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Translating Metaphor in Yōko Tawada's *Yōgisha no yakōressha* (Suspects on a Night Train)

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Abstract

The translation of metaphorical expressions across languages and cultures is challenging because it involves shifting between different linguistic, cultural and conceptual frames of reference. Moreover, in literature, metaphor is usually an important element of style giving rise to a range of cognitive effects that often vary according to each reader's interpretation. This paper explores the key considerations for translators when formulating strategies to render metaphorical expressions, drawing on ideas from conceptual metaphor theory and translation studies. Arguing for an approach that focusses on the function of metaphor and the stylistic effects, I apply this to my own translation of Yōko Tawada's award-winning Japanese novel, *Yōgisha no yakōressha* [Suspects on a Night Train]. I present examples from the translation, identifying the reasons for my strategies based on the foregoing theoretical discussion, my analysis of Tawada's style and her own views about translation.

Introduction

Metaphor is a key way in which writers express their style, build their themes and create emotive effect. Translating metaphor poses difficulties because of its sensitivity to the communicative context, often relying on the author and reader having shared linguistic and cultural frames of reference (Dobrzynska 1995). Translators therefore need to exercise creativity in formulating strategies that focus on replicating the function of metaphor rather than lexical meaning, and allow various possible interpretations of metaphorical effects. After reviewing the key literature on the nature of metaphor and metaphor translation, I will elucidate several important considerations for translators to refer to when developing their approach to metaphor translation and apply these to my own practice when translating a Japanese literary text into English. This text is *Yōgisha no yakōressha* (Suspects on a Night Train) by Japanese-German writer Yōko Tawada and has been chosen because of the thematic and stylistic importance of metaphor.

Theory of metaphor

The following section outlines some aspects of metaphor theory, not to provide a comprehensive overview of developments in this field, but to enable me to highlight some implications for the translation, particularly those deriving from the cognitive view of metaphor.

The nature of metaphor has been extensively theorised since Aristotle's *Poetics*, the traditional perspective being that metaphor was purely a matter of language; words representing one concept were used outside their ordinary meaning to express another concept, which was in some way "similar". Metaphor was mainly studied by linguists and literary critics within the discipline of rhetoric, together with other linguistic tropes. In Abrams and Harpham's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2015), metaphor is grouped

with other figurative uses such as simile, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, hyperbole, irony, etc. and provides that “in a metaphor, a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting comparison” (133). This perspective assumes that the metaphor can be reworded as a statement of literal similarity without losing any of the information it conveys. In his influential 1956 paper entitled “The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles”, Roman Jakobson claimed that metaphor is based on similarity, whereas metonym is based on contiguity, and that these are fundamental poles represented in language, literature, art and other facets of human behaviour.

Since the 1980s, the most prominent theory of metaphor has been the cognitive view. In their seminal work, *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) argued that metaphor is essentially not a linguistic phenomenon at all, but a conceptual one: a means of understanding one domain of experience in terms of another. This set of cross-domain mappings is termed a “conceptual metaphor” (4), and the linguistic manifestations are termed “metaphorical expressions” (7). Conceptual metaphors can be stated as TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN¹, for example, AN ARGUMENT IS WAR, and the individual metaphorical expressions that this conceptual mapping gives rise to in English are, for example: “your claims are *indefensible*”; “he *attacked every weak point* of my argument”, and so on.

The cognitive view also maintains that we tend to use concrete source domains to understand more abstract target domains, and that the relationship between source and target has an embodied experience at its core, for example AFFECTION IS WARMTH is based on the fact that the areas of the brain corresponding to affection and warmth are activated at the same time. The manifestations of metaphor may be based on the essential correspondences between source and target domains, such as in LOVE IS A JOURNEY, where the travellers are the lovers, the vehicle is the love relationship, the destination is the purpose of the relationship and so on. Further, they may be based on entailments of these elements (such as the breakdown of a vehicle signifying the breakdown of a relationship) (Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*).

Kövecses (“Recent Developments in Metaphor Theory”) discusses recent trends in how the theory has been developed and extended. He proposes the idea of “main meaning focus” to explain why, when we encounter the sentence “that surgeon is a butcher”, we map the feature of sloppiness or carelessness onto the surgeon, despite the fact that this is not an inherent characteristic of butchers (17). The meaning focus can emerge “from the contrast of two concepts that are in a metaphorical relationship” (17).

