James St André (ed.), *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors* (Manchester and Kinderhook: St Jerome, 2010)
Jorge Salavert

James St André (ed.), *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors* (Manchester and Kinderhook: St Jerome, 2010)

JORGE SALAVERT

On the numerous occasions – mainly at social gatherings – that I have been asked by people who do not speak or write a second language to explain how I translate literature, I have always felt the temptation (or rather the need) to explain literary translation by means of an analogy. The fact is that metaphor is fundamental to the mental structuring we apply to our abstractions of the world. We only have to consider how often we resort to an analogy when we need to explain complex concepts or new words to young children, whose mastery of language is still being developed. In reality, what we often do is translate those new words for them into smaller or parallel conceptual units to help them to understand. I approached this collection of essays with a certain degree of anticipation, as the concepts of metaphor in translation and the translation metaphor are undoubtedly at the core of literary translation. As the volume editor, James St André, observes in his introductory piece, the choice of metaphor used to think (or explain) the concept of translation may heavily "influence how translation is viewed in terms of process, status of the translator, and status of the translation" (p. 6).

St André has divided the essays into four distinct sections: something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.

Something old

The first essay deals with the history of the translation metaphor. Ben Van Wyke's essay is an interesting reflection on the influence of Platonism on the traditional theory of translation in the West as well as an informative account of the concept of translation as metaphor. He uses Nietzsche's critique of the metaphor of dress to propose a radical recasting of our conception of translation. "Translation", he writes, "cannot be defined without recourse to metaphors of transporting solid objects … from one place, position or condition to another. We can never describe translation … without recourse to… metaphor" (p. 37).

For his part, Yotam Benshalom explores the potential of using the metaphorical tool of (theatrical) performance for discussing translation along two different pathways. In the first, he discusses the possible utilisation of time in translation based on the continuity and spontaneity found in performance, as proposed by Diderot. Yet this is a dead-end road, it seems, for the benefits performers can gain from them will not necessarily be applicable for translators. The second is Method acting, the bottom-up approach proposed by Stanislavski, whose relevance to translation lies in the unique way it balances the usage of the external (the source text) and the internal (the performer's – i.e., the literary translator's – personality). Benshalom makes some valid points about the various criss-crossing facets of performance and literary translation, but the fact is they are such vastly different processes that any glimpse of similarity is misleading in many senses. His essay, in any case, should have been edited more thoroughly. There are far too many errors, and frankly, the oft-repeated use of the apostrophe to indicate decades ("In the 1850's") is unacceptable in academic writing.

Celia Martín de León bases her analysis on conceptual metaphor theory, in an attempt to identify the basic structure underpinning the various metaphors of translation that have been

used throughout history. She identifies up to five different metaphorical mappings and analyses their communication models and the relations they imply between the source text and the target text. Interestingly, such a theoretical frame may be useful for research into significant issues for translation studies and translation practice, in particular any tangible interactions that may be observed to occur between theoretical models and actual translation practice.

Something new

The new approaches are represented by Maria Tymockzo and Valerie Henitiuk. The former argues that the discipline of translation studies has until now been too closely fixated on Western European concepts of translation, while the latter draws our attention to the remarkable prejudice and ignorance that prevailed in many Western translations of Japanese literature. What both essays show is that Eurocentric conceptions are not necessarily ideal for founding an international discipline of translation studies. For many reasons: to begin with, contemporary Western European thinking about translation is entrenched in the written text, and neglects oral practices that are prevalent in many parts of the world; secondly, Eurocentric ideas about translation have been distinctly shaped by biblical translation and the tight links between language and nation in Europe; history shows that the European concept of translation is strongly connected with imperial and colonial practices. Moreover, Tymockzo demonstrates that the metaphors for translation that appeared towards the late Middle Ages reflected pressures from the Western Christian church: the identification of Christ with the Latin concept of *verbum*. This gave ascendancy to a literalist conception of translation: "At once grammatical and holy, the word *per se* assumed central significance in translation processes in part because of the metaphorical religious meanings for the *verbum* in the scriptures of the Western church" (pp. 134-35). The Western concepts of translation prevalent in current translation studies tend to shape insights into others' cultural processes and others' cultures, thus continuing to perpetuate the ascendancy of narrow, exclusionary conceptualizations over local forms of knowledge.

