

Poetic Figurations as World Configurations

(Literature and the Secret of the World)

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I have a very strong memory of a globe I owned as a child . . . But it was not mere curiosity about far-off lands that shaped my way of seeing and that has stayed with me and even unsettles me slightly to this day. In the middle of the South Atlantic, about halfway between Angola and Brazil, the globe showed a very large island, about the size of Madagascar I should say, and almost the same shape, of the same ochre color as the two neighboring continents. And I had spotted this extraordinary thing right at the start . . .

Of course, as I already knew, there was no island like that in that part of the world. . . . But a voice inside me never stopped repeating that what I was looking at was not a stain but an actual island in the middle of the Atlantic, a reality and not a mirage. And that voice . . . asked me to draw disturbing conclusions from this. . . . Because it was on my globe, the simple reason must

be that there were beings who saw what we could not see, knew what we did not know. And these beings must live in very close proximity to us, perhaps in the same streets, the same houses even . . .

There was a thought, a rather vague but persistent intuition, that caused me more concern and that I shall now try to articulate . . .

The thought? Well, if there are beings—and perhaps we should still call them human beings—that can perceive this great island when our sailors pass right alongside without seeing it, there must be all sorts of other things that they apprehend differently from us, as our blindness bears witness: and so they must have tongues that are not just variants of ours in the vast field of language, but go beyond this, being endowed with dimensions, with categories that are unthinkable for us. Tongues—and here I am going to take over from the boy I was then, though I think without betraying him—that transcend us as non-Euclidian geometries transcend old-fashioned space . . .

It was here, in its day-to-day reality, that I wanted that other tongue. And it was rather the dream of it that led me, in a wholly negative way, I mean one that was uncomfortable and unpleasant to experience, to have doubts about the reading of the world our simply earthly tongue allowed us.

It is our whole universe that is imperiled if we come to doubt the rights of language.

—Yves Bonnefoy, *La hantise du ptyx*

“LITERATURE AND THE SECRET OF THE WORLD”: THUS THE RUBRIC UNDER which we have been convened and enjoined to speak, a rubric whose three elements—“literature,” “secret,” and “world”—combine into a range of possible questions that have already been unfolded: What might be the secret action of literature on the world? Is it possible to constitute the world, any world, without literature, without the invisible, concealed action of literature? Does literature secretly predate the world itself? What gives the literary its specificity and difference? Above all, what gives literature its prior and exemplary status relative to other discursive practices when it comes to processes of subjectivization and objectivization, as a condition of possibility for the experience of the world?

The enormity of the questions we have been called upon to answer in a short space of time means there is no choice but to respond either exemplary or dogmatically, in a manner more illustrative or axiomatic than fully explanatory, passing over the series of arguments from critical philosophy and the many additional examples from comparative poetics that would need to be patiently combined to justify the stylistic-transcendental perspective that is to be adopted in what follows. So it is with this caveat—an inelegant way of getting out of a fix—that one can respond by saying that if literature does in fact constitute the secret of the world, if it would not be possible to inhabit a world without the concealed action of literature, this is because its poetic specificity and difference lies in the creation of “forms of meaning” that synthesize the experience of the real, a possible shared world. In other words, if literature has precedence over the world and an exemplary status relative to other discursive practices, this is because literary experimentation has again and again been the primary (although not exclusive) setting for the destabilizing event that constitutes the genesis of new forms of poetic figuration and new arrangements of these forms of poetic figuration, which are the concealed and invisible—because transcendental—conditions of possibility for the configuration of an objective or subjective world.¹

This, at least, is the answer that will be laid out in what follows: first of all, by illustrating it in medias res by a significant detail to which a foundational status can be attached, and then, by articulating a theoretical proposition in which the testimonies of poets and exemplary literary thinkers would have their say.

I. CREATION OF THE WORLD AS POETIC CREATION (A FOUNDATIONAL SIGNIFICANT DETAIL: THE GENESIS AND THE *TIMEOUS*)

“Creation” is cardinal in theology, in philosophy, in our grasp of art, music and literature. . . . How do stories of the inception of the *Kosmos* relate to those which recount the birth of a poem . . . ? In what regards are theological, metaphysical, and esthetic conceptions of conception kindred or divergent?

—G. Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*

I saw the products of art and nature treated alike, esthetic and teleological judgments illuminating one another, . . . the close affinity between poetic art and comparative natural knowledge.

—J. W. Goethe (quoted in Cassirer 1981)

I assert that theology and poetry may be said to be almost one and the same; indeed I say more: that theology is none other than a poem of/on God.

—G. Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*

For I believe in theology as literature of the fantastic. It is the perfection of the genre. . . . Philosophy and theology are . . . two species of literature of the fantastic.

—J. L. Borges, *Diálogos de Borges y Sábato*

It is no coincidence that many tongues use the same word, “creation,” to answer the questions about both the metaphysical genesis of the world and the literary genesis of a poem. It is as though language retained an atavistic awareness, the memory of an inaugural moment, creation itself, when the configuration of a shared space-time horizon, what we call a world, was overlaid with the work of literary figuration in what we call a poem. But are we really talking here about a remote occurrence, a fleeting event in a bygone past leaving traces barely legible to the archeology of language? Is it not rather the case that there is a continual overlay between the creation of the poem and the creation of the world, between the form of poetic creation and the spatiotemporal synthesis of a shared world, rendered transparent by its very ubiquity?

This is what transpires, at any rate, if attention is turned to the beginnings themselves, to the foundational world creation narratives, among which the Hebrew Genesis and Plato’s *Timeous* are unrivalled in their status and the extent of the influence they have exerted and still exert on what is called Western culture. For, looking beyond the order of explicit appearance, of the express staging of created beings in these two cosmogonies, one can discern not only the type of agency taken as generating the real and the conception of the resulting spatiotemporal structure. More radically, one can also discern how it is the characteristic accentuations and linkages promoted by the

dominant forms of poetic meaning in each tradition that synthesize these representations of the real, defining the conditions of possibility of their respective conceptions of the creation of the world.

1. Creative Agency and Spatio-Temporal Structure of the Real: “the word that separates relative parts” and “the mimetic production of a sensible image of an intelligible model”

In the “Heptameron,” the opening narrative of Genesis that stages the creative action of a divinity or divinities called Elohim (*pluralis excellentiae*), what one discerns behind the presentation of the successive creation of the various beings is an agency through the power of the word that structures the real into relative parts.

This can be seen from the very first day of creation, coming right after the title of the narrative and the brief anticlimax presenting the undifferentiated state of *tohu-bohu*:

In the beginning Elohim created heaven and earth.

The earth was without form, and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep, but the breath of Elohim moved upon the face of the waters.

Elohim said: “Let there be light”: and there was light. And Elohim saw the light, that it was good, and divided the light from darkness. And called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, first day. (1:1–5)²

This creative agency through the word of Elohim that separates out of formlessness—light from darkness, day from night, morning from evening—continues to be deployed over the next five days of creation, when, among other things, it separates the waters above from the waters below, the seas from the land, cereals from fruit trees, the sun from the moon, the fish of the water from the birds of the air, domestic cattle from wild beasts, until the climax of the narrative is reached in the genesis of the human being, which is once again a creation as separation into relative parts, this time structured as sexual difference: “Male and female created he them” (1:27). For, as Paul Beauchamp summarizes in a work entitled precisely *Création et séparation*:

The subject of separation has a cardinal function in the structure of the Heptameron since it is the author's own "interpretation" or contribution to the construction of the whole central section. It is in the separation, rather than in the theme of the word, that this interpretive mark is recognized. We also know that the dominant separation is that of time. (2005, 117)

If the originality of Genesis can be recognized more in its conception of creation by separation of relative parts than in its conception of creation by the power of the word (which is a common idea in the cosmogonies of the ancient Middle East), the fact is that the two conceptions are absolutely interwoven: creation is presented as the outcome of the agency of a separating word that structures the spatiotemporal world into dualities with interdependent parts.

In the first place, then, creative agency, the power that is supposed to have allowed beings to come upon the scene as discrete entities, is conceived as a rhetorical-poetic efficacy: the power of the word. In fact, given that creative agency has often involved a strong and obvious overlay between the conceptions of cosmic creation and artistic creation, evincing the imaginary of the dominant and exemplary artistic praxis in a particular tradition, it should not be surprising that it is precisely the art of the word that plays the leading role among the so-called People of the Book. Thus, Elohim's work of creation is done by his word "ordering" the world, in the twofold sense of the verb "to order": to "issue a spoken command" and to "organize or give form to what is formless." "Elohim said: 'Let there be . . .': and there was": this is the basic formula of the creative agency that can be discerned in the "Heptameron," which establishes a strict parallelism between "to say" and "to bring into existence"; to "create" is first and foremost to be obeyed when "calling forth the entity by the word" to a differentiated existence, *at once discrete and relative*.

For the second aspect to bear in mind besides the order of the immediate appearance of created beings, then, is that the organization acquired by the world once the creation of discrete finite entities by the separating word is complete is a configuration into relative parts, almost exclusively binary, that are connected by differing degrees of similarity and difference. The remarkable thing is that this structuring of the world does not only extend to the configuration of metaphysical topology and the entities inhabiting it, all of this being constituted as recog-

nizable parallel dualities, from that first one between heaven and earth with which the narrative leads to the sexual differentiation of the human being into male and female that is its narrative climax. The binary structure also extends to the representation of phenomenal time, which does not assume a linear or a circular imaginary, for example, but is configured as an alternation of complementary poles (day and night, morning and evening), an alternation that is none other than a diachronic projection of the separation between two relative parts. No sooner is the initial structural separation between light and darkness diachronized than the alternation between day and night arises, a conception of temporality that originates as an automatic and direct projection of this conception of a world constituted by the separation of relative parts. This is developed most fully and dramatically on the fourth day of creation:

And Elohim said: "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth": and it was so. And Elohim made two great lights: the greater light [the sun] to rule the day, and the lesser light [the moon] to rule the night and the stars. And Elohim set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and Elohim saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. (1:14–19)

In this fuller projection of the structure of "separation" to represent phenomenal time as an "alternation" of relative parts, the light/darkness pairing is diachronized not only in the day/night pair but also in the pair of lights, the sun and the moon, that become regulators of time. Just as the structure of binary separation is projected diachronically as alternation, so the formless is transformed into temporal succession.

