Images, words, and narrative epistemology

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Abstract (Summary)
The metaphors that permeate literary critical thinking, such as thought, writing and reality, are grounded in language. Literary criticism needs metaphors that fuse image and language to undergird conceptualizations of being.

Full Text (8499 words)

Consider for a moment the metaphors that permeate our theoretical thinking about the nature of being. Thought, for instance, is inner speech (Vygotsky); it is dialogic and multi-vocal (Bakhtin); it is internalized conversation (Bruffee). Thus, even the mind of Emily Dickinson, nineteenth-century recluse and poet, alone in her attic bedroom, penning her revolutionary verse in isolation, reverberates with fragmented conversations (see LeFevre). Self, also, is a "written" construct. It is a rhetorical act (Cornell), a product of discursive formations (Foucault), inextricably bound in language (Lacan). To quote Margaret Atwood, this linguistic sense of self evolves with "your own name first, / your first naming, your first name, your first word." Finally, reality, regardless of its ontological status, is known only as a linguistic product (Mead), our sense of a shared common-sense reality maintained through the fragile medium of conversation (Berger and Luckmann).

At the heart of these metaphors of being that currently dominate our field is language. Such an eventuality, of course, is not unexpected given that language ostensibly is the be-all and end-all of English studies: it is what we study, how we study, and why we study. The current social constructionist orientation, fostered by postmodern influences, reinforces our single-minded attention to language as the preeminent force in constituting all that we are. Neopragmatist Richard Rorty announced the end of philosophy in 1979 and described a post-philosophy in which we "study the world historically and live it conversationally" (qtd. in Diggins 11). He reconstituted philosophy as conversation; rather than search for eternal verities, philosophy examines the linguistic methods by which we legitimate our beliefs. For Rorty, with truth lost for good, language becomes both the method and the object of study. Understanding thought, self, and reality requires understanding language. This linguistic view of being currently has the "loudest warranting voice" (Gergen).

Metaphors based on language as the dominant agent in constituting thought, self, and reality, however, are unnecessarily limiting; they fragment thought, self, and reality without providing a means of unification. They potentially
decenter without centering. For instance, John Clifford and John Schilb in a
discussion of composition and poststructuralism, particularly deconstruction,
cite six themes typical of a poststructuralist stance-centerlessness,
imprecision, indeterminacy, free play, slippage, instability—all of which underlie
the potentially nihilist nature of poststructuralist ideology. Such a stance holds
the power to create a pedagogy of disruption, not the laudable pedagogy of
liberation. Chaos, confusion, and alienation are very real possibilities of such an
approach to thought, reality, and self. Within this dominant view of being, we
can too easily be transformed into powerless victims of our linguistic
epistemes: "they" have constructed "us," and we cannot escape the
designations of context (Cornell).

Since the '60s, one of our goals as composition teachers has been to
empower, not disempower. Thus, we need to reexamine the dominance we
give to language in our theory of being because of its potential to constrain.
Rather than metaphors foregrounding language, I wish to argue that we need
metaphors fusing image and language to undergird our conceptualizations of
being. This fusion is the point at which body and language meld, "when the
bones know / they are hollow & the word / splits & doubles & speaks / the truth
& the body / itself becomes a mouth" (Atwood).

To begin my argument, I review work suggesting that imagery and language
function in tandem to constitute our sense of being, that metaphors of sight
hold as much formative power as metaphors of word. Second, I describe the
limitations of language and the ways in which imagery compensates. Third, I
conclude with a discussion of narrative epistemology as a fusion of image and
language.

Historically, the privileging of language over imagery is an outgrowth of the
privileging of text over iconography (Arnheim). As the importance of printed text
was validated within a culture, the use of imagery became relegated to the
arena of art and religion. Thus, its use as a functional part of conceptualizing
common-sense reality was likewise marginalized. Eric Havelock dates the
privileging of language over imagery to Plato, who distrusted the concept of
imagistic knowledge. Platonism, Havelock says, "is an appeal to substitute a
conceptual discourse for an imagistic one" (qtd. in Berman 73). According to
Morris Berman, historian of science, Plato feared participating consciousness,
the kind of consciousness fostered by imagistic learning, claiming it was
"pathological and the arch enemy of intellect" (73). The Scientific
Revolution—with the dual influences of rationalism and empiricism—merely
completed the discrediting of imagistic thinking begun with Plato. Berman
contends that until the sixteenth century, the belief structure undergirding
Western culture was based on alchemy, and "the language of alchemy [was]
dreamlike, symbolic, and imagistic" (105). The attack on this ideology was
heavily linguistic in nature. The detachment and clarity necessary to forward the
agendas of rationalism and empiricism (and thus capitalism) were antithetical to
the paradoxical nature of alchemical thinking: "The whole alchemical imagery of
things being themselves and their opposites, or possessing inherent ambiguity,
was now regarded as stupid, incomprehensible, an obstacle to be rooted out"
(Berman 106). Antagonism to the paradox which is implicit in imagistic thinking
continued into the twentieth century, regardless of such work as that of
mathematician Kurt Godel, who "proved" that paradox serves as the heart of
any interesting mathematical system (Hofstadter).

