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Article

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Channelling figurativity through narrative: The paranarrative in fiction and non-fiction

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Abstract

Contrary to wide-spread assumptions, metaphor in narrative is not a pre-established, extra-textual form appearing in different instances of discourse, but rather an event resulting from a strategic distribution of information in the narrative process. Hence, the appeal to conceptual cultural knowledge is to be considered as a consequence, and not as a prerequisite of metaphor interpretation. By means of the concept of the *paranarrative*, we highlight the rhetorical interconnectedness of metaphor with other figures of speech (such as *metonymy*) and we explore the narrative integration of *diacritic forms of indirectness*. In order to illustrate the terminology that can address these focal concerns, the paper discusses the relation between tropes and narrative, via selected examples from narrative texts (both fictional and non-fictional) written by Juli Zeh, Herta Müller, Jürgen Nieraad, and Siddhartha Mukherjee. As their common denominator, these examples channel through narrative figurative domains considered to be known intuitively to wit: personifications; iconic *pars pro toto* references to concentration camps; and metaphors for cancer in disease biographies.

Keywords Metaphor, metalepsis, paranarrative, rhetorical narratology; conceptual metaphor, metaphors for cancer, disease biography.

1 Introduction

In this article, we aim to explore the cotextual embeddedness of figurative processes in relation to narrative agency. Moreover, we will attempt to distinguish this cotextual embeddedness from the more conventional types of figurative narration, such as allegory and extended metaphor. By means of the concept of the paranarrative, we argue that narrative texts develop locally valid types of markedness of figurative forms and arrange them into dynamic and negotiable hierarchies. This hypothesis will be applied to selected (fictional and non-fictional) narrative texts written by Juli Zeh, Herta Müller, Jürgen Nieraad and Siddharta Mukherjee. These case-studies have been selected because they set out to alter our understanding of figurative domains that seem to have become fixed and stable parts of the current conceptual system. The analysis then goes on to show that figurativeness, when filtered through narrative, takes on a concrete and identifiable form, which is the result of specific *cotextual* effects activated in the course of the reading process. Our findings accord with recent modifications of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) strengthening the feedback structure, as well as with the turn towards socially embedded forms of cognition and rhetorical negotiation in post-classical narratology.

2 Rhetorical narratology and the paranarrative

Rhetorical narratology builds on the assumption that figurative forms (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, oxymoron, antonomasia, paronomasia, hypallage, etc.) have demonstrable repercussions on the thematic and representational aspects of the narratives in which they occur. These repercussions manifest themselves on different levels, and may lead to the

detection of a paranarrative, an alternative version of the story reflecting on or altering the agency involved in the narration of the events.

In doing so, they display a new, or rather: additional, dimension of narrative organisation: the paranarrative. The term 'paranarrative' was first coined by Pimentel (1990). Sounding somewhat similar to Genette's paratext, though not related to Genette's theory of the quasi-institutional 'threshold' functions of a text's layout, Pimentel restricts her approach to interconnected isotopies as an index of perspectivisation, located '*at the level of the organization of the text*' (Pimentel 1990: 80; italics in the original). In our usage of the term, however, the paranarrative does not primarily consist of figural forms belonging to the sphere of characters and narrators, but rather, at a deeper level, of figurative forms that anticipate and/or alter the very agency subtending the construction of the diegetic universe. Hence, our understanding of the concept is more dynamic than Pimentel's: the paranarrative reorders the (textual) information about the storyworld and therefore strongly relies on both the narrative straightforwardly performed by the narrator's voice – the epinarrative – and a reader who is ready to engage in an interpretative renegotiation with the text. The paranarrative is thus a type of supplementary narrative coherence produced by interconnected figures of speech. In Martens and Biebuyck (2007), we showed that in Heine's *Das Buch Legrand* the protagonist remains at an observing distance from the others in the primary narrative, while the network of metaphors and metonymies in fact reveals a close interaction. This paranarrative dimension leads to a suggestive reframing of 'argument' as 'love' rather than as 'war', which runs counter to the text's narrative action (the epinarrative) and to its genre (polemics). Likewise, via the figurative network of Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* the optical instruments turn out to be conduits of reciprocity instead of projective, phallic devices (Biebuyck and Martens, 2011). The concept of the paranarrative targets the cotextual effort that goes into the interaction between various figurative and proto-figurative forms. This cotext is marked by 'negative

metaphors' (withheld or suppressed tropes) or by 'proto-metaphors' (utterances simulating the coming into being of metaphors).