Something borrowed

The third section comprises three essays on the mutual borrowings between metaphor and translation. Rainer Guldin explores the ways in which metaphor and translation share a political and cultural dimension. The relationship between the literal and the figurative goes back to the rhetoric of the classical tradition, which saw the literal as the proper and severed the figurative from the literal in an attempt at naturalization. However, the literal and the figurative are in a reversible and reciprocal relation, the basis of the continuous process of translation within language and between languages. "Metaphor and translation represent a rift," Guldin explains, "an internal and external split, respectively, and, simultaneously, the very solution to overcome it" (p. 177). Thus, the concept of translation expands into the realm of intercultural communication, and cultural and social negotiations are viewed as acts of translation, processes of interpretation.

Enrico Monti analyses the metaphors used to define metaphor translation. As the basic premise seems to be that metaphor is a central problem, because it defies any strictly linguistic perspective on translation, Monti examines the corpus of translation studies literature. His scrutiny reveals that "translation has indeed elicited a wild imagery on the part of its earlier practitioners and theoreticians" (p. 196). Certainly, the puzzlement metaphor translation has caused (and continues to cause) seems to justify the "wild" tag. There are qualitative metaphors that attempt to describe the issue in a confrontational perspective ("a searching test of translator's powers", "a challenge", the ever-present "problem", "traps", or "dangers") or place the issue of metaphor at the limits of translatability (obviously related to the dangers and obstacles mentioned above, which need to be overcome by crossing or transgressing boundaries). Fluid (less constrained by limits) spatial metaphors for metaphor translation include the "gradient", the "spectrum", the "continuum" and the "fluctuation" between

polarized "extreme positions". Quantitative perspectives, however, rely on dimensions and forces. These perspectives are based on mathematics (translatability in an inverse proportion to the amount of information contained in a metaphor) and physics (the metaphor as a force capable of "compressing a … large amount of information into little lexical matter" (p. 206)). Monti argues that, be it as it may, translation may be seen as "a vantage point to understand the functioning of metaphor itself" (p. 207).

Stéphanie Roesler writes a stimulating essay exploring the metaphors used by French poet and translator Yves Bonnefoy to describe translation, and draws important conclusions about the translation of poetry: "translating poetry essentially consists in writing a new piece of poetry" (p. 230). Roesler points out that Bonnefoy's metaphors of translation invite a view of the translation process as "a relationship between … two individuals" (p. 238) rather than between a source text and a human being, that is to say, a process that fulfils itself by means of a continuum established between two authors, two poets.

Something blue

The final section consists of two essays on metaphor, gender and translation. Sergey Tyulenev identifies "smuggling" as another metaphor that could describe certain processes undertaken by translators whereby "translation may become a vehicle for venting otherwise unacceptable sentiments and concerns" (p. 242). This metaphor implies the primary role translation may have in channelling the translator's own ideas, thoughts, or anxieties. The metaphor is clearly at variance with Venuti's position on the translator's invisibility, since translators-smugglers "cannot be said to be either only 'invisible' or only 'visible'. They are both at the same time."

In his final essay, St André makes a bold proposal to reconsider many aspects of translation studies research with the help of a specifically performative metaphor: translation as cross-identity performance, where cross-identity is an umbrella term under which "the crosser is representing the Other through a set of learned practices" (p. 284) that require bicultural expertise. St André draws our attention to the fact that there is a regrettable tendency to dichotomize many notions in translation studies into opposed, binary pairs, and he calls for a radical overhaul of approaches. While the metaphor of cross-identity has its flaws and poses many problems in its broader application, this is a bold move, and one that deserves further consideration, as it certainly opens up innovative lines of inquiry and represents a significant challenge to long-held assumptions in translation studies, in particular the notions of equivalence and faithfulness.

Thinking through Translation with Metaphors is somewhat uneven. While some of the essays instantly capture your attention because of their originality and the insights they provide, others have too specific and narrow an appeal. However, it is a valuable and motivating volume for literary translators, and particularly for translators of poetry. As a whole, the book helps to move translation studies debates towards new lines of approach, radicalizing the complex and interrelated subjects of translating metaphors and the metaphors that help us to conceptualize translation. As a small bonus, St André has included an annotated bibliography of works on the metaphors of translation, which anyone who wishes to explore the subject further will find useful.