A similar privileging of writing over image is reinforced by our educational
system with its increasingly language-based orientation (Gardner). As
elementary children become more proficient in the mechanics of writing, their
reliance on drawing as a means of articulating their representations of the world
is discouraged. By third grade, linguistic expertise is firmly established as the
preferred means of articulation (Cioffi). Such a state has the inevitable result of
valorizing a verbal mode of mental representation as well. Our culture, through
the academic domination of printed text, predisposes us to think linguistically.
However, the fact that imagery continues to play an important role in our
informal conversations (Tannen) suggests the power mental imagery retains regardless of our cultural predisposition.

Unfortunately, the continued domination in reading and writing of modern schema theory, which conceives of knowledge as propositionally or linguistically based, marginalizes efforts to synthesize image and language. Thus, our entire concept of literacy by definition privileges language. One is literate in our society when one competently uses text to contribute to the functioning of a community (Bailey and Fosheim). Those who lack language facility, those who "read" the iconography of our culture and conceptualize in imagistic terms are not literate, despite the belief that these icons dictate the future structure of a culture (Langer, "The Cultural Importance of Art"). Linguistic literacy further ignores the entire generation influenced by images from television, film, and advertising, a generation that has developed its own imagistic literacy and taboos (see John Berger; Foster). Growing interest within composition studies in the role of imagery, as reflected in such collections as Roy Fox's Images in Language, Media, and Mind and articles in Brand and Graves's Presence of Mind (Fleckenstein; Miller; Worley), suggests that scholars are gradually acknowledging the vital role imagery plays in meaning construction.

Despite its marginalization by rationalism, empiricism, and twentieth-century behaviorism, imagery has a tenacious hold on the human mind. Currently, the importance of imagery can be traced in three fields: philosophy, cognitive psychology, and analytical psychology.

For philosopher and logician Susanne K. Langer, private mental imagery prepared the way for symbolic language. It was the "catalyst" that initiated the evolution of speech as a conceptual system ("Speculations" 41-42). In "Speculations on the Origins of Speech and Its Communicative Function," Langer claims that the whole mechanism of symbolization was probably worked out in the visual system before it was transferred to the vocal-auditory realm (48). Thus, the leap between animal and human occurred when voice articulated the occurrence of image and "stirred an equivalent occurrence in another brain" (49). Without the foundation provided by the private representative and symbolic quality of mental imagery, the need for linguistic expression and communication would not have occurred. At the heart of symbolic transformation are images, "our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of actual impressions" (Langer, Philosophy 128). Even now, for modern humans, imagery continues to function as the initial level of abstraction, symbolically representing our "spontaneous embodiment of general ideas" (129).

Work in cognitive psychology, growing out of an experimental tradition, affirms Langer's assertions concerning the importance of imagery. According to Alan Richardson, the human mind is a landscape crossed by an almost unending stream of images (15). Susan Aylwin in Structure in Thought and Feeling offers a persuasive theory of the way in which this unending stream of mental imagery exists as an essential element of cognition and emotion. Building on the work of Jerome Bruner in psychology and Charles Fillmore in linguistics, Aylwin claims that humans represent knowledge through three distinct modes: verbal, visual, and enactive. Each mode results in representations, or semantic territory, reflecting the relationships of case grammar (for example, agentive case, locative case, experiencer, subject of attribution). Briefly, verbal representations categorize objects into a hierarchical system. Inner speech also involves the sounds of words, as in rhyming. Visual imagery, similar to static mental snapshots, orients things environmentally and is concerned with their attributes. Enactive imagery, imagining that we are something other than ourselves, results in a sense of agency, intent, and consequences.

Each mode, then, functions with its own semantic territory, its own method of making sense of the world. These modes do not, however, function in isolation. Aylwin contends that they form a "triptych," in which verbal and enactive modes
grow out of and flank the central panel of visual representation. The attributes of an object in a visual image are used for categorization in the verbal mode; the intransitive visual mode becomes the basis for the internalized action of enactive scenarios. Thus, representations exist in a continuous flow of shifting relationships. Nor do the structures or relationships that yield a particular representation exist prior to the phenomena. Aylwin carefully asserts that patterns of representation are not precursors to representation. They are not some cognitive deep structure that exists separate from phenomena: "structures are patterns evident in phenomena, not the causes of these phenomena" (44). The semantic territory Aylwin identifies is the result of our attention shifting from one thing to another. Structure is a temporal patterning, a process, not an entity in itself.

Like Langer's, Aylwin's work emphasizes the centrality of imagery, especially visual imagery, as the matrix out of which verbal and enactive representations grow. The ways in which we create our representations of reality are not entirely linguistic; they include visual and enactive imagery as an integral part of our functioning within the world. Focusing on a single mode, either visual or verbal, ignores the ways in which we depend on other means of apprehension to organize our sense of meaningfulness.