The interaction of figurativity and narrativity is pivotal in this respect: figurativity can be seen to interact with the various modalities set forth by stylistic choices related to narration (e.g. free indirect discourse). Narratology has evolved since structuralist narratologists considered the verb to be the kernel of narrativity, and all other transformations a natural expansion of its mode. Post-classical narratology especially shares a common ground with the cognitive theories informing the theory of figurativity. Basically, examining the link between metaphor and narrative allows analysts to give a more dynamic role to the copula that binds together source and target domains in CMT.

By looking at the ways in which texts prepare the ground for figurativity, one indeed notices how especially the metaphorical process is to a large extent predisposed by a reader's cognitive and cultural setup, but not completely determined by it. Crucial to this expansion of scope was the insight advanced by Peter Stockwell that the principle of invariance is too rigid, and the vector of projection in metaphorical predication is bi-directional rather than unilateral. (Stockwell, 1999) His case studies point in the direction of experimental texts. Indeed, one cannot deny that the inversion of the directionality (from the concrete to the abstract) occurs more frequently in experimental prose writing: 'die Straße breitet sich wie eine dunkle Absicht vor ihr aus' (Jelinek, 2004: 615; 'The road spread out in front of her like a dark/mischievous intention'; our translation). Blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) and cognitive poetics/cognitive rhetoric (Stockwell), as well as stylistic approaches (Emmott, Sanford and Alexander, 2010), and text world theory (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007) have all convincingly illustrated how the process of reading not only relies on text-external knowledge, but also actively contributes to shaping the readers' inferential luggage.

In order to visualise the forms and functions of the paranarrative, we are committed to investigating what we will call diacritic forms of indirectness. Inspired by the classical discipline of chironomics and by recent trends in figurative sign language research and gesture research (Cienki and C Müller, 2008), we believe that the use of the body, as is the case in ‘semantically co-expressive’ hand gestures (Cienki and Müller, 2008: 488), in concrete actions or in generic behaviour can also generate metaphorical meaning. This type of surplus signification is due to a situation, in which an action or a type of behaviour not only fulfils the particular intentions negotiated in the specific setting and situation of the moment, but also implies another type of action or behaviour at the same time. Importantly, the situative action or behaviour are not arbitrary and do not disappear under the burden of the implied action or behaviour. This distinguishes metaphorical acts or behaviour clearly from symbolical acts, which have no sense apart from their indirect meaning, or allegorical acts, that clearly display an internal cohesion, but this cohesion is completely dictated by the consistency of the implied reality. The phenomenon of metaphoric agency is particularly urgent in narrative texts, since it not only directly implies the narrative act itself, but cannot take off apart from the concrete, non-figurative or not-completely figurative description of the action or behaviour at stake. A conspicuous instance of such co-occurring behaviour is the speech of Mynheer Peeperkorn in one of the last chapters of Thomas Mann’s *Magic Mountain*. Near a mighty waterfall, Peeperkorn is determined to deliver a speech in front of his company:

It was impossible to hear his own voice, let alone for anyone else to understand a single syllable of what he expressed without expressing it. Holding his goblet in his right hand, he lifted one forefinger, stretched his left arm out, the palm raised at an angle – and his mouth formed words that remained soundless, as if spoken in an airless room. (Mann, 2005: 739)

Peeperkorn actually delivers the speech with all the eloquence and rhetoric required, but neither he himself nor his audience can discern any distinctly articulated speech and hence can hear nothing else except the foaming water, gushing down the waterfall in its meaningless, vitalist drive downwards. Of course, Peeperkorn's speech cannot be reduced to the sound of the waterfall, by which it is actually drowned out. But here a peculiar parallelism comes into being, which emphasises Peeperkorn's will to live and his destiny of an imminent death. As the example shows, the description is in itself not metaphorical, but it acts as a set-piece prefiguring the narrative action by way of figurativity. Thus, the scene is able to sustain the textual dynamics of the novel's paranarrative. In order to substantiate the claim that metaphor develops a specific type of knowledge, the following case studies aim to illustrate the interaction of metaphor both with other tropes and with the details of the narrative agency as shaped by the narrative.

