

Närhet genom avstånd

Förslag till en resonanst teori för metaforförståelse

Touching From a Distance

Towards a resonance theory of metaphor understanding

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The present thesis suggests a new type of theory from which to analyse metaphorical language. This new theory is motivated by shortcomings from the available theories (most notably Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Embodied Metaphor Theory) in analysing metaphors in poetry. The thesis uses a sample of metaphorical poems to highlight three key issues that the available theories have in accounting for metaphors in poetry and suggests a new theory as an attempt to resolve them. The thesis suggests that metaphorically activated domains are not necessarily best understood by the 1:1 coupling suggested by the available theories but rather by the concept of resonance, viewing the text as a trigger and the reader as a resonant space for an associative process. This resonant-associative process allows for analysis that is empirically sound as well as sensitive to the individual reader's experience and action in reading a poem. The present suggestion brings the inquiry back into the reader themselves and aims to emphasise the interpretative importance of a reader in actually constructing a text and laboriously making sense from a text.

1 Introduction: Futile Devices

Metaphor as a linguistic phenomenon is a curious one. In explaining one thing by way of another, people use metaphors in an attempt to get closer to that thing by pointing out its distance to other entities. The metaphor “You are the Sun” attempts to describe a certain person by looking towards an external object that is distinctly not-them. Despite this bizarre dynamic, metaphor is widely used and made sense of in everyday language. What are the processes that allow for this to happen?

The prevailing theories of metaphor today are the *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* and the related *Embodied Metaphor Theory*. Both of these place a central significance on the underlying structure of metaphor, assuming a transmission of meaning between two semantic domains. This theoretical framework has proved effective and productive in discussing metaphors where two domains are made clear by the linguistic context the metaphor appears in. However, not all instances of metaphor are structured in a way that lends itself to isolating a central phrase with two clearly distinct semantic domains.

Poetic metaphor has proven to be a specially difficult object of analysis. Consider the hypothetical situation of a group of peers reading a poem centered around a metaphor. The possibility that every person in the group comes out of the reading with slightly varied conceptions of the text seems an uncontroversial hypothesis. In the context of poetry, the context given in everyday interaction is oftentimes missing, requiring the reader to approach such a text differently. This interpretive feature of poetry constitutes a problem for the available metaphor theories. In presenting a context with more than two domains active as sources of meaning, the theory that restricts itself to only two domains will run into problems.

The following thesis attempts to identify and resolve some of the issues that arise when the available metaphor theories are faced with the concept of poetic metaphor. The

thesis will open with a brief overview of the theoretical landscape and identify some commonalities between the available theories. Section 3 is a critical discussion of a selection of metaphor-rich poems from the perspective of the available theories. In section 4, a proposal will be made towards a new kind of metaphor theory. This proposal centers around the concept of resonance, suggesting that a metaphor functions like a trigger that initiates an associative process in the reader. This resonance-based proposal presents a perspective on metaphor that focuses on the reader and their *experience* of the text rather than the text and its “disembodied” or “standalone” meaning. This new account proposes that metaphorical meaning is to be explained as being more interactive and less rigid than the available theories.

The hope of this thesis is that the proposed account will be able to solve problems of interpretation and understanding that arise from the available theories and also to be able to provide an extension to them. Ultimately not providing a challenge or a rebuttal of the available theories, but rather a supplement and an additional viewpoint from which the world and the place that metaphor occupies within it can become clearer.

2 Background: Two Slow Dancers

The one solid core on which most, if not all, metaphor theory agrees is that metaphor is a structuring relationship between concepts. However, different theorists and theories construct both this *relationship*, the *concepts*, and the way concepts are *activated* differently. Classifying theories based on their construal of the relationship between concepts is one option, however, this can be heavily obscured and is usually not explicated enough to yield a selection suitable as grounds for an analysis. A more effective classification is to divide theories into groups depending on their assumptions about concepts, and specifically how concepts are formed. This is the central difference between the two main theories presented in this thesis.

The story of modern metaphor theory starts with George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, specifically their book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). There were theories before them, and there was thinking done simultaneously with their work that considered metaphor as a complex problem, but there is an undeniable lineage within the western school of metaphor theorising that takes Lakoff and Johnson's work as ground zero. The revolutionary aspect that *Metaphors We Live By*, and also other works like Lakoff & Johnson (1980b) brought to the discussion was to consider metaphor and metaphorical language to be more complex than previously imagined. Instead of considering metaphor as a single unique unit, Lakoff & Johnson (1980a) proposed that metaphors were part of larger systems such that several metaphors could be taking part of the same conceptual mapping. This reevaluation of the concept of metaphor allowed for a different type of inquiry that emphasised systematicity and structure instead of rhetoric or embellishment.

The school of thought birthed by Lakoff and Johnson is often referred to as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). CMT considers metaphor to be a mapping between two conceptual domains such that one (the source) structures the other (the target). Returning to the distinction above, CMT belongs to the type of theory that construes concepts as disembodied and cultural. Concepts in CMT are highly related to the culture from which they are sprung, and they lie above the sphere of individual human activity and functioning.

In the forty years that have passed since the inception of CMT, naturally there have been made additions and adjustments to the theory in order to meet criticisms put forward by rival theorists and critics. In the following, CMT will refer not only to the conceptual metaphor theory as it is presented by Lakoff and Johnson and the additions that have been made since its inception, but also to other theories that aren't strictly part of the CMT-framework. The abbreviation 'CMT' in this thesis refers to those theories that place a central emphasis on disembodied, cultural concepts as something that plays an important part in the theory's explanation of metaphor.

The rival framework in this construction is the *embodied* perspective of metaphor. On the embodied conception, metaphor isn't dependent on concepts "given" to language users from culture or some other "higher" level of existence. Rather, the concepts involved in metaphorical language are emergent from the human experience and the situated body that it employs. The central point of emphasis is that the embodied view ascribes an undeniable importance to the body and the function that the body serves in creating meaning from figurative language.

Based on the brief outline above, the central explanatory work of a theory of metaphor can be centered around two related questions:

- *The Ontological Question*: How are the concepts involved in metaphor *formed*?
- *The Processing Question*: How are these concepts processed and handled within the context of metaphor?

The processing question is more problematic than the ontological as the same writer can provide several different suggestions, all with slight variations that obstructs a generalised summary. The diversity of processing accounts generate a slope of accounts that won't lend itself very easily to any non-arbitrary grouping such as that done above regarding the ontological problem.

As far as CMT goes, the presentation below will show that there are some central issues that arise from the ontological considerations it makes, as well as common ground in how a lot of these theories function. On the embodied account this diversity muddies the waters in a more prominent way. The embodied perspective takes as its only commonality the nature of concepts, and even this varies greatly between them. One of the classic readings of this view is due to Mark Johnson: *The Body in the Mind* (Johnson, 1987). Johnson's theory posits that the central function of metaphor is not to map concepts onto each other but rather to elicit certain sensorimotor responses. Understanding a metaphor is in Johnson's view a function of the bodily results that the metaphor has, thus putting the body in focus rather than the mental primacy assumed in CMT.

When modelling these accounts, there are great similarities with CMT: a central belief in metaphor as

between two concepts, the structuring relationship etc. However, as for CMT, there are outliers in the embodied perspective. For the sake of this thesis and its limited scope, the embodied view, or EMT (Embodied Metaphor Theory) will refer to those theories that follow the perspective sketched out by Johnson and that share the conviction that:

- Metaphorical concepts are *based in* and intimately *linked to* the body.
- The function of metaphor is to elicit a certain bodily response rather than to create a connection between two concepts.
- There is a certain level of interplay between the source and target domains.

Taking this list and relating it to the brief overview of CMT presented above, the two theories can answer the ontological and the processing question as follows:

- *CMT*: Concepts are culturally based and metaphor is conceptual analysis.
- *EMT*: Concepts are based in the body and metaphor is a connection between body and language.

Below follows elaborations on some of the more pertinent details of both accounts, as well as some outliers or more "progressive" accounts. This elaboration serves to simplify the later analysis of specific poems and to draw out commonalities and differences between the perspectives as well as to establish their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory: The Old Revolution

As previously mentioned, CMT views metaphor as a mapping between two domains such that one of the domains gives structure to the other. The domain providing the structure is referred to as the "source" and the domain that is being structured is referred to as the "target". In the classic example sentence "the surgeon is a butcher", the target domain is "surgeon" and the source domain is "butcher". In the case of "*the surgeon is a butcher*", the domain denoted by the word "*butcher*" actually denotes one very specific surgeon, whereas the word "*butcher*" denotes a set of qualities, relations and entities. Thus, we use the elements in the set "*butcher*" to structure the person being referred to as "*surgeon*". A person using the phrase "*the surgeon is a butcher*" might be criticising the practice of a medical professional by suggesting that their practices are similar to those used in an abattoir. The relative similarity between the two practices and professions (both handling meat, both using sharp objects to cut said meat) serve to highlight the relative differences between them (one being concerned more with meat that is already dead whereas the other being more concerned with living beings, one handling animals and the other handling humans, one being considered "brute" or sloppy while the other is considered "precise" and accurate). This relationship of being close enough to compare yet different enough to be informative produces a mapping that effectively can import units from the source domain into the target domain.

In CMT, domains are not only an analytical item without any real-life connection. Instead the source domain of a metaphor impact the way language users constitute the target domain on a fundamental level (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b). According to CMT, when using a metaphor such as "the

surgeon is a butcher” a user is not only making a statement about someone but that statement is important for the user’s own conceptualisation of the person they are talking about. CMT also claims that these conceptualisations are in some way systematic. Lakoff & Johnson (1980b) uses some common ways to speak about arguments as an example. Phrases such as:

- (a) “He *shot* my argument *down*”
- (b) “She *destroyed* him with facts and logic”
- (c) “My theory can *withstand* any *attack*”
- (d) “They *blew* his theory *into pieces*”
- (e) “I *lost* the argument *fairly*”

are assumed to be taking part in the same *conceptual metaphor*: ARGUMENT is WAR¹. CMT would claim that sentences (a-e) are all making use of the same metaphor as they share one domain-mapping: the target domain for all sentences is ARGUMENTS and the source domain is always WAR. In all of the sentences (a-e) readers make sense of the concept of arguments and theories by way of their knowledge of the concept of war. This systematicity is another central tenet of CMT and is Lakoff & Johnson’s way of showing that metaphors follow certain rules and patterns in the same way that “literal” language does.

