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BOOK REVIEW

R. W. Gibbs (Ed.) (2016). *Mixing Metaphor* (Metaphor in Language, Cognition, and Communication 6). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. ISBN 9789027202109 xiv + 269 pp. https://doi.org/10.1075/milcc.6

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"Mixing Metaphor" is a compilation of 12 chapters by prominent researchers, introduced by Raymond Gibbs, one of the main actors in the field of metaphor studies. It is a highly timely contribution that fills a gap between the pre-theoretical notion of 'mixed metaphors', largely known to the (English-speaking) public as something to be avoided as it reflects poor style or even sloppy thinking, and scholarly research on metaphor, where the topic has received little attention. In the Introduction, Gibbs discusses the example *the city's proposal to skim the frosting, pocket the cake, and avoid paying the fair, reasonable value for the meal is hound that will not hunt*, and proposes that such metaphor mixing should not be viewed negatively, but rather as a natural reflection of "people's cognitive flexibility to think of abstract concepts in a myriad of metaphorical ways" (p. vii). But this is a rather too positive an assessment.

What the volume argues is that "mixed metaphors are much more varied than expected" (p. 47), as stated by Cornelia Müller, and before pronouncing a verdict on whether they should be avoided or endorsed, we need first to understand the phenomenon properly. Even the term 'mixed' is contested by many of the authors, who rather propose alternatives like "multiple" (Cameron), "hybrid" (MacArthur), "complex" (Charteris-Black) and "extended" (Naciscione), and discuss a multitude of factors that affect such metaphors' use and interpretation. There are attempts to tackle the phenomenon through an array of models, including conceptual metaphor theory (Kövecses), ATT-Meta (Barnden), a combination of the previous two (Lonergan and Gibbs), discourse dynamics (Cameron), deliberate metaphor (Steen), and conceptual blending (Forceville). This suggests competition, and indeed Gibbs proposes that the "ability to explain both how mixed metaphors come into being and are ultimately interpreted by others" can be viewed as a test for "any comprehensive theory of metaphor" (p. xiv). This turns out to be quite a challenge, and none of the available models appear capable of giving a full account of the bewildering complexity of metaphor mixing, involving factors such as conventionality, intentionality, empathy, context, subjective experience, and different semiotic systems. But they do contribute to this project.

The book is divided into three parts with four chapters each, but we find the groupings and ordering somewhat unclear, and here review the contributions in *two broader groups*: first, six chapters that focus mostly on the *phenomenon* of metaphor mixing/blending, and then the other six that attempt to offer one or another *theoretical explanation*.

An excellent way to approach both is given by Semino (Chapter 10), who analyses the pre-theoretical meaning of the term 'mixed metaphor' reflected in its use in English corpora (by bloggers and art critics), and compares this with three accounts. From a rather traditional perspective, infelicitous metaphor mixing could occur when "dead metaphors […] are brought together so that a conflict in their literal meanings, which normally go unnoticed, is forced upon our attention" (Leech, 1969, p. 161). As well known, Lakoff and Johnson objected to the 'dead metaphor' metaphor, and as far as mixing in concerned, allowed a single target concept to be metaphorically construed in terms of different source domains, as long as these are 'coherent'. Finally, Kimmel (2010) argued that even 'incoherent' metaphors are frequently used in discourse without problems for text comprehension, as long as these occur across clause boundaries. If we consider one of Semino's authentic examples, where a blogger writes *to diffuse the big elephant in the room* and then remarks on this being a mixed metaphor, we can see that all three accounts would agree, since the conventional metaphors of *diffusing* and *elephant in the room* are used in a single clause, which helps bring their clashing literal meanings to the attention of the reader. However, in the majority of Semino's cases of self-assessed mixed metaphors, this either involved concepts from the same source domain (e.g. *at my fingertips*, *on the tip of my tongue*), or did not involve two metaphors at all, but expressions like *heirs to the Communist throne*, giving rise to "partial and awkward overlap between the topic and source domain" (p. 218). Further, most examples occurred *across* clause boundaries. While Semino is careful not to overstate the implications of this quantitatively limited analysis of the "folk concept" of mixed metaphor for theory, she offers important evidence that the latter would need to deal with, one of which is that people are (surprisingly) often "consciously aware of potential incongruities in theirs and others' language choices" (p. 221).

