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# Marinetti's Metaphorical Break with Tradition

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Prima di noi paroliberi, gli uomini hanno sempre cantato come Omero, con la successione narrativa e il catalogo logico di fatti immagini idee [...] Le nostre tavole parolibere, invece, ci distinguono finalmente da Omero, poiché non contengono più la successione narrativa, ma la poliespressione simultanea del mondo.<sup>1</sup>

In “La tecnica della nuova poesia,” Filippo Tommaso Marinetti openly attacks his predecessors, ridiculing their aesthetics, and proposing instead an unprecedented idea of poetry based on “un nuovo modo di vedere l’universo” (182). In order for a new poetic language to be created, the old must be destroyed. In the 1912 “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista” Marinetti calls for the abolition from language of “tutto ciò che essa contiene in fatto d’immagini stereotipate, di metafore scolari, e cioè quasi tutto” (43). In place of traditional poetry Marinetti proposes “un lirismo rapidissimo, brutale e immediato, un lirismo che a tutti i nostri predecessori deve apparire come antipoetico, un lirismo telegrafico, che non abbia assolutamente alcun sapore di libro, e, il più possibile, sapore di vita” (66).

What better way to revolutionize poetry and render the essence of life than by means of analogies, which constitute “il sangue stesso della poesia” (42). In fact it is *only* by means of vast analogies that he claims a poet can capture the intuitive psychology of nature.<sup>2</sup> Although Marinetti identifies no substantial difference between the verse of Homer and that of d’Annunzio (181), he considers his own revolutionary precisely because of its “spaventosa potenza di analogia” (47). But does Marinetti’s actual use of metaphor entirely break free of tradition? Are his analogies as revolutionary as he claims? I intend to examine a sprinkling of metaphors from three of Marinetti’s works written at different periods of his

literary career: “Le Bataille de Tripoli” (1911), “8 anime in una bomba” (1919), and “L’areopoema del Golfo della Spezia” (1935). Although these works appertain to different literary genres, (a journalistic account, a self-proclaimed “romanzo esplosivo” and an “areopoema,” respectively) all three treat the same topic, which is Marinetti’s favorite topic—war. The purpose of my analysis is to determine the degree to which his use of metaphor departs from tradition in different genres and at different stages of his poetic development. More importantly, if Marinetti’s use of metaphor is as revolutionary as he claims, how are we to go about understanding it? Perhaps the traditional models of metaphorical analysis are insufficient. I therefore intend to incorporate into my argument various philosophical perspectives on metaphor, some of which are considered as revolutionary as Marinetti’s poetry itself.

In order to answer the question of whether Marinetti’s use of metaphor successfully breaks free of tradition, it is necessary to establish what exactly that tradition is. Early on, analogy flourished in myth and poetry. Ironically Plato, a master of metaphor, was suspicious of it. In the tenth book of *The Republic*, he addresses the “ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” and defends the banishment of philosophically uneducated imitative poets on two grounds: 1) these poets have no genuine knowledge of what they imitate and 2) poetry “feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue.”<sup>3</sup>

It is Aristotle, however, who provides the first extended philosophical treatment of metaphor. “Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.”<sup>4</sup> Three main conclusions can be drawn from Aristotle’s definition. First, that the metaphoric transfer is located at the level of *words*, rather than sentences. Secondly, that metaphor is understood as a *deviance* from literal usage, since it involves the transfer of a name to some object to which that name does not properly belong, and most importantly, that metaphor is based on *similarities* between two things. Whether the transfer of the name is from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy, there are always some underlying resemblances which make the transfer possible. For the poet, “the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a

sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.”<sup>5</sup> Although Aristotle claims that (when employed properly) metaphor gives style, clearness, charm, and distinction to writing as nothing else can, he warns heavily against its misuse. Metaphors, like epithets, must be “fitting, which means they must fairly correspond to the thing signified: failing this, their inappropriateness will be conspicuous.”<sup>6</sup> The potential for misuse of metaphor is stressed even more strongly in *Topics*, where he warns against the use of metaphors in framing definition, “for a metaphorical expression is always obscure.”<sup>7</sup> The question raised is how are we to determine when a metaphor is fitting and provides genuine insight, rather than being misleading or obscure? According to Aristotle, a good metaphor places things in a new light, so that we can see them in a way we have never seen them before. Thus, it ought to “set it more intimately before our eyes” with a vividness that induces an alteration of perspective that lets us “get hold of new ideas.”<sup>8</sup> The choice of metaphor will depend on which aspects of the thing described one wishes to highlight. Aristotle’s explanation of why various metaphors are either fitting or far-fetched centers on the appropriateness of the relevant similarities emphasized by the metaphor. A striking metaphor, then, is like a riddle, the solution of which brings insight and delight. The trick is to stretch the imagination, but always within appropriate bounds, keeping in mind the underlying similarity at work.<sup>9</sup>

After Aristotle, there followed over twenty-three hundred years of elaboration on his remarks. Virtually every major treatment up to the twentieth-century is prefigured in Aristotle’s account.<sup>10</sup> Cicero’s (106–43 B.C.) perspective regarding metaphor is very similar. He expresses the standard view that “there is no mode of embellishment more effective as regards single words, nor any that throws a greater luster upon language.”<sup>11</sup> He also emphasizes the aspect of comparison:

A metaphor is a brief similitude contracted into a single word; which word being put in the place of another, as if it were in its own place, conveys, if the resemblance be acknowledged, delight; if there is no resemblance, it is condemned.<sup>12</sup> (*De Oratore*, 3:39)

What I find significant about Cicero’s definition is how strongly he warns against the misuse of metaphor. If a comparison is too far-fetched

(where dissimilarity overcomes resemblances), it is “condemned.” But at what point does dissimilarity overcome resemblance? Let us examine a handful of Marinetti’s metaphors selected at random in light of Cicero’s distinction. In “Le Bataille de Tripoli,” Marinetti refers to the sentinels with their feathered heads as “chefs de tribus.”<sup>13</sup> The similarity between the feathered head gear of the sentinels and the headdress of an Indian chief is readily apparent to the reader and sufficiently similar. Marinetti later compares the trench to a giant sewing machine: “Géante machine à coudre l’horizon, qui déclache par saccades irritées ses aiguilles violentes dans l’étoffe lourde des ténèbres!”<sup>14</sup> This metaphor is slightly more “far-fetched;” similarities can be drawn, however, between the pointed weapons of the trench and the sharp needles of the sewing machine. The heavy oppressive feeling of the darkness could be said to engender the same feeling as a heavy and suffocating fabric.

But not all of Marinetti’s metaphors are even this simple. For example, in “8 anime in una bomba,” he likens the laughter of his fourth soul to “la ghiaia sotto il mare colossale di un passato che ritorna” (746). Where do we even begin to identify similarities? Or, perhaps even more complex, in “L’areopoema del Golfo della Spezia” he writes: “Sono un’acqua zampillante che odia gli scheletri mistici delle montagne e cerco il fondo carnoso delle valli, i pettegolezzi dei fiumi e le canzone delle ruote da velocizzare” (819). Two things are made apparent by this small sample of metaphors: 1) the latter two would most certainly be condemned by Cicero and company, and 2) searching for similarities is not an adequate method for making sense of all metaphors.

Despite its glaring inadequacy, the comparison theory has been the single most popular and widely held account of how metaphors work. This theory holds that a metaphor of the “A is B” form is merely a means of indirection by which we get at the speaker’s intended literal meaning “A is like B in the following respects: . . .” According to this view, the meaning of the metaphor is a literal set of relevant similarities picked out by the context of the utterance.<sup>15</sup> When Marinetti refers to the dying enemy as a “matelas écarlate,” for example, the reader readily identifies the scarlet color with blood and recognizes that the mattress is mentioned for its limp and lifeless properties rather than for its softness or the comfort it provides.<sup>16</sup> Another clear and logical example occurs in the first section of “8 anime in una bomba” entitled “Il pianoforte di guerra,” when a group of soldiers attempts to move a heavy piano through a narrow doorway into a bedroom. Marinetti calls the piano an

“elefante sonoro” (719). Although an elephant and a piano are rather dissimilar, the literal meaning is clear: the piano is as heavy as an elephant. This analogy could also refer to the noises made by an elephant and the music of the piano, but the principle similarity of weight is unmistakable given the context.

