"I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" – T.S. Eliot

A semantic analysis of selected metaphors in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot

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Abstract

Metaphor is the most widely recognized and discussed type of trope. It has attracted the attention of analysts from various disciplines, e.g. philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, and literature. Research from these fields has shown that metaphors are ubiquitous and indispensable in our lives. It is not only literary discourse that is abundant with metaphors, but metaphors are also common in scientific discourse and even in our everyday language. Moreover, research from cognitive linguistics has shown that our thinking is metaphorical to a certain extent. Thus, if metaphors are so ubiquitous in our lives, how do we recognize them?

In this paper selected metaphors from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot have been analyzed. These are metaphors from literary discourse; hence, the analysis was partly influenced by the genre and the specific, poetic context. The focus is on linguistic metaphors that can be identified in this poetic text, not on underlying conceptual metaphors. The aim of this paper has been to see how the metaphors in the poem are constructed and how the metaphorical part of the strings they occur in interacts with a seemingly literal part.

According to the results of the analysis, the metaphorical constructions in the poem show a variety of modes of interaction among their constituents. Typically the metaphorical part of the poetic construction evokes a complex and directly perceptible phenomenon which serves as the basis for the understanding of the poetic persona's feelings. Also the metaphors that describe the setting of the poem seem to be projections of the protagonist's mood. Thus, the affective aspect of the metaphors is essential in the poem since it connects the metaphors to a network of meanings related to a prominent theme of the poem, namely the speaker's paralysis and insecurity of himself, adding to the expressive complexity of the poem's structure.

Keywords: Metaphor, linguistic metaphor, poem, vehicle, topic, grounds

Contents

1. Introduction

Metaphor is the most widely recognized and discussed type of trope (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 87). Its application is not restricted to poetry and literature as was sometimes assumed when metaphors were considered a "device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Research has shown that also, for instance, academic writing contains many metaphors (Steen et al., 2010, p. 787). In science there are so-called "theory-constitutive metaphors", which are close to being theoretical models (Boyd, 1993, p. 488). Moreover, metaphors are pervasive in our everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action as well (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3; Richards, 1965, p. 94). Lakoff points out that metaphors consist of mappings across conceptual domains, from the source domain to the target, and that this mapping is primary and conventional (Lakoff, 1993, p. 208). According to this theoretical framework, we use these mappings for the production and interpretation of metaphorical expressions in language, which are the surface realizations of these conceptual mappings. Thus, metaphor is a "ubiquitous and indispensable linguistic and cognitive tool" that we use to conceptualize the world around us (Semino & Steen, 2008, p. 235). The claim that metaphors are a matter of embodied thought is supported by research findings that show that metaphors are realized not only verbally but by means of other semiotic modes as well, for instance gestures and pictures (Cienki & Müller, 2008; Forceville, 2008).

However, although the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff and Johnson and other researchers in the field of cognitive science provides a useful framework of generalizations of more specific meanings of some groups of linguistic metaphors, close examination of metaphors in corpora has shown that certain difficulties and questions arise when cognitive theory is applied to empirical discourse data (Cameron & Deignan, 2006, p. 673). To be specific, groups of figurative language expressions show numerous gaps when it comes to trying to connect them with suggested underlying conceptual metaphors, and many linguistic metaphors are seen to have highly specific metaphorical meanings when examined in detail using corpora (Deignan, 2005, quoted in Cameron & Deignan, 2006). Therefore, I will in this paper concentrate on linguistic metaphors; that is, metaphors that can be identified in actually occurring language use. I will not make any assumptions about underlying cognitive

representations of their semantic structures, as such conclusions could be made only by means of the analysis of behavioral or psycholinguistic data, which is outside the scope of the paper. However, I will refer to some of the research carried out by some cognitive linguists.

The "productive combination of concepts in imagination" has generally been considered the "hallmark of aesthetic and hence also of poetic interpretation", but research in especially cognitive linguistics has shown that our everyday discourse is also metaphorically structured in significant respects (Brouwer, 2010, p. 246). Thus, if metaphors are so ubiquitous and pervasive in our lives, and if they constitute an integral part of our cognition, is it then appropriate to make a distinction between metaphors that we use in our everyday life and metaphors that exist in literature? Some scholars (Leech, 1969; Tsur, 1987, quoted in Semino & Steen, 2008, p. 234) emphasize the "discontinuity between metaphor in literature and metaphor elsewhere by focusing on highly creative, original, and often complex literary examples" (Semino & Steen, 2008, p. 234). In addition, they attribute primacy to metaphor in literature and see metaphors outside literature as derivatives and less worthy of investigation (Semino & Steen, 2008, p. 235). Another contrasting view supported by Lakoff and Turner is that there exists a continuum between metaphors in literature and metaphors outside literature. They claim that metaphorical expressions produced by poets could be seen as novel uses of the same conceptual metaphors that they claim underlie our everyday metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 13). This approach, however, does not seem to be able to account for completely novel metaphors where "metaphorical creativity goes well beyond the metaphorical resources of everyday language (and thought)" (Semino & Steen, 2008, p.237). In addition, the question whether metaphors in literature constitute a category distinct from metaphors used outside literature seems to be very intricate and complex. We simply do not have enough empirical evidence to make this distinction (Steen, 1994, p. 163). Nevertheless, when reading literary texts, readers have certain expectations of them as a genre, and this influences the amount and nature of attention that is devoted to the language structure of the text (Steen, 1989, p. 123).