Last, it will be noted that this conception of creation through a word that separates relative parts leaves a horizontal metaphysics, meaning one that does not recognize hierarchies of levels of being in the real. Of course, in spatial terms, the parallel dualities that structure the representation of the world may be conceived either as horizontal (the sea and the land, the bushes

and the fruit trees) or as vertical (the heaven and the earth, the birds and the fish). But, in metaphysical terms, they belong to the same order of being.³ For this cosmogonic conception does not assume any external anteriority that directs agency as a more real model to be imitated. The rhetorical-poetic imaginary here is that of language as volition and immediate event: Elohim articulates his word undirected by any anteriority, and the formless divides into discrete elements structured as relative parts.

Very different is the conception of creative agency and the resultant order of the real encountered in the other great foundational cosmogonic narrative of the Western tradition, Plato's *Timeous*, where the demiurge creates not by dividing with the word but by deploying a mimetic action that forges a sensible image of an intelligible model, two analogous spheres of existence that are conceived as hierarchically structured.

Both this mimetic agency and its analogical structuring of the real, where the meaning of the sensible copy is referred to the being of the intelligible model, are encountered from the start in Plato's work. As early as the so-called "Prelude" to the "Discourse of Timeous," one reads:

So concerning the whole universe—or cosmos or whatsoever name may be most acceptable to it—we must ask the question which, it is agreed, must be asked at the outset of inquiry concerning anything: Has it always been, without any source of becoming; or has it come to be, starting from some beginning? It has come to be; for it can be seen and touched and it has body, and all such things are sensible; and, as we saw, sensible things, that are to be apprehended by belief together with sensation, are things that become and can be generated. But again, that which becomes, we say, must necessarily become by the agency of some cause. . . . After which of the two models did its builder frame it—after that which is always in the same unchanging state, or after that which has come to be? Now, if this world is good and its maker good, clearly he looked to the eternal; on the contrary supposition (which cannot be spoken without blasphemy), to that which has come to be. Everyone, then, must see that he looked to the eternal; for the world is the best of things that have become, and he is the best of causes. Having come to be, then, in this way, the

world has been fashioned on the model [*paradeigma*] of that which is comprehensible by rational discourse and understanding and is always in the same state. These things being so, our world must necessarily be an image [*eikon*] of something. (2011, 28b–29b; Conford 1937, 22–23; translation slightly modified).

If the physical world is sensible, the argument begins, it must be created, unlike the intelligible eternal. If what has been created must have a cause and model, it goes on, the model taken by the demiurge for the physical world, being good, must be the eternal intelligible. This being so, the creative agency and the resultant structure of the real that can be discerned are very different from the separation through the word of relative entities that was observed in the Hebrew “Heptameron,” being a particular mimesis that produces a sensible image of an intelligible model, an *eikon* analogous to a *paradeigma*.

Where creative agency is concerned, then, the *Timeous* adopts the imaginary of plastic mimesis, of the “visual arts” characteristic of the People of Theory (one can recall that the Greek word *theorein* means precisely “to see”). Of course, this is not the secondary or derivative mimesis of art as such, whose model is sensible reality, but a primary mimesis, the best possible, whose model is Ideas themselves. The demiurge is depicted as a supreme architect or artisan, even as a painter, who forges the cosmos as the sensible copy of an intelligible model that precedes it. “The world itself,” as Stephen Halliwell observes, “is a mimetic creation, wrought by a divine artist who, at one point in the *Timeous* (55c6), is expressly visualized as a painter” (2002, 71).

As regards the resulting metaphysical structure or total order of the real, what impresses itself here is the conception of a hierarchical, analogical, and participatory dualism where the becoming of the sensible image is referred to the being of the intelligible model. If Plato was the first Greek thinker to provide mimesis with a solid philosophical framework by tying it in with his metaphysics and epistemology, the conception of the resulting structure of the real discernible behind the primary mimesis carried out by the demiurge is the well-known ontological structure of Platonism, where the visible becoming of the sensible is seen as constituting a copy by likeness or analogical image (*eikon*) of an intelligible and invisible being that has served as its model (*paradeigma*).

It is this resultant structure of the real, which is dualistic, hierarchical, and analogical, that once again determines not only the conception of metaphysical topology but also that of temporality. For Plato's beautiful and renowned formula—time as “a moving image of eternity”—is the result of a strict projection of the mimetic-analogical dualism between the intelligible and the sensible on to the representation of temporality. It is worth recalling the passage from *Timeous*:

When the father that had begotten the world saw it set in motion and alive . . . he took thought to make it yet more like its model. So as that model is the Living being that is forever existent, he sought to make the universe also like it, so far as might be, in that respect. Now the nature of that Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing. But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving image of eternity; and, at the same time he ordered the Heaven, he made, of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting image moving according to number—that to which we have given the name of Time (37c–d; Cornford 1937, 97–98; translation slightly modified).

In this mimetic-dualistic conception of the real, then, both the conception of physical space and that of phenomenal time are determined by hierarchical opposition to and analogical participation in the intelligible being, the model from which they would draw their existence and meaning. While perception apprehends a “sensible image” (an *eikon* or illustrative comparison), only the judgment of understanding is capable of raising itself to the apprehension of its “intelligible meaning” (the *paradeigma* or idea).

Although it is doubtless not obvious, the above provides a possible definition of “metaphor,” of the poetic figure overwhelmingly dominant in Greek literature from its inception.

2. Dominant Forms of Poetic Meaning: “semantic parallelism” and “analogical metaphor”

Following the identification of the creative agency and resultant structure of the real staged by the two foundational cosmogonies of the Genesis and the

Timeous, the great unanswered question is where these differing conceptions of creation come from: one presenting the world as the result of a word that separates into relative parts and the other as the mimetic generation of a sensible image analogous to an intelligible model. *Great* unanswered question. For the answer emerges only when one turns to the forms of poetic meaning dominant in one and the other tradition, namely semantic parallelism in ancient Hebrew literature and analogical metaphor in Greek classical poetics, two figures that impose a habit that synthesizes the configuration of the real either as relative parts giving meaning to one another or as a sensible image that points to an intelligible meaning.

“Semantic parallelism,” unquestionably the dominant form of poetic signification in ancient Hebrew literature, consists in the structuring of segments of discourse into relative parts, mediated by relationships of similarity and difference that make them complementary, so that the succession generated takes the form of an alternation, often *in crescendo*. In modern times, after long neglect resulting from the allegorizing inertia of Christian exegesis, Robert Lowth pioneeringly described the device under the name of *parallelismus membrorum*; in *De sacra poesi Hebraicorum preaelectiones academicae* (1753), he observes:

The correspondence of one verse or line with another, I call parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it in sense, or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction, these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases, answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms. (quoted in Gevirtz 1963, 6)

These various forms of literary parallelism are very palpably responsible for the mode of linguistic presentation in the so-called “poetic sections” of the Bible, where they constitute the conscious and explicit form of prosodic structuring in the Psalms, Job, the prophets, and elsewhere, in whose verses the second part is structured as an echo, repetition, response, contrast, or correlation to the first. Thus, the dramatic “Poem of Job” opens:

Annul the *day* that *I was born*,
 and the *night* that said, “*A man is conceived*.” (3:3 ff.)

If one goes to the opening of *Isaiah*, in its turn, one reads:

Hear, O heavens,
 and give ear, O earth:
 —for YHWH has spoken.
 The ox knoweth his owner,
 and the ass his master’s crib:
 but Israel doth not know,
 my people doth not consider. (1:2–3)

It will be noted that when the relative parts resemble each other they are never strictly identical, being mediated by patterns of intensification, concentration, literary elaboration and so on: born / *is conceived*; hear / *give ear*; owner / *master*, Israel / *my people*. Similarly, when the relative parts are contrasted, they are never strict opposites, but rather complementary, constituting a horizon of common meaning: day / *night*, indicating all of time; heaven / *earth*, indicating the whole of the world; ox / *ass*, indicating the order of domestic animals.

Now, the fact is that this prosodic work of literary parallelism does not run its course in the explicit structuring it gives to the verses of so-called ancient Hebrew poetry but is also responsible—as an acquired habit operating below the surface—for the mode of linguistic presentation in many of the so-called prose sections of the Old Testament. Thus, it can often be discerned not only behind the proverbial style of wisdom literature—“The sun rises [/] and the sun sets, . . . [//] It goes to the south [/] and swings round to the north, [//] round and round goes the wind, [/] and on its rounds the wind returns” (Ecclesiastes 1:5–6)—but even behind some of the most arid legal precepts of the Torah, where one can still sense a muted labor of basic discursive structuring by division into two corresponding parts. Take, for instance, the prose of Numbers 5:12, which goes: “Any man whose wife strays and acts unfaithfully to him, so that a man lie with her in carnal union, and it is hidden from her husband and her impurity is dissimulated.” This only needs to be reformatted

to render visible the invisible, that is, the formal work of parallelism itself below the prosaic surface:

Any man whose wife strays
 and acts unfaithfully to him,
 So that a man lie with her
 in carnal union,
 And it is hidden from her husband
 and her impurity is dissimulated.

This being so, besides recognizing that semantic parallelism is by any measure *the* dominant form of poetic signification guiding the mode of discursive presentation in ancient Hebrew literature, what needs to be grasped is the habit of transcendental synthesis of the real generated by its characteristic accentuations and linkages, which simultaneously divide discrete elements and place them in correlation. In other words, the type of representation of the real promoted by a poetic form that divides discursive units from within, accentuating two discrete parts that are linked together as complementary or corresponding elements, is none other than a structuring of experience as a division into relative parts whose succession becomes an alternation. In the long run, of course, this work of poetic representation by accentuation and linkage of discrete units as relative parts led to the decantation of a whole series of dualities that became traditional, commonplace, or hackneyed images: “heaven and earth,” “day and night,” “birds and fish,” “man and woman,” and so on. But one should not lose sight of the fact that this binary synthesis of the real, this *configuration* of the structure of the world as a division into relative parts, arose as the result of the type of accentuation and linkage imposed by the poetic *figuration* that was dominant in ancient Hebrew literature: parallelism itself.

