Image and Language: Problems of Perception and Representation

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I

Verbal art is virtually approximated by sound. Sound flows with time and linguistic utterance is completed within a certain duration of time—when the sound is over, the duration of language is over. Written language tries to extend its duration by creating a space to confront time,¹ yet its state, or its pattern, or its existence as to be perceived as it is, still depends on sound. A book takes a space, but reading a book, whether vocalized or unvocalized, the consciousness follows the formation of temporality, i.e., the syntactic concatenation and narrative structure, to construct the aesthetic world sifted from time. Unlike viewing a pictorial or a photographic image where the viewer can synchronize the whole picture, in reading a book, the reader is usually strictly regulated by the syntagmata of the text. Reading moves from the subject (of the sentence) to the object as time moves. Although complexity and ambiguity of written language seems to liberate literature from the confine of time and further claims to have its own time, so far as sound haunts language, time parenthesizes literature.

As opposed to verbal art, image creates vision, presenting space rather than time. As stated above, the pictorial or the photographic image does not require the viewing order, the viewer can diachronically start from left to right, or from top to bottom, or vice versa; or he may give a synchronic view of the whole picture within the frame. Images follow spatial alignment, not temporal sequence. The question concerning viewing a picture is the perspective or point of view of the viewer, rather than locating the appropriate starting point for viewing. More freedom is bestowed to picture viewers than to literature readers, because image betokens spatiality while word suggests temporality.

Literature is difficult because one works with words of temporality to create images of spatiality. Although composed by words, the quintessence of literary works is the created images. Language in literature is different from language in science in that the former tries to reveal the thingness of the thing while the latter tries to reduce the thing into an abstract concept. Science endeavors to discover and define the objective world formulated by abstraction which tends to destroy images.² Literature transcends men, things, objects in the phenomenal field and verbal images enhance that transcendence. The complexity of images in literary works evinces multiple relationships between self and others, or self and itself; and it defies abstract concept which always attempts to generalize the reality. Literature with verbal image

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as weapon defends itself against science and philosophy. With abstract concept, one apple plus one apple equals one orange plus another orange. With image, apples and oranges respectively cause different visual effects. The equal sum is not the equal effect. In literature, the right choice of image, apple or orange, thus becomes one of the most essential questions. Science tends to focus the summation of numbers, while neglecting objects as images; literature as aspect of art is fatefuly concerned with images, trying to escape the yoke of abstract concepts. Literature is ontologically inscribed in images.

Either when the writer creates images or when the reader tries to visualize them in literary works, images are mediated through words. The effort to catch the profiles of the images and sketch a shape or form through language goes in the tempo of time, rather than through certain tenable objects in space. While images seem to reveal themselves in vividness, words withdraw them into obscurity and ambiguity. On the one hand, when the reader is imbued with the scenes depicted, he for a moment sees the image, without seeing the words; on the other hand, when his momentary withdrawal from the objective reality ends, what he faces is words.

Therefore, verbal images seem to have their limitations (although they enjoy more flexibility which is to be discussed later). The images pictured by words are not to be looked at by the physical eyes but perceived by mental eye. The reader of literary works reads to see as opposed to the viewer of pictures who looks to see. The ability to visualize images out of words becomes the most demanding challenge posed for the reader.

The obscurity and ambiguity of verbal images mainly results from a perception which tries to visualize the trace of an image and yet realizes that the image has already disappeared from the visual field. The image constructed by verbals is subject to change in accordance with the change of perceptions. Verbal images are never substantiated into fixity sustaining the “erasure” of time. Forms and appearance of verbal images are not only different to the author and the reader, they are also different to the same reader when his readings shift from time to time, space to space. Consider the images from “The Waste Land”: “Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair/ Spread out in fiery points/ Glowed into words,...” The images seem to be clear yet they never appear in certainty. What kind of firelight is it? Is the moving of the brush carried out by the moving of the hand? Does the hand also appear in the imagined frame? When we see the spread hair, do we also see the head? The images continually change their forms and appearances responding to the change of time and space of readings.