In this paper I will focus on metaphors from the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot, which was published in 1915. I will analyze them in the context of the poem; hence their interpretation will be influenced by the genre and this specific,

poetic context. I will thus treat them as linguistic metaphors rather than as results of underlying conceptual metaphors.

If metaphors are so ubiquitous in our everyday language, how do we actually recognize them in literature? How are metaphors constructed? In a typical metaphor the literal description of a concrete and directly perceptible phenomenon or type of experience is used to outline something more general and abstract (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 20). Thus, in a metaphor readers/listeners are encouraged to compare two phenomena and this involves making similarity judgments (Ortony, 1993, p. 345). However, metaphors are not only built on the basis of factual and verifiable similarities. Often metaphors are built on imaginative similarities (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 72). Moreover, contrasts between two phenomena seem to be of importance as well (Richards, 1965, p. 120), and Kittay claims that a tension between these phenomena is an important aspect of metaphor (1987, p. 183). In addition, Berggren pointed out that metaphors are no longer vital when it is possible to reduce their cognitive input to non-tensional statements (1962, p. 244).

In this paper I will focus on metaphors selected from the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot. My research questions are: How are the metaphors constructed in this poem? Specifically, how do we bring together two seemingly unrelated phenomena that constitute a metaphor? Richards points out that there is an immense variety in the modes of interaction between two thoughts co-present in a metaphor (1965, p. 93). Thus, I will look into this interaction and try and see how a metaphorical part in a poetic construction interacts with a seemingly literal part.

2. Theoretical review

2.1 Distinction between metaphorical and non-metaphorical uses of language

Metaphorical and non-metaphorical language uses do not constitute two distinct categories of language use. Instead, they seem to form an "analytical continuum between cases that are clearly non-figurative and clearly figurative" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 64; Goatly, 1997, p. 19). Thus, various language uses could be placed between these two poles, as the categories of literal and figurative language uses are likely to shade into each other or intersect. One of the reasons for overlapps between these categories is "fuzziness in the semantic concepts" (Goatly, 1997, p. 19) which are built around

"prototypes" defined by "people's judgments of goodness of membership" (Rosch, 1978, p. 11) and which consist of "good" and "bad" members (Ungerer & Schmid, 2006, p. 42). We seem to build these cognitive categories on the basis of similarity between different members. This notion of similarity seems to be fundamental when we make sense of the world around us by means of organizing and classifying a huge number of diverse stimuli. Metaphors also seem to be based on similarities since in metaphors readers/listeners are usually encouraged to compare two phenomena and "making comparisons involves making similarity judgments" (Ortony, 1993, p. 345). However, the claim that metaphors are built on similarities between two phenomena is questioned by some analysts who suggest that "certain very common metaphor patterns are motivated by tight correlations in experience", and these conceptual connections have been termed "primary metaphors" (Grady, 2005, p. 1600). An example would be the linguistic metaphor *a big day*, as we usually refer to some important event in terms of physical size, since in our childhood big things were important to us (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 22).

Along this continuum between the two non-discrete categories of literal and figurative language uses there are some cases which cannot be straightforwardly identified as belonging to literal or metaphorical language uses. Such instances have been termed "approximations" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 58), and they seem to involve more pronounced meaning changes than "collocational tailoring", where a semantically dependent item undergoes interpretative adjustment to a word that has a richer and more complex sense potential (Alm-Arvius, 2011, p. 23). However, the shift of the meaning in an example like that in (1) below is not as drastic as the contrast between a metaphorical target and its source (Alm-Arvius, 2011, p. 28):

(1) The old man was sitting in a chair by *an electric fire*.

In the example above an electric fire is mentioned, and it is not a real fire. Nevertheless, many of the central features of a fire (used for keeping places warm, resembles a real fire, used for cooking food) are preserved in this use. Hence, such uses are not metaphorical as in typical metaphorical meanings "more peripheral or even just connotative features are mapped" from the source onto the metaphorical target (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 104).

2.2 Clines of metaphoricity

Another useful distinction that is worth discussing here is the distinction between "transferred meanings" and "figurative extensions" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 31). The main difference between these two overlapping sets lies in the connection between the literal meaning of the word and the metaphorical meaning. In "figurative extensions" there is a transparent connection between these meanings, and the metaphorical meaning is interpreted via the literal meaning. Such "figurative extensions" are usually called "live metaphors" (Alm-Arvius, 2006, p. 11). In "transferred meaning" the meaning of the metaphorical item has become conventionalized in the language system, and there is no need to evoke the literal meaning to interpret the metaphorical meaning. Thus, it is likely that "transferred meanings" are less noticeable as figurative, and they can be referred to as "dying or moribund metaphors" (Alm-Arvius, 2006, p. 7). In addition, interpretation of the same metaphor may be different for different speakers of a language. Some speakers may draw on the source while processing the metaphor while others interpret it independently. In fact, psycholinguistic evidence shows that "some metaphors are not processed as cross-domain mappings (by comparison) but as forms of categorization" (Steen, 2008, p. 215), and the property that affects the processing of metaphor is a degree of conventionality. To be specific, "conventional metaphors may be processed by categorization or comparison, whereas novel metaphors are processed by comparison alone" (Genter & Bowdle, 2001 quoted in Steen, 2008, p. 215).