Kövecses (2008, 2002) adds to the theory and splits the sphere of meaning into three levels of study: the *subindividual*, the *individual* and the *supraindividual*. The subindividual level is the study of the *basis* of meaning or how meaning arises in the subject²; the individual level studies meaning constituted by individual people, and the supraindividual level is concerned with meaning constituted by cultures or groups of people. Kövecses (2008) claims that CMT is concerned with the supraindividual, or “encyclopaedic” level of meaning, partly because of the aforementioned claim to generalization. As metaphors in CMT are not made by the person using them in the moment they are using them, they are not part of the individual sphere. They are metaphors as an effect of the deeper cultural patterns. The concept of the supraindividual level can be used to explain why metaphoric usage can vary between different cultures. Since the metaphor is not contained in the specific person that is using it but in a larger context of language and cultural specificity it’s possible for there to be multiple metaphoric mappings for the same domains.

A more profound feature of CMT is that metaphors only go one way (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). So while the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT is WAR might be established, the mapping WAR is ARGUMENT is not necessarily also available. There may be cases where this is true, such as the conceptual metaphors LIFE is A YEAR and A YEAR is A LIFE³. Lakoff & Turner (1989) give a reason for this by claiming that users import logical relations, as well as subdivisions of a source domain into a specific target domain. This allows us to establish a mapping between the sequential structure of the stages of the year (spring, summer winter and fall) and the sequential structure of the stages of

life (youth, adolescence, adulthood, old age) and create a sub-metaphor of LIFE is A YEAR that claims that THE SEQUENCE OF THE STAGES OF LIFE is THE SEQUENCE OF THE SEASONS. This second metaphor not only utilises concepts and conceptual entities of both domains, but it also utilises the internal logic of the domains: the stages of life flow from one into the other in the same way that the seasons of the year flow into one another. This exemplifies that while CMT does not approve of *productivity*⁴ in regards to conceptual metaphors and domain mappings, it allows for something similar in regards to the elements contained in the domains that constitute the metaphor.

Recently, CMT has been expanding even further as researchers find gaps in the theory. One especially interesting expansion is due to Kövecses (2020a, 2020b). Kövecses fleshes out the analysis by introducing contextual aspects like the physical situation, the cultural of historical situation and social cues, for example knowledge about the speaker. He also states that different types of meaning are due to different types of processes, combining the meaning extrapolated from a domain with meaning gathered from *image schemas* and what Kövecses refers to as *mental space* and *frame* (Kövecses, 2020b, pp. 115, 125). This extension adds important elements that lends a more detailed image of the processes involved in metaphor usage while still retaining the central idea of conceptual mappings and connections between domains.

The importance of CMT is hard to overstate, as it introduced the idea of metaphor as something that could be analysed systematically, diverging from the previous conception of linguistic metaphor, where every metaphor was an atomic unit that impossibly could be analysed or studied closer. Despite its many developments, CMT’s basis and core remain intact: metaphor consists of a mapping between two conceptual domains and its purpose is to structure one of those domains in terms of the other. Exactly how this structuring takes place is highly debated, and accounts vary greatly in regards to which aspects of the domain are considered most relevant to the metaphor at large.

Embodied Metaphor: The Base of All Beauty is the Body

In recent years, the writings on metaphor have been moving further and further away from the atomic, disembodied framework presented by CMT. Instead going towards a place where bodily input serves the primary function not only for understanding *metaphor*, but for understanding language as a whole.

The perspective of *embodied cognition* as it pertains to metaphor and metaphor theory does not lend itself as easily to a strict and concise categorisation as CMT. This brief survey will take inputs from several researchers and theorists that in some way put the body and its functioning as a central aspect of metaphorical meaning making. The dichotomy of the field is not so much between two rivalling, definite factions, but rather between one traditional, established order

¹ Domains are conventionally written in all caps to differentiate uses of the words as domains from general usage. Any use of all caps in this thesis is to signify usage of words as domains, emphasis is signified by *italics*.

² The word ‘subject’ is most often used in this thesis to describe a human actor of some sort, rather than a subject of study or a subject of debate. For clarity, ‘subject matter’ is contrasted with ‘human subject’ when there might be a larger risk of confusion.

³ eg. “in the springtime of youth” for LIFE is A YEAR and “The birth of a new year” for A YEAR is A LIFE.

⁴ *Productivity* in this case refers to the quality present in most natural and formal languages that allow users to combine items from the lexicon according to the rules of the syntax to potentially form an infinite amount sentences of the language.

of things and a new upstart of diverse origin whose primary goal is to challenge the assumptions made by the old guard: the means of which are less important than the final accomplishment.

The perspectives presented by Johnson (1987), Gibbs & Macedo (2010) and Müller (2019), are largely compatible with CMT. Kövecses (in this thesis more associated with CMT) also claims that metaphorical meaning has a basis in the body (Kövecses, 2008; 2002). What Johnson and Gibbs both claim, is that metaphor is closely connected to the bodily experiences humans have as living beings. Gibbs & Macedo (2010) bring up various studies that have shown how sensorimotor activation was connected to mentally corresponding activity and that certain metaphors activated the corresponding sensorimotor areas in the brain etc. This evidence leads Gibbs & Macedo to assume that metaphors have a bodily basis and that the content of a metaphor stems from the body. Similarly to Johnson (1987), Gibbs & Macedo (2010) position themselves against theories of concepts as disembodied and monadic.

These accounts of metaphor understanding vary from the ones put forth by CMT in that they position the body as the semantic center of understanding. Metaphors are given content and context by the situated bodies of language users rather than partaking in a greater, culturally endowed framework that can be reached solely through reasoning. However, this change of perspective as to the origins and natures of concepts does not imply a rejection of the CMT. Gibbs & Macedo (2010) talk about source- and target domains and while other writers use the terms “vehicle” and “topic” respectively retaining a core of dualistic mapping despite a change in vocabulary. The greatest difference between CMT and EMT lies in how the theories approach concepts: their accounts of how these concepts are used by human subjects are largely similar. The embodied view of metaphor is both empirically sound and intuitively well-conceived, yet it does not offer any alternative perspectives by way of processing that have not already been brought up by writings more explicitly within the CMT tradition.

Summary and Expansion: Only Shallow

CMT and EMT (later also referred to together as “the conceptual theories”) both view metaphor as something that is more structured and complex than simply a rhetorical device and share many similarities, one of which being the focus on the many metaphors that can arise from a single mapping as the realm of study. When discussing metaphor from the supra-individual perspective, this is hardly a problem as this type of inquiry interests itself less in the cognitive processes that interpret the metaphor, and more with the metaphor as a higher-order phenomenon.

However, these theories and this mode of inquiry gets into trouble when confronted with the big, bad, and indefinite wolf of poetic metaphor. While many metaphors employed by poets take part in some basic conceptual metaphor like TIME is SPACE or LIFE is A YEAR, there is also an overwhelming amount of *novel metaphor* in the realm of poetry. Novel metaphor can be defined as metaphorical language that does not make use of any already existing basic metaphors. The following sentence is used in order to provide an illustration of how a novel, low-context metaphor can be constructed. The context is meant to be as low as

possible while still retaining the core features of a metaphor and while also being comprehensible to a reader on some, potentially non-explicative, level.

(f) “the pelicans are shards of glass in the foot of a maple”

One could claim that (f) uses a conceptual metaphor like BIRDS are NUISANCES, but neither does this seem like a particularly prominent metaphor nor is it an informative theory about the meaning of the sentence. As mentioned above there is also a problem of domain identification and integration in the realm of novel or poetic metaphor, probably arising from the relatively low level of context compared to everyday language. Despite this low context, (f) is processed and somehow comprehended by the reader. There seems to be four distinct domains in use, three of which appear after the central connective ‘are’. Mapping out the distinct domains of (f) we get something along the lines of:

- *The Pelicans*: Accessing the domain of birds, or specifically seabirds.
- *Shards of glass*: Accessing the domain of broken objects, artefacts or fragile objects.
- *Foot*: Accessing the domain of body parts.
- *Maple*: Accessing the domain of trees.

Creating any kind of mapping similar to the previously available theories proves extremely difficult with a set of domains like this, especially so given the internal structure of this particular sentence. In order to produce a theory of metaphor understanding that can explain not only the metaphorical “shorthands” described by CMT but also the novel metaphors used in poetry, the limitation to two domains has to be lifted to include a wider range of inputs.

Picture a desk or a workspace, on the desk are a set of items that are used for assembling a collage: scissors, scalpels, glue, paper etc. In order for the person sitting at the desk to assemble their collage they have to interact with the subject matter (the paper and images) but also with the tools (knives, scissors) in order to make the pieces of paper fit together into a compound, comprehensible image. Consider metaphor comprehension as an analogue to this desktop: the words and linguistic indata is symbolised by the paper, the fitting of different pieces together is the attentive process of meaning making, and the knives and scissors represents focused attention.

In order for a reader to make sense of a novel metaphor like the one presented in (f), they need to create a hypothesis of how these associations fit together into some relatively coherent unit. This process has been described by Treisman in her work with the *Feature Integration Theory of Attention* (FIT, eg. Treisman & Gelade, 1980). In this view, the central function of attention is to identify free, isolated parts or features and use them to construct a coherent, compound unit. The main processes and dynamics of FIT, through which a coherent unit is created by integrating a wide array of lesser inputs and units, are suitable to describe the integration of semantic features in the context of metaphor understanding as well as visual data. When the reader has composed their unified model, this becomes the basis of the understanding of the entire sentence.

The metaphorical workspace is filled with associations triggered by the word forms used in an expression. These associations⁵ are naturally bound to the person reading the metaphor and are based on their bodily experiences, situation, history etc. The associative network elicited by the word form can be understood by way of *resonance*. The concept of resonance is mainly concerned with sound and music, where one tone (the *fundamental*) gives rise to others. Imagine striking a tuning fork and hearing its quiet tone suddenly be dramatically amplified when the tuning fork is placed onto another object. The tuning fork in this example is transmitting vibrations to the object such that it makes the object itself vibrate based on its material composition and shape. Depending on the *natural frequency* of the object, the tone of the tuning fork will be differently amplified. The natural frequency is the frequency at which the object vibrates when it is not “bound” by an external source of vibration like a tuning fork. When the natural frequency of a medium is close or identical to the frequency of the tuning fork (or any other oscillatory source) *resonance* occurs. Resonance is the drastic amplification of the signal caused by the two systems (in this case the tuning fork and the objects it is placed on) interacting.

