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Getting to Know the Neighbours: When Plot Meets Knot

Anyone who has dwelt for long in the land of narrative studies will be familiar with the grand claims made by some of its most prominent citizens concerning the fundamental role of narrative as a device by which human beings structure, and give sense to, experience. Best known perhaps is Roland Barthes's claim for the universality of narrative:

Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is not has been a people without narrative ... narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there like life itself (Barthes, 79).

Then there is Jerome Bruner's statement that: "We seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of narrative" (Bruner 1987, 12). Hayden White, having observed that the word "narrate" derives from the same Sanskrit root *gna* as the Latin and Greek words for "to know," asks whether there is perhaps no knowing which does not involve narrating (White 215). Fredric Jameson adds the claim that narrative is "the all-informing process ... the central function or *instance* of the human mind" (Jameson 13).

Students of narrative will be aware, moreover, that these grand claims have served both to reflect, and to stimulate, a preoccupation with narrative in almost every area of intellectual and professional endeavor, as specialists in fields ranging from history to medicine, from psychotherapy to law, and from economics to the physical sciences have sought to describe the part played by narrative in the theory and practice of their discipline.

Even if they have not had the opportunity to follow closely the debate about narrative in every one of these disciplines – to read Jonathan Rée's *Philosophical Tales*, or Michael White and David Epston's *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*, or Robert Cover's *Narrative, Violence and the Law*, or Misha Landau's *Narratives of Human Evolution* – scholars with a broad interest in narrative have been able to gain an overview of work in progress by consulting some of the major collections of essays on narrative across the disciplines: *On Narrative*, edited by W.J.T. Mitchell (1981), which has contributions from scholars in historiography, psychoanalysis, philosophy and ethnography; the special issue of *Poetics* published in 1986, which widened the net to include

studies of the role of narrative in theology, linguistics, education and computer science; *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy and Literature*, edited by Christopher Nash (1990), which added the fields of economics, law, and the physical sciences. Martin Kreiswirth's essay "Tell Me a Story: the Narrativist Turn in the Social Sciences" (1992, revised version 1995) is an extraordinarily valuable critical study of the prominence acquired by narrative in a wide range of disciplines.

Hard-pressed as they must be to keep track of the many fronts on which their own territory has expanded, students of narrative can hardly be blamed if they have remained largely unaware of the extensive settlement that has occurred just across the river in the land of metaphor studies. With their attention fixed on "plot," they have taken little notice of this other tribe, which appears so preoccupied with the twists and turns, the "knots," of figurative language.

Scholars of metaphor can, in fact, boast just as impressive a collection of claims, made over an even longer period, for the ubiquity and the fundamental role of metaphor, and can point to a proliferation over recent years of studies on the role of metaphor in at least as wide a range of disciplines as narrative studies. They start by citing Aristotle's assertion that: "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (Aristotle, chapter 22, 1459a). Then they reel off a string of other claims, including: Stephen Pepper's "both philosophers and poets live by metaphor" (Pepper 130); Kenneth Burke's statement that "whole works of scientific research, even entire schools, are hardly more than the patient repetition, in all its ramifications, of a fertile metaphor" (quoted in Shibbes, i); and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's assertion that "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 3).

Over the last half century, it is philosophers and linguists who have taken the lead in stimulating interest in metaphor studies, with the names of Max Black, Donald Davidson, Ted Cohen and Susan Haack, among the former, and René Dirven, Peter Mühlhäusler, and John R. Taylor figuring among the latter. The work on metaphor in which philosophy and linguistics have most conspicuously intersected is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). But scholars in other disciplines, as diverse as organization theory and the visual arts, cybernetics and psychology, political theory and architecture, have turned their attention to the role of metaphor in their discipline with just as much vigor as colleagues in the same discipline have studied the role of narrative. Evidence of their work can be found in such studies as U. Neisser's "Computers as Tools and Metaphors" (1966),

Carl R. Hausman's *Metaphor and Art* (1989), Conal Condren's "The Renaissance as Metaphor" (1989), and David Leary's *Metaphors in the History of Psychology* (1990). In the words of Wayne C. Booth, "explicit discussions of something called metaphor have multiplied astronomically in the past fifty years ... students of metaphor have positively pullulated" (Booth 47).

