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CHAPTER 6

Mixed metaphor is a question of deliberateness

Gerard Steen

University of Amsterdam

This paper aims to explore the interaction between mixed metaphor and deliberateness in order to throw some new light on the nature of mixed metaphor. The basic claim is that the typical or strongest experience of mixed metaphor arises when two metaphors conflict that are both used deliberately as metaphors. It is likely that all other cases of conceptual clashes between adjacent metaphors do not get recognized as mixed metaphor because their components are not used deliberately as metaphors. Whether the clash between one deliberate and one non-deliberate metaphor can elicit the experience of mixed metaphor is an in-between case that is also discussed. The gist of the paper is, then, that research on mixed metaphor needs to take into account the variable communicative status of each of the presumably clashing metaphors, making a distinction between their deliberate or non-deliberate use as metaphors.

6.1 Introduction

With the cognitive turn in metaphor studies (Gibbs, 2008), a wealth of research has been produced that shows that metaphor is more than just a figure of speech used as a rhetorical flourish in the language of poets, politicians and other kinds of wordsmiths. Metaphor has been reconceptualized from the stylistic device it used to be for over two millennia to a conceptual tool that helps us make sense of everyday experience, in particular when everyday experience requires the use of abstract categories that have to do with complex phenomena like organization and management, government and politics, health and care, and so on. Research has shown that our regular use of language is full of metaphor, examples including talk about organizations as plants that can grow and be pruned, energy as a liquid that can flow or stream, arguments as fights that can be won or lost, and theories as buildings that can be strong or weak and need support or buttressing (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This ubiquity of metaphor in language is taken by many as a reflection of underlying figurative conceptualizations that are pervasive

and systematic, called ‘conceptual metaphors’ in cognitive linguistics. All of these linguistic forms and conceptual structures are presumably used without much awareness on the part of the language user, whether in production or reception, and this would explain why we do not notice the use of metaphor very often. The use of metaphorical meanings is just as automatic as the use of grammatical structures like subject and predicate.

Yet people can and do notice metaphor in special circumstances, one of which is when one metaphor is inappropriately mixed with another metaphor. The example in the Merriam Webster dictionary is ‘If we want to get ahead we have to iron out the remaining bottlenecks.’ This is a special case of when metaphorical language use simply goes wrong, other cases involving, for instance, a metaphorical comparison getting much too difficult or vague to be understood. Metaphor consequently does get noticed sometimes and is then attended to as metaphor by language users. This is again to be compared with other moments when language use derails and draws attention to itself as language use, as when it becomes a noticeable problem that an utterance lacks a subject or a predicate, or that grammatical concord between subject and predicate is incorrect. Along these lines, mixed metaphor is typically seen as a case of flawed and careless language use on the part of the producer who is then accused of not paying sufficient attention to the potential effects of their utterance on the receiver. Mixed metaphor is hence also commonly seen as something to be avoided.

This poses an intriguing problem. If metaphor use is automatic and unconscious, how can so many language and communication advisers spend so much time telling writers and speakers to avoid mixing metaphors? Such advice presupposes that it is possible to monitor one’s metaphor use, which is an activity that is anything but automatic and unconscious. Mixed metaphor may therefore involve interesting questions about deliberate metaphor use, itself a controversial issue in the theory of metaphor (Gibbs, 2011; Steen, 2008, 2011a, 2013, in press). It is my aim in this paper to explore the interaction between mixed metaphor and deliberateness in order to throw some new light on the nature of mixed metaphor. My basic claim will be that the experience of mixed metaphor arises when two metaphors conflict that are used deliberately as metaphors and that it is likely that all other cases of conceptual clashes between adjacent metaphors do not get recognized as mixed metaphor because they are not used deliberately as metaphors.

6.2 Mixed metaphor and deliberateness

The internet abounds with sites presenting hilarious examples of mixed metaphor that have caught people’s attention. On the website *www.about.com*, Richard

Nordquist features the following instance produced by a British Member of Parliament: “Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat. I see him floating in the air. But mark me, sir, I will nip him in the bud.” There is a separate page on www.JimCarlton.com listing his favorite mixed metaphors including “It’s time to step up to the plate and lay your cards on the table.” Mignon Fogarty has an entry on <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/mixed-metaphors.aspx> discussing a phrase by Obama, that people thought that Obama was ‘green behind the ears’, which struck her as a mixed metaphor. And we could go on.

What is interesting about these and many other examples is that they may be explained by a specific special feature: they often involve the use of an idiomatic phrase that is motivated by metaphor, which is either not completed in the expected way or not followed up in a consistent manner but by another, conflicting idiom. Thus, ‘green behind the ears’ involves a mix-up of ‘wet behind the ears’ and ‘green’, and the replacement of ‘wet’ by ‘green’ is noticeable because it generates an incorrect idiomatic construction that is then correctly recognized as mixed metaphor. The other two examples both involve the use of one figurative idiom followed by another that is so different that it breaks the expected sense of cohesion between two consecutive parts of discourse, two figurative constructions combining in such a way that their non-figurative meanings begin to stand out and clash. These cases are therefore not just a matter of mixing metaphors but of mixing idioms that happen to be metaphorical.