In the same way that the object on which the tuning fork is placed will impact the way the tone of the fork is amplified, the person that reads a piece of metaphoric language will “amplify” the semantic content of said piece of language. The associative network mentioned above can be thought of as the overtones resulting from a fundamental frequency being resonated through a space. This metaphor will be elaborated below, but for now it is sufficient to keep in mind two central processes that are active in the comprehension of poetic metaphor: the *resonant associations* elicited by the text itself, and the *integrational workspace* that combines these associations into a comprehensible unit of semantic data. Breaking down this proposed process into rough and basic steps would render something like:

1. *Input*: in this case sentence (f)
2. *Parsing*: Identifying semantically relevant units in the input
3. *Association*: Every unit triggers associations in the reader, creating an interconnected network of concepts, memories and impressions
4. *Integration*: These semantic networks are fitted to each other to produce a coherent unit of associative meaning
5. *Output*: The pattern or relational structure of the associative network constitutes the basis of a non-explanative semantic unit tied to the present input.

Instead of presuming a structure for metaphor that is akin to the syncing of two electrical devices by a wire (mapping a source domain onto a target domain), this account presents metaphorical understanding in a way that puts the reader at the center of the meaning-making process. Emphasising that the reader is an interpreter and *creator* of meaning rather than the *recipient* of it.

3 Material: Fissures in the Megastructure

The discussion below serves to elucidate and concretise aspects, features and problems inherent to the theoretical perspectives outlined above. As this thesis is concerned with the problems posed specifically by poetic metaphor to widely acknowledged metaphor theories, a selection of poems will serve as the basis of the discussion. The poems used do not aim to provide a representation of the state of the art of poetic metaphor but rather to point towards previously overlooked issues that need to be resolved in order to satisfactorily account for the phenomenon. This mode of inquiry has allowed for a selection that is motivated by a wish to find poems that can offer different perspectives on the same phenomenon, thus featuring different poets from different times and traditions. All of the poetry selected is originally written in English, this choice was made to minimise any issues about translation or interpretation from the side of the author or editor. Selection has centered around three central groups: metaphorical poems most satisfactorily accounted for by CMT, metaphorical poems most satisfactorily accounted for by EMT, and metaphorical poems that cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by either theory. The poems are presented in an order that reflects their “allegiance”; the first poem is rather well suited for CMT and EMT, whereas the final one is unsuitable for any explanation by either EMT nor CMT. However, these categories aren’t definite and might overlap at certain points, having a poem be explained both by EMT and CMT etc.

The reading of a poem is heavily impacted by the preexisting knowledge of the reader going into the text. Considering a text in “isolation” is a virtually impossible task as every reader is inextricably linked to their preconceived notions of and preexisting knowledge about a certain text or writer (eg. Kendeou & van den Broek, 2007; Kelly, 2014; Langer & Nicolich, 1981). The discussion does not aim to provide any “objective” reading of the poems studied but simply provide a *possible* reading. The analysis will attempt to explain the metaphors from the individual level, rather than the supraindividual which is the one favoured in most of the metaphor-theoretical discourse. This method aims to show that the *nature* of understanding and comprehending a metaphorical text is invariant over the conditions of naïve and informed reading even though the *specific meaning* made by the reader will vary greatly relative to those conditions.

Lisel Mueller - “Things”⁶

In “Things” (Mueller, 1993, pp.26) the reader is faced with a short analysis of a selection of everyday metaphors in the tradition of Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lakoff & Turner (1987). The poem centers around the relation between humans and objects in the world, first considering man-made objects and later natural phenomena. In her analysis, Mueller creates a sort of meta-metaphor⁷ that rises above the basic metaphors that she uses as her framework.

⁵ The reason why ‘association’ is used in favour of ‘connotation’ is the shared, cultural aspect of connotations. Connotations are usually discussed as being part of a larger context or culture. The use of ‘associations’ is meant to highlight the private nature of the process (cf. §4).

⁶ Full poem available in Appendix 1 as (A1-a).

⁷ A meta-metaphor is, as the word suggests, a metaphor *about* a metaphor. In the case of Mueller (1993, pp.26) the meta-metaphor is a higher-order metaphor constructed out of several lower level ones. Other uses of the term in this thesis refers to metaphors that aim to explain metaphors (e.g. the Resonance-metaphor used throughout the thesis).

“Things” opens with a discussion of loneliness, claiming this to be the reason for humans giving clocks *faces*, chairs *backs* and tables *legs*. Mueller sketches a portrait of humanity that mirrors descriptions of gods dissatisfied with their present way of living, eager to change the dimensions of their confinement. This omnipotence seems to serve the function of support, with Mueller using objects that physically support the body as her first examples. The second stanza continues the theme of loneliness but now focusing less on themes of support and more on language and communication. Here she chooses shoes and bells as examples of objects that have been “given” tongues, allowing humans to listen to them. The third stanza is concerned with beauty, making pitchers and bottles slender and elegant as a way to satisfy a need for beauty and “graceful profiles”.

While the first stanza is highly focused on items selected because of their common function, the second stanza is more fragmented as there is a clear sonic difference between shoes and bells. The bells can be listened to, or as Mueller writes: “...so we could listen / to their emotional language,” (Mueller, 1993, pp.26). The tongues in the shoes are described as being “as smooth as our own” (*ibid.*). The difference between the tongues in bells and shoes highlight different features in the concept of “tongue” that are being activated in either case. The shoes’ tongues are the comforting tongues of lovers and friends, whereas the tongues of bells are the tongues of speech and secrets. The third stanza returns to a more ordered selection, pitchers and bottles both contain liquids. As the head of a person could be considered the “container” for the mind or the very least the brain, these items parallel the literal uses of the words “neck” and “lip”, directing the reader towards a region of the body that nicely parallels the items in question. Finally, Mueller turns towards the world:

Even what was beyond us
 was recast in our image;
 we gave the country a heart,
 the storm an eye,
 the cave a mouth
 so we could pass into safety.
 (*ibid.*)

The final stanza uses a range of contrasts to produce its meaning, one of these being the relationship between the big worldly objects and the small human features. The passage also highlights a gradient within the poem, moving from the concrete and practical towards the abstract and emotional or spiritual. The objects of the first stanza provides physical support in loneliness, the second stanza provides emotional support, the third pleases the aesthetic sensibilities while the fourth serves as a nurturing presence (containing all the culturally defining features of a human being) that protects humans as they interact with the world.

The fourth stanza could be considered a meta-metaphor for the invention of god by humanity; presenting the human race as almost omnipotent masters of the world they inhabit, while at the same time illuminating the intense loneliness that accompanies such a position. Taken in its entirety, the poem handles the human condition and human loneliness in a disillusioned world: making the metaphorical language that

we use to describe manmade objects the source domain and the target domain being the human experience in and of itself. There is plenty of embodiment happening as well, as the poem makes use of human bodies as a counterpoint to the things it describes. This usage of body-centered language can easily be claimed to inform the meaning of the poem, a claim that does not seem to be in conflict with the domain mapping described above.

However, the mapping is not all that simple to concretise, the coupling of METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE is HUMAN EXPERIENCE is hardly informative and METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE is HUMAN LONELINESS has the same problem. This points towards an initial problem for CMT. The clarity of a domain mapping might be functional when describing the metaphor from the top down, but it gives too little information about the way that humans as embodied beings perceive such a mechanism.

EMT has a slight advantage here, emphasising the bodily basis of meaning, but it too restricts itself to a duality of domains. The poem itself has these pairings in abundance: CHAIR SUPPORTS are HUMAN BACKS, TABLE PYLONS are HUMAN LEGS, OPENINGS OF CAVES are HUMAN MOUTHS etc., generating a general mapping like: FEATURES OF OBJECTS are FEATURES OF HUMAN BODIES. But this metaphor is the one that Mueller *uses* in order to create her second, higher order metaphor. The collected weight of the everyday metaphors serve as a base from which the reader can discern a pattern, abstracting commonalities from specific, essential aspects of the sentences used as examples. The resulting metaphorical expression might be summarised in a form that resembles that of a mapping in CMT, but can hardly be pinned down in any way that lends any concrete insight to how the reader interacts with the poem as a collected set of metaphorical activity.

*Ella Wheeler Wilcox - “Friendship After Love”*⁸

There is a clear conceptual metaphor at play in Wheeler Wilcox (1993), linking love to the passing of the seasons. A mapping like LOVE is SUMMER and FRIENDSHIP is WINTER could be suggested, or more generally FADING OF EMOTIONS is FADING OF HEAT. However, this mapping is not necessarily the central point of the poem. While the *narrative* of the text can be understood through this metaphor and the conceptual mappings between seasons/temperature and emotional intimacy, the metaphorical core lies elsewhere. The constant reference to heat and cold as it pertains to the body makes this poem excellent to view from the perspective of EMT.

The use of temperature words throughout (‘ablaze’, ‘mellow’, ‘mild’, ‘cool’, ‘frost’, ‘heat’) highlight the similarity of the experiences of love and heat. Instead of relying on the *mappings* between concepts, Wheeler Wilcox evokes them in a corporeal way so that the reader is faced with the experiences themselves rather than just their conceptual results. Another embodied feature of this poem is its clear focus on movement. In the sixth line, Wheeler Wilcox writes about how “Love has led us” (*ibid.*) and later in the tenth line how in “cool verdant vales we wander free from care” (*ibid.*). This emphasis both on the manner of the world at these places, but also on the manner of which we interact with them further serves to position the reader within a certain psychophysical state.

⁸ Full poem available in Appendix 1 as (A1-b).

Wheeler Wilcox illustrates how EMT runs parallel to CMT: the mappings between domains are most definitely present but they are not only between *conceptual* but clearly also *sensory* domains. This feature makes EMT into a theory more apt for describing the processes of actual readers interacting with actual texts. It assumes less from the world around the reader and, crucially, it does not assume any preconceived knowledge about cultural entities. When basing a theory of understanding firmly in the body, the theory becomes easier to scale up and down in order to get the resolution required by a certain context.

This focus on embodiment is also a key to some issues for EMT as a theory of metaphor understanding. The mapping of domains remain the locus of meaning making on this account, sidelining the creation of individual meaning within the specific reader and still maintaining the objectivist assumptions made by CMT. The assumption that meaning is restricted to two distinct domains is a problem that has been raised several times above, but then mostly in regard to CMT. EMT has these same problems even though it assumes a more individually focused perspective. In Wheeler Wilcox (1993) the concept of embodiment can be used to understand the formation of meaning and to emphasise how this meaning is intrinsically connected to the lived body of the reader.