In metaphor studies, as in narrative studies, there have been a number of major interdisciplinary collections, which have allowed the reader with a broad interest in metaphor to maintain a sense of developments across many fields, most notably: *On Metaphor* (1979), edited by Sheldon Sacks, with essays by linguists, philosophers, and theorists of aesthetics, theology and the visual arts; *Metaphor and Thought* (1979), edited by Andrew Ortony, which, in addition, reflects debate about metaphor in the history of science, in public policy-making, and in education; and *Aspects of Metaphor* (1994), edited by Jaakko Hintikka, which also includes the fields of psychology and computer science.

Given the evident parallels between the claims for the fundamental role of narrative and for the fundamental role of metaphor, and the fact that, in many disciplines, work is being undertaken both under the narrative banner and under the banner of metaphor, it is surprising to realize how few scholars have attempted to relate the two perspectives. Most surprising, perhaps, is the case of Paul Ricoeur, who has written a major work on narrative (his three-volume, *Time and Narrative*) and a very significant work on metaphor (*The Rule of Metaphor*), but who almost never speaks of narrative and metaphor in the same breath. Reading the claims on behalf of narrative that I quoted above, alongside the claims on behalf of metaphor, one might initially assume that they are mutually exclusive, and that the champions of narrative and the champions of metaphor should meet in hand-to-hand combat to sort out whether it is narrative or metaphor which actually rules.

The few thinkers to have worked explicitly along the frontier between the two territories suggest that the actual relationship is rather more complex. Thus, the late Louis Mink, philosopher of history, wrote: "Narrative is a primary cognitive instrument – an instrument rivaled only by theory and metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible" (Mink 131). For Mink, it seems, narrative, metaphor, and theory are to be seen as three competing, or perhaps intersecting, devices for making sense of the world. According to Deirdre, formerly Donald, McCloskey, analyst of rhetoric in economics and the social sciences, "there seem to be two ways of understanding things: either by way of a metaphor or by way of a story," and the relationship between them is "antipodal." McCloskey has argued that, in the physical and social sciences, at least, the relationship between narrative and metaphor may be best seen as complementary: "metaphorical and ... narrative explanations answer to each

other" (McCloskey 5). Taking the example of the biologist who attempts to account for the location of a specific organ on a crustacean, she points out that one can either begin with a metaphorical model of rationality inside the creature, which may be thought of as maximizing its chances of survival by locating the organ at a particular point on its body, and move on to a narrative account of how maladapted varieties of the same creature actually died out, or vice versa. In either case, the second rhetorical device answers the "why" question which the first cannot answer (McCloskey 6). For McCloskey, then, theories themselves are built from both narrative and metaphorical elements. (Jerome Bruner, it may be noted, had already argued that *argument* and narrative are "two modes of thought, each providing distinct ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality...irreducible to one another" [Bruner 1986, 11].)

If, then, narrative and metaphor are both fundamental devices by which we make sense of the world, what *are* some of ways in which they may be described as interacting with each other? Is there any theorizing devoid of narrative and metaphor? What role do fresh narrative and metaphorical patterns play in the formation of new social and intellectual paradigms? No vantage point exists, I suspect, no alpine peak, from which it would be possible to gain a panoramic view of the terrain encompassed by narrative studies and metaphor studies considered together – or, if there is one, I certainly lack the mountaineering skills to reach it. So I have set myself here the very limited goal of highlighting just a few of the most intriguing issues around the connection between narrative and metaphor as they emerge in some passages from a single work of modern fiction.

Milan Kundera, the Czech novelist, is not only one of the great contemporary spinners of narrative, but also a brilliant fabricator of metaphor. Early in Part One of his *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, the narrative voice describes the idealists who set up the first Communist government in Czechoslovakia in 1948, as aspiring to a "realm of harmony" where "everyone is a note in a sublime Bach fugue...." This is a metaphor, a "category extension" of the classic kind, in which an entity from one domain (in this case, music) is superimposed on an entity from another (here, politics), so that the latter is viewed through the lens or filter of the former: the ideal society is conceived of as a musical composition, the fugue, in which several parts or voices are intertwined contrapuntally to achieve a splendid unity.¹ But Kundera's sentence does not, of course, end there. It continues: "... a sublime Bach

fugue, and anyone who refuses to be one is a mere useless black dot that need only be caught and crushed between thumb and finger like a flea" (Kundera 11). The rose-tinted lens has been replaced with a gray-tinted (or some might say, a clear) lens.

