

## Metaphorical Expressions in Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and their Translation into Albanian

Leonard Rapi

University of Gjirokaster, Albania  
e-mail: [nardirapi@yahoo.com](mailto:nardirapi@yahoo.com)

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**Abstract:** Problems posed by the translation of metaphors have often been attributed to linguistic and cultural differences. Those that have argued that metaphors cannot be translated have pointed to their linguistic and cultural specificity. A different view is that according to which metaphors can be translated due to the universality of the perceptual processes underlying metaphorical processes. We found that half of all the metaphorical expressions in our corpus of data have been translated by non-metaphorical expressions. While this may seem as strong support for the argument that metaphors are untranslatable, an analysis of their conceptual structure as well as their implications reveals that in some of the metaphorical expressions differences between the ST expressions and the TT translations may not be accounted for by systemic differences between English and Albanian. Instead, their explanation has to be sought in the influence of factors other than linguistic or cultural.

**Keywords:** metaphors, metaphor (un)translatability, translation procedures, cognitive-pragmatic approach, metaphor analysis

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### Introduction

Metaphor is one of the most frequently used tropes in literary texts. The language of literature abounds in metaphorical expressions of various kinds. However, metaphor translation has not occupied a central place in the field of translation studies. Although its importance for translation has often been pointed out, (Newmark 1981, 114), and despite complaints about its neglect (van Den Broeck 1981, 71), this situation seems to be going on.

In this article we would like to raise this issue once again. We will look at how metaphors have been handled in the Albanian translation of Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles". Based on the assumption that metaphor is a way of structuring communication by mapping on to each other concepts pertaining to different conceptual domains, and that communication is inferential in nature, we will apply a cognitive-pragmatic approach to the analysis of its conceptual structure and function. We will first analyze their conceptual make up followed by an analysis of their implications. Then, we will compare them to their Albanian correspondents in order to look at the relationship between them.

We will argue that even though it might appear that there are significant differences between metaphorical expressions and their translation equivalents, not all of them may be accounted for with linguistic-cultural differences between English and Albanian.

### Theoretical Discussion

There have been two major issues concerning metaphor translation. One is its translatability. The second issue has to do with the procedures that are employed when metaphors are translated from one language into another.

#### *(Un) translatability of Metaphor*

Whether metaphors can be successfully transferred across languages has been a debatable issue in the field of translation studies. Those that have argued for its untranslatability maintain that because metaphors are products of a specific culture, factors like cultural and/or linguistic differences may hinder metaphor translation from one language into another. The main proponent of this view is Dagut (1976, 22), for whom the translatability of metaphor is affected by a number of cultural and linguistic factors. He claims that the main purpose of metaphor is to create special effects, 'to shock readers by creating an aesthetic impact' as he puts it. This is done by violating the linguistic rules of the language. However, due to their cultural specificity, these effects cannot be transferred intact to the target language.

Snell-Hornby (1988, 62-63) and Tabakowska (1993, 67) take the view that, while it is true that metaphor is culture-specific and closely linked to perceptual processes, it is these perceptual processes that make metaphor translation possible. Snell-Hornby (1988) argues that, because metaphor is built upon perception and because perception by definition is universal, there must be some common patterns of conceptualization across different cultures that render

metaphor translation feasible. As Tabakowska (1993, 67) puts it, 'the admission of the link between metaphor and process of perception provides an argument for an opposing view.' A second argument, they point to, is the fact that humans are quite capable of understanding metaphorical expressions in languages other than their own. This might suggest that not everything is culture-specific, and that humans seem to share much more common ground in the way they perceive the world they live in than it is thought.

Our own view regarding metaphor translation falls between these two extremes. On the basis of our data, we will argue that while there are instances of metaphorical expressions which seem to bear little to no relationship to their translation, which might suggest that they are "untranslatable", differences between them may not always be explained by systemic differences between languages, but could rather be attributed to other factors.

