PART I

INTRODUCTION
1 Interaction

§ 1

'All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudo-
scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion,
is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon.'

The first thing to say is that Lawrence’s protest deserves honest respect. If
one had to make an exclusive choice between that version of ‘criticism’
which confines itself to the technical and the typical, and a kind that sees as
its task assessment of particulars unfettered by reference, even, to types and to
any sort of technical consideration: if one must choose, one must choose the
latter. Comparative inarticulacy is preferable to a decrepitate sophistication.

And the second thing to say is that we need not make such a choice. Our
ability to confront literature fruitfully – to be creative – requires articulacy;
and true articulacy requires the direction of the recreative mind. But must
articulacy imply classification and analysis? It must, whether overtly or not,
since language, without which there is no articulacy, is itself a classificatory
and analytical system, although in any articulate use of language the classi-
fication and analysis need not be in any real sense overt, but may be pre-
supposed. The question now becomes one of emphasis and tact. When, if at
all, should the classifying and analysing be more rather than less overt?
And, in particular, are there situations or causes for which such activities
should be actively pursued? There surely are; and the chief is progress
towards a finer articulacy.

The critical mode that Lawrence is attacking could reasonably be called the
classical or neo-classical: here belong Demetrius’ On Style, Puttenham’s
The Arte of English Poesie and Empson’s Seven Types of Ambiguity. Any
literary judgement, any intelligent comment about literature, is ultimately
based on an appeal, implicit or explicit, to particular relations or effects: this
relates to that in a certain way; this has this effect, that has that. And the
rationale of ‘classical’ criticism is to make the appeal explicit in order to
illuminate such relations and effects and, thereby, make the judgement itself
more substantial and more deserving to be called articulate.

‘Dull jargon’ is not inevitable: even Lawrence only said ‘mostly’. In this
respect a mode of criticism is as good as its practitioners make it. As for
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‘mere impertinence’, my conviction is that if the classical mode is to have much chance of going beyond that, it should involve not merely making the implicit appeal explicit, but a genuinely active pursuit of the explication in an evolutionary or, if need be, revolutionary spirit. That is, its categories should be constantly open to refinement or redefinition in such a way that each work of ‘classification and analysis’ might in some degree aspire to be a contribution to theory. And by ‘theory’ is meant the organization and apparatus of the available, provisional answers to the questions, what sorts of thing can literature do or be? how does it operate to do or be them? But the sorts of thing literature does or is, and the way it operates, these mean only what it has done, has been, how it has operated in specific instances. Therefore, a contribution to theory is only conceivable through the study of actual instances, that is of practice, the theory being the summary product of such study.


§ 2

In accordance with such an aspiration, which need not seem pretentious, this study is a sketch of a ‘classical’ literary theory, albeit one of modest scope, based on particular literary practice. The general subject is imagery: imagery as a matter of words; imagery in its ‘micro-contextual’ aspect, to use the possibly dull and certainly scientific jargon of the linguists. My attention, therefore, is not directed essentially towards the rôle of the image within the complete work; not towards its broad, perhaps thematic, significance; but towards its local significance, or rather, those aspects of its local significance that concern interaction. And the ‘practice’ is that of the early Greek lyric and dramatic poets up to, and including, Aeschylus, Pindar, and Bacchylides.

Interaction is not the whole of imagery, and in concentrating exclusively on it I am not suggesting that it is necessarily, or even often, the most important feature of imagery; for a start, many images do not involve interaction in my sense. Concentration on anything inevitably distorts its importance; but when a general possibility has been consistently undermentioned or partially misunderstood, or when reference to its particular manifestations has been inadequate for want of the corrective or stimulus of a systematic discussion, then distortion of this sort is legitimate and even necessary.
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§3

