I am not saying authorial intentions should not be discussed as such, however up until now the applications in the cognitive study of poetry have not been very convincing. For instance, as brought up in the Introduction, Margaret Freeman meticulously analyses the complex blends in Sylvia Plath's poem “The applicant” in a much quoted article (2005a), but then justifies her findings on the theme of marriage through discussing Plath's personal life. This of course is a reflection of a bigger problem in cognitive poetics: how can it succeed in being *poetics* while remaining instrumentally cognitive? It seems to me that often when convincing readings are presented within this framework they do not necessarily need the cognitive tools to say the things they say about texts.

As I take a look at the lyric retrospect of Thomas's "Fern hill", alongside a similar text, William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850), I also take a look back in terms of literary history and theory in the hope of bringing another angle to the issues with the cognitive verbalised mind. These are texts that thematise the fact that they *are* written in retrospect and highlight their own artificiality and thus divert the reader's attention from evaluative identification of a mind allegedly merely mediating some thoughts or events to us (Phelan 2005). However even if the speaker's power over the events unfolding is in focus, this does not have to automatically mean trying to answer questions like, why has the author chosen to portray a particular topic in this way, if something else was going on in reality? To me the poetics of Romantic poetry offers an intriguing insight into the matter: as omnipotent as the idea of poetic imagination was, there is a quarrel between artistic expression and a demand for authenticity that is very much reminiscent of Thomas's poetics, particularly in "Fern hill".

According to Paul de Man, literary history can be seen from the viewpoint of the evolution of figurative language: shifts in terminological debates can help to characterise periods of literary history. (1984, 1–2.) The tension between established conventions and the desire to rename things through imagination characterises the poetics of Romanticism (ibid., 3). Questioning the very definitions of things but never reaching the core of them through language is close to the "womb of war" of Thomas's imagery as well. The poetic method is arguably estranging, but still the power of evoking experience through quasi-perceptual images is there, following Paul Ricoeur's (1978) argument discussed in Chapter 2. The strong emphasis on artistic creation that is present in Romanticism (and to some extent in cognitive literary studies) will not be theoretically pursued here, but the roots of the concept of imagination are in the ability to express things convincingly yet creatively, which will be visible in the imagery of a poem.

William Wordsworth argues for the illusion by insisting on "incidents and situations from common life [...] in a selection of language really used by men" in the "Preface" to his and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1984, 596–597). But since Wordsworth's poetry hardly features the use of colloquial language, the underlining of the everyday use of language here actually brings out the poetic traits instead (Doležel 1991, 80–81). As opposed to the

overwhelming nostalgia of Wordsworth's (artificial) poetic language, the language of Thomas's "Fern hill" is more explicitly directed towards an opposition between simple childhood experience and a complex reflection of it. This is also visibly thematised in the poem, whereas Wordsworth's *The Prelude* in many way tries to cover up its artificiality.

A bit further on in the "Preface" Wordsworth elaborates on the connection between imaginative creation and portraying authentic experience: the goal of the poems was "[...] to make these incidents and situations **interesting** by tracing in them [...] the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we **associate ideas in a state of excitement.**" (1984, 597, emphasis added.) The words "interesting" and "association" in this statement suggest a very conscious approach, but authenticity is still insisted on. Spontaneous excitement and making experience interesting are not seen as contradictory here, but there of course is an inescapable collision. Paul de Man summarises the point:

At times, romantic thought and romantic poetry seem to come so close to giving in completely to the nostalgia for the object that it becomes difficult to distinguish between object and image, between imagination and perception, between expressive or constitutive and mimetic and literal language." (de Man 1984, 7.)

The problem is basically the same that is at work with merging metaphor and thought in cognitive literary studies, though Lakoff and Turner would probably call de Man's characterisation evidence for the fundamental mechanisms of conceptual metaphor.<sup>86</sup> However no matter how fundamental the processes might be in a cultural sense, the tension with the poetic illusion remains.

With this illusion in mind, an important concept in Romantic poetics is the *sublime*.<sup>87</sup> It is typical of the Romantic sublime to perceive natural phenomena such as mountains or the like as evidence of something greater in existence: nature is seen as a holy place. The term is fundamentally cognitive, of course; to Kant it is mental movement in which imagination is

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86 In a recent article, David Vallins (2011) approaches the topic from the point of view of cognitive narratology, treating *The Prelude* first and foremost as a narrative, but does not really add much to e.g. de Man's (who he does not refer to) much earlier insights; no specific (new) tools for approaching the mind are used.

87 The sublime refers to an experience evoked by (for instance) nature where infinity or divinity are suddenly "realised", leading to feelings of confusion and even fear. In its most simple form this can mean experiencing holiness in nature. (See e.g. Levin 1988, 219.)

directed towards a certain target, and Samuel Levin specifies the sublime as “[...] a human attribute, [...] not a manifestation of nature.” (1988, 219.) René Wellek points out the obvious fact that reading nature like this through imagination makes the perceiver see things that cannot be seen as such (1963, 179). In fact, Levin describes Wordsworth’s sublime as overwhelmingly conceptual, “[t]he welding of man and nature into an idea of organic and mutually inspiring relatedness” (1988, 235). Thus the metaphoricity that stems from this view is as artificial as ever, and creates a persuasive frame of interpretation for a poem. The central question here then seems to be: since the problems of mediation are well known, why not just give into the fictionalisation of experience in the reading process? The question is, of course, one that was already raised in Chapter 3, though from another angle: the mythologising of experience through building correspondences between borrowed adventures.

As regards this constructed reality, Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as “[e]motion recollected in tranquillity” (1984, 611) adds a necessary dimension to the authenticity debate. de Man summarises the point: “‘Tranquillity’, it seems, is the right balance between the literal and the symbolic vision, a balance reflected in a harmonious proportion between mimetic and symbolic language in the diction of a poem.” (1984, 132.) Thus the 'natural' figurativeness of Romantic poetry does not mean the use of everyday language, but more like 'naturally' emerging poetic form. A poem is then like a living organism as a parallel to the system of nature (cf. embodiment in cognitive theory).<sup>88</sup> However, in contrast to this notion, very often the embodied lyric experience is fragmented (cf. Thomas’s “tumbledown language”), which must be noted in a reading seeking coherence.<sup>89</sup> Now “Fern hill” and *The Prelude* clearly paint artificial pictures of the past, so how should the reader believe in their reality?

The very space of tranquillity creates (seeming) coherence in Romantic poetry. James Engell writes:

[...] it becomes the resolving and unifying force of all antitheses and contradictions. It reconciles and identifies man with nature, [...] the internal mind and the external world [...]. It relates the static to the

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88 In addition, a key link to cognitive narratology here is in the field of emotionology which deals with a catalogue of learned patterns for conceptualising emotions and how this patterning serves as an aid in interpreting a text (Herman 2007, see also Hogan 2003). However such research does not really extend to the study of poetry as yet, although see Kövecses 2000 and 2008.

89 Though fragmentariness is often seen as a quality of postmodern texts, it of course exists in other poetics as well (cf. McHale 2004).

dynamic, passive to active, ideal to real, and universal to particular. (1981, 8.)

In a way imagination functions as a tool for bringing abstract things onto a human scale. Nature provides basic metaphors for processes of the human mind, a theme that is recurring in Thomas's poems: "Thomas's poetry, like that of the Romantics, is much concerned with creation and origins, and hence with conception, birth and infancy. [...] The narrative mirrors the process it describes [...]" (Crehan 2001, 55). Though there is again terminological inaccuracy here (loose use of the term narrative), I would still call this a good summary of what is at stake in "Fern hill", as well as *The Prelude*. The LIFE IS A STORY metaphor is met in literary form in ways that merge but also contradict, as a parallel to the dynamics of experience. At the same time these tools at work create a sense of estrangement, which adds another layer to the natural, "organic" form.

According to Paul de Man, the poetics of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* lies heavily on the connotations invoked by the expressions "face" and "eye": "Language originates with the ability of the eye to establish the contour, the borderline, the surface [cf. face] which allows things to exist in the identity of the kinship of their distinction from other things" (1984, 91). The kind of mental categorisation at work here is closely related to embodiment in blending. Thus Wordsworth's sublime is not as symbolic as for instance Samuel Taylor Coleridge's, but the poetics arise from conceptualising through a human scale. In some sense this actually links to Wordsworth's goal of making use of "language really used by men". Thomas's embodying imagery obviously builds on the human scale too.

With regard to the sublime, the previously discussed "Poem on his birthday", for example, is hardly a manifestation of pantheism. However in the other birthday poems the approach is much more positive ("Fern hill" can be seen as part of them). For instance in "Poem in October" the speaker clearly projects a child's faith onto the visible scene: "And the mystery / Sang alive / Still in the water and singingbirds" (*CP*, 88). Nature, holiness and perception are intertwined in metaphors like "legends of the green chapels". The merging becomes even more explicit in context:

[...] but the weather turned around.

[...]

And I **saw** in the turning so clearly a child's  
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother  
Through the parables  
Of sun light  
And the legends of the green chapels  
(*CP*, 87–88, emphasis added).

Nature is, then, a chapel and the sun lights the day like a parable in a biblical, enlightening sense. There are two layers here, of course: the enlightening effect is in seeing such an experience in retrospect, from the present of speaking. The main frame is metaphoric perception: these things are *seen* in nature, portrayed from a viewpoint that brings to mind an epiphany (cf. “parables of sun light”).

As a simplifying summary we could say that since pure, unmediated vision is impossible anyway, Romantic poetry diverts the focus to the outright merging of perception and retrospect (de Man 1984, 7–8). This might be interesting to cognitively oriented literary critics who wish to study poetic creation, but it is also such a prominent theme in the poems themselves that it seems to undermine any simple cognitive ideas of mediation as well. This brings to mind Sidney’s definition of mimesis as “figuring forth”. Although Wordsworth is in many ways less obvious than Thomas, coherence is still constructed, forced even, in *The Prelude*: “Imagination / here the Power so called / Through sad incompetence of human speech / That awful Power rose from the Mind’s abyss” (VI, 593–595, 1984, 463). It is interesting how the intentional concept of adding interest as outlined in the “Preface” is here camouflaged by mystifying the process artistic creation.

Now even if the main method of Romantic retrospect is the kind of merging described above, Paul de Man points out that Wordsworth does not try to shy away from contradictions: this is particularly evident with the narrative structure of *The Prelude* (1984, 14). This of course is an important link between Wordsworth’s and Thomas’s poetics. The analogy of man and nature is deliberately broken at times, but the poetic illusion stays intact:

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, Ye Cliffs  
And Islands of Winander! [...]  
And there, [...]

[...] he, as through an instrument,  
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls  
 That they might answer him. [...]  
 Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he **hung**  
**Listening**, a gentle shock of mild surprize  
 Has carried far into his heart the voice  
 Of mountain torrents; or **the visible scene**  
**Would enter unawares into his mind**  
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
 Its woods, and that **uncertain heaven**, received  
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.  
 (V, lines 366–367, 372–376, 383–390, emphasis added, 1984, 444.)

Sound and vision come together in a moment of suspicion towards the “visible scene”. The passage is artificial in how senses mix in this realisation, which leaves the reader hanging on the border of the ‘reality’ of the poem and its expression. The impression is built through very subtle contradictions. This is also true of “Fern hill”, where the contradiction, or twist, is brought in at the very end of the poem. The retrospect is similar in many ways:

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me  
 Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,  
 In the moon that is always rising,  
 Nor that riding to sleep  
 I should hear him fly with the high fields  
 And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.  
 Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
**Time held me green and dying**  
 Though I sang in my chains like the sea.  
 (CP, 135, emphasis added.)

Whereas *The Prelude* is narrative in a more traditional sense of the word, the structure of “Fern hill” is built on repetition and subtle variation. This also includes contradictions as has been defined with Thomas’s metaphoric ‘narrative’. The merging described in this section is often more visible than with Wordsworth, for instance in expressions like “under the simple stars” and “lamb white days”.

As lyric portrayals of past events, *The Prelude* and “Fern hill” share speaking ‘I’s’, childhood memories and uncertainties expressed within the frame of the retrospect. The relationship between the child and the landscape is similar in them too. In *The Prelude* the child talks with owls (who in fables personify wisdom) and the surroundings in a way know this person like he thinks he knows his surroundings. The nature is then seen as a kind of a friend or trusted one. Or, a reflection that still answers back: the “uncertain heaven”, a glimpse of the sublime in nature is reflected on the “bosom of the steady lake” in *The Prelude*. Though the vision is precisely a glimpse, the lake is still steady and close to the child, like a person (“bosom”). The sound that creates the uncertainty is distant too and speaks directly to the child: “a gentle shock of mild surprize / Has carried far **into his heart** the voice / Of mountain torrents”. Water signifies something holy or abstract in “Fern hill” as well: “And the sabbath rang slowly / In the pebbles of the holy streams. // All the sun long it was running [...]” (*CP*, 134). However at this point in the poem there are no uncertainties relatable to *The Prelude* passage quoted.

Further along in *The Prelude* the uncertainty grows and it starts to show more clearly in the diction as well. The sublime seems to be evoked through a horror that rises from certain contradictions:

[...] The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And in the narrow rent at every turn  
Wind thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
[...] the sick sight  
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
[...]  
Were all like workings of one mind, [...]  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity  
[...] (VI, lines 625–630, 633–640, 1984, 464.)

Opposites can co-exist in the mind through a symbolic merging, “the types and symbols of

Eternity". This kind of abstract simultaneity is often present in Thomas's poetry as well, for instance in "From love's first fever to her plague" that activates basic biblical metaphors: "All world was one, one windy nothing / My world was christened in a stream of milk. / And earth and sky were as one airy hill, / The sun and moon shed one white light." (CP, 21.) Whereas here the void preceding creation is an analogy to human birth, Wordsworth's idyllic nature landscape turns into an apocalyptic scene.

The question that arises is of course: why should this kind of rupture occur, if the poem strives towards a nostalgic portrayal of the past? Paul de Man argues that hereabouts in *The Prelude* the reader is forced to focus on the narration itself as a divertive trick. This is because of the content mediated: the party is on a trip crossing the Alps, but here they have realised they have already crossed the Alps without noticing it (1984, 56–57). This realisation is followed by high-flying pondering about the "visible scene" (lines 593–617). Thus missing the opportunity to reach a sublime experience (on top of the mountain) is such a loss that the speaker turns away from the visible scene, slightly paradoxically. He turns to his imagination, and suddenly "sees" the apocalypse in nature.<sup>90</sup> There is a similar moment of realisation in "Fern hill", where at night the child (in the speaker's words) suddenly understands something of equal significance: "And then to awake [...]: it was all / Shining, it was Adam and maiden, / The sky gathered again [...]" (CP, 134). Turning away from a simplistic form of looking back and into a very complex, abstract discourse is an intriguing twist to the merging at work in bringing things onto a human scale, especially since there is supposed to be the illusion of a child's perspective. Thomas creates a mix here: there are childlike wordings ("it was all / Shining") and then a phrase like "[t]he sky gathered again". Of course this could be naturalised as a child repeating phrases he has heard from adults, but more generally I think this links to what Geoffrey H. Hartman writes about *The Prelude*: "[...] memory is creative rather than nostalgic: still sensitive to a past that can modify and even reverse a present state of mind." (1975, 127.) The twist at the end of the poem seems to emphasise this.