Below are examples of "figurative extension" (2) and "transferred meaning" (3):

(2) I *can see straight into* his mind; I know what he is thinking.

(3) I *see* what you mean.

Since "transferred meanings" are "conventional parts of a language", they tend to have acquired "sense relations of their own within the language system" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 36). These sense relations are manifested in "[c]ollocational preferences and possibilities" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 36) that these words or constructions have developed. (Collocations can be seen as meaningful relations between lexical items within syntactic frames (Alm-Arvius, forthcoming, p. 229)). Or we can say that conventional uses manifest various "relations of affinity and contrast" (Kittay, 1987, p. 54) with regards to other items in the language (antonymy and synonymy).

Nevertheless, the connection between the literal meaning and the metaphorical meaning in "transferred meanings" can be revived in certain contexts, for example, in punning.

2.3 Ways of signaling metaphorical uses of language

The "figurative character of a metaphor is typically signaled by a violation of the collocational restrictions of the literal sense of a word or expression" in a language string (Alm-Arvius, 2008, p. 18). Such metaphors have been termed "internal metaphors" by Alm-Arvius (2003, p. 78).

> (4) The girls *flew* out of the room.

In this example the literal collocational relations between the verb *flew* and the subject of the sentence, *the girls*, are violated because the primary meaning of *fly* is "to move through the air using wings" (*OALD*, 2010, p. 597) and girls cannot fly in this literal sense. Therefore, we are encouraged to interpret this sentence metaphorically. Another example is the following:

> (5) This woman is *a pig*.

In this example the subject of the clause, *This woman*, does not refer to the same kind of creature as is described by a literal use of *pig*. The collocational capacity of the noun *pig* seems to be widened in this subject complement use. Generally *pig* is used to refer to a type of animal. In the example above, however, it is used to refer to a person. Thus, the sense potential of the noun *pig* is extended. Since a person is not a pig, we are encouraged to interpret the sentence figuratively and transfer only some features from the source domain of pigs onto the target domain of human beings. An entity that is metaphorically referred to usually "lacks at least one critical feature possessed by the conventional referents of the word" (Goatly, 1997, p. 17). The features that are "mapped" from the source to the target tend to be "more peripheral or even just connotative features" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 104). So in the example above the feature that seems to be transferred from the source, *a pig*, is our emotive reaction and attitude to this animal (Richards, 1965, p. 118). Glucksberg and Keysar argue that metaphors of this form (A is B) are understood as "class-inclusion assertions" and not as implicit similes (1992, p. 578). In other words, the topic of our example, *This woman*, is assigned to a category which does not have a conventional name, hence the motivation to use the metaphor (Glucksberg et al, 1992, p. 578). The vehicle, the metaphorically used word or expression (Richards, 1965, p. 97), is, however, a prototype of this

category and also its name. Indeed, this metaphor is likely to be understood as a "class-inclusion assertion", because the metaphorical use of the noun *pig* has been literalized and has acquired a new conventional semantic meaning: "an unpleasant or offensive person; a person who is dirty or greedy" (*OALD*, 2010, p. 1145). Thus, this woman is seen as a member of the category that the metaphor vehicle *pig* typifies.

However, a metaphorical expression is not necessarily signaled by violation of the "collocational restrictions" of the literal sense, as the example below illustrates:

(6) Smith is a plumber.

Such metaphors have been termed "external metaphors" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 78). The proper noun *Smith*, the subject of the syntagmatic string, and the noun *plumber*, which functions as a subject predicate, are joined together by means of the copular verb *be* in the present tense. This syntagmatic string could, however, be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. It can be interpreted metaphorically when both speaker and hearer know that Smith is not a plumber but a surgeon, for example (Kittay, 1987, p. 69). Then this utterance could be used to comment on Smith's practice and competence as a surgeon. On the other hand, the example above could be interpreted literally outside such a specific context. So it is the context which provides the basis for this sentence to be judged as metaphorical. In other words, it is the "incongruity" (Kittay, 1987, p. 69) of an utterance on a higher level than a sentence that influences its interpretation.

There are also instances where there is no textual "incongruity" of an utterance that can be given a metaphorical interpretation, as this example from the poem *The Road not Taken* by Robert Frost:

(7) Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

In this poem Frost describes two roads that go in different directions and the traveler takes the one "less traveled by". He uses categories from the same experiential domain of wood, and the poem could be interpreted by means of literal senses of the words used. Nevertheless, the recognition of poems as a genre that contains metaphors prompts the reader to interpret the example above figuratively. In other words, we tend to interpret it not only by means of decoding senses and denotations of *roads*, *wood*,

travel and *diverge*. The interpretation of this example and the poem as a whole is more dependent on the pragmatic "utterance meaning" and not the literal "sentence meaning" (Knowles & Moon, 2006, p. 66). Thus, we look beyond the surface meanings of lexemes trying to understand what Robert Frost meant by them. In terms of cognitive linguistics we use the source domain of a journey and apply it onto some target domain, which in this example is left implicit. However, we tend to conceptualize our life in terms of a journey (Lakoff, 1993, p. 223); hence we are likely to infer that the poem is about life.