### Procedures for Translating Metaphors

Studies on metaphor have ranged from its linguistic-syntactic make-up (Goatly 1997) to its conceptual structure (Miller 1994; Steen 1999; Stockwell 2002). Pragmatics-based studies have also focused on the function of metaphor in communication as well as the way it is interpreted by the hearer/reader (Sperber & Wilson 1986). However, the same cannot be said about translation studies where research into metaphor translation has failed to occupy a central place (Snell-Hornby 1995, 55). Boase-Beier (2006, 95) points out that, despite van Den Broeck's (1981) complaints about the lack of attention to the issue of metaphor translation, it has been ignored even by translation theorists such as Bell (1991), Hatim (2001), Hatim and Munday (2004). According to her, it is unacceptable that metaphor has not been deemed important enough to be given its own entry even in Mona Baker's *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation* (1998). The lack of a theory on metaphor translation could perhaps be explained by the fact that translation studies have regarded the problem of metaphor translation just as one of the many other problems translation is faced with. A typical representative of this view is Mason (1982 as cited in Alvarez (1993, 482), who claims that metaphor translation might just as well be treated under the umbrella of translation studies.

Where metaphor translation has been taken into consideration, like other issues in translation, it has been affected by the wider debate in translation studies over the role of equivalence in translation (Schäffner 2004, 1255). For linguistic approaches to translation, equivalence of form and content were of great importance in the process of translation. This rule had to be applied to metaphor translation as well, which meant that metaphors should be translated in a way that their form and content were preserved even in the TT. With the arrival of the textual and functional approaches, the focus shifted from linguistic to communicative- functional equivalence. In other words, a successful translation is one that achieves functional equivalence or when the TT manages to fulfill the same purpose that the ST does. (Schäffner 2004, 1255)

Newmark's (1981, 87-91) list of procedures for translating metaphors seems by far the most elaborate effort to place metaphor translation on a theoretical basis. Apart from his typological classification of metaphors, he also presents a list of seven translation procedures as guidelines for translators to follow to handle metaphors in translation. Although Newmark is criticized for his prescriptivism, he is often referred to when this issue is discussed. Van Den Broeck (1981) and Schäffner (2004) present their own lists of procedures for metaphor translation. Unlike Newmark, they present their procedures not as guidelines for translators to follow but, rather, as descriptions of the way translators actually translate metaphors in real life.

Below is Newmark's list of translation procedures, which we will apply to our data. Due to lack of space, we are not going to reproduce here van Den Broeck's and Schäffner's lists. Examples come from Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and its translation into Albanian "Tessi i d'Erbervilleve". There were no instances of metaphors translated with procedures 6 and 7 in our data:

#### Newmark's List of Procedures for Translating Metaphors

1. *The metaphor is translated with its exact corresponding expression in the TL.*  
eg., The village **was shutting its eyes** –  
*Fshati **po mbyllte sytë**.*
2. *The metaphor is translated with its equivalent in the TL.*  
e.g., This was **the last drachm required to turn the scale of her indecision** –  
*Kjo qe **pika e fundit që e mbushi kupën e durimit.***
3. *The metaphor is translated as a simile.*  
eg., **with the suspended attitude of a friendly leopard at pause** –

***si ndonjë leopard ledhatues, që dicka po priste...***

4. *The metaphor is translated as a simile plus its sense.*  
eg., The ... dead leaves...were **stirred to irritated resurrection –**  
***zënë të fëshfërinin si me zemërim dhe, thua se ishin ringjallur me pahir...***
5. *The metaphor is translated with a paraphrase.*  
eg., **The mountain had not yet been removed –**  
***Barra që i rëndonte mbi kraharor nuk ishte flakur ende tej.***
6. *The metaphor is deleted if it is not deemed essential.*
7. *The same metaphor is used followed by its sense.*