From a traditionally narrative point of view "Fern hill" is fragmentary and presents events from the speaker's childhood without any significant temporal progression or causality. On the

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90 The surprising apostrophe distracts the reader from the fact that according to conventions, there should be horror of the *motivated* sublime here. Instead "Eternity" and "Apocalypse" are "seen" in the scene. Cf. "Oh Heavens! how awful is the might of souls, / And what they do within themselves while yet / The yoke of earth is new to them, the world / Nothing but a wild field where they were sown." (III, lines 180–183.)

other hand the events presented are very vivid and detailed. Here I shall not discuss the kind of narrativity found in Thomas's poems in detail, it will be taken up in Chapter 5, but there is another kind of progression present in the poem, one that I would call metaphoric coherence towards the figurative climax at the end of the poem. As has already been implied, “time held me green and dying” does not fit with an idyllic description of childhood, nor can it be simply justified with a similar missing of a moment as in *The Prelude*. One cannot find a simple motivation for this from Thomas's biography, for example there was no particular loss in the family. If the poem is mediating the author's mental processes then this cryptic metaphor is a definite rupture in the poem's easily identifiable experientiality.

However when we look at the poem's imagery in more detail we can see that there is a subtle build-up towards this. The progression of the poem is constructed through a set of images relating to the viewpoint of the speaker. There are two main “filters”: one where youth is presented as green, linking man with nature, and another where the effect of remembering brings a golden light onto the past. These two frames mix as well. Here I have abstracted the repetitive patterns from the poem, moving towards the twist at the end:

<b>green (youth, nature)</b>	<b>mixed</b>	<b>golden (nostalgia, retrospect)</b>
happy as the grass was green		Golden in the heydays of his [time's] eyes
And as I was green and carefree		Golden in the mercy of his [time's] means
	And green and golden I [...]	
	fire green as grass	
the whinnying green stable		
	Before the children green and golden / Follow him [time] out of grace	
Time held me green and dying		

The expressions are in the order they occur in the poem, and what can be seen at first glance is that the nostalgic golden expressions do not appear near the end of the poem. Instead the green and golden frames are mixed halfway through in natural images. The categories here rely on basic conceptual metaphors: green links to nature but also to youth through the

personifying metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, and gold also links to youth through TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY. It is striking how explicit the use of the basic metaphors is, unlike in *The Prelude* which nevertheless features similar attitudes. A closer look at the creative use of these schemata shows how things are not so golden towards the end, the nostalgia frame is first alongside greenness and then completely gone by the time the speaker says: “Time held me green and dying”. The point explicated here is a very typical one in Thomas’s poetry: decay is emphasised to be within the human body right from the beginning, which links to the Fall. But here this morbid view is brought into childhood where it normally of course does not exist (in a child’s mind that is); childhood is conventionally a carefree time.

Stewart Crehan claims that the poem’s nostalgia does not project adult problems onto a child’s reality in any forced way, but that the scene is sort of re-enacted with this reality in mind (2001, 62). This in my view is quite different from Wordsworth's Romantic notion of adding interest into real events, even though the principle of merging is similar. Crehan's statement is supported by the fact that the twist at the end *is* surprising at first. However I would rather say that the merging is done in such a cunning way that the retrospect that is clearly constructed gives way to an empathetic reading. One particular way in which this is done is by personifying time, presenting the passing of time as someone who allows things to happen – it is as if there is an adult watching over the child. The way this personified time is presented changes with the tone changes in the imagery as well: first time allows and lets things happen, later time leads astray and holds the speaker captive. Re-reading the early lines “Time let me play and be / Golden in the mercy of his means” shows the different layers of the reading process well: at first the interpretation is closer to time allowing things, later the emphasis is more on the word “mercy” in the sense of being under the power of someone or something who then has mercy on you in allowing things as “exceptions”.

Another layer in this metaphoric progression is the use of biblical references. In a key stanza, stanza four, the child is told to suddenly understand something of great significance: “And then to awake [...]: it was all / Shining, it was Adam and maiden, / The sky gathered again [...]” (CP, 134). This is a rupture to the mimetic illusion as was already mentioned before. Phrases like “[t]he sky gathered again”, “simple light” and “first, spinning place” are of course references to the myth of creation in the Bible, and suddenly realising something

related to “Adam and maiden” could refer specifically to the original sin, Adam and Eve's realisation of their mortality, bodiliness. Therefore this moment could be naturalised as an important moment in growing up. This interpretation is supported by other expressions in this stanza that feature some kind of change or transition: “awake”, “come back”, “the sun grew round”, “horses walking [...] / Out of the whinnying green stable / On to the fields of praise”. As was already established, the myth of creation can be seen as a common schema and therefore part of a child's understanding as well, but on the other hand the way the allusion is presented highlights the role of interpretation and a more complex degree of organisation.

Significantly this is also one of the places where the flow of the poem is broken slightly, with the enjambement “it was all / Shining”. There are also several other places where the TELLING frame is highlighted in one way or another. Moreover, these places deal with the concept of time, which emphasises the narrativising LIFE IS A STORY metaphor, creating temporal links and coherence. The lines “the sabbath rang slowly / In the pebbles of the holy streams” feature the speaking I's projection – childhood as something pure and the setting Eden-like – but at the same time the description of time passing by slowly is still within the experiencing child's realm. The expression “once below a time” is a typical one for Thomas: including an estranging twist to a conventional expression but still contributing to the progression of the poem. The evoked fairytale frame links to the child's world, whereas the pun emphasises the recounting of the speaker. The lines “Nothing I cared [...] that time would take me / Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand” summarise the overlapping of the frames: a literal childhood experience of something exciting, maybe forbidden, mixes with the metaphorical meaning of time, adulthood and loss of innocence looming over the idyll. Even a simple metaphor like “house high hay” contains the two I's: from a child's perspective the hay is really high, but at the same time this is a very poetic expression repeated on many occasions with the alliteration.

These overlappings create a feeling of having to switch between two text worlds (or, in Romantic terms between the natural world as seen through the power of imagination and a more naturalistic view) – a point of which Peter Stockwell has written with reference to another poem by Thomas (2009b), “And death shall have no dominion”, and one that becomes increasingly important in the next chapter. As discussed in Chapter 3, in Paul Werth's

definition (1999), text world is a cognitive structure, a mental stage onto which the events of a text are placed. However even though the subject matter, the identifiable main events of the poem, are within the child's world, the controlling text world is the speaker's 'now' – in cognitive terms some features in a text always functions as attractors that resonate with the reader's readerly skills. The way the frames of nostalgia and pastoral idyll are used direct the reader into noticing the switches and thus seeing the remembering of the past as something reconstructed, something highly literary.

## 4.2. Testimonies: “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Elegy”

Thomas included a comment, a mini-parable, in the author's foreword to his *Collected Poems* that has (mis)guided many readers of his poetry:

I read somewhere of a shepherd who, when asked why he made, from within fairy rings, ritual observances to the moon to protect his flocks, replied: "I'd be a damn' fool if I didn't!" These poems, with all their crudities, doubts, and confusions, are written for the love of Man and in praise of God, and I'd be a damn' fool if they weren't.

As we have seen, Thomas's poetics of embodiment has its origins in the biblical myths of creation and the Fall, and many other stories in the Bible play an important role in his poetry as well. However I have already made the point that the Bible is not so much an ideological backbone of Thomas's poems as it is a fictive *intertext*. Thomas's tongue-in-cheek use of parable in the foreword clearly points to this direction, and yet it has been read as a serious credo by many. In addition, as Thomas emphasised himself, these biblical myths are schematic commonplaces and thus serve as *material* for poetic defamiliarisation. However such a powerful statement as the one in the author's foreword understandably directs into biographical readings wherever such a possibility is available. In this section I will look at poems that offer not only an opportunity for a more personalised interpretation, but also a chance to evaluate this particular credo as an ideological signpost.

These poems deal with death, a topic understandably inducing emotive responses and spiritual musings. Death is a recurring theme in Thomas's poetry, and as I have argued, Thomas's way of dealing with the topic – as part of the cycle of life theme – is naturalising, gruesome and complex all at once. Thus a reading in which embodiment simply brings abstract, difficult matters closer to home is clearly inadequate. However, in the later poems we encounter a few instances of more direct and intimate address that are traditionally interpreted quite straightforwardly in the context of Thomas's biography: Thomas's father died of illness when the poet was thirty-eight years old (only a year before his own death). Two poems that are usually directly linked to the father's death are “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Elegy”: they both address a father figure. I shall not go into the details of Thomas's personal life at the time of writing these poems, but it is of course relevant to make a note of the circumstances when discussing the more personalised mode of speaking in these poems.

It is also noteworthy that “Do not go gentle into the good night”, along with “Fern hill”, is considered to be among Thomas's most successful poems, if not the most successful one. The passion and strong emotional tension in the poem has resonated with readers in an entirely different way than is the case with Thomas's other, more obscure poems.<sup>91</sup> However, as with “Fern hill”, there is more than meets the eye to the experientiality of this poem. This is suggested by the metaphoric expressions that reflect the speaker's stand. My main argument in this section is that however authentic the voice of the grieving poet, there is a distinct tone of artistic self-awareness that comes through in the interplay of *apostrophe* and metaphors. The kind of metaphoric play we find in “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Elegy” corresponds with Thomas's lyric narrative's constructedness even if the poems seem unusually direct. The view that a person's consciousness, here arguably Thomas's, is somehow simply mediated in the poetic expression of feelings proves to be problematic.

The core of the issue can be related to the dual effect of *apostrophe*, as described by Jonathan Culler (1983): *apostrophe* creates an illusion of immediacy and spontaneity in the discourse of a poem, but at the same time it necessarily brings about a highly artificial tone to the discourse. This is because the time of events is put on hold and the present of speaking

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<sup>91</sup> The poem is often used in obituaries in the English speaking world, and has also featured in different kinds of emotional contexts in popular culture.

becomes the focus of attention. In my mind, focusing solely on the “what-it’s-likeness”<sup>92</sup> in reading a literary text from a cognitive point of view would be like foregrounding the immediacy effect of apostrophe and not noticing its artificiality, and this would be a serious simplification even with the most straight-forward of Thomas's poems. Here especially the biographical tradition of Thomas criticism proves to be both an aid and a pitfall: the intimate tone in “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Elegy” clearly stems from a personal tragedy, but the way grief unfolds in the poems is not as simple as that.

As Ralph Maud (among other critics) has pointed out, the main message in “Do not go gentle into that good night”, the plea to the dying father to “rage, rage against the dying of the light”, is conflicted by Thomas's insistence that his father never see the poem (2003, 79). Why would he not want his father to receive this heart-felt appeal? Maud concludes that the poem must have been meant for the grieving poet himself as “[...] one does not preach to one's father.” (Ibid.) However Maud does not discuss how exactly the poet addresses himself in the poem: if he is not trying to convince someone, why the iterative metaphoric patterns for instance? Or, if the poet is trying to convince himself, why is that not more obviously hinted at? Indeed our schematic knowledge of grief tells us that most of the rituals associated to the death of a loved one (at least in the Western world) are, at the end of the day, primarily for the people grieving, not the person who has died or is dying. Still, any public expression of grief is a message that has to be interpreted, and in a literary context it is hard to conceive of a message meant solely for therapeutical purposes.

Nevertheless, the personally charged emotive content of “Do not go gentle into that good night” is evident, and to me it seems very interesting how and why the poet of complex metaphors all of sudden speaks in a more direct manner. Or does he? A closer look at the metaphoric frame, in conjunction with the rhetorical structure of the poem, will help with answering the question. There are three initial observations that guide the way: 1) The poem has a rhyme scheme that does not contain any surprises<sup>93</sup>, plus an overall symmetrical structure, 2) the poem's metaphors are quite conventional, even banal, and 3) the identity of the addressee is only revealed at the end of the poem – until then the discourse remains on a

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92 Qualia, see Herman 2009.

93 However the choice of form is a little bit striking in a literary historical sense: it is written as a *villanelle*, a form typically used for light-toned poems.

rather general level. Similarly to “Fern hill”, the poem builds up to an ending that shifts the reading in progress into another angle.

For a reader who is familiar with the poem it would be tempting to characterise it as inviting the reader's emotional identification from the first line on, but the poem is not quite this straight-forward in its (cognitive) build-up. It opens with the plea already mentioned:

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
(*CP*, 148.)

After this the speaker moves on to describe how wise, good, wild and grave men meet death. The apostrophe is then rather vague before the very last stanza, and the line “[o]ld age should burn and rave at close of day” seems much like an impersonal generalisation at this point. The rhetorical structure of “giving evidence” to convince the addressee of the argument turns out to be quite unconvincing as well. Wise men know “dark is right” as “their words had forked no lightning”, they have not said anything of great (illuminating) importance during their lifetimes; good men's good deeds “might have danced in a green bay”<sup>94</sup>; wild men enjoyed adventures but learned they were still too aware of it all ending; grave men, serious and already buried, “see with blinding sight” what could have been. How are these examples supposed to make the addressee believe life is worth living to the fullest until the very end? In fact it almost seems like it is *not* the goal at this point: the rhetoric of persuasion is too reminiscent of simplified text book examples.

Furthermore, the metaphoric dualism of light and darkness seems rather flat at first glance. The metonymy<sup>95</sup> “old age” is set to pose as any old person and the use of the verbs “burn” and “rave” blend light as the flame of life into the reference. Light is present as the implicit

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94 There are clear echoes of John Donne here; in “A valediction: forbidding mourning” Donne writes, “As virtuous men pass mildly away, / And whisper to their souls to go, / Whilst some of their sad friends do say, / 'Now his breath goes,' and some say, 'No.'” (1992, 31.)

95 Metonymy is a somewhat problematic concept within the cognitive metaphor theory and has not been addressed by many so far. Turner simply states that in the blended space the comparisons made can be metonymic (1996, 83). See Kövecses 2002. The thesis cannot explore the issue at length, but certainly the partiality structure inherent to metonymy is very relevant with the impaired embodiment of *Under Milk Wood* (section 5.2.).

antonym of “night”, as well as in “day”, and in the third line it is made active with the verb “die”. This is a classic case of adding dynamics to a static, abstract thing (see Lakoff & Turner 1989, 29). The conventionality of the comparison of day and daylight to human life is, of course, very obvious. It goes all the way back to Aristotle's metaphor discussion: “As old age (D) is to life (C), so is evening (B) to day (A). One will accordingly describe evening (B) as the ‘old age of the day’ (D + a) [...] and old age (D) as the ‘evening’ or ‘sunset of life’ (B + C).” (1968,1457B.) There is a slight twist to the metaphor though: the personified image of light dying is almost like a comment to tradition as the use of the verb is so underlining of the conventional meaning of the metaphor. In Lakoff and Turner's terms such a twist could be called elaboration of a basic metaphor, but the fact remains that the metaphor is still quite banal and makes one wonder if it is meant to seem that way: a reader of Thomas's poetry expects something more challenging than that.