Since verbal images lack certainty although they to some extent create immediacy, literary worlds are between the real and the unreal. Because of its innate obscurity and therefore a desire for certainty, some verbal images make efforts to “contain pictures in poems” (詩中有畫) so that the reader may “see the man
Image and Language. Problems of Perception and Representation 253

while reading his work, see the form while hearing the sound.” (觀其文如観其人，聽其聲如見其影) The principle for creation is the verisimilitude of the created images. The pen for writing is expected to be used as a pen for picturing; therefore words “paint” images. In Chinese classical poems, lines which emphasize the juxtaposition of noun-images, with discursive language filtered out, tend to create word-pictures. In Ssu-k'ung Shu's lines, “Yellow-leaves trees in the rain, white-haired man under the light,”³ (雨中黄葉樹，燈下白頭人), the images are comprised mainly by nouns, the juxtapositions of nouns seems to present “real” objects, without the projection of abstract concepts. In Liu Tsung-yuan’s line, “‘K’uan-nai, a sound, mountain-water green,”⁴(款乃一聲山水綠) in addition to the juxtaposition of sound image and visual image, the use of onomatopoeia, imitating the sound of the row beating against the water, enhances the similarity between the verbal image and the real object.

In Western literature, imagism in the 20th century also attempts to present things without resorting to discursive language. The first of three rules suggested by F. S. Flint and Ezra Pound, prevails a while: “Direct treatment of the ‘thing,’ whether subjective or objective.”⁵ The motto later reverberates in Wallace Stevens's poem, “Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself” and William Carlos Williams's line, “no ideas but in things.” Imagists endeavor to reveal the thingness of the objects with delineation of forms and appearances; hence their poems are called “physical poetry.”⁶ Neutrality is a corollary of poetic practices; and Flint’s and Pound’s rule, “whether subjective or objective,” is reduced into idealized objectivity. Poems present things in images, not abstract concepts; poets, accordingly, have to avoid a line which “mixes an abstraction with the concrete.”⁷ Physical poetry or poetry of imagism in a sense lifts the bondage of didactic or conceptual abstraction. Images thus show, rather than tell, the reader the phenomenal field and poetry walks out from the shadow of theme-oriented studies.

But the presentation of the phenomenon through images cannot be accomplished without the projection of human consciousness. Physical poetry is in a sense trapped in a paradoxical controversy. To present the thing in its thingness is to be completely objective; yet to transfer the thing in nature to the thing in poetry is somehow an act of subjectivity closely related with the intentionality of consciousness. A poem is not simply a group of playing-words. Images are carefully written to present objects and they are not scribbled to show a moment of slip-of-tongue. The moment of creation is separate from other moments of time-flow. In this particular moment when the image is created to win a space from time, whether or not the poetical treatment is neutral or objective, it is definitely the product of human consciousness. However objective in presenting an object, the formation of a line, or the speculation of rhythm and meter, is already a “vestige” of thinking and association. Lines like these by Amy Lowell: “Jagged greenwhite bowls of pressed glass/ Rearing snow-peaks of
chipped sugar/ Above the lighthouse-shaped castors/ Of gray pepper and gray-white salt”,
though seeming inconsequentially the description of the things, presently involve human thinking. The thingness of the imagist poem is therefore not “pure.”
Flint’s and Pound’s first rule has probably already implied this difficulty: the demand for the direct treatment of the thing, whether subjective or objective, foretells the antagonism between subjectivity and objectivity.

Physical poetry echoes some proclamations of realism in the preceding century. Gustave Flaubert’s adumbration of his credo for visualization runs like this: “I derive almost voluptuous sensations from the mere act of seeing.” And near the end of 19th century, Joseph Conrad announced: “My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is before all to make you see.”

The effort to visualize things in novel in 19th century and the effort to treat things directly in poetry in this century seem to betray an unconscious lack and desire on the part of the writers—the word is immanently inadequate to present things; literary task, therefore, is to transform words into images so that writing may come closer to painting.

Basically, in terms of verisimilitude, words or even like Chinese ideograms, lack great certainty compared with other forms of art like painting or photography. Images in physical poetry, however clear and vivid, are far from the real forms of the original objects. Is this because that presentation of verbal images are carried out in time and thereby limited by time? Can other forms of art which are presented spatially surmount this difficulty and achieve stark realism?