Based on a different corpus study, Charteris-Black (Chapter 8), analyses metaphor combinations in interviews with people who have experienced chronic pain, and proposes the superordinate category "complex metaphor", which involves metaphor combinations that range from (a) fully consistent "repeated" metaphors, (b) more ("extended") or (c) less ("elaborated") compatible metaphors, to (d) "semantically divergent" mixed metaphors. The data suggest an interesting (iconic) correlation: "the greater the semantic divergence of the metaphor source domains, the more intense the embodied experience of pain, and the greater the

agency of the pain rather than the speaker" (p. 155). This allows the author to characterize the use of the (complex) metaphors by the patients as *purposeful*, in the sense of adequately reflecting their experiences and being communicatively efficacious, even if this "may not be something of which the speakers are *fully* conscious" (p. 159, our emphasis).

MacArthur (Chapter 7) also extends the scope of the phenomenon by analysing the attempts of Spanish learners of English to integrate metaphors (and corresponding cultural knowledge) from their first language into their learner discourse, which often results in what she calls "hybrid metaphors". For example, one may first use the standard expression *travel broadens the mind*, and later extend this with the non-idiomatic (and thus novel) expression *this can open your mind*. MacArthur argues against the customary condemnation of such practice in foreign language teaching, since it is often creative and communicatively successful, especially when considering that English functions as a medium for international communication. Such hybrid metaphors can sometimes lead to clashes and confusing infelicities, but these can be mitigated "when conscious attention is paid to language production" and by "helping learners to use metaphor more effectively, rather than simply encouraging them to parrot the conventional metaphors of a foreign language and culture" (p. 151).

Paradis and Hommerberg (Chapter 9) are not so much concerned with mixing metaphors as with the 'mixing' of the perceptual senses/modalities of vision, smell, touch and taste in wine tasting, and with the verbal descriptions of these experiences by wine reviewers. The data includes terms like *soft*, which the authors view as inherently cross-modal rather than metaphorical as "no conceptual primacy exists in the realm of sensory perceptions" (p. 190). Still, the descriptions of the extended 'imagery' present in some reviews include many cases that could have led to clashes, like *this blockbuster reminds me of Mohammed Ali*, if it were not the case that the reviewers systematically used similes as a device to mitigate against this. In fact, it is hard to find a single example that involves a clear case of 'incoherent' mixed metaphor with incongruity between source concepts. The authors discuss one possible candidate, combining *lush* and *sensual*, but conclude that in the context both terms concern WOMAN, from the (intended) "male, heterosexual perspective" (p. 194).

A different kind of potential extension of the domain of mixed metaphors is discussed by Forceville (Chapter 11), who considers metaphors in pictures (with or without language) and film in six briefly described case studies. His conclusions are that all these involve combinations of two or more source domains, which can be analysed (with the help of blending theory) as creative "hybrids that were intentionally created" (p. 234), which do not involve the "unintended humorous results" (p. 223) of typical mixed metaphors. He proposes that one of the reasons

why pictorial metaphors are blended rather than mixed is that pictures lack *grammar*, and that those who use the term 'visual grammar' do so metaphorically, deliberately or not.

Finally for this group Naciscione (Chapter 12) also discusses one case of *verbo-pictorial* metaphor (a term we prefer than 'multimodal', as the latter conflates sensory modalities and semiotic systems) but focuses on English literary texts. Her main claim is that these include multiple cases of "extended metaphor", defined as a "pattern involving a string of metaphorical sub-images sustained and linked together by the base metaphor, creating a cohesive network of associative and metonymic ties" (p. 245). By "base metaphor", she means phrases like *a silver lining*, which are both conventional and (relatively) stable, and yet metaphorically extendable. But as this definition implies, such "cohesive networks" do not involve clashes. Naciscione is in general sceptical about the notion of mixed metaphors which she attributes to linguistic prescriptivism, and concludes that "the question why two metaphors cannot be used in one context if they come from different conceptual domains has not been answered by mixed metaphor theorists yet" (p. 261).