Mixed metaphors that involve one or more metaphorical idioms, like the ones above, seem to be specially prominent cases of all mixed metaphor, which concerns a slightly more subtle matter. Generally, mixed metaphor simply depends on a noticeable clash between the non-metaphorical meanings of two metaphorical uses of words within one relevant grammatical or discursive frame. Two good illustrations of this phenomenon are the following:

- (1) ... – the economic cake grew fast enough in these years for most demands to be accommodated without conflict (Judt, 2005:266)
- (2) The Italian welfare state in the 1960s was still a rather rough-and-ready edifice that would not reach maturity until the following decade ... (Judt, 2005:413)

Both have been taken from Tony Judt’s magnificent work on the history of Europe after the Second World War, which I will use as my data source for this chapter. Intuitively, Judt’s writing looks representative of its kind, history, which is close enough to most storytelling and reflection on events in life to be more generally interesting. With its 800-plus pages, it offers a wide variety of metaphorical language use, including some possibly mixed metaphors like (1) and (2).

The reasons these two cases can be seen as mixed should be obvious. Cakes do not grow but at most become bigger, which does help to explain the slip into 'grow'; and edifices do not reach maturity, but at most get completed, which may be seen as close to reaching maturity. In both cases, the non-metaphorical meanings of the second metaphorical images ('grew' and 'reach maturity') clash with the non-metaphorical meanings of the first metaphorical images ('cake' and 'edifice'). The crucial question about mixed metaphor is why these non-metaphorical meanings become prominent whereas in most other cases of adjacent metaphor, the non-metaphorical, basic meanings of metaphorically used words do not draw people's attention, making the ubiquitous use of metaphor so unobtrusive.

I will explore this phenomenon from a specific theoretical perspective that taps into the potential prominence of metaphor. I have argued that it is true that most metaphor is unconscious and automatic, but that we need another distinction to get a handle on some cases of metaphor use that are special (Steen, 2008). This distinction has to do with the deliberate versus non-deliberate use of metaphors *as* metaphors: most metaphor use is non-deliberate, but some metaphor use is deliberate. I would contend that the use of many metaphorical idioms qualifies as potentially deliberate: when a Member of Parliament says 'Mr Speaker, I smell a rat', this appears to involve the selection of a type of expression deliberately introducing a different image of a situation. Deliberate metaphors are intentionally chosen perspective changers, invoking distinct conceptual domains as alien referents in the on-going discourse. (This is a notion of deliberateness that does not necessarily involve consciousness, but is based on the general goal directedness of language use, which may also be and in fact typically is unconscious; see the discussion between Gibbs 2011 and Steen 2011a). Because of this deliberate metaphor use, the metaphorical, alien image may be represented as a distinct referent in people's minds and be available long enough to produce a potential clash with the next metaphorical image if it is nearby enough and incompatible enough to be noted as invoking yet another distinct conceptual domain. If it is agreed that metaphorical idioms have such a potentially deliberate metaphorical quality, this might explain why mixed metaphors involving metaphorical idioms like the ones at the beginning of this section are so prominent.

Is it possible that 'the economic cake' can also be qualified as deliberately metaphorical, and can this explain the sense of clash with the next metaphorically used word 'grew'? And is it possible that 'The Italian welfare state was a rough-and-ready edifice' is also deliberately metaphorical, again explaining the sense of clash with 'that would not reach maturity'? I believe that a good case can be made for an affirmative answer to these questions. Thus, the use of the domain indicator 'economic' suggests that the writer intentionally instructs the reader to give an economic interpretation to the next word, 'cake', which by itself

sets up a culinary referent. This is a form of metaphor signaling which would make ‘the economic cake’ a deliberate metaphor. As a deliberate metaphor, ‘cake’ can then be felt to clash with the next word that is metaphorical, ‘grow’. Whether this is true even if that next metaphor related word is not used deliberately itself, as is probably the case here, is another question, which we will address later. The relation between mixed metaphor and deliberate metaphor use clearly merits further analysis.

In fact, jumping ahead to the suggestions I will be making later, mixed metaphor and deliberate metaphor may be seen as two unexpected allies in research on the activation of metaphor *as* metaphor in people’s attention and consciousness (Steen, 2011b, 2014). If mixed metaphor is characterized by its ability to impinge on people’s attention and consciousness, it is possible that this is largely based on its relation to deliberate metaphor. The mixing of two deliberate metaphors could then be noticed more often as mixed metaphor than the mixing of one deliberate and one non-deliberate metaphor, which in turn should be more prominent than the mixing of two non-deliberate metaphors. These are hypotheses that can be tested experimentally, which is on our program for research. Vice versa, since deliberate metaphor use is still a controversial affair, demonstrating that it has differentiated effects in mixed metaphor would help in establishing its own nature and function as well.

My plan for the rest of this chapter is as follows. I will first illustrate the distinction between deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor use. Then I will take a close look at some mixed metaphors to see whether and how they interact with deliberate metaphor use. This will lead to new questions about mixed metaphor and deliberate metaphor that can be put on the agenda for future research.

6.3 Deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor

My basic argument is the following. As a rule, metaphors are not produced or noticed as metaphors by language users. People do not typically go around thinking they need a metaphor to construct their next utterance, or recognizing one metaphor in other people’s use after another. At the same time, metaphors abound in our language use, which also means that they are often adjacent to each other and consequently may cause occasional conceptual conflicts between them: not every metaphor is consistent with or compatible with the next metaphor. How often such conflicts occur in the structure of language is hard to say, but with an estimated average of 13.6% metaphor-related words in natural discourse (Steen et al., 2010), one in every 7 to 8 words is used metaphorically, which should give some concrete idea.