3 Paranarrative and extended figurativity: Juli Zeh's *Spieltrieb* (*Gaming Instinct*, 2006)

On the basis of the definition of the paranarrative provided above, one may surmise that the paranarrative triggers off a semantic surplus similar to that of metanarrative statements. In narrative theory, however, figurative clustering does not figure prominently among the markers of metanarrativity as developed by Nünning and others. (Nünning, 2004) In order to consider the relation between the paranarrative and the metanarrative more closely, we turn to the young German author Juli Zeh's novel *Spieltrieb* (*Gaming Instinct*, 2010). With her novel, Zeh gave an update to the coming-of-age novel by modifying and inverting the plot of Robert Musil's classical modernist *Bildungsroman*, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906). In

Zeh's novel, the pupils do not mob a fellow pupil; instead, their transgressive behaviour is directed towards a teacher. Zeh's style is marked by extended simile, by continued (animal) metaphors (bordering on catachresis) and by personifications. The anthropomorphisation inherent in personification is often seen as a characteristic of Expressionism. Since French structuralism and its literary counterpart, the Nouveau Roman, personification has been increasingly frowned upon on account of its arbitrariness and subjectivist underpinnings. Zeh, however, is able to exact creativity especially from personifications that are supported by adjectival and adverbial metaphors, as in the sentence: 'während sie [die Bäume] langfingrig die Balkone betasten'¹. Similar processes of personification with figuralising extensions occur when she refers to transhistorically circulating cultural stereotypes of cities and rivers, which are reinvigorated and modified via verbal metaphors:

Daddy Rhine sweated out its river-like secretions, the Cologne-Bonn-Bay gathers them and boils them down into a thick mush that weighs down on houses, car roofs, backs and thoughts. (Zeh, 2006: 8, our translation)

While the personification of rivers is a common phenomenon in cultural history, the ensuing verbal metaphor 'sweating' is quite close to the river as vehicle, which turns the extended figurative complex into a highly hybrid and artificial one, mixing both elements of the narrated *diegesis* (scene and action) and of its more imaginative counterparts ('car roofs, backs and thoughts'). Such constructions occur in a context saturated with references to Nabokov (the protagonist's name Ada, the Lolita motives) and citations of Nabokov's idiosyncratic style. Especially the extension of metaphor may remind one of the way in which Nabokov configures parts of inanimate objects as if they were animate and thus operationalises one of the prototypical categories of the metaphorical with a synecdochical strain: 'The train was due to

leave at 10:10. The longer hand of the clock would point like a setter, then pounce on the coveted minute, and forthwith aim at the next.' (Nabokov, 1989: 240) The highly crafted style of Zeh's novel is an explicit nod to modernists like the aforementioned Thomas Mann and Musil, who figure prominently on the thematic level and among the novel's (many) intertexts. Especially the relative arbitrariness of the genitive metaphor is a staple surrealist technique that Zeh brings to fruition:

This message had the effect that he jumped out of his life as if out of a driving train, rolling down the railroad embankment of his own biography while dressed in an overcoat. (Zeh, 2006: 348; our translation)

The focal point of this citation is the balance between the genitive metaphor 'railroad embankment of his own biography' and the verbal metaphor 'jumped out of his life', extended with the figuralising simile 'as if out of a driving train'. The starting point of this playful figurative constellation is the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A ROAD or LIVING IS BEING UNDERWAY, in this case transformed into BEING UNDERWAY BY TRAIN and thus emphasising human impotence to navigate one's own fate and the subjection of the individual to uncontrollable and automatic mechanisms. But the metaphor does not stop with the extension: by stressing the act of jumping out and by materialising and enriching the metaphoric scene by the reference to the overcoat in the simile, it distorts the common conceptual metaphor by situating the narrative representation of one's life, biography, on the place where one can either observe the 'train of life' or get out of it.