Adherents of the comparison theory would see this metaphor as nothing more than an entertaining way of saying, “the piano is heavy.” Indeed, there is a long philosophical tradition that treats metaphor as a mere stylistic ornament that is reducible to literal statements without loss of cognitive content.<sup>17</sup> But not all of Marinetti’s metaphors are formed on the basis of similarities, or at least not easily identifiable ones. For example, in the “Manifesto tecnico” he refers to his comparison of a fox terrier to boiling water. The two objects are wildly dissimilar. They are not even the same state, one being solid and one liquid. They are not the same color or texture. One is animate, the other inanimate. What Marinetti meant was not, at least for me, directly discernable from the metaphor itself. Luckily, his explanation elucidates this metaphor, which was indeed based on similarities. Since the fox-terrier is described as “trepidante” in the previous example in which it is compared to a small Morse code machine, we can conclude that it is this quality that makes it comparable to boiling water. He recognizes the distant (or what others would term “far-fetched”) nature of such an analogy but defends it on the grounds that “[v’è] in ciò una **gradazione di analogie sempre più vaste**, vi sono dei rapporti sempre più profondi e solidi, quantunque lontanissimi” (42).

Marinetti insists, in fact, that analogies be sufficiently distant. If the two objects likened are too similar, they teach the reader nothing about the object that he/she does not already know and only reinforce the obvious. This idea seems to be supported by two twentieth-century theories on metaphor which both refute the comparison theory: A. I. Richards (1936) and Haig Khatchadourian (1968) have argued that by overemphasizing the role of similarities the theory of comparisons ignores the sometimes crucial role of differences and disanalogies.<sup>18</sup> In many of Marinetti’s metaphors on aspects of war, it often seems to be the sharp dissimilarity that is key to the comprehension of the metaphor. For example, when he likens the “cro! Crocro! Cro! Cro!” of machine guns to “les croassements d’un peuple de crapauds en amour,” the similarity of the sounds is the basis for the metaphor, but the key is

the dissimilarity of the romantic and peaceful pond and the bloody and chaotic battlefield.<sup>19</sup>

An entire series of metaphors likens war to games, and soldiers and guns to babies and children. In “Le Bataille de Tripoli,” a sergeant says tenderly of his machine gun, “Il faut donner à boire de temps en temps à la petite! Ajoute le sergent qui, sans se presser, arrose les lèvres vermeilles de la mitrailleuse avec un petit bidon à robinet.”<sup>20</sup> A small canon is manned “avec la gaieté agile des écoliers en vacances. C’est un canon-jouet, ou plutôt un enfant lui aussi, l’enfant prodige qui va bientôt déclamer toute sa poésie, par coeur, et que l’on porte presque dans ses bras vers les applaudissements des balles enthousiastes [. . .] L’enfant-canon a vraiment des poumons de tenor!”<sup>21</sup> The sound of bullets also recalls school boys: “Généralement, les balles ont le sifflement goguenard et traînard des gamins qui rentrent de l’école.”<sup>22</sup> Marinetti recounts of how his lieutenant speaks to his men like a kindergarten teacher to his class: “Je n’oublierai jamais l’accent affable et doux avec lequel le lieutenant Franchini invita ses soldats à mourir: --Venez, mes enfants! Nous allons enfin nous amuser pour tout de bon.”<sup>23</sup>

War becomes even more amusing when compared to a circus or a game of billiards, as one soldier admires his shot at the enemy “avec la désinvolture d’un joueur de billard, pour contempler son coup.”<sup>24</sup> Pieces of shrapnel are “innombrables dans l’azur du ciel, clowns vêtus d’argent multipliant leurs bras ouverts et crevant des cerceaux de fumée, infatigablement, l’un après l’autre, dans un cirque sonore.”<sup>25</sup> War is, or at least should be, the farthest thing away from the innocent games of children. And how similar are weapons that end lives and a new-born life? It seems to me that the dissimilarity of these metaphors is what makes them so poignant. When speaking of similarity and dissimilarity in metaphor, there is another aspect which complicates the matter. What if one or both of the objects compared is either an abstract concept, or does not exist? Let us look at an abstract example from “8 anime in una bomba.” “Quando nuoto il mio torace si gonfia d’ambizione salata” (759). Technically, the abstract term “ambition” is replacing air, or oxygen. But how could an abstract idea be similar to a gas?

