Charteris-Black, J. (2017). *Fire Metaphors: Discourses of Awe and Authority.* **London: Bloomsbury. 238pp. ISBN 9781472532541 (HB).**

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Charteris-Black's latest monograph "Fire metaphors: Discourses of awe and authority" (2017) opens with dramatic reference to an act of self-immolation that provoked the wave of civil protests in the Middle East in 2010 now known as the 'Arab Spring'. Framed as a 'spark' which 'ignited' a tinderbox of civil unrest, this opening reference is remarkably effective given the aims and scope of the book. Firstly, it highlights the pervasiveness of fire metaphors in our conceptual and linguistic representations of power play. Secondly, it illustrates how the choice of which fire-related lexical items to employ in any given context is itself ideologically-bound. Describing the above-mentioned act of self-immolation as a 'spark' is not simply suggesting this was the cause of the 'Arab Spring'; it is, rather, activating additional meanings which suggest lack of intention, lack of control and, given the usual negative outcome of unintended and uncontrolled events in the natural course of fire, destructive consequences. The civil disobedience arising from this act, then, is not represented as requiring political invention or negotiation, but rather as an unfortunate consequence which must be controlled, contained and extinguished. Finally, reference to this internationally-significant event showcases how fire itself can be used as an act of defiance by the disenfranchised.

In its analytical focus on religious and political discourse, the book appears to have arisen rather organically from the author's previous work on conceptual metaphor use (c.f. 2004; 2011; 2014). However, this book's aim is to identify the exclusive role of *fire* metaphors in the language of power, with a focus on religious discourse – or what the author has reframed as "discourses of awe" – and political discourse – "discourses of authority" – and how the

language of the former has shaped the latter. As Charteris-Black notes (p. 6), discourses of authority have long been an object of study by those concerned with the structures that facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of power, and investigation of the rhetorical role of metaphor in such discourses likewise has some precedent. The author's decision to focus solely on fire metaphors initially appears somewhat problematic, particularly given his previous finding that fire is not among the most commonly employed source domains in metaphors of power, particularly within political discourse (Charteris-Black, 2011). However, the importance of an extended study on fire is well rationalised through extended consideration of the nature of fire and of its integral place in the human narrative. We, as a species, are "touched by fire" (Pyne, 2001, p. 24); by freeing up time previously spent hunting and foraging for food, fire is, Charteris-Black asserts, responsible for both our physical and cognitive development (p. 7). He illustrates that fire is a rich source domain with a range of diverse and often challenging characteristics that we draw upon to structure our thinking on a great many concepts. Fire is the ultimate agent of change, capable of transforming solid objects into ashes. It is "conceptually ambiguous" (p. 6); simultaneously both giver of heat and light and destroyer of things, perceived as alive and yet not alive, the contradictions of which such ambiguity is comprised, and our human endeavours to both negotiate and understand it, require much further interrogation (p. 3). Using a corpus analysis Charteris-Black shows that the word *spread* is most often collocated with words from the domains of language, disease, authority and fire, thereby proving a crucial conceptual link between these domains. As the most visceral, fire is our prototypical example of a 'thing that spreads', the chief cognitive reference point according to which we conceptualise the more abstract spread of language, disease and authority. Finally, Charteris-Black emphasises the close parallels between metaphor *and* fire:

> "Metaphor is …, metaphorically speaking, fire in language. Just as fire transforms the visible material world into something immaterial and less visible, so metaphor shifts the sense of words away from their visible, material senses towards invisible, immaterial senses. Fire is therefore the perfect model for how metaphor works." (p. 9)

It is clear throughout this book that such a narrow linguistic focus, while initially appearing prohibitively restrictive, actually facilitates greater familiarity with both this particular metaphor type and the broader conceptual constructs underpinning its use, enabling a wider understanding of the role conceptual structures play in linguistic representation of the social world. The book's value resides in its enhancement not only of our existing understanding of human conceptualisation but also of the intricate relationship between cognition, language and social action. This desired outcome is largely achieved through a methodological approach which couples macro-investigation of large corpora with impressively detailed and nuanced micro-analysis of individual instantiations of fire metaphors.

