



Untangling and Re-spinning the Web: Translations of Metaphor in Tanizaki's "Shisei"

Shani Tobias

Monash University

shani.tobias@arts.monash.edu.au

Abstract. This article evaluates strategies for translating metaphor from Japanese to English adopted by five translators of Japanese author Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's short story "Shisei". Metaphor is an important literary device, and its translation poses the challenges of switching between different cultural, conceptual and linguistic frames of reference. Therefore, the effect of the particular strategies adopted is central to how the literary work is received by the target readership. Nevertheless, research into metaphor translation strategies has only emerged recently, and focuses mainly on European languages. The much larger linguistic and cultural divide between Japanese and English will therefore reveal important insights. This case study shows significant differences in strategies among translators and demonstrates the importance of interpretation in literary translation. In order to recreate similar effects, translators must decipher the intratextual network of metaphors and maintain this in their translation.

Keywords: literary translation; translation strategies; translation of metaphor

Introduction

Metaphor is a key way in which writers express their style, build their themes and create emotive effect. Its translation 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). Therefore, by examining how metaphorical expressions are rendered in translation, it is possible to analyse the effectiveness of translation strategies in dealing with cultural and stylistic considerations and enabling target language (TL) readers to form a similar interpretation of the text.

The following case study deals with the language pair Japanese and English, and in particular highlights the importance of interpretation in literary translation. Where metaphorical expressions are part of a network of symbolism in the source text (ST), the translator needs to understand how such metaphors are interconnected and reformulate this 'web' of symbolism cohesively in the translation.

Metaphor and translation

Since the influential research done by Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is generally regarded as a cognitive phenomenon, rather than simply a matter of language, that is, as a means of understanding one domain of experience in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphorical expressions often contain culturally-specific terms, embodying analogies relevant to the particular cultural community. But at a higher level of analysis, conceptual metaphors are often shared by more than one culture (Kövecses, 2002).

Factors likely to affect translation of metaphorical expressions include the novelty of the metaphorical image, the relevance of the particular metaphorical expression to the communicative function within the text, the

author's style, and the type of metaphorical expression. For example, similes are usually easier to translate than pure metaphors, because they make an explicit comparison between the image and that to which it refers.

Metaphors that intentionally represent a concrete phenomenon using an abstract image, and those which create a deliberately ambiguous image, leaving it up to the interpretation of the reader, are particularly difficult to translate (Oshima, 1995). The more culture-specific the references are, the harder it is to translate by retaining the same image. Conversely, the existence of a common conceptual metaphor may make it easier to keep the same basic metaphor, even if specific linguistic items might have to be adjusted in the TL.

In the past quarter of the century, more and more theorists have begun to see translation studies from a cultural perspective, recognizing that linguistic 'equivalence' is a largely illusory concept and translation strategy is influenced by factors that go beyond the actual words of the text (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Hermans, 2006; Venuti, 1998). These include considerations of power and ideology in the production and distribution of literature, for example the use of translation to create or support a particular image of the source culture (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). They also include the economic need to make a translation marketable to the target readership. Moreover, translators are guided by the prevalent literary poetics and the particular translational norms that are seen as important at the time. These are affected by the degree of closeness of the cultures, the relative status of the source and target cultures and languages, and the status of translations in the literary poly-system (Toury, 1995). Where a text has been translated on a previous occasion, later translators will often attempt to distinguish themselves from the earlier translation by adopting a different approach.

Peter Newmark identifies seven strategies for translating metaphorical expressions¹, which can be viewed as deriving from three broad alternatives: (i) Reproduction of the same metaphorical image in the TL; (ii) Substitution of the source language (SL) image with a different TL image having a similar sense, and (iii) Paraphrasing so as to translate just the sense instead of the metaphorical image.

Newmark argues that (i) should be the default position, that is, metaphorical images should be retained in their original form unless this is impossible due to linguistic or cultural differences (Newmark, 1988).