Wheeler Wilcox uses not only HEAT and LOVE as domains but also TRAVEL, MOTION, DISSATISFACTION and LONGING. By following CMT and restricting the analysis to only the two most prominent semantic fields several others are being left out of consideration. This selection of which concepts are deemed relevant enough creates a structure where hierarchies are not ordered on a scale of more to less prominent, but rather along a binary of “semantically efficacious” and “semantically docile”. The conceptional theories’ emphasis on the single, binary mapping restricts reading and potential meaning to specific parts of the poem and runs the risk of potentially isolating texts from their own inherent context.

The usage of multiple semantic domains allows for an interplay between them that in turn creates a type of non-explicative meaning that is unique to the specific poem and specificity of its situation. This type of meaning also allows for analysing semantic realms as varying in intensity rather than considering them as simply efficacious or not.

Dan Chelotti - “Compost”⁹

“Compost” (Chelotti, 2014) presents human fragility through the lens of a decaying snake left to rot by the roadside. By using the metaphor of the snake, Chelotti is able to hone in on both the fragility and ephemeral nature of the human condition and its corporeal nature. The snake serves as a metaphor for the entirety of the human experience as Chelotti perceives it. One could suggest a mapping like: “THE SNAKE is HUMANITY”, and they would not be wrong: this seems to be one of the uses of the snake in the poem. However, it does not provide any theory of how the *reader* understands the poem.

The power of metaphoric language lies not in the building of a bridge between two places that every reader then takes, but rather in giving readers the *opportunities* of building bridges by themselves. The author suggest several domains at play in a poem, and that their occurring together is a way

to understand them. The reader seeks a pattern and thus construct meaning from the text.

In “Compost”, there are a number of domains being activated. Depending on the depth of analysis it does not seem impossible for there to technically be infinite domains available to a reader in a case like this but most prominent seem to be the domains of decay, parenthood, death, youth, caretaking, nurturing and exploitation. Perhaps the two most central domains are those of decay and parenthood, Chelotti centers the poem around a walk that the narrator has with their daughter, their encounter with a dead snake, and subsequently the memory of the narrator’s own experiences with death and decay in regards to their own father.

Similar to the resonant effects of an acoustic instrument, Chelotti creates a complex web of associations and connections, guided by the words on the page. As mentioned above, the domains activated in “Compost” constitute a numerable infinity like that exhibited by the set of positive integers: we can discern discreet borders between units in the scale but we cannot expect this scale to ever end. This property of infinity is also present in resonant overtones of an instrument. As the overtones resulting from a sound source are infinite and the human hearing faculty is limited, only a selection of overtones will be audible to a human subject. Even though a frequency cannot be heard, it can affect the body of people that it reaches in other, non-audible ways. These properties are shared between the concept of overtones and that of semantic domains. Depending on our interaction with the text, different domains will be made available. Looking at a text for just a couple of seconds, only the most obvious domains will be activated. Upon further inspection however, more and more can be discovered.

The concept of an indefinite number of possible meaning-making domains allow for an analysis of a poem like “Compost” that does not rely on a singular, atomic mapping. In constituting metaphor as an active process performed by the reader a lot of issues of separation and selection can be sidestepped. The text serves as a trigger for a resonant process in the reader that subsequently triggers and selects relevant associations.

Caroline Caddy - “Solitude”¹⁰

Akin to Mueller (1993), Caddy (2007) uses the metaphor of objects to explain loneliness. This conception of loneliness considers it as something precious in and of itself, using parallels to precious objects and things protected by bureaucracy to explain the experience and evolution of loneliness. However, this conception changes in the latter half of the poem. Suddenly indicating that loneliness or solitude also can be like things abandoned by the roadside: when they are picked up their finder do not realise what they are holding in their hands until it is too late. This double view of the metaphor is quite interesting, and also poses a bit of a problem for the conceptualist view.

While a conceptual mapping of OBJECTS are LONELINESS or LONELINESS is AN OBJECT can be proposed, it is clear that there is more to the story than simply the connection of domains, mainly because of the aforementioned switch between different versions or conceptions of objects. A wider conceptualisation would propose that there is one metaphor in the beginning of the poem: LONELINESS is A PRECIOUS ITEM and another one at the end: LONELINESS is A TRICK/SURPRISE/

⁹ Full poem available in Appendix 1 as (A1-c).

¹⁰ Full poem available in Appendix 1 as (A1-d).

TRAP. This could help enhance resolution and consider the metaphor more aptly. However, an important feature of the poem is the rigidity of the original metaphor. As the reader progresses down the poem, they take a similar path to that of the protagonist, being equally surprised at the end to be handed this new perspective on loneliness. In seeing the connections between the objects described in the beginning of the poem, and those described at the end, the reader realises the innate duality of the metaphor and perhaps the very concept of loneliness or solitude. In a metaphor like that employed by Caddy, the mapping and importing of domain-based data is not the end of the story. For while it is possible to explain the shift in semantics throughout the poem from a CMT viewpoint, it never delves into the mechanics of how and maybe more importantly *why*, this happens.

Both CMT and EMT have a tendency to sidestep both the interpretative role of the reader and the compositional function of the text itself in favour of more theoretical posits like concepts and mappings. While such theoretical units are important and highly relevant when composing an illustration of a process, they are less relevant when describing the process directly. Claiming that a person reading “Solitude” connects the concepts of ‘solitude’ and ‘tools’ and making that the end of inquiry misses the questions of how the activated concepts interact with each other and maybe even more importantly; how they are formed. Assuming a theory that states that concepts are accessed by a person in a certain way due only to the fact that the person is entrenched in a certain interpretative context disregards the ability for multiple interpretations. Assuming an explanation that allows for multiple readings not only by different people but also by the same person at different times opens up the possibilities of a more life-like and intimate account of how meaning making occurs in actual human subjects as it pertains to metaphor.

The material of the poem is both the guide and the vehicle, nudging the reader to interact with them in certain ways. When nearing the end of “Solitude” this aspect is intact as the language shifts, also shifting the perceptions of the reader. These shifts of material and guiding can be considered to change the mappings of conceptual spaces, and in extension to be the low-level processes that gives rise to them. However, as has been mentioned above, the idea of rigid domains is in and of itself a not wholly unproblematic view. A position that considers conceptual domains as primarily a theoretical posit rather than the end of the explanation will retain the plasticity necessary to account for a multitude of readers and their multitude of interpretations.

Louise Glück - “Elms”¹¹

Two quite clear domains can be distinguished from “Elms” (Glück, 1985, pp.50), that of the relationship between the narrator and - presumably - a lover, and that of the elm tree. After observing the elms and seeing their twisted forms as a result of torment, the narrator sees the same torment and twisted form in their own relationship. Another interpretation might be centered around the fourth verse. Considering the narrator and their partner to be like builders could be a metaphor for how they attempt to shape the twisted forms of the elms into something orderly and neat.

The simplest mapping for the poem would be something like RELATIONSHIPS are ELMS or, more general: RELATIONSHIPS are TREES or, wider still: HUMANS are

PLANTS. A mapping between domains can be established here partly because of the relative brevity of the poem, the short duration limiting the domains that can be evoked. While “Elms” is a poem that lends itself more easily to an analysis on a CMT perspective than a lot of Glück’s other work, this analysis leaves a lot to be desired.

The analysis from CMT provides a kind of blueprint of how the poem *should* be interpreted. An analysis from CMT aids in creating the possibility of shared meaning through one shared a definite interpretation. This function of a CMT-based analysis is not to be discredited as it plays an important part in the communicative aspect of poetry, but it provides little explanation about the processes that are active in textual understanding on the individual level. Furthermore, the restriction to just two domains excludes additional semantic data from entering the analysis. These “additional domains” are highly valuable to the reader and are vital in creating the meaning of *this specific poem*, rather than that of another making use of the same fundamental basic metaphor.

In the case of Glück (1985, pp.50), the multiple domains can be understood through the resonance metaphor outlined in §2. The multiple domains elicit a certain set of associations in the reader, similar to the way resonant amplification functions. When these associative networks are presented in succession as the reader interacts with the text they combine to form a chord or a melody, with previous associations impacting the occurrence of later ones. This combinatorial feature of semantic information is left out of the discourse of metaphor more tightly connected to the CMT tradition.

Louise Glück - “The Silver Lily”¹²

The theme of silence features like bookends in “The silver lily” (Glück, 1992, pp.59), we are introduced to it in the first stanza: “...will / speech disturb you? We’re / alone now; we have no reason for silence” (ibid.), and in the final stanza: “after the first cries, / doesn’t joy, like fear, make no sound?”(ibid.). Framing the poem in silence sets a certain tone for the text as a whole. The narrator starts off by saying that there is no reason for silence between its central characters, and concludes by pondering that both pain and joy share in just that silence. This shared property casts the first line in a different light that makes the concept of ‘silence’ more than simply the lack of sound, in turn creating a sort of low-level metaphor between the concepts of pain/joy and silence.

In between these two bookends we have three additional stanzas discussing the moon’s cycle and its light into a garden. The third stanza, which is coincidentally the longest, describe the garden and how it behaves in spring with flowers come back to life, the moon as a constant and celestial witness. Glück then interrupts herself. Having gotten into the rhythm of spring, the reader expects the fourth stanza to be about summer, fall or winter. Instead Glück quickly veers to the side, going into a more confessional tone that comes across like beckoning to a lover. She writes about the end and uncertainty, both for the narrator’s own future and the world, and ultimately also for the lover. The fourth stanza ends with the line “And you, who’ve been with a man -”, (ibid). once again the thought is left hanging, unfinished. Then follows only the fifth stanza about joy, pain and silence.

The first stanza functions like an overture, picking up several subsequent themes. It opens with the theme of

¹¹ Full poem available in Appendix 1 as (A1-e).

¹² Full poem available in Appendix 1 as (A1-f).

silence, creating a connection with the final stanza; the theme of spring present in the third is introduced as well as the domain of nights that crop up in the shape of the moon later. Moving into the third stanza the topic of the moon is more clearly introduced and explicitly named: “can you see, over the garden - the full moon rises. / I won’t see the next full moon” (ibid.). This introduces the theme of the conversation as well as the concept of ‘ending’ later referenced in the penultimate stanza. The second set of groupings is thus those between the second and third, and the second and fourth stanzas respectively.