The extended use of figurative settings may strike the reader as playful, but it is part and parcel of the narratorial agency of the novel. What is being conveyed through this realisation, however, is a temporal blend between the diegetic story world and the act of the

storytelling. The reference to the overcoat depends on cotextual inference: the novel's cataclysmic event consists of a teacher's suicide. It is rendered decent through a metonymical reference to the teacher's blood-stained overcoat. Posterior to the event (but also prior to it), the overcoat becomes a marker of *vanitas* and nihilism. Basically, the extensive figurativity of the citation covers up a metaleptic movement: an abrupt increase in the narrative pace which is both elicited and brought to a halt by the narrator. More importantly, the railway imagery is almost a direct pastiche of similar formulations in Musil's *The man without qualities*, which is arguably Zeh's most prominent intertextual sparring partner in this novel and which contains quite a number of train metaphors with sylleptic usage. (for instance, 'The train of events is a train unrolling its rails ahead of itself.' (Musil, 1995: 484))

Everybody knows the moment when a train in which one is sitting is entering the railway station. One notices the slowing down of the speed, and one bows the chest curtseying in due respect for the god of inertia of masses in movement. When the train has come to a halt, it occurs to the traveller that he in effect could disembark. Mankind senses such transshipment centres of fate in every single muscle. (Zeh, 2006: 279, our translation)

This passage likens the bodily movement in a train slowing down to an act of religious devotion. From a narratological point of view, the text appeals to a commonality of understanding ('everybody knows', 'mankind senses') which is reinforced by the shift to the present tense. Nevertheless, the depiction conveyed by the figurative construction is not at all intuitive. It is supported by a combination of marked genitive metaphors ('god of inertia of masses', 'transshipment centres of fate'). Being a young female writer and one of the first alumni of a creative writing programme in Leipzig, Zeh's writing style has been a continual

source of contention. It has been praised, but more frequently it has been criticised as inappropriate (for her age). (Zemanek, 2008) Young male authors like Clemens J. Setz, however, continue to be admired precisely because of such stylistic prowess and virtuoso combinations.² It would be interesting to investigate whether this reprimanding critique points to gendered codification of poetic licence and whether the critique has indeed led Zeh to turn towards a more realistic prose style. Yet, Zeh's recourse to personifications has a clear-cut function – they are part of a playful type of metalepsis:

Before we can go on to recount the failed Friday, the remnant Thursday stands there spraddling and blocking our way. (Zeh, 2006: 448; our translation)³

This figurative type of metalepsis resonates strongly with the literary tradition of metanarrativity, which is further corroborated by the usage of synthetic chapter titles (as practised by Sterne and others in his wake). Metalepsis does not simply structure the narrative, it elicits a thorough effect on the ethical agency of the omniscient narrator reporting the events and which counters the voyeuristic directness and stylistic neutrality attributed to contemporary *Popliteratur*.

4 Paranarrative and metaphor *in praesentia* in Herta Müller's *The Hunger Angel* (2009)

Relying on a corpus-based inquiry into metaphors for Europe, Müller reaches the conclusion that the creative usage of metaphor is actually quite rare in journalistic and non-literary discourse. (R Müller, 2012: 222) When the metaphoric forms *in praesentia*, like genitive metaphor and metaphoric compounds, are perceived as self-evident, to some extent even

cumbersome, this raises the question whether their creative usage is possible at all. The answer to this question will depend on the actual definition and degree of creativity that one expects from metaphor usage.⁴

Central to our analysis of the novel *The Hunger Angel*, published in 2009 by Nobel-Prize winner Herta Müller, are those metaphors that dynamically confront the source and the target domains with each other and directly interact with the narrative. As the title of the novel may help to indicate, Müller's novel abounds with *in praesentia* metaphorical constructions, in which both terms of the metaphor feature prominently, such as 'hunger angel' (H Müller, 2012: 111). Most of these metaphors, however, require extensive knowledge of the co-text, as they are gradually built up. Hence, to the readers of the novel, the 'heart-shovel' (H Müller, 2012: 8), the 'skinandbones time' (H Müller, 2012: 86), the breath-swing (H Müller, 2012: 133), and the 'cheek-bread' (H Müller, 2012: 112) will not come across as solecisms: their meaning can be inferred via cotextual cataphoricity. The 'heart-shovel' projects the activity of shovelling coal, as disheartening as it may seem, into the realm of the aesthetic by focussing on the (minimal) pleasure to be gained from synchronising the movement shovel with one's heartbeat. The directionality of the compound word remains fundamentally open: it can be primarily a tool in one's hands, but it can also be something vague in one's chest. The heart-shovel can be personified: 'The heart-shovel notices right away if I'm not there exclusively for it' (H Müller, 2012: 77). The cheek-bread is derived from an absurd, yet obsessive practice of swapping bread crusts on the basis of the owner's physiognomy: The prisoners judge the desirability on the basis of the appearance of a person's cheek, which stands for the whole of his or her well-being. In doing so, they copy the guards' behaviour. Nevertheless, the metaphors themselves have a therapeutic function, they are described as 'words of escape' (H Müller, 2012: 174) and 'hunger words and eating words': 'Hunger words, or eating words, feed your imagination. They eat themselves, and they like