The metaphoric frame established in the first stanza is elaborated on in the following stanzas, and the continuity is very evident throughout. The failure of the wise men is described as forking “no lightning”, the good men's pointless good deeds are “bright”, the wild men's adventures are portrayed as catching and singing “the sun in flight”, and the grave men “see with blinding sight / Blind eyes could blaze like meteors”. All of these stanzas end with either of the imperatives from the first stanza, “[d]o not go gentle into that good night” or “[r]age, rage against the dying of the light”. The rhyme scheme brings together the key words of this metaphoric frame, “bright”, “night”, “light” and so on. Paralleling the opposites of the frame through rhyming only adds up to the already mentioned feeling of the rhetoric being a bit too familiar. What is created through the form and sound-patterning though is a passionate rhythm suitable for trying to convince someone.

Another highly conventional basic metaphor that is played with here (as with “Poem in October”, for instance, and the radio play *Under Milk Wood*) is UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING: grave men seeing “with blinding sight” how blind eyes *could* light up close to death is a more typical metaphor by Thomas as it contains many (seeming) layers of contradiction. The realisation that not understanding everything does not have to prevent one from enjoying life is bright as an epiphany, only it is too late for the “grave men” of course. Such useless belated epiphanies are at the heart of the poem's rhetoric. They negate a potential over and over again,

much like the use of the conventional metaphors: they do not bring about any new layers of meaning but repeat associations that are rather fixed. This is further reflected in the metaphor “good night”: death is seen as positive (though not by the speaker, obviously), possibly a relief, which is of course a belief shared by many religions. Perhaps the metaphor hints at the downsides of such religiousness: putting one's thoughts and hopes into the after-life can prevent one from living in the moment, enjoying the life one still has left. At the same time the metaphor playfully refers to the phrase used by people in their everyday discourse, possibly suggesting a child-like frame of mind, or a casual air perhaps. At any rate the despair and bitterness of the speaker comes through in the expressions linked to the metaphoric frame.

The interpretation of a desperate plea for recognising this life's worth is backed up by the last stanza in which the rhetoric of the poem reaches another level. The apostrophe is personalised:

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
(*CP*, 148.)

The ending achieves a symmetry into the whole poem's structure: the apostrophe of the beginning with the personified light is repeated at the end. There are, however, two crucial differences. First of all, the middle line from the first stanza, the one that seemed to be rather like a piece of generalised knowledge, is omitted. Second of all, the passionate, almost preaching rhythm of the poem is slowed down with the full stops at the end of each repeated line. The winding down is evident in Thomas's own reading of the poem as well.<sup>96</sup> This could be taken as an indication of resignation, like a request which the person asking knows is not going to be fulfilled. The speaker's despair is especially clear in the line “[c]urse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.” The father's tears would be a blessing and a curse all at once: they would show he does not want to leave this life, that he wants to hold on, but he would then break down and show his sadness to the son who already faces the burden of

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. for instance *Dylan Thomas: The Caedmon CD Collection* (2004).

dealing with loss. Using the expression “fierce tears” is a poetic way of delivering this raw message: the assonance is soft and pleasing, but the meaning, desparation over dying and leaving your loved ones, is deeply saddening.

Another anomaly in the last stanza is that it has four lines instead of three like the previous stanzas. This seems to emphasise that something is *added* at the end: the speaker brings in explicit personal sentiment. All of the points mentioned add up to a significant difference in the rhetoric of the poem: if the rhythm and the previously occurred impersonal apostrophe created a passionate, preaching tone, there is no sign of it at the end. The final, very moving despair is foregrounded by the unconvincing proof for the initial argument, but this reading is only fully realised in the small details. The flatness of the metaphoric expressions makes sense in the light of this subtle portrayal of emotion: when a personal tragedy like this occurs, all of the beautiful words in the world will not make a difference, in the end they have “forked no lightning”. Still the truth of life's worth is in words communicated to a person held very dear.

Let me now reconsider the initial contextual problem of Thomas not wanting his father to see the poem. If Ralph Maud, and along with him many other critics, is right, then Thomas tries to persuade himself in the poem that words *can* make a difference and that it is never too late. However the slowly and very subtly built resignation and the less than brilliant argumentation that takes up a large part of the poem seem like unnecessary distractions with this interpretation. In my view describing and emphasising the carefully constructed rhetoric does not undermine an experientially focused reading but has to be part of it. If we simply say that the (implied) author's message is that he (or/as well as his father) should seize the day, then we are ignoring how the banal metaphors of the poem argue against such a possibility.

Furthermore, why would the backing up of such a message be so contradictory? Maud sees this as a way for Thomas to get rid of the anger caused by remorse and disappointment related to his own life. However if we naturalise the speaker's mind to be Thomas's, why does he then use apostrophe at all? To me the distancing effect apostrophe provides is the key here. It seems to draw the addressed person, and the issue at hand, close but in fact it draws the attention to the speaker and the speaking itself. Consequently, if the speaker was simply

Thomas then surely he would have the means to present his emotions, and case, lucidly and convincingly. The striking thing is that the speaker does not seem to be able to do this until at the very end. The fact that the poem leads so subtly towards such an outcome suggests there has to be *yet another* level of organisation present, whether we call it impersonal voice, auto-poetic layer of narrativity or implied author: the speaker is too overwhelmed.

The issue can be further investigated by contrasting “Do not go gentle into that good night” with “Elegy” which was written in the same vein of emotion but *after* the death of Thomas's father. Ralph Maud writes: “The earlier poem was a conspiracy with the father to blast the universe. This one is a record of love.” (2003, 86.) Now I have already argued that such a positive reading of “Do not go gentle into that good night” is somewhat one-eyed, but calling “Elegy” a record of love is too simplifying as well. Sure enough, the interpretation that seems to emerge most naturally is that this poem is about how you *can* go gentle into the night, showing a grieving Thomas having come to terms with the loss as well as his own mortality. However there are metaphoric expressions in the poem that suggest an unresolved pain and an undecidedness. In many ways the poem can be said to elaborate and even comment on the emotional issues of “Do not go gentle into that good night”. Analysing these overlappings will help to form a more whole picture of grief and loss than reading the poems from the factual centre of what was about to happen or had happened. In addition, links to the other elegies Thomas wrote serve as an interpretive aid.

In fact the elegiac tone of “Elegy” resembles that of “After the funeral” quite remarkably. The poem opens:

Too proud to die, broken and blind he died  
The darkest way, and did not turn away,  
A cold, kind man brave in his burning pride

On that darkest day. [...]  
(CP, 155.)

In “After the funeral” the mourning speaker says: “She would not have me sinking in the holy / Flood of her heart's fame; she would lie dumb and deep / And need no druid of her

broken body.” (CP, 73.) It is clear that in “After the funeral” the poet-speaker is singing in Ann Jones's praise regardless of this acknowledgment, the artistic impression is fairly evident as was established in Chapter 3, but why is the dead person in “Elegy” portrayed as proud but *cold*, if it is indeed Thomas's father, a much closer figure than his aunt Ann? I think another parallel between the poems provides a clue: the embodied space (and time) of mourning. In “After the funeral”, the scene is “a fiercely mourning house in a crooked year”, and in “Elegy” the speaker muses “in the crouching room, by his blind bed, / In the muted house”. This deformed variety of embodied imagery becomes increasingly central in Thomas's later works, a tendency I will discuss in the next chapter in more detail – but suffice to say here that these metaphors communicate an estrangement and a distance rather than a consoling “human-sized” idea of loss. In their negation of a flawless human condition they alienate the speaker from the events at hand: usually in elegies the deceased person is talked of in a praising, idealised tone. Therefore these unflattering images seem to negate an acceptance of death and a whole-hearted embracing of grief. Such a speaker will also describe his late father in an elegy as cold.<sup>97</sup>

However a notable difference between “After the funeral” and “Elegy” is that while the former explicitly counts on the power of words with remembrance and respecting human life and is against religion due to its restricting role in that life, “Elegy” portrays no attempts for explicit artistry<sup>98</sup> and seems to be almost religious in tone. This is where “Do not go gentle into that good night” proves to be a useful parallel as well. Has the despondent speaker who forbade his father from going quietly into “that good night” found peace in seeing his father off to a better place? Is Maud's reading of Thomas right: that the raging and despair over his father giving up has softened into a declaration of love, possibly due to him giving the God-hating man<sup>99</sup> into the hands of God? The mode of speaking is very different, that is for sure, but the religiousness of “Elegy” – and along with it the acceptance of death due to faith – is in fact only seeming.

The description of the father as “brave in his burning pride” relates to the insistence that “old

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97 Arguably a possible reading of “cold” here could be *concretely* cold, referring to the dead body. However the stanza is written in past tense throughout, making the metaphoric interpretation of “cold” more compelling.

98 The same is true of “Do not go gentle into that good night”, as was established in the analysis of the flatness of the rhetoric.

99 On Thomas's father's atheism see for example Maud 2003, 79.

age should burn and rave at close of day” in “Do not go gentle into that good night”. Even though the verb connects the two lines and perhaps first prompts the interpretation that he did in fact burn and rave in the end, the phrase “burning pride” as a metaphor in its own right reminds us of the fact that in the present of that poem he *was* too proud to bless or curse the son with his “fierce tears”. Moreover, the next line, separated from the previous one with an enjambement from one stanza to another, situates the burning pride on “that darkest day”. Thus the “burning pride” does not light up the day, concretely the day the father died and perhaps metaphorically the life that was coming to its end in “Do not go gentle into that good night”.<sup>100</sup> Naturally such a day is dark to the one losing a dear someone, but is there now any relief in the “good night”? The speaker wishes that the father may “live lightly, at last, on the last, crossed / Hill, and there grow young, under the grass, in love”, but is he referring to heaven or not? The ambivalence of the question is obvious throughout the poem, but I would be inclined to say that there is not much conviction for a heaven to be found.

A metaphoric detail that is easily overlooked with the author-centered readings is the use of the word “blind” in different contexts in both “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Elegy”. I have already mentioned the (impaired) embodied space of mourning, but there is more to it than that. Now Thomas's letters tell us that his father went blind well before his death, something that caused further complications and grief. Because of this fact the uses of the word “blind” in “Elegy” are usually read as direct references to the father's impairment at the moment of his death. The first instance, “broken and blind he died”, seems rather straightforward for sure. However the second and third instances are more nuanced. “[B]lind and unblest” adds metaphoric meaning to “blind” as with no blessing it seems to connote seeing no prospects or a truth that would link to salvation. As was analysed before, with “his blind bed”, due to the other images of embodied impaired surroundings, the effect is alienating: human qualities are transferred *outside* both the speaker and the person whose elegy the poem is supposed to be.

Moreover, the word “blind” links to “Do not go gentle into that good night” because there is strikingly much darkness in “Elegy”: the “grave men” of the former poem saw “with blinding

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<sup>100</sup> This shift also links to the spatial embodiment mentioned in conjunction with “After the funeral”: in “Do not go gentle into that good night” the father was on “a sad height” and could have cursed and blessed the son below with his “fierce tears”, but that possibility is gone in “Elegy” and is reflected in the metaphor “crouching room”, the speaker sitting by his dead father's bed and watching over him.

sight” how “[b]lind eyes could blaze like meteors”. Since light and day and burning were metaphors for life in that poem, the darkness and blindness of “Elegy” seem to suggest that the moment of such realisation as the grave men had has certainly gone.<sup>101</sup> Indeed through the faded eyes of the blind father the speaker can see “to the roots of the sea”, an ambiguous metaphor that might refer to the origins of human life. In terms of metaphoric construal this is an interesting image: the original UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor is negated in the dead father's “faded eyes”, his consciousness has stopped perceiving things, but through the significance of this very event the son understands something of great importance, which has emotional consequences as well.

Looking at more examples of the kind of ambivalence I have pointed out will show why I have come to a rather pessimistic interpretation of “Elegy”. After expressing the wish that the father would forever “live lightly”, the speaker goes on:

[...] and never lie lost  
Or still all the days of his death, though above  
All he longed all dark for his mother's breast  
  
Which was rest and dust, and in the kind ground  
The darkest justice of death, blind and unblessed.  
(*CP*, 155–156.)

*Whose* point of view the possible peace found in the after-life actually is remains strikingly unclear, and I think this kind of blurring of the minds and hopes of the speaker, the father, and his mother cannot be arbitrary but suggests a carefully constructed play with thoughts that give comfort. The first two lines are the speaker's thoughts (continued from the line that began “Oh, forever may / He [...]”). All these eloquent hopes are then strangely conflicted with the remark-like turn-around “though above / All he longed all dark for his mother's breast”. Did the father feel afraid facing his death, thus wanting his mother? This interpretation is hardly plausible as earlier the speaker has described the father as brave and not turning away at the moment of death. Was this want then characteristic of his life in general? Ralph Maud finds

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101 There are other similar instances of the use of the word “blind” elsewhere in Thomas's writings, for example in a late (also unfinished) poem “In country heaven”: “Heaven is blind and black.” (*CP*, 155.) This link, one might argue, adds to the religiously pessimistic tones of “Elegy”. “In country heaven” is a relevant association also in that it features an embodied god who identifies the failure of man as blindness of heaven.

an explanation to the line that initially “causes something of a shock” in Thomas's biography: according to a letter by Thomas, just before his death the father wanted to go to the kitchen to get soup he thought his own mother was making for him (2003, 85–86). The line would then simply be a reference to this incident.

Again here I think the biographical approach is not very helpful at all. We must note that this “shocking” line is carried onto the next stanza, as with the “burning pride”: the mother's breast the father longed for “was rest and dust”. Therefore the object of desire must be a rest that the mother had when she faced *her* death. However this rest's potential Christian significance is questioned in what follows: the ground where the body (and possibly the soul as well) remains is “kind”, and there one encounters “[t]he darkest justice of death, blind and unblessed”. Whose view is this? The syntax leaves room for interpretation: is this a continuation of “he longed”, meaning that the father wanted the “darkest justice” through death, and considered himself unblessed? Or, is it the son's view that the father was unblessed (possibly due to lack of faith, especially if we think of Thomas's actual father here), and perhaps the son might still believe in him going to a better place? Of course the word “unblessed” could be seen as an external evaluation as well, or not a literally religious term at all. Furthermore, the fact that just before this declaration the speaker has been talking about the father's mother adds to the point of view confusion. Whatever the most likely alternative might be, it is clear that ambivalence prevails here.

If, then, the forever the speaker is wishing for his father is not very likely an eternity in Christian heaven, these two ambiguous references bring in further interpretive problems:

Let him find no rest but be fathered and found,

I prayed in the crouching room [...]

[...]

Go calm to your crucified hill, I told

The air that drew away from him.

(*CP*, 156.)

The first line is extremely puzzling. What kind of rest is the speaker talking about, if it is not

included in God, father, finding the dead father? Or does the “fathering” not refer to God at all? If not, then it could be some kind of “finding” in people's minds instead – this would explain why no rest is needed as in that case his memory should live on. The reference to crucifixion is equally problematic. If the father is unblessed, why should he go to this metaphorical place? Or is it merely a reference to a graveyard? It could well be, but here again enjambement brings an important added layer to the interpretation. The last line reveals that the speaker is addressing the “air that drew away from him”, not *him* as such. This is an estranging use of address that is emphasised by the gap between the stanzas. If the place called “*your* crucifixed hill” is in fact the graveyard, then telling the “drawing air” to go there is to say do *not* rely on any possibility of a heaven to go to. If on the other hand the place is a symbol of salvation, then this telling would be in conflict with the previously stated unblessedness of the father (and if we want to refer to Thomas's biography, also in conflict with his father's conviction). And why would the speaker in this case use the possessive “*your*” instead of the definite article?

