

INTRODUCTION

Translation is an ever-evolving form of transmission that carries with it ideas, hopes, politics, poetics, and desires. Building upon Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assertion that "translation is the most intimate form of reading" (1992), the present research is a component of a larger project which aims at exploring the connections between Lori Chamberlain's metaphors of translation (1988), existing literature on intimacy and translation, and comparisons between translation and erotic labor. While work by translation theorists of the 20th and 21st has explored the connections between intimacy, relationship, and translation (Spivak 1992; Basile 2005; West 2012; Arrojo 1995), not much has been examined about what kind of language translators themselves use to describe work of translation. The language of metaphor can be instructive of a translator's process, and useful for understanding literary translation as a craft akin to other modes of artistic production. Examining the paratextual element of a translator's interview can help increase the translator's visibility and provide useful language for the study of translation and training of translators.

METHODS

I analyze a series of translator interviews in order to ascertain 1) literary translator attitudes towards translation metaphors; 2) common words and themes in translation metaphors from translators; 3) mentions of intimacy, the body, or relationality in translation metaphors from literary translators. The examined corpus is the *Words Without Borders* Translator Relay series. These interviews, published between 2015 and 2021, include 43 interviewees in total. Each interviewee selected the subsequent interviewee.

The interviews are comprised of six questions: five questions that are reproduced in every interview, and one question that is selected by the previous interviewee.

- What is your connection to the language(s) you translate from and/or the place(s) where the books you translate are written?
- Can you give us an example of an "untranslatable" word or phrase, and tell us how you brought it into English?
- Do you have any translating rituals?
- Do you have a metaphor you use to explain the translation process and the role of the translator in bringing a piece from one language into another?
- Tell us about a current, or future, translation project that you're excited about.
- Last question generated by previous interviewee

For the purposes of this study, interviewee responses to question five ("Do you have a metaphor you use to explain the translation process and the role of the translator in bringing a piece from one language into another?") are analyzed, although data was collected on the other questions.

CONCLUSION

Metaphor can be a way of describing the work, the process and the significance of literary translation. Preferred translator metaphors can be seen as sorts of signatures, intimate aspects of self and work, and they can offer rich context for a translation. A key takeaway from this pilot study is that it is valuable to ask translator's about their work, and center their voices when developing theory. The emerging metaphor categories from this corpus, as well as expressed translator attitudes towards translation metaphors, affirm that this is an area worthy of continued examination. Future research in translation metaphors may choose to take up the question of metaphor and technical translation, for example. Another area for continued research could be languages and metaphors (for example, does translating between certain languages provoke specific metaphor categories?) This examined corpus is shaped by translators themselves, with each interviewee choosing the next. Comparative research could also be performed based on genre.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An exploratory textual analysis of the selected corpus reveals that literary translators use an array of metaphoric language to describe their own work. Initial findings demonstrate that, out of forty-three interviewees, three translators use intimacy as a metaphor for the translation process. An additional two mention a metaphoric relationship with the author. Other identified metaphor categories include magic, comparisons to other artistic mediums, in-betweenness, channeling, and transport. Many interviewees contend that there exists a plurality of possible metaphors and that there is no one correct or best metaphor for the process of translation.

Table 1 – Mentions of Intimacy

Interview Excerpt	Translator	Languages	Category/ Categories
And another I've been thinking about from the very first time I tried translating a poem, and it goes for my own creative practice as well. It's like—do I really want to say this here?—being with a lover, all aspects of loving and being in love: physical, emotional, sexy, searing, tender, embodied, wondrous, frustrating, impulsive, all-consuming, maddening, painful, healing. I fall in love easily but I'm extremely picky, and the same goes for the texts I work on. And just as I never really stop loving a person, even when I want to, I always wish I could keep writing or translating the same poem again and again. I never want it to be over. Even after a piece is published, I often feel like going back to try a different way, even if it's just for fun.	María José Giménez	Spanish, French, English	intimacy
I often use the metaphors of translation as performance and translation as channeling, especially for translating Clarice Lispector, a dead writer with a distinctive voice and strong sense of theatricality. Lately, I've been thinking about translation as cultural cannibalism, an act that's both violent and intimate, in which you absorb the force of another textual body and render it in terms of your own textual body.	Katrina Dodson	Portuguese, English	intimacy, channelling
If pressed for a metaphor, I would gravitate toward some version of Chaim Nachman Bialik's groom kissing the bride through the veil—translators and translated texts as lovers going through blissful times, hard times, and entanglements; lovers who may be committed, fickle, both self-centered and giving in their comingling. I'm not sure how Roland Barthes's metaphor fits here, but it captures some of my approach to the languages between which I travel: "Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire."	Mihaela Moscaliuc	Romanian, English	intimacy

Table 2 – Selected reflections on the use of translation metaphors

Interview Excerpt	Translator	Languages
In that dreamy world where translators' work is widely respected and essentially understood, we won't need to use metaphors when talking about translation. We'll say, "I'm a literary translator," and the images that will pop into a person's head will roughly correspond with what we actually do. [...] Nevertheless, I'm still on the lookout for that magic un-metaphor metaphor that can explain what we do on our own terms, without having to conjure conductors and jazzmen and ventriloquists.	Jason Grunebaum	Hindi, English
A translator with only one metaphor is lost—he or she needs three, four, dozens!	Robyn Creswell	Arabic, English
The very fact that we so often reach for metaphors in order to talk about translation itself points to the poetry at the heart of the whole enterprise.	Peter Cole	Hebrew, Arabic, English

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