

BOOK REVIEWS

A. Musolff & J. Zinken. (2009/2015) *Metaphor and Discourse*. London: Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 978-0-230-53730-9 978-0-230-59464-7, xi + 269 pp.

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In the introduction to their edited volume, “Metaphor and discourse”, Musolff and Zinken make this observation: “Metaphors invite narratives [...] From this perspective, there is no ‘full’ understanding of a metaphor ...” (p. 5). The gap between speaker and hearer is, they suggest, not really there to be filled in the sense some accounts of metaphor take it to be. Instead, we interpret metaphor partly through a felt understanding, without exhaustively mapping between source and target domains, and without necessarily building up elaborate, analogical cognitive structures (Gibbs, 2005; Indurkha, 1999). As they see it, the key to our ability to (partly) feel our way to meaning is metaphor’s intrinsic relationship with discourse. It follows that we should want to know not just who is writing or speaking, but when, where, why and to whom. We should ask how the discourse in question, and the metaphors we focus on, fit in historically, socio-culturally, and in terms of the exchange of ideas. Only by such close attention to discourse context can we approach an adequate account of how a given metaphor comes to be used, and might be interpreted.

Discourse, as Steen observes in his chapter, means different things to different people. In this book it almost always means written texts – fiction, poetry, political treatises, newspaper articles or, sometimes, reporting of (semi-) scripted speeches. There is little analysis of spontaneous dialogue, with the exception of Barnden’s contribution. Most of the metaphors analysed are produced, in writing, by educated, highly literate people, prone to thinking closely about how they express themselves. This is a function of the origin of the volume, which has grown out of workshops on “metaphor in discourse and conceptual history” (p.vii). This book takes a discourse metaphor perspective (see e.g., Zinken, 2007, for an outline), examining longer-term changes and stabilities than other approaches to metaphor in discourse might do. Evidence for these processes inevitably tends to come from documentary data, though it is an open question, touched on in the commentary, how such stable conceptualisations interact with spontaneous language use.

This observation aside, the contributors take their metaphors from a fascinating variety of sources, from near-contemporary politics to Stoic-era philosophy. Their approaches are varied, but each in its way tries to ground its metaphors in the

socio-cultural, intellectual, or historical discourse milieu that gives rise to them. Each brings out some aspect of the ways of understanding (*embodied; dialogic; information processing; and historically situated* (p. 6)) set out by the editors in their introduction. Several also carry a striking contemporary resonance, addressing as they do themes such as rhetoric and political influence, motivated framing, and the philosophy and ethics of language.

The book's three sections cover methodological and theoretical perspectives, case studies from contemporary public discourse, and what the editors term "metaphor evolution in discourse history". Chapters in the first explore discourse influences on metaphor arising from: the pressures of cultural conformity; political tensions; historical legal custom; extended source-domain scenarios; and the functional characteristics of metaphors in use.

Kövecses discusses what he calls the "pressure of coherence" (p. 11), a cultural, experiential tendency to adjust metaphors to discourse context, a pressure that can override strict notions of embodiment taken to be fundamental to conceptual metaphors. This is interesting, since it opens a potential thought space where bottom-up approaches to metaphor in discourse (e.g., Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Maslen, 2016) might interact with more abstract conceptual theorising.

Drawing on Systemic Functional Grammar (e.g., Simon-Vandenberg, et al., 2003) and cognitive linguistics, Steen distinguishes between lexical metaphor and forms such as simile, on the one hand, and grammatical metaphor (in which a process is portrayed as a thing, for example) on the other. Given the implications for processing of this taxonomy, and the complexity of mappings it entails, he makes the case for taking a cognitive psychological perspective that allows for multiple levels of representation.