### **A Cognitive-Pragmatic Approach to Metaphor Analysis**

Our model of metaphor analysis is based on the assumption that rather than a violation of linguistic rules, a metaphor is a process where concepts belonging to different conceptual domains are mapped on to each other (Simpson 2002, 41). In other words, one entity is conceptualized or described in terms of another. The first entity represents the literal part of the metaphor, while the second represents the non-literal or metaphorical part. What this means for our analysis is that the first step to analyzing a metaphor should be breaking it down to its constituent conceptual components. This kind of analysis is important for two reasons. First, it is an essential step towards the establishment of the analogy or comparison underlying the metaphorical expression, which might lead to its better understanding. Second, according to Dagut (1976, 22), problems in translating metaphors arise because different languages may not share the same concepts or may do so to varying degrees. For this reason, the concepts that make up the structure of metaphors first need to be identified to be able to pass an informed judgment about their availability and whether or not or to what degree they have been retained in the target language.

According to Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 2004, 87), for communication to take place between the speaker and the hearer, the speaker should provide evidence of his/her meaning. This evidence can be structured in many ways. It may vary in its complexity of nuance or structure to the degree that the speaker deems fit for the communication process to succeed. The hearer builds on this evidence in order to infer/construct the speaker's meaning as he/she intended it. This view of communication as inferential in nature can be applied to translation as well. Translation, too, is a communication process with the writer as the speaker and the translator as the hearer. Metaphors are one of the various forms of expression that the writer employs to communicate with the reader. Sperber & Wilson (2004, 101) also maintain that the poetic effect created by the metaphorical expression is not just a function of its main implication. The metaphor may, instead, evoke a range of implications, some stronger than the others but, in combination they make the metaphor relevant to the process of communication. As a reader, the translator has to infer the main implication of the metaphor. This is what immediately comes to mind when the metaphorical expression first appears. Apart from that, the translator should be sensitive to other implications, which, although weaker, still have their share in the creation of the metaphorical effect. Thus, the translator will have to make the best interpretation possible of the metaphorical expression based on the textual evidence as well as the cognitive context available to him/her.

### **Methodology**

Our corpus of data comes from Thomas Hardy's novel "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" and its translation into Albanian "*Tesi i d'Erbervilleve*". Through careful and repeated readings over a long period of time, we have recorded 60 instances of metaphorical expressions. We have focused primarily on un-lexicalized metaphors, which have been deliberately created for the artistic needs of the novel and, therefore, cannot be found in dictionaries of the English language. Then, we have mapped them onto their Albanian corresponding translations. As the whole process is manual, we are conscious that other instances of metaphorical expressions may have been missed. Nevertheless, we believe that this corpus of data is representative enough to throw some light on issues linked to metaphor translation.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

Table 2 below presents a classification of metaphorical expressions based on the frequency of use of the procedure used to translate them into Albanian.

**Table 2** Classification of Metaphorical Expressions Based on the Procedure Used to Translate them.

	Translation Procedures	No	Percentage
1	Translation with its exact corresponding TL expression	14	23%
2	Translation with an equivalent metaphor in the TL	11	18%
3	Translation as a simile	2	3.3%
4	Translation as a simile plus sense	1	1.6%
5	Converting the metaphor into its sense	30	50%
6	Deletion of metaphor	-	-
7	Translation with the same metaphor plus sense	-	-

The table indicates that the most frequently used procedure is that of converting the metaphor into its sense. 30 metaphors or 50% have been translated using this procedure. This seems to support Newmark's claim (1981: p.90) that translation by paraphrase is a common procedure. The second most frequently used procedure is translation with an exact corresponding expression in the TL. 14 metaphors or 23% of the total have been translated by this procedure. 11 or 18% of the metaphors have been translated with an equivalent Albanian metaphor. We have also found two instances of translations as similes. One instance has been translated as a simile plus sense. In our data there are no instances of deletions or instances of translating metaphors with identical metaphors plus sense. It should also be noted that two instances have not been translated into Albanian. However, these may not count as deletions because the paragraphs where these expressions occur have not been translated for reasons other than those cited by Newmark (1981: 91).