2.4 Metaphor and simile

Metaphors have often been compared with similes and seen as merely implicit comparisons. Similes, by contrast, are seen as explicit comparisons where the overt indicator *like* signals that comparisons need to be drawn between two phenomena (Ortony, 1993, p. 344). Markers such as *like* are termed Metaphor Flags (MFlags) by Steen et al. (2010, p. 775). Nevertheless, the distinction between metaphors and similes needs to be recognized.

 While some similes can easily be turned into metaphors, others can pose significant difficulties in this respect, as the examples below show:

 (8) Encyclopedias are like gold mines.

 (9) Encyclopedias are gold mines.

 (10) The occupants of the tunnel awoke in the morning with mouths that tasted like the bottom of a parrot's cage (Hanks, 2005, p. 4).

 (11) My mouth is the bottom of a parrot's cage.

Metaphors are distinguished from similes by means of an internal, compositional contradictoriness that similes lack. Another aspect that should be pointed out here is that "similes typically pick out a particular feature", whereas metaphors are typically "holistic" (Hanks, 2005, p. 13) and do not specify which features should be compared:

 (12) This wood is hard, like iron.

 (13) This wood is iron.

2.5 Terminology

The terms I will be using in the analysis of Eliot's poem are mainly borrowed from Richards' lectures dating from 1936 and published under the title *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Richards, 1965, p. 96). He introduced two commonly used technical terms to help us to distinguish between two phenomena that are active in a metaphor: the vehicle, used to refer to the idea conveyed by the literal meanings of the words used metaphorically, and the tenor, referring to the things described by the vehicle (Richards, 1965, p. 97).

(14) The past is *a foreign country*; they do things differently there.

In the example above the tenor is the concept 'the past' and the vehicle is the concept 'foreign country'. The meaning of the metaphor, however, is neither the vehicle nor the tenor but both in cooperation (Richards, 1965, p. 100). This could be connected with the interaction view of metaphor proposed by Black where he pointed out that the meaning is a result of the interaction between two phenomena that are active in a metaphor and that our conception of one phenomena is influence by the other and vice versa (1955, p. 285, 291). In the poem analysis in this paper I will be using terms adapted by Goatly (1997, p. 9). Thus, I will use the term 'topic' instead of 'tenor'. In order to distinguish between concepts and the actual language used to express them the terms 'vehicle-term' (V-term) and 'topic-term' (T-term) will be used (Goatly, 1997, p. 9). The term 'grounds' is then used to refer to similarities and/or analogies between the topic/tenor and the vehicle involved in a metaphor (Goatly, 1997, p. 9; Richards, 1965, p. 117). So in example (14) above, the V-term is *a foreign country*, the T-term is *The past* and the grounds are *they do things differently there*.

3. Methodology

Due to the fuzzy nature of literal and metaphorical meanings, the identification of metaphorical uses in the poem may not seem unproblematic. The identification of meaning as literal or metaphorical depends partly on which stance we take: diachronic or synchronic. However, since diachronic changes of word senses are usually unavailable for language users, it seems sensible to concentrate on synchronic word senses. I will use the primary sense of a word or a syntagmatic construction as the basis for identification of metaphorical meanings. By primary senses of words I mean the senses that are first and foremost associated with the language elements in question, and

these senses tend to be given as the first sense in a dictionary entry. For this purpose I will use *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* (*OALD*). None the less, one has to take into consideration the influence of genre; the conventions for the referent of *mouse*, for instance, will be different in the genre of computer hardware catalogues and fairy stories (Goatly, 1997, p. 108). I will also use the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to get access to collocates of the V-terms.

Initially a wider scope of metaphors from the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* was analyzed but only some of them were selected. The selected metaphors are thematically significant. That is to say, they are significant not only in the local context they occur in but also in the global context of the poem, contributing to the construction of the theme of the speaker's, or the poetic persona's, indecisiveness, inability to act and move forward to the overwhelming question, his paralysis and cowardice. The selected metaphors will be analyzed using the terms 'topic', 'vehicle', 'T-term', 'V-term' and 'grounds'.

In addition, the analysis conducted in this paper will be somewhat subjective, which is in fact what literary texts tend to highlight, namely the experiences of subjectivity which are based on different interpretations of the same metaphorical statement (Steen, 1994, p. 35). In other words, readers could interpret the same metaphorical expressions in a partly different way. All the same, I have tried to present a variety of interpretations based on the interaction between vehicle and topic.