One of Steen's illustrative texts is a line from Tennyson, and Chilton sticks with the poetry in an analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 ("When to the sessions of sweet silent thought ..."). He analyses emergent metaphorical effects, and is, like Steen, informed by accounts of language that focus on different levels of processing, from local grammatical coherence (Kamp & Reyle, 1993), through Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) and the Discourse Dynamics approach (Cameron & Deignan, 2006), to societal level macro-discourses (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 1996). This is an ambitious task, deftly handled. The minutiae of anaphoric reference have to be integrated with historical factors, socio-cultural context, and everything in between, as, for the reader of the sonnet, "integrated conceptual spaces are successively built up, modified and partially resolved" (p. 43). Of course, the reader in question is an idealised one, informed, sensitive, prone to reading (and re-reading) sonnets. Chilton himself acknowledges that a blend will be 'run' in different ways by different readers. It is impossible to say exactly which concepts, or blend of concepts, will be activated for a given reader in a given

moment, or what will remain after reading. Perhaps the notion of 'maximal coherence' could be given in the plural, which would tie in with Musolf and Zinken's eschewing the 'full' interpretation of metaphor.

De Landtsheer's methodology – and sources – take a very different turn. She introduces a 'metaphor power model', a way of combining the frequency, 'intensity' and semantic content of metaphors to work out a quantitative metaphor-stylistic profile of media discourses. When the results are compared with historical events and across media, there are some remarkable correlations. Higher 'power' figures emerge during economic crises, for example. However, the results need to be tempered with some methodological caution. Firstly, the 'intensity' measure, which more or less corresponds to a metaphor's novelty, relies on a qualitative coding decision; since, as the author says, inter-coder reliabilities are very low, findings may need some firming up, perhaps by replication. The 'content power' measure, too, requires caution, since it involves an a priori numerical hierarchy applied on the basis of a metaphor's source domain. These caveats aside, De Landtsheer's methodology, which is described in welcome detail, has clear potential to reveal emotive patterning in public discourse.

Barnden explores the role of context in non-parallel processing – that is, the processing of metaphorical meaning beyond parallel mappings between domains. From his AI perspective, he conceives of a context-driven process in which a discourse gives rise to a source-domain scenario in which only some metaphors receive fully-fledged parallel mappings, while others, without such mappings, contribute to building the source scenario, yet may still be crucial to the meaning of an utterance. This bears out the idea from the introduction that, rather than proceeding as an exercise in filling a gap in knowledge, metaphor understanding happens partly through an indirect enrichment of the narrative milieu.

Case studies in the second section are taken from political and business discourse, British and Spanish newspaper headlines, and public health reporting. These are fascinating texts, but again highlight the somewhat static (at least within the text) and often crafted nature of the discourses analysed in the book. What we do not see is the kind of discourse most of us engage in most of the time. That is a justifiable editorial choice, for the reasons given above, but sometimes missing, too, in this and other sections, is a clear idea of how metaphors were identified and analysed: what was included, what was left out, categorising procedures, and so on. Providing some guidance on these matters would help those who might wish to emulate these expert analyses.

Charteris-Black, in the first case study, explores the ways in which political leaders use metaphor to establish ideologies and sustaining myths. Metaphor, as he observes, takes a less conscious route to acceptance than does reasoned argument, and so metaphorical expression lends itself to the performative, self-legitimising

purpose of staking out ideological positions, as it does also to the elaboration of myth. The claim that metaphor has a persuasive discourse function is not in itself new, of course, but seating metaphor as the integrator and mediator of ideology and myth is a thought-provoking perspective. Charteris-Black focuses on two examples: Castro's fable of Cuba as a *sardine* to America's *shark*; and Tony Blair's framing of Iraq as a *rogue state*. Drawing on Aristotelian rhetoric, Charteris-Black gives an account of metaphor's role in explaining, emotionalising, and morally justifying political action. In terms of specific techniques, he touches on humour, personification and othering, and highlights the fact that the power of metaphor resides in its combination with other rhetorical effects. One of his more telling observations is that the very act of doing the talking, of delivering the myth, confers a sort of fabulist's legitimacy, an imputed moral authority for framings, judgements, ideological claims, and demonisation.