The kind of interpretive questions I have raised might seem like nitpicking, but I find that incorporating such features as enjambement or ambiguous syntax and imagery into an interpretation of *any* Thomas poem is certainly necessary. It seems to me that the resonant qualities of the personal tragedy and the more accessible lyricism in these poems have curiously distracted critics who with other Thomas poems would stress the complex and highly self-aware nature of his writing: the experiential reading comes naturally and can lead to an interpretation that is simplifying in a literary sense. A detailed analysis of technique and ambiguities does not have to undermine the resonance that *is* nevertheless obvious in these poems. An awareness of the kind of modelling we embrace in viewing the speaker's “mind” as well as the artificial qualities reflected in the rhetoric and metaphoricity are crucial.

Of course the modelling that guides my interpretation of Thomas's poems is the interconnectedness of his poems' structural build-up and the ideas behind the central thematic thread. Such modelling also relies on a construction of Thomas's poetics across his works. Another poem that can provide further enlightenment to both “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Elegy” is “Poem on his birthday”. Read alongside “Elegy” it makes one lean in the direction of a more pessimistic view of salvation. Although it is not an elegy, it talks about

death and the possibility of an after-life. I discussed the poem in detail in Chapter 3, and it was apparent this poem is one of the more complex ones by Thomas. However as regards the time of writing, it is not that far away from “Elegy”, and as I have argued I find it is important not to isolate the late, more direct and sentimental poems from Thomas's earlier work. The common ground of the poems shows especially in this “Poem on his birthday” passage:

And freely he goes lost  
In the unknown, famous light of great  
And fabulous, dear God.  
Dark is a way and light is a place,  
Heaven that never was  
Nor will be ever is always true [...]  
(CP, 145–146.)

The puzzling line “[l]et him find no rest but be fathered and found” in “Elegy” seems clearer in the light of this passage: one *loses* one's self in believing in God, which certainly does not make the wish for the dead father to be “fathered and found” seem religious at all. Furthermore, the dark journey that is life leads to a light place, but this place “never was” and yet “is always true”. This paradox makes more sense if we look at how the dark way is described in detail: the word “dark” appears three times with an increasing despair, “[d]ark is a way” turns into “dark is a long way”. This shift emphasises that the desperate darkness is all we can *experience* during our lives, while the light place is nowhere to be seen or felt – it is and is not. What is striking in “Elegy” is that “dark” is repeated in its superlative form three times: “The darkest way”, “that darkest day”, “[t]he darkest justice of death”. There can then be no further, higher degree of darkness in the speaker's evaluation: the condition is the worst possibly imaginable. The ultimate moment of accepting that there is no proof of the light place has come.

“Elegy” was the last poem Thomas wrote and is said to be unfinished (see for example Maud 2003, 86).<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, as I have shown, it has important links to many earlier poems. The impaired embodiment as well as the metaphoric frame of light and darkness I have discussed in this section are highly relevant in the more 'impersonal' elegies Thomas wrote around the

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102 A version that was “completed” by Thomas's friend and poet Vernon Watkins also exists, but there is no indication that Thomas considered the poem too incomplete to reach readers.

time of World War II. In poems like “Ceremony after a fire-raid” and “A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London” the speaker is yet again a preacher-like utterer of general truths, and the estrangement already present in the embodied impairment of “After the funeral” and “Elegy” gains much stronger emphasis in the context of the destruction of war. I shall focus on this shift as I discuss the most morbid of Thomas's death-related poems: how the possibility of going gentle into the night becomes void in a moment when “[b]eginning [crumbles] back to darkness”.

## 5. Metaphor undone: negation as (narrative) coherence

The physical foundation of spatial metaphors is more or less taken for granted in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and blending theory. However, over-emphasising the human body as the archetypal container schema can lead to the rather unhelpful notion that all spatial metaphors are necessarily embodied. Moreover, a distinction needs to be made between different types of embodiment, based on if the target in question is body-internal, body-external or neither, that is to say completely abstract (Kimmel 2008; 2011, 216). This chapter deals with embodiment from a *negative* point of view, and tries to specify the role of embodiment in mapping spatial metaphors more precisely in doing so: the main question posed is, what kind of implications might the failing of the human scale have when reading poems that take negative embodiment, or *impaired embodiment*<sup>103</sup>, as their point of departure? Are distorted forms of embodiment inevitably mapped against an intact version? How does the 'unnaturalness' of such projections relate to the resonance Lakoff and Turner (1989, 89) claim is induced in the reader when identifying conceptual metaphors?

Furthermore I shall explore how metaphoric networks of this kind can be linked to narrativity in terms of figurative negotiation: as Benjamin Biebuyck and Gunther Martens (2011) argue, the interconnectedness of figurative networks can be seen as fundamentally narrative in nature, entailing on-going interpretive negotiation as opposed to just processing pre-existing conceptual categorisations (see also Yacobi 2011). The idea is of course not new as such but has not been extensively discussed within (cognitive) literary studies as yet (although see Pettersson 2011). Indeed, Brian McHale argues that if narrative theory has taken an interest in poetry at all, it is typically without any attention to the poetry-specific elements (2009, 11) – although in McHale's own take segmentivity, not figurativity, is the key trait of poetry (to be taken into account in relation to narrativity). For example in Peter Hühn's writings (e.g. 2005) poetic form is something additional, not integral to narrativity.

The first section investigates how Dylan Thomas's so called war elegies – “Among those killed in the dawn raid was a man aged hundred”, “Ceremony after a fire-raid” and “A refusal

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103 As far as I know, there has not been any discussion about the impaired forms of embodiment in the context of literary studies – the nearest thing is narratological analyses of the impaired minds of characters or narrators.

to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London” – are characterised by a (narrative) dynamic of impaired embodiment. I argue that rather than just invoking embodied reader involvement with a negative twist, embodied metaphors perform a particular rhetorical function in these poems. The communicative weight they carry is foregrounded through the complexity of expression: embodiment creates both emotional and stylistic estrangement. With regard to this kind of negotiation and the role of embodiment within it specifically, Michael Kimmel writes:

What is cognitively effective is not always ideally captured through 'standard cognitive linguistics'. We frequently find metaphors with non-identical narrative functions, despite their instantiating the same conceptual metaphor. Likewise, image schemas are not embodied *tout court*, but invite different degrees of bodily participation by the reader. (Kimmel 2011, 197.)

The critique is directed towards approaches that tend to see all spatially oriented metaphors as embodied (see for example Lakoff & Johnson 1999), as already brought into focus, but it may also be added that the quantitative analysis of such metaphoricity is comparable to readings of poems that merely “discover” basic underlying metaphors in the text. Kimmel elaborates on the issue: “A purely quantitative analysis [...] leads us off track when we are interested in *imagistically rich and phenomenally accessible* levels of embodiment that are *felt* by the reader as a specific kind of immersive state.” (2011, 216, italics original.) Certainly my assumption with the embodiment in Thomas's war elegies is that it invokes a specific kind of immersive state, but more specifically I am interested in how the poems deliberately restrict the quality Kimmel calls “phenomenally accessible”.

The second section takes a step outside of Thomas's lyric works by analysing impaired embodiment in the radio play *Under Milk Wood*. One reason for making such a connection across genres is the chronology of Thomas's works: the war elegies as well as the many radio plays Thomas wrote are from the later years and thus contain many similar elements in terms of figurative language. This could be labelled as increased cynicism in the spirit of Blake's *Songs*: the original metaphor of man as the ultimate measure of things has changed in a way that seems irreversible. My hypothesis is, then, that this thematic shift manifests itself on the level of the construction of figurative language as well. *Under Milk Wood* also brings another layer of complexity into the cohesion that can be constructed with negative metaphoricity: the

text has two narrators who manipulate the organisation of the text world in a very self-aware, lyric manner, and the text makes explicit use of the concept of voice and its implications on the processes of association.

### 5.1. Lacunae in mapping mortality: the war elegies

In an article on the negative techniques typically found in modern poetry, Jonathan Culler discusses two powerful categories introduced by Hugo Friedrich as early as in 1956. These categories are *Entrealisierung*, meaning how imagination can transform reality by making it 'unreal', and *Entpersönlichung*, the effect of depersonalising (Friedrich 1956, 169, cited by Culler 1987, 191). The categorisation builds on the (modern) notion of a constructed consciousness at the centre of a poem, embodying varied forms of negation, and also suggesting a compelling reading strategy: “[...] the most bizarre and disconnected images can be read as signs of alienation [...] or of a breakdown of mental processes brought on by the experience in question.” (Culler 1987, 196.) This of course links to the mind-relevance and the idea of experientiality in cognitive narratology (see previous chapter). Even though the typical lyric poem (typical to Modernism) often might not have obvious narrative relevance initially, as Marjorie Perloff argues, the etymological roots of the word “narrate” go back to 'knowing', activating a link to a common convention of lyric poetry: recounting on the past in order to come to terms with the present (Perloff 1982, 413). In Thomas's war elegies, the evoking of absence and lacking is not static but dynamic, and this dynamic seems to have everything to do with how the speakers of these poems *are able to* articulate, and manipulate, a sense of loss: the focus is turned towards the consequences of war in returning to the past through a negative metaphoric pattern.

As has been brought up before, in cognitive literary approaches to poetry, a distinction between a speaker and an (implied) author is not often made when a poem contains 'arguments' of some kind<sup>104</sup>, as would be the case with these poems' very resonant topic – at

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104 See Chapter 4; I am referring to Phelan's definition of lyric texts (2005; 2007) and Margaret Freeman's take on complex blends in particular (2005a; 2005b).

least not in a sense that would extend to the 'manipulative' use of figurative language as well (cf. the A THINKER IS A MOVER AND MANIPULATOR metaphor). Namely a poet voicing the horrors of war is far from being an adequate description of what is at stake here: such an emotionological reading of the poems' imagery would be too simplifying.<sup>105</sup> Instead, as the focus of these poems is clearly in what *has happened*, that is not in present-tense action (that can be judged) as such, the network of metaphors should be treated as an additional layer of narrativity that focuses our attention on the consequences of the events. The way figurative negotiation foregrounds the reader's input (Biebuyck & Martens 2011), especially through negation, is a dynamic in itself, and it is in my reading linked to a strong poetic speaker. Ultimately, the reader is forced to build something and pull it down as a parallel to the destruction of war.

Interestingly enough, the issue is reminiscent of what Culler calls the "totalization" effect of negation in Friedrich's reading model (Culler 1987, 207). Culler writes:

Negative categories in effect empty the lyric of everything except the movement of consciousness. [...] This model makes it difficult to deal pertinently and convincingly with aspects of poems that cannot easily be explained by reference to a consciousness: sound patterns, typographic arrangements, intertextual relations. Intertextual echoes, for instance, must be translated into attitudes. [...] It is as though in operatic arias one were supposed to attend only to that which contributed to understanding of a character. (Culler 1987, 197.)

Seeing poetic means as figurations of a consciousness without enough critical input is the other side of the same coin; the mega-metaphor is a potential "totalization" too. In addition, McHale's criticism of narrative theory ignoring poetry-specific means is in the same vein of thought as well. Of course the more general problem here is defining when exactly fragments form a pattern of signifying and when coherence is imposed upon a text; as Marjorie Perloff has pointed out, what is often left of 'story' in the traditional sense in lyric poetry is mere allusions to it, typically turned inward (1982, 417). McHale's term weak narrativity (2001) captures the same kind of narrative evasiveness, also relevant to the negativity in this chapter.

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<sup>105</sup> An example of a cognitive reading of a poem that does this kind of "streamlining" is in my opinion David Herman's interpretation of Blake's "A poison tree" (2010).

From a cognitive perspective, Peter Stockwell's (2009b) analysis of the lacuna structures in "And death shall have no dominion" provide further interpretive tools: in my view, the negative patterns of progression Stockwell discovers in "And death shall have no dominion" are present in *all of Thomas's so called war elegies as well*. They reverse the mythical origin of the body, as portrayed in many of the early poems, into a symbol of disintegration and destruction. There are also differences in how the *negative embodiment* (distinctly different from disembodiment) is treated within these poems. I shall look at two of the war elegies in particular, comparing and contrasting the way in which their cynical world-view is constructed. I argue that in both "Ceremony after a fire-raid" and "A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London" (hereafter "A refusal to mourn") embodiment acts as a tool for estrangement, serving the war theme the poems express, as opposed to the usual use of bringing things closer to home, into an understandable form on the human scale. Furthermore, I suggest that while "Ceremony after a fire-raid" is resonant in its collective mode of speaking, and its grand tone, "A refusal to mourn" is more personal and introverted and as such more literary and pessimistic.

Now Stockwell lists quite a few ways in which "And death shall have no dominion" turns out to be "simultaneously assertive and destructive" (2009b, 42), all of which are relevant for the analysis of "Ceremony after a fire-raid" and "A refusal to mourn" as well. For one, there is a lot of negation on the level of the lexis, typically invoking an image and immediately negating it. In the same way there is negation in the more basic semantic value of the lexis, for example "give way" or "break down". Significantly, many of these expressions communicate removal or fracturing; qualitatively negative lexis reinforces the effect of such word choices, most notably the frequent use of the word "death". The most interesting notion, though, concerns metaphors: they create "lacuna-shaped images" in being visual but often also open-ended and abstract. (Stockwell 2009b, 37–38.) Here Stockwell argues that "world-switches" are triggered in reading, meaning instances where the 'now' of the text (or its interpretation) is interrupted by different means. The idea is based on Paul Werth's cognitive concept of text world, and is similar to Elena Semino's point about the modalities of the discourse situation in lyric texts, as discussed in section 3.2.

Although it is a bit of a simplification<sup>106</sup>, we can say that at times negation invokes modality: grammatical lacunae, activated with phrasings like “shall” and “though”, open up an alternative “reality” (Stockwell 2009b, 37–38). Formulated using terms from cognitive text world theory, shifts to modal worlds are diversions into subworlds of the text world: they are hypothetical or imagined scenarios presented within it (Gavins 2007). A special feature of these world-switches in “And death shall have no dominion” is that they are linked to the opposition of motion and stasis (Stockwell 2009b, 38). Any upward or downward movement is typically seen as a cognitive attractor, and playing with such features highlights the process of reading itself, a mechanism than has been discussed on several occasions with Thomas's poetics already, though not in these terms exactly.

Stockwell's cognitive reading model is based on the resonance created in processing a literary text; resonance refers to an intuitive readerly feeling and a sense of significance in the interpretive process (Stockwell 2009b, 27). This is obviously linked to Stockwell's earlier writings on figure and ground (for example 2002), but the model is developed further with the idea of *cognitive attractors* and their (anticipated) reception. Some of these attractors include: closeness, volume, noisiness, brightness and motion. In addition, familiarity brought about by the human scale is a prominent attractor as it evokes empathy in the reader through recognisability. (Stockwell 2009b, 30.) With regard to the war elegies, familiarity as well as motion and spatial relationships are major attractors: more specifically in how their anticipated resonance is violated through negation. Stockwell draws on the (empirical) research of various scholars, but most notably that of Kai-Uwe Carstensen, who describes the kind of attentional changes at stake with spatiality as *shifts* (the effect of motion), *zooms* (apparent changes in size), or *state changes* (a sense of newness or suddenness) (Carstensen 2007, 8). My analysis of “Ceremony after a fire-raid” and “A refusal to mourn” will focus on the interconnectedness of the two in terms of negative metaphoricity.