By imagery I mean primarily metaphor, simile and the various forms of comparatio; the tropes and schemes, that is, based on analogy or similarity. ‘Based’, of course, refers to the logical basis: πάντες γὰρ οἱ μεταφέροντες κατὰ τινα ομοιότητα μεταφέρουσιν (Arist. Top. 140a.10ff.). It does not imply that the logical basis, or pretext, for a literary image is necessarily to be equated with the interest or ‘point’ of the image. As has been repeatedly demonstrated, this interest characteristically derives from the unlikeness as much as from the likeness; and indeed without a sufficient unlikeness, all ‘point’ in the true sense tends to disappear: as Johnson remarked of a passage in Dryden’s Eleonora, ‘there is so much likeness in the initial comparison that there is no illustration’. Contrast the positive relevance of the unlikeness in Iliad 3.106ff., where Gorgythion in his death is compared to a ‘droop-headed’ poppy – drooping under the weight of its seed and the spring rain:

μήκων δ’ ώς έτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἢ τ’ ἐν κήπῳ, καρπῷ βριθαμένη νοτίησι τε ελαρίνησιν.

Plainly, the point of similarity (the tilt of the man’s head and the poppy’s head) makes possible a fine sensory effect. But equally plainly, that single point is outweighed in interest by the points of dissimilarity, the contrast. The poppy is alive and flourishing in a peaceful garden; Gorgythion is dead on the battlefield. Life and maturity, evoked by the specific circumstantial detail of seed and rain – the poignancy of the contrast needs no labouring. Nonetheless, the likeness remains logically prior: the force of the unlikeness depends on it. Without any substantial likeness, an ‘image’ tends to be gratuitous and idle: Edith Sitwell’s ‘the light is braying like an ass’. But the principle of ‘relevant unlikeness’ is not affected by this caveat; and, as will appear in due course, such unlikeness has a special relevance for one of my categories.$^3$

Under the heading ‘imagery’ I shall also include, on occasion, certain other stylistic modes, notably the omen, which, in the form widely used in ancient poetry, has obvious affinities with imagery proper:

Full of his god, the reverend Chalcas cried, 'Ye Grecian warriors! lay your fears aside. This wondrous signal Jove himself displays Of long, long labours, but eternal praise. As many birds as by the snake were slain, So many years the toils of Greece remain.'

(Iliad 2.322ff., trans. Pope)

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I shall not be concerned either with symbolism, where this means something other than imagery as interpreted above, or with metonymy; and my use of the words ‘metonymy’ and ‘metonymic’, I should add, follows the precedent of the eighteenth-century rhetorician George Campbell. By metonymy I mean any of the tropes based on contiguity: 4 notably the kinds traditionally distinguished as synecdoche, 5 enallage (transferred epithet) and metonymy proper. 6 Hence none of the following count as instances of imagery:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds} \\
&\text{I am gall, I am heartburn} \\
&\text{O for a beaker full of the warm south} \\
&\text{I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes}
\end{align*}
\]

Other considerations relating to my practical definition of imagery will be discussed later. For the moment, the discussion will centre on metaphor and the aspect of metaphor that concerns interaction.

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1 Explicitly by e.g. Richards 127, Leavis IM 232ff., Nowotny 53, Waldron 176ff., Ricks 127ff. Not so often by Hellenists, though Fränkel HG moved somewhat along these lines apropos the Homeric simile (most obviously in the case of the explicit ‘contrast function’, as exemplified in IL 11.86ff. – Fränkel 106); and Ed. Fraenkel pointed excellently to the ‘contrast that intensifies the horror’ in some Aeschylean imagery (on Ag. 437ff., similarly on Ag. 65); cf. also Stanford AS 109 on A. Eu. 253.

2 Johnson 1.441. Cf. his remarks on Cowley, 1.20.

3 Link.

4 On this term see Wellek–Warren 194ff., Ullmann LS 177ff.

5 Nac procul ab hoc gener [sc. synecdoche] discedit metonymia, Quintil. 8.6.23.

6 I had hoped to add that, as a rule, I would not be dealing with catachresis (abusio) either, but eventually decided that I can neither define the trope in question, nor confidently identify examples of it, nor, in particular, distinguish it from metaphor. (See further Appendix II.) Presumably, then, I shall be including as instances of imagery what some would regard as catachresis.