The way the poetic form of parallelism generates the representation of the world as dualities with relative parts can be seen very clearly if one examines passages of so-called biblical poetry that stage views of nature or of the cosmos.⁴ Take just Psalm 8, whose evident kinship with the “Heptameron” of the Genesis has often been remarked upon.

The psalm begins with musical instructions and an invocation of the Tetragrammaton (my italics):

*For the lead player on the gittith, a David psalm.
Lord, our Master,*

Then comes the development of the poem itself (emphasis mine):

How majestic Your name in all the earth!
Whose splendor was told over the heavens.

From the mouth of babes and sucklings, You founded strength,
on account of Your foes to put an end to enemy and avenger.

When I see Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars You fixed firm,

What is man that you should note him,
and the human creature, that You pay him heed,

You make him little less than the gods,
with glory and grandeur You crown him?

You make him rule over the work of Your hands.
All things You set under his feet.

Sheep and oxen all together
and also the beast of the field.

Birds of the heavens and fish of the sea,
what moves on the paths of the seas.

Following this development of the poem, the opening invocation is repeated, breaking off the movement by parallelisms to bring the song to a close:

Lord, our Master

How majestic Your name in all the earth!

Leaving aside here a number of very delicate literary details that could be commented upon in this poem,⁵ it will be noted how, other than at the beginning and the end (that is, the points where the prosodic movement is initiated and broken), the poetic parallelism, as it guides the presentation of each of the periods of discourse, accentuates and links a series of terms that decant into dualities, giving rise to a conception of the real as separation of relative parts: “the *name on earth*” and “*splendor in heaven*”; “the *cry of children in the home*” and “the *silence of foreign foes*”; “the moon” and “the stars”; “the hands” and “the feet”; “domestic animals” (sheep and oxen) and “wild beasts,” all “land animals” set in turn against the “animals that create paths over the seas” (that is, the “birds” and “fish”). Thus, it is not a matter here of the *poetic form* of parallelism having been placed at the service of a traditional Hebrew *conception of the world* (as tends to be thought from a realist, nontranscendental perspective that, even after recognizing the more archaic style of this Psalm 8, sees it as a summary poetic paraphrase of what had been supposedly established by the “Heptameron” as dogma).⁶ Form and representation are absolutely inseparable: it is the behavior of the parallelism, its work of accentuation and linkage synthesizing discrete and relative parts, that everywhere imposes the representation of the world as separation; it is insofar as the interplay of identity and difference imposed by parallelism entails the formal arrangement of the poem into relative lines of verse, or into relative parts within lines, that there is established a habit of transcendental synthesis that sets the conditions of possibility for a representation of creation as a division into corresponding parts.

Thus, if it is precisely this conception of the world as separation into relative parts that was discerned, more thematically than prosodically, in the text of the “Heptameron,” by this stage it is also possible to recognize how this discourse of Genesis is shaped secretly, and at first sight invisibly, by the literary form of parallelism itself, which explains not only the formulaic expression of the Hebrew cosmological narrative but also the very conception of creation as separation by the word that it stages. It is enough to reformat

the text, marking its internal inflections, for this invisible work of the poetic form to become visible.

It will be recalled that the narrative of the “Heptameron” begins with a “title”:

IN THE BEGINNING ELOHIM CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH

The beauty of this title is that whereas its incipit introduces the matter to be dealt with—the “beginning” of the world, which immediately resonates with the famous initial emphatic alliteration: *bereshit bara* (lit. “at the head”)—the other emphatic place in the line, its ending, performatively introduces the form of signification that organizes the world itself, parallelism, which is imposed in the most general possible pair, “heaven and earth,” a correlative image for the world in its totality.

After the title, it was noted, the narrative begins with an anticlimax presenting a formless state, one of initial indetermination, where, as the divinity prepares to utter the first word, there are as yet no discrete entities in an organized creation:

The earth was without form,
and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep,
but the breath of Elohim moved upon the face of the waters.

The striking thing in this anticlimax is that just as form has not yet been given to the binary poetic parallelism, nor has form yet been given to the world. For what can be recognized in this first period is a “threefold parallelism” (between “the earth without form,” “the deep with darkness upon it,” and “the waters with the breath of Elohim moving upon them”), a peculiar poetic arrangement, and a much less common one in biblical literature, which acts as a highly effective performative way of unbalancing the expected prosodic order, and with it the order of the world, of checking the binary synthesis of relative pairings at a point where we are being precisely told that matters are still at a formless initial stage. Just as Elohim’s creating word has not yet acted, as he is only opening his mouth and breathing out, the binary parallelism that orders creation into relative

parts has not begun to act; matters are in a state of *tohu-bohu* in which there is no stable structure.⁷

It is only after this anticlimax, initial quietude, or indifferenciation that, even as a divine word separating relative parts day after day is thematized, the concealed work of prosodic representation of binary parallelism is recognized beneath the narrative surface. Thus, if we reformat the text of the first day that follows, marking its internal inflections, we read:

Elohim said:

“Let there be light”:

and there was light.

And Elohim saw the light, that it was good,

and divided the light from darkness.

And called the light Day,

and the darkness he called Night.

And there was evening

and there was morning:

First day.

When the narrative of the first day of creation is spaced in this way, it will be noted that, as in Psalm 8, the parallelism guides the whole mode of linguistic presentation except the beginning and end (that is, when the narrative period is triggered and broken off), synthesizing the order of representation of the real as relative parts. In other words, the spatiotemporal conception discerned earlier—the structuring as separation and the succession as alternation—is recognized now not only in what the language of the text says, in the thematization of Elohim’s separating word to which attention was paid earlier (“And Elohim *divided*”), but above all in what the language does: in the work of synthesis of the literary parallelism beneath the apparent prosaic surface of the text, a

form of poetic behavior that is responsible for the kind of representation given of the world.

The same formal poetic determination can be discerned throughout the remaining five days of creation, where this configuration of the real by literary parallelism produces some of the most startling cosmic images, such as that of the division of the waters from the waters. Beauchamp, surprised by such an image, comments: “It really would be difficult to be less descriptive than the author of the “Heptameron” is in this passage! When it comes down to it, there are few images taken from nature that can explain this formulation: it seems to be driven above all by logic, not that of nature, but that of words and literary traditions. Whatever the action that divides the waters may be, it has constituted them into two blocks” (2005, 202). The action that divides the waters from the waters and surprisingly constitutes them into two blocks, it will be appreciated, is none other than the form of poetic signification of parallelism itself, which operates by defining the conditions of possibility for the experience of this order of the real as separation and succession of relative parts, a literary movement *in crescendo* that reaches its climax in the creation of the human “couple.” Then, if the text is once again reformatted and its internal inflections marked, one reads:

And Elohim said:

“Let us make man in our image
after our likeness.

And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea
and over the fowl in the air;

And over the cattle, and over all the earth
and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

So Elohim created man in his own image,
in the image of Elohim created he him,

male and female created he them.

If, after the cosmic, physical, and biological separations that precede it, the sexual differentiation of the human being is the final determination, the climactic moment of a narrative *in crescendo* where increasingly discrete elements have been separated, it is precisely what makes the human being resemble the divinity, the power of poetic language, that determines the way of representing the world as a division into relative parts.

Indeed, the linguistic agency that gives order to the spatiotemporal world, besides being thematized in the strong word of Elohim, operates in the poetic parallelism peculiar to human beings, which imposes a transcendental habit of synthesis of the real. To begin with, the type of accentuation and linkage of relative parts imposed by literary parallelism determines the representation of the metaphysical topology, from the very structure of the cosmos, which is seen as being formed of relative parts (heaven and earth, upper and lower waters, etc.), to the configuration of the living beings inhabiting the phenomenal space, which are represented as discrete entities in reciprocal relationships (land and sea creatures, birds and fish, male and female, and so on). Then, the transcendental synthesis of poetic parallelism is what also determines the conception of phenomenal time, which is represented as an alternation of relative events (day and night, morning and evening), a projection of the binary structure on to the order of succession. It is thus that the dominant poetical device in the Hebrew tradition, literary parallelism, can be said to operate as a form of transcendental synthesis, as a formal habit that sets the conditions under which the representation of the world arises.⁸

The same transcendental effect can be discerned in the work of metaphor, which is unquestionably the dominant form of poetic signification in ancient Greek poetry, when it comes to the metaphysical-temporal order examined in Plato's *Timeous*, the conception of creation as a sensible image that points to and participates by analogy in an intelligible model that gives it meaning. For it is not enough just to note, as contemporary theory often does, the basic solidarity observable between metaphorical tropology and ontological topology, between the semantic substitution of the literal image by the figurative idea and the metaphysical structural dualism that subordinates the sensible to the intelligible.⁹ More radically, it needs to be understood that it is the transcendental

habit imposed by the incontestable and massive dominance of this form of metaphorical-analogical imagery from classical poetics onward, soon becoming a mode of conceptual thought, that is responsible for the synthesis of the real characteristic of ontology, a dualistic metaphysical conception subordinating the immediately sensible to the intelligible allegedly transcending it.

The way the metaphorical forges the ontological is confirmed when one considers the conception of metaphor itself left by classical Greece, as well as the massive labor of the metaphorical-analogical language in Plato's work, where it not only appears as an explicit and conscious method of conceptualizing the highest and most intractable matters to which his philosophy leads but is also implicitly and somewhat less consciously responsible for the way he projects his metaphysical configuration of the real.