Before moving on to the analysis of these poems, let me exemplify some of the negative features with a poem that precedes the war elegies. The title of the poem “Foster the light”

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<sup>106</sup> Compared with the theoretical notions of apophasis, for example. See Derrida 1987; Wolosky 1987.

seems to hint at the cherishing of the miracle of creation in the spirit of “In the beginning” for example, but already the first lines conflict this expectation: “Foster the light nor veil the manshaped moon / Nor weather winds that blow not down the bone [...]” (*CP*, 50). Now in terms of grammar, “nor” should be complemented with “neither”, however the lines remain perfectly understandable even though “neither” is omitted here. The grammatical anomaly highlights the content of the lines: man should not foster the light, the moon should be seen as “manshaped” instead of something God has created. In fact it is almost as if the syntactic twist is hinting at a breeching of expectations the reader might have having read Thomas's earlier work: the original miracle “written” in the flesh has in a way taken over and is leading a life of its own.

Similarly, the image of “blowing down the bone” is negated (in fact twice), resulting in a strongly felt drawing back as motion is a prominent cognitive attractor here. The world is embodied in a different way than in the earlier poems: man defines the scale now (cf. “I, in my intricate image” and “[m]an was the scales”). The human form of creation has become a schematic commonplace in Thomas's poems, and it now runs both ways: “[...] the Christian allusions serve to emphasise the fact that this is a world in which man's own powers have become godlike, at the same time as supernatural control or sanction over them has ceased to exist.” (Goodby 2001, 205.) This very fundamental negation is repeated in different ways in the war elegies, but also in many of the other later poems. Religion can then be read as a lacuna (as Stockwell does with “And death shall have no dominion”) – the negation on the level of lexis, grammar and metaphor extends to thematics as well (or the other way around).

Both “Ceremony after a fire-raid” and “A refusal to mourn” depart from a gruesome embodied image summarising the devastating effects of war: a newborn child and her mother killed in a fire-raid, lying alongside other victims and among crumbled buildings. However the shocking image is part of a more elaborate figurative network and placed differently in a rhetorical sense in the two poems. Furthermore, as I said before, the tone of speaking is also different in the poems, and this is also reflected in the way the central image is treated: in “Ceremony after a fire-raid” the speaker initiates a (public) mass and directs the feelings of being disillusioned and even disappointed in one's own ability to lament *outside* of the poem's

realm, whereas in “A refusal to mourn” it is almost as if the disappointment has already been processed up to a point and what remains is a sense of 'flatness' and a feeling that *any* words spoken are futile. This point is made explicit in Thomas's plans to model “A refusal to mourn” after a poem on the same (kind of) topic he had written earlier on, “Among those killed in the dawn raid was a man aged hundred”: the title (and consequently the poem to some extent) imitates newspaper headlines. However after some consideration Thomas dropped the idea with “A refusal to mourn” (see for example Maud 2003, 41), but the poem can still be seen as somewhat laconic in the style of factual writing reporting on incidents.

Of the two war elegies I want to look at in this section “Ceremony after a fire raid” was written first. It is divided into three parts, and in each part the mode of speaking is different. This is something we have already seen with for instance “I see the boys of summer”, but here the impersonality of the speaker carries a different kind of weight. The poem starts out with a very pompous tone: the speaker is preaching to an audience, using a lot of imperatives and repetition. The second part is more personalised and the tone somehow despondent. Also, from the scene of the dead child amongst the destruction left behind by a bombing, the poem moves on to the very beginning of mankind and the so very familiar imagery of genesis. The third and last part is like a coda, even containing explicit musical references, and again void of any personal tone. At the same time the amount of active verbs diminishes significantly. The speaker's hiding between the lines can be called a kind of a lacuna, as by contrast he at times asserts his own standpoint quite strongly as well. I shall now look into this particular negativity in relation to the embodied imagery in the poem: as mentioned, my hypothesis is that embodiment is used as a means of estrangement both emotionally and stylistically.

The single most powerful negation is of course the death of the newborn child, here “tireless” in that there is no mercy in war and no end to man's evil. The way the death is initially described is a strong image deploying embodied metaphors that create a world-switch through negation: “Among the street burned to tireless death / A child of a few hours / With its kneading mouth / Charred on the black breast of the grave / The mother dug, and its arms full of fires.” (*CP*, 107.) The image that is evoked is of course the child being breastfed by the mother, and it is negated in the way the child's mouth is “kneading” and how the mother is

“the black breast of the grave”. The most natural and vital bond imaginable is broken with the means of embodiment: the mother *is* the grave, as the child has died on her. Their lives have come to an abrupt and unnatural end, which is highlighted by the fact that the embodied image (of the human grave) is *body-external*. The first line here is also of importance: the grammatical peculiarity of using the preposition “among” with “street” can be made sense of in terms of the destruction that struck the mother and the child, the street is in pieces, therefore we can be among it as observers and grievers of the scene. We as readers have to piece together the normal state of affairs just before the attack and then tear it down, in other words simultaneously co-construct the text world and a modal world through our schematic knowledge.

This sense of breaking a natural continuity is paralleled with the fracture that occurred with original sin: “Sing / Darkness kindled back into beginning / when the caught tongue nodded blind” (*CP*, 107). Original sin is portrayed through impaired embodiment, “caught tongue nodded blind”, signifying the inadequacy of words as well. Yet the audience is asked to sing – perhaps to wish for the darkness to stay where it first emerged. However, the darkness is “kindled back into” the beginning – although Ralph Maud explicates the verb as “burned”, linking the line to the havoc of the first stanza, I would say the sense of the word as igniting or fuelling is significant here, meaning releasing a tension that was already there. The second occurring of the same phrasing in the second part of the poem supports this reading:

Man and woman undone,  
Beginning crumbled back to darkness  
Bare as the nurseries  
Of the garden of wilderness.  
(*CP*, 108.)

Eden is a “garden of wilderness” now, and the age-old dichotomies governing what makes us man and woman have dissolved; on a less cosmic scale the beginning here can refer to the life of the killed infant, meeting its end due to the evil of man, first surfacing in the “original” beginning. However in the light of the previous part we can read “[m]an and woman undone” as well as the verb “crumbled” in a more macabre way too, as dismembered – as the ultimate

negative embodiment imaginable. The second part then reinforces the despair of the first: the beginning of life in the biblical sense was tainted as a result of free will, and going back to such a beginning will give no hope. Furthermore, the “bare nurseries”, another use of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor, are placed in wilderness, that is to stay in circumstances that do not help with preserving life. From this angle, we can see the present darkness of the poem (the horrible event) as revisiting original sin: the specific evidence of the evil of man can be seen as yet another manifestation of an age-old tendency.

Moreover, the fire reference with the verb “kindle” links interestingly to the very basic metaphoric dichotomy of light and darkness. In the earlier poems of Thomas, God as light has emphasised the divine origins of life. Here the result of the original darkness within God's creation (containing original sin) burns life into charred remains. In addition to the black chest of the mother, the very last line of the first part refers to the devastating consequences of the fire-raid: “Seed of sons in the loin of the black husk left.” (CP, 107.) The seed is wasted in that there is only a black “outer cover” left of a person (again a grim use of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor).<sup>107</sup> Human vitality could hardly be negated more clearly: there is no future when the seed is this thoroughly destroyed. Embodiment is certainly making the destruction more graspable for the reader, but also distancing it from the reader due to the world-switches required in the mapping of the negative metaphors. Also, the body is “bereft” and “love is the last light spoken”: there is a hope put in divinity but *it is of a kind that ends when speaking ends*.

The mode of speaking in the second part is of special interest as it is framed in negation: “I know not whether [...]”. This is a common enough rhetorical device: claiming that one is unable to say something and then doing so anyway, and in a rich array of ways even. With Thomas's poetics it links to the brokenness of the human language, an inevitable reality since the Fall, and expressions utilising the light/darkness dichotomy in this part are, in fact, pronouncedly biblical: “white ewe lamb”, “her snow / On the altar of London”, “White as a skeleton / Of the garden of Eden”, “the serpent's night fall”. Ralph Maud argues (2003, 71) that this particular rhetorical pattern allows Thomas to line up many images of sacrifice next

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<sup>107</sup> This particular use of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor brings to mind another variation in “I see the boys of summer”: “I see that from these boys shall men of nothing / Stature by seedy shifting”.

to each other all at once (without worrying about the distance between them), a point that is reminiscent of the trickster-like speaker of “Altarwise by owl-light – but obviously without the tongue-in-cheek tone.

However something that Maud does not note is that the negative rhetorical pattern is explicitly turned around in the second half of part II: “I know the legend / Of Adam and Eve is never for a second / Silent in my service” (*CP*, 108). The syntactical ambiguities here, achieved with enjambement, emphasise the twist: the negation of “never” is altered into a positive with the postponing of the word “silent”. The expression “my service” is highly ambiguous in this sense too: if we take the speaker to be the (or a) poet, then “service” would hint at a similar approach as with the manipulation of metaphoric material in “Altarwise by owl-light”, but on the other hand the speaker's preaching can be seen in a more particular way as well (due to other textual hints relating to a mass), as a poet being able to lament an event like this on behalf of others, as a sort of a collective effort. Such a notion is further supported by the occasional unmotivated use of the pronoun “we” alongside “I”, as well as by the use of plurals like “[m]yselfes / The grievors / grieve”.

The line with “darkness kindled back into beginning” also begins a series of motion-focused expressions in the poem. The speaker hovers over the destruction a lot, distancing himself from the reality he is describing, almost to a god-like position – or, on the other hand the position of the aircrafts responsible for the fire-raid. The speaker also describes something *entering* a place on many occasions, most prominently in the coda-like third part:

(I) Darkness kindled back into beginning

(II) Beginning crumbled back to darkness

(III) Into the organpipes and steeples [...]  
Into the weathercock's molten mouths [...]  
Into the dead cock burning the hour  
Over the urn of sabbaths  
Over the whirling ditch of daybreak

Over the sun's hovel and the slum of fire [...]  
Into the cauldrons of the statuary  
Into the bread in a wheatfield of flames  
Into the wine burning like brandy [...] (CP, 107–109).

All of these expressions cumulate into the final lines, thus the syntax anticipates a climax: “Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter for ever / Glory glory glory / The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis’ thunder.” (CP, 109.) The thunder can be linked to the sound of the bombing planes, but also to the powerful voice of God in the Old Testament. The mixing of the two – the booming voice of God (asking Adam and Eve to explain their conduct, most likely) as well as war as a “natural phenomenon” – is a very grim image of modern man. The miracle written in man's flesh in Genesis is replaced with pessimistic preaching, “utter for ever / Glory glory glory”.<sup>108</sup> The fact that the “ultimate” kingdom is “sundering”, cracking, summarises the cynical tone: it is another lacuna structure. Furthermore, if we consider the last part of the poem, “the coda”, to be a musical part in a mass, *Gloria*, as Maud suggests (2003, 71), then this is pointing to another lacuna *outside the poem*: a funeral mass would not traditionally contain this part as it is celebratory in nature. In the same way, the hint to the Lord's Prayer (“glory”, “kingdom”) flattens the *credo* function of it as the speaker's attitude is very cynical indeed. As for the Holy Communion, the bread is in flames and the wine is “burning like brandy”, another echo of the reversal of the original light/darkness metaphor.<sup>109</sup> In this light the expressions “luminous cathedrals”, “whirling ditch of daybreak” and “golden pavement” seem purposefully utopistic as well.

In addition to the eruption, there are many instances of similar kind of movement in the poem: “blood spurt”, “grains blow through our heart” (I); “night fall and the fruit like a sun” (II); “Into the organpipes and steeples” (III). In terms of resonance in the reading process, the attentional changes in these examples are either shifts (motion) or state changes (suddenness)

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108 The repetition of the word “glory” of course links to the rhetoric of a Christian service, but the tone of it is definitely ironic (this reading is supported by the fact that there are no effects of exclamation here). Such a repetition in the context of war brings to mind T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* with its famous ending, “shantih shantih shantih”, as well as the lines “Co co rico co co rico / In a flash of lightning.” (1959, 77–76.) Another intertext could be William Blake's *America, A Prophecy*: “Fiery the Angels rose, & as they rose deep thunder roll'd / Around their shores, indignant burning with the fires of Orch (1966, 200).

109 Compare also with the “unholy communion” (though for other reasons) in “A saint about to fall”. Another instance (though not as bleak) can be found in “This bread I break”.

(Carstensen 2007, 8), or *both* at the same time. They foreground the final part's magnified and seemingly holy tone: man's imperfection (the Fall) is schematically speaking top-down movement and Christ's ascension to heaven of course is a default example of the GOOD IS UP schema. The significance of the Fall is a fracture, a breakage that can be seen as sudden due to its dramatic effects. This is paralleled with the suddenness of the fire-raid, coming from above. As opposed to this, the movement in for example "Foster the light" is still cyclical: "Now make the world of me as I have made / A merry manshape of your walking circle." (CP, 51.) Here the way creation should be seen as continuous in how man exists entails that it reflects back too. On the other hand the limits of human cognition outline such circularity as well: "When logics die, / The secret of the soil grows through the eye" ("Light breaks where no sun shines", CP, 24). In the same way the caterpillar and the fly are fed, that is kept alive, by the "mystery" of free will, symbolised by the tree of knowledge within the human mind, in Blake's "The human abstract".

Whereas "Ceremony after a fire-raid" presents us with a collective, resonant 'service' at the face of destruction, "A refusal to mourn" turns inward right from the start with the striking negation in the title. However as Ralph Maud points out (2003, 42), this negation is (most likely) negated by the reader on embarking on an interpretation of the poem: why should the poem exist otherwise, and why would such an anti-human view be put forth? The poem opens:

Never until the mankind making  
Bird beast and flower  
Fathering and all humbling darkness  
Tells with silence the last light breaking  
[...] (CP, 85).

The complicated syntax of the first lines brings to mind some of Thomas's more obscure poems, for example "After the funeral" and "Altarwise by owl-light". Such introversion could easily be called a lacuna in itself, but let us take a closer look at how the lines are constructed. The verbs "making", "fathering" and "humbling" of course create a sense of cohesion on a

phonetic level, but they are actually all participles and as such three paralleled qualities that modify “darkness”, the subject of the construction. This all-powerful darkness seems to go back to the very first moments of the world – containing contradictions within itself – and it also “tells with silence the last light breaking”, respectively, that it takes the beginning to the end much like “Ceremony after a fire-raid”, but with a muteness that was not present there.

