

In the second stanza Thomas writes of the moment of conception in the womb and relates his emotions and conflicts to that stage of life. The images move around these emotions and conflicts, defining them:

Shall it be male or female? say the cells,  
And drop the plum like fire from the flesh.  
**If I were tickled by the hatching hair,**  
The winging bone that sprouted in the heels,  
The itch of man upon the baby's thigh,  
I would not fear the gallows nor the axe  
Nor the crossed sticks of war.

If he were again an unborn child, the poet says, he would not fear death, whether by execution or in war, but of course the point is that he *does* fear all these things, though he wishes he did not. From the stage of life in the womb, with the sexual appetites peculiar (according to the poet) to it, Thomas passes to the sexual appetites of adolescence:

I would not fear the muscling-in of love  
If I were tickled by the urchin hungers  
Rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve.  
I would not fear the devil in the loin  
Nor the outspoken grave.