The effect of the opening metaphor, with its implication that the individual "note" in the composition was a valued, indeed essential, contributor to the work as a whole is crucially undercut by this second category shift. It now becomes clear that the human individual counted for nothing in the grand musical scheme, and was potentially no more than a pest fit for extermination.

Six pages later, however, the musical metaphor is reactivated, as the narrative voice declares that, in the events of Spring 1968, around the figure of Alexander Dubcek, "notes were escaping from the enormous Bach fugue for everyone to sing in his own way. It was an unbelievable gaiety; it was a real carnival!" (Kundera 19). This suggests not only that the activists refused to be "crushed," nor even that their actions represented a straightforward rejection of the magnificent dream of twenty years before, but that they were, to an extent, picking up that dream again, seeking to exceed its limitations, seeking, indeed, to improvise fresh variations around its original theme. Following the arrival of the Russian tanks in August 1968, however, not only was their improvisation interrupted, but, and here Kundera introduces a metaphor which is to recur in different forms right through the work, all references to these events and the names of the Czech reformers "are carefully erased from the country's memory, like mistakes in a schoolchild's homework" (Kundera 19).

Metaphor, Kundera demonstrates, can be much more than just a static image, embroidered on the fabric of a narrative. His metaphors are, rather, nodal points at which the threads of narrative join and divide. In the first ten pages of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, twenty years of Czech history are recounted in terms of a series of metaphorical shifts. Each metaphor crystallizes the experience of a moment, a change of state, or an insight. The metaphor of the notes which "were escaping from the enormous Bach fugue for everyone to sing his own way" serves not only as shorthand for a complex narrative of events in Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s, but also to capture a major emotional shift in the population. As Daniel Cohen argues, in an unpublished paper, it may be useful to think of metaphor as compressed narrative, or, indeed, of narrative as extended metaphor. Whereas the classic examples of metaphorical usage, such as "Juliet is the sun," which have been exhaustively – not to say, tediously – examined by philosophers, involve a single imaginative leap, without any particular sequel, Kundera reminds us that metaphors are in several respects inherently dynamic, unstable, and charged with explosive *narrative* energy. In the words of Paul de Man, "from

1 I.A. Richards, in his essay, "Metaphor," proposed the terms "tenor" and "vehicle," while Max Black, in *Models and Metaphors*, preferred "frame" and "focus" for the two elements of a metaphor. I am here using "lens," where they would use "vehicle" or "focus."

the recognition of language as trope, one is led to the telling of a tale... The temporal deployment of an initial complication, of a structural knot, indicates the close, though not necessarily complementary, relationship between trope and narrative, between knot and plot" (de Man 21-22).

Increasing suspicion has, with the work of Jean-François Lyotard and others, fallen on what have been called "grand narratives," those sets of overarching religious, historical and political assumptions structured in narrative form, of which the individuals and groups who live within them may not be consciously aware: the grand narratives of emancipation, or progress, or decline from a golden age. Kundera suggests, however, that we need to be equally suspicious of "grand metaphors." While I doubt that the communist activists of the 1940s ever actually used an analogy with a Bach fugue to convey the nature of their enterprise, they will certainly have had recourse, consciously or unconsciously, to the metaphor, which has such a long history in European political thought, of the well-functioning society as founded on "harmony" and "concord." Deriving originally from the Pythagorean conception of the cosmos itself as organized on the model of a musical composition, this metaphor took on new life, and was employed for very different political purposes, at different historical moments. Whereas for Nicholas of Cusa, in the fifteenth century, for instance, it encapsulated the notion that there was a naturally occurring identity of interest between all constituent parts of the Church, by the eighteenth century it suggested the need for government to be founded on the individual consent, the "voice" of each human being (Sabine 26, 322-3).