II

Aesthetic critic, Jean Tardieu, in his Les Portes de Toile, celebrates the musician and the painter who are able to escape the impurity of verbal language. For him, language is “a faulty instrument which can only imperfectly translate form, color, and composition into linguistic terms.” Yet it is interesting to note that as aesthetic critic he continues to use the “faulty instrument” to render Bazaine’s paintings of the sea into verbal images. Verbal language is “faulty” probably because it is far away from the natural object which first mediated by painting on canvas then recaptured by words is doubly distanced and doubly twisted. When Tardieu tries to justify the relationship between sound and color in Bazaine’s paintings, his explanation that color is incessant voice of the sea virtually tries to grasp something ungraspable. It is not simply that verbals cannot grasp the objects in nature; the object is also ungraspable to painting to a certain degree. Adelaide M. Russo states that, for Tardieu, each reading, “each excursion through the partially elusive elements of language, yields not the thing itself, but the reader’s perception of it.” The same fact also applies to painting itself. While paintings are taken for the original, verbal translation cannot trace back to the origin; while the thing in nature is regarded as
the origin, the color, the form and the composition on the canvas cannot reproduce the original either.

That the natural object or thing is irreproducible has nothing to do with abstract painting or realistic painting. Conclusions derived from observations of linguistic facts also fit painting and are able to formulate paintings as a system of writing. Literature-thinkers\textsuperscript{14} recently has de-stabilized the static opposition between the signifier and the signified. Jacques Derrida has demonstrated that in language the origin is untraceable and recoverable. Marcelin Pleynet extends Derridian notion of “trace” to account for color in painting. “Trace” for him is a signifier which in a picture of non-color simultaneously sums and cancels the color.\textsuperscript{15} This is similar to the impossible project of physical poetry which signifies its image as a thing and yet never ceases to signify because it is never the thing, the signified. Derridian concept of “di\`{e}r\`{e}ance” may also help to account for the project of writing and painting. “Di\`{e}r\`{e}ance” suggests either deferment or difference. While deferment infers a time-delay and the original object is absent from the scene of the text of writing, the difference refers to a spatial element which implies that the origin has long vanished from the space, the canvas.

If pictorial images also twist reality, one may tempt to ask if photographic images might get closer to the reality. The object in a photograph does appear completely real to the viewer, yet the distance between the natural object and the photographed object still exists. First, starting from the basics, the photographed object does appeal to the eye, yet it fails to satisfy the senses of the ear, the nose, the tongue and the finger. Second, the thing viewed from the photograph is still different from the thing in nature, even we condescend to limit our discussion exclusively to the sense of seeing and bypass its inadequacy to satisfy other senses since basically what images stand for is to let one see, to visualize the thing. The image is mediated through camera eye, thus what comes to the sharp focus or thins into the blurred background is directed by the intentionality of consciousness. The framing of a photograph is already a modification of reality. The natural object is recuperated in the photograph yet its living context has been subjected to mutation and mutilation. That is why Roland Barthes calls the photographic image “a reduction—in proportion, perspective, color.”\textsuperscript{16} Third, what the photographic image shows is a thing not “not yet” but “no longer.”\textsuperscript{17} The relationship between the photographic image and the natural object is distanced not only by space but also by time. Roland Barthes excellently observes:

The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it established not a consciousness of the \textit{being-there} of the thing (which any copy could provoke) but an awareness of its \textit{having-been-there}. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the \textit{here-now} and the \textit{there-then}. It is thus at the level of this denoted message or message
without code that the \textit{real unreality} of the photograph can be fully understood: its unreality is that of the \textit{here-now}...\textsuperscript{18}

The photograph is literally a trace of time stimulating memory. Aesthetic world of the photographed image is definitely to be constructed by the viewer who upon viewing realizes both the past and the original object is unrecoverable. The "real" image of the object turns to suggest the unreality of the photograph. Moreover, if the viewer looks at his own photographed image, the distance between the image and the self can be shortened with the extention of his hand and fingers; they can even encounter at a certain spatial point. However, time interrupts and sends them counter-directionally into different moments. The viewer of the photograph is an exile outside the picture-frame, doomed to linger in a time in which he fatefuly cannot recover the lost time.

If both the verbal image of temporalized format and the pictorial and photographic images of spatialized format are blocked away from the reality, one is lured further to seek a new possibility in a medium which embraces both temporality and spatiality—that is, the filmic image. The quest for reality in this medium turns out again fruitless for various reasons. One essentially inherent in this medium is that cinema is propelled to function by montage, the art of editing or composition. Montage inevitably involves the film in a paradoxical situation. On the one side, montage projects intentional consciousness onto the frames to construct the narrative; thus in turn the realization of consciousness becomes, like in the photographic image, the reduction of reality, rather than the reality itself. On the other side, the possibility of concretizing intention is also open to question. Montage is often violated by the law of contingency which continually bisects and undercuts the author’s intention. Contingency affects intentionality not only in the narrative sequence but also in the spatial contiguity. The incidental “contact between pictures in a film evokes a mutually interpreting associative process, whether the director wishes this or not.”\textsuperscript{19} And in a specific frame of a shot, the intrusions of the objects into the frame upsets the dominance of intention. In either way, a film finds itself distanced from the reality.