The embodied aspects of this complex mesh are primarily twofold. The first, and the most obvious one is the theme of silence that bookends the poem. Calling upon the auditory region in a medium such as poetry and by such a visual storyteller as Glück activates new and unexpected regions in the meaning-making process. It also serves to connect the auditory domain to the visual and somatosensory domains that are at play when describing the garden. The second, more profound aspect of embodiment is the disorientation that Glück performs by switching and weaving the domains present in the poem. This effect is perhaps the most emphasised when Glück ends the fourth stanza before finishing the sentence, or before the narrator is allowed to finish their thought. The reconnection to the initial theme present in S1 comes as a surprise from the previous four stanzas. These two effects create a sense of tension and release in the poem. This tension and release is a physically anchored experience that heavily informs the reading of the poem, using bodily attributes to connect different realms of meaning to one another and to create a new space for meaning to be constituted.

As for many of the poems discussed, problems arise when the conceptual reading is faced with a plurality of domains. It is not difficult to see the bodily basis of meaning present in “The Silver Lily”, but the conceptual mappings between domains are almost impossible to produce. One could claim that the aforementioned connection between joy/pain and silence is a viable option, but that leaves out most of the text and also misses the entirety of the disorientation that the narrator expresses¹³. The non-linguistic metaphor of confusion and disorientation as a way of explaining or understanding the passage of time, the seasons and relationships does not lend itself to any conceptual mapping as the *concept* of confusion is not so much at play as the *experience* of it. The meaning of the poem is given *from* the body, it does not follow the EMT tradition in claiming that the meaning is *instantiated in* the body. A conceptual mapping is not responsible for a physical reaction that in turn produces or informs meaning, rather the text elicits a physical reaction that in turn forms the concepts themselves.

Finds from the material: Excavation

Evident from several of the examples above, there is a central problem posed by poetry for the top-down processing account provided by both EMT and CMT. In assuming a rigidity of domains the theories remove themselves too far from the human interpreter to be able to account for the analysis and processing of poetic metaphor, not necessarily partaking in traditional conceptual mappings. The poems discussed might in some cases be making use of such a

mapping as a linguistic device, but the central metaphors rarely lend themselves to being summarised to a conceptual mapping in a way that elucidates the reader’s actual work in understanding the poem. Sidelining the reader’s personal labour in constructing the metaphor as it is being read runs the risk of positing normative statements about meaning and establishing false borders and partitions into the world. It also complicates the theories further, making what seems on the surface to be a simpler and more stripped down theory of metaphor into something that more profoundly assumes a multitude of entities in order to make its claims and statements.

Another problem raised above is that of resolution. While the assumption of simple conceptual mappings are functional when analysing metaphor as a code, it is not as welcoming to the analysis of metaphor as nuanced action. The conceptual mappings present in both EMT and CMT provide an analytic resolution too coarse grained to constitute a theory with any real insight into the processing of the metaphor from the subjective standpoint. This relates back to the notion of the supra-individual sphere of meaning proposed by Kövecses (2008). Discussing metaphor from the supra-individual perspective makes it difficult, if not impossible, to envision the reader as an actual person with variation and contrast to their neighbour. CMT and EMT are explicitly concerned with how metaphor *functions*, and not necessarily with how it is *understood*, such an endeavour makes the supra-individual level an appropriate resolution of the study. However, it seems that the function of metaphor might be more entwined in the reading and comprehension of metaphor (following the research by eg. Gibbs (2019), Gibbs & Macedo (2010)) than previously figured. This intimate connection between function and comprehension demands a more fine grained and nuanced resolution of explanation in order to render any truthful image of the phenomenon of at hand.

A third and final problem is that of normativity. In order to have a shared language understood by a multitude of people, there has to be a normative level to it such that a certain statement means the same thing in a multitude of contexts. However, when studying poetry this is less than enviable. Considering poetry from a standpoint of normativity and a definite set of interpretations creates a setting where one reading is considered “more correct” than another, thus establishing limits in the set of readings available to a reader, and by extension establishing a limit in the readers that are able to be considered to “understand” the poem. These three problems: the problem of *resolution*, the problem of *direction*, and the problem of *normativity* are all pointing towards the need for a new type of metaphor theory that can account for reader’s interactional experiences with metaphorical language.

It seems clear that regardless of whether or not it is the “intended” one, a reader always leaves a text with *some* understanding of it, even if that understanding itself is one of confusion. In a binary theory that uses conceptual mappings, these nuanced readings are forced into the categories of “right”/“wrong” or “appropriate”/“inappropriate” instead of looking to the readers themselves and seeing their actual comprehension for what it is. This constraining effect primarily arises from the inability of the conceptual theories to account for multiple domains actively contributing to one metaphor. Instead of interesting oneself in decoding

¹³ An attempt to produce any conclusive list of domain mappings for “The Silver Lily” runs the risk of creating a countable infinity of mappings. As the poem makes use of both linguistic and non-linguistic meaning the borders and edges of the domains are blurred, in turn making it possible to map the domains to each other, but difficult or impossible to determine when every possible domain has been mapped to another.

metaphors, the metaphor theorist should be interested in studying the variations and multitudes in which people perceive metaphor; realising that this multitude is not a problem, but rather the strength of metaphor as a linguistic phenomenon. If metaphor provides a way of explaining one phenomenon or concept by way of another, *how* it does so is at least equally important as the fact *that* it does so.

4 Theoretical Proposal: A New Dawn Fades

Background: The Sun Roars Into View

As suggested in §3, EMT and CMT share many of their problems regarding poetic metaphor. Despite their clear differences in regards to concept formation they both consider metaphor as a mapping between two distinct domains. Even theories like those presented by Gibbs (2019) which focus on the enacted aspects of metaphor make this assumption. Naturally, it is an accessible route to take given CMT and its prominence in the discourse as well as the common definition of metaphor as a structuring relationship between *two* concepts or objects.

A theory like CMT makes few, if any, explicit statements about meaning making, but it contains several features that partake in what Reddy (1979) refers to as the *conduit metaphor* of communication. On this account, abstract meaning in the mind of the speaker is formalised or put into a receptacle of some sort. The receptacle is then transferred to a conduit that delivers it to the recipient who in turn unpacks the formalised items just as they were packaged. In this case, the receptacle is language or words and the conduit is the communicative act. In the conduit metaphor-paradigm, meaning is only produced by the “speaker” and can be unpacked in a perfect 1:1 ratio by the recipient.

CMT and other theories leaning heavily on domain rigidity and discreteness are conduit-like in that they assume a definite mapping between two units: the metaphor TIME is MONEY means the same thing every time it is used as it features the same fundamental building blocks or use the same *function*¹⁴. Considering a sentence like “That’ll cost me two hours” from a CMT perspective assumes that the reader simply unpacks the language to reveal a definitive mapping between the domains of TIME and ECONOMIC TRANSACTION. Given this apparent similarity, the same criticisms that Reddy (1979) raises against the conduit metaphor can be raised against CMT and any theory of metaphor that assumes a rigid, objectivist mapping of domains.

One of the fundamental demands for a theory of subjective metaphor understanding is a resolution of explanation that centers on the reader themselves. Theories like CMT that partake in the conduit metaphor of language have a resolution that is too coarse to lend any real insight into these processes. CMT provides an account of metaphor that is as informative of human understanding as a dictionary is of understanding semantics or language use: showing a statistical and higher-level representation of how metaphors occur, but not attempting to view them from the bottom up. The theories that are available to us are suited for different purposes, and should be viewed as different tools available to the craftsperson. CMT has its uses and benefits, but trying to explain the meaning-making of poetic metaphor solely from

the perspective of CMT is like a surgeon attempting an open heart surgery with a bread saw.

Resonance, conventions and meaning: No Natural Order

In assuming a rigid *function* of metaphor rather than a fluid *activity* a lot of explanatory work is left out, resulting in a theory that can easily relay a formalised version of metaphor, but not explain its internal structure. In order to produce a suggestion towards a theory more apt to tackling these problems, the metaphor of a workspace has previously been employed. Delving further into the theory, let’s briefly consider the concept of resonance as another way to concretise metaphorical understanding.

The physical features of the vocal tract of a human and the spatial features of an acoustic instrument shape the resonant overtones, amplifying some and dampening others. The collected overtones relative to a certain physical base is what makes a guitar sound like a guitar and not like a cello or harpsichord, this characteristic sound is oftentimes referred to as “timbre”. The determiners for timbre are thus the sound source and the resonant space in which the sound reverberates.

Mapping this concept onto written poetic metaphor, a word form is the “sound source”, it is what generates the signal and is the material to be moulded. The “resonant space” of a poem is the reader itself, their memories, opinions, understandings and knowledges. This meta-metaphor allows us to consider the imperative importance of the reader in constituting metaphorical meaning, equating the reader with the medium through which sound travels.

The metaphor of resonance allows for a reading that removes any talk of external concepts and cultural units as necessary to meaning-making, instead centering the process on the human reader. However, this does not mean that concepts in this reading are superfluous or inefficacious. The key difference is that this conception (Resonant Metaphor Theory, RMT) can account for differences in perception due to variation and difference in the concepts available to subjects. Caddy (2007) will be read differently depending on the reader’s familiarity with both loneliness in itself but also with the concepts that Caddy is using to explain it. The opening lines reference seamen and night shift workers. A person having had any of these occupations will most likely have wildly different associations triggered by these words than a person without that experience. The resonant space constituted by the reader is impacted by the experiences that they’ve had, making a seaman’s resonant space reflect differently than that of a night shift worker or a student with no prior work experience.

The impacts of new word-forms on the reader can be described by reference to *melody*. A melody is a series of tones presented in a specific, defined sequence. The sequential aspect makes both the value (pitch) and position of each item important in the experience of the melody as a whole. The presence of a certain tone in a sequence will be interpreted differently depending on the preceding tone, thus making a melody into a phenomenon that constantly makes predictions about future elements in the series as well as looking to the past for support for these predictions. Similarly, the way a reader constructs meaning from metaphorical poetic language is dependent on the meta-context of the poem at hand.

¹⁴ ‘Function’ to be understood here in the mathematical sense such that the function will always generate the same output given the same input, and that the output of the function will vary predictably relative to changes in the input.

The reader does not interpret this line from “Things” in a vacuum: “so we could pass into safety” (Mueller, 1993, pp.26) Rather it is read as part of a context where certain predictions and interpretations have been conditioned from the preceding text. The *melody* of the poem gives rise to a *key*, a local context that allows the reader to set up their workspace in a way that aids reading. Breaking the key - going against the metaphorical norm established earlier on in the poem - will result in confusion for the reader in a similar way that an unexpected chord change in a song or composition alerts the listener.