4. Analysis

(15) When the evening is *spread out against* the sky

This is an example of "internal metaphor" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 115) since there is a "collocational clash" between the subject of the clause *the evening* and the verb phrase *is spread out* etc. in this passive construction. In other words, the verb *spread out* in its primary sense tends to collocate with nouns that have spatial dimensions such as *hair*, *arms*, *legs*, *papers*, *map*, *wings* and *fields* as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) shows. The noun *evening*, however, is usually used in its literal temporal sense to refer to a time period between the afternoon and the time you go to bed (*OALD*, 2010, p. 521). Thus, the T-term *evening* is more abstract, whereas the V-term *spread out* evokes collocates which have spatial dimensions; the V-term

concretizes the T-term and the evening is perceived as an entity, a concrete thing which could be spread out over some area. In fact, it has often been noted that "time in English is conceptualized in terms of space" (Lakoff, 1993, p. 216). The metaphor could, in fact, refer to the special light conditions that pertain to evenings. Nevertheless, the grounds, i.e. concreteness, specified by the V-term are only partial. The simile in the next line allows for the possibility of other grounds to be created.

(16) *Like a patient etherized upon a table*

In this line the reader is impelled to evoke an image of a patient lying on an operating table in a hospital. The overt indicator of comparison *like* encourages the reader to draw comparisons between the evening that "is spread out against the sky" and a patient that is lying "etherized" upon a table. The most salient grounds likely to be evoked are the manner in which the patient is spread out. When a person is made unconscious, s/he is in a sleep-like state and is not able to use the senses; the limbs are relaxed, heavy and spread over the operating table. Thus, the lethargic and sleep-like manner of a patient in this state is compared to the way the light of the setting sun is spread across the sky. Moreover, the transfer of these features could not be accomplished without some interpretative strain due to their incongruity. Indeed, the "most interesting metaphors involve a great deal of strain on language and thought" (Kittay, 1987, p. 183).

By extending the context of the simile, i.e. drawing on our encyclopedic knowledge and experiences of hospitals, we could get access to less salient assumptions which could be of importance. One of them is the purpose of spreading out the patient for an examination or operation. This assumption seems important when we consider the overall context, i.e. the poem, where the speaker seems to be analyzing his behavior and life in general during some social gathering. Indeed, *evening* could also be used when speaking about some type of activity, for instance, a *musical evening in school* (*OALD*, 2010, p. 521). Thus, *evening* could also refer to the social gathering the speaker is attending, and this event is spread out metaphorically in order to be analyzed like the patient who is lying on the table. Indeed, connotative associations are often evoked when interpreting metaphors. In our example it seems significant that hospital experiences are usually associated with negative emotions, since we usually find ourselves, or our relatives/friends, in hospital when we are sick or need treatment. Thus, such negative connotations could also be relevant in our interpretation, because the experience that the speaker describes is unpleasant (cf. metaphor 21).

(17) Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

…

Streets that *follow* like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

To *lead* you to an overwhelming question ….

The speaker seems to invite the reader to imaginatively wander about the streets. The V-term *follow* is a dynamic verb and in its primary sense it requires an agent, usually representing a person or some animate being. However, to use *follow* as the predicate of *path/road* seems to be quite conventional, as *OALD* (2010, p. 601) shows (*The lane follows the edge of a wood for about a mile*). But in the poem the streets are compared to an argument by means of the overt simile indicator *like*:

Streets that *follow* like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

The simile *like a tedious argument of insidious intent* provides the grounds for comparison. Cognitive linguists claim that arguments are usually conceptualized in terms of journeys, which are based on the image schema 'path'. Like other image schemas it can be understood to be firmly grounded in our bodily experiences (Ungerer & Schmid, 2006, p. 119). The conceptual metaphor AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 89) is to do with the goal of an argument, as "it must have a beginning, proceed in a linear fashion, and make progress in stages toward the goal" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 90). Thus, the streets which can lead to certain places are compared to arguments that proceed and develop toward some goal. In our example, however, we have *tedious arguments,* and from our experience we know that tedious arguments tend to last for a long time. Moreover, we have an argument *of insidious intent*, namely an argument that develops "gradually or without being noticed, but causing serious harm" (*OALD*, 2010, p. 805), and wandering along the streets could also lead one to some dead-end where danger awaits you. Instead of leading us to a conclusion, the argument ends in a question: *To lead you to an overwhelming question* … This line seems to draw on the image schema 'path' mentioned above on which conceptions of both wanderings around streets and arguments are based. The V-term

lead is primarily used metaphorically. Nevertheless, the primary meaning of *lead* is already activated in our minds in an image of wandering along the streets.

A less salient but still relevant ground could be evoked by the T-term *streets*. The streets that the speaker invites us to wander about are *half-deserted*. This feature of half-desertedness could be mapped onto the V-term *argument*. However, streets and arguments are different phenomena; therefore, a direct transfer of the feature will not work here. The reader/listener will need to adapt this feature. Half-deserted streets are streets that are half empty; there are not so many people there. Thus, half-deserted arguments could be arguments that lack substance, which are about nothing.

In this example the meaning is the result of interaction between the vehicle and the topic. The grounds are not only taken from the vehicle and transferred onto the topic, but also come from the topic, and our conception of streets is influenced by the conception of arguments and vice versa.