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§ 4

Aristotle’s celebrated definition of metaphor has, as Mrs Nowotny notes, 1 a certain emphasis on what might be called its terminological aspect: ‘applying to a thing a word that belongs to something else’. 2 The emphasis is more explicit in her own paraphrase: ‘speaking of X in terminology proper to Y’. Where poetic metaphor is concerned, this is not, one might comment, an especially popular emphasis; or at least it has not been so since the
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Romantic revolution. More typical of modern attitudes is the non-verbal, even anti-verbal, emphasis apparent in, for instance, Lorca’s somewhat extreme manifesto, ‘la métaphore unit deux mondes antagonistes dans le saut équestre de l’imagination’,3 or in I. A. Richards’ more restrained comment, ‘fundamentally it is a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts’.4 That ‘fundamentally’ is provocative and symptomatic of a reaction. The shift to ‘mondes’ and ‘l’imagination’ and ‘thoughts’ is certainly not in itself illegitimate or unwelcome. The tone of post-Romanticism is less prosaic and its formulations are, in an obvious sense, more impressive than Aristotle’s – but in what sense can its definitions claim to be more ‘fundamental’? Poetry, like all language, is made of words, and nothing can be more fundamental than that.

Here are two Hellenists at work: ‘Das Epitheton ἐρειβοῦς befreundet für Eros, denn das ist ja bei Homer die αἰγίς und die ηδελθοῦ: Eros ist nicht finster.’5 And: ‘A second, archetypal image is that of the road or way, ὁδὸς or κλεφθός: It is used of behaviour by Hesiod.’6 The value of these particular specimens depends, of course, on where the discussions go from there. But so far there can be little doubt that the emphasis of the first (Wilamowitz) is terminological or verbal, that of the second (Bowra) conceptual;7 and that the former is closer to ‘fundamentals’. One notes that, for a conceptualist, not only is the word not primary; it may not even matter which word (‘ὁδὸς or κλεφθός’). The ‘it’ that is used by Hesiod is a notional relation, at a remove from any specific and concrete sequence of words. ‘The image’ is thoughts or, as might have been said, ideas or areas of experience, irrespective of the particular words used.

Now plainly, if one is ever to pursue or invoke or even merely presuppose any of such obviously important matters as the propriety or suggestiveness or originality of an image-relationship, one must have this conceptual emphasis behind one. There are certainly occasions when one reasonably wants to say that ‘the image’ κακῶν πέλαγος (A.Πε.433) ‘recurs’ in the form κλέφθος κακῶν (599), despite only a partial verbal resemblance; or that Shakespeare’s ‘sea of troubles’ and Aeschylus’ κακῶν πέλαγος are ‘the same’ image, in that they bring into metaphoric relation the same areas of experience. But if one’s purpose required the more fundamental, verbal conception of imagery, one would, at the very least, feel obliged to say ‘corresponding’, not ‘same’, in such a case. And if one’s purpose did require it, as mine does, one would resent the appropriation of ‘fundamentals’ by the conceptualist.

At all events, it is clear that ‘thoughts’ and ‘words’ represent two possible and different emphases. To vary the example, it is important to be able to say
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that ἀνάγκης ἐς γυγὸν καθέστωμεν (E. Or.1330) has something in common with ἀνάγκος ἐξι λέγαμεν (A. Ag.218), but it is at least as important to make the distinction that whereas the one phrase is trite,8 the other is novel and striking.9 It is true that the areas of experience, the conceptual relations, involved are hardly distinguishable. It is also true that for effect the verbal sequences are to be contrasted rather than compared. The phraseology that encourages us to equate the two as ‘the same image’ or ‘the image of . . . ’ can be seriously misleading.

Note, therefore, the convenience of the expression ‘the image’ for anything that may be called a conceptual approach to metaphor. By contrast, any verbal orientation, and especially any that involves an active interest in the question of ‘terminology’, has not been well served. Terms that promote, or at least suit, such an emphasis have not, until fairly recently, been forthcoming. As is well known,10 technical (or non-technical) terms for the two basic constituents of metaphor have generally been unfortunate expedients and hardly conducive to any serious purpose. The chief problem has been to avoid terms that invite confusion between the figurative element and the image as a whole. Such well-established terms for the former as ‘figure’, ‘comparison’ and ‘image’ itself create just such a confusion. (Besides which, ‘figure’ and ‘image’ – not to mention ‘picture’ – are in any case tainted with visual associations: tainted, because the largely eighteenth-century assumption that there is something in the nature of poetic imagery to create a demand for a specifically visual or pictorial effect is not defensible.)11 Another problem has been to find terms to make clear that the non-figurative element is not the same thing as the total meaning that arises from the two elements in combination; hence the inconvenience of such terms as ‘meaning’ and ‘referent’. Ironically enough, the pair of terms most amenable to my purpose was invented with thoughts and ideas, not words, in mind. ‘A first step’, wrote I. A. Richards in 1936,12 ‘is to introduce two technical terms to assist us in distinguishing from one another what Dr Johnson called the two ideas that any metaphor, at its simplest, gives us. Let me call them the tenor and the vehicle.’13