As we have seen, to analyze Marinetti’s metaphors, the comparison theory is not adequate. It is necessary to turn to alternative theories that claim to capture aspects of metaphoric comprehension that go beyond mere recognition of resemblances. For example, Max Black’s “interaction view,” which is a development of Richards’ (1936) interpretation

of metaphor as “a borrowing between and intercourse of *thoughts*, a transaction between contexts.”<sup>26</sup> According to Black, in any given metaphor A is B, A presents the reader with an entire “system of associated commonplaces,” which interacts with that of B to produce emergent metaphorical meaning. The “associated commonplaces” are whatever properties and relations are commonly believed to be true of an object, person, event, etc.<sup>27</sup> Of course this brings up the issue that each reader would have his own personal “system of associated commonplaces,” which vary based on his life experience.

In any case, the fact that we may not comprehend how the author originally intended the metaphor does not mean that it is ineffective. Black’s contribution was the notion of “interaction.” Contrary to the standard comparison theory, comprehending a metaphor is *not* merely a matter of comparing objects to determine what discrete properties or relations applying to one also apply to the other in the same or in some similar sense. Instead, we use one entire *system* of commonplaces to “filter” or organize our conception of some other *system*. The “interaction” is a screening of one system of commonplaces by another to generate a new conceptual organization of, a new perspective on, some object. Black claims that this projection of one system onto another is a distinctive intellectual operation not reducible to any mere comparison of objects to mark their similarities. If this is true, it might be possible to justify claims about the indispensability of metaphor for cognitive insight.<sup>28</sup>

Also useful for understanding Marinettian metaphors are theories which conceptualize metaphor in a more visual vein. Several explanations of the peculiar power of metaphor for inducing insight have been inspired by Wittgenstein’s (1953) notion of “seeing-as” or perspectival seeing. The ability to see a given visual array first as one thing, then as another (e.g., seeing the duck-rabbit figure first as a duck, then as a rabbit) involves an imaginative activity partially subject to the will and not identical with an act of mere perception. The poet, in creating metaphors, exploits imagistic language to reveal aspects of objects previously unnoticed.<sup>29</sup>

Another treatment of the “seeing-as” in relation to metaphor is Marcus Hester’s (1966) explanation of the similarities and differences between visual and metaphorical aspect seeing. Hester argues that “metaphorical seeing is a seeing as between the metaphorical subject and the metaphorical predicate, either one or both of which must be



image-exciting.”<sup>30</sup> In some metaphors both terms are “image-laden,” but in others one term will be more image-exciting and it will be used to understand the more abstract term. This theory is applicable to the aforementioned metaphor: “Quando nuoto il mio torace si gonfia d’ambizione salata” (759). The vivid image of a confident, exuberant swimmer compensates for the fact that the term “ambition” in itself does not conjure up images.

When both terms are image-laden, one image seems to dissolve immediately into another, such as in the following two-part metaphor. The first part of the compound analogy likens Chianti to blood: “Questo giovane nudo ha nelle vene del buon Chianti” (745). This comparison is certainly nothing out of the ordinary and is immediately comprehensible as the substances likened are two liquids of similar color. It bridges on boring, since many readers may have seen or heard a similar analogy before. But the phrase that follows, “e pisca un arco d’oro d’Asti spumante,” together with the former makes for a complex and innovative visual analogy. Although urine and *spumante* are also two liquids of similar color, they are not traditionally associated. Furthermore, the linkage of the two flowing-liquid metaphors is visually continuative, as we picture first the nude young man, second the Chianti coursing through his veins and finally flowing directly out his body (perhaps changing color in mid-air) to become an arc of gold. Not only is this metaphor visually effective, but it adequately conveys the arrogant, fiery, jovial, carefree, contemptuous and impetuous air of the youth.