The full impact of Kundera's society-as-Bach-fugue metaphor comes from the fact that he so quickly deconstructs it, to display the nature of the problem of consent in the collectivist conception of society. He emphasizes, it is true, that the idealism of 1948 was genuine, that "the half that did the cheering was the more dynamic, the more intelligent, the better" (Kundera 10). But the metaphorical slippage, from individual as musical note to individual as troublesome insect, not only captures the historical sequence by which an idealistic movement came quickly to be corrupted, but suggests the inevitability of that process – that the first, grand, metaphor of human liberation always had the second, mean, totalitarian metaphor concealed within it.

The communist regimes of post-war Eastern Europe actually did, as the Nazis did, and, as so many other governments and tribes before and since, in almost every part of the world have done, identify a particular group, metaphorically, as vermin or parasites. Once such an identification has been accepted, extermination of the group will seem not only desirable, but also inevitable. While metaphor may, indeed, record a flash of real insight, or serve as valid narrative shorthand, it may equally be used to obscure or skip

over important, but inconvenient, narrative details.

Narrative utterances and metaphorical utterances, it is increasingly acknowledged, both involve active interventions in the world. To tell a story is, in the words of Robert Anchor, to make "meaningful totalities out of scattered events by means of a plot or storyline" (Anchor 133-134), and, according to Ross Chambers, storytelling is "an act, an event, one that has the power to produce change, and first and foremost to produce change between narrator and narratee" (Chambers 74). But to coin a fresh metaphor is also to link categories not previously associated, to invite the addressee to adopt a perspective, which he or she may not previously have taken. While Ross Chambers uses the term "seduction" to describe the process by which the narratee gets caught up in a story before it becomes clear just what the point of it may be, Ted Cohen's term for the process by which metaphor operates, "the cultivation of intimacy," has strikingly similar connotations. According to Cohen, the uttering of a metaphor (and he is referring to "strong" metaphors, rather than the all-pervasive metaphorical ether analyzed by Lakoff and Johnson) has three aspects: "(1) the speaker issues a kind of concealed invitation; (2) the hearer expends a special effort to accept the invitation; and (3) this transaction constitutes the acknowledgement of a community" (Ted Cohen 6).

I have argued elsewhere that narrative seduction, like seduction in its literal sense, may as readily be used in bad faith and to initiate a relationship of exploitation, as to promote a mutually satisfying relationship (Hanne, 14-15). Ted Cohen has made much the same point about metaphor: "Do not ... suppose ... that metaphors [are] always for communal insight. Some of the most instructive examples will be ones in which intimacy is sought as a means to lethal and one-sided effect" (Ted Cohen 9-10).

Yet it seems that social and political commentators are currently rather less adept at identifying, and expressing skepticism towards, "grand metaphor" than they are at spotting "grand narrative." I doubt that I am alone in my concern at the completeness with which the neoliberal metaphor of "the marketplace" has, for the moment at least, swept from the field of economic and social debate the swarms of metaphors associated with a collectivist, collaborative model of society, to capture very nearly the whole discursive territory. In its origins, it seized on an idealized image of the medieval market, as a place to which peasants brought their produce for sale, where price was determined, not just by demand, but by the fact that different producers displayed similar produce on adjacent stalls. Ignoring the tariffs, the taxes, the baronial bullying, and the other forms of regulation and coercion to which these transactions were, in fact, subject, proponents of the market economy have offered it as a metaphorical model for all economic and social transactions. Yet, as in most forms of fundamentalism, whether political or

religious, this single metaphorical formulation has come to be employed as if it were non-metaphorical, a literal and self-evident truth, not open to question.