The importance of mental imagery has also resurfaced in the work of psychotherapy, particularly in the theories of Carl G. Jung, who saw in medieval alchemy, with its intense imagistic orientation, a map of the unconscious. Mental images—especially those surfacing in dreams, art, and ritual—form the core of Jung's psychology of religion. These imagistic representations are manifestations of archetypes, or innate modes of apprehension, and possess transformative power. Individuals suffering from feelings of alienation and meaninglessness can create for themselves new ordering principles out of these images. Thus, images are a crucial part of an individual's development of selfhood and self-value. James Hillman, a neo-Jungian psychologist and former director of the Jung Institute, built his own psychology of the mind on the pivotal role of imagery. The "imaginal method" is the matrix of Hillman's theories (Moore). Hillman asserts that imagery and psyche are inextricable. Language is not the center of being: imagery is. Imagery functions as the heart and foundation of our psychological dimension. There is nothing that is not imagistic, which, for Hillman, means that there is nothing that is not poetic. The psychology of the soul, the poetic basis of the mind, is the psychology of imagery. Images provide "the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world. They are the axiomatic, self-evident images to which psychic life and our theories about it ever return" (Hillman 23). Hillman compares mental images to first principles or the models and paradigms by which we organize our sense of being.

Neo-Jungian feminist Annis Pratt redefines archetypal images even more radically than does Hillman. In Dancing with Goddesses, Pratt suggests that archetypal images evolve out of a nexus formed by the confluence of earth, human beings, animals, and plants. Privileged images in Native American poetry and in European paganism grow out of the matrix or field created by the interdependent, transactive relationship among all living things on the planet. Unfortunately, Pratt contends, our culture is under the sway of words, not images. Theories based on the supremacy of the mind and the mastery of nature posit language as the supreme ordering principle: "The words for your life, your gender, and nature took primacy over their actuality, so that it was 'subjective' to trust your own experience, 'essentialist' to pay attention to gender, and 'sentimental' to love nature" (Pratt 369). As a result of this linguistic supremacy, Pratt argues, our identity disintegrates, our culture is fractured, our ecology raped, and harmony remains a chimera. Transforming societal and individual meaninglessness and alienation requires creating anew images of value from the fluid confluence of planetary life. Without images to serve as a primary means of ordering reality-images that reflect both our individual signature and our ecological/historical situatedness—we impoverish ourselves.
and our planet.

This concatenation of thinking in various fields underscores the importance of imagery in our sense of being and reality. Reconceptualizing epistemology to embrace both imagistic and linguistic representations can only increase the explanatory power of our theories of meaning. It can also provide us with an epistemology in which each constituent element compensates for the other's limitations. Language, riddled as it is by the dominant ideology of a culture, functions as a coercive force within a society (Berger and Luckmann). This is especially evident in the socialization of women. Historian Gerda Lerner points out that "it's men's hegemony over the symbol system which most decisively disadvantages women" (219). Male dominance over definition shapes women in such a way that they internalize the idea of their own inferiority (Lerner 218). Therefore, as girls mature into women, guided in their representations of self and gender by a culture which privileges language, they are inevitably guided into their own oppression, their own contextualization as "other" (Beauvoir; MacKinnon). Feminists even contend that the symbol system itself is androcentric and patriarchal. Julia Kristeva, in her early work, echoes Lacan in her assertion that women must commit matricide, that is, kill the imaginary mother, to survive within the conventions of the existing order. In stepping out of the constructs of patriarchal thought, woman faces existential nothingness. Thus, a woman's "voice" is achieved at the cost of her own castration (Cornell 8). As members of any subordinate culture immerse themselves in the language of the power elite, they simultaneously bar themselves from participation in their own culture. If they come to speak with authority in the former, they are silenced in the latter. Conceiving thought, reality, and self predominantly in linguistic terms oppresses certain members of a society, then functions to ensure their continued marginalization.

Beyond the limitations of language as a social construct reflecting and supporting the power hierarchy, the structure of language as a means of representation imposes constraints on conceptualization. On the basis of a series of free association experiments, Aylwin contends that verbal semantic representation has three characteristic properties: it is organized hierarchically or taxonomically; it focuses on "typical" instances; and it dereferentializes (that is, separates the word from what it refers to) (23). Language creates meaning by classifying items into superordinate categories (a dog is a mammal) and into differences or oppositions (a dog is not a cat). Because of this hierarchical organization, semantic representations naturally focus on prototypes, or general representations of a class, instead of on individual possibilities. Finally, language dereferentializes, creating distance between signifier and signified. One manifestation of this is in formulaic associations of words, whereby a word such as freedom becomes an automatic constituent of a phrase such as freedom of speech. An extreme example of this dereferentializing is rhyming, in which words no longer function as signifiers at all but as objects.