what they eat. You never get full, but at least you're there for the meal.' (H Müller, 2012: 148-149) The same self-protective function motivates the attempt to integrate Russian words into the narrative. By way of homonymy, the Russian word for 'gas coal', *gazovy*, which in Ukrainian becomes *hazoviy*, is associated with German *Hasoweh* (hare woe), which refers metaphorically to death. The approximation of hare and (hunger-stricken) woe partly derives from the comparison 'as slender as a hare' (H Müller, 2012: 47), but more importantly from a synesthetic description of what hunger feels like: 'When you can no longer bear the hunger, your whole head is racked with pain, as though the pelt from a freshly skinned hare were being stretched out to dry inside. Your cheeks wither and get covered with pale fur.' (H Müller, 2012: 18) These descriptions border on hallucinations and thus oscillate between the figurative and the non-figurative.

Precisely thanks to its appeal to the apparent genitive metaphor, Müller's language is richly poetic and rich in allusions to poetry. In fact, Müller's famous fellow countryman, Paul Celan, objected to the suspicion of 'Genitivmetaphern', which he rehabilitated as 'ein unter Herzensnot Zueinander-Geboren-Werden der Worte'⁵. Celan's characterisation of the synthetic genitive metaphor may remind one of the classical rhetorical notion of the *inopia* metaphor or *catachresis*, which compensates for a deficit in the lexicon and illustrates the vitality of language and its means of extending its vocabulary.⁶ In Herta Müller's novel, the device returns to this original denomination of a lack, as it becomes a primary expression of (thematized) lack, and of the fundamental lack of expression that ensues from the horrifying scenes of hunger and slavery. The novel abounds with descriptions of lack and shortage: the lack of food, but also the lack of human warmth and compassion. While the novel's actual use of catachresis, conventionally built as a genitive ('the foot of the mountain'), is very limited, preference is clearly given to composite forms that contain both elements of the target and source domains. This predilection for concatenation may be accounted for on the basis of the

ominous contextual associations of *Bandwurmwörter*: W.G. Sebald cites some of these as epitomes of the bureaucratic, anonymous system that sustained the linguistic infrastructure of the Holocaust; the bureaucratic nominalising style euphemistically allowed to abstract from agency altogether. As a kind of oppositional act, Müller's novel engages in the attempt to exact more complex and outspoken agency from the very formula that allowed for anonymity. This becomes clear when even the compound 'hunger angel' is read against the grain of its dismal connotations: the hunger angel, as the messenger, the carrier and thus the metonymical personification of hunger, haunts and besieges the prisoners. But in hindsight, the balance of signification shifts and the 'angel' part of the word is made to stand for a soothing, reassuring presence, protecting the prisoners from harm.

I went on for pages triumphantly describing my saved bread and the cheek-bread. And my persistence in the emergency exchange with the horizon and the dusty streets. When I got to the hunger angel I went into raptures, *as if he'd only saved me and not tormented me*. That's why I scratched out FOREWORD and wrote AFTERWORD above it. I was now free, but it was an immense personal disaster that I was irrevocably alone and bearing false witness against myself. (H Müller, 2012: 271)

The very stylistic device of metaphor *in praesentia* was criticised by Iris Radisch, an influential literary critic in Germany. In her review of Müller's novel, she objected to the fact that the vehicle terms are borrowed from rather traditional domains (angel, heart, etc.). She dismissed the 21st century usage of these terms, as well as their application to the concentration camps, as 'perfumed' (Radisch, 2009) and outdated. Radisch mounts a classical argument, namely that only a terse, degree-zero style is appropriate to representations of Holocaust and Gulag literature alike.