The established ubiquity of metaphor in language sharply contrasts with the low frequency of spontaneous metaphor recognition, including mixed metaphor recognition. There may hence be more conflicting metaphors in the structure of language than experiences of mixed metaphor in language users' processing. The question therefore arises when, or which, adjacent and conflicting metaphors are noted and experienced as mixed.

The answer to this question may have much to do with the distinction between deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor use: I will argue that at least one deliberate metaphor may be needed for mixed metaphor to be recognized. If a metaphor is not used deliberately as a metaphor, as generally is the case, it is immaterial whether that metaphor conflicts with an adjacent metaphor. However, if a metaphor is used deliberately as a metaphor, which happens in more specific conditions, it does become relevant if the next metaphor is consistent or not. Perhaps this alerts language users to non-deliberate metaphors, but it will most likely trigger mixed metaphor recognition for two deliberately used metaphors in a row that are also conflicting with each other. Deliberate metaphor may hence offer the key to understanding why some adjacent metaphors are experienced as mixed while most adjacent metaphors are not (cf. Kimmel, 2010).

Consider the following random paragraph from Tony Judt's *Postwar* (p. 298), with separate sentences numbered for convenient reference:

- (3) (1) The first lesson of Suez was that Britain could no longer maintain a global colonial presence. (2) The country lacked the military and economic resources, as Suez had only too plainly shown, and in the wake of so palpable a demonstration of British limitations the country was likely now to be facing increased demands for independence. (3) After a pause of nearly a decade, during which only the Sudan (in 1956) and Malaya (in 1957) had severed their ties with Britain, the country thus entered upon an accelerated phase of de-colonization, in Africa above all. (4) The Gold Coast was granted its freedom in 1957 as the independent state of Ghana, the first of many. (5) Between 1960 and 1964, seventeen more British colonies held ceremonies of independence as British dignitaries traveled the world, hauling down the Union Jack and setting up new governments. (6) The Commonwealth, which had just eight members in 1950, would have twenty-one by 1965, with more to come.

This is a regular stretch of historical writing, with no metaphors calling attention to themselves as metaphors, apart from one. There are plenty of metaphors to find, all of them highly conventionalized, as a slightly more technical glance will reveal (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010), but they all do not seem to be used deliberately as metaphors. Sentence (1) opens with the metaphorical use of *lesson*, which is described in Macmillan sense 2 as 'something you learn from life,

an event, or an experience.' Sentence (2) features *in the wake of*, a set phrase that has been given its own sense description 'happening after an event or as a result of it', deriving from *wake*, 'the track that appears in the water behind a moving boat'. In the same sentence, a case can be made for *palpable* and *facing*, both of which have to do with embodied experiences in their basic senses whereas they are here applied to the more abstract, complex concepts of 'demonstration' and political negotiation. Sentence (3) contains clear examples like *severed their ties with*, *entered upon*, and *accelerated*, all of which are also conventionalized in their metaphorical use. This type of metaphorical conventionalization even extends to the use of *in* in sentence (4) and *between* in sentence (5), where time is talked about in terms of space. All of these are regular, non-deliberate metaphors in that their use does not call attention to the metaphorical status of the word(s). What is more, it is quite possible that all of these words are processed by lexical disambiguation, not on-line cross-domain mapping in conceptual structure, whether by construction or retrieval (cf. Steen, 1994: 15–22; 2008).

Sentence (5) features an interesting variant of zeugma in its final part, British dignitaries 'hauling down the Union Jack and setting up new governments': *setting up* is used in contrast to *hauling down*, but *setting up* is not used in its concrete motion sense, whereas *hauling down* is. The use of 'setting up' may have been the only metaphor in the entire stretch that has caught the reader's attention as metaphorical. I would contend that this is precisely because it has been used deliberately as a metaphor. The reason why I think it is deliberate becomes clear once it is acknowledged that the style is intentionally humorous here: the humor is based in the contrast between the two motion words in their nonmetaphorical and metaphorical uses that is not accidental or fortuitous but intended for ironic effect. This entails that 'setting up new governments' is a metaphor that is deliberately used as a metaphor.

This example shows that conventional metaphor can be used both non-deliberately and deliberately. All of the previous examples in excerpt (3) are conventional whereas none of them is deliberate, somehow drawing attention to itself as being metaphorical, but 'setting up new governments' involves a conventionally metaphorical use of the verb *to set up* which is here deliberately used *as* a metaphor to wittily contrast with the non-metaphorical *hauling down*. Deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor use involves an independent dimension of metaphor use, and it is to be crossed with the one distinguishing between conventional versus novel conceptual structure.

I have labeled the dimension accommodating deliberateness the 'communicative' dimension of metaphor: it deals with the communicative status of metaphor *as* a metaphor (or not). The dimension ordering conventional versus novel conceptual structure is the scale familiar from cognitive linguistics dealing with

metaphor in thought. What remains is the third dimension of metaphor in discourse, i.e. the one that distinguishes between different linguistic forms of metaphor, such as metaphor versus simile, something we will return to later on. We need a three-dimensional model including metaphor in language, thought, and communication to account for the role of metaphor in discourse (Steen, 2008). The point here is that the communicative dimension of metaphor, including the contrast between deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor use, has been ignored for a long time in contemporary metaphor theory and research. Its explanatory potential has been underestimated and is here argued to extend to the phenomenon of mixed metaphor as well.