Moreover, blurred forms in a film are not used to correlate with some real unidentified figures in the real life, rather, forms are aesthetically blurred to defamiliarize our perception of reality. Visualization of these forms demands the motivated imagination on the part of the viewer while the identification of the unclear forms in the real life requires the shortening of the physical distance between the viewer and the object. The difference between the excursion in imagination and the actual trip in life sets the filmic world apart from the real world.

Also, music accompanying the pictures in a film will again null any attempt to identify the film as a realistic representation of reality. Music in a film is artistically
concerned to give aesthetic appeal. It is viewer-oriented rather than reality-oriented. In fact, it comes to confront the reality and becomes an unreality.

Given these, the director of a film often pilots the film to break with neorealism. Giuseppe Mazzotta’s studies of Antonioni’s films point out that Antonioni’s “double vision” is a created vision endeavoring to replace the realistic one. The film, Zabriskie Point, as Mazzotta observes, seems to tell the viewer what he sees is merely “a shadow, an apparition or relic, is the role of that illusory and magic experience known as cinema.”20 The predicament of this double vision is to let the viewer see the appearance of the world and yet to look beyond it. Near the end of the movie, the heroine, Daria, dwells in the imagination and sees the split between image and reality—the glamor of color effaces representation itself. Mazzota states:

In a way Antonioni is like Daria, to be sure, in that he also has given up mimesis: as he takes recourse to a fictional emblem, a purely imaginary signifier without any reference in reality, he seems to advance his understanding of what the cinema can be: images that appear only to disappear quickly into nothingness.21

Mazzota continues to say, “Daria’s imagination, freeing the objects from the constraints of referentiality and liberal sense, reducing the world to a purely imaginary construct, kills reality, or better, changes it into a shadow and relic of itself”22 Whether image in cinema can completely liberate itself from referentiality is to be discussed later; at present, it suffices to note that cinema as a medium of art can be used to dismantle the reality. Likewise, Jean-Louis Schefer’s view of cinema is to lead us to see representation disintegrate itself before our eyes, to witness forms in film liberated from the objectal mode which claims to be real.23

For some reason, the unreality of cinema is related with its difficulty of interpretation. It is difficult to interpret a film because any interpretation takes place at a moment when the film is no longer there. The interpreter must resort to memory; thus “talking about a movie really means talking about our particular memories of that movie.”24 Here the mode of memory, or more exactly, memorization, is different from what is related with the photographic image—the token of memory itself. The photographic image can be read, referred, and cited from time to time; yet writing about a movie is always delayed until long after the movie is over.

The time-delay pushes interpretation farther away from the origin. Thus the reproduced image in interpretation is doubly blocked away from the real world. Raymond Bellour points out that the text of the film is unattainable25 because it is uncitable. The reproduction of the whole film, the accompaniment of music and the attaching caption altogether pose extreme difficulty for the interpreter. The interpreter tries to synchronize the music, words and images and yet find himself reproducing the irreproducible. Roland Barthes’ discussion of the obtuse meaning, or the third meaning, in Eisenstein’s Ivan the Terrible, is clearly and intelligently
presented, yet his discussion is limited to some stills of the movie which are literally similar to photographs. Instead of discussing those sequentially juxtaposed images in a narrative, he extracts separate pictures and seems to freeze the movie into still moments. Interpretation of a film thus tends to become a reduction.

Then we come to the most crucial and most essential point which distinguishes the filmic image from the object in reality. Barthes’ reading of Eisenstein’s images derives from the condensation of time; the dynamic of time in its continual surging forward is stilled into silent moments. Interpreting a film is impossible unless the dynamic time-flow of the movie is condensed.

The duration of a movie is also another form of condensation. The cinema which embodies both temporality and spatiality recedes into a locus where time and space are transformed. The movie temporalizes and spatializes time, space, and, above all, reality.

III

The discussion of the “unloyalty” to the reality in various forms of art does not mean to belittle the art of those media. Eisenstein, the esteemed film director and theorist, concerning the acting of an actor says:

...the lifelike acting of an actor is built, not on his representing the copied results of feelings, but on his causing the feelings to arise, develop, grow into other feelings—to live before the spectator.