The difficulty of the syntax carries the poem forward; the completion of the beginning comes as late as late as line ten, “Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound / [...] to mourn // The majesty and burning of the child's death.” We have been following a cryptic apocalyptic vision up until now: the image of the child killed by the bombing is postponed by abstract images, going on to the third stanza due to the anticipatory enjambement. What is more, there is a whole host of alliteration on the way, functioning as a kind of a distraction until the moment we are faced with “[t]he majesty and burning of the child's death”. The definite article here is a signal of the anticipation the reader has been led to keep up: the title's original negation. However the use of the definite article also creates ambivalence, somewhat paradoxically: the child is not necessarily the one mentioned in the title, but could also be a reference to Jesus as *the* child. Having said that, I do think this association is (no matter that it is clearly there also due to other hints, like “fathering”) negated though, much like the Lord's Prayer and the Holy Communion in “Ceremony after a fire-raid”. In a similar vein, the use of the word “majesty” is ironic, I think, and serves as yet another way of negating and distancing something that cannot be fully grasped.

This point is made very clear in the lines that follow:

I shall not murder  
The mankind of her going with a grave truth  
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath  
With any further  
Elegy of innocence and youth.  
(CP, 86.)

The negation is directed towards a particular kind of attitude, towards elegiac conventions common in situations of this kind: one-sided idealising of a dead person. As Ralph Maud writes: “[...] there is the sense that if one can find and offer resignation in the face of such a death, or all our deaths, mourning perhaps *should* be refused.” (2003, 42, emphasis original.) The embodied part, linking to “Ceremony after a fire-raid”, comes afterwards:

Deep within the first dead lies London's daughter,  
Robed in the long friends,  
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,  
Secret by the unmourning water  
of the riding Thames.  
(*CP*, 86.)

The dead child is “robed” by dead bodies, and the river (linking to the mother's veins) is embodied with the participle “riding”, but it is “unmourning”, void of sentiment; the negation is further strengthened by the word's grammatical unconventionality. Moreover, the simple, almost-there rhyme pattern throughout the poem highlights the banality of verbal expression in a situation like this, but especially so here with regard to the “pointless” embodiment: “daughter” – “water”, “friends” – “Thames”.

Finally, the very last line of the poem ends this progression with an absolute-sounding yet ambiguous declaration: “After the first death, there is no other.” (*CP*, 86.) Thinking of the metaphoric coherence in the poem, as well as the despondent tone of the speaker, the line can hardly be seen as a reference to Christ's death (although the possibility is nevertheless there, like with the use of the definite article with “child” earlier on). Rather, I would say it is a combination of the first death in the sense of Adam and Eve (since the Bible references are distinctly to the Old Testament) and the experience of death in the context of war: one gets numb after a while when surrounded by death. Furthermore, in terms of spatial orientation, this poem comes down from a rather high (abstract) position down to earth, more specifically

into water. As opposed to “Ceremony after a fire-raid” where the speaker's sermon soared into an open space, we are left in the bosom of the embodied havoc – the progression is from “the round / Zion of the water bead” to the depth of the “unmourning water” in London, a concrete place in the world we know, and relating to the actual news stories we might know.

While the negative embodiment of “Ceremony after a fire-raid” links with Culler's idea of the “totalization” of negation as a (reading) pattern, in that it offers “escape from the more banal and unsettling predicament of confronting an endless series of memories that cannot be integrated” (1987, 207), “A refusal to mourn” is more in line with Shira Wolosky's (1987) analysis of Samuel Beckett's “figural evasions”. According to Wolosky, the “double impossibility” of negative patterns found in Beckett's writing produces a kind of a bleak positivity in the end: “[...] each denial of figure itself constitutes an assertion, a voice that again and again reemerges to reflect on itself, in an incessant and enduring act of rebirth.” (Ibid., 184.) Even at the end of “A refusal to mourn”, human memory is not eradicated (cf. the tension between the poem's title and the content and rhetoric of it): there still is an echo of the original organic cycle of life and death established in the early poems.

## **5.2. Metaphoricity and deformity: *Under Milk Wood***

So far in this chapter I have been looking at Thomas's poems deploying impaired embodiment as well as the possible narrative implications of such a continuity, but in this section I will be analysing another type of text, namely the radio play *Under Milk Wood*. This addition is relevant for two reasons: One, the text is highly lyric and employs the same kind of linguistic techniques as Thomas's poetry. However the tone of the text is very different from the war elegies: it is a comedy that makes extensive use of punning metaphors, for instance.<sup>110</sup> Two, the metaphoricity of the text adds a very interesting layer to the functions of embodiment in Thomas's poetics: here we encounter essentially a *metonymic* chain of metaphors that communicates physical and mental impairment. Even though the text is a drama, there is a

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<sup>110</sup> A telling example is the name of the town where the events take place, Llareggub: read backwards it says “bugger all”.

clear narrative structure linked to the metaphoric coherence. Moreover, the fact that *Under Milk Wood* is a radio play is of key importance to the narrativity: the text plays with the fact that it is meant to be heard by making the process of plot construction very challenging *through figurative language*.

*Under Milk Wood* depicts an ordinary day in an imaginary Welsh village. Nothing much happens plot-wise, but textually there is a lot going on: the world of the text seems to be determined by exaggeration and excess. Two narrators, or “voices”, overwhelm the reader/listener with extremely poetic discourse littered with embodied metaphors of disability and restricted vision. In contrast to the metaphorically charged language, the characters seem to be stereotypical with simple motives and recurring catch phrases. This opposition suggests that the characters are somehow ignorant, like puppets in the text world, and in my reading the lacking the impaired embodiment communicates is a parallel to the way in which the characters are denied change, development and fulfillment in the plot. This rather depressing undercurrent within a very humorous text is complemented with dark, ominous metaphors as well.<sup>111</sup> The co-existence of sinister and playful imagery highlights the literary nature of the text, but also the dynamics of experience – as I have hopefully already shown in some respect, if and when metaphoric language is founded in our bodily experience, then any distorted forms are also a fundamental part of it.

Since this kind of metaphoricity is particularly evident and frequent in places where *text world shifts* (text world to modal worlds) are required in the reading process, metaphor is clearly a matter of plot construction and narrativity as well. In *Under Milk Wood* the interruptions of the 'now' of the text are mainly instances of dreaming, sometimes also wishful thinking and negation. The emphasis on the processes of conceptualisation makes Werth's model particularly applicable to this text, but also from Stockwell's list of cognitive attractors (2009b, 31) the familiarity aspect is especially relevant in reading this text. The way the reader is immersed into the world of the text makes use of the most effective elements on this empathy scale (the later ones), adapted from Langacker (1991):

abstractions > landscape objects > immovable objects > human-scale objects > machines > plants >

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<sup>111</sup> Interestingly Thomas has been criticised for the “immoral” treatment of the characters in *Under Milk Wood*, see 5.2..

animals > groups > ill-defined individuals > specific persons (hearing > speaking) (Stockwell 2009, 30).

Significantly, the least empathy evoking elements are made more familiar through embodiment (abstractions as well as the landscape), and precisely through the use of voice in terms of both hearing and speaking, as we shall soon see.

Indeed, the shifts to modal worlds in *Under Milk Wood* are linked to the medium also on the level of genre: the “play for voices” (Thomas’s own subtitle) begins with “eavesdropping” on the townspeople’s dreams. The narrative situation is strikingly artificial, as the dreams *are* actually heard: the characters speak their dreams while they sleep, and the narrators manipulate this telling in a very unnatural textual progression. The reader is given access to the characters’ minds, and numerous metaphoric expressions related to *seeing and not seeing* create a clear division between those who *can* see (the narrators and the reader/listener) and those who *cannot* (the characters). The frequency with which the frames of dreaming, seeing and hearing are intertwined makes the modal world dominant and emphasises the metaphoric nature of the text. Moreover the auditive qualities of the metaphoric language underline the literariness of the narrative.

There are three main aspects that I want to focus on. The first one is the most important one: I will explore how the embodied metaphors of disability and restricted vision sustain the thematics of the text on two levels: the particular language emphasises the role of the reader (listener) and the narrators as “accomplices” who know more than the characters, and, on the level of the text world, the language shows how the characters’ wishes are negated by the reality of everyday life. Second of all, I will pay attention to how the genre of the text is also a thematic element: the auditive qualities of the metaphoric language underlines the hierarchy mentioned and blurs the boundaries of the “real” and the “dreamt” in the text. Thirdly, I will analyse how the shifts from the actual events of the text to modal worlds are linked to metaphoricity and again emphasise the reader’s role as an active participant.

The fact that the plot is so uninteresting is noteworthy in itself. This is due to the narrative-temporal structure of the text: the events take place on one day, and it is implied that this day is like any other day in the village. Linked with the stereotypical characters and the impaired

embodiment, it seems that the text emphasises typicality and the non-existence of the possibility of change. The narrative begins with night, presents normal activities done during the day, and ends with night again. There is also a certain self-reflexivity in terms of time in the narrative: “the sleepers are rung out of sleep **this one morning as every morning**” (*Under Milk Wood*, 24).<sup>112</sup> This, together with other means, seems to ask the reader to see the patterns that govern the text *and* the characters’ lives. I will return to the significance of the temporal frame shortly.

The very beginning of the text establishes the metaphoric frame of impaired embodiment (1), and invites the reader in (2):

(1) FIRST VOICE: To begin at the beginning. It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, **the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and- rabbits' wood limping** invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. **The houses are blind as moles** (though moles see fine tonight in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock, the shops in mourning [...] And all the people of the lulled and **dumbfound town** are sleeping now. (*UMW*, 1.)

(2) [...] Only your eyes are unclosed to see the black and folded town **fast, and slow, asleep** [...] Only you can see, in the **blinded bedrooms**, the combs and petticoats over the chairs, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams. (*UMW*, 2.)

As Paul Werth has pointed out, the conceptual metaphor A PLACE IS ITS INHABITANTS can be identified as the main one in the first passage (1999, 319), or in fact it is a metonymy, and indeed the town takes on a human form here.<sup>113</sup> The striking thing of course is that the human form is deformed and restricted in perception, and this state is paralleled with images of mental impairment, being ignorant; the word “blind” significantly suggests both at once. This then gives the impression that there is something the characters do not know and the reader is invited to learn more about this. Moreover, the metonymy structure supports the effect of watching the characters ‘from above’ that is created here: all of the individual minds are

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112 Hereafter *UMW*.

113 Kövecses (2002) uses the same passage as an example of the synthesis of metaphor and metonymy.

compressed into a single (simple) one. In addition, the poetic and aesthetically pleasing language contrasts with the dark undercurrent suggested by expressions like “bible-black” and “shops in mourning” (cf. the basic metaphor DEATH IS SLEEP). The disposition then highlights its own constructedness, and a sense of tension and a feeling that something is looming is then created as well.

In the second passage the hinted hierarchy is reinforced and the reader is explicitly drawn in. The reader is given access to the characters’ minds in a subtle way as many expressions link to seeing and not seeing, respectively. The metaphoric pun “blinded bedrooms” refers to actual blinds in the windows, and also to the fact that the people cannot see, literally and metaphorically.<sup>114</sup> Another pun, “fast, and slow, asleep”, highlights the idea of the characters as somehow ignorant: “fast asleep” is an idiom that is complemented with metaphoric “slow”, dumb. Of course, this “seeing” becomes (more clearly) metaphoric when the narrator moves on from the still somewhat realistic description of the setting to the idea of seeing *and* hearing the characters’ dreams, their “tunes and wishes and flight”. To summarise, the main extended metaphor that emerges in building the text world here is PERCEPTION IS POWER<sup>115</sup>, and it becomes an important interpretive thread when reading on.

Furthermore, realisations of this metaphor guarantee what Steven Pinker has called a “rhetorical payoff” (2007) in that they stress the active participation of the reader, *while* they also link to the text’s thematic level and have an integral part in the play’s plot. This brings to mind Biebuyck and Martens’s argument that metaphors can emphasise the communicative efforts of the reader (2011, 63). However the way in which the communicative transaction itself is thematised in *Under Milk Wood*<sup>116</sup> is in conflict with their argument that the figurative network of a text would form an auto-poetic layer of narrativity, as with the negativity of the war elegies, but with the emphasis more on the word “narrativity”: the narrators of *Under Milk Wood* explicitly seek to form a pact with the reader through their manipulative use of the PERCEPTION IS POWER metaphor.

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114As has been mentioned before, there are similarly ambiguous uses of the word “blind” elsewhere in Thomas’s works as well, for instance in “Elegy” and of course in “Ceremony after a fire-raid” in the previous section.

115 This metaphor is an extension of the very common UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING discussed by Mark Turner (1987).

116 Compare with the analysis of “Altarwise by owl-light” in 3.2.

We only need to look at the way in which the shifts to the modal worlds of dreams are orchestrated. Right after the introductory passages the dreams *are* actually heard. The first dreamer is “the retired blind seacaptain” Captain Cat:

FIRST VOICE: Captain Cat, the retired blind seacaptain, [...] dreams of...

SECOND VOICE: never such seas as any that swamped the decks of his S.S. Kidwelly bellying over the bedclothes and jellyfish-slippery sucking him down salt deep into the Davy dark where the fish come biting out and nibble him down to his wishbone, and the long drowned nuzzle up to him.

FIRST DROWNED: Remember me, Captain?

CAPTAIN CAT: You're Dancing Williams!

FIRST DROWNED: I lost my step in Nantucket.

(*UMW*, 3.)

The narration of the dream has various layers: the first narrator instigates the depiction of the dream, the second narrator gives a brief and very poetic summary, and then the reader is actually 'thrown' into Captain Cat's dream and hears a dead person speaking in it. Thus a modal world is created with the help of metaphoricity: a world in which 'event' can mean (re)enacting of imagined things. The text world itself is relatively ordinary overall with a very imaginable setting and everyday incidents, but the frequency with which the frames of dreaming, seeing and hearing are intertwined in complex ways makes the modal world dominant and thus highlights the metaphoric nature of the text.

Moreover, it is significant that Captain Cat is the first dreamer the reader 'hears': he is a central character in the play as due to his (actual!) blindness he can hear more than the others, making his role in the text world a parallel to the one the reader/listener has. Some of the everyday events in the village are actually presented through Captain Cat narrating what he hears:

[*Postman's rat-a-tat on door, distant*]

CAPTAIN CAT (*Softly, to himself*): That's Willy Nilly knocking at Bay View [...] The knocker's got a kid glove on. Who's sent a letter to Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard?

[*Rat-a-tat, distant again*]

CAPTAIN CAT: Careful now, she swabs the front glassy. Every step's like a bar of soap. Mind your size twelveses. That old Bessie would beeswax the lawn to make the birds slip.

WILLY NILLY: Morning, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard.

MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD: Good morning, postman.  
(*UMW*, 38.)

The reader assumes Captain Cat's place in seeing the town's morning without actually seeing it. The effect of *in medias res*, being drawn in the middle of things, is particularly strong here (cf. Semino's model of lyric worlds), and this pattern is repeated on many occasions. This makes the role of Captain Cat close to that of the narrators', but without the manipulative metaphoricity. However, since the reader has been first invited into the world of the text as the narrators' accomplice, but is now put on the same level as Captain Cat in *not* seeing, suspicions arise: how far does the manipulative spectacle of the narrators go? Are the narrators reliable? These doubts will resurface later on.

Meanwhile the modal world of dreaming has become the prominent one within the text world, with an increasingly metaphoric rule:

FIRST VOICE: [...] Mr Utah Watkins counts, all night, the wife-faced sheep as they leap the knees on the hill, smiling and knitting and bleating just like Mrs Utah Watkins.