In the following section, I will analyse the strategies adopted by five translators to translate key metaphorical expressions in 「刺青」 (“Shisei”²) by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. *Shisei* literally means “tattoo” but has been variously

¹Newmark, P. (1998). The 7 strategies are as follows: (1) Reproducing the same metaphorical image in the TL; (2) Substituting the source language (SL) image with a different TL image having a similar sense; (3) Translating a metaphor using a simile (conversely, a simile may be translated using a metaphor); (4) Translating a metaphor (or simile) using a simile together with an explanation of its sense; (5) Converting metaphor to sense (paraphrasing); (6) Deletion of the metaphorical expression, and (7) Using the same metaphor together with its sense

² The word 刺青 can also be read as *irezumi*, but in this story it is given the *on-yomi* reading (the way of reading kanji characters derived from the Chinese pronunciation) *shisei*.

translated as “The Young Tattooer”, “Tattooing”, “The Victim”, “Tattoo”, and “The Tattooer” (see below).

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) was one of Japan's foremost literary figures. He published over 20 works in his career including novels, short stories, essays, translations and screenplays. Most of his works have been translated into English as well as other languages. “Shisei” was his debut work, published in 1910³. His works are noted for their wit and ironic sophistication, dealing with themes such as the influence of Western culture on traditional Japanese values, obsessive love, the destructive forces of sexuality and the dual nature of woman as goddess and demon (Gessel, 1992).

“Shisei” is set in the early 1800s and is about a skilful and sadistic tattoo artist, Seikichi, who yearns to create a masterpiece on the skin of a beautiful woman. One day, he catches a glimpse of a woman's foot protruding from under the curtain of a palanquin. The beauty of this foot makes a huge impression on him, and years later, when a *maiko* (apprentice geisha) arrives at his door with a package he realizes that it was her foot he had seen. He tries to convince her of her destiny by showing her paintings such as one of a beautiful woman surrounded by the corpses of men she has destroyed. Realizing that he has seen her hidden desires she is frightened and wants to leave. However, Seikichi drugs her and begins work on her, realizing his dream, pouring his whole soul into tattooing a giant man-devouring 女郎蜘蛛 (courtesan spider) on her back. When it is finished, the woman wakes up and is changed forever. Not only is she beautiful but her modesty and weakness are gone and she becomes strong and triumphant. Suddenly, their roles are reversed and with a cruel sparkle in her eye, she tells Seikichi that he is her first “victim”. Thus by realizing his desire, Seikichi sealed his own fate.

Metaphor in “Shisei”

The story is embedded in a ‘web’ of metaphoric symbolism. Linguistically, at the micro level, it is metaphorically dense, with close to 40 metaphorical expressions found in the 11-page Japanese text. These individual metaphorical images are interlinked and brought together into layers of metaphor that overarch the whole narrative. This structure has key implications for translation because in order to produce a similar effect on target text (TT) readers, translators must both understand and develop strategies to recreate this macro-level network of metaphors.

Three important symbols in the story, from which other metaphorical images are derived, are the spider tattooed onto the young woman's back, the paintings that Seikichi shows her, and the act of tattooing itself.

The “courtesan spider” is associated with beauty, but also with poison. Moreover, 女郎蜘蛛 is also the name used for a mythical creature found in Japanese folk tales. It is sometimes depicted as a half-woman, half-spider, or otherwise as a spider that transforms itself into a beautiful woman in order to lure its prey. This creature is said to entangle humans in its thread and devour them, or breathe a blue smoke that sucks out their lifeblood. This metaphor of

³Tanizaki, J. ‘Shisei’, (Shoban 1910) *Nihon Bungaku Zenshu 15*, Shinchosha, 1961.

the ‘poisonous woman’ is a longstanding symbol in Japanese literature (Petersen, 1979) and its importance in this story is readily apparent. It becomes evident from her responses to the paintings that the girl secretly aspires to be like the 女郎蜘蛛 to lure men and conquer them with her beauty, destroying them for her own sake. She is too timid to realize her desires until the spider is tattooed on her back, transforming her and empowering her so that she becomes strong, beautiful and deadly.