(18) The yellow fog that *rubs its back* upon the window-panes,

The yellow smoke that *rubs its muzzle* on the window-panes

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,

Slipped by the terrace, *made a sudden leap*,

And *seeing* that it was a *soft* October night,

Curled once about the house, and *fell asleep*.

This is an instance of an "extended" or "expanded" metaphor (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 120) where the V-terms – the nouns *back, muzzle* and *tongue* and the verbs and constructions *rubs, licked, lingered, slipped, made a sudden leap, seeing, curled* and *fell asleep* – are used to refer metaphorically to the explicitly stated topic, *the yellow fog*. Moreover, this can be seen as an example of a "metaphtonymy", where a metaphor is based on metonymy (Goossens, 2002, p. 357). The implicit vehicle of this metaphor, *a/the cat*, is implied by a series of metonyms which describe animal qualities and the behavior of cats. So the language senses of these words and our encyclopedic knowledge of cats and their behavior help us to construe the vehicle. Both the vehicle

and the topic of this metaphorical passage are concrete. The V-terms evoke a rich visual image of a cat, and this encourages us to re-conceptualize our general image of the topic. Thus, the motion of a cat, the way it rubs its back etc., is compared to the way the fog moves and touches the window panes. Furthermore, cats are usually friendly and warm, which could affect our conception of the fog in this excerpt. They are agile, elegant and independent. We can construe this cat – fog relation in many ways. Readers may also associate certain meanings with the color yellow. *Yellow* is used to refer to people who are cowards and could be easily frightened (*OALD*, 2010, p. 1790). This meaning seems to be important in the poem, as it ties into the network of meanings that refer to the speaker's indecisiveness (cf. metaphor 19).

The excerpt above also contains an example of a synaesthetic metaphor - *soft* in *soft October night* - where the V-term *soft*, which is literally used to describe things that are experienced with the sense of touch – e.g. *soft blanket/pillow/grass* – is used to describe the night. Thus, it is used to describe "impressions from another sense modality than those denoted by the primary or literal senses" (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 128). The feature that is relevant here is a pleasant perception of something being soft, which contributes to the tangibility of the experience described in the excerpt.

(19) And indeed there will be time

To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair -

The line *Time to turn back and descend the stair* is an example of an "external metaphor", which could be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. The V-terms of the metaphor evoke an experience of climbing the stairs that is not foregrounded but only implied. What is stated, however, is a part of this experience, i.e. turning and descending the stairs. From our encyclopedic experience we know that we usually go up the stairs with some purpose in mind, for example to visit some person. We usually turn back and descend the stairs when we change our mind or are afraid of going there or cannot proceed for some other reason. So literally this line could refer to the speaker's indecisiveness to enter some room. Lakoff claims that we conceptualize longer purposeful activities in terms of journeys (1993, p. 220). Thus, the suggested conceptual metaphors A LONGTERM PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS A JOURNEY and

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PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS could be used to explain our understanding of the metaphorical utterance where the speaker has some goal in mind, which seems to be the overwhelming question he intends to ask. This goal, however, is not reached because of certain circumstances; that is, the speaker's indecisiveness ("Do I dare?").

(20) I have *measured out* my life *with coffee spoons*

This metaphor is cued by the collocational violation resulting in tension between the literal meaning of the V-term *measured out* and the T-term *life*. *Measured out*, which is literally used when talking about substances that are concrete or perceptible, is complemented by another V-term, the instrument of this measuring: *with coffee spoons*. Together these V-terms suggest a vivid image of the poem's persona measuring out some substance with coffee spoons. However, this substance here is his life, a complex and partly abstract concept that cannot be literally measured out with coffee spoons. The grounds which seem relevant for this metaphor concern the precision of the process of measuring. This could imply that the speaker does everything in a measured and controlled manner. He does not like taking risks, an attitude echoed in the now emerging theme of the poem, namely the speaker's inability to act. Moreover, *coffee spoons* could be first metonymically and then metaphorically related to the social gatherings that the speaker is attending during the poem. As mentioned in metaphor (18), such instances have been termed "metaphtonymy" (Goossens, 2002, p. 357). Thus, the speaker's life could be felt to be measured by the number of social gatherings he has attended, and this appears in an intricate way to be connected with the speaker not being an outgoing person, but rather shy and not confident; hence he is indecisive.

(21) And when I *am formulated, sprawling on a pin*,

When I *am pinned and wriggling on the wall*,

Then how should I begin

To *spit out all the butt-ends* of my days and ways?

The V-term *formulate* in its primary sense means to "create or prepare sth carefully, giving particular attention to the details" (*OALD*, 2010, p. 611). In our example above, it is the speaker (T-term) who is formulated. Thus, this could be connected with the overwhelming question he intends to ask. However, instead of acting he imagines himself *sprawling on a pin* and *wriggling on a wall*. This could be a reference to the practice when insects were collected and pinned to some surface inside a frame so that

they could be observed and analyzed. In addition, when people say they would like to be a fly on the wall, they do not want to be noticed, which seems to agree with the personality of the poem's persona. Nevertheless, these V-terms conjure up a rather unpleasant image of the speaker being spread on the wall with a pin. The speaker is *wriggling on a wall*; hence he is in a rather awkward and helpless position. This image of the poem's persona being spread out on the wall could remind us of an earlier image used about the evening, which was likened to a patient spread out on the operation table: both are constrained, helpless and ready to be examined and judged. Thus, the features that are evoked by this metaphor complex express unpleasant feelings, helplessness, paralysis, and even hopelessness.