Koller's contribution is a computer-assisted quantitative analysis of corporate mission statements. These discourses draw on religious and political metaphor in an era that sees traditional institutions of authority ceding their power to the commercial, corporate world view, but still providing some of the "cognitive raw material" (p. 117) for how we talk (or rather write) now. Her focus is on primary, embodied conceptual metaphors, retrieved in machine searches of tagged corpora. She is frank about the pitfalls of this early stage approach – the search identifies non-metaphorical terms as source domain items, for example. However, the overall thrust of the chapter is convincing, and it underlines the potential of machine searching in corpora whose scale puts them beyond traditional approaches.

Sticking with tradition, however, White and Herrera analyse Spanish and UK business press headlines. They identify what they call literal-figurative 'interface' patterns (p. 137), those in which the source domain relates to the target domain ("grapes of wrath" referring to problems in the French wine industry, for example). The authors note the density of some of these forms and their potential to activate multiple, blended scenarios and express ideological stances. As they observe, the collaborative character of headline discourse might have implications for processing. In potentially short-circuiting readers' ethical decision-making, it certainly has socio-cultural consequences.

Nerlich and Koteyko's analysis of metaphors in reporting of the MRSA 'superbug' crisis in UK hospitals brings a diachronic perspective to proceedings. Taking data from the early stages of public awareness through to the full-blown political response, they demonstrate a clear evolution in metaphorical conceptualisation. A shift takes place from use of the bacterium's 'voice', to the patient's voice, to the voice of politicians and policy. This last development is accompanied by an increased use of military metaphors and a battle scenario linked to cleansing and purity, a perhaps predictable effect of politicising a discourse.

In some ways the case studies provide support for the ‘feeling’ aspect of metaphorical understanding: metaphors are partial, they cross domain boundaries, change with the years, and so on. But the discourses in these cases have a partly causal character. They are always to some extent one-sided, crafted for an audience, intended to foster a certain way of thinking, to create a certain response. No doubt there is traffic the other way; public opinion feeds back to ministries, PRs and editorial offices by all manner of discourse means, and the analysed metaphors no doubt draw in part from these more mundane interactions. Yet here we can only intuit that that is the case.

This point is obliquely addressed in Frank’s chapter (the first in the third and final section of the volume), which applies complex adaptive systems theory to the notions of *meme* and *gene* in discourses about language change. Discourse metaphors, as defined here, arise out of situated metaphorical reasoning and change by the process of “emergent dynamics” (p. 176). In other words, the linguistic-cultural system has no central control, no prior design, and cannot be predicted. Rather it is subject to circular causality. Global behaviour arises out of myriad local interactions, in much the same way it does in an ant colony or the financial markets. Biogenetic models have been applied to language by a number of scholars, but Frank cautions that such work may have relied on a now outmoded notion of what a gene is and does. Specifically, genes are no longer considered autonomous and agentic in the way they once were. Current work on metaphor and conceptual evolution, taking earlier limitations into account, looks to apply memetics to metaphor and conceptual evolution. The approach might be able to illuminate relationships between collective and individual cognition, and the distributive nature of language.

Subsequent chapters explore historical instances of change in metaphor use, particularly those relating the state, or polity, to the human body. Cowling explores the links between linguistic borrowing (from Italian), economic exchange and political threat in sixteenth-century French discourse. In that febrile political climate, French purists applied metaphorical models of ‘expertness’ to themselves: they were *gardeners*, *doctors*, licensed to turn xenophobia into linguistic xenophobia. Echoing Chilton, Cowling concludes it is essential to understand contemporary common ground if we are to really get to grips with a discourse and its metaphors. Marilynne Robinson (2015) makes a similar point in her essays about the influence on Shakespeare of late 16th and early 17th-century religious upheavals.

Banks cautiously adopts the notion of the ‘meme’ (see above) to examine ways in which the ancient ‘body politic’ metaphor conceptualised the French constitution and the religious wars of the sixteenth century. A harmonious state, for example, kept its ‘humours’ in balance, a state at war suffered *diseased* and *broken bones*, a king might be *head*, *doctor*, *cure*, a heresy *poison*, or *plague*. A key point is

the eminent transferability – once they are salient in the discourse community – of such metaphors between opposing sides, and the role of historical events in triggering usage: a king, first a *doctor*, becomes the *disease* to be *cured*.