The two paintings are also symbols of the powerful woman that the girl will become and the men who will give their lives for her. One shows a beautiful Chinese princess looking down on men who are being tortured, and the other shows a woman surrounded by corpses under a cherry tree. Seikichi recognizes that the girl has secret, sadistic aspirations to become like the women in the paintings, and that she is the perfect canvas for him to create the masterpiece that will make her supremely beautiful.

For the tattooer, Seikichi, the act of tattooing this young woman is much more than simply creating a work of art. He chooses her because she is a female equivalent of his own self; they both share the sadistic desire to inflict pain on men. Therefore, by giving her this tattoo, Seikichi is externalising himself on her skin, and this is described metaphorically a number of times in the text as pouring his “soul” into the tattoo, or in his spirit dissolving into the ink and soaking into her skin (see Example 2 below). Thus, the tattoo is not only an embodiment of the *maiko*’s secret desires, it also represents Seikichi himself. But, after she has been given the tattoo it is apparent that she is independent from her creator and Seikichi’s identity has become more hers than his. The theme of the protagonist submitting himself to a woman whom he has empowered by means of his own submission is a key motif in many of Tanizaki’s works (Atkinson, 2003).

The translators and dates of translation are as follows:

T1: Asataro Miyamori (1917)⁴

T2: Smimasa Idichi (1923)⁵ (In modern Romanised spelling, Sumimasa Ijichi)

T3: Ivan Morris (1961)⁶

T4: Ryozo Matsumoto (1961)⁷

T5: Howard Hibbett (1963)⁸

The translations produced by these five translators are significantly different and this can be seen in their respective strategies for translating metaphor. The two early translations tend to adhere relatively closely to the source text and translate metaphorical expressions by retaining the same imagery in the English to a greater extent than the post-war translators.

⁴Tanizaki, J. ‘The Young Tattooer’, tr. A. Miyamori, *Representative Tales of Japan*, Sanko Shoten, Tokyo, 1917.

⁵Tanizaki, J. ‘Tattooing’, tr. S. Idichi, *Herald of Asia*, 7 April 1923, pp.607-608, continued 14 April 1923, pp.7-8.

⁶Tanizaki, J. ‘The Victim’, tr. I. Morris in I. Morris (ed.), *Modern Japanese Stories*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1961.

⁷Tanizaki, J. ‘Tattoo’, tr. R. Matsumoto in R. Matsumoto (ed.), *Japanese Literature New and Old*, The Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1961.

⁸Tanizaki, J. ‘The Tattooer’, tr. H. Hibbett in *Seven Japanese Tales by Junichiro Tanizaki*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963.

However, T1 has a far more literary style than T2, and therefore their translations convey very different impressions to readers. Both T1 and T2 use language which strikes the modern reader as archaic. Of the postwar translators, on the whole, T5 retains Tanizaki's metaphorical imagery more than T3 and T4, but also engages in omission and adaptation of metaphors. T3 and T4 present highly domesticating approaches offering interpretations of metaphorical meaning that frequently differ from each other and perhaps from what Tanizaki intended. T3 in particular omits or abbreviates whole sentences on a number of occasions.

The translators' respective strategies for dealing with metaphorical expressions and the resulting effects will be illustrated by two example passages which are key to the themes and 'web' of metaphor in the story.

The first passage contains six metaphorical expressions (numbered and underlined) referred to below as M1-6. It describes the woman's foot that Seikichi sees, peeping out from under the curtain of a palanquin. The Japanese is very rhythmical, with the four relative clauses in the second sentence, and the final sentence using repetition of the words 男(men) and 足(foot) to enhance the effect.