Johnson observes that a serious problem with Hester’s view is his over-emphasis on images.<sup>31</sup> We cannot conclude that all poetic metaphors are necessarily imagistic or that the images are always necessary for one’s comprehension. For example, just because I form an image of a wolf when I hear the remark “Man is wolf,” it is not clear that I must form such an image to understand the metaphor. Besides, it would be hard to picture an image for the following metaphor from “L’areopoema” (if indeed it can be called a metaphor): “Seminare idee con subitanee esplosioni di fiori frutti fervore slancio volontà ricchezza” (793). Searching for an image results in a brain-warp.

Johnson claims that the real value of Hester’s view lies in its focus on what he calls the “gestalt switch,” or flash of insight induced by a good metaphor. In this respect he echoes Black’s claim that in understanding a metaphor we use one system of implications as a “filter” or “screen” through which we see some other system. This screening

process highlights certain associated implications, suppresses others, and redefines others still.<sup>32</sup> Lakeoff and Johnson developed a more detailed account of the gestalt switch described by Hester and others. They argue that actions, events, and objects are understood in terms of “experiential gestalts,” i.e., structured meaningful wholes within experience. Each gestalt consists of various recurring sub-patterns of the whole structure and can be analyzed into these patterns, though to do so destroys the relationships that makes the *whole* structure meaningful for us. The gestalt for “war,” for example, involves the standard sub-patterns or dimensions of structure for any action, but they are specified in a way peculiar to war: PARTICIPANTS (people/nations as adversaries), PARTS (two positions, planning strategy, attack, defense, counterattack, surrender, etc.), STAGES (one adversary attacks, both sides maneuver, one side retreats, etc.), LINEAR SEQUENCE (retreat after attack, counterattack after attack, etc.), CAUSATION (attack results in defeat, etc.), PURPOSE (victory).<sup>33</sup> Although any activity or event can thus be broken into dimensions such as these, it is only the complex relationship of these aspects that constitutes the meaning of war for some individual. For Lakeoff and Johnson, meaning in metaphor emerges at the level of experiential gestalts, which give coherence and structure to our experience.

This concept of experiential gestalts is particularly useful for analyzing complex systems of linked metaphors which involve various sub-patterns, and which Marinetti terms “catene delle analogie.” In point 9 of the “Manifesto tecnico” he writes: “bisogna dare la *catena delle analogie* che esso evoca, ognuna condensate, raccolta in una parola essenziale” (43). A wonderful example is his comparison of a nocturnal trench to an orchestra. Although this extended analogy comprises almost an entire column of a page of the *L’Intransigeant*, the French newspaper in which it was published, it is worth citing in its entirety:<sup>34</sup>

*L’orchestre des tranchées nocturnes*

Stridences et dissonances futuristes dans l’orchestre profond des tranchées aux pertuis sinueux et aux caves sonores, parmi le va-et-vient des baïonnettes, archets de violons, que la baguette rouge du conchant directeur enflame d’enthousiasme. C’est lui qui, d’un geste vaste, ramasse les flûtes éparses des oiseaux dans les arbres et les harpes plaintives des insectes, le craquement des branches, le crispement

des pierres. C'est lui qui arrête net les tympanes des gamelles et des fusils entrechoqués pour laisser chanter à pleine voix sur l'orchestre en sourdine toutes les étoiles en habits d'or, les bras ouverts, debout sur la rampe du ciel. Et violà une dame au spectacle: En grand décolleté, le désert étale, en effet, sa gorge vaste aux mille courbes liquéfiées, toutes vernies de fard rose sous les pierreries croulantes de la nuit prodigue.<sup>35</sup>

Every aspect of the trench corresponds to an element of the orchestra. Although the analogy of the desert and the “dame au spectacle” may be far-fetched if it stood alone, here it is a fitting component in a coherent whole. This ingenious metaphoric sequence stretches our imagination and, I believe, extends our capacity for the comprehension of metaphors.