Because of the experiential basis of conceptual metaphor, clearly it is affected by our physical and social-cultural environment. Furthermore, due to the patterns of mapping abstract (concrete, generic) specific, linguistic metaphorical expressions often embody analogies relevant for the particular cultural community. Thus, the degree of cross-cultural commonality in metaphor may depend on the extent to which the conceptual metaphor derives from universal human experience or physiology and also the level of metaphor analysis (conceptual or linguistic). For example, in a study of eight unrelated languages, expressions consistent with ANGER IS HEAT or ANGER IS A PRESSURIZED GAS/LIQUID IN A CONTAINER could be found in varying forms in all languages (Kövecses, *Metaphor*). This is likely a result of common human bodily sensations when becoming angry. Thus, in English we say “he makes my blood

¹ Lakoff and Johnson use capitalized font to distinguish conceptual metaphors from metaphorical expressions.

boil” and in Japanese a similar expression *harawata ga niekurikaeru* (my intestines are boiling) is used. But this also shows that at the specific level, conceptual metaphors and linguistic expressions are likely to be affected by the broader cultural context (Japanese tends to regard emotions as located in the stomach (*hara*), for example).

Ibarretxe-Antuñano (324) believes that metaphorical understanding combines both physical and cultural elements. In other words, there is a “cultural sieve” of beliefs, knowledge and worldviews which is an active mediating device through which physical experience is passed. Cultural factors make it easy to see why metaphorical concepts and uses change over time as a culture develops and comes into contact with other cultures, which has clear ramifications for translation.

Metaphorical expressions can be considered according to their degree of conventionality, from lexicalised “dead” metaphors or well-worn “stock” metaphors at the one end, to highly unconventional, “novel” metaphors at the other, and the latter are commonly seen in creative literary works. While the expressions used may be “novel”, however, they are frequently still a manifestation of a conventional metaphor at the conceptual level. In accordance with the view of literary language as “defamiliarizing”, poets extend, elaborate, question, or combine conceptual metaphors in a creative way that foregrounds the language used (Lakoff and Turner). By doing so, literary metaphor can have a powerful cognitive effect on readers, generating an emotive response or a flash of insight.

However, Steen (1994) points out that readers may not in fact access conceptual metaphors in their mind when interpreting metaphorical expressions. In other words, highly conventionalized metaphorical expressions are often understood “directly”, without drawing on their conceptual basis, whereas novel metaphorical expressions usually require an active process of analogical reasoning by the reader, but this produces a new metaphorical mapping by the individual, without necessarily drawing on the knowledge structures of conceptual metaphor (17). The important point (for a discussion of translation as well) is that the cognitive effect on readers of the existence of conceptual metaphors is likely to vary.

Although in general, metaphor commonly expresses an abstract concept as something concrete, Oshima shows that some literary metaphors actually do the opposite. This may be done intentionally to create ambiguity and leave various interpretations open. Another example is that of implicit metaphor, in which the source domain that is being referred to by the target domain is unclear. Such cases, where the cognitive burden on readers is high, will pose issues for translators as well.

Translating metaphor

I have alluded to the potential cross-cultural challenges in translating metaphor, and noted that in literature, metaphorical expressions may be employed precisely for their element of surprise or ability to engender varying interpretations. Thus, the translator’s interpretation is only one possible interpretation, which he/she attempts to inscribe into the target language (TL).