Example 1

彼にとっては□貴き肉の宝玉であつた。拇指から起つて小指に終わる繊細な五本の指の整い方、□繪の島の海辺で獲れるうすべに色の貝に劣らぬ爪の色合い、□珠のような踵のまる味、□清冽な岩間の水が絶えず足下を洗うかと疑われる皮膚の潤澤。この足こそは、やがて□男の生き血に肥え太り、□男のむくろを踏みつける足であつた。(p. 11)

Kare ni totte wa tōtoki niku no hōgyoku de atta. Boshi kara okotte koyubi ni owaru sensai na gohon no yubi no totonoikata. Enoshima no umibe de toreru usubeni iro no kai ni otoranu tsume no iroai, tama no yō na kakato no marumi, seiretsu na iwama no mizu ga taezu ashimoto o arauka to utagawareru hifu no juntaku. Kono ashi koso wa, yagate otoko no ikichi ni koefutori, otoko no mukuro o fumitsukeru ashi de atta.

T1: The foot was to him a priceless jewel of flesh. How symmetrical the delicate little toes! The nails were as pink as shells gathered on the beach of Enoshima; the heel rounded and dainty in its curves as a pearl; the skin as fair and lustrous as if the foot were incessantly laved by crystal water running down from some pure mountain spring. This foot was surely destined in future, as it were, to grow fat from the winepress of her lovers' blood and to tread on their corpses. (p.7)

T2: And the feet of this girl were a precious gem of flesh for the tattooer. The perfect shape which was seen in all the five delicate toes from the great to the little toe; the colour of the nails which well matched the light pink colour of those shells which people gathered on the shore of Enoshima; the tournure of the ankles which reminded one of the rounded shape of a precious stone; and the dewiness of the skin, which appeared as if fresh water from a mountain brook had constantly washed the feet – the feet of such qualities were, indeed, those which, having fed on the blood of men, would soon conquer their hearts. (p.607-608)

T3: This white foot seemed to Seikichi like the rarest of jewels. The perfectly-shaped toes, the iridescent nails, the rounded heel, the skin, as lustrous as if it had been washed for ages by the limpid waters of some mountain brook – all combined to make a foot of absolute perfection designed to stir the heart of a man and to trample upon his soul. (p.86)

T4: The foot was perfectly formed with dainty toes, their nails in light pink like the shells one finds on the beach at the Island of Enoshima.

“A goddess with such feet must tread on men, making a doormat of them, to make herself rich and comfortable...” (p. 110)

T5: This one was sheer perfection. Exquisitely chiselled toes, nails like the iridescent shells along the shore at Enoshima, a pearl-like rounded heel, skin so lustrous that it seemed bathed in the limpid waters of a mountain spring – this, indeed was a foot to be nourished by men’s blood, a foot to trample on their bodies. (p. 163)

The basic grammatical structure is retained by T1, T2 and T5, with T5 managing to incorporate repetition in the last sentence (“a foot to..., a foot to...”). This retention of Tanizaki’s rhythmical style is key in enabling TT readers to experience a similar effect. T4 omits both the descriptions of the heel and skin, departing from the ST to the greatest extent.

T1 and T2 seem overly wordy when compared to the original. T1 seems to have fallen victim to the tendency of over-translation (Berman, 2004), embellishing the original by using two adjectives when the ST only uses one in the description of the heel (“rounded and dainty”- he adds “dainty”) and the skin (“fair and lustrous”- he adds “fair”), as well as translating a non-metaphor (清冽, cool and clear) with a metaphor (“crystal”). T2, perhaps trying to keep too close to the strict grammatical structure of the original, loses its rhythm and poetic style, for example with his repetitive use of “which” to form the relative clauses.

Given that the metaphorical expressions M1-4 are used to describe physical parts of the human body and stress visual and sensory aspects, one might expect that translation by the same metaphors would be relatively straightforward. Metaphors 2-4 are also similes, which should make translation easier, at least in these cases, where they make the links explicit by including elements of sense in the comparison (such as using まる味, roundness) together with “pearl-like” and 潤澤 (lustre) together with the simile “as if it had been continuously washed by the pure waters of a mountain stream”). However, only T1 and T2 have retained the images for all four metaphorical expressions. T4 and to a lesser extent T3 have adopted strategies of omitting the metaphorical images or replacing them by sense.