1 Nowottny 49. Let me acknowledge here that it was through Mrs Nowottny’s discussion of metaphor (pp.49ff.) that I first perceived the potential utility of the word ‘terminology’ for the study of imagery.
2 Arist. Po.1437b.7.
3 Quoted by Ullmann LS 174.
4 Richards 94.
5 Wilamowitz SS 124, on Ibyc.1.11 Bergk (= 5.11 Page).
6 Bowra, Pindar 252.
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7 The term ‘conceptual’ is convenient, although the antithesis could be misleading. Concepts and words are not opposites nor happily separable.

8 See below, p. 67.

9 And presumably Aeschylus’ invention.

10 See in particular Richards 96ff., and cf. Johansen GR 20 (with n.18). The problem is not peculiar to modern criticism: cf. McCall 217 and 221f. on Quintil. 8.3.77.

11 Cf. e.g. Richards 16f. and 98.

12 Since which time his terms have been widely used by English-speaking students of imagery, though rarely by British Isles Hellenists.

13 Richards 96.

§ § 1

As used by Richards, the tenor is ‘the underlying idea’, and the vehicle the other idea, the one brought in from outside, so to speak, the one to which the tenor is, in logical terms, compared. 2 The same writer suggested in addition the term ‘ground’ to denote the likeness, the feature or features held in common between tenor and vehicle. This ‘ground’ might seem to be inherently a conceptual, not a verbal, matter. 3 On the other hand, tenor and vehicle can be reinterpreted as matters of words. Thus, taking Aeschylus’ κλόδων κακῶν, one might say that the vehicle is ‘rough sea’, conceptually understood, or that the vehicle is the actual word κλόδων. Similarly, one might say that the tenor is ‘impending series of disasters’ (or whatever), or, if the tenor is conceived as words, – but here a difficulty presents itself, beginning with a problem of formulation. The verbal tenor must evidently contain, in the first place, the word κακῶν and, secondly, the word or words that could have been used instead of κλόδων had there been no metaphor: the literal equivalent, if any, which has, in a sense, been suppressed under, or presupposed by, κλόδων. Or rather, ‘in the first place’ should apply not to κακῶν but to this literal equivalent which is the nominal object of ‘comparison’. One might in fact wish to confine ‘tenor’ strictly to this suppressed equivalent or (if a conceptualist) to the concept in question, ‘impending series’. The importance of the alternative – ‘κακῶν plus’ or merely ‘plus’? – will emerge shortly. 4 As for the question, ‘what is the ground?’, this seems to demand, as I say, an answer in conceptual terms. ‘The ground is whatever is held in common between the impending series of disasters and a rough sea’; or ‘...between impending series and a rough sea’. In any event, however we chose to formulate the tenor and the ground, it would be necessary to insist that the tenor is distinct from the product of tenor and vehicle combined, the total meaning; and that the ground is similarly distinct. 5 Likeness, to repeat, is not the be-all and end-all of imagery.
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Mrs Nowottny’s discussion of metaphor may be invoked at this point, making as it does a clear and relevant distinction between ideas or concepts and words. ‘Metaphor directs us to the sense, not to the exact term. The directions lead us not to...[any one of the available literal formulations]...but to that which...is the common target of all these verbal shots...Metaphor indicates how to find or to construct the target, but it does not contaminate the mental image of the target by using any one of the literal terms available in ordinary language for referring to such a target.’6 Evidently this ‘target’ has something to do with ‘the product of tenor and vehicle combined’. It is not the same as any of the literal equivalents, i.e. the ‘suppressed tenor’. And, without any question, it is inherently and necessarily non-verbal.

