7. METAPHORICAL IMPERIALISM

 The study of metaphor brings up a number of perennial problems in the study of cultures One is the search for the core of culture: Is there something that is most fundamental, that determines other things or prior to them? Many answers have been offered. Basic personality type---Ruth Benedict, famous book, *Patterns of* Culture, culture as personality writ large. Other answers: a set of values, core elements of economy or social organization, adaptation to the physical environment---all suggested at one time or another. Marx, divided society into base, structure, and superstructure, but latter-day Marxians have often changed priorities.

Related question: how different are cultures? What is the range of possible variation? Is each culture truly unique? Put another way, how plastic, how changeable, are human beings? What are the possibilities?
Famous study, Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, argued that adolescent turmoil was peculiar to western culture. Said Samoan adolescents very free in sexuality, and so had no hang-ups or turmoil. Since strongly criticized, suggested that very biased, found results that wanted. Huge controversy.
As general rule, anthropologists see lots of variation, cultural variability, but some see limited possibilities in whatever area they study.
E.g. study of color terms: great variability in how different cultures cut up color spectrum, but then study said there was in fact considerable regularity.

Third related question: How much does culture determine thought and action? Are cultures straight-jackets or recipe books allowing one to cook up a lot of dishes and even create new ones?

One major approach to these questions is through language. Naive version of linguistic determinism very common: people are like their languages. Germans are harsh and rigid like their consonants, Italians fluid and not rigid enough. English much better than other languages because has huge vocabulary.
-A German told me the Kuna language had no fixed rules, i.e. no real grammar, which nonsense. A friend said Spanish speakers lacked sense of personal responsibility because they used an impersonal form to describe accidents: "It fell on me" rather than "I dropped it."

Translation and its difficulties suggest how different languages and worldviews may be. In book by JH, I used word "mixer" about dances to suggest they were sponsored by policemen in order to meet local women. Excellent translator into Spanish, but we never found a way to translate mixer satisfactorily. (Now also strange in English, because no longer have mixers.) Title of book, *A People Who Would Not Kneel*, implied both that they refused to kneel and habitually didn't do it, untranslatable. Also, title in Spanish put in imperfect tense, Kuna friends said, "Oh, and now we do kneel?" which not an issue in English.

Most famous linguistic determinism in anthropology and linguistics, by amateur linguist, Benjamin Whorf, studied esp. Southwestern Indian languages. Said language strongly determined thought. Nouns in language determine how world seen. Most famous example, Eskimo (Inuit) words for snow, much finer gradations than we have---many people have heard of this example.

Even more so in grammar. W. said language of Hopi had radically different conception of time from ours. Few or no constructions that refer primarily to time, to past, future, enduring or lasting states.

Much more recently, Hopi linguistic named Malotki says is complete bull: he wrote down 600 pages of temporal expressions. (Ekkehart Malotki 1983, *Hopi Time: A linguistic analysis of the temporal concepts in the Hopi language*. Mouton).

Similarly, we can learn distinctions in snow that unknown before: skiers have elaborate vocabulary.

No agreement on issue, but rough consensus that language does strongly shape how people understand world but probably not radically determine it in way Whorf suggested in his strongest claims.

If we return to metaphor, can see that the article by Cohn is concerned with some of these issues. She suggests that to talk about strategic defense issues, she had to adopt the tropes used by specialists, got her thinking and talking in certain way, very hard to break out of trap.

Most systematic and important development of such ideas by Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, philosopher and linguist. We have an excerpt from their first book on subject. Argument very similar to Whorf, though I have never found place where they acknowledge connection.

Lakoff and Johnson suggesting that metaphor much more pervasive in our language than we usually recognize. Not decoration but foundational, part of structure, basic. No self-conscious or consciously elaborated but imbedded in language, often so fundamental and pervasive that we don't recognize. Systematic: hide some things, highlight others. These are important points, they are correct. They argue that core ideas and assumptions of a culture imbedded in metaphor.

Q. What do you think of their example, Time is money? Seems very apt, though question of how much of the equation follows from the metaphors. Historians show how time discipline was imposed with growth of capitalist economy: does metaphor merely reflect or actively shape?

Q. What about suggestion that linguistic expressions are containers? or that our field of vision is a container? May not be so intuitively obvious as time is money, but the linguistic expressions we use seem to depend on that metaphor.