Such paraphrasing, as Newmark warns, will always entail an omission or addition of components of sense (Newmark, 1988), as can be seen in the translations of M1, which literally means that for Seikichi, the foot was “a precious jewel of flesh”. T1, T2 and T3 retain the image of a jewel, although T3 softens this by converting it into a simile, using “seemed...like” and leaves out the word “flesh”. T4 and T5 both adopt the strategy of replacing metaphor by sense, stressing the “perfection” of the foot in Seikichi’s eyes. This “jewel” metaphor is emphasized by referring in the same passage to her heel being like a pearl (M3), in other words an object of rare beauty and value that Seikichi must possess at all costs. In order to ensure English readers obtain a similar impression, it would be best to retain both metaphorical descriptions and there is no obvious reason why this has not been done, as the abovementioned connotations of jewels and pearls would seem to be similar in both languages. M3 is retained only by T1, T2 (“precious stone”) and T5, with T3 omitting the simile and T4 omitting the description of the heel altogether. Thus T4’s strategy removes the jewel/pearl metaphor completely and also disrupts the carefully crafted rhythm of this passage.

M2 expresses the simile that the colour of the girl’s toenails was like the light pink shells one can find on the shore at Enoshima. T3 removes this metaphorical expression, replacing it with one word “iridescent”. This may capture the sense of the image, but it removes its poetic nature.

M4 is again completely omitted by T4, whereas the other translators retain a similar metaphorical image. The simile describes the lustrous quality of the foot's skin, surely the most important part to the tattoo artist, in terms of the pure waters of a mountain stream, accentuating the purity of the young woman herself.

The translations of M5 and M6 show the dangers of substituting loosely similar TL metaphors for SL ones, where the SL image is linked with deeper symbolism in the text. Both metaphors are 'pure' metaphors rather than similes and therefore the images are particularly vivid. M5 states literally that her foot would grow fat from the lifeblood of men. T1, T2 and T5 provide a similar image to the Japanese and this is particularly important because the image is linked with the subsequent symbolism in the painting Seikichi shows the young woman, which depicts a triumphant woman surrounded by the corpses of men.

The painting is titled 「肥料」 (*hiryō* or *koyashi*), which all translators have rendered as "The Victims". However, the word literally means "fertiliser", being made up of two characters, the first meaning to grow fat (the same character as used in the verb 肥える in M5), and the second meaning material. Therefore the word has the metaphorical meaning that the woman feeds off men for her nourishment (to make herself rich and powerful) and then they are destroyed by her. This also links with the image of the poisonous "courtesan spider" that Seikichi tattoos onto her back.

However, T3 adopts the strategy of substituting the Japanese metaphor in M5 for a more common English one ("stir the heart of a man"), but this has a different emphasis, thereby weakening the idea of the woman destroying men for her benefit as well as losing the link with the painting. T4 paraphrases the image using an aspect of its sense: "to make herself rich and comfortable" but this also fails to reproduce the gory, vampire-like image of the Japanese expression.

The image in M6 of the woman's foot trampling on men's bodies is also a direct link with the painting and therefore "bodies" or "corpses" (T1, T5) are preferable to "soul" (T3). T2 substitutes the expression with a TL metaphor ("conquer their hearts") which does not have the same destructive connotations and does not seem to fit with his first description ("having fed on the blood of men"). T4 attempts to replace the image with the English metaphor of a "doormat", but as well as losing the connection with the painting, the image seems more modern and colloquial and does not seem to accord with her description as a "goddess".