Mapping all these concepts onto metaphor, a word-form in a poem elicits a resonant-associative network in the reader that combine sequentially as the reader progresses through the text. The sequential combination guides the reader similarly to the way a melody guides a listener in making predictions based on previous items in the sequence. The collected predictions of the reader constitutes a general theory of the poem - the key - providing a contextual framework that further guides association. The way the melody of the poem relates to the key is in itself a basis of resonant association such that the reader themselves begin to “take part” in the text.

Viewing metaphor from this perspective allows for a greater temporal resolution and plasticity necessary to give a fair account of how a reader interacts with a metaphorically dense poem. This conception emphasises that while the text can elicit a reaction in the reader, ultimately it is the reader that provides the interpretation that *makes sense* from the text.

The most obvious problem for this proposed theory of meaning-making is *privacy*. In assuming a meaning-making process that starts and stops with the reader runs the risk of solipsism. A solution to this comes in the form of *conventionalised* meaning. On the RMT account, the resonant semantic unit is non-explicative as it constitutes abstract connections between semantic items for the reader. These connections have to be produced through some sort of creative labour; meaning has to be *made*. This process of meaning-making can be alleviated and aided through the use of shorthands and code. These formalised units are the conceptual metaphors. When we understand a sentence that partakes in a conceptual metaphor, the main semantic input does not come from the metaphor itself but rather from some specific content that has been associated with a certain phrase. A sentence like “in the autumn of age” is common in Swedish (as well as other languages) when talking about someone of advanced age. This frequency of use creates a second layer of semantic information that equates that sentence with the expression “old”.

Conventionalisation gives CMT and conceptual mapping its code-like behaviour such as the ability to claim that a metaphor has some determined reading or rigid meaning. When ascribing this type of shorthand to a metaphorical expression, it ceases to be purely metaphorical and starts to delve into other types of language use. Given the problems posed by poetry, it seems clear that the form of CMT present today is lacking in its analysis of metaphor. Poetry differs from conventional, everyday language in its frequent use of novel metaphor. Novel metaphor highlights the subjective meaning making as the reader will most likely have no preconceived notion of interpreting the metaphor. The key difference between novel metaphor and conventionalised metaphor is thus the availability of a second, formalised meaning for the latter that is not available to the former. Due to their specific and profound nature, it seems improbable that the metaphors employed by Glück in *Elms* will be taken

up into any significant cultural context. This restricts their possibility for conventionalisation, leaving only the resonant mode of meaning available to the reader.

The process of conventionalisation when it comes to everyday metaphor is the same process that conventionalises any language use. There are conventions that state that the word form ‘dog’ refers to a certain group of entities in the world, and conventions that entities captured by the term “time” can be discussed in terms of the entities captured by the term “space”. When a speaker says something like:

G. “I’m going to destroy his argument!”

A listener can comprehend that this person is not speaking literally, as an argument is not a physical object that can be physically destroyed. Instead, listeners can understand that G. partakes in the convention of language that claims that ARGUMENT/DEBATE is WAR and thus assume that the speaker is using the domain of war to explain the manner in which they are going to engage with their interlocutor. The conventionalised meaning derived from repeated use gives us a firmament upon which we achieve a common ground. However, this common ground does not rule out the production of a resonance-based additional meaning.

It would also be foolish to claim that these previously established patterns of meaning would not be involved in the creation of new meaning. A sentence like G. will have the conventionalised conceptual reading available in the workspace, as well as a non-explicative resonant meaning. This is echoed in Mueller (1996). Mueller uses the conventionalised meanings of the metaphors in the poem to construct a novel metaphor. The everyday metaphors of PARTS OF OBJECTS are PARTS OF HUMANS is so heavily conventionalised that they take on a new meaning in the novel usage that Mueller provides, adding resonant meaning-making to the conventionalised structure. *Things* thus becomes an illustration of the differences between the two types of meaning by showing how they can exist within the same text.

When discussing written language, environmental factors are a lot fewer and have less impact than in a spoken language interaction. The unique nature of an utterance still remains, as the network of associations created by for example repeated instances in the same text or varied usages of similar forms will inform the way a reader interacts with the meaning of the text. Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Howl” (Ginsberg, 1956, pp.9-26) is a brilliant example of how repetitive patterns serve to create new types of meaning and change the way each word is perceived. In the “Footnote to Howl” (Ginsberg, 1956, pp.27-28), Ginsberg repeatedly starts his sentences with ‘holy’. Had the word only been used once, this might have stood out as a specific reference, and our perception of the sentence would reflect that. With the repeated use of ‘holy’ to describe a wide array of people, object and phenomena, its interpretation changes as different associations are activated.

Resonance and the Brain: Extraordinary Machine

Researchers like Singer (Singer & Gray, 1995) and Pollen (1999) have proposed neurally based theories of resonance. The *Adaptive Resonance Theory* (ART), spearheaded by Grossberg (eg. Grossberg (2012), Grossberg & Carpenter (2002)) and discussed in both Singer & Gray (1995) and Pollen (1999) claims that a central part of visual attention and object recognition makes use of a phenomenon of resonance. The theory claims that sensory data trigger

feedback loops such that the input data is compared to an expectation and fitted to the expectation model. The mismatch between input and prediction then forms a pattern that can be compared between different groups of neurons.

This is where the concept of resonance enters the picture. ART states that two groups of neurons with patterns that match will fire in an oscillatory way that resonates and amplifies the signal, whereas groups of neurons with a mismatch in their patterns will instead dampen the signal. (Pollen, 1999) This concept of resonance and amplification provides a neurological context for both stage 4. and 5. from the list in §2¹⁵. The studies that have been done on ART and neural resonance have not by and large focused on metaphor or figurative language, but they might provide a possible way forward.

Consider a process such as that sketched out in 4. A reader receives an input of a word form. Using the concepts given to us from ART we can assume the activation of associations for this word form to be the semantic units that resonate with it. The association process is on this account not an atomic mapping between two different domains or concepts but rather a highly reactive process of interconnected meaning. This phenomenon needs to be studied in more detail in order to be of use in any definitive sense, but considering the relatively broad support for ART in different modes of perception (Lavoie et al., 1999; Mishchenko, 2017) it does not seem unlikely that a similar process might be at work when it comes to the understanding and meaning-making of figurative language.

On this account, the associations triggered by a certain word form are the semantic units that in some way share an activation pattern with the word form. When the input word form is presented to the system it creates a network of resonating units that in turn form the novel understanding of the figurative sentence. This also allows for the meaning-making process to contain interaction between domains without having to assume a completely symmetrical relationship between them. The asymmetrical relationship is retained as the input word-form *triggers* the resonance of semantically related units. Once the resonance is active however, this enables a more interactive process between the units. In turn allowing for a completely novel and highly context-sensitive form of meaning and knowledge to be formed. Another additional benefit of this model is that it retains and can reduce concepts and phenomena described by CMT and similar theories. The input word-form (the fundamental pitch in the resonance analogy) is analogical to the source domain in CMT. The resulting resonant semantic network (the overtones in the resonance analogy) is analogical to the target domain. Glück (1992, pp. 59) makes use of interlocking and interweaving domains that seem to interact almost fluidly. When considered from the resonant perspective, these fluid interactions and mutations can be viewed as being resonant from a specific trigger. The causal direction and flow is maintained, while still accounting for the multitude of associations that arise from such a text.

This metaphorical explanation also demonstrates the aforementioned asymmetry, as it is clear that the fundamental tone is responsible for the multitude of resultant overtones. However, as has been presented by the discourse around the phenomenon of the “*missing fundamental*” auditory illusion, the fundamental tone is not necessary in order for human subjects to *experience* its pitch (Judge, 2017). In the same way that the fundamental frequency does not have to be “actually” experienced in order for a human subject to

identify its pitch, this proposal allows for metaphorical understanding even without any clearly identifiable source-domain.

In step 4., the resonance aspect is less relevant as this step is concerned with the integration of information into a semantically coherent unit. This part of the process rather seems to function similarly to the dynamics described by FIT (e.g. Treisman & Gelade, 1980). The associations activated through the resonant process described above are unified by active, focused attention into units. This unit, as mentioned above, is not necessarily explicative in its nature. Its semantic information is highly dependent on and connected to the embodied associations activated by resonance, and as such it is the basis of what can be termed a *resonant* semantic mode. This non-explicative nature can be seen in Chelotti (2014). When moving through the poem, the reader is also moving through a symphony of potential meaning, constantly being impacted by new information that changes the perceptions of both preceding and succeeding information. The order in which the words appear in the text will impact the way their associate-resonant patterns emerge. Had the stanzas of “Compost” been rearranged so that the final stanza came first, the resulting associations of decay and responsibilities would be received differently because of the variation in pre-existing associations active in the reader. As a result, the reading of the poem is centered around this experience. Such an experience can be *fitted* onto an explicative form in order to make it more accessible or transmittable but it seems that the core of the data remains in a form that lacks any explicative qualities. Describing this semantic data as resonant highlights the interconnectedness of the metaphorical language. A metaphor is not a logical unit nor a mathematical function such that it can be calculated and defined a priori but it is instead a mode of meaning that makes use of the reader as a resonant environment in which to create the *possibility* of a certain type of meaning making.

The present focus on activity and possibility echoes the *variation theory* of didactics spearheaded by Ference Marton. Variation theory states that the central aspect of learning is contrast and that one cannot know what something *is* without first knowing what it *is not* (eg. Marton, 2014; Bussey et al., 2013; Kullberg et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2012). Similarly the meaning-making process that takes place when interacting with metaphorical language is not only based on connecting like with like, but also to use the activated associations to establish differences and variation. The process of determining what something is by way of variation also reveals the *critical aspects* of the object. Bussey et al. (2013) uses banana ripeness as an example. By looking at a set of bananas with varying colour, shape and size and examining them for ripeness, the student will find that the common aspect that ripe bananas share is colour. Colour, but not size, is thus a critical aspect of predicting banana ripeness. Similarly, the author’s highlighting of certain elements but not others serve to aid the reader in identifying the critical aspects of the poem.