One should add, however, that the creative usage of outdated vocabulary is possible only in a context that makes gestures towards the attempt to allow for brute realities to gain poetic overtones without wanting to succumb to them. In the over-determined context of second-generation memory writing, the metaphoric actions are able to at least hint towards the qualia of the experience, without taking recourse to the iconic and metonymical associations that have become the staple references of the existence in the camps, prone to the allegorical transfiguration of the unspeakable. Nearly all of the types of hard labour described in great detail in the novel (and summed up by the catachrestic denominations discussed here) could also be interpreted as metaphoric actions pointing towards the act of writing, recollecting. Yet, according to the narrator, to do so would result in bearing false witness.

5 A figurative biography of one's disease: Cancer biographies by Nieraad and Mukherjee

The Sign of Cancer, a Journey of No Return is the autobiographical account of the German-Israeli literary scholar Jürgen Nieraad's fight against cancer, posthumously complemented and published by his wife, the translator Ilana Hammerman. (Nieraad, 2005)⁷ The act of telling the story is an act of opposition against the fact that the narrator is forced into the roles of both the patient and of the heroic, wilful agent. After having been diagnosed with cancer, the narrator embarks on a heroic journey to his native country Germany, where he wants to commit suicide in the wake of Heinrich von Kleist: an instance of metaphoric behaviour, in which the narrative persona Nieraad simultaneously organises the end of his life and acts out that of a literary model. This behaviour allows him to be the protagonist of his life story, 'actor and director' (Nieraad, 2005: 75) of his fate; at the same time, he realises that the suicide

would be egoistic towards his wife. The narrator goes into therapy, but continues to oppose the prescribed roles. Due to a perverse side-effect of ideology of the welfare state, the narrator argues, one is robbed of one's right to decide; yet, the effectiveness of the high-tech treatment is attributed to the will of the patient: 'He was greeted back as hero', he was told to be 'a lochem, a fighter'. His fellow patients told him 'in the tone of the converted that it was the human will that counted for 50% percent of the recovery.' (Nieraad, 2005: 84; our translation)

The cancer diary itself resists the role of the confessional and personal, as it is told by a third-person narrator. It has been noted before that the narrator's 'use of third-person narration instead of first person is typical of the narration of trauma because the narrator is trying to distance the overwhelming occurrences.' (Salmon-Bitton, 2006: 154) In addition, the book was clearly written in the acute awareness of Susan Sontag's *Disease as Metaphor* and shares its sustained sensibility towards the synecdochical reduction of a sick person to contaminated body parts and towards metaphors euphemising the bare facts of disease: 'mere metaphors that blur the truth' (Nieraad, 2005: 63). Nieraad explicitly criticises the premature popular conceptual metaphor CANCER IS DEATH ('the popular belief that cancer equals death', Nieraad, 2005: 75), which condenses the metonymic relation between the illness and its often unavoidable outcome into a simple equation. Although the narrator aims to resist transfiguration, it is clear that figurativity is an important ally in his resistance against the ideological of the disease and the patient's battle against it. As was the case in Zeh's novel, Nieraad's figurative autobiography makes use of scathingly ironical personifications: 'the haemoglobin twiddled its thumbs' (Nieraad, 2005: 83). The patient is forced to subject himself to the routines and procedures of invasive health-care, but he is in fact left hanging 'at the infusion gallows' ('am Infusionsgalgen hängen', Nieraad, 2005: 82). The protagonist goes on to recompile the medical terminology in a more poetic way:

Georg, drifting into sleep, imagined his Minoan leukaemia, riding on a cancer, surrounded by various cystic and bawdy bubbles [Zyten und Zoten], viciously grinned at by globoids, poetic proliferation, ruddy-cheeked hematomata, aggressive monoblasters. (Nieraad, 2005: 83-84; our translation)

