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Volume 53, numéro 4, décembre 2008

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019651ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/019651ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (imprimé)

1492-1421 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Jiang, Q. (2008). Aesthetic Progression in Literary Translation. *Meta*, 53(4), 860–871. <https://doi.org/10.7202/019651ar>

Résumé de l'article

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Aesthetic Progression in Literary Translation

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RÉSUMÉ

L'exploration du processus esthétique de la traduction littéraire est un des nouveaux domaines qui restent à développer. Prenant en compte le fait que les théories de linguistique cognitive n'ont pas été exploitées à fond en matière de traduction littéraire, nous proposons, dans la présente étude, un modèle de traduction fondée sur les images cognitives, arguant que la compréhension d'œuvres littéraires, dans un contexte de traduction, mobilise non seulement des activités cognitives telles que la simple identification de caractéristiques distinctives et de leur distribution, mais aussi l'expérience esthétique. Une traduction réussie résulte de la formation d'une image *gestalt*, c'est-à-dire d'une intégration de l'organisation linguistique et de la scène visualisée, plutôt que de la correspondance de phrases ou de mots isolés.

ABSTRACT

The exploration of aesthetic progression in literary translation is a new area yet to be developed. Considering the fact that cognitive linguistic theories have not been fully exploited in literary translation, the present study proposes an image-based translation model out of the assumption that literary comprehension in translation involves **not only** cognitive activities such as identification of distinctive features and their distribution, but **also** the aesthetic experience; and successful production in translation does not rise from correspondence finding of individual words or sentences, but is procured by means of a mentally formulated image *gestalt*, an integrated entity of both linguistic organization and visualized scene.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

aesthetic progression, image model, imagination, accommodation, schema

1. Translation as an aesthetic progression

Progression instead of process is based on the conception that a literary text characterized by images as well as linguistic meanings images inherently capable of multiple actualizations cannot be assigned a single correct translation, and that aesthetic experience is not a property of a finished product; it can never achieve a state of fixity but exists as continuously changing processes.

Aesthetic progression in literary translation is a psychological procedure acting on and building representations of what is described in the text. It is applied to denote the intermediary stage in literary translation, that is how the image is mentally actualized. At the reading and interpreting stage, the translator is supposed to visualize images and consider possible linguistic means to reconstruct them in the target language. The act of image actualization is a cumulative process the building of meaning upon meaning and experience upon meaning in order to establish finally an idea or an interpretation in the mind of the translator-reader.

Aesthetic experience in literary translation is a progression also in that the image of the translator is actualized in two languages and his mental actualization is integrated with transference into another language, for he is always operating between a source text and a target text. The image actualization of the translator is first of all a gradation from one version toward another like that of the ordinary reader, and on the other hand undergoes the further progression in transformation, since he has to represent it in another language.

What first appears in written form is very often not an adequate representation of the mental one, for the mental image is activated by two language schema simultaneously. The written representation has to obtain progression from ST-based schema to TT-based schema, and the production of T-text entails the application of regular and efficient transformations to a mental image. In this context, the mental representation of the text that is finally registered in the translator's mind may not be identical with the original text in formal structure. The syntactic or semantic elements are subject to constant reformulation and modification in accord with the TL rules and the gestalt image with TL schemata. For the translator, it is equally important to obtain the maximally text-based meaning representation of the original text, and obtain maximal realization of a new text in another language. The early versions of a translation would tend to correspond more closely to linguistic expressions of S-text, while the later versions would gradually approach the maximally appropriate representation which manifests a T-text schema. That is, an image would at first be characterized by S-text formulations, while the final realization would be adapted to fit the T-text organization. The translator has thus subjected the text to a process of rearrangement. And the aesthetic experience or image from ST to TT undergoes the progression from SL structured to TL structured.

Translation has been regarded as equivalent representation of linguistic structures, and Translation Studies have long been concerned with different levels of text equivalence. Ever since Nida presented his sentence-rank model to describe the translating process, researches in this field have devoted a great deal of thinking to the intermediary stage transfer (1964) and have then developed more adequate and sophisticated models. Holmes (1988) developed on Nida's kernel-level by presenting a text-based model. In his model, the stage of transfer has been expanded to a complex transference of map or mental conception.

Bell (1995) has gone even further by exploring the mental actualization, that is, how the translator processes Tsl information. He argues that the study of translation requires a double awareness, that of linguistic texture in terms of structure and of discourse, and of text processing in terms of construction and interpretation, linking linguistics with psychology in an attempt to understand what it is that translators do when they translate. Benefiting from information theory, he posited a translating process involving three processing stages with psychological faculties involved.