Thus, when the passage is read as a whole and in light of the themes and symbols in the story, in my opinion T5 does the best job of translating the metaphorical expressions so as to encapsulate Tanizaki's rhythm and imagery, producing similar effects for English readers. In particular, his strategies show his awareness of Tanizaki's deliberate use of interconnected symbolism and the need to maintain this in translation. On the other hand, T3 and T4 are less successful in this regard, which may be due to a lack of attention to the links between metaphors in the ST or a preference for an approach that domesticates and softens the impact of figurative language. The extent of omission, paraphrasing and substitution with different metaphorical images by these translators undoubtedly leads TL readers to form different interpretations. The two pre-war translations represent a less domesticating approach but suffer from stylistic weaknesses not directly due to the

metaphorical expressions but more to over-translation of descriptive features and a lack of creativity regarding grammatical structures.

The second example describes Seikichi creating the tattoo on the young woman.

Example 2

若い①刺青師の霊は墨汁の中に溶けて、皮膚に滲んだ。焼酎に混ぜて刺り込む②琉球朱の一滴一滴は、彼の命のしたたりであった。彼はそこに③我が魂の色を見た。(p. 15)

Wakai shisei-shi no rei ha sumijiru no naka ni tokete, hifu ni nijinnda. Shōchū ni mazete horikomu ryūkyūshu no itteki itteki wa, kare no inochi no shitatari de atta. Kare wa soko ni waga tamashii no iro o mita.

T1: The young tattooer's soul dissolved in the pigment and soaked into the skin. The drops of the Loochoo vermilion mixed in spirits were so many drops of his lifeblood. There he saw the colour of his soul. (p.15)

T2: The young tattooer's soul seemed to have been dissolved in his ink and permeated into the girl's flesh. Each drop of Loochoo rouge which was inserted after having been mixed with a liquid, looked like a drop of his blood. Indeed, he saw the colour of his own heart therein. (p.7)

T3: It was as if the tattooer's very spirit entered into the design, and each injected drop of vermilion was like a drop of his own blood penetrating the girl's body. (p. 89)

T4: The soul of the young tattooist seemed to dissolve into ink and to penetrate her body. Every drop of the mixture of Loochooan cinnabar and distilled spirits which he injected in her with his whole heart was like a drop of his own life blood. For him, the colour was that of his own living spirit. (p. 114)

T5: He felt his spirit dissolve into the charcoal-black ink that stained her skin. Each drop of Ryukyu cinnabar that he mixed with alcohol and thrust in was a drop of his lifeblood. He saw in his pigments the hues of his own passions. (p. 167)

This passage contains three metaphors which are part of the extended metaphor of Seikichi tattooing his "soul" into the woman, so that in fulfilling this dream, he gives her his soul even though this means that she will conquer and destroy him. The soul constitutes a person's inner self or identity in both English and Japanese, and therefore, the conceptual metaphor of "giving someone one's soul" would have similar implications of submitting oneself entirely to that person, or merging one's identity with that person.

For this reason, the metaphor is generally retained in the translations, although the first metaphor is translated as a simile by T2, T3 and T4, giving it a weaker effect. A literal rendition would be: "the spirit of the young tattooist dissolved in the ink and soaked into her skin." T3 changes the image to Seikichi's spirit "entering the design", making the image less vivid than if it were part of her body.

M2 evokes a strong image, literally that each drop of *Ryuku* cinnabar that he mixed with *shōchū* (a kind of liquor) and thrust in was a drop of his life. This is made more easily understandable by T1, T4 and T5 by their rendering of "life" as "lifeblood", which refers back to the use of "lifeblood" in the first example. T2/T3's translation as "blood" may lack the stronger connotation of "life" or "lifeblood", especially since the connotation is that once he finishes the tattoo, Seikichi will be drained of his whole soul and existence as he has

known it. T3 and T4 again translate metaphor as simile, softening the immediacy of the image.