As will be appreciated, deliberate metaphor use can depend on very local stylistic considerations. In the present case, the prior phrasal context 'hauling down the Union Jack' creates the first half of what turns out to be a semi-zeugmatic construction that is completed by the metaphor 'setting up new governments' that may therefore be seen as deliberate – the utterance and its humorous effect do not come about accidentally. The experience of deliberate metaphor does not require its full-blown presentation or recognition as a metaphor: the only thing that is needed is that it should lead to some, however fleeting, moment of difference that is dependent on the distinct representation of the source domain item, signaled here by the humor that is caused by the non-fortuitous contrast between the non-metaphorical hauling down of flags versus the metaphorical setting up of new independent governments.

Having now set the stage for the difference between non-deliberate and deliberate metaphor, here are some more conspicuous examples of deliberate metaphor from the same book. The most convincing and extreme case of deliberate metaphor is extended metaphor:

- (4) West Germany had navigated safely between the Scylla of neo-Nazism and the Charybdis of philo-Soviet neutralism, and was anchored securely within the Western alliance, despite the misgivings of critics at home and abroad. (p. 265)
- (5) Moscow was the flattering mirror of their political illusions. In November 1956, the mirror shattered. (p. 322)

Extended metaphor involves the deliberate use of metaphor across independent clauses or even sentences. Tony Judt does not use many of these, the first half of his book only including the above two examples if I am not mistaken. What is striking is that another six can be found in quotations from other speakers, offering somewhat more spectacular metaphorical comparisons across sentences that are clearly meant to enliven the text. This almost suggests that extended metaphor is too much of a good thing for decent historical writing. By contrast, it clearly is

not in media discourse, as is shown by the many examples of extended metaphor examined for the presence of mixed metaphor by Kimmel (2010); he concludes that mixed metaphor does not occur much between sentences. In the next section we will consider one or two potential cases from Judt.

Deliberate metaphor that is not extended (and not mixed but ‘pure’) can be found more often in Judt’s writing. One example is (6):

- (6) The second Stalinist ice age was beginning. (p. 145)

All of the words in this sentence except domain indicator *Stalinist* come from an alien semantic field: they ostensibly do not talk about Soviet history but about geology. This is no accidental but deliberate metaphor use. That they are supposed to be interpreted metaphorically is explicitly signaled by *Stalinist*, another symptom that the producer is deliberately using the metaphor-related words as metaphor, that is, as an expression involving a mapping from the source domain of ice age to the target domain of Stalinist repression. It is not just the signal, however, that makes this metaphor deliberate: in the broader context, there is no doubt that the author deliberately intends to set up a functional contrast between two domains of meaning that is to be mentally attended to as such:

- (7) It is significant that the attacks on Tito and his followers coincided with the full flowering of the Stalinist personality cult and the purges and show trials of the coming years. For there is little doubt that Stalin truly did see in Tito a threat and a challenge, and feared his corrosive effect on the fealty and obedience of other Communist regimes and parties. The Cominform’s resistance, in its journals and publications, on the ‘aggravation of the class struggle in the transition from capitalism to socialism’ and on the ‘leading role’ of the Party risked reminding people that these had been precisely the policies of the Yugoslav Party since 1945. Hence the accompanying emphasis on loyalty to the Soviet Union and Stalin, the rejection of all ‘national’ or ‘particular’ roads to Socialism and the demand for a ‘redoubling of vigilance.’ The second Stalinist ice age was beginning. (p. 145)

The paragraph could also have ended ‘The second ice age was beginning,’ with no damage to referential comprehensibility or communicative effect (even though there would have been a loss in referential specificity). This clearly is a deliberately metaphorical utterance that does require the reader to heed to the fact that it is metaphorical by giving separate attention to the source domain concepts of the beginning ice age as distinct referents in the meaning of the text. It is fundamentally different to the examples of non-deliberate metaphor discussed under (3), or to the non-deliberate metaphors in this very excerpt itself, like *attacks* or *flowering* in the first sentence. To be fully explicit, *attacks* does not require the reader

to contrast the argumentative and war senses of the word – on the contrary, that would be distracting in a way that does not hold for the final sentence of (7).

There is yet another reason why this particular metaphor is deliberate: its novelty. In the dictionary, the expression *ice age* is described in geological terms only, ‘a period of time thousands of years ago when large areas of the Earth were covered in ice’ (Macmillan). Tony Judt has clearly looked for an appropriate rhetorical device to close the paragraph and devoted some attention to crafting it. Indeed, the last sentence is followed by a blank line in the chapter, which makes its function of closing device even more effective. In its constructed novelty, the final utterance is therefore no accidental use of metaphor. This illustrates how deliberate metaphor use comprises both conventional as well as novel metaphorical structures in thought. (Not all novel metaphor is deliberate by definition, though, as for instance happens when children or mental patients use language in ways that are innovative to the general language user but themselves do not intend to construct novel cross-domain mappings that are presented as such.)