Regarding the conception of metaphor in classical Greece, if we heed the most thorough discussion that has come down to us—the one bequeathed by Aristotle in the *Poetics*, the *Rhetoric*, and some additional passages in other of his works—it is clear from the start not only that this figure is predominant in Greek literature, where it is seen as *the* mark of poetic genius,¹⁰ but also that within the variety of tropes subsumed under the heading of *metaphora*, the figure by analogy has an incontestable precedence: “Of the four kinds of metaphor, those by analogy are the best liked” (*Rhetoric*, 1411a). Then, and no less decisively, Aristotle allows one to see how this poetic work of perception of the like in the unlike and of the unlike in the like takes place primarily in the comparison of sensible images that point to (or project) an intelligible meaning; in the *Rhetoric* he notes:

For example, to say that an honest man is like a square is to make a metaphor. Both terms *imply an idea of perfection*. (1411b25; emphasis mine)

The Simile also is a metaphor; the difference is but slight. When the poet says of Achilles that he “leapt on the foe like a lion,” this is a simile; when he says of him “the lion leapt,” it is a metaphor—here, *since both are courageous*, he has transferred to Achilles the name of “lion.” (1406b; my italics)

If the metaphor presents the abstract in the guise of the concrete, as is usually seen, it is important to realize that not only does it generally establish a

likeness amid unlikeness between two known sensible elements (in this case between a “man” and a “square,” between “Achilles” and a “lion”) but that this recognition of the likeness in the unlikeness generates an intelligible ideality: in this case the *ideas* of “perfection” and “courage.”

As will be appreciated, this provides quite an analytical description of the emergence of the Platonic world of Ideas (with a capital “I” this time), and more broadly of the constitution of the ontological order as a whole. For this fundamental twofold action of metaphor that projects the intelligible through comparison of the sensible is found throughout Plato’s work, his whole strategy of thought and discourse, where not only does he explicitly use metaphors to get out of the philosophical bind into which his theory of Ideas leads him, to the extent of deploying veritable allegories, but ultimately it is also possible to see how metaphor works implicitly and less consciously, at the transcendental level, by generating this ontological representation of the real.

To ascertain how metaphorical-analogical figuration fulfills this twofold role of explicit theoretical conceptualization and implicit metaphysical configuration in Plato’s work, one might recommence here with some words that Aristotle uses to criticize Plato’s theory of Ideas, words that, from a transcendental perspective, say rather more than the Greek philosopher meant to say from his realist stance. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle complains:

To say that the Ideas are models [*paradeigmata*] and that other things participate in them is to lose oneself in empty words and to *shape poetic metaphors*.
(I.9.991a19; emphasis mine)

On the face of it, of course, Aristotle’s intention is to criticize Plato’s figurative use of the words “model” (*paradeigma*) and “participation” (*methexis*) as metaphors allowing him to deal with the philosophical enigma of the relationship between the sphere of intelligible Ideas and the realm of sensible objects. Aristotle’s explicit criticism is itself symptomatic, though, for it points out that when Plato is in a philosophical bind, when he addresses the thorniest matters to which his metaphysical conception leads him, he uses metaphors to extricate himself: he deploys analogical thinking in which he makes use of visible images of the sensible world to grasp the ideal meaning of a supposed

invisible realm beyond the reach not only of perception but of conceptual logic. (As we know, the substitution whereby an outworn metaphor is dissimulated into a theoretical concept is not just an event like any other in history but a foundational philosophical act, in ontological thinking especially.)¹¹

Plato himself is aware of the need for diffidence when it comes to using the metaphorical-analogical as a mode of conceptual argument for the hardest matters. Thus, among many other examples, in book 6 of the *Republic*, when asked by Adeimantus to explain why philosophers ought to govern, something that will ultimately require recourse to the Idea of the Good, Socrates begins defensively:

—The question you ask needs to be answered by means of an image [*eikon*, “illustrative comparison,” “metaphor,” “simile”].

—And you, of course, aren’t used to speaking in images.

—So! Are you making fun of me now that you’ve landed me with a claim that’s so hard to establish? In any case, listen to my image, and you’ll appreciate all the more how greedy for images I am. (487e–488a)

What immediately follows this inversion of the traditional roles, with Adeimantus taking an ironic, provocative stance and Socrates a rather defensive one, is the allegory of the philosopher as an expert ship’s pilot (488a–489c), to which are then added, at the end of book 6 and the beginning of book 7 of the *Republic*, what are undoubtedly the most famous allegories in the whole history of philosophy: that of the Sun to explain the Idea of the Good and that of the cave to explain the different levels of the real, especially the relationship between the sphere of intelligible Ideas and the sphere of sensible images.

Here is just one example of this deployment of analogical poetics as a form of philosophical explanation:

Let’s say, then, that this is what I called the offspring of the Good, which the Good begot as its analog. What the Good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the Sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things. (508b–c)

One gets here a complete and perfect illustration of the type of proportion described by Aristotle for analogical metaphor: what the Sun is to sight in the sensible sphere, which constitutes a perceptible realm, Good is to understanding in the intelligible sphere, which is presented as an ideal topology.¹² The Good, projected as an absolutely transcendental sphere, is actually an ideal representation configured by analogy itself.

Thus, as advanced, if the words from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are read from a linguistic-transcendental perspective, they offer rather more than the complaint and criticism the philosopher meant to formulate about Plato's theory of Ideas from a realist stance: they explain nothing less than the figurative genesis of the conception of the real that ontology stages. If it is true, as Aristotle says, but also independently of this, that in formulating his theory of Ideas Plato "shapes poetic metaphors," it is because this metaphorical operation, its analogical projection of the invisible through comparison of the visible, is responsible for generating a sphere of ideality, for synthesizing this representation of the real as a dualism between the sensible and the intelligible. At the most basic, it must be appreciated that the implicit movement of production of an ideality, triggered by the analogical movement that establishes likeness amid difference between sensible entities, is not too far removed from the way the emergence of the abstract Socratic concept is usually explained analytically by the similarity of or features common to concrete sense perceptions. Then, more radically, it must be appreciated that the analytical explanation that can be given for the emergence of the very conception of Platonic Ideas, based on the question about what is common or alike in the elements of the sensible world, the being of the entity, replicates the actual labor of production of ideal meaning in the metaphorical, with its hierarchical and teleological structuring of the sensible and the intelligible.

If the realist conception of creation offered by Plato assumes that the sensible analogically imitates the intelligible, from a transcendental perspective it can be seen that there was an earlier movement of idealization that constituted this metaphysical dualism; that it was the metaphorizing analogy that, as a habit of transcendental synthesis, projected a world of intelligible meaning based on comparison of the sensible, a dualism in which it is only later, by a movement of inversion that occurs when the derived concept is

given precedence over the original image, that the being and meaning of the image are made to depend on the Idea.

The transgression of meaning of the poetic figure generates the transgression of immanence of the metaphysical conception. First, for Platonism, the sensible world acquires the metaphysical-epistemological status that the images of visible objects or concrete events accentuated and compared by metaphor have on the poetical plane: a world of contradictory images where there is active, shifting similarity and difference, making it necessary to resolve this into something common that transcends it. Thus one arrives, in the second place, at the intelligible and eternal world of the Platonic Ideas in which that dispersion of the sensible is resolved, a world that acquires the same metaphysical status of abstract and ideal unequivocality as is possessed, on the poetic plane, by the ideal meaning generated by the analogy between the images of the metaphor once the figurative movement has been completed and the ideal and final meaning of the comparison has been understood. Third and last, the proportional participation or mimesis that Platonism conceives as a mode of metaphysical relationship between the sensible world and intelligible Ideas has the same analogical linking status, on the metaphysical plane, as the relationship observed on the poetic plane between the sensible images compared and the intelligible meaning of these in the substitutive structure of metaphor. Not for nothing would Neoplatonism subsequently redefine this idea of participation, *methexis*, using the formula of *analogia entis*, the analogy of being. For, to quote the unintended conclusion of a more recent Platonist and Spanish-language editor of *Timeous*: “Only secondarily is the *Timeous* a cosmology . . . Above all, its aim is to *spell out the analogy that exists between the world of ideas and this world*” (Plato 2011, 29; emphasis mine).

The fact is that, when one finally returns to the cosmogony of *Timeous*, the shortest route to understanding how metaphorical-analogical figuration drives the configuration of the real characterizing Platonic ontology is to focus on the very terms in which, here and in other of his works, the philosopher expresses the two spheres brought together in his metaphysics. For if the sensible sphere is figured as an *eikon*, an “image,” and the intelligible sphere as a *paradeigma*, a “model” (which is what Aristotle complains of in his *Metaphysics*), these, as has been seen, are precisely the terms usually employed by

Plato himself to express analogical figuration, properly so called, in the poetic field: simile and metaphor.¹³ To put it another way, if, within the field of their specifically poetical-rhetorical core uses, the Platonic notions of the *eikon* (image, simile, “illustrative comparison”) and the *paradeigma* (model, example, “comparative illustration”) both entail a relationship between two parts where the essential thing is the metaphorical-analogical operation, there is far more involved than just a terminological match with the ontological conceptuality, where these same notions of the *eikon* and the *paradeigma* make a figurative reappearance to name the two basic spheres of the real drawn together by the Platonic ontology. It is because of the habit of metaphorical figuration that the entities of sensible becoming, conceived as *eikones* (images, similes), constitute, from early Socratic dialogue onward and most particularly in mature Platonic epistemology and metaphysics, a sphere whose function is reduced to that of “illustrative comparison,” where the perception of commonality in difference provides a basis for constituting the concept and the Idea, the beings of the intelligible world, which are conceived as *paradeigmata* (models), elevated to the role of “comparative illustration,” an ideal generality to which the dispersion of entities is subordinated.

It is thus that one recognizes another exemplary case in which the form of poetic signification that is clearly dominant in a literary tradition—in this case, the analogical metaphor, whose incontestable preeminence can be seen in Greece from the times of Pindar and Homer and extends to the philosophical prose of the classical period—determines the conception of the creation of the world and the synthesis of the representation of the real: the structure of Platonic ontology, which would have a long future development.

More broadly, it is thus that one begins to understand a constitutive relationship between dominant figurations of the poetic image and characteristic spatiotemporal configurations of the real. For what is to be marked here is not just a solidarity between the behavior of a literary form and the representation of the world but, more radically, the transcendental effect of the dominant forms of poetic signification on the experience of the real: the way the enormous event that is the creation of a poetic form in language turns into the even more enormous possibility of recreating the representation of the world.