In the last line of this excerpt there is a delay in specifying the topic, which is introduced at the end of the clause. This could in fact intensify the image evoked by the V-terms that precede the topic. Thus, we are presented with an image of the speaker spitting out butt-ends, namely the ends of cigarettes, which are always left behind. However, the introduction of the T-terms *of my days and ways* forces us to re-interpret the clause metaphorically. Butt-ends of cigarettes are never smoked; they are the ends of cigarettes and are usually thrown away. However, the features, or the grounds, that are relevant in this metaphor are not specified. Consequently, the reader is free to draw on her/his imagination within the associative semantic scope of the vehicle. The speaker could be referring to his life as a cigarette that has already been smoked, and what is left from his life is just this last bit, which could mean that the speaker is not young anymore or does not feel young. Another feature that could be evoked is the uselessness of a butt-end, as it cannot be used anymore; hence it is cast away. In other words, the speaker could be talking about the future and what is left for him, and this does not look optimistic. Moreover, the V-term *spit out* introduces additional grounds. *Spit out* refers to a forceful action of spitting out something, probably something unpleasant (*OALD*, 2010, p. 1487). Thus, what the speaker is referring to as *the butt-ends of his days and ways* are no doubt unpleasant, painful experiences, and he has to force himself to bring them up.

(22) I should have been *a pair of ragged claws*

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

The vehicle in this example is stated in a synecdochic way by mentioning some body parts. These V-terms evoke an image of a crab moving with quick and short steps across

the bottom of the sea(s). The bottom of the sea(s) is not referred directly or literally either, but by means of the V-term *floor*, which could also be linked to the setting the speaker finds himself in, namely the room.

As we know, crabs usually move sideways. They cannot move forwards. This typical way of moving is evoked when understanding the metaphor; and it serves as the grounds for the comparison between the speaker and a crab. The speaker, just like a crab, cannot move forward, metaphorically speaking; i.e. he does not dare ask the overwhelming question the reader now desires to hear. He is also like a paralyzed patient mentioned earlier in the poem. In addition, the seas that the crab is scuttling across are silent. The vehicle of the metaphor, however, is partly open for interpretation. Thus, *a pair of rugged claws* might refer metaphorically to sailor's hands. They also constitute a pair and are used for handling food and other activities. Moreover, they become rough after years of work at sea, hence *rugged claws*. The speaker could be wishing to become a sailor whose work consists of making trips, i.e. *scuttling*, across the silent seas and back. *Silent seas* could be connected to places without people where the speaker feels more comfortable. This metaphor could also refer to a damaged body of a dead sailor on the bottom of the sea; hence, *ragged claws* and *the floors of the silent seas.*

(23) And the afternoon, the evening, *sleeps so peacefully*!

Smoothed by long fingers,

Asleep … tired … or it malingers,

Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.

There is again a collocationally introduced clash or tension between the topic of the metaphor and the V-terms which signals that the clause should be interpreted metaphorically. *The afternoon* and *the evening* cannot *sleep* in the primary sense of this verb, since they are inanimate periods of time. The repeated reference to the evening conjures up an image presented earlier in the poem, when the evening is compared to a patient etherized upon a table. However, in this metaphor the evening *sleeps peacefully*. The activity of sleeping literally pertains to human beings and animals. So a set of similarities and contrasts needs to be evoked to resolve the incongruity of the utterance. As has been mentioned earlier, *the evening* could in a metonymic way refer to, or encompass, the social gathering the speaker is attending. When human beings or

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animals sleep, they are inactive. This is in fact the feature that could be applied to the T-term *the evening*. Referring to the evening as being inactive could imply that there is not much happening during this time or social event. The further V-terms *smoothed by long fingers*, *stretched on the floor* and *asleep* may again trigger the image of a cat that was present in the extended metaphor above (18). One can actually picture a woman with long fingers stroking a cat that is lying asleep on the floor. In fact, there are many references to women's arms in the poem. Moreover, the topic of the metaphor is referred to as being *asleep*, *tired* or it *malingers*. Thus, is it the social event he is referring to, or the cat, or even himself – or all of these in a holistic, multi-layered scene colored by melancholia? The concept of evening is multifaceted; the grounds are not stated; therefore, this metaphor allows a number of rather inexact but still potentially rich associations.

5. Discussion

The majority of the metaphors in the poem are cued by means of collocational violations resulting in tension between the literal meanings of the constituents. However, in the example *Time to turn back and descend the stair* the coherence of the utterance is preserved, and the context allows us to interpret it both literally and metaphorically.