The patient imagines himself as a quasi-mythological hero, on top of the disease, but also carried away by an uncontrolled proliferation. The imaginative transport takes off from the alliteration in the medical terminology 'Zyten und Zoten', which is lost in translation. The image remains ambiguous as to whether the 'patient' is primarily an agent or rather undergoing the action. The figurative indirectness is very much geared towards resisting the pull of narrative biography. The narrator considers the option of a 'typical disease narrative', which is based on the *conversio*, 'the model of the biographies of famous men, who were able to indicate their *vita nova*, the famous turn that divides the continuum of their lives in two parts (Nietzsche's idea of eternal return on that day of August 1881 at the sea of Silvaplana, Freud's discovery of secret of dreams on July 24 1895, Goethe's discovery of the *Urpflanze* in Palermo, Kant, Descartes, Paulus).' (Nieraad, 2005: 80, our translation) However, the narrator decides against this option. To give in to the structure of biography would boil down to rendering familiar the utter bewilderment by and the high-tech nature of the disease and its treatment.

More recently, Siddhartha Mukherjee's *Biography of cancer*, which won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Non-Fiction, reflected in a similar way on the shifts in the cultural signification of cancer. Just as Nieraad's text aims to counteract the totalising effect of metaphors such as the 'heroic fight' against cancer, Mukherjee's account is amongst many other things, also, and importantly so, about language. Mukherjee traces back the *military* metaphors for cancer

(such as 'infiltration' and 'battle') to the period of the Cold War and its aftermath.⁸ Mukherjee advances an alternative notion: that of cancer as our evil, yet more sophisticated twin. The shift to the family metaphor is central to the idea that the disease might never be 'overcome' and that the related cell growth is in fact a more evolved and mobile version of our body's normal genetic replication. Mukherjee touches upon the mapping of cancer onto extreme experiences, e.g. that of the concentration camps, which he explains as a hyperbolic version of the pervasive metaphorisation of the disease as confinement and imprisonment: 'Cancer is not a concentration camp, but it shares the quality of annihilation: it negates the possibility of life outside and beyond itself; it subsumes all living. The daily life of a patient becomes so intensely preoccupied with his or her illness that the world fades away. Every last morsel of energy is spent tending the disease.' (Mukherjee, 2010: 483)

Implicitly, Mukherjee also imparts another, more complex narrative structure to the disease, which is more like that of a modernist, non-linear and non-continual account of the disease rather than a teleological epic structure of winning or losing. In terms of the narration of his own book, Mukherjee opts for personifying cancer not only for the sake of vividness: 'This book is a 'biography' in the truest sense of the word—an attempt to enter the mind of this immortal illness, to understand its personality, to demystify its behavior.' (Mukherjee, 2010: 11) He also makes use of counterfactual narration and science fiction conventions in order to sketch the open horizon of what future cancer treatments may look like. Given the widespread usage of 'cancer' as an established vehicle for metaphorisations of foreign, intrusive, detrimental effects to the body politic, it becomes clear why Mukherjee opted for the loose, encyclopaedic and narrative approach to his treatise. Considerable narrative embedding is required in order to redress cancer as a tenor onto which the writer wants to establish a new perspective, and as something endemic to the human body. The broad span of time that Mukherjee covers by tracing the history of the illness back to Egypt is itself a kind of

narrative scaffolding which runs counter to the firm association of cancer with a terminal and often brief anomaly. The fact that cancer has been around since time immemorial bolsters his claim that the disease might continue to inhabit our innermost being. Through the twinning of individual disease narratives across centuries, Mukherjee's account develops the scaffolding needed to reframe mutations hitherto associated with illicit and detrimental growth as neutral or even potentially benign types of combination and selection. It is indeed Mukherjee's claim that the discourse on cancer needs to develop 'from a monolith, a single, central narrative' (Mukherjee, 2010: 378) into an emergent, agile narrative, flexibly adjusted to a patient's mutating genetic make-up. This alternative scenario can be facilitated only by an alternative conceptualisation of cancer that affects even the etymology of its treatment: The Greek word *onkos* has been taken to mean 'mass' or 'load' (564), but its Sanskrit root actually means 'to carry, to move a burden from one place to another. [...] It is an image that captures not just the cancer cell's capacity to travel – metastasis – but also [...] the long arc of scientific discovery – and embedded in that journey, the animus, so inextricably human, to outwit, to outlive and to survive.' (Mukherjee, 2010: 565) This passage illustrates to what extent imagery and narrative are intertwined.