Lawrence Venuti’s 2013 hermeneutic model of translation (*Translation Changes Everything*) enlightens us as to the nature of translation as interpretation. He overturns the commonly-held assumption that translation is about transferring an “invariant” (whether form, meaning or effect) from source to target, maintaining that any and all correspondences between source and target are shaped by the interpretation of the translator at every stage – from the choice of source text (ST) to every verbal choice (179). Furthermore, he argues that “because translation performs an

interpretation, it can never be literal, only figurative, or more precisely inscriptive of effects that work only in the translating language and culture” (179-80). In other words, translation decontextualizes by removing the text from its original intratextual, intertextual and receptive contexts, and recontextualizes it in a different environment, with inevitably different effects on the readers. Therefore, it is important to consider the agency of the translator and the bases for their linguistic and cultural choices, which Venuti calls the “interpretants” (181). So-called “formal interpretants” may include the translator’s concept of equivalence and their concept of style, while “thematic interpretants” may be values and beliefs associated with specific social groups, a certain discourse, or existing commentaries on the text. Moreover, interpretants “are always already implicated in the hierarchies of value that structure the receiving culture at a particular historical moment” (183), in other words, the prevalent translation “norms” (Toury). Recognising that each translation is provisional, Venuti argues that it is important for translators to be self-reflexive and able to give an account of their translation process, what interpretants they applied and why (246).

Turning now to the specific issue of metaphor translation, the literature up until 20 years ago is informed by linguistic approaches to metaphor and to translation equivalence and tends to be prescriptive. For example, Newmark (1980) provides seven translation strategies in order of preference as follows: (1) reproducing the same metaphorical image in the TL, provided the image has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate register; (2) replacing the source-language (SL) image with a standard TL image that does not clash with the TC; (3) translating a metaphor using a simile, retaining the image; (4) translating a metaphor (or simile) using a simile plus sense (or occasionally a metaphor plus sense); (5) converting metaphor to sense (paraphrasing); (6) deletion; and (7) using the same metaphor combined with sense (Newmark 95-97). Samaniego-Fernández, writing in 2013, (268-9) criticises this list as not based on real data and simply showing how the author would like metaphors to be translated, ignoring other possibilities such as those mentioned by Toury (25): translation of a non-metaphorical expression in the ST into a metaphor, and creation of a metaphor that does not exist in the ST. These latter strategies are important, particularly because they may be employed as a form of compensation for instances where ST metaphors could not be retained in the target text (TT), or a means of achieving a stylistic effect in cases of extended metaphor or a network of metaphor within the text. Nevertheless, Newmark makes some important points about the potential effects of each strategy, for example, that replacement of a SL metaphor with a different TL metaphor may produce different connotations and different registers; use of a simile in place of a metaphor may soften its “shock” or poetic effect, as will paraphrasing, which also inevitably restricts interpretation of the sense. Conversely, literal translation of a conventional metaphor may result in over-translation (96-99).

Unlike Newmark, Van den Broeck (1981) adopts a descriptive approach whereby translatability is said to hinge on the relevance of the metaphor to the communicative function of the text. Functional relevance does not necessarily depend on the type of metaphor, as a lexicalized metaphor may be made relevant such as when ambiguity between literal and figurative levels of signification is exploited for effect. Such cases are seen as less translatable especially when the functionally relevant feature is a formal part of the language itself, as in wordplay. Van den Broeck also notes that a “private” (novel) metaphor might operate as a violation of rules governing the SL linguistic system, but that does not mean that such a metaphor can always be translated easily by violating the TL rules in the same way. For example, if the expression depends

not only on the metaphoric possibilities but also on morphological characteristics or grammatical peculiarities of the SL, it might be difficult to translate into a TL with different characteristics. Differing cultural connotations as well as literary/aesthetic traditions in the respective cultures may also decrease translatability. Van den Broeck recognizes that the translatability of metaphor in individual texts is not an isolated issue, and will depend on its interaction and relationship with other textual elements as well as the literary and sociocultural context (86).

The cognitive approach to metaphor has been applied to translation only relatively recently. An important study was carried out in 2004 by Christina Schäffner who identified a range of translation strategies in her data (political texts) whereby the same basic conceptual metaphor was maintained across languages, even though the actual metaphorical expression was altered. For example, some translations portrayed a different aspect of the conceptual metaphor, expressed it more elaborately, or illustrated its entailments rather than its structural components (1265-7). Such strategies may successfully convey the desired cognitive effects that arise as a result of the underlying conceptual metaphor, while adjusting the surface level expression to cater for linguistic or cultural differences. Of course, to apply this in practice, translators need an awareness of the conceptual nature of metaphor and the ability to compare conceptual as well as linguistic metaphor across cultures, and should also be mindful of Steen's caution about the variable nature of effects deriving from conceptual metaphor.