Linguistic representations possess both power and danger. They provide us with a means to structure reality in such a way as to test its validity. We make statements through language. It is also true that the detachment or distance from emotionally distressing episodes provided by verbal structures can offer us healing space. Psychotherapists who encourage patients to write about their experiences in journals, letters, or poems have tapped this aspect of language to help sufferers deal with trauma (Berry and Pennebaker; see also Rico). On the other hand, hierarchical structure reinforces our sense of higher and lower, superior and inferior, and the tendency to organize in terms of differences or opposites continues to center and marginalize simultaneously, reinforcing power lines within our culture. Similarly, focus on the "typical" allows undue reliance on socially engendered stereotypes. Aylwin describes verbal daydreams as fantasies in which the dreamer envisions how things should be and then criticizes deviations from this standard (54): linguistic representations bind us into socially ratified practices. Finally, divorcing signifier from signified makes it easier for language to be used as a tool for propaganda (Aylwin 27). While it may provide the detachment necessary for us to deal with
psychological trauma, the distancing of language from the context of individual experience also allows us to justify and accept morally ambiguous actions (war, capital punishment, and so on). Such dereferentialization severs word from emotion, implicitly emphasizing the specious dualism between reason and emotion, meaning and feeling, dominant in our Western culture. Dereferentialization offers us tools to legitimate or rationalize almost anything.

Imagery, because it provides an alternate way of organizing thought, reality, and self, compensates for the coercive force and structural limitations of language. Mental imagery, as a system responsive to direct, concrete experience (Paivio) and closely tied to the actual percept (Langer, "Speculations" 43), is less controlled by the politicized forces of language. It is less riddled with the dominant ideology of a culture. Freud contends that nonverbal representations operate in close relationship to the id, whereas verbal representations serve the function of the ego and operate according to the reality principle (Aylwin). Language focuses on what is typical in a socially engendered reality, negating the implausible, serving the status quo. On the other hand, nonverbal representations, more sensitive to idiosyncratic individual experience, reflect less interference from socially constructed reality. Neo-Jungian feminists tie images closely to inner feeling and bodily reactions. They believe that reclaiming a woman's representational images, a major goal of psychotherapy, requires fighting any dogmatic system of thought that devalues "real experience" or the primacy of inner feelings (see Lauter and Rupprecht).

Imagery compensates for the limitations of language, first, by its connections to kinesthetic and emotional reactions. Imagery provides a rich source of lived experiences. It is spontaneous, quasi-automatic (Langer, "Speculations" 43), and occurs almost continuously, either consciously or unconsciously (Richardson). Tightly tied to the actual, initiating perception (Langer, "Speculations"; Paivio), imagery possesses an obvious relationship to the source of the perception and thus representation. As a result, images are centered within each individual's concrete experiences in the world. They possess the individual's signature (Pratt).

Second, where language taxonomizes, images synthesize. Images are not direct copies of experience, but have been "projected" into new dimensions by the process of experiencing the stimuli and experiencing the image (Langer, Philosophy 127). As a result, images mesh and pool results of perceptions and experience (Langer, "Speculations" 43). Sir Frederic Bartlett, the father of schema theory, claims that imagery crosses schematic boundaries, incorporating knowledge from differing domains. Images organize this knowledge in what Allan Paivio calls nested setsembedded or webbed organizational patterns-which complement the linear and sequential organization of linguistic representations. Within a nested set, however, images also fuse self and culture. As Bartlett's experiments more than sixty years ago demonstrated, information stored in memory does not remain static. It reorganizes itself according to socially internalized patterns of regularity. Reconstructing memory, including imagery, means reorganizing memory guided by the ordering principles derived from participation in an individual's culture. Thus, a re-evoked image contains traces of the initiating perceptions and the influence of culture. Within its nested structure, an image reconstructs a culture and a self.

Unlike lived experience, imagery can be recreated. In dreams, daydreams, fantasies, and nightmares, we initiate and participate in a stream of imagery, providing a quasi-subjective record of experience but without the "mercurial elusiveness" of real experience (Langer, Philosophy 127). Events we experience in "real time" pass. Images, however, we can reactivate (Langer, "Speculations") or reconstruct (Bartlett). Unlike the ephemeral transience of real experience, imagery, as an "object of the mind's possession, not just a sensation" (Langer, Philosophy 127), can be the object of analysis as well as the subject of experience.
Another way in which imagery complements language is by its emotional tonality. Imagery is infused with emotional involvement (Langer, "Speculations"; Aylwin; Paivio). Affect, which Bartlett contends is the basis of all perceiving and remembering, is an integral and important part of imagery. Images fuse information and emotion. To engage in imagistic thinking is to feel. Such a characteristic forces us to contend with the emotional causes and consequences of our actions. Imagery contextualizes action within the warp and woof of beliefs, intentions, and desires. The intense subjectivity of images counters the dereferentializing of language. We rationalize, we intellectualize much less easily with imagery than with decontextualized language. On the other hand, as evidenced by Hitler's swastika, Caesar's eagles, and the Christian cross, we can propagandize much more effectively with imagery because of its intense emotional component. (Of course, emotion colors language as well, but its intensity is diffused by our use of language as a public medium of exchange.)