This leads us naturally to the chapters that *do* attempt to provide answers on the basis of different theoretical models. Kövecses (Chapter 1) takes on the task to "save the CMT view of metaphor comprehension" (p. 11) in the case of apparent mixed metaphors like (a) *the surest way people bind themselves* and (b) *a whole sea of immigrant body-builders who are coming here to run for office*. In neither case do speakers experience any clash of "incongruous images" (p. 6) that should according to the theory be mapped over from the respective source domain: PATH and JOINING in (a), and SEA and RACE in (b). Kövecses proposes a four-step argument: (1) all target domain concepts have "aspects" that can be mapped onto from independent sources; (2) such mappings are more or less conventional; (3) the latter "are correlated with differing degrees of neural activation" (p. 12) and (4) this activation needs to pass a certain threshold before it can result in conscious imagery. So if the 'mappings' involved in (a) and (b) are less conventional (which seems rather counter-intuitive), CMT would predict that no experienced conceptual clash would occur. But is such a complex explanation better than the more traditional account that would suggest that *way* and *run for office* are here simply not used metaphorically? Kövecses asks for psycho- and neurolinguistic evidence to resolve this, but it is rather unclear how the 'threshold' in question could be operationalized. Further, the author also discusses cases like parables and analogies where the source-to-target mappings are *intended* to be recognized. But such cases (as Naciscione's "extended metaphors") typically involve 'homogeneous discourse' *without* mixed metaphors.

The issue of context is emphasized by Cameron (Chapter 2), who addresses the topic from the perspective of discourse dynamics, according to which "large scale systematic metaphors… emerge from repeated instances of use in dialogue and interaction" (p. 28). Her main point is that while "multiple metaphors" are used in discourse, these do not deserve to be regarded as 'mixed', because more subtle analysis shows that they actually cohere even when they at first glance may appear not to. Based on examples from an emotionally charged series of dialogues between a bomber and a victim aiming at reconciliation, Cameron shows how the different metaphors in expressions like *cycle of bitterness* or *come face-to-face with that price* can naturally combine, as they have been previously grounded in the discourse. The most complex cases involve the active 'layering' of one metaphor on top of another, as in *my healing journey*, where the discourse evidence suggests that recovering from trauma as "healing" was established before it could be combined with the "journey" of understanding the perspective of the Other. Here, and in the subsequent summary of her analysis of empathy in terms of "deliberate and reflective use of metaphor" (p. 25), the chapter offers support for the position that conscious awareness of metaphoricity is essential for speakers and theorists alike.

Müller (Chapter 3) offers something of a synthesis of the perspectives of the previous two chapters. Her dynamic view of mixing or rather 'blending' metaphors, presents the phenomenon as an inevitable "consequence of shifting one's attention to uncommon aspects of metaphorical meaning" (p. 31). Like Kövecses, she regards the standard notion of 'dead metaphors' as simplistic, and its analysis of mixed metaphors as contradictory: if indeed, such expressions have lost all their metaphoricity there would be no need to warn against 'mixing' them. In contrast, she advocates the meta-metaphorical cline between "sleeping" and "waking" metaphors, with the level of metaphoricity not being pre-given, but dynamically assessed in context. Thus, Müller is sympathetic to Cameron's approach, with its sensitivity to contextual construal, but aims to make it even more dynamic, claiming that "metaphors come to exist only in the moment", involving "different levels and forms of consciousness" (p. 50). One of her examples of mixed metaphors (all taken from the secondary literature, which is rather unfortunate for her context-oriented approach) is the sentence *the butter mountain has been in the pipeline for some time*. Rather than focusing on the incongruity of the image of a solid mountain somehow transmitted through a pipeline, the speaker's attention seems to be directed to the more "general idea that there has been some kind of entity that has been awaiting distribution for a long time" (p. 42); to the extent that the addressee can understand this, the more specific, and potentially clashing aspects become irrelevant.