This methodology involves initial identification of what Charteris-Black labels the "core fire lexicon", those words that are part of both the semantic field of fire (terms conceptually associated with fire) and the lexical field of fire (lexical realisations of these concepts which differ across languages) and which cover fire's origins, properties and effects. This core fire lexicon is divided into three categories. Natural Fire refers to terms representing fire as a natural phenomenon and hence includes those properties over which humans have little or no control, such as fire's properties and appearance. Functional Fire includes terms relating to the effects of fire, such as its output of light and heat. Finally, Organic Fire terms reference the process of igniting, maintaining and extinguishing a fire, all of which are perceived as organic stages in its lifespan. Charteris-Black refers to difficulties in categorising some of the more fluid terms such as 'heat' and 'smoke' which can be placed in the first or second categories depending on whether they act as nouns or verbs (p. 31), and indeed categorisation of any nature is always contentious to some degree. A potential issue in this case, for example, is that the effects of fire are solely included within the Functional Fire category, which implies that, while humans have little control over the properties of fire, they have control over the effects of fire, which is not always the case (e.g. fire on a domestic hearth

versus wildfire); similarly the natural properties of fire captured by the category of Natural Fire determine its life cycle, which is represented by the separate category of Organic Fire. However, as above, contentions in categorisation are inevitable and the important thing here is the transparency and consistency with which the author classifies the terms in the core fire lexicon. Following this, Charteris-Black adopts a corpus approach to identify how terms from the core fire lexicon are utilised in a wide range of religious and political texts. Discourses of awe are investigated through consideration of the Bible, the Jewish Torah, the Qu'ran, Zoroastrianism's Avesta, and the Hindu sacred texts the Rig Veda and the Upanishads while discourses of authority are explored through reference to *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* and a sample of relatively contemporary British and American political speeches. Fire terms used in a metaphorical context are focused upon, with frequency of use and collocation informing analysis of each metaphor.

The book has a tri-partite structure. Part 1 lays the groundwork in its focus on the nature of fire; its outline of the study's methodological approach and how it provides a means of interrogating the connections between fire and human thought; and its detailed analysis of the use of fire as a source domain in the description of emotions, emphasising the activation of the key mapped element of transmitted force. The final chapter in this first part is particularly noteworthy in that it sets itself the task of identifying those elements of fire metaphors which make them ideal for appropriation into discourses of awe and authority. Effectively, Charteris-Black concludes, fire metaphors enable better understanding of how humans conceptualise their emotions. Just like a physical fire, emotions are construed as forces which have an effect on our bodies, most often in terms of bodily temperature (discomfort may make us feel 'hot under the collar' while one can be 'left cold' by shock), resulting in the conceptual metaphor EMOTION IS FIRE. Charteris-Black identifies those key words from the fire lexicon most likely to describe the causes and effects of emotion and considers individual instances of use

in order to construct their underlying conceptual metaphors and reveal how we cognitively link these source and target domains. The terms 'spark' and 'kindle', for example, are among those most commonly used to represent the *cause* of an emotion (p. 42), while 'consume', 'scorch' and 'burn' are most likely to capture its *effects* (p. 46). Anger is the emotion most strongly linked with fire – we frequently use metaphors of fire to describe states of anger e.g. 'burning with rage' – and analysis of how we metaphorically represent anger reveals much about the predominant conceptual frames underlying our representations of emotion more generally. The strong links between anger and fire are most likely due, as the author asserts (p. 49), to the heavily embodied nature of this emotion which creates a rise in temperature in the body, just as fire does, thereby offering support to Conceptual Metaphor Theory's core argument that metaphor use arises from such universal experiences. However, Charteris-Black's investigation of particular fire metaphors suggests that, in certain instances, historical and cultural factors, not merely universal experiences, can effect metaphor use. For example, he finds that "[w]hen fire metaphors are used to describe the *destructive* effect of fire, this is influenced by cultural-historical factors rather than by the universal 'embodied experience' of cognitive linguists that account for [the use of fire metaphors] for descriptions of emotional or physical pain" (p. 49). Thus fire is construed as being an immensely rich source domain ideal for creating discourses of awe and authority precisely *because* of its origins in *both* universal *and* historical / cultural human experience (p. 42).