The discursive ploy in (6) is that the author has condensed a metaphorical comparison between an understood referent in the text (amounting to something like ‘the second Stalinist period of repression’) and its metaphorical image (‘the second ice age’) into a singular referential expression (‘the second Stalinist ice age’). A textually more explicit version of this type of one-on-one metaphorical comparison can be seen in (8):

- (8) But the British saw the ECSC as the thin edge of a continental wedge in British affairs. (p. 159)

To say that the British *see* ‘the ECSC’ *as* ‘the thin edge of a continental wedge’ involves an explicit comparison that crosses two conceptual domains, and is therefore metaphorical. This is as deliberate a metaphor as one can forge. In the present case, the metaphorical expression is fully conventional, as can be checked in the dictionary: the thin edge (or end) of a wedge is ‘something that is not important by itself but will have serious, usually bad, effects in the future’ (Macmillan). That it is metaphorical can be argued because its components ‘thin’, ‘edge’, and ‘wedge’ each still have their own original concrete sense, and because the expression as a whole has been broken up by the insertion of ‘continental’. We will see another example of this same expression in a similarly free form under mixed metaphor below. The signal that one thing is seen in terms of something else marks the author’s intention that the reader attend to the fact that this is a metaphorical construction.

Even though it may be clear that a metaphor is deliberate, it is not always clear whether it is to be seen as novel or conventional:

- (9) Religion, especially the Catholic religion, basked in a brief Indian summer of restored authority. (p. 227)

People can literally bask in the sun while relaxing and enjoying themselves, and they can metaphorically enjoy other people's attention and approval, as if they are sitting in the sun, especially upon success; for the abstract notion of religion to bask in something positive, however, is an innovative application of a conventional metaphor. Moreover, people usually bask in the sun, but to bask in an Indian summer is another novel extension, with a strong hyperbolic element. This new application of a conventional expression or idea is precisely what will draw language users' attention, however briefly or superficially, to the communicative status of this metaphor as metaphorical. It does not make sense to claim that the metaphorical meaning of this utterance would have been constructed non-deliberately – the structure of the language suggests that the author intends readers to pick up on the special (ultimately metaphorical) nature of this construction in one way or another, even if it would just involve a smile.

Apart from the question of novel versus conventional conceptual structure, there are other structural aspects to the deliberate nature of example (9), which can also be found in the following deliberately metaphorical constructions:

- (10) The state thus lubricated the wheels of commerce, politics and society in numerous ways. (p. 362)
- (11) ...-it was Korea, not Schumann, that sent the West German industrial machine into high gear. (p. 159)

What is shared between (9) through (11) is their personified subjects combined with a metaphorical action that explicates a predicate and an object and/or adverbial phrase in terms of the metaphorical source domain. Abstract agents 'religion', 'state' and 'Korea' are portrayed as people respectively basking in a brief Indian summer, lubricating wheels, or sending a machine into high gear. Given the preceding contexts, which are all about directly designated historical referents and processes, these are notable deviations from the dominant semantics of the text, drawing attention to themselves as deliberately metaphorical. In particular, the most important intended referents in the state of affairs designated by the sentence are all involved in metaphor: the agent of the action is an abstract entity, the action itself is a metaphorically expressed action, and the affected or other semantic roles are also expressed metaphorically. More than one of these intended referents in the projected state of affairs is expressed by means of a concept belonging to another domain than the dominant topical one; this makes the metaphorical status of the utterances quite deliberate.

Very close to this pattern is the following set of examples:

- (12) ...; in the USSR it was the events of 1956 that tore the veil from the eyes of hitherto committed Communists like the young Leonid Pliushch. (p. 322)

- (13) But ironic or not, the reburial of Rajk provided the spark that was to ignite the Hungarian revolution. (p. 314)

In (12) the construction suggests that ‘the events of 1956’ act as a person tearing the veil from the eyes of committed communists. This is a heavy metaphorical expression whose main referents (designated by verb, ‘tore’, object, ‘veil’, and adverbial adjunct, ‘from the eyes’) are indirectly expressed as coming from some other domain than the one of Hungarian history. Intuitively the personification of ‘the events of 1956’ is different and harder to conceptualize than the ones we saw in (9) and (10), with states acting as persons, and even in (8), with religion acting as a person. One important reason may be the fact that *events* is plural, not easily mapping onto one person doing the action of tearing the veil from somebody’s eyes. In (11), *provide* is metaphorical and has effects on the role of ‘the reburial of Rajk’ as a grammatical agent; however, this does not necessarily produce personification, making ‘the reburial of Rajk’ human: *provide* is a verb that displays a range of conventional subjects, from people through institutions to events. As a result, the deliberate quality of the metaphor in this sentence does not rest on personification and may be limited to the combination of *spark* and *ignite* – a typically journalistic way of metaphorically expressing this type of event, according to the Macmillan dictionary. Some deliberate metaphors belong to the clichés of specific registers, but this does not make their use any less deliberate (on the contrary).

Slightly more controversial may be the view that the following cases are also deliberate:

- (14) On the basis of the terms agreed at Evian de Gaulle called a referendum on Sunday July 1st and the French people voted overwhelmingly to free themselves of the Algerian shackle. (p. 288)
- (15) Within a year it was clear that Paris and Algiers were on a collision course. (p. 288)
- (16) De Gaulle understood economic stabilization and modernization largely as weapons in the struggle to restore national glory. (p. 290)

Their complete conventionality and the lack of signaling in (14) and (15) makes them less typical candidates for deliberate metaphor use. However, there are still other factors that are important to note. In particular, the use of *shackle* as an abstract concept is a mainly literary device, according to the Macmillan dictionary, the concrete sense being the more regular meaning of this word; this heightens the contrast between the abstract content of all of sentence (14), on the one hand, and its unexpected ending in a concrete ‘literary’ image that requires metaphorical interpretation. The final position of the word in the sentence may increase this effect. This argument might also be applied to the next two sentences, but

the assumption of some prominence or salience of the concrete meanings of the metaphor related words ‘on a collision course’ and ‘weapons in a struggle’ over the abstract meanings seems more questionable there. It is interesting to note, though, that the position of *on a collision course* at the end of the sentence in (15) may also increase its prominence in comparison with the sentence-internal position of *weapons in a struggle* in (16). For (16), on the other hand, there is the presence of the signal that de Gaulle understands X as Y, where Y clearly comes from another domain if it is taken in its basic concrete sense of ‘arms’. It is the next word ‘struggle’ instead of ‘war’ or ‘battle’ that reduces this bias again, however, so that this example becomes somewhat dubious. These are variables of deliberate metaphor use the structures, functions and effects of which are currently studied in our lab.