Barnden (Chapter 5) first introduces and updates his theory of metaphor (comprehension), implemented as the program *ATT-Meta*, and then applies it to

metaphor combinations "including felicitous compounding, not only infelicitous mixes such as when there are unintended comical effects" (p. 75). The chapter is nearly twice as long as most of the others, understandably given that Barnden needs both to explain the apparatus of the model and to compare it with better-known models like CMT and blending theory. In a nutshell, the model adopts a "pretence-based approach", according to which the literal meanings of words, as well as inferences that follow from them, are taken in as-if mode and eventually mapped over to "reality space" by a combination of very general "correspondence rules" and "view-neutral mapping adjuncts". For example, *an angry dark cloud hanging over a person's head* could be interpreted as being depressed over some persistent thought. Crucially, there is nothing in the model that corresponds to the stable cross-domain mappings of CMT, but rather (a) rich pragmatic knowledge, (b) general transfer rules/schemas, and (c) more or less general analogy-making from pretence to reality. While the model can show that most cases of apparent mixing can be given coherent interpretations, it can also account for incongruity when "the speaker does not seem to have noticed a clash" (p. 103). Yet, given that lexicalization can differ across speakers, and literal meaning can be more or less active depending on context, the model predicts much variability in the interpretation of mixed metaphors.

In contrast, Steen (Chapter 6), proposes a much more specific prediction: that the experience of "a noticeable clash between the non-metaphorical meanings of two metaphorical uses of words within one relevant grammatical discourse frame" (p. 115) arises when at least one of them is *intended* by the speaker to be recognized as a metaphor, leaving "traces of this intention in the language" (p. 125). The author provides examples like *trials were but the visible tip of an archipelago of repression* where the iceberg metaphor is rather incongruently combined with that of an archipelago, possibly meant to evoke the title of Solzhenitzyn's novel *Gulag Archipelago*. Thus, Steen argues that it is not the conventionality or lexicalization of a given metaphorical expression that predicts clash-experience, but *deliberateness*. But even if the latter notion is operationalized with the help of 'traces', whether the (intended) literal meaning would be 'activated' or if interpretation would be made directly on the metaphorical level (as, e.g. in Müller's analysis), seems to remain a highly contingent matter, so there appears to be ample space for the kind of indeterminacy discussed by Barnden.

The diversity of mixed metaphors and the need for actively making sense of them in context are also in focus in the chapter by Lonergan and Gibbs (Chapter 4). The authors examined 9 extracts from the "Block that Metaphor" column in "The New Yorker", which they analysed in terms of 62 different expressions (p. 61), apparently the component clauses or sentences. Using an (underspecified) extension of MIP (Pragglejaz, 2007) the authors moved from establishing the

metaphoricity of individual *words* (20–25% of the corpus) to that of the analysed *phrases*, all of which were found to be metaphorical, which is rather surprising as the corpus in the Appendix has a good number of sentences like *I don't care if it's $100*. When they searched for these phrases with variations in the British National Corpus they found that the majority had been used as metaphors and could thus be regarded as conventional. The way they were presented in the excerpts was, however, novel and indeed involved a combination of different source and target domains, confirming the pre-theoretical judgement that the excerpts contained mixed metaphors. Yet, in a follow-up study participants seemed to converge on appropriate and similar interpretations of the various phrases, apparently on the basis of "ancillary assumptions and beliefs about the specific source domains" (p. 67). The authors see this as calling for "an important revision of conceptual metaphor theory for handling creative metaphor use" (p. 61): mixed metaphor comprehension involves not so much the activation of pre-stored 'mappings', but on-line reasoning based on cultural knowledge and context, which is a proposal that is consistent with those of Cameron, Barnden and Müller.

Where does the book, and this discussion, bring us with understanding the phenomenon of mixed metaphors and the ability of current metaphor theory to explain it? First, we have learned that metaphors can indeed be flexibly combined in a variety of ways: in discourse and even in single clauses, within and across languages, and across language and other semiotic systems such as still and moving pictures. Second, we can conclude that while a wholesale negative attitude is mistaken, an equally totalizing positive attitude is also simplistic, as some cases indeed involve undesirable clashes in imagery due to different levels of lexicalization and deliberation (i.e. conscious attention) by users and interpreters. Third, whether or not a clash will be experienced is dependent crucially on the context in which metaphors are used (including background knowledge, discourse, grammar, medium). Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, as we have noted repeatedly in our summaries, both metaphor users and interpreters are very often *conscious* of metaphorical meaning-making, for the most part avoiding clashes, and when this happens, using it for rhetorical effects, or mitigating it by using 'traces' of their intentions, such as similes.

When it comes to metaphor theory, all this implies the need for more integrative models, combining the flexibility of cognition with the sensitivity of discourse context, and embracing the richness of human consciousness, rather than seeking simple explanations. The 'mixed metaphor test' can indeed help us move further in this direction.

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