We have, then, adequately defined for present purposes tenor, vehicle, ground and target. As may have been divined, I intend to make use of Richards’ main terms, tenor and vehicle, and to use them not as their maker meant them, but as referring to words. Henceforth, the ground and, in particular, the target will not, on the whole, concern me directly.

1 The mode and direction of the analysis in this section are indebted to Nowottny 55ff., though I would not subscribe to every detail in her discussion.

2 My paraphrase. Richards gives no formal definition.

3 It is certainly true that other names for the ground tend to be used of the concept – e.g. the German Vergleichungspunkt and the scholastic tertium comparationis, an unwieldy expression mercifully out of fashion (and so bizarrely misunderstood by Taillardat 24, with n.6, and 473ff., who thinks it means the vehicle).

4 It does not appear that the distinction between these alternatives has occupied much attention. Richards does not give enough detailed analysis to make it clear what his own answer would be.


6 Nowottny 59.

7 If it is, the vehicle must be mere surface ornament (cf. Richards 100); or else mere subterfuge, as sometimes in Delphic utterances.

§6

I shall now return to κλόδων κοσμων to continue the exposition and thereby, inter alia, explain my intermittent bandying about of the cumbersome words ‘terminology’ and ‘terminological’. Cumbersome, but valuable, if, as I hope, they evoke the difference between my tenor and vehicle and Richards’ and,
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incipiently perhaps, hint at the perceptual significance of the difference. His
dualism, with its orientation towards abstractions, is logical. In logical terms,
metaphor, as Hermogenes noted in the second century A.D., involves a
‘subject at issue’ (Richards’ tenor) and an ‘extraneous object of reference’
(Richards’ vehicle). But, as Hermogenes also noted, metaphor involves them
not simply as such, but as elements of what I have already casually alluded
to in speaking of ‘the total meaning’, which he called a ‘composite concept’
and which, as ‘composite’ suggests, must represent a new unity, and, surely,
a unity felt or feelable as a unity by its audience; but a unity which Richards’
logical bias is likely to undermine. A Richards-based mode of analysis,
therefore, would tend to go against the hearer’s perception, the feel of the
thing. My dualism and analysis, not logical but terminological, and so dealing
with the immediate words we hear, aspire to explicate and, modestly,
enhance perception, rather than replace it.

In κλύδων κοκών, the two words belong to different terminological con-
texts. One is in marine or nautical terminology, the other is in the terminol-
ogy of human affairs in general. As far as the quotation goes, κλύδων is the
representative, the sole representative, of the vehicle. κλύδων, and only
κλύδων, is in the marine terminology of the vehicle; or, as I have indicated
I would say, is the vehicle. (The terminological emphasis is thus implicit.)
And the tenor here, as already stated, consists first of a suppressed literal
‘equivalent’ to κλύδων, say, for the sake of argument, πλήθος,2 and secondly
of κοκών. κοκών and the suppressed element, πλήθος, cohere terminologically;
both are also ‘predictable’ in a sense and a direction that κλύδων is not;
and it is κοκών, in its significance as the predictably literal context, that
determines our awareness that there is a ‘suppression’, something pre-
supposed, and our awareness of the implicit coherence. By itself, taken as a
single word in vacuo, κλύδων does not presuppose anything, does not imply
any suppression. In the light of κοκών, κλύδων does presuppose. But note:
if we say that κλύδων presupposes something in the ‘human affairs’ terminol-
ogy, e.g. πλήθος, we find no corresponding necessity to say that κοκών pre-
supposes anything in the marine terminology of the vehicle, λάφρος for
instance. The feasibility of saying this does not arise, because κοκών is there
by right, as it were, there being nothing in the context to make us take it at
other than its face value. The tenor, in short, is the norm; the vehicle is a
departure from the norm; and under normal circumstances we follow the
dictates of the norm. And the norm is ‘there’ all the time.

It would, therefore, appear undesirable to think of tenor and vehicle as
exact opposites, if the tenor is liable to be ‘there’ all the time, sometimes in
verbal embodiment, sometimes presupposed, whereas the vehicle is ‘there’