Charteris-Black also succeeds in illustrating that many fire metaphors originate from metonymic relationships; in 'burning with rage', for example, the metaphoric effect of the emotion ('to burn') only stands for the cause of the emotion (metaphoric fire) revealing the underlying frame EFFECT (STANDS) FOR CAUSE. As the effect of burning is itself a force, such fire metaphors also manifest the EFFECTS ARE FORCES metaphoric conceptual frame. Both frames rely upon the 'master' frame EMOTIONS ARE FORCES proposed by Kövecses

(2008, p. 385) and they prompt Charteris-Black to similarly adopt Kövecses' *force dynamics* approach, an approach used in much cognitive linguistic thinking to emphasise the importance of embodied experience to conceptualisation by construing entities as related to one another in terms of energy and its expenditure. In doing so, the author aims to improve upon Lakoff's "rather static" (p. 59) original mappings-based approach by illustrating how emotions of varying levels of intensity can act as a force (antagonist) upon their possessor (agonist); as a result, his examples are not only enlivened but more effectively illustrate the dynamic nature of the relationships in question. Recognition that different terms from within the *same* semantic field of the fire lexicon can be employed to represent *differing* levels of emotional strength – for example, 'she had a *meltdown*' suggests a much stronger emotional response than 'her heart *melted*' – prompts the author to formulate and extend the conceptual metaphor LEVEL OF INTENSITY OF AN EMOTION IS THE LEVEL OF INTENSITY OF A FIRE which results in the creation of two further and, crucially, more generalised frames whose usefulness is very convincingly argued: CONTROLLED EMOTION IS MODERATE TEMPERATURE and UNCONTROLLED EMOTION IS EXTREME TEMPERATURE (p. 54). These and many of the other frames identified by Charteris-Black in this chapter reappear in the interrogation of religious and political discourse which comprises Parts Two and Three of the book respectively, and it is the rigorously undertaken and detailed analysis of Part 2 in particular that, in my opinion, steals the show.

In the context of religious discourse, Charteris-Black assumes as his starting point that metaphor is "the natural language through which religious faith is communicated" (p. 68). He then demonstrates that fire is discursively constructed as an element that evokes both awe and (often as a consequence) authority and illustrates that variations in how fire is conceptualised are reflected in the fire metaphors identified in his corpora of religious texts. In pantheistic religions such as Hinduism, fire was a gift *from* the Gods while in Christianity and Islam,

martyrs could offer themselves up as a gift *to* God through sacrificial fire, a simultaneously agentive act by which they subverted hierarchical religious power. Fire either *symbolically* represents God and divine power (for example in the monotheistic Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam) or actually *constitutes* God (in Zoroastrianism's cult of fire, for instance), and it is this equation of fire with the divine that results in the symbolic use of fire to represent spiritual knowledge, and, by extension, creates the fire metaphors used to transmit this knowledge (p. 67). Charteris-Black first analyses fire metaphors in the Bible, the Torah and The Qur'an as a means of tracing how fire's role in religious discourse transitions from its physical manifestation in the form of "Sacred Fire" – i.e. lightening fire perceived as a divine gift and preserved as "a means of sacrifice, ritual and power" – to fulfilling a purely symbolic role as "a metaphor for the survival and extension of the faith" (70). As metaphor use reflects textual ideology, his findings naturally vary across religions. Particularly noteworthy is his assertion that the New Testament's representation of divine presence through metaphors of light (particularly JESUS IS LIGHT and SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT) – a departure from the Old Testament in which not only divine presence but also divine wrath and retribution are represented through fire – not only differentiates Christianity from Islam (in which fire is still used to represent divine retribution) but may also have its origins in Zoroastrianism (p. 88). This demonstrates how fire has conceptually transitioned from a marker of divine wrath, a discourse of authority, to a marker of a discourse of awe. Detailed investigation into the use of fire metaphors in the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism and Hinduism also reveal a significant, though gradual, change in the representation of fire. The Avesta is almost entirely devoid of metaphoric references to fire because Zoroastrians believe that certain types of Sacred Fire *are* the divine (symbolic), not merely (metaphoric) representations of it. The earlier Hindu Rig Veda constitutes something of a mid-point as it contains a dense range of complicated fire metaphors but they are chiefly concerned with one topic: the rituals through

which poet-priests tending a Sacred Fire pay homage through discourses of awe which simultaneously act as discourses of authority in their reassertion of Brahmanic power and superiority. This constitutes one of the most convincing illustrations of the confluence and symbiosis characteristic of Charteris-Black's twinned discourses of awe and authority. The later Hindu Upanishads are concerned with the dissemination of 'true' spiritual knowledge which they encourage followers to access directly, rather than through the specialist knowledge of Brahmans; as such, those fire metaphors found in the Upanishads function to explain complex religious beliefs. Charteris-Black briefly wonders which of these linguistic strategies is the most effective as a discourse of awe and rightly concludes that success largely depends on highly complex patterns of individual cognitive, social, psychological, theological and, ultimately untestable, difference.