When considering the cognitive effects of literary metaphor in the context of translation, Jean Boase-Beier's cognitive stylistics approach (2006) is a useful framework. Boase-Beier sees literary style (including metaphor) as a cognitive entity, not simply a linguistic one. Style consists of a "set of weak implicatures" (aspects of textual meaning which are suggested to a greater or lesser degree and are left fairly open to interpretation) (*A Critical Introduction* 9). Through its style, a literary text gives rise to cognitive effects on the reader such as the immediate feelings they experience and attribute to a character in the text, mental effects that arise from the search for meaning, and sometimes changes to knowledge or behaviour (108). Thus, "to translate style is to translate poetic effect, implicature, state of mind, attitude, and so on" (81). Importantly, this model does not assume that there is a fixed authorial intention that can be accessed by the reader/translator, but that the reader/translator will always construct their own interpretation of stylistic effects based on their individual cognitive context (including their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes) (Boase-Beier, *Stylistic Approaches* 63). In this respect, her theory is compatible with Venuti's hermeneutic model discussed above. Boase-Beier sees a literary translation as a 'blend' of the ST with an imaginary text in the target language (TL):

The translation does not displace or replace the original text, but the effects created by the translation are added to it, and result from the increased engagement with the text that its blended nature gives rise to. The voices in the original text are multiplied as the translator's voice is added, and the possibilities for interpretation may be enhanced by the translator's interpretation.

(Boase-Beier, *A Critical Introduction* 169)

Translator and scholar Chantal Wright, who published an experimental translation into English of a German prose text by Yōko Tawada, states in her introduction that she

adopted Boase-Beier's cognitive stylistics framework, concentrating not on transferring the formal features of the text but on translating the range of cognitive effects generated by the weak implicatures. She writes, "there is no guarantee that the range of effects I intend and the range of effects the reader finds in the translation will coincide, but I can nonetheless attempt to create a text in which a plurality of effects are in play" (Wright 29). Such an approach would encourage ST and TT readers to go through similar cognitive processes, such as exploring multiple meanings in response to an ambiguity (Boase-Beier, *Stylistic Approaches* 63) or performing cognitive mapping to interpret a novel metaphorical expression.

Case study: translating metaphor in *Yōgisha no yakōressha*

I will now apply the above considerations to the task of translating metaphorical expressions in Yōko Tawada's Japanese novel, *Yōgisha no yakōressha* (Suspects on a Night Train) (2002).²

Yōko Tawada

Born in Japan in 1960, Yōko Tawada moved to Germany when she was 22 and has since published prolifically in both Japanese and German including novels, collections of short stories and poetry, plays and essays. She has won multiple literary awards in both countries.

As a bilingual and exophonic writer (someone who writes in their non-native language),³ she frequently writes about living in more than one language and cultural tradition, and resists essentialist notions of identity and the link between language and national identity. Many of the characters in her fictional works are travellers, and lack a sense of national identity or "native" language despite the pressure from bureaucracies and those around them to assert their identifications.

Tawada's works in both Japanese and German are polyphonic, containing strands of multiple languages, images and intertextual references. In particular, she uses defamiliarizing techniques, such as wordplay that extends idioms in unique ways or taking grammatical concepts, such as German grammatical gender, literally. She also finds ways to make the Roman script and Japanese scripts interact with each other. In so doing she makes us question the "naturalness" of our native language and of the relation between word and referent. She says that she seeks to "find the poetic ravine (*shiteki na kyōkoku*) separating language A and language B and fall into it" (Tawada, *Ekusofonii* 32).

As her English translator, Margaret Mitsutani maintains, translators commonly find themselves caught between languages (Mitsutani, *Facing the Bridge* 35). But if we take Tawada's perspective, this "poetic ravine" is in fact an ideal space for translators, as well as writers to inhabit.

Tawada herself has written a number of essays and literary works on the theme of translation, notably her 1999 novella *Moji ishoku* (literally: "Transplanting Letters", translated by Margaret Mitsutani as *Saint George and the Translator*). She challenges the traditional distinction between translation and literary creation: if we consider that the existence of a true, authoritative and stable "original" is fundamentally an illusion, translation, just like writing is an interpretive and creative act. Tawada also highlights the process of translation as transformation; it brings about "displacement, distortion,

² I translated two chapters from the novel as part of my 2010 doctoral dissertation.