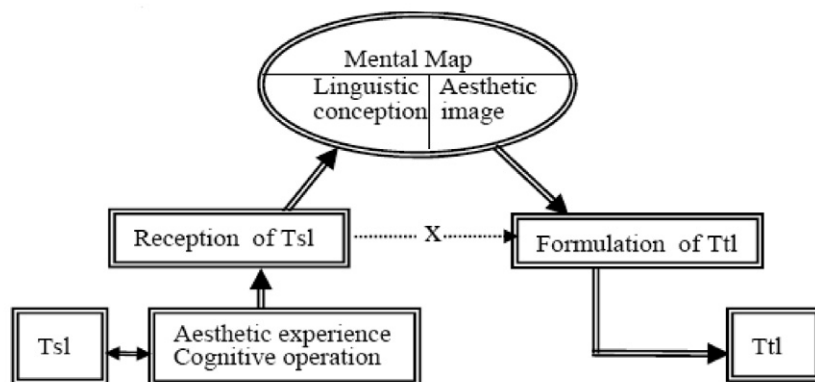
As is seen, Translation Studies have been more and more concerned with complexities of the mental operations at the intermediary stage. These models provided have doubtlessly made a great achievement in this area, especially Bell's model, which, closely related to theory of information processing, has explored cognitive factors involved in the mental processing. However, when applied to a highly complex entity of the literary text, the translating process still requires considerable development.

The literary text is universally recognized as work of art, which contains aesthetic essence within and beyond the linguistic structure. It is constituted by the possession of aesthetic qualities as a necessary though not perhaps a sufficient condition (Osborne 1983; Mitias 1988). These qualities as its defining characters are not given as ready made or finally formed realities, but as possibilities or inherent images for realization. They emerge as gestalt in the activity of aesthetic faculties, waiting to be actualized in the interaction with the translator. In reading and interpreting the literary work of art, the translator cognitively perceives a relatively stable linguistic structure and goes on to build artistic images which realizes the aesthetic value that intrinsically belongs to the linguistic aspect of the work. This interaction between the text and the translator constitutes the aesthetic progression, which the translator, as a reader first of all, experiences in his interpretation of the literary text.

2. The image model

In literary translation, the text is not reproduced in the sense of linguistic structure but by way of meaning gestalt and image gestalt. Linguistic structure in the target text may come out as equivalent with that of the original text, which, however, does not rise from correspondence-finding of linguistic items. Rather, it is the result of psychological tendency and linguistic universals or coincidence. In his interpretation of the S-text, the translator formulates images, and represents them in a T-text. Just as de Beaugrande pointed out, the basis of the act of translation is not the original text, but rather the representation of the text that is eventually generated in the translator's mind. In the production of the T-text, the translator does not find individual linguistic items (words or sentences) correspondent to those in the S-text, but uses the image gestalt as a kind of general criterion against which to test each sentence. Translation does not mean to replace one linguistic text with another, or to find word-for-word, sentence-for-sentence equivalents, but to reproduce in linguistic forms the mental image constituted out of the ST. In the formulation of the new, translated text, there are no doubt equivalent linguistic structures, but they do not result from a direct or mechanical corresponding process, rather they are the necessary coincidences of two languages since there exist similarities between them. On the other hand, in the process of reproduction, the psychological tendency of the translator would permit him to equate the linguistic items with the original ones. This processing result is quite different from mechanical corresponding translation in that, in the former action, the translator acts as a creative artist (like the author), while in the latter case, he is a mechanical simulator. In Holmes' translation model (1988), the translator as a reader abstracts a map of the original text (Map Tsl), then on the basis of this map he develops a second map (Map Ttl). The present study assumes an aesthetic image at the mental transferring stage without classifying it into Image-Tsl and Image Ttl, for we further assume that the image-G is the interactive result of both SL and TL and its realization undergoes a progressive transference from one to the other.

The present study will therefore present an image-based literary translation model.



Main phases:

Phase I: to translate the written text into a mental map;

Phase II: to find goal-language exponents of the overall mental representation obtained in Phase I.

(The dotted line with X signifies an unsuccessful process.)