Other “catene delle analogie” do not seem to remain within any one gestalt. In the following example, translated from the original French version of “Le Bataille de Tripoli,” Marinetti compares a machine gun to a fascinating and seductive woman. He switches unexpectedly from the realm of cars, to a courtroom, to perhaps a factory:

[Voi] siete, piccola mitragliatrice, una donna affascinante, e sinistra, e divina, al volante di un invisibile centocavalli, che rugge con scoppii d'impazienza [. . .] Voi somigliate per me, a un tribuno proteso, la cui lingua eloquente, instancabile, colpisce al cuore gli uditori in cerchio, commossi [. . .] Siete, in questo momento, un trapano onnipotente, che fora in tondo il cranio troppo duro di questa notte ostinata [. . .] Siete, anche, un laminatoio, un tornio elettrico, e che altro? Un gran cannello ossidrico che brucia, cesella e fonde a poco a poco le punte metalliche delle ultime stelle!<sup>36</sup>

When several analogies are woven together, such as in the aforementioned example, they create “strette reti d'immagini o analogie” that enable the poet to “avviluppare e cogliere tutto ciò che vi è più fuggibile e più inafferrabile nella materia” (43). According to Marinetti, this type of disordered string of analogies better captures the essential nature of objects than one could achieve through logically applied traditional imagery. It must be remembered that he privileges intuition above intellect: “Siccome ogni specie di ordine è fatalmente

un prodotto dell'intelligenza cauta e guardinga bisogna orchestrare le immagini disponendole secondo un **maximum di disordine**" (44). Such analogies may require extra effort from the reader, but this effort is worthwhile. Some philosophers have seen the cognitive activity involved in processing a metaphor as the true significance of metaphor; namely, that it serves as a device for reorganizing our perceptual and/or conceptual structures. Metaphor can be seen as a device for altering or restructuring our concepts and categories. Colin Turbayne (1970) argues that metaphor is a form of "sort-crossing" in which objects ordinarily falling under one category are seen as falling under some new category.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Nelson Goodman (1968) sees metaphor as a "calculated category mistake [. . .] A label along with others constituting a schema is in effect detached from the home realm of that schema and applied for the sorting and organizing of an alien realm."<sup>38</sup>

While each perspective on metaphor here discussed highlights some important aspect of metaphoric comprehension, no one theory provides us with an adequate account of the mechanism by which we understand metaphor. While some of Marinetti's metaphors, particularly the more simplistic ones of "Le Bataille de Tripoli," can be explained by the traditional comparison theory, others are best understood in the light of more image-based theories such as Hester's. In both cases metaphor leads us to "notice what might not otherwise be noticed."<sup>39</sup> Some theorists, such as Felicity Haynes (1975), identify a comparative *and* an interactive level in the comprehension of metaphor:

On the comparative level we are transferring characteristics of Y to X in order to say something about X. On the interactive level, placing known characteristics of Y against those of X may provide *new* insights, either about X or about a new third, Z, an irreducible synthesis by juxtaposition which it is difficult to reduce to simile or to literal language.<sup>40</sup>

Thus at the comparison level we comprehend similarities between objects (X and Y) in a rule-governed, systematic way, which is what the comparison theory has understood. But Johnson points out that the comparison view cannot explain the gestalt switch, the "intuitive grasping of a whole which is not reducible to any system,"<sup>41</sup> which occurs at the interactive level, and which Haynes does not explain.<sup>42</sup>

Johnson herself tried to remedy the defects in her theory by offering models of metaphoric comprehension based on Kant's account of reflective judgment, in which the imagination freely plays with (and reflects on) a series of representations in search of a unifying principle. Johnson suggests that the interactive level involves a play of the imagination analogous to Kant's aesthetical reflective judgment. There are essentially no rules governing this reflective activity.<sup>43</sup>

One aspect that Johnson and other theorists have not considered (as far as I know) is time. I argue that the length of time in which we engage in reflection on the image or system allows ideas to crystallize in our minds and that this in turn affects our comprehension of the metaphor. A prolonged meditation on the following metaphor ("Tutti i forni sono accesi nella mia vita interna. Rombo tonfo sibilo di turbine stantuffi dinamo motori a scoppio e cuori elettrici. I miei nervi sono corridoi brulicanti dove le sensazioni martellano per produrre armi munizioni contro gli imperi centrali del cielo" (815-816)) allowed me to imagine an entire internal body-factory. The rhythmic constraints of poetry (and especially of Marinetti's fast-paced, energetic verse), however, generally do not allow me to ponder any particular analogy for more than a few seconds before I am racing on to the next. His poetry calls for velocity, as does his whole philosophical theory. We are not meant to ponder, rather to be bombarded with sensory images. Each analogy is meant to hit us like bits of shrapnel from a rapidly firing machine gun. Multiple bullets have already penetrated before we even realize we got hit by the first. This is, in my opinion, intentional. We are not meant to come to a thought-out interpretation of each analogy, but to react immediately and instinctively.