Deliberate metaphor involves the use of metaphor *as* a metaphor. From a structural-functionalist point of view, this can only be observed if the metaphor producer has left traces of this intention in the language. This most clearly happens when metaphors are extended across sentences or when they are accompanied by metaphor signals. Other symptoms include salient deviations from the register of a text, as when a literary meaning is inserted in a historical text, when a concrete image is placed at the end of a sentence that is all abstract, or when a figurative idiom comprising a number of source-domain referents is located in a text that is otherwise non-figurative and colloquial at all. This is when metaphor becomes deviant instead of regular, drawing attention to itself as a stylistic or rhetorical means to change the reader’s perspective from inside the target domain to one positioned in some other, alien source domain. It is this experience of deliberate metaphor which I hold to be a precondition for the spontaneous recognition of mixed metaphor.

6.4 From deliberate to mixed metaphor

Let us now turn to some clear cases of mixed metaphor and examine whether they can be analyzed as involving deliberate metaphor.

- (17) Trials were but the visible tip of an archipelago of repression: prison, exile, forced labor battalions. (p. 191)
- (18) But whereas the Moscow Trials of the 1930s, particularly of the 1938 trial of Nikolai Bikharin, had been *sui generis*, theatrical innovations whose shock value lay in the grisly spectacle of the Revolution consuming not just its own children but its very architects, the trials and purges of later decades were shameless copies, deliberately modeled on past Soviet practice, as though the satellite regimes hardly merited even an effort at verisimilitude. And they came, after all, at the end of a long string of judicial purges. (p. 178)

- (19) Just as Western Europe was about to enter an era of dramatic transformation and unprecedented prosperity, eastern Europe was slipping into a coma: a winter of inertia and resignation, punctured by cycles of protest and subjugation, that would last for nearly four decades. (p. 195)

Example (17) sets up as a sentence where one would expect *the visible tip of an iceberg of repression*, but continues in an unexpected turn, replacing *iceberg* with *archipelago*, which entirely changes the metaphorical image from one floating iceberg that is a risk to a set of stable islands. The following case has an image of the Revolution consuming its own children, which involves a cannibalistic parenting scenario, coordinated with the Revolution consuming its very architects, which by implication turns the revolution into a building so that the action of cannibalism becomes non-sensical. In (19), Eastern Europe slips into a metaphorical coma which is then equated with a metaphorical winter, a bad spell of a rather different status and quality, that is moreover then punctured, which seems to turn the winter into a material object such as a tire or a tank. There can be little hesitation that these examples illustrate the essence of mixed metaphor.

I hold that each of these cases does not involve just a conflict between two metaphors, but a conflict between two deliberate metaphors, and that this explains their prominence as mixed metaphors. Example (17) begins with the deliberate metaphor that trials are but the visible tip of repression, which by expectation would be equated with an iceberg. Using the expression that something is the tip of an iceberg is deliberately metaphorical, as it involves a multiword metaphorical idiom that stands out from the rest of the concepts of the utterance. To then change that expression into another, totally novel metaphor, by replacing *iceberg* by *archipelago*, is also deliberate without any doubt. It is quite likely that the author was inspired here by the topic of his text (cf. Semino, 2008) and reminded of Alexander Solzhenitzyn's novel *Gulag Archipelago*.

This is clever, deliberately metaphorical writing that has been badly edited. The archipelago metaphor does not make sense in the present grammatical construction: if trials are *the* tip of an archipelago of repression, it follows that the archipelago has only one tip, which is precisely not the point of the archipelago metaphor (but in fact is the point of the iceberg metaphor). The sentence probably meant to say that trials are the visible aspect of a system of repression (tip of the iceberg) that has more manifestations than just trials, such as prison, exile, and forced labor battalions (which can be compared to an archipelago of repression) but then got reduced to a grammatically nonsensical structure. Its mixed nature depends on the clash between the two images, while the visibility of this clash depends on the fact that the two images are each clearly deliberate and therefore separately prominent. Their grammatical intertwining within one flawed idiomatic construction may have increased this visibility.

Example (18) has also textually reduced two coordinated deliberate metaphors: the revolution consumes its own children and the revolution consumes its own architects. Both metaphors are deliberate for the same reason: they involve an abstract subject, the Revolution, functioning as a personified agent in the cannibalistic action of consuming people, in the one case its own children and in the other case its own architects. These metaphors are deliberate for the high degree of fantastic content that draws attention to itself as perhaps a form of hyperbole which to some may be over the top. Their combination in a juxtaposition between children and architects forms the basis of a contrast that turns out to be an irreconcilable conflict, producing mixed metaphor. The prominence of the clash is again due to the prominence of each of the two separate metaphors as deliberate.