Part Three's opening investigation of the sixteenth-century English Protestant text known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* offers an appropriate bridge between Part Two's focus on religious and Part Three's focus on political discourse. The text's purpose is to establish its Protestant martyrs as latter-day saints (p. 134) and hence the book itself acts as the site for the convergence of an implicit discourse of awe with an explicit discourse of authority, in both of which fire plays a pivotal role. As interesting as this text is, its use of fire metaphors is perhaps more predictable: there is little positive semantic prosody attached to fire due to its prevalence as a force for (usually human) destruction throughout. Rather, it becomes a "metonym for tyrannical authority" (p. 141), though an authority which can be overthrown by a victim who willingly embraces death as a form of spiritual salvation, thereby becoming active participant in his/her own destruction. Such acts, as the author concludes, reveal this text as one in which "the discourse of authority was … challenged by re-invoking a sense of awe, not for the fire itself but for the spiritual courage of those who endured its inflictions on their bodies" (153).

The purpose of the two adjoining – and rather similar – chapters on British and American political rhetoric is to demonstrate how politicians seek power through appropriation of discourses of authority, as the author demonstrates through initial identification and subsequent tracing of what he illustrates are recurring conceptual frames of fire within his corpora of political speeches. While there are substantially more fire metaphors in the corpus of American political speeches, which Charteris-Black attributes, not wholly convincingly, to their greater experience of "*actual* fire" (p. 181), the countries' shared historical and cultural context appears to be responsible for the similarities in fire metaphor use: the categories of Natural Fire and Organic Fire, for example, have positive associations in both cases, though they tend to be utilised in discourses of awe in American speeches and discourses of authority in British speeches. Overall, the idealism underpinning American political rhetoric (and exemplified in frames including PURIFICATION IS FIRE and FREEDOM IS FIRE) is provided as the reason for their heavier reliance on discourses of awe, a discursive strategy employed by Churchill which may have altered the path of world history (p. 200). Charteris-Black also identifies politicians' individual preferences for fire metaphor use – Corbyn, for example, tends to frequently use the Organic Fire term 'fuelled' – findings which could make for a very interesting satellite study given the current political climate.

The final chapter focuses on representations of anger through verbal and visual metaphors of fire found in British political cartoons, and draws chiefly upon those conceptual frames outlined in Part One of the volume: EMOTION IS FIRE and EMOTION IS A FORCE. While their analysis is original and insightful, it somewhat lacks the rigour and analytical detail characteristic of the preceding chapters. Nonetheless, it does serve to highlight how such "anti-authoritarian" discourse is constructed and gently hints that an inability to distinguish discourses of awe from those of authority is responsible for the recent targeting of journalists who satirise religious figures, most notably the *Charlie Hebdo* killings in 2015. In particular,

the author notes that fire's 'newsworthiness' (p. 211) as a conceptual source domain contributes towards the creation of multiple narrative themes – or cognitive scripts – including culturally familiar phrases and events; again, localised historical and cultural experience appears more important to metaphor creation in these instances than universal experience.

The focus of this monograph is quite esoteric and the inevitable consequence of its impressive level of analytical detail is that its links to the book's overall aim can sometimes become obscured. Also, while the author asserts that discourses of authority often originate in discourses of awe, at times there are cross-overs between discourses of awe and those of authority which bear further investigation and a more sustained consideration of how the former results in the latter more generally could be helpful (although there is some interesting micro-detail on this topic; c.f. p. 113). The absence of a concluding section to the book might also be perceived as a missed opportunity to tie multiple fascinating intellectual threads together. Overall, however, there is little doubt as to the contribution this monograph makes to the field: not only does it enhance our understanding of how we conceptualise fire – an element instrumental in our physical and cognitive development – but also proves how the intricacies of metaphoric thinking have and will continue to shape some of the most crucial aspects of the world in which we live.

References

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