Kundera, of course, displays at least as much suspicion of narrative, in particular the narratives of history, as he does of metaphor. The "erasure" of the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia from the official memory of the nation is just a single instance of the process by which, in storytelling, we shape, select, exclude, tidy the events we claim to recount. And his voice is only one of many which, in recent years, have expressed mistrust of narrative for its tendency to impose (singular) form on the shapeless heterogeneity of reality, excluding those data and perspectives which do not fit the narrator's purposes, in favor of a highly selective, apparently unified, and consequently persuasive account. According to Robert Anchor, all storytelling contributes to the reproduction of dominant ideology, and "historical narratives, no less than fictional narratives, always serve in one way or another, to legitimize an actual or ideal social reality" (Anchor 133-4), and, in the words of Robert Scholes, "traditional narrative structures are...part of a system of psychosocial dependencies that inhibit human growth and significant social change" (Scholes 208). So, for instance, stories that might have been told by women, by colonized people, and by marginalized or dissident voices, are suppressed in favor of the "official" story.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his Nobel Speech of 1970, made the nicely paradoxical claim that the fictional narratives of literature could somehow make up for the deficiencies of official historical narrative: "literature...nurses and preserves [a] nation's lost history, in a form which is not susceptible to distortion and slander" (Solzhenitsyn 15). And Solzhenitsyn's fiction offers itself as just such a series of coherent alternative histories. Kundera rejects this attractive position as impossibly naïve. His fiction is typically fragmentary, working to disrupt, and cast doubt on, rather than to stand in the place of, the selective and highly crafted character of official history. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, he presents seven, apparently disconnected, stories. In part, he seems to support Lyotard's argument about the potential validity of "little narratives" as contrasted with the impossibly flawed nature of "grand narratives" (Lyotard 60). At the same time, he is clearly inviting the reader to seek out possible links between the stories, to make category shifts – essentially metaphorical leaps – within the narrative realm.

As its title suggests, forgetting is a central concern of Kundera's novel, which juxtaposes instances of the convenience and, ultimately, the perils of forgetting in the political realm, with instances of the same phenomenon in the personal realm. Part One of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* focuses on the figure of Mirek, a political activist, in 1971, who, though he rejects the tendency of the regime to erase certain figures from the records ("the propaganda department immediately airbrushed him out of history" [3]),

and puts himself in danger by refusing to destroy his personal records of political meetings and discussions, seeks, on the personal level, to wipe from his own memory any recollection of an affair that he now regrets ("he wanted to remove her picture from the album of his life" [21]). The central portion of this first section of the novel tells of his drive through the outskirts of Prague, with his eyes on the rearview mirror, trying, on the one hand to shake off the secret police, who have found his personal notes, and, on the other, to dismiss from his mind any image which will remind him that he once loved Zdena: "His first impulse is to step on the gas and break loose from that metaphorical mirror. Moreover, the reader is invited to make the imaginative connection, the category shift, that Mirek consistently fails to make between political forgetfulness and personal forgetfulness. Metaphor, both on the specific, textual level we have already noted, and on the level of structure, has, in a sense, taken over much of the work that narrative does in the traditional, realist novel. The reference to "laughter" in the book's title is a useful reminder of the parallel made by Ted Cohen (though not in quite these terms) between the "aha" of recognition and enlightenment which comes from making the imaginative leap required by a well-chosen metaphor, and the "hahaha" which follows from hearing a good joke (Cohen 8-10).

It seems that we may have to trust *metaphor* at just some of those moments that *narrative* is least reliable. Yet trust, in the postmodern age, is a rare commodity, and, for the most part, of course, our skepticism is amply justified. Nevertheless, there is little to gain from exaggerated, or generalized, distrust. There is clearly no managing without either narrative or metaphor, and the challenge is to decide in just what circumstances, and to what degree, each is to be trusted.

Storytelling, as Peter Brooks has so eloquently argued, is a prime device by which we order and organize events, ascribing sequence, agency and causality to them: "We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects. Situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed" (Brooks 3). Moreover, as political philosopher Conal Condren argues, narrative has traditionally been the major mechanism available for describing reality, and involves "the temporal construal or description of the world in which we might act" (Condren, unpublished paper). Narrative makes it possible for us to predict, to plan, to act purposefully, and, it is suggested by Alasdair MacIntyre, in his *After Virtue*, to think and act morally. The capacity to recognize and construct narratives appropriately is one of the faculties associated with what we call mental health. In the words of James Hillman, "those who have a connection with story are in better shape and have a better prognosis than those to whom story must be introduced"

(Hillman 1). And according to at least some philosophers of science, narrative is fundamental to all scientific thinking. In the words of Peter Medawar, "a scientist, so far from being a man [sic] who never knowingly departs from the truth, is always *telling stories* in a sense not so very far removed from that of the nursery euphemism – stories which might be about real life but which have to be tested very scrupulously to find out if they are indeed so" (Medawar 127). I share Robert Scholes's view that, "we can and should be critical of narrative structuration, but I doubt if even the most devoted practitioner of anti-narrativity can do without it" (Scholes 208).