Hence the image of a scene, a sequence, of a whole creation, exists not as something fixed and ready-made. It has to arise, to unfold before the senses of the spectator.

The achievement of art is not the duplication of the reality. In discussing Rousseau’s observation that “the primitive way of writing was not to represent sound, but objects themselves,” Derrida points out that painting redoubles nature with displacement, and the “perfect representation is always already other than what it doubles and re-presents.” For Ernst Gombrich, a picture is not a facsimile of the object in nature, but a “relational model.” For Carolyn Korsmeyer, the “pictorial assertion” is not based on the values outside the picture-frame.

Granting that images are not copies of objects or things; literary works do not have to worry over their inadequacy in dealing with the reality. In fact, the complexity and ambiguity of words bestow more advantages to verbal images in their flexibility to arouse aesthetic responses from the reader. Realistic method in depicting the resemblance between the image and the object does not necessarily justify its aesthetic value over those relatively unrealistic ones. The realistic mode, onomatopoeia, for instance, though claimed to be the duplicate of the reality, is in fact the
illusion of reality. Literature dwells between reality and unreality.

More and more literature-thinkers come to believe that image in literary works is a sign to be looked at, not through. Poetical designation differs from communicative designation, as Jan Murkowsky observes, in that in the former attention is directed to the sign itself, and thus the sign and its contexture of the text comes to fore; whereas in the latter the attention is concentrated mainly on the relation of the word and the thing which this word signifies. When T. R. Martland discusses Cummings's famous poem, "I(a)", he tries to say that in order to grasp what the poem refers one has to look at the poem itself, the signifier. The re-alignment of words of the poem effects the correlation between lonliness and the fall of the leaf. Martland thus concludes: "A poem which imitates and represents does not mean to direct its audience outward to something else but to stimulate them to look inward at the words themselves and let their words deliver a content."

Literature follows a mode of imitation and representation and at the same time tries to outdo that mode. Cummings's lines of "I(a)", graphically arranged to imitate the falling and the fallen leaves, become an image which dwells between the real and the unreal. William Carlos Williams's poem, "The Wind Increases," for another example, implies a signified that the poet says what he should say and sticks to what he believes to the last minute in facing the changeable nature metaphorized as the increasing wind. The graphic form of the lines itself is a signifier calling the reader's attention. The words are unevenly distributed either on the left or the right side of the poem suggesting the scattered objects dispersed by the wind. Usually approximately two lines on the left are counterbalanced by one line on the right. The left side seems to imply the force or the power of the wind while gestures or reactions from the tree or the poem expressed by these words like "sidle," "exists," "their way," "of motion," "gripping," and "to the last leatip" appear on the right. Near the end of the poem, the wind seems to have its way; therefore, seven lines on the left are counterpoised difficulty by two lines, "gripping," and "to the last leatip" on the right suggesting the unyielding spirit of the poet. Hence the graphic form of the poem is an important signifier deserving scrupulous attention. In Cummings's another poem, "I Will Be," words in graphic form present pictorial images. Almost every word of every line shows this imitation and representation mode. The word, "l oo k" in Line 14 for instance, doubled "o", separate from "l" and "k", creates an image of human eyes. The pictorial form seems to reveal a self-contradicting desire of word as a relic of the natural object: it cherishes a nostalgia for the lost reality and yet at the same time deviates further from the realistic mode realizing that graphic resemblance is another illusion.

Verbal images even can violate the conceptualization of images as being images and defie visualization. Consider the lines from "The Waste Land": "And other withered stumps of time/ Were told upon the wall..." the image "withered stumps
of time” is hard to visualize; but because it challenges visualization, it offers flexibil-
ity of perception. In Lo-fu’s line, “a/ moon/ gulping down plenty of asensic trioxide,”
(一枚/吞食大量砒霜的/月亮）the density of the image probably owes to the
projection of the viewing consciousness onto the object to perpetuate a reversible
nature. In no way can one deny that these lines from Eliot and Lo-fu are images;
yet these images resist to be pictured as simply a representation of the objects in
nature.