This is a macro model mainly concerned with the aesthetic progression in literary translation. The essential argument of this model rests on the following assumptions:

- a. In literary translation, the translator's interpretation of the literary text undergoes an aesthetic progression.
- b. The aesthetic progression is an image building process from ST to TT organization.
- c. Successful literary translation results from image representation apart from text-representation, text in the sense of formal linguistic structure. The linguistic equivalents in the translation are mainly due to similarities in the two languages ST and TT on the one hand, and the psychological tendency of the translator on the other hand.

Bell (1995), in his study of translating process, has claimed that the translator translates with full resources of the semantic representations of the clauses available and with the unity of the text organized as a schema ready in memory. According to Bell, in this schema, all information about each clause and about the text as a whole is displayed and interconnected as a semantic representation. The mental process of the transformation of a source language text into a target language text is simplified as: (1) the analysis of one language-specific text (the source language text, the SLT) into a universal (non-language specific) semantic representation, and (2) the synthesis of this semantic representation into a second language-specific text (1995). Bell's schema focuses on semantic gestalt while our image model emphasizes aesthetic gestalt and significance, both promoting a unified conception and a gestalt transformation.

In literary translation, aesthetic properties derive from the dense restructuring of the artistic image presented in the original text. It follows that a translator has the duty of reflecting these qualities by means of a maximal preservation not only of the linguistically relevant information, but also of the image. Of course formal correspondence is also important in whatever kind of translation. However, the priorities

and the work sequence is supposed to be in the order of image primary, form secondary and not vice versa. Linguistic formal equivalence is secondary properties entailed in the reproduction of the texts but not independently significant. Since linguistic or syntactic manifestations of texts are themselves functional signals for creating and presenting the image in texts, there is no special motive for preserving their outward forms in translating. If the T-text is manifested in identical or invariant formal representations as a result of image-G transformation, it is the coincidentally equivalent aspects between languages, or is due to language universals. Naturally, when the translator as the subject perceives and examines the material constituting the pattern or image, he would expect the corresponding structural patterns in form and therefore in expression. Sometimes the coincidence would occur that both the form (the equivalent parts and expression) and the whole image are harmonized. But not always. The corresponding parts would most often add up to something that shows neither harmony nor conflict but a lack of unity or relatedness, which renders the whole meaningless, inexpressive. Therefore literary translation must be coordinated by a conscious establishment of images, especially in translations conducted between languages such as Chinese and English, which differ rather enormously in linguistic structures, and between which formal correspondence does not easily occur.

3. Aesthetic progression and the translator

As an artist, the translator must have a high degree of ability to re-present, in the mind's eye, certain combinations of the S-text. Like a painter who has an uncommon visual imagery, the musician auditory imagery, the translator must have verbal imagery. As Zwaan (1993: 170) claimed, text comprehension is a process influenced by both textual and cognitive factors. That is, text comprehension does not just lie in the meaning the text conveys, but also in how the reader approaches and responds to it. In the process of meaning comprehension, or in this context, of image-actualization, the translator-reader has, apart from his cognitive mechanisms, his aesthetic faculties such as imagination, which operate to actualize the meaning and achieve certain aesthetic experience.

Different translators with different operations of psychological faculties might produce different comprehension of a literary text, hence different translated versions. This point is held by Iser who described the personalized aspect in the following way:

In the same way two people gazing at the night sky may both be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough and the other will make out a dipper. The stars in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable. (from Viehoff 1986)

Such a claim justifies the notion of dynamics in one's comprehension, which is also true in the comprehension of text meaning, thus the actualization of the aesthetic qualities of the image is dependent much on subjective perception and judgment. The artistic image is not a thing with a definite structure but a dynamic reality which becomes actual in aesthetic perception. First of all, the aesthetic quality originates in a creative process where the activity involved is vital and out of lived experience. The translator as an author in his re-creative activity has also to articulate the life of the mind. Hence if the reader is to actualize the image or quality, his dynamic

activity is to be involved. It is for this reason that we will take into special account the translator's subjective role particularly his psychological operations in his image-actualization. The psychological operations are mainly constituted by passive synthesis and active operation, which can be further analyzed as imagination and reflection.

3.1 Imaginative faculty

Imagination for the literary translator is the assistant operation of bringing together of elements which are not equivalently connected and organized or the operation of actualizing what is inherent in the source text. As far as literature is concerned, the meaning of the literary work is not the same as the formulated aspects, but can only be built up in the imagination through continual shifting and reciprocal qualification of those aspects. The meaning of the literary work remains related to what the printed text says, but it requires the creative imagination of the reader to put it all together (Iser 1978:142). As Richards (1983: 188) put it, the production of vivid images is the commonest and the least interesting thing which is referred to by imagination. In the following translations, there involves obvious operation of imagination. When it works sufficiently and appropriately, it may result in a translation presenting a vivid picture.