Actually, Nieraad's fictionalised account is further removed from narrative than Mukherjee's heavily narrativised non-fiction account, despite their shared sensitivity towards the cultural and historically changing signification and figurative mappings of the disease. In Nieraad's case, this awareness is gestured at by the paranarrative, which consists of an involuntary figurativity to be reconstructed by the reader. At the end of the novel, the intercultural signification of disease is also made visible at the story level: While the narrator's wish for terminal sedation can neither be articulated nor responded to in Israel's official therapeutic system, it is a Palestinian nurse who is found to be willing to help out.

6 Conclusion

Our account of the interaction between narrative and figurativity differs from previous accounts in that we assume that figurativity is not just relevant for the Jakobsonian depth structure of narrative or the epinarrative, but also for the reflection of the agency involved in the construal of the diegetic universe. Fludernik, while defining the rhetorical-stylistic approach as a possible pathway for narratological research into corpus-based research, touches upon the diacritic aspect of figurativity when she notes: 'metaphor often combines with narrative to generate mini-stories of 'disnarrated' material. They introduce 'alternative worlds', roads not taken which infract on the neat delineation of voices and agents' (Fludernik, 2009: 124). Since the paranarrative is the result of a gradual linking process between figurative forms in the course of reading, it may be clear that it traverses the dominant linearity of the narrative process and induces both prospective and retrospective re-reading; as such, it reorders the prevailing spatio-temporal order.

We opted for these four cases, because they illustrate how the interaction of metaphor with other tropes amalgamates into paranarrative scenarios and acts as a gatekeeper for diacritic forms of indirectness. In Zeh's case, we have seen genitive metaphor at work, dragging with it a complex configuration of metaphors and comparisons and leading up to metalepsis with gestural overtones. In Müller's novel, we can witness the persisting collaboration between primarily metaphorical composites and cotextual cataphoricity, which fittingly results in a paranarrative focusing on the ethics of the eye-witness. Nieraad's and Mukherjee's unconventional *biographies of illness*, finally, stage narrators very much preoccupied with avoiding symptomatising and narrative altogether, yet especially Nieraad's text witnesses a re-entry of narrative sequentiality on the level of the paranarrative. For various reasons, the narratives at hand can only gesture towards their figurative paranarratives, for reasons of playfulness (Zeh), traumatised reticence (Müller), or self-

reflexive refusal (Nieraad and Mukherjee) required to overturn the extant metaphorisations of cancer as heroic-epic narratives. The paranarratives offered by figurative narration thus reconfigure the narrative's current proportions and versions of agency in the originary narrative. Their relevance is in keeping with what in recent revisions of CMT has been called 'rhetorical payoff' (Pinker, 2008: 265); its description contributes to a richer account of the role of figurativity in narrative.

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¹ The personification is partially lost in the translation: 'the long-fingered branches [of the trees] brush the balconies' (Zeh, 2010: 6)

² See Strigl (2009), who quotes such venturesome images as: 'His facial expression was so serious that he almost slipped over it und burst into reckless laughter.' 'His feet chewed at the pedals.'

³ On the relation between metaphor and metaleptic scene-shifts, see: Fludernik (2003). Zeh also uses scene-shifts that are not accompanied by figurative language: 'Meanwhile, five kilometers away, Höfe sat at the side of the bed of his wife.' (Zeh, 2006: 297; our translation)

⁴ Müller argues that genitive metaphor is used creatively when the target term is concrete enough, which then allows for a more plastic, specific meaning of the metaphor (see R Müller, 2012: 141).

⁵ Celan (1999: 158): 'genitive metaphor, a being born towards one another of words by heart's destitution' (our translation)

⁶ On the 'necessary metaphor' when no *verbum proprium* exists see: Lausberg (1998: 254).

⁷ The book has been the object of a narratological analysis by Rimmon-Kennan (2007), who focuses solely on the issue of co-authorship. We concentrate on the parts written by Nieraad, which are marked by typography in the book. As a scholar, Nieraad was a specialist of metaphor theory.

⁸ For a cognitive psychological evaluation of different metaphoric models for clinical therapy: see Gick and Holyoak (1980: 346-355).