### Converting the metaphor into its sense

The fact that the translator has opted for this specific procedure to translate 50% of the metaphorical expressions into Albanian might first seem as strong support for the argument for the untranslatability of metaphors. However, as we will try to demonstrate further on, it is not the case that all these metaphorical instances had to be translated that way for lack of another choice. In what follows, we will focus on some of these metaphorical expressions. We will analyze their conceptual structure as well as their implications. Then, we will compare them with their Albanian translations. We will offer our view as to how motivated these translation solutions are. Our main claim is that some of the choices the translator has made cannot be accounted for with cultural-linguistic differences between English and Albanian, but may be linked to other factors.

#### 1. ...and the night **swallowed him up**. (p.19)

This is a case of an animistic metaphor (Leech 1968, 158) where animate attributes are given to an inanimate entity. The word *night* is used in its literal sense, whereas the verb *swallowed* represents the non-literal part of the metaphor. It is based on one of the lexicalized meanings of *swallow* (*taking somebody or something in or completely, cover it so that it can no longer be seen or no longer exist separately*) (OALD). The metaphor is built upon the analogy that *the night is like some entity that has the capability and desire to swallow*.

The main implication is that the person in the role of the recipient of the action (*him*) can no longer be seen as a result of the action carried out by the agent (*the night*). Another possible, but important, implication might be that of the night as something with a will of its own entertaining evil intentions.

The Albanian translation for this metaphorical expression is: ...*dhe u zhduk në errësirë* ..., (*and disappeared into the dark.*), (our translation). As back-translation indicates, this is an instance of a metaphor that has been translated by being converted to its sense. In our opinion, the main problem with it is the fact that the metaphorical effect of the original expression is lost in the Albanian translation. And this is for two reasons. The first is that it has been replaced by a non-metaphorical expression where *disappeared* has been substituted for *swallowed* and *darkness* for the *night*. The second is the syntactic organization. In the original metaphor, the word "*the night*" has agentive status. In the Albanian translation we see a reversal of roles between the agent and the recipient. The recipient *him* has acquired agentive status, whereas *the night* has been reduced to an adverbial. As a result, the Albanian translation seems to carry the suggestion that the act of disappearance is not something that is conditioned by the will of the entity *the night*, but, it is as if the recipient of the action is acting on his own will. This is made possible also by the use of the intransitive verb *disappeared*.

We believe there may be other ways in which this metaphor could be rendered into Albanian and that they would be better suited to transferring both the conceptual structure of the metaphor as well as what it implies to the target language. The concept of "*swallowing*" does exist in the Albanian language even in the particular sense used in our metaphor, "*përpij*", "*gllabëroj*" (Qesku 2000, 1205). In our opinion, a better way to translate this metaphor would be the



one where “*përpij*” in its Past Tense form in Albanian was used for “*swallowed*” while “*night*” and “*him*” would retain their respective status as agent and recipient, although in accordance with the word order rules of Albanian the recipient might precede the agent. “...*dhe atë e përpiu nata.*”

2. ...*Tess’s passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest.* (p.127)

This is a typical case of an A is B metaphor. “*blight*” represents the literal concept.

The non-literal concept is “*her mental harvest*”. The analogy upon which this metaphor is built is: *Her corporeal blight was to Tess’s mental development like harvest is to farm people.* The use of the word “*harvest*” evokes associations of the time of year when crops are ripe enough to be cut and gathered. The metaphor seems to imply that what Tess had gone through had sped up her mental development and that now she had grown into an adult capable of knowing what decisions to make.

This metaphor is translated in Albanian as “...*nëpërmjet përvojës ajo kishte arritur pjekurinë e saj mendore.* (p. 168) (Literally: ...*through experience she had reached her mental maturity.*). It is again an instance of translation through a non-metaphorical expression. While the translation seems to capture the meaning of the metaphor, it does so quite literally and the poetic effect intended by the original expression is lost. The main difficulty in translating this metaphorical expression stems from the fact that even though the concept of harvesting is available in Albanian, it is not something in terms of which people’s mental state of development could be thought of. However, there are other expressive means that would be quite suitable. Therefore, we believe that, in this case the procedure of translation with an equivalent metaphorical expression might have been applied.