Verbal images can further digress from the conventionalized norm of imagery
and approach a realm where they are virtually reflections of consciousness, rather
than representations of reality. Stark reflections of consciousness render the image
into an existence shuttling between being and non-being, similar to what Ssu-Kung
T’u says, “Image beyond image, scene beyond scene.” (象外之象, 景外之景) If
image is reflection of consciousness and its physical form resists to be visualized, one
may doubt whether verbal image can be abstract and becomes another form of
scientific abstraction and philosophical conceptualization. The answer is an easy one.
Philosophical abstract conceptualization for a time does intrude into poetry and
claims literature as a didactic means. Shelley’s lines, “O World, O Life, O Time./
On whose last steps I climb,/ Trembling at that where I had stood before./ When will
return the glory of your Prime?/ No more, O never more!” impart a “philosophical”
thinking into the reader and the image, “On whose last steps I climb,” is subjected
into abstract didactism, overshadowed by those pompous abstract words, “O World,
O Life, O Time.” The use of image in Lo-fu’s poems is completely different although
the image seems to be abstract in that it resists to be pictured. In these lines, “If we
insist on/ Walking on head./ Will the sky die in a bubble?” (倘若我們堅持/用頭顱行走/天空，會在一粒泡泡中死去嗎？), or in Ya-Shuan’s lines, “Later he throws
to us/The life of the remnants of what he has eaten,” (後來他便拋給我們/他吃贖下來的生活), “You wash your face with night-color; you fight with
shadow” (你以夜色洗臉，你同影子決鬥), verbal constructs reveal the
abstract nature of projected consciousness and present images that cannot be com-
fortably listed under the conventional category. Verbal images in this case are not
representation of nature, but reaction to nature. The untenability of verbal images
confirm that literature as mental reflection superimposes a world upon the world.

In fact the projection of consciousness is epitomized in figural language. Whether
metaphor or metonymy, verbal images in figural norm come to re-define nature.
Whether the conventional privileging metaphor over metonymy, or modern thinkers’
priviledging metonymy over metaphor, nature is open to man who demonstrates his
existence in creativity by incessantly exploding nature through figural language.
The above-mentioned image, “other withered stumps of time;” is a metaphor which
ironically shows a dual view of time: man degenerates under the aggressive time and
time is withered when man decays. Lo-fu’s image, “a/ moon/ gulping down plenty
of ascenic trioxide,” is based on metonymic transfer\textsuperscript{36} effected by the positional juxtaposition of man and the moon.

Figural language by nature brings an object in nature and an image in work together based originally on physical resemblance. Yet more and more literature-thinkers tend to assert that the figural relation between objects is established mainly by substitution rather than by resemblance.\textsuperscript{37} Metaphor functions on the substitution of an object by another object; metonymy operates either in the displacement of the part for the whole or one name for another name through continuity or contiguity. While metaphor is a semantic process, as Paul Ricoeur observes, metonymy remains often to be a semiotic attribute.\textsuperscript{38} Modern thinkers’ privileging metonymy over metaphor further pushes the figurative away from the reality because as semiotic process, metonymy becomes a sign which demands, as stated above, to be looked at, not through or beyond. Marcus Hester argues that similarity mainly results from experience-act of “seeing as” which contains a ground that metaphor is no longer based on the similarity or dissimilarity of objects, but on the resemblance between two ideas established by the very act of “seeing as.”\textsuperscript{39} This is echoed in Nelson Goodman’s observation of painting that “A picture never merely represents x, but rather represents x as a man or represents x to be a mountain,...”\textsuperscript{40} “As” for Goodman becomes a code which, as Martland points out, provides mechanism of representation. Martland continues to say, “As such, aristic representation are man-made presentations, dependent upon contributed constructs which exist independently of the referent itself.”\textsuperscript{41} Timothy Rase in his “The Fallacies of Imitation,” after discussing a passage by Proust, remarks, “Proust shows how the concepts of substance and attribute, which underlie our analyses of beauty and our theories of mimesis, are subject to figural play.”\textsuperscript{42} Roland Barthes gives a metaphor-image for the text, an onion, to replace other species of fruit with a kernel. The text is, “as a onion,” “a construction of layers (or levels, or systems) whose body contains, finally, no heart, no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its own envelopes—which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces.”\textsuperscript{43}