Example (19) begins with one obviously deliberate metaphor, Eastern Europe was slipping into a coma. We have personification plus two source domain referents again. The colon introduces an apposition to the notion of coma, but changes it from a coma into a winter: we are shifting scales from personal misfortune to the cycle of seasons here, which involves at least a form of aggrandizement that can encompass an entire half continent – this may again be a case of topic-driven metaphor (Semino, 2008). The notion of winter is obviously metaphorical with respect to both coma as well as Eastern European life, and it is deliberately metaphorical in its construction of ‘a winter of inertia and resignation.’ The logical clash between the two notions of coma and winter is obvious and prominent because both notions are deliberately positioned in the text as source domain terms in their own right. The experience of mixed metaphor is explained again by the combination of two incompatible deliberate metaphors. It is somewhat attenuated, however, if the colon is read as introducing a reformulation of the previous metaphor, one that is seen as more apt in terms of scale as well as topic for the purpose.

What is interesting about these three cases is that they all seem to have a deliberate metaphor that is immediately magnified into another deliberate metaphor. The second deliberate metaphor, however, also seems to be incompatible with the first one. This produces a clear feeling of metaphor mixing, and eventually of the possibility of bad writing.

Next is a case that involves two conflicting metaphors that may be less spontaneously recognizable as a mixed metaphor, which, if true, could be due to the fact that only one of the two metaphors involved is deliberate:

- (20) ... – the economic cake grew fast enough in these years for most demands
to be accommodated without conflict (Judt, 2005: 266)

This example was discussed above. The text explicitly tells us that we are not talking about a regular cake but an economic cake. This is a signal for the metaphorical status of ‘cake’ in its context, suggesting that it is to be taken as a culinary word

here that requires reinterpretation in the domain of economics. To signal this very operation makes the metaphor deliberately used as a metaphor. We are talking about the economy in terms of cakes, and this is made explicit in the text: the cake is to be seen and represented as a true cake in order to be mapped on to an aspect of the economy.

However, this is not the whole story. The economy is to be represented in terms of a cake that grows. This is where a conflict arises, because cakes do not grow, but merely become bigger. We have moved outside the target domain of economy to some source domain involving cakes which has been explicitly represented in the meaning of the utterance, but this source domain does not include the concept of growing. From this perspective, we have a conceptual clash, which would lead to the conclusion of mixed metaphor.

At the same time, however, both cakes and economies can conventionally 'grow'. And the specific use of the verb *grow* in this particular context does not draw attention to itself as a deliberately used metaphor in connection with either cake or economy – there is nothing in its semantic scale, grammatical positioning, or pragmatic properties that makes it stand out as a metaphor. This downgrades its perceptibility as introducing a second source domain.

What is illustrated by (20), therefore, is the disjunction between the fact that two adjacent metaphors in the structure of language may display a conceptual conflict, on the one hand, and the fact that their communicative force may vary between deliberate and non-deliberate use, on the other hand. If the communicative force of one of the two metaphors involved in the conceptual clash is non-deliberate, it becomes less prominent as a metaphor and it may, as a result, remain 'invisible' as a second alien source domain. If this happens, the experience of a clash will be attenuated or disappear, so that a sentence like (20) would be less easily experienced spontaneously as a mixed metaphor (unless one is on the lookout for conceptual clashes in order to detect mixed metaphors in bad writing). This is a prediction based on structural-functional analysis of metaphorical language use that can be experimentally tested.

Similar questions can be asked about (21), also discussed above:

- (21) The Italian welfare state in the 1960s was still a rather rough-and-ready edifice that would not reach maturity until the following decade ... (p. 413)

For (21), the basic structure of the sentence says that the Italian welfare state is an edifice, which involves an A is B metaphor that to many is the prototypical form of metaphor as a rhetorical figure of speech. It involves the deliberate construction of a false identity or class-inclusion statement that is too prominent to miss as a purposeful rhetorical device. If this is accepted, the temporary activation of 'edifice' as a concept and referent of its own in people's attention is ineluctable,

and this requires integration of this concept and referent as an alien entity into the dominant semantics of the target domain. This is when a cross-domain mapping is needed.

Given this presence of 'edifice' as a source domain concept and referent in attention, the elaboration of its nature by 'reaching maturity' can become problematic. The text says that we are dealing with an edifice that would not reach maturity. A quick check does not return the combination of these two terms as a regular collocation in the domain of buildings or architecture, so that 'maturity' must be seen as genuinely metaphorical with respect to 'edifice'. It is clearly also metaphorical with respect to the true target of the utterance, the Italian welfare state. However, the metaphorical meaning in that connection becomes more conventional: the online Longman dictionary has as an example 'the era when the Republic came to political maturity.' This yields an interesting problem for analysis.

From the perspective of the grammatical connection with 'edifice', 'reaching maturity' displays two crucial metaphorical referents (reach and maturity), which in combination with edifice form a novel and visible metaphorical construction that can qualify as possibly deliberate. This reading would make the clash with the first deliberate metaphor, 'the Italian welfare state was an edifice' quite prominent, explaining why this clash between the two metaphors may be experienced as a typical case of mixed metaphor.

However, from the perspective of the Italian welfare state, 'reaching maturity' might be seen as much less deliberate. This is a conventional expression for complex systems to come to developmental completion, and it is only the presence of two source-domain referents, 'reach' and 'maturity', that could count as symptoms of deliberateness. But given the idiomatic nature of the metaphorical phrase, it becomes doubtful whether it was deliberately constructed as a metaphor. This possibly non-deliberate status of 'reach maturity' would make it much less prominent as a metaphor, favoring referential representation in target domain terms of completion only. This in turn could explain the lack of a visible clash with 'edifice'.