The structure of imagery also complements the structural limitations of language, particularly the ontological depth of visual imagery and the agency of enactive imagery. Aylwin explains that three structural attributes distinguish visual imagery: static spatiality, metaphoric propensity, and ontological depth. Briefly, static spatiality refers to the snapshot quality of a visual image (although, because images are processes, they are not frozen in memory or stored in a mental photo album). A visual image creates an environment or reference frame to which all other elements are related. In addition, a visual image relies on isomorphic relationships, defining itself metaphorically. Finally, a visual image also incorporates relationships among different ontological categories: object-environment, whole-part, objectattribute. The properties of an object, defined relative to each other, are embedded, not linked by an additive relationship.

The quality of ontological depth is especially complementary to the categorical structure of inner speech. Verbal representations oppose and differentiate, then taxonomize on the basis of those differences and oppositions. This is important because it allows us to make the generalizations necessary to function within the world, but dangerous because it essentializes reality and reduces it to static polarities. Within such an essentialized reality, philosophical dualism is privileged, social and gender roles are opposed, and folk psychology, our common-sense conceptions of reality, is eviscerated. Binary thinking reduces our cultural and personal options for action. Reconceptualizing binary thinking helps to ensure a fluid sense of realities, of "possible worlds" (Bruner) and, unlike language, visual imagery constructs possible worlds by embedding elements of an entity within an environment; it does not oppose them. Reflecting, according to Mary Ricketts, a gynocentric epistemology of relationality that contextualizes androcentric binaries, visual imagery layers the attributes of an object within the whole. It represents reality relationally, not oppositionally. As such it functions as a "brace against reductionism, not an invitation to it" (Aylwin 30). Such an ability is important in a culture dominated by poststructuralist philosophy based the linguistic concept of difference.

Enactive imagery, which consists of narrative scenarios incorporating a range of senses, reaffirms a sense of agency undermined by our language system. Distinguished by four interrelated features—the agency involved in transitive actions, relative spatiality, subjectivity, and an awareness of future consequences—enactive imagery privileges self-action. Linguistically, we are dominated by the poststructuralist stance that has stripped the subject position of agency and defined it as empty. Christine Downing hypothesizes that poststructuralism, regardless of protests to the contrary, may be another patriarchal effort to disempower women because it silences them as subjects at a time when women have just begun acquiring a voice. Enactive imagery, however, focuses on a "doing," an activity with an actor, instruments, and objects. As we image enactively, we envision ourselves as agents of an action replete with intent and motivation. Thus, enactive imagery counters the poststructuralist destruction of agency by reinforcing the sense that we as
actors can engage in a course of action that is designed to achieve a goal. And agency, although philosophically suspect, is psychologically crucial. Those denied agency and freedom of action fall into helplessness, self-deprecation, depression, even death (Aylwin). They become victims. A means of representing agency is essential for those within our culture who have been denied a subject position and relegated to the position of object. As feminist psychotherapy has indicated, for women to effect any changes in self-destructive behavior (such as bulimia), they must develop a sense of agency (see Mitchell). Within the semantic territory of enactive scenarios, women are not passive recipients of male action. They are agents themselves.

Because of its subjectivity and narrative quality, enactive imagery also fosters the development of moral sense and complements the tendency of language to decontextualize ethical decision from their initiating matrix. Marked by transitive verbs, enactive scenarios embrace intentions, motivations, and consequences. Any agency requires intent, and intent is never neutral. The difference between transitive and intransitive action is that intent. "Transitive verbs," Aylwin explains, "have eaten of the tree of knowledge, and lost their innocence" (34). Thus, as agents "do" something through enactive imagery, they automatically infuse the doing with loosely legitimating motivation. We envision consequences to our doing and even empathize with the victims of our acts. This "intersubjective perspective is an important social prerequisite for emergence of moral agency" (Aylwin 34). It is also a vital element in feminist ethics, born out of the empathy and narrative epistemology implicit in enactive imagery but absent in more decontextualized nonconsequentialist ethics (see especially Noddings; Gilligan; Andolsen, Gudorf, and Pellauer).

Ultimately, imagery offers a counterbalance to the hegemony of a phallogocentric linguistic system. Because it is related to direct experience and is recoverable for reflection, it can serve as an axis or a still point (Haney) around which individuals can center themselves as they seek to challenge the cultural ordering principle that previously constructed their sense of self. Part of the difficulty women face in a patriarchal culture is that "they have no past, no history, no religion of their own" (Beauvoir xxv). Without a history, they have no present, no future (Lerner). But creating a personal history meaningful outside of patriarchal paradigms requires writing a MamaFesta (James Joyce, qtd. Cornell 1) in something other than our phallogocentric symbol system. It requires a recovery of a "female language of metaphors, symbols, and myths" (Lerner 225). The imaginal sphere of life, because it proceeds without as much interference from the defining force of culture (see Lauter and Rupprecht), offers a matrix or source pool for that female language. During an era in which "women are hungry for images through which we might see ourselves" (Downing 7; her emphasis), visual and enactive imagery provides a counterpoint to the melody of language.