In Glück’s “Elms” (Glück, 1985, pp.50), the elm tree is chosen in favour of other trees. By specifying the elm, Glück points the reader towards examining the poem from the perspective of a specific type of tree, thus easing and enabling the process of identifying the critical aspects that define the relationship behind her metaphor. The concept of critical aspects can be applied to metaphor theory as a means of narrowing the range of semantic search. By limiting the

¹⁵Abbreviated, the process contains five stages: 1: *Input*; 2: *Parsing*; 3: *Association*; 4: *Integration*; 5: *Output*.

search to identifying the critical aspects of a metaphor, the interpretative practice of the reader is put into a larger context of learning and meaning making. The search for and comprehension of critical features can be viewed as the driving force behind the integrational workspace. With the reader attempting to identify what *for them* is the central aspect of the poem that makes the rest fall into place. The meta-metaphor of a poem having a key is related to this, with the key being a way to illustrate the product that a reader is left with after identifying the critical aspect of the poem.

The workspace-metaphor is also worth elaborating slightly at this point. As readers get faster at identifying the critical features of a certain text, their workspace increases to contain more and more items at once. This can be considered an effect of conventionalisations, with a reader making use of previous experience in interpreting novel information. Another way to see it is that the reader has started to identify some sort of critical aspect of the medium of poetry or a certain genre of it. Similarly to any use of language, novices struggle with the combination of lexical items into sentences while experienced users are more concerned with sentence structure and effectivity. The meta-metaphor of the workspace was chosen for this thesis because of its prominence in the literature on working memory. The workspace is not something unique to the reading of poetry, but is a general feature of the human faculty of reasoning and pattern seeking. Combining domains is a feature of conceptual metaphor theories, but the level of this combination is very rough and unspecified. The present suggestion claims that this combination of features is central to the process and experience of meaning-making and that the tension between identification and combination is one of the key driving forces behind metaphor comprehension specifically, and language comprehension generally.

The understanding of two semantic domains in a metaphorical expression is about establishing the *relationship* between the involved domains. On this account it is superfluous to assume a certain relationship to hold between domains as the only “objective” relationship active is that they are connected by the writer. The role of the reader is then to detangle the semantic web that is cast in order to make an assumption of what is being conveyed by the metaphor. As two people can conceptualise the same metaphorical mapping or the same metaphor in different ways, a definitive mapping such as that suggested by CMT seems unlikely or impossible.

The theories described above all share some common characteristics that make them relevant for the present proposal. They all consider meaning-making from the perspective of the recipient of a conversation. ART and FIT for example, both emphasise processes that take place within the reader/listener in their explanations of object recognition and association. The *temporal correlation hypothesis* (TCH) proposed by Singer & Gray (1995) can be read as a way of neurally supporting FIT in claiming that the identification of perceptual objects is “achieved by the temporal coincidence of the neuronal discharges evoked by those features.” (Singer & Gray, 1995, pp. 579).

FIT, ART and TCH all partake in a paradigm of object recognition that takes its departure from the individual actually involved in an experience. This parallels the theoretical developments made by Gibbs, Müller and others working in the enacted or ecological perspective on metaphor understanding. The resonance metaphor proposed in this thesis is an attempt to build onto these theories in order to produce a theory of metaphor understanding that is consistent not only with present theoretical advancements but that also

can be supported by relevant empirical work. Understanding the relations between metaphorically connected semantic realms as analog to the relationship between a fundamental pitch and its resultant overtones is a way of representing these theories in a way that fits the resolution necessary to satisfactorily account for metaphorical language in poetry.

Application: To See the Next Part of the Dream

As a way of illustration, the following is a short re-analysis of some of the poems discussed in §3 from the perspective of the resonant approach to metaphor that is sketched out above. Starting with the problem noted above: that identification of distinct domains to map onto one another proves very difficult. Looking at the metaphorical language in this poem instead as a result of resonance, this problem is relieved. The motif of the garden that occurs several times across the poem functions similar to the key of a piece of music: aligning some of the resonant associations and in turn aiding the reader in comprehending the text. The way Glück transitions between the final stanzas of “The Silver Lily” is another highly important feature of the poem:

In spring, when the moon rose, it meant
time was endless. Snowdrops
opened and closed, the clustered
seeds of the maples fell in pale drifts.
White over white, the moon rose over the birch
tree.

And in the crook, where the tree divides,
leaves of the first daffodils, in moonlight
soft greenish-silver.

We have come too far together toward the end
now
to fear the end. These nights, I am no longer even
certain
I know what the end means. And you, who've been
with a man—

after the first cries,
doesn't joy, like fear, make no sound?
(Glück, 1992, pp. 59)

The abrupt turns from nature, to relationships, to emotionality can be considered a source of conflicting resonance. When the resonant frameworks of these three stanzas collide without any clear or obvious overlap, the clash produces another type of resonance, triggering an association network that uses the dissonance between the previous networks as its fundamental frequency. This is an example of what happens when the key of the poem is broken, assumptions of what *should* follow are broken and the reader might be given a sense of dissonance or disorientation.

The resonant-associative networks elicited by the poem serve as the basis of metaphorical understanding. Instead of attempting to map the motif of the garden onto some concept

or other, resonance lets the reader and analyst view the poem as simply a basis from which metaphor arises. The clash between the stanzas in the latter half of *The Silver Lily* is a formal aspect of the poem that sticks out differently to different readers. In a conceptual framework this is difficult to account for, but in RMT it can be explained as being the difference of the individual resonant frameworks between different readers. The identification of a target domain is less important in RMT, as that process is highly dependent on the specific reader. Instead the metaphor is conceived of as a source domain that opens the possibility of target domains in the reader.

“The Silver Lily” uses dissonance to achieve a certain communicative goal, but the possibility of harmony is equally possible. Wheeler Wilcox (1993) draws upon the combinatorial aspects of the metaphors involved. The associative networks elicited from the words relating to heat and fires mesh together to create an understanding of the different metaphors as being connected. In “The Silver Lily”, the domains elicited might be too disparate, creating a sense of clashing or confusion. If domains instead contain items where a line can be drawn between items in the different associative networks, the metaphors can be connected to form a *chord* of related resonant associations. Similar to the satisfactory experience of hearing a piece of music resolve, the domains of Wheeler Wilcox (1993) combine in a way that follows the predictions made by the reader. Viewing poetic metaphor from this perspective allows the same explanatory model to be used for greatly differing poetry, producing a theory that is more robust and makes fewer ontological statements.

Dissonance and harmony are both concepts related to resonance and as such figure mainly in musical discourse. However, they are also used frequently metaphorically to describe experiences related to different types of art. The most useful feature for the present context is their ability to move along a gradient, making the opposition between dissonant and harmonious domain-integration a scale rather than a binary. This gradient allows a more accurate theoretical representation of language user’s actual behaviours and moves away from a theory that leans heavily on theoretical posits and externally accessed units of analysis.

This thesis argues above that “Things” (Mueller, 1993, pp.26) is best understood as making use of lesser, conventional metaphors in order to produce a higher order, novel one. This higher-order metaphor is substantially more difficult to formalise in a CMT-like tradition. “Things” is a great example that highlight the practicality and need of a theory like RMT when analysing poetry. As it uses language that eludes formalisation into domains, it is hard to conceive of it as importing entities between these domains. Instead viewing it as a resonant phenomenon sidesteps this issue and considers the poem as its own domain and a unique setting that gives rise to unique associations within the reader. “Things”, as it is re-analysed from RMT contains a central metaphor that does not attempt to map two clearly distinct domains together. The co-occurrence of the everyday metaphors within it instead offers a possibility for the reader to create their own mappings and associations. Where some (like the present author) will see a profound statement on the nature of language and communication, some might see nothing.

“Elms” (Glück, 1985, pp.50) uses a different style of metaphorising than the previously discussed poem. Instead of utilising the linear flow of written text like Mueller (1993, pp.26), Glück weaves back and forth between semantic

domains in order to stretch a web of tension that in turn elevates the reader’s associations. By activating several contrasting concepts (Carpentry, trees, emotional labour in relationships, pain etc.) the reader is actively made to search for the commonalities and shared differences within these concepts. Compared to Mueller (ibid) which presents a clear progression and almost logical-seeming sequence, *Elms* reads more like... a tree. While there is a general direction, in order to see how all of the branches (concepts) connect one cannot look just at one small section (mapping) but must see the entire tree (poem). The strength of *Elms* come from its immense density that constantly serve a purpose. RMT allows for a more truthful interpretation of texts like this by the reference to the integrational workspace. When reading a text like Glück (1985, pp.50) it is paramount to recognise the active work done by the reader in incorporating the disparate domains into one coherent unit.

5 Summary: Arc of a Journey

In §3 a few central problems were identified. Firstly the problem of resolution, the conceptualist theories of metaphor use a resolution too coarse to lend any insight into the way these metaphors are understood by a reader. Second, the problem of direction. Conceptualist theories begin the analysis of metaphor from the concepts themselves, then assuming a top-down program that ends with the reader. Finally the problem of normativity, in assuming that all readers have equal access to concepts in the same way, conceptualist theories become normative and restrictive in how they conceive of metaphorical meaning. The problems were illuminated by poetry’s widespread usage of novel metaphor and its heavy reliance on the reader as an interpreter. The material points towards gaps in the theory that ought to be filled in order to produce an accurate and reliable account for metaphor comprehension that covers both novel and established metaphor. A suggestion towards such a theory was made that makes use of two meta-metaphors which in turn aim to explain metaphor comprehension.

The first of these meta-metaphors is the *workspace*. The workspace is used as it highlights the active work done by the reader in constructing meaning from poetic metaphor. Another feature of the workspace is the usage of already existing material in order to produce something entirely new. This workspace is proposed to be an overarching metaphor that generally explains the way metaphorical meaning-making works. The workspace metaphor is fleshed out by specifying three steps between input and output: 1) The segmentation of the input into semantically relevant parts; 2) The activation of related semantic data present in the reader; 3) The integration of the input and the elicited associations, forming a network of associations that gives rise to a non-explicative form of meaning.

The second metaphor used features the musical phenomenon of *resonance*. The steps taken from the workspace metaphor are explained by the concepts of resonant frequencies arising as a result of an input and a resonant space. The input gives rise to a certain amount of overtones depending on the shape of the resonant space. In this metaphor, the resonant space is the reader and their knowledge and the input is the text that is being read. This assumption is supported by work in cognitive neuroscience, (cf. Pollen, 1999; Grossberg, 2012; Lavoie et.al. 1999; Singer & Gray, 1995) showing that such resonant processes exist in neural processing of visual information. The “resonant” associations rendered from the input and the

reader are integrated in accordance with the visual integration paradigm presented by FIT. The parsing of the sentence is given a less detailed explanation, as the recognition of semantic units, similar to the recognition of overtones in a natural sound, depend highly on attention and previous knowledge. This explanation features insights both from FIT and variation theory.