IV

In this sense reality is further relegated from unreality into non-reality. But is this really the case with literature? If the signified is overemphasized in an unrecoverable past, the present tends to overemphasize the signifier. To say a world in literary work is different from the objective world is one thing, to say that this world is completely cut off from that world is another. The assumption that the implied author is different from the real author does not mean that the characters in literary works are completely alien to the men in life. When Goodman says that a picture represents x as a man, “as” has already suggested that our cognition of it as a man is compared with our understanding of what a real man is. It cannot be merely a construct in-
dependent of the referent as Martland claims. In fact theorists in justifying a concept often tends to overemphasize it in a certain moment while turns to disregard it in another moment. Martland in the same essay, "When a Poem Refers," his excellent conclusion of Cummings's poem, "I(a), "a new sensitive understanding of loneliness and death in experiencing the drooping and fading away of the falling autumn leaf," already refers to the life outside the text. The same is with Hester. Although Hester's justification of the poetical language as a sign to be looked at tries to empty its referential character, his "seeing-as" as "experience-act" turns out to define the resemblance between image and object, not the reverse. Neither does the privileging of metonymy over metaphor guarantee the self-reflexivity of the figural language. Metonymy as a syntactic or semiotic attribute could be contiguous to an external text or object and contextualized to create meaning. As Gérard Genette observes of Proust's metaphor: the steeples of Saint-André-des-Champs are described as ears of corn and those of Saint-Mars-le-Vetu as fish with mossy reddish scales because the former rises out of fields of grain while the latter stands by the sea. Thus while similarity or resemblance as an aspect of metaphor is argued down, metonymy at the same time shows an external referentiality. The external relation motivated by metonymy is most evident in Stephen Ullmann's reading of another passage by Proust about the name Champi and the color. Ullmann argues that the connection between the name and the color is not based on hidden analogy or resemblance, "but on purely external relation: the accidental fact that the book had a red binding." If an image or a text can accidentally refer to an external object or text, why is it not possible that it can also refer to something which it resembles? The accidental encounter with an object, although from metonymic connexion as suggested by Genette, may somehow revive something of the past in the present through memory. Georges Poulet would discover in Proust the connection between the image and the self through the "grace of profound remembrance," or "metaphoric operation of memory." At the sight of a hawthorn, Poulet points out, the boy feels unknowingly the flower springing up within himself to become part of his own identity. The essence of being or self is momentarily felt with association of images of different times and spaces. A poetical image reverberates the reader's imagination and exists lively in reverie. The reverberation of the image is mainly due to the "tabooed" word, resemblance, which implies an indirect or projectile projection of the outside object. Gaston Bachelard perceives, "A world takes form in our reverie, and this world is ours. This dreamed world teaches us the possibilities for expanding our being within our universe." This does not again turn literary studies another round so one has to search outside the text for external reference. External studies again will reduce literary studies into a sub-discipline of psychoanalysis or sociology. Resemblance in discussing image is introduced here to suggest that literature creates another reality
although it is not the duplicate of the outside reality, that literary work refers not
directly to the outside signified, but within its own world there is also a signified, that
figural language based on analogy or resemblance is not open to “figural play.”

Word-play can be recognized and accepted only when one plays with word while
word plays itself. Word-play is different from playing-word; for a Chinese the latter is
a derogatory term because it is possible that in order to be argumentative to be a
master of discourse, one might intend to trespass against truth or reality. Word-play is
meaningful only when one realizes that word is another being and writing is a dialo-
gue with the being of the word. For Martin Heidegger, language is the house of
being; for Poulet and Bachelard, language is the essence of self. The origin or the
essence, questioned by Derrida and other deconstructionists, can be felt, or seems to
be felt, in a certain moment. The “incision” from which being is exposed, for
Derrida, is nothing but a withdrawal of being and incision itself. While decon-
structionists presume that concepts are continually subject to deconstruction and the
origin or the essence is under various erasures, can one turn to believe that during
these shiftings a concept might take a break and enjoy a momentary stay? What
concerns us is a time-category. It is true that a verbal or poetical image indicates not
merely an object not here but also a thing-event no longer. But isn’t at a certain
moment that one recalls that time and space and seems to relive the past? Of course
what is recalled is but a simulacrum of the past, or a dissemination of the past, a
différance. But isn’t at this moment that one feels that his being or self is different
from other moments? What makes the difference?

What makes the difference also makes an intentional being different from a
natural object. Being confronts the objective time with a mental time by enriching
a moment. Maurice Merleau-Ponty says, “It is objective time which is made up of
successive moments. The lived present holds a past and a future within its thick-
ness.” Only yielding to the objective time does one surrender to the incessant
shiftings of successive moments. However, consciousness will momentarily hold a
lived present although this present is different from the present and this present is
soon becoming absent. Derrida must have faced a present when he is doing decon-
struction, otherwise one may wonder what is to be deconstructed. He in an “apoca-
lyptic moment” brings out its concealment, the presence of his discursive power,
and does violence to the text.