3. ...*whose mood was tuned to its lowest bass...*(p.149)

The conceptual mapping underlying this metaphorical expression is: *mood is a musical instrument. A bad mood is like an instrument being tuned to its lowest bass*, “*bass*” being the lowest tone of music or voice. It has been used here to depict Marian’s heavy spiritual state after realizing that she has no hope that her feelings for Angel Clare will be reciprocated by him.

The Albanian translation goes like “...*me një pamje shumë të ngryset.* (p.197) (Literally: ...*with a downcast look.*). It is obvious that the mode employed falls short of reproducing the effect in the original. As in the previous case, this is an instance of conceptual discrepancy. Although the concept does exist in Albanian, it is not something that would normally be used to describe the way people feel. In our opinion, a better way to translate it would be by employing an equivalent metaphorical expression.

4. ...and the **thorny crown of this sad conception** (p.157)

The expression “*thorny crown*” represents the metaphorical part in terms of which “*sad conception*” has been conceptualized. There are many ways of structuring metaphorical expressions. This one has been organized in the form of a genitive. The metaphorical effect comes from “*thorny crown*”, which refers to the crown that Jesus was made to wear before being crucified. It has since become a symbol of something that torments people, but that they have to endure without complaining because they have no other choice. In the context of the novel it implies what Tess has suffered in her young life; a sad thing that torments her.

This metaphor has been rendered into Albanian as: *Tesi arriti në këtë përfundim të hidhur dhe i therri në zemër kur mendoi se...*(p.198) (...*Tess reached this bitter conclusion and it broke her heart when she thought that...*). As back-translation shows, there is no relationship between the ST expression and its TT translation. This total deviation, in our opinion cannot be accounted for due to a lack of an equivalent concept. The expression “*thorny crown*” is quite universal due to the influence of the Bible. However, we think that, because of its religious overtones - at the time of translation Albania was ruled by an atheistic regime – the translator may have hesitated to reproduce the metaphor by its exact corresponding expression in Albanian (*kurorë me gjëmba*).

5. *This question of a woman telling her story – the heaviest of crosses to herself – seemed but amusement to others.* (p. 185)

This represents an instance of a metaphorical expression in the form of an apposition. Goatly (1997, 212) maintains that because it is punctuated by commas, and because of its minimal syntactic bonding, apposition can give prominence to the topic and vehicle of the metaphor. The literal entity, *the question of a woman telling her story*, is conceptualized in the form of the cross. Again the metaphorical expression evokes Biblical associations. Its main implication is that Tess’s secret story of her life is such a heavy burden for her to bear.

It has been translated into Albanian as: *çështja nëse duhej ta dëftente një grua historinë e jetës së saj, ishte për Tessin një problem torturues, kurse të tjerët i bënte të qeshnin.* (While for Tess, the question whether a woman should tell the story of her life was a tormenting problem for Tess, it made other laugh.) As it can be seen, this metaphorical expression has been rendered by a non-metaphorical expression. The problem with this way of translation is that the power of the original expression is not present in its translation. The choice of a biblical element to describe Tess's mental suffering because of the sad secret she keeps cannot have been accidental. So, it was something that should not have been skipped. To think that the translator has opted for this way of translating it because the readers might not understand the allusion is again out of the question because Albanian readers were well aware of the story of the bible.

6. ...*The mountain had not yet been removed.* (p.217)

This is a case of an implicit metaphor in which only the non-literal concept "the mountain" is present. The literal part is not found in the immediate context but clues to it are provided by the larger context. The concept of "the mountain", with its implications of size and weight, has been employed to refer to Tess's dilemma whether she should tell the man she is going to marry about her past.