UTAH WATKINS (*Yawning*): Thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, forty-eight, eighty-nine...

MRS UTAH WATKINS (*Bleating*): Knit one slip one

Knit two together

Pass the slipstitch over... [...]

SECOND VOICE: Cherry Owen, next door, lifts a tankard to his lips but nothing flows out of it. He shakes the tankard. It turns into a fish. He drinks the fish.

(*UMW*, 17.)

Dreaming and actual present-tense action blend into one another so that the reader "sees" the dreaming and the dreams themselves. The artificiality of the situations is often very explicitly underlined: "SECOND VOICE: Mr Beynon [...] straightfaced in his cunning sleep he pulls the legs of his dreams and / BUTCHER BEYNON: hunting on pigback shoots down the wild giblets." (*UMW*, 19–20.) Butcher Beynon is supposedly so cunning that he is in charge of what happens in the dream and can even finish the narrator's sentence. However, since he "pulls *the legs* of his dreams", in plural, and not *a leg* as in the idiom, perhaps the sentence is actually describing an action he is performing in his sleep, trying to catch the piglets, which would make the use of the word "cunning" ironic. In any case this finishing off of the

narrators' sentences is a pattern repeated with several characters, all of whom are elsewhere shown to be under the narrators' thumb, so to speak.

The dreaming is on many occasions coloured by the ominous tone of the DEATH IS SLEEP metaphor, for example: “[...] Mr and Mrs Floyd, the cocklers, are sleeping as quiet as death”; “Ocky Milkman, drowned asleep on Cockle Street, is emptying his churns into the Dewi river [...] and weeping like a funeral” (*UMW*, 17). Another sinister yet absurd instance takes the hierarchy between the narrators and the characters a step further:

FIRST VOICE: P.C. Attila Rees lumps out of bed, dead to the dark and still foghorning, and drags out his helmet from under the bed; but deep in the backyard lock-up of his sleep a mean voice murmurs  
A VOICE (*Murmuring*): You'll be sorry for this in the morning [...]  
(*UMW*, 18).

The verb “lump” refers back to the initial deformed personification of the town, while “dead to the dark” is a multi-layered metaphor combining the death as sleep metaphor with an echo of the conventional metaphor “to be dead to someone” (not to the world if we continue the personification). The shift from the text world to the modal world is of course very amusing in the way it refers to Freud's theory of the self: the metaphorical voice inside P.C. Attila's mind, borrowed from the model that is a metaphor in itself, becomes an actual voice. The ridiculing of the human mind as a complex layered entity in my view highlights the flatness of the characters and the non-existing control over things they have.

Due to the absurdities presented within the modal worlds of dreaming, and the self-indulgent poeticity of the narrators' discourse, John Goodby brings up the link to surrealist and Freudian ideas:

[...] as Freud explained, connections are made through transference and trivial associationism; alliteration and pun bulk more centrally than causal logic. In this world, comedy acts as a continual rebuke to moralism, at times in an almost surrealist manner. (Goodby 2001, 212.)

Even though I have already argued that Thomas's writing cannot be called surrealist, the argument about triviality fighting moralism is intriguing with *Under Milk Wood*, and I will

discuss it more shortly.

As for Freud, Thomas explicitly expressed Freud's influence (Freud's ideas) on his writing. Even if the influence is clearer with the poetry, the metaphors in this statement by Thomas form enlightening parallels with the way the characters are subjected to manipulation in *Under Milk Wood*: "Poetry is the rhythmic, inevitably narrative, movement from an overclothed blindness to a naked vision [...] Poetry must drag further into the clear nakedness of light more even of the hidden causes than Freud could realize." (CL, 311.) In the light of this, the fact that narrators exercise their power precisely through poetic embodiment seems to suggest the manipulative spectacle *is* meant to reveal something. Furthermore, it is interesting that radio plays as a genre utilise the logic of dreams: its artistic form is rather intuitive because of the active visualising and processing that moves forward quite fast and associatively.<sup>117</sup>

What, then, could the purpose of such a spectacle be? In order to answer the question we need to go back to the text's temporality. John Goodby argues that the structure of *Under Milk Wood* is consciously static, allowing isolation from social contexts (2001, 210). In the same way, the text's temporal progression is somehow very artificial, highlighting the literariness of the text. As was already mentioned, the events take place on one day, and everything is left unresolved at the end. It is emphasised that the day described is a prototypical day in the village, and that nothing ever changes: "The ship's clock in the bar says half past eleven. Half past eleven is opening time. The hands of the clock have stayed still at half past eleven for fifty years. It is always opening time in the Sailors Arms." (UMW, 36.) The day-in-the-life-of structure underlines conventionality, and ultimately the restrictions of routine-bound life.

Furthermore, since the text progresses from night to day and night again, the centrality of night time is obvious, and carries more than just temporal significance. Expressions like "all dead day long" (UMW, 77) bring to mind the ominous atmosphere that was present at the beginning of the text, linked to the characters' ignorance. In addition, the (same) darkness at end of the text implicates that everything will happen exactly the same way again the next day: "Dusk is drowned for ever until to-morrow. It is all at once night now." (UMW, 81.)

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<sup>117</sup> There seem to be very few theorists who have been interested in radio plays at all. See for example Zilliaccus 1976. By contrast, for a cognitive analysis of visual poetics, see Collins 1991.

What is more, the wood surrounding Llaregub becomes like an active agent, which seems to emphasise the dullness of the people: “The thin night darkens [...] the suddenly wind-shaken wood springs awake for the second dark time this one Spring day.” (*UMW*, 86.) Not only does the reference to the darkness in the beginning of the text bring to mind the initial metonymous hierarchy, but the wood as an active agent is like an ironic negation of the original A TOWN IS ITS INHABITANTS metaphor.

In fact, the narrators of *Under Milk Wood* suggest that behind the routines and endlessly repeated habitual patterns of the townspeople there is an age-old dichotomy of what is perceived as right or wrong, and the text also hints towards a critical view of this conventionality. For example, the way in which the purity of the character of Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard is described becomes something completely opposite when contrasted with the fact that in her dreams she actually bosses her two dead husbands about as if they were present:

FIRST VOICE: Now, in her iceberg-white, holily laundered crinolene nightgown, under virtuous polar sheets, in her spruced and scoured dust-defying bedroom [...] Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard widow, twice [...] fidgets in her rinsed sleep, wakes in a dream, and nudges in the ribs dead Mr Ogmores, dead Mr Pritchard, ghostly on either side.

MRS OGMORES-PRITCHARD: Soon it will be time to get up. Tell me your tasks, in order.  
(*UMW*, 14.)

The passage ridicules with subtle metaphoricity the way Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard is bound to her ways: she lives for the feeling of organisation (and power over her dead husbands) even in her dreams, “under virtuous polar sheets”. Even though one of the central characters, reverend Eli Jenkins, claims in his evening sermon that “[w]e are not wholly bad or good” (*UMW*, 79), this kind of either/or thinking is nevertheless frequently brought up in the text as something the townspeople base their everyday lives on.

In *Under Milk Wood*, then, the basic biblical dichotomies underlying Thomas’s prototypical embodied metaphors are brought into play and questioned through additional means not (in any direct way) available to lyric poetry. The pastoral setting is conventionally bright and joyous, and respectively, wicked things usually take place in the dark of the night. This metaphoric foundation that reminds us of the power of God (light) and the darkness of sin (the

Fall) is elaborated on in various ways. There are idyllic depictions of the countryside, accompanied with conventional features of the pastoral like strikingly flat and clichéd songs. Similarly sinful (mostly sexual) events are often linked to night: “Down in the dusking town, Mae Rose Cottage, still lying in clover, listens to the nannygoats chew, draws circles of lipstick round her nipples [...] And Lily Smalls is up to Nogood Boyo in the wash-house” (*UMW*, 82). Significantly, the A TOWN IS ITS INHABITANTS metaphor usually refers to the dark side of the town: as the night is about to fall, “[...] the town is dusk.” (*UMW*, 76.) It is as if the metonymy hints to a collective consciousness that tells the people what is good and what is condemnable.

In contrast, the idyllic pastoral depictions rely, more often than not, on imagery so conventional it is quite flat, and when the personification identifying the town with the characters is used here, it is *individualised* (linked to a certain character). Typically, then, the figurative patterns link to the *repressed* sexual desires of the characters:

FIRST VOICE: Outside, the sun springs down on the rough and tumbling town. It runs through the hedges of Goosegog Lane, **cuffing the birds to sing**. Spring whips green down Cockle Row, and the shells ring out. **Llaregub this snip of a morning is wildfruit and warm, the streets, fields, sands and waters springing in the young sun [...]**

SECOND VOICE: Gossamer Beynon high-heels out of school. The sun hums down through the cotton flowers of her dress into the bell of her heart and buzzes in the honey there and couches and kisses, lazy-loving and boozed, in her red-berried breast. [...]

GOSSAMER BEYNON: I don't care if he *is* common,

SECOND VOICE: she whispers to her **salad-day deep self**,

GOSSAMER BEYNON: I want to gobble him up. I don't care if he *does* drop his aitches,

SECOND VOICE: **she tells the stripped and mother-of-the-world big-beamed and Eve-hipped spring of her self [...]**

SECOND VOICE: Sinbad Sailors watches her go by, demure and proud and schoolmarm in her crisp flower dress and sun-defying hat, [...] **the butcher's unmelting icemaiden daughter veiled for ever from the hungry hug of his eyes.**

SINBAD SAILORS: Oh, Gossamer Beynon, why are you so proud?

SECOND VOICE: he grieves to his guinness,

SINBAD SAILORS: Oh, beautiful beautiful Gossamer B, I wish I wish that you were for me. I wish you were not so educated.

(*UMW*, 60–61, emphasis added.)

The conventional metaphoric connection between spring time and sexual awakening is denied through a subtle use of the PERCEPTION IS POWER metaphor: Gossamer Beynon is feeling her awakened desires, but the narrators imply through very simple evaluation (“salad-day deep self”) and excessive and banal spring-awakening metaphors that she is entertaining follies. Similarly, moving on to Sinbad Sailors’s repressed feelings, the narrators present Gossamer Beynon not as sunny and buzzing but cold, “the butcher’s unmelting icemaideen daughter”. This disappointment is already lurking in the metonymous description of the situation: the spring is “cuffing the birds to sing”, in other words makes animals (and humans) slaves of their instincts.<sup>118</sup> Throughout the day-time part, there are also more general images describing the town’s awakening, like “rising and raising its blinds”, “the dawn inches up”, “The town ripples like a lake in the waking haze” (*UMW*, 27), but when it comes to the dichotomy of good and bad, the generalising metaphoric frame is mainly reserved for the dark side.

However, the dark undertone is not only reserved to night time. It is occasionally used in the broad light of day too, and this is where the basic dichotomy mentioned is most visibly broken:

FIRST VOICE: In the **blind-drawn dark dining-room** of School House, dusty and **echoing as a dining-room in a vault**, Mr and Mrs Pugh are silent over **cold grey** cottage pie [...] Alone in the hissing laboratory of his wishes, Mr Pugh [...] tiptoes through spinneys of murdering herbs, agony dancing in his crucibles, and mixes especially for Mrs Pugh a venomous porridge unknown to toxicologists which will scald and viper through her until her ears fall off like figs, her toes grow big and black as ballons, and steam comes screaming out of her navel [...]

MR PUGH: You know best dear [...]

SECOND VOICE: Sly and silent, he foxes into his chemist’s den and there, in a hiss and prussic circle of cauldrons and **phials brimful with pox and the Black Death**, cooks up a fricassee of **deadly nightshade**, nicotine, hot frog, cyanide and bat-spit for his needling stalactite hag and bednag of a pokerbacked nutcracker wife.

(*UMW*, 62–64, emphasis added.)

The dark diction of the narrators is contrasted with Mr Pugh’s obedient discourse with his wife: his words hide the murderous intentions revealed to the reader by the poetic language of the narrators. Significantly, even though the wife acts as if she does not know about her

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<sup>118</sup> Another meaning of the verb “cuff” is to slap, which would have a similar connotation in this context but also a more physical sense to it.

husband's true feelings, it is implicated that she does in fact know about them. This contradiction is left as it is and seems to signify the co-existence of sinful darkness and (pretentious) light. Similarly, in between the cited parts of the conversation, there is brighter, pastoral commentary (“[t]he sunny slow lulling afternoon yawns and moons through the dozy town”), and the narration actually shifts from Mr and Mrs Pugh's conversation to a conversation heard by Mrs Pugh earlier on: in the midst of the dark situation there is an unnatural flashback, again heard as if it happened in the present moment of the text. This kind of modality underlines the simultaneity that is also applied to the artificial divisions between good and bad. Needless to add, Mr Pugh does not murder his wife in the end but swallows his bitterness once more.

At the end of the text the two opposite poles are *seemingly* consolidated, when reverend Jenkins's and Mary Ann Sailors's views on life are presented as the night falls:

The Wood, whose every tree-foot's cloven in the black glad sight of the hunters of lovers, that is a God-built garden to Mary Ann Sailors who knows there is a Heaven on earth and the chosen people of His kind fire in Llaregub's land, that is the fairday farmhands' wantoning ignorant chapel of bridesbeds, and, to the Reverend Eli Jenkins, a greenleaved sermon on the innocence of men, the suddenly wind-shaken wood springs awake for the second dark time this one Spring day.”

(*UMW*, 86.)

It is suggested that both views are naïve since they are presented alongside the sinful night time in the wood: there is a striking contrast between the sexual acts going on in the dark wood and the idealised conceptions of the characters (e.g. Mary Ann Sailors's Eden). Therefore, the ending emphasises the fact that the characters will stay the same no matter what: their awareness has not grown at all.

This is so evident that it almost seems like an intended backlash on the typical complex, estranged Modernist hero. The unchanged, flat characters in a sense mark very literarily “the loss of self” described by Joseph Frank in relation to his idea of *spatial form*<sup>119</sup>:

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119 Spatial form is defined as “a shift in the internal hierarchy of the elements composing narrative structure” and it applies especially to stream of consciousness narrative and fragmented narrative (Frank 1978, 284). Similar ideas, but especially with regard to poetry, are presented by Brian McHale (see especially 2004).

[...] “the loss of self” is one of the dominant tendencies of both modernism and postmodernism; and such loss is of course another symptom of what I called ‘the transmutation of the time-world of history to the timeless world of myth’. The self no longer feels itself to be an active, individual force operating in the real world of history and time; it exists, if at all, only through its assimilation into a mythical world of eternal prototypes. (Frank 1978, 278.)