³ Tawada first used the term 'exophony' in her 2003 collection of essays: *Ekusofonii – bogo no soto e deru tabi* (Exophony: Traveling outside the mother tongue) 3-7.

hesitation, fluctuation, etc. Nothing is more stimulating than this for literature. Literature in translation plays a role of transforming” the target language (quoted in Suga 30). This also implies that no translation is final; any translation is simply one of any number of possible interpretations that gives a new life to the ST. Tawada (*Katakoto* 23) sees much potential in Walter Benjamin’s notion of fragments of multiple languages coming together through translation (Benjamin, “The Translator’s Task” 81). This may make translation visible, but it is exactly this defamiliarization of language through translation that is interesting and translators should be interventionist in their exploration of unique interpretations. Tawada believes that is only by shining light on the poetic ravine between languages rather than trying to bridge that gap that the heteroglossia inherent in any text and its translation can emerge. Thus, she defies the conventional conceptualisation of translation into source vs target binaries and encourages us to pay more attention to the “in-between space” of translation. These are important considerations informing my approach to translating Tawada.

Yōgisha no yakōressha

Yōgisha no yakōressha (Suspects on a Night Train) was published in 2002, earning Tawada two Japanese literary awards⁴. It has been translated into French and Russian, but only one of the thirteen largely self-contained “chapters” has been translated into English⁵, so all quotes that follow are my translation. In each chapter the main protagonist is “you” (*anata*); that is, the whole novel is written in the second person. The only other area of consistency among the chapters is that “you” are characterised as some kind of performing artist and “you” are travelling somewhere, usually on a night train. The destination is given as the name of the chapter. Most of the episodes describe the incidents and unusual things that happen to you on the trains and at stations, and the various people you encounter. Your travel plans are frequently interrupted, making you frustrated and bewildered. Where is your next destination? Will you ever reach it? And who are “you” anyway? This theme of shifting, uncertain identities is played out throughout the novel.

There is an ongoing conflict between your existence “in the second person” without a fixed identity and the systems and expectations that require you to belong somewhere. This conflict is brought to a climax in “To Bombay” when you realise, once already on the train, that the passport you are carrying is not your own.

The presence of *yōgisha* (suspect or suspects) and the feeling of suspicion is a feature of many of the stories, represented by Tawada through the strategic use of surrealism, and through the defamiliarization of language, as described below. Through the surrogate experience of being “you”, travelling from place to place on a night train, the reader begins to feel unsure of their own identity, the “naturalness” of the language they commonly speak and their own norms and beliefs.

Translation approach and examples

Drawing on the foregoing theoretical discussion, the following points influence my approach to translating the metaphorical expressions in *Yōgisha no yakōressha*:

- 1) Metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon and is influenced by both physical and cultural experience.

⁴ The Tanizaki Prize and Ito Prize in 2002.

⁵ “To Zagreb” (translated by Margaret Mitsutani in *Granta* 131: The Map is not the Territory, Spring 2015 <https://granta.com/issues/granta-131-the-map-is-not-the-territory/>)

- 2) There may be more commonalities across cultures between basic conceptual metaphors than individual metaphorical expressions.
- 3) Metaphorical expressions in literature are an important feature of style, and give rise to cognitive effects on the reader. They are more likely to be novel creations and open to reader interpretation.
- 4) For translators, identifying cases where there is a clear underlying conceptual metaphor that is common to both cultures may enable translation strategies that retain the basic conceptual metaphor while altering the particular expression if necessary.
- 5) Translators need to consider the intratextual, intertextual and extratextual factors that give rise to the cognitive stylistic effects (weak implicatures) conveyed by metaphor. In particular, these would include the functional relevance of metaphorical expressions in the text, how they are linked with other metaphors, and how metaphor is used to convey themes, setting, characterisation, and other features of the work.
- 6) Focussing on the effects rather than strict adherence to form or content may encourage translators to be more experimental and creative in their strategies. At all times it is recognised that the act of translation is one of interpretation and of transformation: effects can never be “equivalent” between source and target. Nevertheless, translators can strive to keep a range of effects in play by choosing strategies that keep various interpretations open, sensitising readers to aspects of both their own language and culture and that of the ST, which they might not have considered.