This is what has been discerned, at least, in this basic comparative survey, limited to the way the conceptions of the real staged by the two foundational cosmogonic narratives of antiquity—creation by division of relative parts in the Hebrew Genesis and creation as mimesis in the sensible image of the intelligible model in Plato’s *Timeous*—display transcendental dependencies on the forms of poetic signification that dominate their respective literary traditions—namely semantic parallelism in the case of ancient Hebrew poetics, where the prosodic movement divides the period into two relative parts that give each other meaning, and metaphor in the case of ancient Greek literature, where the semantic movement takes the form of an analogical substitution of the sensible image by its ideal meaning.

Looking past the conceptual and stylistic considerations raised regarding these two exemplary cosmogonies, this same transcendental impact of forms of poetic meaning on the representation of the world can be discerned more broadly by carefully considering the way the habits of synthesis driven by the different literary figurations dominant at different times and in different places display strong solidarities with the conceptions of the world characteristic of their respective traditions, a synthesis that is manifested first and foremost in the dependency of metaphysical and temporal conceptions on the behavior of the forms of the poetic image. (The Chinese classical tradition, e.g., where clear relationships can be identified between the cosmological conception of the Process, with its cosmic correlations and alternations, on the one hand, and the operation of the dynamic image in regulated poetry, with its varied forms of literary parallelism, on the other, is highly instructive.)

II. LITERATURE AS CHARGED LANGUAGE WITH A HEURISTIC FUNCTION (THE THEORETICAL PROPOSITION)

It is clear that there is no classification of the Universe not being arbitrary and full of conjectures. The reason for this is very simple: we do not know what thing the universe is. . . . We are allowed to go further; we can suspect that there is no universe in the organic, unifying sense, that this ambitious term has. . . . The impossibility of penetrating the divine pattern of the universe

cannot stop us from planning human patterns, even though we are conscious they are not definitive.

—J. L. Borges, *Otras inquisiciones*

As for the world, the whole of reality has no more reason for existing than to challenge the poet to a sublime tournament, forfeited in advance.

—P. Valéry, *Cuadernos*

Esthetics can be thus understood in a Kantian sense . . . , as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise.

—J. Rancière, *Le partage du sensible*

It will be appreciated that after the poetic-stylistic analysis the theoretical proposition imposes itself: it can be reformulated by saying that what is peculiar to literature—what may be called the “poetic” in literature—is the production of a language charged with meaning that deploys a heuristic function, a semantic plus and transcendental exploration of the representation of the real obtained through the workings of poetic forms, where the output of the image plays a central role.

The most basic thing to establish, then, is that if the literary art consists in a special use of language, in a poetic experimentation with a given tongue, from a semantic perspective this experimentation charges it with meaning, gives it a “plus” of sense relative to the normal or established uses of the language concerned. This has often been appreciated by poets, especially by those who have doubled as critics of their own creative activity, whose testimonies might be privileged here. Thus, one may recall Pound’s well-known formula, deduced from his anthologizing impulse and patient study of the masterpieces of every time: “Literature is language charged with meaning”; “great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree” (Pound 1991a, 28). Approaching the matter more as a phenomenologist than as a literary historian, Valéry had already concluded: “Poetry is the ambition for a discourse that is charged with more meaning, and mixed

with more music, than ordinary language does or could bear . . . that charge of wonders which is superimposed upon, or replaces, the instrumental charge of language” (Valéry 1957, 1:712). Insofar as poetic experimentation charges meaning, generates a semantic plus relative to the settled use of the tongue concerned, then language sheds its derivative instrumental function as a tool of analysis or denotation of a given reality, recovering its original transcendental function of “synthesis” of the new or the never-before-represented-as-such. Valéry himself illustrates and warns: “The poet’s task is never to say it is raining. It is to . . . make rain”; “What is it we want, if not to create the powerful—and for a time continuous—impression that there exists between the sensory form of a discourse and its *idea-changing value* I know not what mystical union, harmony, grace, in which we are privy to a world wholly different to the world in which words and actions correspond?” (Valéry 2007, 435).

It is this opening up of the world via a sensory form that requires us to complete the initial delimitation of the specificity of the literary by adding that if what is discerned from the semantic standpoint just discussed is a “language charged with meaning,” what is discerned from a transcendental standpoint is a “language with a *heuristic function*”: an exploration of the representation of the real capable of revealing new ways of perceiving and thinking about the world that have the potential to be socialized. This has been pointed out by some of the thinkers who have inquired most patiently and acutely into the metaphysical status of poetic language. One may recall Ricoeur’s conclusions in his study of the forms of metaphor:

Poetic discourse faces reality by bringing into play *heuristic fictions* whose constitutive value is proportional to their power of denial. (Ricoeur 1978, 283; translation slightly modified)

Poetic qualities, through their status as transferred, add to the shaping of the world. They are “true” to the extent that they are “appropriate,” that is, to the extent that they join fittingness to novelty, obviousness to surprise. (Ricoeur 1978, 282)

Poetic forms generate a fiction in a strong sense: not the “illusion of fantasy” but the “*as if* of the imagination,” the exploration of new ways of representing

the real on the basis of the synthesis carried out by a particular creative pattern of language. Ricoeur goes on: “Finally, if all language, all symbolism consists in ‘remaking reality,’ there is no place in language where this work is more plainly and fully demonstrated. It is when symbolism breaks through its acquired limits and conquers new territory” (280); “here again, the *epoché* of natural reality is the condition that allows poetry to develop a world on the basis of the mood that the poet articulates. It will be the task of interpretation to elaborate the design of a world liberated, by suspension, from descriptive reference” (229). Accordingly, these heuristic fictions consist not in the production of a utopian place, which could never take place, but in an invitation to a new way of synthesizing place, including metaphysical topology, to perceiving the breaks and conceiving of the relationships between the things and events that constitute the representation of a world.

This transcendental effect of the poetic was already discerned by Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose pioneering transference of Kant’s Copernican revolution from subjectivity to language was wholly dictated by his attention to and privileging of the behavior of literary language. “The real importance of the study of languages lies in the part language plays in *forming representations*,” he begins, before concluding that “this is a continuing harvest from the *literature* of a people, though especially there from its *poetry* and *philosophy*. . . . Talented writers give the words this enhanced content, and an eagerly receptive nation adopts and propagates it” (Humboldt 1999, 87). In its original poetic function, language is not a tool, an instrument of communication that imitates or denotes a given reality or thought, but a form that synthesizes objective and subjective representation, the experience of a possible world: “Language is the medium . . . whereby human beings shape themselves and the world at the same time, or rather become conscious of themselves by projecting a world outside of themselves”; “the diversity of tongues is not a diversity of sounds and signs, but a diversity of worldviews [*Weltansichten*]” (Humboldt 1991, 54). Ultimately, if there is no perception or thought without language, if different tongues synthesize different conceptions of the world, the crucial thing is that languages are transformed historically by poetic experimentation in a broad sense, that is, whether occurring in a literary work or in some other linguistic performance of the productive imagination; they

are transformed by the creation of new forms of poetic meaning and the structuring of new arrangements of poetic forms that, when socialized, modify the system of the language and the consequent representation of the world to which it gives rise:

We must distinguish a state of language in which, as a faithful portrait of a period, it contains many poetically formed elements, from one in which sounds, forms, untrammled connections and constructions sow in the organism of the language the imperishable seed of ever-springing poetic creation. In the first case, the form once minted gradually cools off, and its poetic content is no longer felt to inspire. In the second, the poetic form of the language can appropriate self-created material with ever-renewed freshness, depending on the mental cultivation of the age and the genius of its poets. (Humboldt 1999, 165; translation slightly modified)

It is precisely when the transcendental foundation of experience is shifted from the old Kantian privileging of the supposedly universal forms of subjectivity to the variety of syntheses offered by the historical languages, living and constantly changing as they are due to the creations of the literary imagination, that it becomes necessary to understand the work of creation and the particular economy of the “*forms* of poetic meaning.” For one thing, since the simultaneously receptive and active work involved in the creation of a poetic form, when strong and successful, can end up by creating a new way of synthesizing the real—if, in Valéry’s words, everything starts with the feeling of a possible new world, where the unfamiliarity of the real is matched by an unfamiliarity of language that results in objects being associated otherwise than usually (“I spoke of the *feeling of a universe*; I meant that the poetic state or emotion seems to me to consist in a nascent perception, a tendency to perceive a *world*, or complete system of relations” [Valéry 1957, 2:514])—the enthusiasm of the poet who wishes to give a new presentation of that which goes beyond settled representation is capable of igniting an independent creative work, where the recognition and staging of *trouvailles* through the productive virtue of the conventional can end up by activating a new form of meaning that synthesizes a new order of possible experience: “Beautiful works

are daughters of their form—*which is born before them*” (Valéry 2007, 363); “between the *underlying* conceptions and the actions that engender the *form*, there is no longer any contrast. . . . An intimate correspondence has been set up, identifiable in a reciprocity whose existence those who have not experienced it cannot imagine” (quoted in Hytier 1970, 217). It is above all necessary to grasp the work of creation and the peculiar economy of the “forms of poetic meaning,” since experimentation in the various literary arts, whether it enhances them individually or generates new arrangements among these forms, is capable of synthesizing shared and lasting orders of experience, worlds with the potential to be socialized: “A form is good when we repeat and imitate it. . . . *Form* is essentially linked to repetition” (Valéry 1957, 2:554); “Its catalytic effect alters minds, each according to its nature and state, giving rise to the combinations for which the potential already existed in a particular mind” (quoted in Hytier 1970, 251).

Now, if the most basic task in a study of forms of poetic meaning would be to establish a catalog and taxonomy of these, it must be recognized that the historical life of languages—and certainly the constant experimentation in that laboratory of languages that is literature, including the contagion of forms from particular tongues to others through strong poetic translation—means that any attempt at an exhaustive treatment is bound to remain inconclusive, open, and constantly shifting. Nonetheless, amid the myriad forms of meaning that have been developed in historical languages and literatures, it is possible to establish certain groups with a “family likeness,” drawing together those poetical forms that most obviously fall within the arts of verbal music, of the image and of contextual effects. Pound’s famous three-part definition can be recalled here:

If we look at what actually happens in, let us say, poetry, we will find that the language is charged or energized in various manners.