The consequences of certain metaphorical conceptions can be enormous. Zavidil explores the Stoic concept of the ‘two cities’, heavenly and temporal, in connection with body metaphors. As in Cowling’s examples, these metaphors could transfer across political boundaries, be used to calm mobs, or justify regicide. One upshot of this was what Zavidil terms “political [...] passivity” (p. 229). It is argued this may have contributed, on the one hand, to monasticism, on the other to Augustine’s influential concept of the *City of God* and the Church’s espousal of the Great Chain of Being. The latter had much debated consequences: relative stability, some say, but also the tolerance of feudalism. Zavidil’s conclusion, that a change in metaphorical conception can influence political and moral thought for centuries, should give pause to anyone whose words are heard in public (though it might also have them champing at the bit).

In the final chapter, Musolff, in, offers a twelfth century example of the ‘body politic’ metaphor in John of Salisbury’s “Policraticus”: a ‘diseased state’ requiring ‘medical attention.’ This chimes with his own work on Nazi discourse, and shows the remarkable robustness of the conception. As in other examples in the book, this is a refined linguistic form employed with craft, and its long-term entrenchment seems at least partly a function of the longevity of scholarly discourses. And yet, as society develops, so does the metaphor. Musolff examines the effect of the Enlightenment, and use by totalitarian regimes, and then the twentieth century’s opening up of greater semantic flexibility (and one assumes, speed of change, another example of which perhaps we see in Nehrlich and Koteyko’s study). With John of Salisbury, the metaphor is still fixed in its mappings and highly detailed. One rather poignant note is John’s concern for the peasants, the ‘feet’ in the soil, and his warning they should be cared for, lest the state be reduced to crawling. Again, there is contemporary resonance; such sentiments would not be out of place in the current output of the Vatican Press. Indeed, Musolff notes that John is seen by some as a medieval humanist reformer, though he makes clear, as did Cowling, that we today lack the contextual knowledge to fully recover historical metaphorical meaning.

A commentary (Gibbs & Lonergan) reiterates the stance that metaphors are a product of discourse (but of course most discourse is not of the fascinating types seen in this book). In discussing the implications of the volume as a whole, they wisely advise caution in drawing conclusions from limited sets of data. Conceptual metaphors, they say, cannot be inferred without evidence from the society and culture and broader language patterns they occur in. One might add that, with historical data, we are typically hearing one or two voices among silent millions.

Methodology, quite rightly, comes under the spotlight here, too. In several chapters in the book, it is not always clear just how a metaphor has been identified as such. One might argue this is less important in the analysis of historical, philosophical or theological sources than it is for, say, a study of focus group discourse. But if a writer is contributing (as all in this book do) to the field of language and cognition (whatever other audiences they may also address) it would be appropriate and useful, where possible, to give some account of procedure, corpus size and metaphorical density, for example, and to specify the method used for identifying metaphors. Scale has a part to play here, of course. A sonnet the reader can see for themselves, but a more explicit orientation in longer texts, even historical ones, is an aid not just to understanding but to replication and further study by others.

Gibbs and Lonergan have a lot to say about mixed metaphor, which they observe is a good illustration of why cognitive, social and pragmatic factors must always be taken into account. The fact we can readily understand oblique metaphors also tells us something about how we process them. Gibbs and Lonergan present data from an experiment with mixed metaphors, in which people interpret prompts and have their responses analysed for underlying conceptual metaphorical structures. As might be expected, participants can make sense of what appear quite infelicitous admixtures of imagery. Musolff and Zinken's rewarding volume offers a wealth of perspectives, from mostly written discourses of various kinds, on factors which might be at play as the participants in Lonergan's study 'feel' their way towards meaning. It seems somehow appropriate the book should end with an example of what most of us are, most of the time, when we express and interpret metaphors: just regular people producing language off the top of our heads.

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