The examples below are from my translation of the first chapter, “To Paris”. On many occasions in this work, Tawada uses Japanese idioms and proverbs in defamiliarizing ways to make readers think about the literal meaning behind the metaphorical expressions they use on a daily basis. She also frequently exploits the fact that kanji (Chinese ideograms) usually have more than one meaning to create puns. She makes us realise that language is not something innate and stable but very much conditional and malleable. As noted earlier, when faced with a common idiom (lexicalised metaphor) or kanji compound, most readers understand its meaning directly, but Tawada forces the reader to perform the conceptual mapping and consider the levels of signification. Lexicalized metaphors that have been made functionally relevant through wordplay are, as Van den Broeck argues, the hardest to translate (82-3). This was the case especially since proverbs and idioms have historical, intertextual and cultural origins which vary significantly between Japanese and English and the way double meanings and puns are achieved is inevitably different. Thus, a range of strategies were required, sometimes allowing the Japanese expression to influence the English, introducing readers to new linguistic forms and making them notice the language that way, and other times exploiting the English language and metaphorical concepts applicable to the target readership. However, because of the often-intricate nature of Tawada’s double meanings and the way they are woven into the story, sometimes it was necessary to prioritise either the literal or figurative meaning. Hence, a certain translation “loss” was sometimes unavoidable regarding a particular expression, but often this could be made up for with compensatory strategies such as introducing wordplay or a metaphor elsewhere to achieve the overall purpose of defamiliarizing language.

Example 1 (To Paris, p.18⁶)

Context: After your travel is disrupted by a railway strike and your performance cancelled, you are taking a bus back home, looking out of the window at a herd of cows.

ST: 夜行で行って、美味しいギャラをもらって、夜行で帰るつもりが、とんだ旅行になってしまった。野心の野原は焼け野原、牛の群れに混ざって、のんびり草でも噛んでいた方がましだった。

Back-translation: You had planned to go by the night train, earn a tasty fee and return by the night train, but the trip had turned out dreadfully. The fields of ambition are a burnt-out wasteland, it would have been better to mix with the cattle herd and lazily chew grass.

TT: You had planned to travel by the night train, earn a juicy fee, and return by the night train. But what a nightmare it had become! The land of ambition is a burnt-out wasteland; you would have been better off staying with the cows, lazily chewing the cud.

First of all, although the Japanese does not use the word “nightmare” to describe the trip, I chose this idiomatic expression because of the pun and rhythm that could be effected by the three repetitions of “night”, which also compensates for the inevitable weakening of the wordplay in the second sentence. In the Japanese, there is a kanji-based pun since the first character of the word for ambition (野心) and the word for fields or plains (野原) is the same (although it is pronounced differently), so saying “fields/plains of ambition” in Japanese achieves a visual pun as well as an interesting metaphor. Then this is coupled with the expression 焼け野原 which is again formed from the word 野原 (fields) and the word for burnt, meaning burnt-out ruins or devastated land. I decided to retain the “place” conceptual metaphor by using the image “land of ambition” (instead of “fields”) and then repeating the “land” sound through the expression “wasteland”. The next phrase I interpreted as a subtle link to the Japanese idiom 道草を食う (literal translation: eat roadside grass) which means to loiter while on one’s way somewhere. I chose the expression “chewing the cud” because in English the expression has an idiomatic meaning of meditating or pondering something for a long time, so while the sense is slightly different, it still fits well with the notion of not rushing from place to place as well as the literal meaning of chewing grass with the cows, therefore achieving a similar effect of exploiting the literal and figurative meanings of a metaphorical expression. “Chewing the cud” also retains the link with the food metaphor implied by the “juicy/tasty” performance fee.

⁶ Page numbers refer to the Japanese ST.

Example 2 (To Paris, p.7)

Context: You are waiting at the station, ready to board a night train to Paris.