That is to say, there are “three kinds of poetry”:

MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are *charged*, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.

PHANOPOEIA, which is the casting of images upon the visual imagination

LOGOPOELA, “the dance of the intellect among words,” that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes account in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play. It holds the esthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation and cannot possibly be contained in plastic or in music. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and undependable mode. (Pound 1991b, 5:114)

Over and above the basic meaning and representation generated by plain language—the particular effect, let us say, of the forms of a lexicon organized by the forms of a syntax—it is possible to distinguish at least three major literary arts that are used to charge meaning and explore the representation of the real: the art of verbal music, which includes forms of meaning such as meter, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, modulations, and so on; the art of the verbal image, which includes poetic forms such as metaphor and simile, metonymy, synecdoche, and the other tropes, as well as the different forms of parallelism and juxtaposition that can be traced from the ancient Hebrew and Chinese literatures to modern montage; and last, there is the verbal art of contextual effects, with forms such as connotation, allusion, irony, and other resources that charge meaning and alter representation by evoking an outside-of-the-immediate-text, an intertext, or context.

More important than this possible three-way taxonomy of forms of poetic meaning, though, if one inquires how they operate, how they charge meaning and explore the representation of the real, what one finds are basically two procedures, the second of which is decisive: first, the promotion of the material iconism of the language, which charges meaning with a sense experience, intensifying or modifying the representation; second, the multiplication of the accentuations and linkages between elements of language, which projects a new order of breaks and relationships in the representation of the world itself.

The most basic and limited way in which poetry generates a semantic plus and explores the synthesis of the real, then, is by bringing forward the iconic side of language, by the prominence it is able to give to the material elements of oral or written discourse, which means that the process of signification and representation is combined with a sense experience that intensifies or modi-

fies it. Thus, if every form of language always has a material-sensory aspect and a conceptual-ideal one, whereas the dream of science has been to develop the latter to constitute a pure logic of abstract signs that erases any semantic influence from the materiality of language (which is a chimera), the poetry of all times has often achieved its effects of representation by giving priority to sound iconism, bringing out the relative meaning (which is conventional but not arbitrary) of the phonic materiality to reinforce the synthesis of the idea expressed in the words of the discourse. This is what is seen in resources such as onomatopoeia, so-called mimetic rhythms, the contrast between bright and dark vowels, between hard and liquid consonants, and the like, where the material behavior of language makes us “feel” what the language “says” (or makes us feel something that enters into a relationship with and modifies what the language says): quickness or slowness, brightness or darkness, largeness or smallness, hardness or softness, stability or fluidity, and so forth. The same can be said of the promotion of visual iconism in written language, with resources such as the pictographic suggestiveness of signs, the calligrammatic layout of the text on the page, and so on. However, this iconic development of the material side of language, which is seen especially in the enchantment produced by the poetic forms characteristic of the art of verbal music and in the visual impact of textuality, is a fairly basic procedure whose influence on the semantic charge and exploration of representation of the real is rather limited.

Of much greater importance and impact is the procedure that is dominant in most of the forms of poetic meaning belonging to the arts of music, imagery, and verbal context, namely, an echo procedure—be it phonic, semantic, syntactic, or of some other kind—that multiplies the “accentuations” and “linkages” between elements of language, thus projecting “discrete breaks” and “relationships” between objects and events of the world, a way of organizing the representation of the real. Valéry observes:

The text . . . works for us by making us live a different life, draw breath by that second life, and it entails a state or world in which the objects and beings found there, or rather their representations, have other freedoms and other associations than those of the practical world. . . . They are enriched by similarities

and contrasts which they arouse: all this finally gives the idea of an enchanted nature, subjected, as though by a charm, to the whims, the prestige, the power of language. (quoted in Hytier 1970, 288)

From a transcendental perspective, that is, one that reviews the conditions of possibility of this “enchanted experience,” what is observed is the synthesis by particular forms of accentuation and linkage that generate representation as an order of discrete elements and their relationships. The most basic thing is the way the accentuation of language condenses the multiplicity of the impression into a discrete perception and sets limits on the impression so that it becomes a recognizable element or event of the world. Then, the most complex thing is the way the myriad forms of meaning of language are capable of setting up multiple sophisticated links that configure an order of relationships, making it possible to understand the world as a particular kind of structure, from phenomenal space and time to the metaphysical conception that is taken as underlying them.

The fact is that this fundamental twofold operation whereby poetic forms generate meaning and synthesize a representation of the world—the accentuation and linkage between elements of language—is the basic function of language as such, recognizable from its plainest forms (which is a further argument for the precedence of the poetic function, the function of synthesis, in language as a whole). Thus, even in the most basic use of any language, this twofold function of accentuation and linkage determining the categorization and ordering of the real appear, for example, in the work done by the forms of the lexicon, whose most obvious function is to fix the impression as a discrete perception, all within categorical networks intrinsic to the lexicon itself, and in the forms of syntax, whose most obvious function is to link up more discrete elements of language into an order that makes it possible to think about the world in a particular way. Here is a genetic summary by Cassirer:

The speaking process does not consist only in coining more and more “names” or in acquiring new isolated meanings, but in establishing relationships between the latter in such a way that they determine one another. Any predicative judgment is the starting point for such a determination. . . . Every concept

is given its full sense by this indeterminable labor of determinations. The infinitely varied connections introduced by the concept into the totality of language give it its content and form. For this very reason, that form must never be thought of as firm and permanent, fixed once and for all. That form exists only insofar as it is established and affirmed in the ebb and flow of discourse. Language does not flow peaceably along a ready-made bed, but has to cut a channel for itself at every point; language is the same living current that is constantly producing new and more highly developed figures. Therein lies its true and fundamental strength. (Cassirer 1985, 3).

Even a basic “word” within the system of the language—daisy, rose—serves to fix the dispersed impression into perception, be it objective or subjective; the act of naming, through the projection produced by the articulation of sound, gives unity to the intuitive plurality in discrete breaks. As Humboldt explains: “Just as the vigor of reflection gives rise to the separation and individuation of sounds through articulation, so this too in turn has to operate once again on the material of thought, separating and individualizing” (Humboldt 1991, 49). Then, the decantation that occurs in a particular language as words with a family likeness are grouped into ideal terms (flower, bush, tree, feline, mammal, being), as well as the law of word creation by relative motivation that in inflected languages decants into the forms of morphology (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), will project a series of field divisions on to the elements and events of the world (animals and vegetables, substances, actions, qualities, etc.), establishing a specific taxonomy and categorical system. More importantly, though, what makes these discrete elements or events acquire more complex meanings and the potential to constitute an order of the world susceptible of thought are primarily the linkages established by predication, the forms of meaning of a particular syntax; in Humboldt’s words:

More than any of the other parts of a language, grammar exists essentially in thought, which it provides with a way of linking words to express and conceive ideas. . . . The real grammar of a language is presented in it in a way that is recognizable from marks inherent in words, or from grammatical terms, or from positions fixed in accordance with unchanging laws. (Humboldt 1827, 9–10)

Whether they are predominantly inflectional, agglutinative, or positional, the specific links that the forms of syntax establish between words may promote a representation of the world that is more hypotactic and abstract or more paratactic and concrete—a system of fixed and clearly hierarchized relationships, as in classical Latin or classical French, or a juxtaposition of elements in open and multiple relationships, as in classical Chinese and, to an extent, modern English. It hardly needs saying that the poets of all times have succeeded in disrupting these forms of syntax—whose accentuations and linkages they already bring into counterpoint with the accentuations and linkages produced by the breaks, pauses, and suspenses of the poetic line—either intensifying or counteracting the tendency imposed by their particular tongue and modifying the representation of the world as a result; one need only think of the *figurae verborum* that dominate the works of Góngora, Mallarmé, and Dickinson, to take some exemplary cases; Valéry, for his part, testifies: “Some phrases have acted upon me like magical formulas . . . making me see something where I saw nothing before” (Valéry 2007, 72).

For the fact is that, more generally, literary exploration does not stop at a given world or exhaust itself in the signification and representation produced by the forms of accentuation and linkage of a customary lexicon and syntax but constitutes a process of constant invention of more and more complex forms, where the multiplication of accentuations and linkages through poetic forms of meaning belonging to the arts of verbal music, imagery, and context, all of which operate for the most part suprasyntactically, project new and renewed syntheses of the phenomena of the world. Valéry alerts us:

Prose and poetry use the same words, the same syntax, the same forms and the same sounds or timbres, but coordinated otherwise and awakened in other ways. Prose and poetry are thus distinguished by the difference of certain relationships and associations that are made and unmade.

Superabundant relationships must exist between the successive significations, as well as relationships that are not necessary for clear, linear understanding. This is what leads poets to use figures. (quoted in Hytier 1970, 119, 185)¹⁴

The superabundance of suprasyntactical relationships between different elements of language is the usual way in which the forms of meaning characteristic of verbal music—rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, rhythmic stress, and so on—charge meaning and explore the synthesis of the real, with the multiplication of phonic echoes generating new accentuations of discrete elements, as well as tensions and linkages between them at a greater or lesser distance, producing a plus of sense and modifying representation.¹⁵ This is also very clearly recognizable in the series of forms of meaning characteristic of the art of the verbal image, such as metaphor, simile, and all the other tropes, for example, or the different kinds of parallelism, from ancient Hebrew antithesis and Chinese correlation to modern montage; that is, if the accentuation of a simple image constitutes a concrete and depurated presentation that strikes the visual imagination as an emphatic instance of reality, all those forms of complex images are characterized by the fact of establishing a “specific type of linkage” between two more discrete elements of language (usually simpler images), whether by analogy, the relationship of the part to the whole, parataxis, or some other form of similarity and difference, a type of linguistic linkage that is projected as a new ordering of the real, structuring the relationships between objects and events in the representation of the world.¹⁶ The same can be said of the forms of poetic meaning belonging to contextual art—connotation, allusion, irony, and so on—in all of which some accentuation and linkage is established between elements of language in the immediate discourse and elements of language outside the immediate discourse, another way of charging meaning and altering the representation of the real in a manner that goes beyond the plain discourse.¹⁷ Finally, in the case of written language—meaning language that signifies and represents via a system of relatively durable visible graphic signs spaced out in a textual system (as is almost always the case in modern literature)—one must also mention the accentuations and linkages characteristic of forms of writing (which may be predominantly logographic or phonetic: having a tendency to present things in a way that is more concrete and autonomous or more abstract and apparently speech-dependent), and particularly the accentuations and linkages imposed by the forms of textuality—the polyphony generated by the arrangement of the text on the support, a form that is visible, spatial, and in large

measure simultaneous (not audible, temporal, and successive like the forms of oral discourse) and that can be used to establish structural relationships in a “*space* of language,” giving their own orientations to thought and the conception of the real (beginning with a structuring of the diachrony or a spatial arrangement of temporal dispersion that has a fundamental incidence on the emergence of a *historiographical* consciousness or experience).