Depending on whether readers process 'reaching maturity' as related to 'edifice' or to 'welfare state', the value of this clash might therefore become stronger or weaker, yielding mixed metaphor or not. This is due to the ambivalent nature of 'reaching maturity' as a deliberate metaphor, which depends on the way it is semantically connected to its discursive context. This is again a prediction that can be experimentally tested.

A comparable situation seems to hold for (22):

- (22) Such a departure from Soviet practice was the thin edge of a democratic wedge that would spell doom for Communist parties everywhere. (p. 320)

Here we have another A is B structure for the first metaphor, turning ‘Such a departure from Soviet practice was the thin edge of a democratic wedge’ into a deliberate metaphor. The insertion of the domain indicator ‘democratic’ reinforces this quality. Again, this would position the concepts and referents ‘thin edge’ and ‘wedge’ into the mental representation of the state of affairs designated by the text, making them prominently alien entities that require integration by cross-domain mapping in order to preserve textual coherence.

The elaboration of ‘the thin edge of the wedge’ by the next metaphor, ‘that would spell doom’, also resembles what happens in (21). Thin edges of wedges cannot really spell doom, so that spelling doom is metaphorical with respect to wedge. A departure from some practice cannot literally spell doom either, so that the second metaphor is doubly metaphorical again. However, *spell doom for* is listed as a conventionally metaphorical expression, ‘cause end, death, or destruction’, and its typical subject would be some encompassing process or event, like departures from some practice. This yields the same structural situation as with (21): if ‘that would spell doom for’ is interpreted by readers in relation to ‘the thin end of a democratic wedge’, it becomes quite deliberate as a metaphor, but if it is interpreted in relation to ‘such a departure from Soviet practice’, it becomes quite conventional and possibly non-deliberate. The same conclusion follows as for (21): depending on the way readers represent the two metaphors in their situation model for the text, the value of the conceptual clash might become stronger or weaker, consequently yielding mixed metaphor or not.

Is it possible to find an example with a semantic clash between two metaphors that are both not deliberate? And can it then be argued that their prominence as mixed metaphors is less than the above kinds of cases? Here is one possible case:

- (23) The personality cult around the Soviet dictator, already well advanced before the war, now rose to its apogee. (p. 174)

In other circumstances, the clash between horizontally advancing and vertically rising might be noticeable as mixing metaphors, but since both metaphors are non-deliberate, it takes some focused effort to dig this out. Another example is (24):

- (24) In the palpably rigged Sofia show trial of ...

One can metaphorically rig trials, but to call this rigging ‘palpable’ does not make sense. However, since both metaphors are not deliberate, it is just the analyst looking for mixed metaphors who will probably stumble over them.

There hence seems to be some ground for thinking that mixed metaphor is a question of deliberate metaphor. Conceptual clashes between adjacent metaphors appear to become prominent if the metaphors are used deliberately as metaphors. If one deliberate metaphor clashes with a non-deliberate metaphor, it is possible

that there still is some experience of mixed metaphor, but this may be less strong. Two non-deliberate metaphors clashing with each other may not produce any recognition of mixed metaphor at all. These are claims on the basis of structural-functional language analysis which are currently turned into predictions for behavioral research in our lab.

6.5 Epilogue

Let us finish by zooming out and considering some other examples.

- (25) From November 1958 through the summer of 1961 the crisis over Berlin simmered, diplomatic nerves frayed and the exodus of East Germans grew to a flood. (p. 251)

There is a possibility that some people might object to the three distinct metaphors in the series of three coordinated clauses in (25) as mixed, but if they do, that depends on the fact that the three are clearly all deliberate metaphors, too.

- (26) But for the peoples to the *east* of that barrier, thrust back as it seems into a grimy, forgotten corner of their own continent, at the mercy of a semi-alien Great Power no better off than they and parasitic upon their shrinking resources, history itself ground slowly to a halt. (p. 196)

There is a possibility that some people have trouble integrating the two metaphorical images of peoples thrust back into a grimy, forgotten corner of their own continent on the one hand, and history itself grinding slowly to a halt on the other hand, into one encompassing situation model. But if that happens, this is because both of the metaphorical images are highly deliberate.

- (27) Post-war Europe was still warmed by the fading embers of the nineteenth-century economic revolution that had almost run its course, leaving behind sedimentary evidence of cultural habits and social relations increasingly at odds with the new age of airplanes and atomic weapons. If anything, the war had set things in reverse. The modernizing fervor of the 1920s and even the 1930s had drained away, leaving behind an older order of life. (p. 227)

There is a possibility that fading embers is seen as conflicting with running its course and leaving behind sedimentary evidence, which might then be transcended by constructing a volcanic eruption scenario that could account for all this. This activity would make the metaphorical image in the first sentence quite deliberate and vivid, which would then clash with the war setting things in reverse in the second sentence, a clear case of mixed metaphor that also depends on all of the components in the different sentences being deliberate metaphors. This might

even revitalize ‘drained away’ as also deliberately metaphorical, adding to the metaphorical complexity of this passage for the reader. Mixed metaphor can clearly also occur between sentences, but then it also depends on the deliberate nature of the metaphors involved.

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