ST: その日の夕方から夜にかけて、あなたはハンブルグのダムトア駅の近くにある小さなホールで踊った。竹の裂けるような、石橋を叩くような、時雨が降るような現代音楽の音の群れがまだ耳の奥で響き続けている。

Back-translation: From that evening until night, you had danced at a small hall near Dammtor station in Hamburg. A collection of sounds of contemporary music, like bamboo splitting, like tapping a stone bridge, like drizzle falling, continued to reverberate deep in your ears.

TT: That evening you had danced at a small hall near Dammtor station in Hamburg. The diverse multitudes of sounds – bamboo-splitting, stone-tapping, falling raindrops of contemporary music still reverberated deep in your ears.

The three similes relating to the contemporary music may be interpreted as having multiple meanings – firstly they have literal meanings as adjectival clauses describing the sounds and secondly, through wordplay, they conjure up particular Japanese proverbs or idioms in the reader’s mind. Thus, the first expression (竹の裂ける) means the sound of splitting bamboo, but if you replaced the verb with a different verb meaning ‘to split’ (割る), you would have the idiom 竹を割ったような, which means straightforward or honest. Additionally, an alternative wordplay may be seen if you substitute “ears” for “bamboo”; the expression becomes 耳が裂ける, which means ear-shattering (noise). As I was unable to capture both possible puns in my translation, I chose to hint at the latter interpretation by using “bamboo-splitting” as an adjective, which subtly links to the idiom “ear-splitting” in English. I used this syntactic form to make the pun clearer instead of keeping the simile which would have been awkward (‘like bamboo splitting’), and therefore changed all three expressions into metaphors for consistency. Unfortunately, the double meaning of 石橋を叩く could not be carried through in translation. Apart from the literal meaning of “tapping a stone bridge”, the reference is to the proverb 石橋を叩いて渡る (lit. tapping a stone bridge before you cross it), which implies acting with the utmost caution. However, the translation, in the first place, must employ an expression that describes sound, and since I was unable to come up with a phrase that did both, I chose to render only the literal rather than metaphorical meaning. I decided on “stone-tapping” because it retains the sound described by the Japanese expression and appropriately brings to mind “toe-tapping”, given that the protagonist is a dancer. The next expression (時雨が降る) literally means “drizzling”, but I interpreted it also as a subtle reference to the figurative use of the noun 時雨 and verb しぐれる, meaning to cry (teardrops falling) or as in 時雨心地 (to feel like crying). Since “drizzle” in English does not also have this metaphorical sense, I decided on “raindrops”, which may bring to mind “teardrops”, although it is undoubtedly a stretch. It is certainly relevant that Tawada uses three images that bring to mind old Japan (bamboo, stone bridges and drizzling rain) to describe something as far removed as contemporary music in a German setting. This can be seen as a deliberate technique to create a dislocating effect on readers, that is to confuse their

expectations of what is German and what is Japanese, and build the aura of uncertainty that permeates the whole novel relating to the identity of the protagonist and the fluid nature of identity in general.

The text also contains many instances of novel, imaginative metaphorical expressions that do not involve literal/figurative exploitation or wordplay but provide a vivid image and also require active interpretation by the reader. I generally preferred to retain the same unique images in the TT and avoid strategies such as substitution or paraphrasing just for the purpose of making the text more “readable”, because of the potential to destroy the effect of the image’s novelty and eliminate possible interpretations of the metaphor.

Example 3 (To Paris, p.9)

Context: ‘You’ are asleep on a night train when you are suddenly woken by the conductor who orders you to get off the train at the next station, due to a railway strike.

ST: 眠りのかなたで、鉄と鉄が擦れる音が続いている。浅いような深いような眠りだった。だから車掌に突然起こされた時には、びっくりして記憶袋を床に落としてしまい、一瞬、自分がどこにいるのかさえ分からなかった。

(My translation below is a close rendering of the ST, so no back-translation is needed)

TT: Far away, on the other side of sleep, the sound of metal scraping against metal continued. It was a shallow sleep, yet deep somehow. So when you were suddenly awoken by the conductor, you dropped your bag of memories on the floor in surprise and for an instant you even forgot where you were.