As was mentioned in the introduction, typical metaphors are used to explain a more abstract and elusive phenomenon by means of a more concrete one (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 20). Indeed, most of the V-terms used in the metaphors are concrete or evoke collocates that are concrete: an image of the speaker sprawling on the wall, a patient etherized upon a table, etc. With the help of these rich images and connotations connected with them, we get access to the complexity of the speaker's feelings and emotive reactions. By means of extending the context or drawing on our encyclopedic knowledge and various experiences associated with the vehicle, readers could also evoke many weaker but potentially still important assumptions.

In this poem there are also topics which are concrete, for example the yellow fog and the streets. The yellow fog is further described by means of an indirectly implied concrete vehicle, a cat. Such a metaphor usually invites readers to view some phenomenon from a different perspective. Indeed, the movement of fog could be seen as the movement of a cat.

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The topic in most of the analyzed metaphors is stated explicitly. Nevertheless, in some examples it is inexact, and it can then evoke a variety of rich associations. The T-term *the evening* is an example of this. The grounds for comparison are usually associated with the vehicle of the metaphor. However, in example (17) the grounds are not only taken from the vehicle to explain the topic, but also from the topic to explain the vehicle. Thus, two ideas are active together and the reader draws both on the topic and the vehicle and various assumptions associated with them. This could be connected with the interaction view of metaphor proposed by Black and mentioned in section 2.5 above (1955, p. 285). Moreover, in example (15), for instance, the V-term provides the grounds only partially, and this is further complemented by means of the following simile (16). This reflects Hank's statement that similes pick out particular features; therefore, they lack the contradictoriness of metaphors (2005, p. 13).

In addition, many of the metaphors are not based on antecedent similarity between the topic and the vehicle. Instead, similarity is created in the very making of the metaphor where two incongruous phenomena are brought together and the reader is left to explore the grounds for comparison. So metaphors are often built on imaginative similarities (Alm-Arvius, 2003, p. 72). Such metaphors, in fact, facilitate our literary experiences whereby the construction of the meaning is more subjective, and this leads to a variety of interpretations.

A central aspect of the analyzed metaphors is their rich, partly open imagery. The images evoked by the metaphors in the poem do not only describe the reality and setting of the poem but are projected onto it, reflecting the speaker's mood. In other words, the description of the evening, the streets, the fog, etc. is not objective. On the contrary, it is colored by the emotional state of the poem's persona (fog is like a cat, half-deserted streets are like tedious arguments of insidious intent). Indeed, as Richards points out our "world is a projected world, shot through with characters lent to it from our own life" (Richards, 1965, p. 108). This affective aspect of the metaphors is essential in the poem as it connects the selected metaphors in a network of meanings which build one of the dominant themes in the poem, namely the speaker's paralysis, indecisiveness, passivity and resignation.

6. Conclusion

In this essay I have selected and analyzed metaphors from the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot. The aim of the analysis was to see how these metaphorical expressions are constructed and how the metaphorical part in a poetic construction, the V-term, interacts with a seemingly literal part, the T-term.

According to the results described in the sections above, the most common type of metaphor in the poem is the internal metaphor, which is signaled by a collocational clash between literal senses of the lexemes involved in a metaphor. Most of the topics are stated explicitly, but some of them are quite vague and could be interpreted differently. The V-terms are predominantly concrete and the images they evoke, namely the connotations associated with these images, help us understand the inner world of the poem's persona which is in part projected onto the description of the setting in the poem. Thus, the metaphors in the poem do not only interact in the local context they occur in but also in the global context of the poem, projecting the theme of paralysis and contributing to the complexity of the poem. This could be connected with Nowottny's observation that poems are more highly structured in linguistic terms compared to other types of discourse (1965, p. 72). He argues that poets typically make use of the difference between the "concretion of the verbal particulars" or separate metaphors in our case and the "abstractions these particulars can be guided to suggest", namely the dominant theme in the poem (1965, p. 78).

Although it is hard to generalize from this analysis, it has nevertheless shown the importance of the context, i.e. the whole poem, for the analysis of specific metaphors. Further research in this area is needed to establish whether this feature is common in metaphors in literary texts.

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Appendix

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S. Eliot (from *Prufrock and Other Observations*)

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse

A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,

Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.

Ma per ciò che giammai di questo fondo
Non tornò vivo alcun, s'i' odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the windowpanes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;

Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair--
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin--
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all--
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all--
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all--

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare

(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)

Is it perfume from a dress

That makes me so digress?

Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.

And should I then presume?

And how should I begin?

. . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets

And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes

Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

. . . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!

Smoothed by long fingers,

Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,

Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?

But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,

Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in

upon a platter,

I am no prophet--and here's no great matter;

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,

And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,

After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,

Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,

Would it have been worth while,

To have bitten off the matter with a smile,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball

To roll it towards some overwhelming question,

To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,

Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"--

If one, settling a pillow by her head,

Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.

That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,

Would it have been worth while,

After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,

After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor--

And this, and so much more?--

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:

Would it have been worth while

If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,

And turning toward the window, should say:

"That is not it at all,

That is not what I meant, at all."

. . . . .

No!I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;

Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,

Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,

Deferential, glad to be of use,

Politic, cautious, and meticulous;

Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous--

Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.