Literature-thinkers often shift their perceptions and viewpoints; and although
these perceptions are later changed or “deconstructed,” at least for a certain moment
they believe that they are true. Barthes gives the onion metaphor-image to demon-
strate the absence of the kernel or core or the referred reality in a given text; but for
a time his analysis of photographic image, as aforementioned, shows that a being
torn between two different times, realizes “its reality that of having-been-there,...
giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered.” This
phenomenological perception is even more evident in his *Camera Lucida*. He contrasts the photograph, “Winter Garden Photograph,” with other photographs of his mother, and he observes:

These same photographs, which phenomenology would call “ordinary” objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me utopically, the impossible science of the unique being.\(^5\)\(^9\)

And later he concludes:

Such would be the Photograph’s “fate”: by leading me to believe (it is true, *one time out of how many* ?) that I have found what Calvino calls “the true total photograph,” it accomplishes the unheard-of *identification of reality* (“that-has-been”) *with truth* (“there-she-is”);\(^6\)\(^0\)

For Barthes at this moment, there is an essence, a reality, and even a truth.

Images, especially verbal images, are those through which one might visualize the objects and seek to recuperate the lost origin or essence. Works of Arcady, of exile, and of epiphany are all works of consciousness with this longing or desire. Other works sometimes show momentary perception of the relic of essence. In the beginning of Part II of “Big Two-Hearted River,” the concluding story in *In Our Time*, “Nick crawled out under the mosquito netting stretched across the mouth of the tent, to look at the morning.” Here “the morning,” referred not to specific trees or flowers, is not a substantial physical object but, probably, an essence of morning. In Robert Frost’s “After Apple-Picking,” the line, “I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough,” also implies that the speaker for that certain moment seems to catch the essence of the morning through the reflection of the water or ice. This moment of perception undoubtedly distinguishes itself from other moments of his life. Imbibing in his half drowsing off, the speaker does feel or sense something unfamiliar out of the familiar when he says, “Essence of winter sleep is on the night,/ The scent of apples:...” Here the metaphorical relationship between essence of winter sleep and the scent of apples is motivated by metonymic connexion; and this analogical relation is not based on physical similarity, but on association of imagination projected by consciousness because essence in no way can be visualized.

To recapitulate, literary work creates a world as opposed to the world although this world is not amputated from the outside world. Verbal image may refer to an internal signified which is not necessarily unrelated with external signified; however, this is not to suggest that one has to examine the external signified in order to validate the internal one. A world is perceived when one thickens a particular moment.
When we "keep thereby a presentness to perception, even in the throes of faithful infidelity," we come to feel or recognize the simulacrum of the origin or the essence. Verbal images therefore become media through which one in a unique moment creates a mental time to resist the objective time.

Notes


3. In this paper, all English versions of Chinese texts are my tentative translations.


7. Also quoted by Ransom on p. 872.

8. Ibid., p. 872.


10. This famous remark is from the Preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus."


12. This is what Russo talks about Tardieu's position. See Adelaide M. Russo, "From Visual to Verbal in Jean Tardieu's Les Portes de Toile," SubStance, XIV, 1 (1985), 78.

13. Ibid., 91

14. This is the term I used to describe those who "would seriously contemplate on the phenomena of reading and interpretation with focus on the world of language in literature" when I wrote The Reader in the Blanks: A Study of Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. See page 100 (Taipei: Bookman Books, 1985) of this book.


17. I echo Georges Poulet's sentence: "And if it reveals a fundamental emptiness, that is not because it needs anything from 'ahead' but because it lacks something
from 'behind': something which is no longer; not something which is not yet.” See the chapter on Proust in *Studies in Human Time*, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956). p. 291.

18. Barthes, p. 44.
22. Ibid., 9.
26. Barthes, pp. 52-68.
35. Ibid., 272.
36. I discuss briefly the metonymic transfer in one of Lo-fu’s poems in “Metaphor and Metonymy in T’ang’s Poetry,” *Chung-Wai Literary Monthly*, XII, 2 (July, 1983), 12.
41. Martland, 270.
44. Martland, 272. Emphasis mine.
45. Ricoeur, p. 213.
50. See the introductory chapters of *The Poetics of Space* and *The Poetics of Reverie*.
52. This has been mentioned above. See also Note 42.
57. “apocalyptic moment” is a term Mazzota uses to describe Daria’s visionary power in a certain moment in Antonioni’s *Zabriskie Point*. See Mazzota, 5.