Example 1

Arable lands are few and limited; with but slight exceptions the prospect is a broad rich mass of grass and trees, mantling minor hills and dales within the major. Such is the Vale of Blackmoor. Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

Chinese pinyin: Zheer de gengdi buduo, mianji ye shao, yiyang wangqu, chule jichu liwai, man shi l'cao he shumu, fengmei qianmian, fugai zhe gaoshan dahe zhijian de zhepian qiuling xiaogu. Zhe jiushi heiyuangu de fengguang. By Sun Fali

The phrase minor hills and dales within the major in the original calls for a mental picture of the translator, who has to actualize it through imagination and represent it out of a T-text schema. As a result, *gaoshan dahe zhijian de zhepian qiuling xiaogu*—instead of *xiaoshan xiaogu zai dashan dagu zhong* is produced, which draws a clear outline of mountains and the hills, dales among them, and makes the picture in the translated version just as consistent. Imagination in literary translation is, first of all, an act of creation conceived as essentially and perpetually bringing of order out of chaos, or destroying chaos, chaos in the sense of a T-text schema, by making its parts intelligible by the assertion of the identity of the T-text schema.

Since the aesthetic experience did not happen in language, language *per se* can only communicate it symbolically; the power of language to symbolize experience depending on its power to stimulate imagination. Currie has also stressed imagination as a part of the mind's information processing system. The fictional status of didactic or motivating pieces, he stated, is secured when they are designed to instruct and exhort us by getting us to imagine. In order to symbolize experience as completely as possible, that is, to provoke the most complex imagination possible, literature makes appropriate use of every power language has of affecting the mind. The translator has the potentiality for image actualization, while psychological factors such as imagination might produce effects on the information processing of image qualities. Image qualities are manifestation of psychical processes, which are most

often perceived in the aesthetic experience, for literally they are only suggested and not actually there. If all languages express the same ideas and feelings in all the same way, or if they express them with more words, it would become apparent that the image in question is actually present in the object of perception and not merely associated with it by imagination. But actually, aesthetic qualities are inherent hence experienced. Imagination is therefore necessary in formulating a gestalt image and experiencing the aesthetic qualities involved. Examples:

Example 2

The sky, now overcast and sullen, so changed from the early afternoon, and the steady insistent rain could not disturb the soft quietude of the valley; the rain and the rivulet mingled with one another, and the liquid note of the blackbird fell upon the damp air in harmony with them both. Daphne du Maurier: Rebecca

Chinese pinyin: Tiankong zheshi heiyun mibu, yinyinchenchen, he xiawu san si dianzhong de shihou buda yiyang, yu you buting di xiazhe, dan zhe que jingrao buliao shangu de jingmi; yu sheng he xishui sheng jiaorong zai yiqi, huamei de wanzhuan de qudiao zai chaoshi de kongqi zhong huidangzhe, he yu sheng, xishui sheng xiang yinghe. 1

The translator visualizes the picture, hearing all the sounds as if present at the scene. In reproduction he is able to use his image to recreate the vividness of the original, rendering rain and rivulet as *yu sheng*, *xishui sheng*, of which *sheng* (the sound) is not morphologically stated in the original, so that the T-text reader can experience the melody of what seems silent.

Example 3

It was a day as fresh as grass growing up and cloud going over and butterflies coming down can make it. It was a day compounded from silence of bee and flower and ocean and land, which were not silences at all, but motions, stirs, flutters, risings, fallings, each in its own time and matchless rhythm.

Chinese pinyin: Lücao qiqi, baiyun ranran, caidie pianpian, zhe rizi shi ruci qingxin keai, mifeng wuyan, chunhua bu yu, haibo sheng xie, dadi yin ji, zhe rizi you ruci anjing, ran er bingfei anjing, yinwei wanwu ge yiqi teyoude jiezhou, huo dong, huo yao, huo zhen, huo qi, huo fu. By Xi Yongji

Out of imagination, the translator is able to associate “*cao*” (grass) with “*lü*” (green) “*yun*” (cloud) with “*bai*” (white), and “*die*” (butterflies) with “*cai*” (colourful) instead of “*cao zhang qilaile*” and so on. He can also transform all the nouns motions, stirs, flutters, risings, and fallings into correspondent Chinese verbs *dong yao zhen qi fu* to present the target readers with a vivid scene.