The present proposal of a cognitive workspace operating with resonant associations account for the differences between established and novel metaphor by the concept of *conventionalisation*. The proposal is that over time and use, meaning making calls upon previous iterations of similar types of inputs and their resulting outputs. This iterative process causes the nuanced and non-explicative meaning produced by resonance to be normalised into discreet and clearly distinguishable packages. This conventionalisation adds a second mode of semantic information to a metaphor, making use not only of the resonant data, but also of the conventionalised and “codified” information that is created through these many layered iterations. Taken together, these metaphors serve as guides to shape the theorising of figurative language into one that centers on the reader and the reader’s own internal processes in interacting with a text.

By considering meaning making as an active, enacted process RMT also aims to get rid of the normative implications that come with assumptions of metaphor as partaking in some higher order entities like concepts. RMT responds to the three problems identified in §3 as follows: *Resolution* is addressed by the introduction of the resonant-associative process as well as the integrational workspace, providing a more detailed explanation of metaphorical meaning-making. *Direction* is addressed by explicitly making the reader the source of meaning, this is especially clear in the distinction between the cultural domains proposed by conceptual theories and the present proposal’s emphasis on individual associations. Finally, *normativity* is also addressed by a move away from external, higher-order concepts like semantic domains. RMT claims that the central process of metaphorical meaning-making takes place *within* the reader rather than using any normative unit derived from a history of cultural entrenchment. However, the present thesis recognises the importance and function of conceptual theories of metaphor, and does not claim them to be ineffectual or superfluous. The conceptual theories focus on a type of metaphor that is used for different things than most of the metaphors used in poetry. The conceptual theories are not *wrong*, but simply misdirected.

Returning to the two questions posed at the beginning of this thesis, - the ontological question and the processing question - RMT is akin to EMT in the importance placed on the body and experience for the semantic domains activated in metaphorical language. However, RMT takes a more holistic view on semantic domains, considering not only sensorimotor responses to be significant, but also taking the entire subjective experience into account. The answer to the processing question is the concept of resonant association and the integrational workspace. With these two answers RMT emphasises that concepts are inextricably embodied, while not for that matter completely disregarding a more “rational” level of comprehension. RMT aims to present a type of metaphor theory that considers metaphor to be a phenomenon hinted at in the text but ultimately performed by the reader. Recognising that the meaning constructed by the reader will be impacted not only by certain agreed-upon units of text, but the entire work.

6 Conclusion: This Must be the Place

When reading a transcript from a news report or reading a newspaper article on the new rent increases in your housing area there is rarely debate whether there is a right reading or not, it is generally assumed that there is simply one single reading available. The assumption that there is only one reading is a prerequisite to the assumption that there is a right reading in that the “right” reading is the only acceptable one, rendering any other reading illegitimate. The single-reading paradigm erects a dichotomy of “literal” and “non-literal” language, where the latter but not the former requires interpretation from the reader. The extension of the single-reading paradigm into the right-reading paradigm simply is a way to force the “figurative” language into a similar dichotomy. It is assumed that “figurative” language needs to behave like the “non-figurative” type, especially in the sense that there is a single reading available. In the case for poetry this reading is usually taken to be what the poet intended for their text to be about or to read the poem confessionally, as a chronicle of the poet’s own experiences and life.

This dichotomy and classification is a grave fallacy, and risks fundamental misconstrual of deeply complex issues. In assuming a normative stance towards language such that statements “actually” means certain things we disregard the central problem of communication: how can humans make sense of each other’s thoughts and intentions when these are not directly available to their interlocutor? The answer to this of course is that true communication is practically impossible, at least in the sense that is usually meant in the discourse. Instead of viewing language from a positivist perspective where there is a certain core meaning or nugget of knowledge to be grasped or extracted from a certain interaction, language and communication should be viewed as enacted opportunity. Regardless of the situation and the nature of the communicative act, the sender/writer/speaker/initiator can only create an environment in which recipient/listener/reader/patient can create meaning. This environment can be more or less defined and make use of different levels of culturally agreed upon notions but ultimately, the meaning-making in a communication lies not in the signs themselves but in the users of those signs, or as George Yule puts it in his book *The Study of Language*: “Words themselves don’t refer to anything. People refer” (Yule, 2017, pp. 369)

Accepting a view of language as enacted and situated in a certain environment by certain involved participants we can see clearly that any view that assumes the type of definite dichotomy like that between “literal” and “non-literal” language is mistaken. This thesis has attempted to show that the culturally prevalent metaphor theories partake in this objectivist tradition, thus rendering them unfit to be used as explanations of human meaning-making. The title of this thesis is taken from the song “Transmission” by Joy Division (Curtis et.al., 1979). The song sees Ian Curtis crooning about the paradoxically distant closeness that defines radio as a medium. The intimacy experienced in reading a poem is always a contact defined by both absence and distance. This experience is not the unveiling of a defined object and stripping it of a frivolous but ultimately useless casing. It is the crafting of that casing itself. A casing with no defined content: a casing such that the perception of the shell *creates* its insides. We *do* connect through metaphor. Just like the connection of a radio transmission: “touching from a distance, further all the time” (ibid).

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In addition to the title, this essay borrows from a few musicians in its section titles. The works referenced are the following: "Futile Devices" is a song by Sufjan Stevens, "Two Slow Dancers" is a song by Mitski and "The Old Revolution" is a song from Leonard Cohen's second album. "The Base of All Beauty is the Body" is the title of a song and an album by Scandinavian noise-supergroup Body Sculptures and "Only Shallow" is the barraging opener to My Bloody Valentine's record "Loveless". "Fissures in the Megastructure" is a song and an EP by techno producer Blush Response and "Excavation" is in this case a reference to the album by the same name by The Haxan Cloak. "New Dawn Fades" is the second song by Joy Division to be referenced in this thesis and "The Sun Roars Into View" is the title of a track from the collaborative album between Colin Stetson and Sarah Neufeld. "No Natural Order" is in this case a reference to a song by Pharmakon, "Extraordinary Machine" is the title of both a song and an album by Fiona Apple and "To See the Next Part of the Dream" is the title of an album by Korean shoegaze project Parannoul. "Arc of a Journey" references a song by Broadcast and finally "This Must be the Place" is the title of the fantastic song by Talking Heads.

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Appendix I: Full-Length Poems used as material in §3

(A1-a)

Lisel Mueller - Things

What happened is, we grew lonely
living among the things,
so we gave the clock a face,
the chair a back,
the table four stout legs
which will never suffer fatigue.

We fitted our shoes with tongues
as smooth as our own
and hung tongues inside bells
so we could listen
to their emotional language,

and because we loved graceful profiles
the pitcher received a lip,
the bottle a long, slender neck.

Even what was beyond us
was recast in our image;
we gave the country a heart,
the storm an eye,
the cave a mouth
so we could pass into safety.

(Mueller, 1993)

(A1-b)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox - Friendship After Love

After the fierce midsummer all ablaze
Has burned itself to ashes, and expires
In the intensity of its own fires,
There come the mellow, mild, St. Martin days
Crowned with the calm of peace, but sad with haze.
So after Love has led us, till he tires
Of his own throes, and torments, and desires,
Comes large-eyed friendship: with a restful gaze,
He beckons us to follow, and across
Cool verdant vales we wander free from care.
Is it a touch of frost lies in the air?
Why are we haunted with a sense of loss?
We do not wish the pain back, or the heat;
And yet, and yet, these days are incomplete

(Wheeler Wilcox, 1993)

(A1-c)

Dan Chelotti - Compost

There is magic in decay.
A dance to be done
For the rotting, the maggot strewn
Piles of flesh which pile
Upon the dung-ridden earth
And the damp that gathers
And rusts and defiles.
There is a bit of this
In even the most zoetic soul —
The dancing child's arms
Flailing to an old ska song
Conduct the day-old flies
Away to whatever rank
Native is closest. Just today
I was walking along the river
With my daughter in my backpack
And I opened my email
On my phone and Duffie
Had sent me a poem
Called "Compost." I read it
To my little girl and started
To explain before I was three
Words in Selma started
Yelling, Daddy, Daddy, snake!
In the path was a snake,
Belly up and still nerve-twitching
The ghost of some passing
Bicycle or horse. Pretty, Selma said.
Yes, I said. And underneath my yes
Another yes, the yes to my body,
Just beginning to show signs
Of slack, and another, my grasping
In the dark for affirming flesh
That in turn says yes, yes
Let's rot together but not until
We've drained what sap
Is left in these trees.
And I wake in the morning
And think of the coroner
Calling to ask what color
My father's eyes were,
And I asked, Why? Why can't
You just look — and the coroner,
Matter-of-factly says, Decay.
Do you want some eggs, my love?
I have a new way of preparing them.
And look, look outside, I think this weather
Has the chance of holding.

(Chelotti, 2013)

(A1-d)

Caroline Caddy - Solitude

It's something they carry with them
– explorers night shifts seamen –
like a good pair of binoculars
or a camera case
perfectly and deeply compartmented.
It has a quiet patina
that both absorbs and reflects
like a valuable instrument
you have to sign for
– contract with alone –
and at the end of the voyage
you get to keep.
Sometimes it's very far away.
Sometimes so close
at first you think the person next to you
is picking up putting down
a personal cup
a book in another language
before you realise what
– when talk has moved off
leaning its arms
on someone else's table –
is being
handed to you.

(Caddy, 2007)

(A1-e)

Louise Glück - Elms

All day I tried to distinguish
need from desire. Now, in the dark,
I feel only bitter sadness for us,
the builders, the planers of wood,
because I have been looking
steadily at these elms
and seen the process that creates
the writhing, stationary tree
is torment, and have understood
it will make no forms but twisted forms.

(Glück, 1985)

(A1-f)

Louise Glück - The Silver Lily

The nights have grown cool again, like the nights
of early spring, and quiet again. Will
speech disturb you? We're
alone now; we have no reason for silence.

Can you see, over the garden—the full moon rises.
I won't see the next full moon.

In spring, when the moon rose, it meant
time was endless. Snowdrops
opened and closed, the clustered
seeds of the maples fell in pale drifts.
White over white, the moon rose over the birch tree.
And in the crook, where the tree divides,
leaves of the first daffodils, in moonlight
soft greenish-silver.

We have come too far together toward the end now
to fear the end. These nights, I am no longer even certain
I know what the end means. And you, who've been with a man—

after the first cries,
doesn't joy, like fear, make no sound?

(Glück, 1992)