We cannot, however, eschew language merely because imagery possesses formative and transformative power. To do so ignores those same qualities in language. We cannot merely create significant images within the space carved out by others engaged in similar struggles. To be effective, those images must have a linguistic life within the dominant conversation, or women just exchange one kind of silence for another. If we ignore the importance of language, we risk the danger of rendering women "uncontainable," reinforcing the patriarchal identification of women with darkness, mystery, and physiological passions. Language is necessary, but language fused with metaphor, which is, Langer claims, "the law of growth of every semantic" (Philosophy 130). The union of language and image allows for the possibility of the poetic in the discursive and unity in the midst of fragmentation. By transforming language imagistically, women hold the potential of feminizing the dominant culture, of reframing the conversation. Neither culture nor symbol system can remain phallogocentric if the feminine becomes a force (see Peters, qtd. in Diehl 105; Goldenberg).

So what might this fusion of image and language look like? The narrative epistemology of Jerome Bruner provides one example. An examination of the
characteristics of narrative knowing reveals its imagistic and linguistic roots.

A narrative epistemology grows out of the belief that our initial means of making knowledge about the world is narrative, not paradigmatic or logico-scientific. According to Jerome Bruner, we construct two kinds of knowledge of the world: paradigmatic and narrative. Paradigmatic knowledge, the almost exclusive focus of previous studies of meaning-making ("Narrative Construction"), results in knowledge linked by logical relationships-logico-scientific knowledge. On the other hand, narrative knowledge, the basis of our folk psychology, organizes experience and memory of human happenings in narrative form. Such knowledge enables us to identify ourselves and function as social beings. Unlike paradigmatic knowledge, it cannot be falsified; it can only achieve verisimilitude. (See chapter 2 of Actual Minds, Possible Worlds for a description of the differences between the two kinds of knowledge.)

Three kinds of correspondences indicate the relatedness of language and imagery in narrative knowing. First, both narrative knowledge and imagery share an irreducible narrative core. Second, structural parallels-temporality, motivation, a type-token relationship, interpretive necessity, context sensitivity, and underdetermination-suggest that language and imagery blend in narrative knowing. Finally, their similar function in cultural legitimation and negotiation, processes served by narrative knowing, further underscores their consanguinity.

The narrative core of imagery itself indicates the basic connection between imagery and narrative knowing. "The first thing we do with images is to envisage a story," Langer says (Philosophy 128; her emphasis). So imagery, although a mode of untutored thinking, yields stories as its earliest product. Aylwin's work with visual and enactive imagery verifies Langer's contention and shows that the semantic territory of images encompasses narrative. First, visual representations, although seemingly static, can convey a story by a succession of "frames," similar to the method used in comic illustrations and stained glass windows. Action is indicated by changes in location and stance. Second, enactive representations are stories, replete with conflict, motivations, consequences. They are action scenarios. Images-either visual or enactive-are essentially narratives without language. In Actual Minds, Possible Worlds, Bruner claims that the role of narrative discourse is to convert "unworded narratives into powerful and haunting stories" (16; emphasis added), suggesting that imagistic stories may well precede their discursive counterpart.

Structurally, both narrative epistemology and imagery are distinguishable first by chronological ordering; a narrative is immutably temporal, representing human events in sequential order (Bruner, "Narrative Construction" 6). It is a "mental model" whose essential property is its chronological arrangement of events. The semantic territory of enactive imagery is similarly structured to reflect temporal sequencing. Because enactive images involve "doing," they inevitably embrace a chronology that mediates actions by relating them temporally to each other.

Second, the quality of intentionality-with its implicit ethicality-characterizes both narrative knowing and enactive imagery. "The function of the story," Bruner claims, "is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from canonical cultural patterns" (Acts 50). Defined as "vicissitudes of intentions," narratives link the unexpected to the culturally expected by means of stories based on intentions. For instance, as we stand in line at the post office, we witness an unexpected occurrence. A man dressed in army fatigues marches into the post office, waving an American flag and demanding our attention. We account for his situationally inappropriate behavior by explaining to ourselves that he "intends" to protest as unpatriotic a proposed increase in the price of stamps. We implicitly evoke our values in our script: the "right" to protest, the appropriateness of the venue, and so on. Because intentionality is the fulcrum of narrative epistemology, narrative knowing is inevitably moral. "To tell a story is to take a moral stance, even if it is a moral
stance against moral stances" (Bruner, Acts 51).

Similarly, the key element of enactive imagery's action scenarios is intentionality with its attendant moral agency. Intent is implicit within the transitive verbs that mark enactive imagery, and because of this intent there are no innocent transitive verbs (Aylwin 34). Within the intentionality of a transitive verb, we act on the basis of loosely legitimating motivations and justifications, indicating the social prerequisites of our moral agency.