Imagination for the literary translator is the assistant operation, whose major function is to facilitate image-formulation, and helps to adjust the mental image, that is: a. to experience the gestalt qualities and formulate a pictorial scene out of the linguistic schemata; b. to organize mental image into a unified and T-text-oriented entity (structure).

However, in literary translation, a different operation of imagination may conjure up different images, or in other words, different versions may result from different imaginations of the original picture. Psychologically, this is most often due to a dissimilar perceptive schema.

Image perception for the translator is an automated process based on his linguistic and other comprehensive knowledge, and imagination is naturally involved in this process to supplement image-actualization. However, for the translator, who is sometimes confronted with syntactic and semantic deviations when two languages conflict in structure and dissimilar patterns emerge, this automated process will be impeded and expectations will be disturbed. Thus, more conscious and active imagination is integrated. Such imagination is what Coleridge has defined as secondary imagination which he classifies from the primary imagination. Primary imagination is what is involved in perception and what naturally operates unconsciously, an agency which enables us both to discriminate and to order, to separate and to synthesize, and thus makes gestalt organization possible, for without it we should have only a collection of meaningless sense data. The secondary imagination is the conscious human use of this power. When we employ our primary imagination in the very act of perception we are not doing so with our conscious will but are exercising the basic faculty of our awareness of ourselves and the external world; the second imagination is more conscious and less elemental. It projects and creates new harmonies of meaning. When its synthesizing, integrating powers are at work, bringing all aspects of a subject into a complex unity, then image-G in this larger sense results. Dewey once described the creative act of imagination and its conditioning factors, with reference to art in general:

For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced (1958: 54).

This is closely related to secondary imagination in literary translation. That is, to perceive, the translator is to recreate but his imagination should remain as related as possible to what the text uncovers. Secondary imagination in literary translation, especially when it operates consciously, is a kind of relevant association. It is in such case not boundless, but is modified toward the author's perceptual patterns. It is simply association based on the context, rather than imaginative acts fully executed or given full play. The former would produce an image more equivalent to that underlying the original text, while the latter might reveal a product of one's own which might go astray from the SLT. For this reason, the translator often modulates his imagination, and reflection plays its role much more than an ordinary reader does. Thus the secondary imagination is imagination integrated with reflection in aesthetic perception.

3.2 Reflection or accommodation

As perceptual patterns are particularly based on past experience and in most cases the interpretation of the perceived expression is influenced by what is known about the person or object in question and about the context in which it appears, reflection or accommodation comes into play when dissimilarity occurs in the perceptual patterns. Such active psychological operations will lead to more differentiated interpretations, which will take the particular context into account.

Reflection is illustrated by Dufrenne (1973) as to what make perception and imagination as consciousness. It operates to control and, if necessary, restrain its spontaneity, and reduces the sense of confused totality which the translator experiences in the first reading of the text. It is thus capable of increasing the translator's comprehension of the work's meaning as an equivalent whole since the scene or character as an image is immanent in the linguistic sign, in contrast with external and conventional meaning of linguistic signs. The images he has built, the meaning he has obtained might be of self-identity (too much of the translator's own flavor), since the workings of his faculties are of occasional spontaneity, which can result in dissimilarities as discussed above. Rather than relying on intuition or spontaneity, the translator is to gather data and make analytical study, to supplement the inductive heuristics of actual reading, to organize elements and adjust his image according to the original. A translator is at first confronted with the parameters of choices made in the original text. Those parameters can serve as important criteria for making decisions about the translation, and serve as a standard for making appropriate choices and hence for reflection on the style of the work. We most often name an expression in accordance with the name of the creator of a work, because the characteristic quality of that work also appears to designate its creator. By reflective analysis we can identify the function of expression in the aesthetic object.

As an active operation, reflection is necessary in the aesthetic progression in literary translation, in a way to adjust the workings of his imaginative faculties and provide access to a more faithful meaning. Since emotion in aesthetic imagination may ravish and shatter us and prevent us from reading expression, since it may sometimes distort our proper understanding of the meaning, reflective analysis comes into play to define, or at least name expressions in a more correspondent sense.