Q. What do L&J mean by orientation metaphors? Q. by ontological metaphors?

Q. What do L&J mean by metaphorical coherence? What is their positional on how coherent sets of metaphors are? They stress how metaphors fit and work together, how coherent they are, but they also take pains to point out that coherence is partial, and that metaphors and ideas may be contradictory.

One of the key questions that has come up is whether and how much values and ideas etc. are imbedded in metaphors, how much the assumptions and values are *in* the metaphors, as opposed to the values and ideas being there in the culture, and the metaphors are chosen to represent them.

Article by Naomi Quinn, (in *Beyond Metaphor*, supplementary reading list), deals with these issues concerning American conceptions of marriage.
As Quinn sees it, Americans have a set of core ideas about marriage and how it should be. (Not everyone would agree---another might see less agreement or deny that something as big as the U.S. could have a common culture.)
Qualities: shared, lasting, mutual benefit, compatibility, difficulty, effort, success/failure, risk (p.66)
esp. shared, mutually beneficial, lasting. Mapping cultural understandings of love onto marriage.

These ideas are often communicated through metaphor, but she argues that the ideas are not embedded in any single metaphor.
e.g. Lastingness represented by well-made manufactured product, on-going journey, two inseparable objects, permanent location, indestructible natural objects, secure possessions, covenant with God. No one metaphor is central—the idea is central.
Metaphors are used to convey notions that exist outside of any particular metaphor.
Lakoff shrugged off this critique, perhaps because doesn't catch its full force.

Q. If we go back to L&J's very first example in the book---argument is war (pp. 3-6)---does Quinn's argument apply? They argue that we think of arguments in a certain way, and that that conception is embedded in metaphor.

Now we can certainly think of other metaphors for arguments: a duel ("touché!") or a game with points. But L&J would shrug that off, see those metaphors as secondary to argument=war.

What they miss is that, *regardless of metaphor,* antagonism and contestation are part of the *very definition* of argument. If we see people talking without disagreeing, without antagonism, without trying to win, then we don't call it an argument. Instead it's a chat, an interchange of ideas, a dialogue, or billing and cooing.
Furthermore, arguments are not a natural thing out there in the world like a chair. Verbal interchanges are what we experience, and if we judge them a certain way, we call them arguments.

L&J go on to suggest we imagine a culture in which arguments are not seen as war. "In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently" (p.5)---a strong claim. How we represent arguments would influence our behavior and experience as well as our concepts.

This form of claim is typical of philosophers, who often think up hypothetical, imaginary examples. "Thought experiments". This example seems typical of two researchers who just work in English.

Q. What's wrong with argument-as-dance in some other culture?
If we think seriously about that imaginary other culture, it won't have any word *argument*. It will have word X, *gzornenplatz*, which labels certain verbal interactions. If it labels antagonistic, contested interactions, we might translate gzornenplatz as 'argument'. If gzornenplatz labels interactions that are nice or like a dance, or if it invokes a metaphor comparing dialogue with dance, we wouldn't even consider translating it as 'argument'. We would translate it as dialogue or conversation or verbal interaction, or if no English word corresponded closely and it was important to the point we were making, we'd use gzornenplatz itself and then explain it at length. A word that both translates as argument and yet implies lack of antagonism or contestation is *logically* impossible. So the imaginary example is in its essence *bogus*.

L&J actually pretty ambivalent about cultural variability. Make much of grounding of metaphors in bodily experience, sounds pretty universalistic.

Q. What about their idea that the words or the metaphor necessarily constrain experience and action? If we compare verbal interaction to dance, does that mean we have to be nice?
Among the Kuna, they have many metaphors for discussions in the meeting hall. Quite a few are based on equation of cases or issue or matter with a trail or path or way (*igar*). "Hear the way," "find the way," "clear the path," "resolve the way," "give each other the way." Other expressions: "call to each other, first one and then the other." Nice friendly metaphors.

But those discussions once in a while get heated, even harsh and antagonistic, sometimes downright nasty. They regret the unpleasantness: "Why do we have to fight and criticize and talk tough when we are hearing the way?"

So the metaphors indicate the desired behavior but not what actually happens.
As with the original Whorfian hypothesis, this conclusions about metaphorical determinism leaves us in middle: metaphor influences and guides but seldom absolutely determines.

Tropical dualism

There is another, even more famous attempt to extend the idea of tropes, to use it to explain different domains of life.