It is worth considering whether this tendency is distinctively Modernist or not. David Holbrook (1966) has analysed the cynical elements in *Under Milk Wood* by pointing out links between the text and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922).<sup>120</sup> Holbrook’s analysis compares and contrasts Joyce’s stream of consciousness narrative with Thomas’s dramatic use of multiple voices in *Under Milk Wood*. The links Holbrook makes seem relevant, and the influence of Joyce on Thomas’s writing is undeniable, but Holbrook misses the mark slightly with the evaluative comments he makes about Thomas’s verbal exaggeration. His detailed analysis of the style of *Under Milk Wood* is apt, but the judgment he makes about the function and purpose of the linguistic techniques seems rather one-eyed:

The effect of the stylization of the piece is to make the world a pretend-place, with pretend-relationships [...] with no morality or reality to impinge [...] it [the immorality of *Under Milk Wood*] is really dangerous, because it flattens and reinforces the resistance to those deeper insights we need [...] the total effect of this “vitality” of language is in fact deadness. It simply cannot be taken in: the impression it leaves is of no essential atmosphere [...] but an occasional felicity of caricature, a sense of ebullience, and an impression of “clever” writing. (Holbrook 1966, 100, 103, 108.)

The very explicit way of merely showing this kind of “immorality” to the reader, as in avoiding bringing in obvious sentiment that would create an effect of immersion for the reader, clearly does not fit with Holbrook’s ideas of what literature should be and do. And indeed, from such a point of view the foregrounded language most definitely must seem like the author’s attempt to come across as “clever”, in the sense of being rather pointless.

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120 Interesting parallels include: both display a control over language to achieve certain effects (although in Holbrook’s view only Joyce succeeds in this; in both the theme of sexuality and lust is connected to the moral deprivation of the ‘modern man’ (or indeed of man in general); both make the use of the ‘unreal’ in their writing techniques (*Ulysses* particularly with the hallucinatory brothel scene, *Under Milk Wood* with the unconventional depiction of dreams); both use different discourse registers like songs and children’s rhymes; in both texts the sea has certain symbolic value. For the present discussion the most interesting parallel is the link between the theme of moral deprivation and techniques like stream of consciousness narrative, complex language and multiple voices or layers within the text. As John Goodby adds: “[...] for authors like Joyce and Thomas, writing is not representation so much as an investigation of the ways in which language signifies, according to the revolutionary formal demands of modernist practice.” (2001, 198.)

Furthermore, as there are no characters in *Under Milk Wood* comparable to Joyce's *Ulysses* (i.e. characters the reader could clearly identify with), the lack of sentiment offered to the reader is not a particularly fair criticism. The structure and form of the text are fundamentally different from *Ulysses*, and it is precisely the structure of the text – the manipulative hierarchy maintained by the narrators – that is behind the strikingly metaphoric and at times unusual use of language in my view. This has much to do with genre. The following characterisation of broadcasts by Tim Crook makes a crucial point: because of “[...] the opportunity to create an individual filmic narrative and experience through the imaginative spectacle the listener becomes an active participant and ‘dramaturgist’ in the process of communication and listening.” (1999, 66.) This is exactly what happens with the carefully constructed progression of *Under Milk Wood*, even if the word “listener” is replaced with “reader”.

The description brings to mind what Paul Ricoeur (1984) sees as a shared quality of metaphor and narrative, that they both act as an impulse for assimilation and can be thus seen as part of the establishing of mimesis, opening “the kingdom of the as if” (see Pettersson 2011, 96). I would not call the way in which such a kingdom is opened in reading *Under Milk Wood* as allegorical<sup>121</sup>, which has been one pattern of interpretation, I would rather say that the extended metaphors create a dynamic of recursiveness, as argued by Biebuyck and Martens (2011). This means that a powerful metaphor opens a door to re-interpreting non-figurative parts that refer to related semantic fields, creating a pattern of recuperation. Of course the danger is that such extensions may be *too* easy to make at times (keeping in mind how Wayne C. Booth for example reminds us of the dangers of falling for macro-metaphors), but in this particular example metaphoric projections themselves are clearly at stake and it seems the reader is *supposed to* have suspicions.

The kind of “cruelty” Holbrook accuses Thomas of is typical to the way the narration and language in the text function. The reader is an active participant in the process in that he or she ‘shadows’ the characters as guided by the narrators, and often laughs at their expense. There is, then, no real opportunity for the reader to see these characters like traditional

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121 Compare with Peter Crisp's definition: “Extended metaphors create a conscious, and rather strange, experience of metaphorical blended spaces, while allegories refer to and characterize fictional situations functioning as their metaphorical sources” (2008, 293).

characters of narrative fiction – and identify with their emotional state, which Holbrook insisted on. This has to have something to do with the genre being a new way of looking at the world we know:

The idea of the play for voices [...] is one of many attempts to make a new convention in which the necessary explicitness is preserved, yet without limitation to a single dimension of reality [...] The craft of dialogue, in modern drama, has been ordinarily so much practised in terms of naturalism, that to a poet, or a writer with similar intentions, it has come the hardest and most baffling part of drama [...] Narrative, in comparison, is free [...] (Williams 1966, 91).

The craft of *Under Milk Wood* includes the “cruelty” exercised by the narrators as one of the main sources of humour in the text, but at times the reader needs to reconsider the “pact” he or she is supposed to have with the narrators. In this passage a pastoral idyll with a vivid soundscape is created, and then negated, like the tender feelings of Mr Edwards:

SECOND VOICE: Nogood Boyo goes out [...] and [...] looks up at the spring sky [...]

FIRST VOICE: He turns his head and looks up at the Llaregyp Hill, and sees, among green lathered trees, the white houses of the strewn away farms, where farmboys whistle, dogs shout, cows low, but all too far away from him, or you, to hear. And in the town, the shops squeak open. Mr Edwards, in butterfly-collar and straw-hat at the doorway of Manchester House, measures with his eye the dawdlers-by for striped flannel shirts and shrouds and flowery blouses, and bellows to himself in the darkness behind his eye

MR EDWARDS: (*Whispers*) I love Miss Price.

FIRST VOICE: Syrup is sold in the post-office. A car drives to market [...]

(*UMW*, 37–38.)

The effect created in reading could be described as another type of text world shift. As with the creation of a metaphoric dream world, the reader is thrown into the imaginative spectacle, but as the reader is trying to picture the setting, he or she is told to draw back. Significantly the reader’s role is compared here to a character’s standpoint, which brings to mind earlier instances of suspicion over the narrators’ trustworthiness. Of course at the same time the refusal of Mr Edward’s feelings *is* still comical, and the doubts are left in the background.

The way in which the world of *Under Milk Wood* is constructed is similar to the crumbled embodiment of Thomas’s war elegies, but the former creates humour out of the very process

of figurative negotiation whereas the latter features the distancing sensation of “just” estranging embodiment. Though in different ways, together they seem to agree with Gertrude Stein that a complex Modernist self-questioning text is “the only ‘composition’ appropriate to the new composition in which we live” (Bradbury & McFarlane 1976, 24). However as argued by Jonathan Culler, such a typical and powerful negative frame for reading may result in 'consciousness' being *the* answer to all specific questions about a text (1987, 196), and further inquiry into what might be transformed or repressed in a text by the use of such negative patterns is certainly needed. Sure enough, the three kinds of modality present in *Under Milk Wood* – dreaming, hypothetical scenarios and negation (which was shown to often be part of the two others) – all link to the rule of metaphor in the text as it is the impaired metaphoricity that sustains the hierarchy between the characters and the narrators (*and* the reader). In order to avoid the effect of “negative totalization”, in Culler's terms (*ibid.*, 207), one should not follow the route of escapism that negation may provide, but try to find ways to decide whether certain potential negative patterns or echoes within a text signify or not.

## 6. Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have analysed some of the main traits of Dylan Thomas's poetics of embodiment. The initial assumption was that Thomas's poetry is characterised by an embodied thematic frame that takes the myths of creation and the Fall in the Bible as its point of origin and *elaborates on them in different ways*. Furthermore, I set out to show that the treatment of this thematic frame evolves from the very abstract and often puzzlingly contradictory bodily metaphors of the early poetry to the less cryptic and rhetorically simpler portrayals of man's mortality in the later works. The goal was not to present a thematic-chronological overview of Thomas's poetry, but to draw thematic links between poems in a manner that would produce cross-referencing insights into Thomas's characteristic qualities as a poet. While focusing on Thomas's lyric craftsmanship, as his way of writing is often called, I also shed light on some of the intertextual links that can be seen to have supported the creation of such a unique world of inner referentiality. Throughout the thesis, I tried to preserve a sensitivity towards ambiguities and alternative readings within the individual interpretations.

Similarly, the thesis set out to elaborate on the rather simplistic (and widely criticised) early notions of metaphoric mapping in Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lakoff & Turner (1989) through additions and shifts in focus. These additions were mostly literary-specific and analytically oriented, aiming at a more applicable take on the model. Shifts in focus, on the other hand, featured making the reader's input more visible in the process of metaphoric mapping as well as situating instantiations of basic metaphors within a larger network of metaphors. The hypothesis was that the particular metaphoric patterns found in Thomas's poetry would test the illustrative powers of CMT and would also provide clues on how to develop some of the problematic areas of the theory further. I shall now briefly sum up the findings in relation to the goals outlined initially. In addition, I will indicate points of elaboration and further investigation within the theoretical framework as well as within Thomas's poetics that could not be pursued in this thesis.

The “biblical rhythm” of Thomas's poetry is a complex system featuring not only the idea of

man as cosmos and as a kind of a poetic *origo*, but most centrally the way in which human language can signify after the Fall. The main theme in Thomas's poetry is then how man, and often more specifically a poet, may (only) reach for the original divine image of man after the “bodily turn”. The specific metaphors used to portray this (doomed) aspiration vary from the merging of man and nature to physical conception as literary creation and to man as the measure of things but also as a kind of an illness that cannot be cured. While the most simplistic forms of the man as cosmos metaphor in Thomas's poetry may be quite straightforwardly bound to Genesis, as in the early work, (later) added lyric layers of man's varying functions contribute to a gradual drifting away from the abstract and rather dualistic first world of creation and towards a polysemantic reality penetrated by other literary works' influence as well. The following three generalisations can be made from this movement:

- 1) The grand narrative of the Bible, the creation of man as the image of God and the fall from that image, is paralleled with the creative work of a poet through the metaphor of God as word, and fleshed out in parabolic uses of the character of Jesus and the story of redemption. Meaning is created as a result of the initial tragedy: man is a bodily creature and separate from God. This separation is then both reinforced and reconciled in God taking on human form as Jesus. Thomas's treatment of this grand narrative often echoes William Blake's writings. On the level of embodied metaphoric language, the complex theme is in its most basic form manifested in metaphors containing (seemingly) irreconcilable contradictions, as well as metalyric and distinctly ambiguous manipulation of the metaphoric material (cf. the A THINKER IS A MOVER AND MANIPULATOR metaphor).
- 2) Thomas's idea of the 'narrative' of contradictory images is a thematic feature in that this chaining unifies what cannot be unified, the breakage that occurred in the Fall. Thomas's poems often highlight their own constructedness with such contradictoriness of metaphors that brings together writing and divine creation. At the most complex end of this spectrum are lyric worlds that feature a God-like poetic speaker operating on varied allusions, neologisms and highly innovative metaphoric integrations. Thus metaphor can become the defining element of the text world even if the kind of “natural resonance” of interconnected metaphors Lakoff and Turner present as the power of poetry may not be present.

- 3) The way Thomas operates on embodied imagery is not only distinctly literary and rich in allusions, but also highly self-reflexive in that the coming to terms with the tragedy of falling from grace receives various forms that relate to previous portrayals. As the initial embodied metaphors have been well established, they are rendered to re-interpretations and reversals. This happens particularly clearly throughout the birthday poems (from “Poem in October” to “Fern hill” and “Poem on his birthday”), as seen in the consecutive analyses of the poems. In addition, the impaired forms of embodiment encountered in the later works form a substantial contrast to the earlier poems, while still working from and around the same basic metaphors.

In terms of the forms of embodiment more specifically, six main types can be identified drawing on the analyses in this thesis.

- i) The activation of static, isolated events or images via the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor as a parallel to the animating breath of God in the myth of creation. The movement created with this activation is more often than not powered by contradiction. Therefore it often occurs in conjunction with the LIFE IS A STORY and A THINKER IS A MOVER AND MANIPULATOR metaphors.
- ii) The personification of abstract things as a realisation of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor, linked with the idea of the human scale bringing things closer to home, as well as Adam and Eve as the (original) representatives of mankind, and finally Jesus as God personified.
- iii) The identification of man with nature and the projection of the human scale onto the surrounding world (cf. ii), often in conjunction with the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor. This pattern is essentially linked with Romantic poetics, and in some of the poems (cf. the birthday poems) features pantheistic ideas, though often the inevitable decay that living beings face is foregrounded.
- iv) The negative interconnectedness of man as a bodily being with the WRITING IS CREATION metaphor in that man's bodiliness, or sexuality more specifically, is an itch no words can provide an aid to, as well as man as an incurable disease, typically cancer, that is spread out in language. This tendency of course originates in the Fall.

- v) Spatial orientation as an evaluative move. The GOOD IS UP schema, embodied by Christ in particular, is contrasted with the idea of descending as moral deprivation and the body being absorbed into the earth as dictated by the organic cycle (cf. iii).
- vi) The negation of the human scale in metaphors of impaired embodiment. As a reversal this pattern affects all of the other patterns mentioned above as they rely on the “norm” of the human scale. In a thematic sense the reversal is fundamental, too: the pulling down of something taken for granted indicates loss of faith in basic things like the goodness of man. It is also significant whether the target space is body-external or body-internal: the direction of the projection can underline or negate familiarity.

The rather obvious link between Thomas's poems and the idea of embodiment in CMT was the thesis's central starting point. The obviousness of the connection made one of the main weaknesses of the theory very visible: the compelling everyday applicability and generality of CMT and blending theory alike is rather far away from the most constructed of Thomas's embodied metaphors. Thus the usefulness of the theoretical model in terms of literary analysis was put to the test throughout the thesis, and at times CMT could only function as an initiating impulse for more nuanced interpretation. However as such it helped in outlining many key points in Thomas's poetics of embodiment. In order to see Thomas's metaphoric narrative as a coherent thread in a text, comparable to the natural resonance Lakoff and Turner talk about, a more canon-aware approach to the way metaphoric projections work and evolve was and is needed. By 'canon' I refer to literary history and the study of literature alike. When applied as an analytical tool, CMT has to be accompanied with a knowledge of literary conventions in order to make the necessary distinction between metaphor and thought when reading fictional texts. Furthermore, the way in which the evolution of Thomas's embodiment theme was shown to extend also onto the structural level in the negative forms of embodiment brought out the importance of questioning the 'constant' of the human scale in CMT and blending theory.

Further investigation into the relationship between conceptual metaphors and their instantiations in poetic forms is certainly needed, and especially into how this relationship is influenced by other poetic means. The poetic speaker's role is particularly important in this regard, as my analyses have shown. In a larger-scale study of Dylan Thomas's poetics of

embodiment I would bring in Thomas's narrative works as a contrast in order to shed light on the generic-specific implications on the realisations of conceptual metaphors. Such an undertaking would also include further problematisation of the concepts of narrativity, lyricality, experientiality and voice, to name a few. A more thorough discussion of intertextuality would also be required. The challenge is to find a balance between a bottom-up approach and all the larger contexts involved, as Benjamin Hrushovski points out: "Isolating metaphor as a linguistic unit would mean separating the processing of language from a reader's processing of texts, including the construction of fictional [...] settings and 'worlds', as projected in works of literature." (1984, 7.) Cognitive poetics, ideally, would mean a balance between the mind-relevance and literary-specific observations.

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