On this point, accommodation by Piaget is also referential. According to Piaget's theory of cognition or perception, when confronted with a new stimulus, one tries to assimilate it into existing schemata. When sometimes a stimulus cannot be placed or assimilated into a schema because there are no schemata into which it readily fits, and when the characteristics of the stimulus do not approximate those required in any of one's available schemata, one can either create a new schema into which he can place the stimulus or he can modify an existing schema so that the stimulus will fit into it. These are two forms of accommodation in the cognitive sense, which means the creation of new schemata or the modification of old schemata. When applied to aesthetic perception, accommodation helps to modify or adjust the perceptual schema. In image-actualization in literary translation, the conscious accommodation of the translator can result in a change in, or development of perceptual schemata, that is, it can modify his passive perception of the image schema in the original, either adjusting his own to the original or the original to his own. Once accommodation has taken place, the image-G structure is readily assimilated, and a three-dimensional image is readily constructed in the mind of the translator.

With the supplementary aid of such active operation, *sympatico* can be relatively achieved, even when there occur perceptual dissimilarities between the translator and the author and even oppositions between their beliefs. The degree to which he accords with the relevant experience of the writer is a measure of the degree to which the image in S-text will arouse similar experiences in him. As Richards (1929: 255)

has stated: poetry which has been built upon firm and definite beliefs about the world must appear differently to readers who do and readers who do not hold similar beliefs. Yet in fact most readers, and nearly all good readers, are very little disturbed by even a direct opposition between their own beliefs and the beliefs of the poet. Different readers, after due study, may respond in the same way to the poetry and arrive at similar judgments about it. Consequently, after due study, after active operation or an adjustment of his perceptual schema, the translator is likely to follow the writer in the writer's way. The operation of reflection or accommodation is a common operation agreed on by practising translators. But on how and how much it operates, there is still a lot to explore. This no longer concerns us at present due to limited space and time, but will be of much interest to deal with in future empirical studies. Here, however, we must mention a few factors the translator has to consider when his reflective analysis works to accommodate his schema. They are mainly: the context, the ideological component and the cultural diversity.

As is commonly known, the spatio-temporal context influences the way a phenomenon is perceived. An object looks big or small depending on whether it is seen, spatially, in the company of smaller or larger objects (Arnheim 1949). The same is true for the temporal context. Mozart's music may appear serene and cheerful to a modern listener, who perceives it in the temporal context of twentieth-century music, whereas it conveyed the expression of violent passion and desperate suffering to his contemporaries against the background of the music they know. Shelley's poems might be difficult to comprehend if they are not related to the specific context of war or the fierce reality the poem is positioned against. The ignorance or irrelevance of the background knowledge may hinder a legitimate reception and production of meaning, even more an experience of the feeling. Such an example does not demonstrate that there is no intrinsic connection between perceptual patterns and the expression they convey but simply that experiences must not be merely evaluated in isolation from their temporal whole-context. Besides, there is also an ideological component, which acts as a constraint on the perceptual schema. Needless to say, ideology is taken here in a sense not limited to the political sphere; rather, ideology would seem to be that grillwork of form, convention, and belief which orders our actions (Jameson 1974: 107). The translation usually projects a certain image in the service of a certain ideology. This fact is most apparent in the altered images in the translations. Some translators have tried to make the reproduced images fit their ideology by using all kinds of manipulative techniques, while other translators try to merge the poetics of the original with a poetics acceptable in their own ideology. What's more, the social and cultural diversities may make the pursuit of *simpatico* difficult if not impossible for the intra-lingual translator. Sometimes the translator does not activate the same image a native speaker of the language would activate, or the images the author intended, because the images realized by a linguistic frame are closely linked to a different sociocultural background of the language user in question. Similar schema are more likely to be realized when the author and the translator live in the same historical moment, in the same ideological background. In such case they might share a common sensibility and enjoy a similar aesthetic experience.

All the above factors must be taken into account in the active operation for the translator to realize a similar schema and experience with the author.

Active operation is an indispensable facilitation to reach the point of *simpatico* at which author and translator converge, and this point marks the end of self-alienation which takes place while the translator is disregarding the author and his experience. Our discussion suggests that there are two kinds of *simpatico* or communion: one is operating unconsciously and the other consciously. By the unconscious one, we mean that which operates under the condition of similar patterns. And by the conscious one, we refer to that which operates when the translator voluntarily applies some psychological mechanisms under the condition when dissimilar patterns occur.

The need for access to the nature and function of aesthetic progression becomes more and more pressing and less and less deniable if translation theory is to set about providing a systematic and objective description of the process.

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