In all these cases—music, image, context, textuality—the crucial thing is that while the accentuations and linkages are usually obtained suprasyntactically, they charge meaning and modify the representation of the real insofar as the new series of reciprocal relationships between language elements is superimposed on the more basic accentuations and linkages of the words ordered by predication, something that is projected on to the representation of the world itself. Accordingly, if poetic experimentation is a metaphysical adventure, the interpretation of a literary work, in the musical and hermeneutic sense of the word “interpret,” involves the activation of myriad accentuations and linkages between elements of language placed there by the poetic art, language relationships that project a particular way of structuring representation, that render habitual a particular transcendental way of organizing the world, of perceiving and thinking about the real based on a *sui generis* form of accentuating and linking language.

For the effect of this exploration of the real may prove long lasting, insofar as it is shared and becomes established through social reciprocity. In principle, the event that constitutes a new form or a new arrangement of forms of meaning in the literary work—or, more broadly, in the sphere of poetic discovery, wherever it occurs—insofar as it establishes a system of new emphases and relationships between language elements, invites us to perceive the world in a novel way, makes us participants in a heuristic fiction that allows to explore a possible order of the real. But if the exploration proves successful, and is widely shared, if it is legitimated by a substantial social reciprocity, it becomes a lasting experience of the world. Of course, it is not only or not so much that a whole community enters into a new experience of the real by reading a particular literary work. What happens, rather, is that a new way of using language in one or more literary works from a particular place and time, or a new poetic use arising out of speech, is incorporated into the system of a language, altering it from

within, with the consequent opening up of new ways of synthesizing the order of the real and alteration of the representation of the world.

These revolutions are not far to seek and have often been both sudden and lasting. It is enough to consider what has happened in the past hundred years with the forms of meaning of “montage.” For, after they arose in the avant-garde literature of the early twentieth century under the influence of the accentuation and linkage strategies of Oriental poetry—especially the “dynamic image” techniques of classical Chinese and Japanese poetry—they would soon go on not only to revolutionize poetic language but to form the basis for the new cinematographic language and later for digital language, completely altering contemporary ways of perceiving, thinking about, and representing the world. So much so that one no longer perceives the work of accentuation and linkage of these forms of montage, their peculiar forms of fragmentation and juxtaposition of reality, but only the effect of representation they give rise to; that is, their action has become transcendental, invisible, secret, defining the conditions under which the phenomena of the world are experienced. This is what has enabled these forms of meaning by perspectivist fragmentation and juxtaposition without transition to generate not only new ways of representing phenomenal space and time—with cinematographic language setting the standard here—but even new ways of representing history. Benjamin, a pioneer in extending the forms of montage to historiographical representation, could already state:

The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. (Benjamin 2002, N2,6)

Method of the project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. (Benjamin 2002, N1a,8)

Formula: construction by assembly of facts. Construction that completely does away with theory. (Benjamin 2002, O°, 73)

If montage acquires this privileged status as a way of synthesizing the dispersal of events in time into historical representation it is because, beyond the weak force that is exerted when its formal device is constituted—the forging of discrete, sharp-edged breaks from a particular perspective (accentuation) and the juxtaposition of these without transition (linkage)—the signifying effects of such a device cannot be intentionally mastered, as it produces “meaning by shock effects” for historical events that is interruptive, polyvalent, and nonintentional, making it thus possible to get past the dead ends that voluntarist subjectivism in historicist empathy, and especially the substitute teleology of the ideology of progress, had led to.¹⁸ Thus the contemporary awareness of the exhaustion of the metaphorical representations of the real, metaphorical representations that, in many variations, have dominated space-time synthesis at least since classical Greece and well into modernity, evincing a powerful solidarity between the movement of analogical substitution leading from the sense-perceptible image to its figurative sense and a historiographical conception in the form of a discrete movement toward an end, where the meaning of events in time is referred to an ideal telos (something that manifests itself as a diachronization of the dualistic, substitutive, and hierarchical metaphysics of ontology, where the immanent sensible finds its meaning in the transcendent ideal). It was this metaphorizing inertia that was interrupted by the unpredictable translation effects generated in Western poetics by the grafts of the forms of meaning of the dynamic image characteristic of Chinese poetics, particularly by the forms of vibratory parallelisms, which are of a piece with their representation of temporality as a process of resonances (something that manifests itself as a diachronization of their conception of the cosmos as a spontaneous and continuous unfolding into dynamic correlations).

Now, while this is not the time or place to summarize the history of the major revolutions in the synthesis of the real determined by the emergence or grafting of new poetic forms of meaning, one may just note that, in all the cases just mentioned, the conceptions and transformations in the representation of the world depended fundamentally on the transcendental effects of different forms of poetic images. For what is discerned when this history is observed as a whole is that it is precisely the dominant forms of the image in a

particular literary tradition that have had the most decisive impact on the transcendental habits of synthesizing the real, that have most obviously imposed a particular style of conceiving the world through the behavior of language. It is, as we saw, what explains the pervasiveness of Platonic ontology and teleological representations of history, where the world as a sensible image points to an ideal that directs it, which must be explained in terms of the transcendental habit imposed by the substitutive figuration of analogical metaphor, just as the ancient Hebrew or classical Chinese worldviews, in their turn, with their characteristic ways of representing the real as a structure of correlative parts, must be explained in terms of the transcendental habit imposed by their peculiar forms of poetic parallelism.

Nonetheless, it hardly needs saying that a reasonably convincing explanation of the different ways in which the dominant forms of poetic signification synthesize different spatiotemporal representations of the world would require a considerably more patient labor: not only a comparative illustration of the solidarities between poetic forms and conceptions of the real in broader and more varied and contemporary settings but also an explanation in terms of critical philosophy of how and why it should be poetic forms, the products of an imagination that might be assumed to have an essentially linguistic output, that are responsible for the transcendental synthesis of experience; how and why it should be primarily the transcendental habit imposed by the creative work of poetic accentuation and linkage in language that allows dispersed impressions to be united and related in representation and inhabit a shared world.



NOTES

1. "Transcendental," not "transcendent," that is, what is being pointed to here, from a critical perspective and in a Kantian sense, are "the conditions of possibility of experience" (more precisely, "the *a priori* formal conditions of the representation of the world"), and not, in a Realist sense, that which is beyond experience (a supposedly transcendent ideal world).
2. Quotes from the Bible have been taken from the King James Version, but revised and modified throughout, both in what concerns wording and spacing.

3. It could in fact be argued that not even the divinity or divinities called Elohim, whose function it is to separate, exist in any other sphere of the real; as Paul Beauchamp also observes: “Au lieu d’être séparé dans un lieu sacré correspondant à une partie du monde, Dieu est séparant. Au lieu qu’il soit lui-même à part, c’est le sacré qui prend la fonction de séparer et de compartimenter. Il y a là un type de pénétration négative dans le monde ainsi égalisé qui complète nécessairement la notion de transcendance” (2005, 371–72).
4. See, for example, Psalm 33 (6–9), Psalm 104, the beginning of Psalm 136, Nehemiah (9:6), Daniel (5:51–90), Jeremiah (4:23–27, 5:22–24, 31:35–37, 33:20–25), Proverbs (8:22–31), and particularly Psalm 148 and the book of Job (3:3 ff. and 38:22–33).
5. See, among others, Alter (2011, 146–51).
6. This is the paradox that challenges Paul Beauchamp’s epistemological realism in *Création et séparation*, for example, where he observes: “Ceci vaut quelque soit l’échelonnement chronologique du Ps . . . , de Job et de l’Heptaméron: le début des séries cosmologiques se présente comme moins archaïque dans l’Heptaméron, plus archaïque dans les deux autres textes. Mais cela peut s’expliquer par les différences de genre ou par les intentions théologiques” (147–48). R. Alter also observes: “The justly celebrated Psalm 8 is a luminous instance of how poetic structure was made to yield a picture of the world that eloquently integrated underlying elements of Israelite belief. The poem might be described as a kind of summarizing poetic paraphrase of the account of creation in *Genesis* 1, more or less following the same order of things created and stressing, as does *Genesis* 1, man’s God-given dominion over the created world” (2011, 146–47).
7. Milton’s creative translation or paraphrase will be recalled:

The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
 Illimitable Ocean without bound,
 Without dimension, where length, breath, and highth,
 And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
 And Chaos, Ancestors of Nature, hold
 Eternal Anarchy, amidst the noise
 Of endless wars, and by confusion stand. (*Paradise Lost* bk. 2, 890)
8. The same transcendental determination of the conception of creation as separation through the poetic form of parallelism can be seen in the old Mesopotamian traditions of Sumer and Akkad, on which Hebrew literature is very obviously dependent, having inherited not only or especially a conception of the real, as is usually acknowledged, but also and particularly the parallelistic form that synthesizes it, the figuration by parallelism that produces it.

One needs to look no further than the best-known cosmogonic text, the *Enuma Elish*. For not only does this, like the “Heptameron,” begin with an instance of the phonic alliteration habitual in incipits everywhere (*Enuma Elish*, *Bereishit bara*, *Ying-yang*, *Big-bang*: as though it were intuitively felt that every beginning was itself a repetition), but the Akkadian text also begins with a series of parallel verses that synthesize a conception of the real as separation into relative parts:

When the sky above was not named,
And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,

And the first-born Apsû, who begat them,
And Mummu-Tiamat, the mother of all,

Their waters were mingled together:
The fields were not yet formed; no reeds were to be seen.