M3 is translated literally by T1, as “he saw the colour of his soul” in the tattoo. Thus, the metaphor enhances the previous two metaphors, creating an elaborate extended metaphor. T3 omits this sentence altogether, perhaps regarding it as unnecessary or repetitive. However, the metaphor in this sentence adds a nuance to the previous two because the word 色 (*iro*; “colour”) in Japanese can imply “look” or “nature” and therefore “he saw the colour of his soul” could be interpreted as “he saw the nature of his desires” (to turn this woman into someone so beautiful that he would become her victim in the process). This is encapsulated by T5’s translation as “the hues of his passions”, which while not as literal as T1 or T4, may be more readily understandable by English readers, since the use of “passions” or “heart” (T2) conveys the idea of emotions/desires more than “spirit” or “soul” which is more likely to symbolize the being/self. Therefore this example also shows the importance of interpretation in translation and how a translator might need to depart from the exact image in the ST to achieve the overriding goal of creating a similar effect. This goal is what has been called “pragmatic equivalence” as opposed to lexical or semantic equivalence (Hale, 2007), and requires the translator to interpret the author’s intended effect in context and attempt to achieve a similar reaction by target readers, taking into account their different cultural and conceptual understanding of an utterance.

Conclusions

With regard to the two examples discussed, it is interesting to note that except for T1, retention of the same metaphorical image in its ST linguistic form is not the default position adopted by all the translators. T3 and T4 adopt the most ‘domesticating’ strategies, ranging from omission to substitution, paraphrasing, and converting metaphor to simile. These strategies are designed to improve the smoothness and fluency of the English prose, decreasing the visibility of the translator and making it easier for the reader, who does not feel challenged by the foreignness of the language or the awareness that it is a translation. However, such strategies also weaken the power of metaphorical expressions, transforming them into a more bland, toned down version of the original. They do not allow the features that are unusual and creative in the SL to influence and change the TL, and therefore the readability of the translation may come at the expense of a loss of its literary value. This tendency to soften metaphorical language is therefore likely to be common when translational norms favour domestication, as was certainly the case in the translation of Japanese literature in the 1960s. Yet in the case of “Shisei” where metaphorical imagery (such as the graphic imagery of corpses, blood, fertiliser, vampirism and bodily transformation) forms an extended, interrelated network of symbolism, if this is weakened by the translation, not only the emotive effect but also the thematic significance is partially destroyed.

I have already mentioned the word 肥料 (fertiliser), which is an overarching metaphor that describes the bodies of men destroyed by the poisonous spider-woman transforming them into fertiliser for her nourishment. As well as the title of the painting, the metaphor is also used by Seikichi when he has finished tattooing the woman and tells her that now all men will become her 肥料, as well as the woman herself when she realizes that all her fears have gone and in giving her the tattoo, Seikichi has become

her first 肥料. The word is translated as “victim” on each occasion or omitted, losing the strong symbolism produced by the multiple layers of metaphor in the ST. Certainly a literal translation as “fertiliser” would have different connotations for a modern-day English reader and the translators were evidently unable to come up with an adequate alternative apart from the more common, dampened down expression “victim”. However, the imagery of a poisonous beauty devouring its prey, whose decomposed remains then become the nourishment that fattens the consumer is a key symbol that ought to be retained in translation, if not through the word 肥料, then at least through close translations of the imagery linked to this (such as in M5 and M6 in Example 1).

Of course it may not be possible to reproduce the connotative meaning and intratextual or intertextual allusions inherent in metaphorical expressions every time, and translation is always a process of negotiation in each circumstance. Cultural, conceptual or linguistic barriers to metaphorical understanding mean that sometimes style may have to be sacrificed for the sake of meaning and vice versa. Nevertheless, this kind of analysis shows that since metaphorical imagery often extends beyond individual linguistic expressions, it is essential that literary translators are able to untangle the textual "web" of metaphor in their process of interpreting the ST and recreate this through innovative translation solutions. Strategies should aim to reproduce the author's style and intended effect to the greatest degree possible.

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