かなた means beyond/over/on the other side/in the distance, so here Tawada is using a metaphor that conceptualises ‘sleep’ in spatial terms. In particular, かなた is often used together with words that imply very large distances, such as ‘the world’, and ‘the universe’. Therefore, sleep is imagined as a wide expanse of unknown territory. I chose to add ‘far away’ in order to convey the idea of distance.

The next sentence makes use of the repetitive structure (word) ような (antonym) ような, saying that sleep is both kind of deep and kind of shallow. While this oxymoron is a matter for reader interpretation, it resembles the expression 分かる ような 分からない ような which could be translated as: I sort of understand but sort of don’t. It thus makes the reader feel uncertain about their own understanding, and although I used different syntax in the English, this was the effect that I was aiming for. The conceptual metaphor SLEEP IS A PLACE/SLEEP IS A WELL is not specific to Japanese culture and easily accessible for Anglophone readers, so my translation took advantage of this common conceptualization to retain the images in the above two cases.

Likewise, in the last sentence, “dropped your bag of memories on the floor” is a literal translation of the Japanese expression. This image implies that your memories are contained in a bag, and dropping the bag entails temporarily losing your memory. The “bag of memories” image is found in English as well, and although it is employed in a novel way in this context, I believe that the TT reader will obtain a similar effect,

since the conceptual metaphors of THE MIND IS A CONTAINER and THOUGHTS/FEELINGS ARE THINGS are common to both languages and cultures.

Metaphorical expressions might be novel and creative but if they have a physical or sensory basis such as visual or auditory images, they may be easier to picture, less culture-specific, and therefore more conducive to translation by retention of the ST image.

Example 4 (To Paris, p.18)

Context: You are trying to control your frustration at having to buy a bus ticket out of Paris, as the trains have been cancelled.

ST: あなたはふつつつ噴き出してくる文句を噛み殺して

Back-translation: you suppressed your complaints that were bubbling, about to burst out [although the verb “to suppress” actually has the literal meaning of “bite to death”]

TT: Putting a lid on your complaints before they bubbled over,

This is an example of ANGER IS A HOT LIQUID, which as discussed earlier, is a common conceptual metaphor in English and Japanese. Since “complaints” has a metonymic relationship with “anger”, it was possible to retain the same image by using “bubbled over”. However, instead of a verb such as “suppress” or “stop”, I chose to adopt a Tawada-style tactic of extending an idiomatic expression to play on its literal and figurative meaning, here the English phrase “put a lid on it” (i.e. stop complaining), combining this with the metaphor of a pot containing boiling water. This is therefore an example of compensation; while there were cases elsewhere in the text (e.g. Example 2) where the play on the metaphorical expression could not be effectively translated, I could sometimes add a double meaning where English allowed me to do so, thus contributing to the defamiliarizing effects of the work as a whole.

Concluding remarks

As this case study has shown, authors can use metaphor to achieve a variety of literary effects or “weak implicatures”, giving rise to an interpretative process on the part of readers and translators. Rendering these stylistic effects in the target language is a creative endeavour that may require a range of translation strategies. The translator needs to decide upon strategies in light of the contexts in which metaphor is used and the function of metaphor in the artistic structure of the text, its relevance to themes, characterisation and the like. In so doing, it is often helpful to consider the underlying conceptual metaphor that an expression is based on to determine whether or not an image could be perceived in a similar way or whether certain adjustments may be necessary. Through my examples I have demonstrated the effects of a variety of strategies including defamiliarizing the target language by directly transferring a Japanese metaphorical expression, in effect foreignizing the text. I have examined how the converse strategy of substituting an English metaphor can also be effective in exploiting the literal and figurative meanings of the text, when this stylistic purpose is deemed more important than the sense of the metaphor. I have further noted that where a translation “loss” is unavoidable, it may be possible to use compensatory strategies elsewhere in the text to contribute to the overall metaphorical style.

Although the translator's interpretation is only one interpretation, and therefore "equivalence" of effects is never completely possible, this may also be seen as something positive. In other words, in the "poetic ravine" between source and target a translation can be a site of hybridity and rejuvenation, combining voices from both sides, and challenging our preconceived notions through new metaphors and an additional range of literary effects.

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