Third, narratives and images are both tokens and types, that is, both particular and general. Stories, which take as their subject matter particular happenings, can only be realized through those specifics. But an idiosyncratic story also falls into a broader category, such as the timeless "boy woos girl" (see "Narrative Construction"). "Particularity achieves its emblematic status by its embeddedness in a story that is in some sense generic" (Bruner, "Narrative Construction" 7); the representative or emblematic status of a story contributes meaning to the gaps within the particular discursive elements of that story.

Similarly, while the particular elements of images may be idiosyncratic, the relationships by means of which the elements are structured are universal (see especially Aylwin 4445). Langer in Philosophy in a New Key notes that, while images remain "entirely private," they also have the character of symbols (127). They not only connote the initial sense experience from which they are derived, but they also possess the "inalienable tendency to mean things" (128). Thus, images, like narratives, are both particular and universal.

Fourth, and perhaps most indicative of narrative knowing's imagistic matrix, is its hermeneutic composibility, or its reliance on the human capacity to compose knowledge interpretively, not logically (Bruner, "Narrative Construction"). Initially, we necessarily interpret narratives because a story is a transformation of life, not a copy of life. We have no obligation to match a story to any extralinguistic reality. Without a verifiable reference point, we possess no rational or empirical means of ascertaining the "truth" of a story. Instead, its power rests on our interpretations of its internal verisimilitude. We are satisfied with a narrative account when we can mentally nod and concede, "Yes, that makes sense."

Next, we necessarily interpret narratives because we cannot determine truth or falsity of a story on a sentence-by-sentence basis. Instead, we base judgments of verisimilitude on the sequence or configuration of sentences. A central paradox of narrative knowing is that to grasp a story's plot, we must make sense of its constituent parts, but the parts only make sense within the context of that plot.

This need for interpretation is also characteristic of imagery. Although an image is tied to its initiating situation, it is not a copy of that situation. Thus, like narratives, its legitimacy or validity cannot be traced to any empirical or necessary relationship to an instigating reality. Its "truth" rests not on its verifiability but on its verisimilitude. Furthermore, because of contextual embeddedness, comprehending an image requires, paradoxically, grasping the whole as we grasp the parts. Within visual images, the constituents of a scene are related to their environment as well as to one another; visual images come to "be" because our attention shifts along paths that connect and embed parts within the whole. To comprehend the parts, one must comprehend the whole. To comprehend the whole, one must comprehend the function of the constituent parts. Images, like stories, must be composed hermeneutically.

A fifth structural similarity between imagery and narrative knowing is context sensitivity. Bruner explains that as creators and interpreters of stories, we are marked by context sensitivity (see "Narrative Construction"; see also the discussion of subjectification in Actual Minds 26, 28-37). We bring to bear on stories all that we know and expect, both consciously and unconsciously. We filter narrative reality through the consciousness of creators and protagonists. Weavers of stories (both listeners and speakers) live by evoking the full range of their autobiographical scripts. The work of Jung on dream symbolism
underscores the contextual similarity between imagery and stories. Jung, who claims the images in dreams are essentially the same as their waking counterparts, merely more picturesque and vivid (29), notes the role of context sensitivity in dream interpretation. No dream symbol, Jung warns, can be separated from the individual who dreams it, nor can the interpretation be severed from the interpretant. Each symbol and interpretation is replete with predilections and prejudices because both are embedded within the specific contexts of dreamer and interpretant. Jung warns that analysts are often hampered in therapy when they privilege their own subjective contexts and interpret analysands’ dreams from their own viewpoint.

These five structural similarities—chronology, intent, universality/particularity, interpretive necessity, and context sensitivity—indicate that a narrative epistemology evolves out of a matrix that includes imagery. Finally the underdetermination of narrative language also connects narrative knowing to imagery. In "Narrative Construction" Bruner explains that narrative discourse is a peculiar kind of language—one characterized by underdetermination: the tendency to be elliptical, symbolic, and metaphorical. Logico-scientific discourse, in contrast, is marked by meticulous logical correctness and exact reference to an "aboriginal reality." Its truth value is measured by its resemblance to that aboriginal reality. "A narrative, after all," Bruner asserts, "is not just a plot, or fabula, but a way of telling, a utz" (Acts 123). It relies not on logic, but on literariness and the power of tropes (Acts 60). The gaps within the elliptical openness of narrative invite performances of meaning. What results from narrative language is a contingent reality; by creating and comprehending stories, we traffic in human possibilities and perspectives, not in certainties. (See also Tannen's work on the literary quality of conversational discourse.)

This underdetermination—the uneven relationship between sense and reference—is also characteristic of the participatory nature of imagistic thinking described by Berman in The Reenchantment of the World, suggesting that the ellipticality of narrative language possesses imagistic roots. Imagistic thinking, manifested in the symbolic iconography and esoteric language of alchemy, follows dialectical as opposed to critical reasoning. Its central tenet is that reality is paradoxical; imagistic thinking defies the logical sequences of space and time to represent opposing concepts as also the same. Within the alchemical paradigm of imagistic thinking, critical or logico-scientific reasoning is suspect because it attempts to "rob significant images of their meaning" (Berman 81), a meaning found within the contradictions and gaps of dream language. The underdetermination of imagistic thinking—like that of narrative language—provides the space within which the necessary play of paradox and symbolization can be enacted.