If narrative is the prime mechanism that we possess for describing reality, metaphor, it has been suggested, is the principal device available to us for the *redescription* of reality, for arriving at a fresh conception of a familiar phenomenon, for developing a new model or paradigm. Donald Schön refers to this as the "generative" force of metaphor (Schön 254), and Susan Haack suggests that "metaphor is conducive to innovative, creative thinking because, by inviting a comparison of the phenomenon of which one is exploring a theory, and some other apparently *incongruous* phenomenon, it directs one's attention in what are likely to be hitherto-*unexplored* directions" (Haack 15). And Thomas Kuhn has argued that it is through the adoption of substantially new metaphorical paradigms that we lurch from one conception of the cosmos to another.

Contemporary debate has, I would suggest, drifted into a position, by no means fully articulated, which looks with favor on metaphor precisely for its capacity to proliferate, to break traditional moulds, for its acceptance of the impossibility of pinning down (singular) meaning. It is amusing to realize that the grounds for contemporary approval of metaphor are almost identical with the grounds on which philosophers from Locke to John Stuart Mill opposed the use of metaphor in philosophy, its "inconstancy." According to Locke, for instance, metaphors and other forms of figurative language are designed "for nothing else than to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement; and so indeed are perfect cheats" (Locke, vol. II, 146). Nevertheless, of course, Locke – like Hobbes and John Stuart Mill, two other philosophers implacably hostile to metaphor – had the greatest difficulty in weeding out metaphors from his own argument – the mind, for Locke, is variously referred to as an empty cabinet, a blank sheet of paper, a wax tablet etc. – and indeed from his own critique of metaphor. There is a nice irony, of which he seemed quite unaware, in the metaphorical vigor of his statement that doctrines which make use of metaphor resist attack "not for the strength that is in them, but the briars and thorns, and the obscurity of the thickets they are beset with" (Locke, vol. II, 128). It is, in fact, just this vegetative luxuriance of metaphor that endears it to many contemporary thinkers.

This broadly favorable account of metaphor chimes well with much recent feminist discussion, deriving from the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, of the multiple and procreative quality of female sexuality and feminine discourse. There has, consequently, been a tendency to set up an opposition between "feminine" metaphor, with its positive, life-enriching connotations, and "masculine" narrative, associated with the singleness, the task-orientation, the exclusivity, the desire for dominance, which, it has been argued, are characteristic of male sexuality.

As should be clear from the twists and turns of my discussion to his point, I reject such an essentialist binary opposition. In the first place, it is not an inherent characteristic of narrative that it must be single and exclusive. Susan Winnett, for instance, has argued persuasively for recognition of narrative patterns that mirror the more diffuse and divergent structures of female bodily pleasure. Such writing is not restricted to women, however, and Kundera's fiction displays to spectacular effect the capacity of narrative, too, for multiplicity, for proliferation.

As we have seen, grand – and even not so grand – metaphors are capable of capturing broad stretches of discursive territory with their sheer singleness, in just the same way as grand – and not so grand – narratives do. The choice of one metaphor or another – the metaphor of society as a musical composition, rather than, say, as a human body – imposes a particular perspective on the addressee, excluding other perspectives. Lakoff and Johnson speculated, in *Metaphors We Live By*, about the practical consequences which might follow if the dominant metaphor of argument-as-war were to be displaced by the metaphor of argument-as-dance. At the same time, as Kundera's example of the notes in the Bach fugue transformed into insects to be crushed illustrates, it would be unwise to be always suspicious of single metaphors, and to uncritically trust metaphorical multiplicity. Lakoff and Johnson have demonstrated that we readily employ a range of apparently contradictory metaphors to describe different features of a single item. So they point out that, while arguments are most often referred to as if they were battles, we may also speak of them in terms of a journey (e.g., "We've covered a lot of ground"), or a container (e.g., "His argument doesn't hold water"), or a building (e.g., "A well-structured argument"). While there is no consistency between these metaphors, there is, nevertheless, a degree of overlap, and so coherence (e.g., the reference in all these metaphors to a spatial dimension). And so they conclude that "the various metaphorical structurings of a concept serve different purposes by highlighting different aspects of the concept" (Lakoff and Johnson 96).