Comes from Roman Jakobson, famous linguist, ended up at MIT

Jakobson developed the duality of metaphor/metonym, said they represented two opposed cognitive tendencies that could be recognized in many areas

(Roman Jakobson, 1956, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Aspects of Aphasic Disturbances" in *Fundamentals of Language*, R. Jakobson & M. Halle, eds., Mouton.)

To the extent that he paid attention to synecdoche, J saw it as just one variety of metonym

In all his work, J was very fund of two part, binary distinctions

(oversimplifying) J said there were two basic operations in grammars

Substitution, what could go in place of something: thus, if the subject of sentence was tree, there was a large set of nouns that could be substituted for it to go in that place in the sentence structure.

Sequence: what could go before and after in the structure of sentence.

In music, would be harmony versus melody.

Metaphor, J said, is based on substitution, metonym on sequence

Sometimes phrased as paradigmatic relations versus syntagmatic relations

J said this basic distinction characterized many domains

In literature, he said Romanticism was essentially metaphorical, naturalism metonymical

Said also found in problems with language. Aphasia, inability to correctly process or generate spoken or written language.

J said were two basic kinds of aphasia, two different linguistic failures, corresponded to metaphor and metonym

Even claimed that when one writer developed aphasia, it was the kind of aphasia that corresponded to the style of writing he had written before.

Very appealing and persuasive argument, what sometimes called sexy or cute. Clever, seems to explain a lot. Others have carried it further.

Anthro named Paine, suggested that in political rhetoric, metaphor was essentially liberal, metonym conservative

Claude Lévi-Strauss, one of most famous living anthros, his name will come up repeatedly. During WWII, was in NYC with Jakobson and other refugees from Nazism. Levi-Strauss was strongly influence by J, tried to find similar deep structures in culture.

In *The Savage Mind*, L-S analyzed the relationship of animals and their names to human society. Some animals seen as essentially analogous to humans, metaphorical, while others matter of association with humans, thus contiguity, metonym. Said in once case that relationship of animals themselves to humans was metonymical but relationship of their names, metaphorical.

Appealing, widely adopted, but lots of problems

Studies of aphasia don't seem to have followed J's suggestion since then
Does literature really divide into two clear types corresponding to metaphor and metonym? Not very likely, very hard to apply when get down to cases. Certainly, concerning political rhetoric, there are lots of conservative metaphors and liberal metonyms.

The grand schemes have been abandoned, but one frequently sees offhand, passing references to things as metonyms or metaphors. Very widespread, often-used distinction.

More fundamental problems with this dualism include the following.
First, J offers no good reason to forget about synecdoche. In practice, with a particular trope, it may be hard to say whether it's synecdoche or metonym , but it is in general useful to distinguish the two
In particular, taxonomic synecdoches are quite distinct from metonyms
So no particular reason to insist on a dualism

Second, and even more important, J (and many others) assume that tropes are always essentially one thing or another.
In the readings, Ohnuki-Tierry introduces the concept of *polytropes*, tropes that are two things at once.
She introduces a lot of technical points, sometimes confusing, her usage for synecdoche is different from what we are using here---disregard all that. What is crucial is the idea of polytrope.

Many many tropes are both metaphorical and metonymic. The Kuna constantly compare villages to rivers. Each village must be near a river for fresh water, so metonymic, but they also develop instructive comparisons, so metaphorical. Effective political action like flood in river that washes away debris and snags, sweeps clean.
Previously, in discussing magic, we mentioned hex-dollies that metaphorical, metonymical, and synecdochal all at same time

Third, tropes have a way of decomposing into each other.
Synecdoches, part/whole relationship, but some are felt as more or less arbitrary than others. Sapir calls them "apt" synecdoches. What is aptness?---it is when the part is felt to resemble or epitomize the whole. Thus metaphor lurks inside synecdoche, appears any time there is a resemblance between part and whole.

Metonym similar. a metonym is felt to be good or strong according to the strength of the physical or logical connection between its parts and/or according to its aptness, i.e. its similarity. If a cigar is associated with a person only because he smokes them all day long, the relationship is purely metonymical, but if in some implicit way, however vague, the cigar's qualities resemble the smoker's, then the connection is also metaphorical.
Look at L&J's discussion of metonym, esp. of dove as Christian metonym (p.40)---obvious that it is also a metaphor.

So both metonym and synecdoche have a tendency to leak into metaphor, just as soon as two things not just linked in fact but also in shared features.

Jakobson served a useful function, got people looking for tropes outside of literature, poetry, just as L&J have. But rigid distinction doesn't hold up.