When the gods had none of them been called into being,
Did not yet bear a name, or have a destiny assigned.

Among them, the gods were created:
Lahmu and Lahamu were brought forth, called by name.

—*Enuma Elish*, 1–10

One of the striking things about this anticlimax to creation in the Akkadian tradition is the way the work of literary parallelism clarifies not only the structure acquired by the cosmos—the division into relative parts: the heavens above and the earth below, the god Apsû (the personification of fresh water, from the Sumerian AB.SU, whence the Greek *abissos*) and the goddess Mummu-Tiamat (the personification of salt water, from the Akkadian *Tiamtu*, sea), and so forth—but also the way creation itself takes place via the word, since the literary parallelism very clearly equates “calling by name” and “creating.” The events of “naming” and “existing”—being determined by the accentuation of the word and entering upon existence as a discrete entity that separates out from the initial indifferentiation (Apsû/Tiamat)—are overlaid (the lexicon of “naming”—*shuma zakaru*, *nabu*, *se’u*, *shima shimu*—also has clear connotations of determination, delineation, identification, and separation). This is spelled out thematically, rather than formally, further on in the poem, when Marduk positively deploys his destructive and creative power in the face of the challenge from the other gods: “‘*At a word from you*, let this Constellation vanish! / *At another command*, let it be whole!’ // *At a word from him*, by his *command*, the Constellation *vanished*. / *And at another command*, the Constellation was *restored*. // When the gods, his fathers, saw the *fruit of his word*, / Joyfully they did homage: ‘Marduk is king!’” (emphasis mine).

9. Heidegger’s admonition in *The Principle of Reason* will be recalled:

The representation of a transference [*Übertragen*] and of metaphor [*Metapher*] rests on a distinction if not separation between the sensible and the non-sensible as two independently constituted domains. The setting up of the division between the sensible and the non-sensible, the physical and the non-physical is a basic thrust of what is called metaphysics and remains a standard for European thinking.

The most essential thing, then, is to mark the well-known solidarity that can be discerned between the substitutive structure of ontology, which refers sensible becoming to intelli-

ble being, and the substitutive structure of metaphor, which refers the literal image to the figurative sense. [See also, among others, J. Derrida. “La Mitologie Blanche (la métaphore dans le texte philosophique),” *Marges de la philosophie*].

10. “The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars” (Aristotle 1962, 1459a).
11. Nietzsche’s famous admonition will be recalled: “Truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigor, coins which have lost their embossing and are now treated as metal and no longer as coins” (quoted in Ricoeur 1978, 379–80). In a genealogy spanning Vico, Herder, and, later, the speculative philology that came out of German Romanticism, there is a repeated insistence that the primary use of metaphor is in a conceptualizing role and not one of adornment or embellishment via poetic transposition; this is also taken up by Max Müller, who writes: “The old metaphor was rather the result of a need, and was usually not so much the transfer of a word from one concept to another as the creation or more accurate determination of a new concept using an old name” (quoted in Cassirer 1973, 107–8 [M. Müller, *Das Denken im Lichte der Sprache*]). Where philosophical work is concerned, images of the sensory space have routinely been extended metaphorically in an effort to grasp the ideal, including a metaphoric of what is held to be suprasensory; as Ernst Cassirer observes: “It is as though all intellectual and ideal relationships could only be made accessible to the linguistic consciousness by projecting them into space and ‘reproducing’ them there analogically. Only in the relationships of ‘together,’ ‘apart’ and ‘adjoining’ does this consciousness acquire the means to represent the most heterogeneous qualitative connections, dependencies and oppositions” (Cassirer 1985, 162).
12. Aristotle’s words in the *Poetics* should be recalled:

Analogy or proportion is when the second term is to the first as the fourth to the third. We may then use the fourth for the second, or the second for the fourth. Sometimes too we qualify the metaphor by adding the term to which the proper word is relative. Thus the cup is to Dionysus as the shield to Ares. The cup may, therefore, be called “the shield of Dionysus”, and the shield “the cup of Ares”. Or, again, as old age is to life, so is evening to day. Evening may therefore be called, “the old age of the day” and old age, “the evening of life”, or, in the phrase of Empedocles, “life’s setting sun”. For some of the terms of the proportion there is at times no word in existence; still the metaphor may be used. For instance, to scatter seed is called sowing; but the action of the sun in scattering his rays is nameless. Still this process bears to the sun the same relation as sowing to the seed. Hence the expression of the poet “sowing the god-created light”. There is another way in which this kind of metaphor may be employed. We may apply an alien term, and then deny of that term one of its proper attributes; as if we were to call the shield, not “the cup of Ares” but “the wineless cup”. (*Poetics*, 21)

In principle, analogy is defined as a play of proportions whereby a calculated substitution can be carried out between parts on the basis of a similarity, like the one carried out by Plato

in using the Sun for the Idea of the Good. Strikingly, however, Aristotle also recognizes that metaphor can operate as an analogy of proportions where one of the terms is lacking, in which case the metaphorical will have an inaugural output, being capable of projecting a representation of something hitherto unrepresented-as-such, like the sphere of ideality itself in Plato, which culminates in the Idea of the Good.

13. The word *metaphora* (“transfer” applied analogically to linguistic figuration) is not used in a rhetorical-poetical sense by Plato but appears and becomes established with Aristotle. For a general survey of the vocabulary of comparison in classical culture, see Marsh McCall’s *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison*.
14. Also worth mentioning is the way Pound explains this poetic charge in terms of precise relationships between elements of language employing an electromagnetic simile: “Let us imagine that words are like great hollow cones of steel of different dullness and acuteness; I say great because I want them not too easy to move; they must be of different sizes. Let us imagine them charged with a force like electricity, or, rather, radiating a force from their apices—some radiating, some sucking in. . . . Some of these kinds of force neutralize each other, some augment; but the only way any two cones can be got to act without waste is for them to be so placed that their apices and a line of surface meet exactly. When this conjunction occurs let us say their force is not added one’s to the other’s, but multiplied the one’s by the other’s; thus three or four words in exact juxtaposition are capable of radiating this energy at a very high potentiality” (Pound 1973, 34).

To literalize this simile, one may use Jakobson’s well-known formalist thesis, with its delimitation of the specificity of poetic language as projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination: “What is the empirical linguistic criterion of the poetic function? In particular, what is the indispensable feature inherent in any piece of poetry? To answer this question we must recall the two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behavior, *selection* and *combination*. . . . The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, while the combination, the build up of sequences, is based on contiguity. *The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary; syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure and so are morae or stresses” (Jakobson 1960, 357).

15. As Jakobson points out in the specific case of rhyme, a form of poetico-musical meaning dominant from the late Middle Ages in Romance poetry and European poetry more generally: “Although rhyme by definition is based on a regular recurrence of equivalent phonemes or phonemic groups, it would be an unsound oversimplification to treat rhyme merely from the standpoint of sound. Rhyme necessarily involves the semantic relationship between rhyming units (‘rhyme-fellows’, in Hopkins’ nomenclature)” (Jakobson 1960, 367). More precisely, if the occurrence of a sound in a rhyme position creates an expectation, an

acoustic desire that will be satisfied by the occurrence of the matching sound further on, the ways in which this expectation is met through the linking of two words in an interplay of similarity and difference is highly meaningful, as Gerard Manley Hopkins himself explains: “There are two elements in the beauty rhyme has to the mind, the likeness or sameness of sound and the unlikeness or difference of meaning” (Hopkins 1959, 179).

16. The words of Pierre Reverdy may be recalled here: “L’image est une création pure de l’esprit . . . Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l’image serait forte—plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de réalité poétique” (quoted in Henry 1971, 57). Concerning the way the links established by metaphor not only provide a form of conceptual explanation but synthesize a new representation of the world, Borges remarks: “No existe una esencial semejanza entre la metáfora y lo que los profesores de la ciencia nombran la explicación de un fenómeno. Ambas son una vinculación tramada entre dos cosas distintas, a una de las cuales se la trasiega en la otra . . . [/] *Su tumba son de Flandes las campanas / Y su epitafio la sangrienta luna* [/] En frases como las anteriores, la realidad objetiva—esa objetividad supuesta que Berkeley negó y que Kant envió al destierro polar de un noumèno inservible, reacio a cualquier adjetivación y ubicuamente ajeno—se contorsiona hasta plasmarse en una nueva realidad. Realidad tan asentada y brillante, que desplaza la inicial impresión que la engendró” (Borges 2002, 114–15).
17. This is remarked upon by Valéry Larbaud, representing connotation as a word with tentacles that attach it to others outside the immediate text, in a context that charges it: “Ce sont les mots d’un Auteur, imprégnés et chargés de son esprit, presque imperceptiblement mais très profondément modifiés, quant à leur signification brute, par ses intentions et les démarches de sa pensée, auxquelles nous n’avons accès que grâce à une compréhension intime de tout le contexte et par là nous entendons d’abord toute la partie de son œuvre qui fut écrit avant ce mot, et ensuite toute la partie qui fut écrit après ce mot . . . Et surveillons-le bien, ce mot; car il est vivant. Voyez : des frémissements, des irisations le parcourent et il développe des antennes et des pseudopodes par lesquels, bien qu’artificiellement isolé, il se rattache aux flux de la pensée vivant,—la phrase, le texte entier,—hors duquel nous l’avons soulevé; et ces signes de vie vont jusqu’à modifier rythmiquement son poids” (Larbaud 1997, 83).
18. Benjamin also notes: “Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each ‘now’ is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. (This point of explosion, and nothing else, is the death of the *intentio*, which thus coincides with the birth of authentic historical time, the time of truth.) It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” (2002, N3,1). The two great related demands made by T. S. Eliot in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” will also be recalled here: his call for the exercise of the “historical sense” as a juxtaposition of significant events from discontinuous times, which in turn produces an “impersonal” (nonintentional) effect. These demands define the representation of history in works such as *The Waste Land* and Pound’s early cantos.

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