This bland formulation misses the point that, in certain fields of discourse, there is a tendency to slip and slide between metaphors in a way which is evasive, if not downright deceptive. We rarely hold to a single

overarching metaphor, but slide opportunistically from one metaphor to another. While the "marketplace" is undoubtedly the master-metaphor in contemporary economic and social debate, the metaphors deriving from the market are not required to go into battle on their own. They are flanked by a number of other metaphorical clusters: metaphors associated with the military ("strategy," "aggression" etc.); with sport ("players," "level playing fields" etc.); and with religion ("the invisible hand"). The work done by each of these clusters is rather different. The military metaphors suggest the calculating seriousness with which the "captains of industry" must operate. The sporting metaphors carry with them socially acceptable connotations of voluntary participation, fairness, and entertainment value for players and fans alike. The religious metaphor suggests both grandeur and inevitability in the mysterious workings of the economic divinity.

Crucial to the role played by these secondary metaphorical clusters is the sequential, indeed *narrative*, process by which the speaker is able to slip from one cluster to the other, to avoid exploring the full implications of each. Neoliberal social and economic discourse slides away from metaphors of war just before it is forced to acknowledge that unfettered individualism does indeed kill. It drops metaphors associated with sport just before anyone points out that competitive sport actually depends on just the systems of rules, referees, and internationally agreed regulations on the dimensions of the arena, that neoliberal economic dogma rejects. And it tosses the religious analogy away before anyone has time to ask whose conception of the divine might apply.

While metaphorical proliferation may indeed act as an explosive force to shatter the monolithic control exercised by a grand metaphor, so it may just as readily be employed to mystify, to obfuscate, and indeed to buttress the grand metaphor.

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GIULIANA PERCO

If on a Winter's Night, Wandering Through a Landscape Painted with Tea.... Milorad Pavić, Italo Calvino, and the Construction of the Reader

[A] writer always suffers from the same disease, the disease of crisscrossing words, of building, from one tongue in his mouth, two. What is a book, really, other than a collection of words well crossed? (Pavić, *Landscape* 185)¹

Lack – or apparent lack – of causal development in the narration, intertextual suggestions, chronological disruption of the events narrated, slippages between different literary genres, propensity towards what Umberto Eco defined as *opera aperta*:² all these elements, present in both novels I will discuss here, are common features to be found in a number of other contemporary narratives. But what Milorad Pavić's *Landscape Painted with Tea* and Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* share, and what ultimately concerns me here, is the awareness of the need for a reader able to become an "accomplice," a "traveling companion"³ of the writer; a necessity embodied in the explicit purpose both texts contain to mold and manipulate their reader through the structure of the narration and the use of self-reflexive

1 "A pisac uvek boluje od iste bolesti, od bolesti da ukršta reči. Da od jednog jezika u svojim ustima gradi dva. Šta je u stvari jedna knjiga, do zbirka dobro ukrštenih reči?" Pavić, *Predeo slikan čajem* 215).

2 "Si ha un testo 'aperto' quando l'autore [...] [decide] fino a che punto deve controllare la cooperazione del lettore, e dove essa va suscitata, dove va diretta, dove deve trasformarsi in libera avventura interpretativa" (Eco, *Lector* 58). "We have a 'open' text when the author [...] [decides] to what extent he should control his reader's cooperation, where it should be stimulated, where it should be directed to, where it should become a free interpretative adventure."

3 In Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, the writer Morelli imagines "a text that would not clutch the reader but which would oblige him to become an accomplice as it whispers to him underneath the conventional exposition other more esoteric directions" (396).