Returning to Johnson's model based on Kant's aesthetical reflective judgment, we can conclude that the metaphorical insight that results from the "imaginative leap" is not rule-governed. Johnson makes a further conclusion that provides insight into the creation of metaphors: "If our comprehension of metaphor involves something like a free reflective judgment, then making metaphors would constitute a free (not wholly rule-governed) act of originality, which Kant calls an act of 'genius.'"<sup>44</sup> Marinetti's production of metaphor seems much more akin to Johnson's "free act of originality" than it does to Goodman's "calculated category mistake." In "Distruzione della sintassi — Immaginazione senza fili — Parole in libertà," Marinetti asks fellow writers to imagine a friend, one gifted with lyricism of course, who finds himself amidst a revolution, a

war, a shipwreck, or an earthquake. How would a man moved to speech under emotional duress communicate his experience?

Sapete che cosa farà istintivamente questo vostro amico lirico e commosso? [. . .] Egli comincerà col distruggere brutalmente la sintassi nel parlare. Non perderà tempo a costruire i periodi. S'infischierà della punteggiatura e dell'aggettivazione. Disprezzerà cesellature e sfumature di linguaggio, e in fretta vi getterà affannosamente nei nervi le sue sensazioni visive, auditive, olfattive, secondo la loro corrente incalzante [. . .] Manate di parole essenziali senza alcun ordine convenzionale. Unica preoccupazione del narratore rendere tutte le vibrazioni del suo io. (61)

For Marinetti, the poet is the rare being who is gifted with the faculty to “colorare il mondo coi colori specialissimi del nostro io mutevole” (61). While in the “Manifesto tecnico” he had referred to poets as being divinely inspired, here he defines lyricism as “la facoltà rarissima di *inebbriarsi della vita e di inebbriarla di noi stessi*” (61). The poet's main task is to capture his lyrical inebriation. Marinetti's wording is well-chosen. An inebriated man would act according to his instinct rather than his reason, and it is precisely the logical lyrics of tradition that Marinetti wishes to combat. Neither the comprehension nor the composition of Marinettian metaphor seems to be an entirely rule-governed process.

Paul Ricoeur (1978) offers an even more fully developed account of the role of imagination in metaphoric insight, which, in my opinion, is the most useful model for understanding Marinettian poetics.

Imagination does not merely *schematize* the predicative assimilation between terms by its synthetic insight into similarities nor does it merely *picture* the sense thanks to the display of images aroused and controlled by the cognitive process. Rather it contributes concretely to the *epoché* of ordinary reference and to the *projection* of new possibilities of redescribing the world.<sup>45</sup>

The purpose of Marinetti's poetics is to rewrite the world. He refers to this new system as *immaginazione senza fili* and declares: “Giungeremo un giorno ad un'arte ancor più essenziale, quando oseremo sopprimere

tutti i primi termini delle nostre analogie per non dare più altro che il seguito ininterrotto dei secondi termini” (46). In order to achieve this it becomes necessary to renounce being comprehended (“esser compresi, non è necessario”) and to free oneself from the traditional syntax, “pesante, ristretta, attaccata al suolo, senza braccia e senza ali perché è soltanto intelligente. Solo il poeta asintattico e dalle parole slegate potrà penetrare l’essenza della materia e distruggere la sorda ostilità che la separa da noi” (46).