The Albanian translation is: *Barra që i rëndonte mbi kraharor nuk ishte flakur ende tej.* (Literally: *The burden that weighed on her chest had not been thrown away.*) We believe there are two problems with this translation. The first is with the concept "the mountain". This concept, as used here, does exist even in Albanian. We can think of several examples of similar instances in Albanian artistic literature or folk culture with the word *mountain* used to refer to people's problems of life. For this reason, we cannot see why the translator has not thought it fit to translate the metaphor with its equivalent in the Albanian language. The other problem, in our opinion, has to do with the fact that the sentence in the original is also quite short, which we think is not accidental. In the context of the novel, this sentence comes quite abruptly after a number of longer ones. The way we see it, it has been aimed to produce the effect of offsetting what has been said before through both, the meaning of the words used, and its syntactic structure. This does not seem to be the case in the Albanian version, in which the relative clause (*that weighed on her chest*) does not seem to add anything specific but amounts almost to a tautology.

7. *Every seesaw of her breath, every wave of her blood...*(p.182)

"seesaw of breath" and "wave of blood" are two metaphorical expressions structured in the form of genitives. The first word represents the metaphorical, non-literal part of the expression and the second the literal one. These types of metaphors occur quite frequently in Thomas Hardy. Their function is to give a perceivable form to abstract entities. As they are products of personal perceptual processes, they may indeed be difficult to translate. Again the main difficulty does not come from the fact that these concepts do not exist in Albanian. It is just that they may not be normally employed in the sense they are employed in the English original.

The Albanian translation for these metaphors is: *Çdo frymëmarrje e kraharorit, çdo pikë e gjakut...*(p.235) (*every breath, every drop of blood...*). It can be seen that the English metaphors come simplified and normalized in Albanian. While we think that such a solution may not be so bad, our view is that these metaphors could be translated through equivalent metaphorical expressions which are not inexistent in Albanian.

8. *Then one day a peculiar quality invaded the air of this open country.* (p.298)

The main function of this metaphor is to express in a poetic way the change in the weather. By attributing meteorological changes to some unusual invading entity that arrives uninvited, the metaphor implies that such changes are quite unexpected, almost mysterious and undesirable.

This has been translated into Albanian as: *Por një ditë në atë pllajë të zbuluar ndërroi moti.* (*But one day, the weather changed in that open plateau*). It is obvious that the metaphorical expression has been reduced to its meaning and there is very little of the special effect created by the original expression. We think that there is nothing unusual about this metaphor that makes it untranslatable. The translator might as well have opted for an almost literal translation that would both stay close to the original and manage to create almost the same effect as that in the ST.

## Conclusion

In this article we have looked at the way metaphorical expressions in Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" have been translated into Albanian. More specifically, we have focused on the instances that were translated by non-metaphorical expressions.

We have tried to demonstrate that the fact that a considerable number of metaphorical expressions have been translated by non-metaphorical expressions, might not count as evidence that metaphors cannot be transferred from one language to another. Our analysis has shown that differences between metaphorical expressions in the ST and their translations in the TT are not always attributed to conceptual and linguistic differences between English and Albanian.

In addition, based on our finds, we believe that the instances we discussed above along with 14 instances of literally translated metaphors and 11 instances translated with equivalent Albanian metaphors constitute a significant chunk of data in our corpus in support of the view we take that metaphors are translatable to varying degrees.

Based on the results of our analysis, we believe we have reason to claim that when it comes to translating metaphors not everything happens due to linguistic or cultural specificities. There is an array of other factors that might come into play. One undeniable factor could be the translator. There can be a lot of subjectivism when translating from one language to another. Translator-related factors such as background and even personal taste might have a huge impact on the way translators choose to translate.

So, next time we set about seeking explanations for the choices made by translators, we should not forget that research into what is on the page may not be enough. It should be coupled with research that would account for other psycholinguistic, sociological, ideological or political factors as well.

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