Narrative epistemology's functions of cultural legitimation and negotiation also indicate its incarnation as both language and imagery. Any culture, via its participants' folk psychology, sets up norms and procedures for dealing with deviations from those norms. Folk psychology, a stream of continuous scripts, focuses on ways of acting that are situationally appropriate. It endows these cultural scripts with canonicity or legitimacy. These canonical ways of being become "deontic"—that which we are expected or supposed to do (Feldman, qtd. in Bruner, Acts 24). So we are normed by our stories. These scripts function unconsciously until a breach in canonicity occurs, until something in our environment violates our expectations. We respond by creating a story, a possible world, in which we normalize the breach by linking intentional states to canonical script. We use narratives to re-weave the unexpected back into the pattern of our legitimated canonical scripts.

This process of legitimation is characteristic of both language and imagery. As Aylwin explains, linguistic representations serve a legitimating function. Inner speech is marked by deontic verbs, such as "supposed to," by which we construct a world and legitimate (or delegitimate) behavior and desires by means of that construction. Such speech addressed judgmentally to the self essentially functions as a cultural superego, identifying and condemning
deviations from a norm or failures to live up to a canonical ideal. Thus, functionally, through its discursive nature, narrative epistemology is tied to the institutionally coercive nature of language (see Berger and Luckmann; see also McDonald on the norming function of language). Visual images, however, particularly our visual daydreams, also serve as a means of social legitimation. Visual daydreams provide a play space within which we rehearse various social personae valorized within our culture before an audience (Aylwin). The physical space of visual images becomes a social space in visual daydreams where we enact a performance designed to gain us approval or adulation from others. Thus, we create culturally canonical roles that will evoke approbation within a particular social space. Because of the intransitive nature of visual representations, however, we cannot transact with our audience to change its responses or behavior; we can only craft our own to match the projected expectations of that audience. So we change ourselves to achieve cultural membership, in the process implicitly legitimating those cultural scripts.

The viability of a culture, however, rests on negotiation as well as on legitimation, and the process of negotiation can be both linguistic and imagistic. When values, beliefs, and intentions conflict, we quickly find ourselves in adversarial positions of argumentation. Creating and sharing stories, even deontic ones based on dissimilar canonicity, can transform an agonistic communication into a collaborative one. As story sharers we are not cross-referencing an aboriginal reality; we are sharing contingent realities-possible worlds, not actual ones. Linguistically, this ability of narrative knowing to effect cultural negotiation resembles the function of the spectator role in language hypothesized by James Britton. This spectator role, the basis of gossip and poetic language, is an essential aspect of expressive language. According to Britton, when we use language in the spectator role, we shape a vision of reality to share with another. In the process of exchanging stories, we use the reactions and shared scripts of others to recheck our own constructions, to renegotiate our vision so that it gains greater intersubjective validity. Thus, through a kind of cultural gossip, the fluid paths of negotiation are maintained.

This ability of narrative knowing to effect cultural negotiation parallels a similar function of enactive imagery, especially enactive daydreams. By means of enactive imagery we are able to identify with another's perspective, live another's story. As we daydream enactively, we can identify empathetically with social misfits or outcasts, thus digesting the harsher aspects of reality and making them ours (Aylwin). This ability to empathize with any deviation from canonicity contrasts sharply with the linguistic tendency to condemn those same deviations. Through enactive daydreams we lay the groundwork for negotiation, not ostracism, because we become the other. According to Nel Noddings, once we experience that empathetic sharing, we can approach difference from a caring perspective, rather than from an adversarial perspective, thus enhancing negotiation.

A powerful image in medieval alchemy is the androgyne or hermaphrodite: a figure which is half man, half woman (see Berman 79). For medieval alchemists, the androgyne represented the participatory union of opposites: sol and luna, nature and humanity, and so on. Narrative epistemology can also be conceptualized iconically as an androgynous figure-half image, half discourse-shimmering fluidly from one to the other, neither all one nor totally the other. A culture, a community, a family, or a self reconstitutes itself linguistically by "swallowing its own narrative tail," Bruner says ("Narrative Construction" 19). But we also maintain ourselves culturally and autobiographically though our adherence to a world image (Langer, "Speculations"). Impoverish either our story-making ability or the images at its heart, and we impoverish our culture, community, family, and ourselves. Given this union of image and language, narrative discourse may well be the "metaphoric language" legal ethicist Drucilla Cornell and neo-Jungian feminists insist is necessary for feminist transformation of self and reality. Thus, in our desire to empower our students to construct lives of meaningfulness and value, we must reconstitute our theories of being to focus not on language or imagery alone, but on the
androgynous transmutation of both into being.

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