Marinetti’s use of metaphor in “Le Bataille de Tripoli” (1911), “8 anime in una bomba” (1919), and “L’areopoema del Golfo della Spezia” (1935) can be seen as a progressive departure from tradition towards this goal. While the metaphors in “Le Bataille de Tripoli” are relatively straightforward, those in “8 anime in una bomba” become increasingly abstract. By 1935 Marinetti’s metaphors are not only more abstract, but also asyntactical and irresistibly incomprehensible. This change is partially attributable to the change in genre. Since “Le Bataille de Tripoli” is a sort of poetic journalism, Marinetti most likely could not have been as radical as he may have liked. In “L’areopoema,” on the other hand, he is able to indulge in full poetic freedom. Furthermore, “Le Bataille de Tripoli” was written at a time when his poetic theory was just taking off, before the publication of the “Manifesto tecnico” (1912) and “Distruzione della sintassi — Immaginazione senza fili — Parole in libertà” (1913). By the time he wrote “L’areopoema del Golfo della Spezia” in 1935, he had completed take-off and reached a cruising altitude high above the grounds of tradition. Marinetti’s philosophical perspective on metaphor would inspire not only the Futurist poets, but also those of the Dada and Surrealist movements who carried on his project to rewrite the world with their plans to “changer la vie” — one metaphor at a time.

## Notes

1. All Italian quotes of Marinetti and parenthetical citations are from *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1968); here 181–82. Quotes in French are from “Le Bataille de Tripoli,” first published in segments in the French newspaper *L’Intransigeant* in the late December issues of 1911, and subsequently published in its entirety in the 1912 edition of “Poesia” (Milano).

2. "Solo per mezzo di analogie vastissime uno stile orchestrale, ad un tempo policromo, polifonico, e polimorfo, può abbracciare la vita della materia." Marinetti, *Teoria*, 42.
3. Plato, *The Republic*, in *Six Great Dialogues*, trans. B. Jowett (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2007), 183-460; 447.
4. Aristotle, *The Poetics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2316-2340; 1457b, 2332.
5. *Ibid.*, 1459a, 2335.
6. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 2152-2269; 1405a, 2240.
7. Aristotle, *Topics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 167-277; 139b, 236.
8. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1405b, 2241; 1410b, 2250.
9. *Ibid.*, 1405b, 2241.
10. For an overview of philosophical perspectives on metaphor over the centuries, see Mark Johnson, "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 3-47.
11. Cicero, *De Oratore*, in *Cicero on Oratory and Orators*, trans. J.S. Watson (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 142-401; 3:41, 380.
12. *Ibid.*, 3:39, 376-77.
13. *L'Intransigeant*, Dec. 26, 1911.
14. *Ibid.*, Dec. 27, 1911.
15. Johnson, "Introduction," 25.
16. *L'Intransigeant*, Dec. 31, 1911.
17. See Johnson, "Introduction," 24-25.
18. A.I. Richards, "The Philosophy of Rhetoric," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 48-62; Haig Khatchadorian, "Metaphor," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 8, no. 3 (1968): 227-43.
19. *L'Intransigeant*, Dec. 27, 1911.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *L'Intransigeant*, Dec. 28, 1911.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Richards, "Philosophy of Rhetoric," 51.



27. Max Black, "Metaphor," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 63-82.
28. Johnson, "Introduction," 27-28.
29. *Ibid.*, 29.
30. Marcus B. Hester, "Metaphor and Aspect Seeing," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 25 (1966): 207.
31. Johnson, "Introduction," 30.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 48-62.
34. *L'Intransigeant* was a French newspaper, founded in July 1880 by Henri Rochefort. Though initially politically oriented to the left, it soon changed its views. In 1906 under the direction of Léon Bailby it reaches a circulation of 400,000 copies. It ceased publication after the French surrender in 1940. After the war it was shortly republished in 1947 under the name *L'Intransigeant-Journal de Paris*, before merging with *Paris-Presse*.
35. *L'Intransigeant*, Dec. 26, 1911.
36. Marinetti's own translation of the original French version from "Le Bataille de Tripoli." Marinetti cites his own metaphor as an example in his "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista," in *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1968), 43.
37. Colin Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina, 1970).
38. Nelson Goodman, "Metaphor as Moonlighting," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 221-27; 224.
39. Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 200-220; 212.
40. Felicity Haynes, "Metaphor as Interactive," *Educational Theory* 25, no. 3 (1975): 273.
41. *Ibid.*, 276.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Johnson, "Introduction," 39.
44. *Ibid.*, 39-40.
45. Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978): 154.