Language in Use

Language in Use:

Metaphors in Non-Literary Contexts

Edited by

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PREFACE

Though it was only in the 80s that Lakoff and Johnson (1980) clearly pointed out the pervasiveness of metaphor not only in language, but also in thought and everyday human activity, metaphor had not passed unnoticed, being discussed mainly as a figure of speech used for rhetorical effects. Already in Antiquity, thinkers like Greek philosopher Aristotle or the Romans Cicero and Quintilian spoke about it in the context of oratory and written prose, as an ornamental "unusual" trope that only the most gifted speakers and writers could use skillfully (Nicolae 2015).

Later on, in the 18th century, the view of metaphor as a mere decorative element of a written text or piece of oratory was rejected by, for example, the Romantic poets, from among whom S.T. Coleridge and P.B. Shelley spoke in well-heard voices. For them, metaphor was no longer something that pertains to language, but rather to imagination which, as Nicolae (2011) observes, instead of recording pre-existing similarities between things, builds a unitary whole out of diverse thoughts, restaging our perceptions of the world. However, the name that is much more strongly connected to the dismissal of the view of metaphor as having solely a decorative function is that of Max Black (1962, 1979). His theory, known as *the interaction view*, postulates that metaphor is not an aesthetic element at the level of words and phrases, but one which operates at a deeper level–that of the concepts underlying words and phrases. At this deeper level, metaphor is a matter of predication, of transferring attributes from one entity (concept) to another, by actually stating that an entity (concept) is another entity. A development of Black's interaction view is represented by Ortony's (1979a, 1979b) *formulaic approach*, proposing that metaphor results from a salience imbalance between the shared features of the two entities that are implicitly compared (i.e. the same feature is more salient in the source domain than it is in the target domain to which it is transferred or vice versa).

Metaphor was investigated with componential analysis-related instruments as well. For linguists such as Weinreich (1966) or Levin (1977), for example, a metaphor is born when the deletion, addition or replacement of one or more semes in the meaning of the tenor (via its association with a certain vehicle) renders it semantically deviant.

Pragmatics, in its turn, also tackles the problem of metaphor. Thus, Searle (1979) considered metaphor the result of the clash between the literal meaning of a sentence and the speaker's intended meaning when uttering it (the context of the utterance undoubtedly plays a role in deciphering the intended metaphor). Sperber and Wilson (1986), as advocates of the *relevance theory*, echo Searl's opinion on how metaphor is generated when saying that

> metaphor involves an interpretive relation between the propositional form of an utterance and the form it represents […] There is no reason to think that the optimally relevant interpretive expression of a thought is always the most literal one. The speaker is presumed to aim at optimal relevance, not at literal truth. The optimal interpretive expression of a thought should give the hearer information about that thought which is relevant enough to be worth processing, and should require as little processing effort as possible. (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 231-233)

Cognitivism may, however, be considered the framework which has generated the richest and most widely accepted reflections on metaphor. Of the many scholars who have embraced cognitive points of view concerning it, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999, etc.), Lakoff (1987, 1990, etc.), Johnson (1981, 1987, etc.), Turner (1991), and Kövecses (2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, etc.) are resounding names. At the core of *cognitive metaphor theory* there is, by and large, the idea that metaphor presupposes the understanding of one thing in terms of another and that it is the surface manifestations of underlying conceptual mappings between a *source domain* (that from which information is extracted)–which is usually concrete, and a *target domain* (that for which a definition or description is sought)–which is usually abstract and less familiar. The mappings are based on the language user's direct (bodily) experience with the surrounding reality (in some cases, universal human experience, in others–experience influenced by cultural and social parameters); they are unidirectional (i.e. the transfer of features works only from the source domain towards the target domain and never vice versa), and partial (i.e. only those features of the source domain that match the schematic structure of the target domain are transferred).

The idea that metaphorical mapping is a unidirectional process was challenged by the proponents of the *blending theory*–Fauconnier and Turner (Fauconnier 1994; Fauconnier and Turner 1995). Their refinement of conceptual metaphor theory consisted in replacing the concept of "domain" with that of *mental space*, "as a short-term construct informed by the more general and more stable knowledge structure associated with a

particular domain" (Grady et al., online). There are four mental spaces that make up the model on which blending theory is based: two *input spaces* (that correspond to the source and the target domains in conceptual metaphor theory), a *generic space*–containing the conceptual structure shared by the two inputs, and the shared or *blend space*–"where material from the two inputs combines and interacts" (Grady et al., online). Thus, both inputs contribute elements to the blend space and it is the overlapping of some of these elements that give birth to metaphor.

The approaches to metaphor mentioned so far all tackle it either from a purely linguistic stance or from a combined linguistic-cognitive one. However, metaphor functions beyond language, too (in, for example, pictures, music, movement of actors in films or theater plays, etc.)–a fact that, once admitted, has brought it into new light, in a collection of studies on its either non-linguistic monomodal or multimodal instantiations. One of the scholars to have opened this new research strand is Forceville (1996), who focused on metaphors in advertisements, in particular, on the pictorial (realized in pictures) and verbo-pictorial ones (realized in pictures accompanied by language).

The various theories on metaphor are definitely not presented here in minute detail, nor are they mentioned because they are flawless or the only ones existent. The reason why they have been briefly introduced is simply to prove the open-endedness of research on metaphor, of which what has been done up to now may be only a small part.

The present collection of contributions is a kaleidoscope of studies born from the belief that there is always something more to say about metaphor. What unites the pieces of this kaleidoscope is that all chapters rely (heavily or just secondarily) on conceptual metaphor theory. As such, they are meant to bring together applications of this theory (and some of its further developments) in a variety of contexts and types of discourse, against a multitude of cultural backgrounds.

The book is structured in two sections. The first, *Metaphors at play and work*, is dedicated to metaphors in everyday language. Particular attention is paid to metaphors of/in translation and to metaphors based on color terms (some of the studies in this section are comparative: they involve the analysis of various metaphors across two languages) and in specialized jargons (pertaining to the sports, wine making and cuisine domains). The second, *Living with metaphors,* builds on metaphors in private discourses (diaries and life stories) and in public ones (pertaining to the political arena, advertising, media campaigns, the foreign language teaching environment, and the film industry).

Part I opens with **Éva Antal**'s chapter, in which she analyses the metaphors of truth, purity, wholeness, and fragmentation that Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jaques Derrida and Walter Benjamin use to refer to translation. Gadamer, the supporter of philosophical hermeneutics, highlights the connecting and knowledge-transferring potentialities of translation by frequently resorting to the bridge-metaphor. In his turn, Derrida offers a deconstructivist view on the matter, calling attention to the dangers of metaphorically approaching translated texts as receptors of transferred meaning. Instead, he sees a poem like an *istrice* (the Italian word for "hedgehog") which, in its habit of self-defense, rolls into a ball and bristles its spines. In other words, a poem is, according to him, a text spiked/hedged about with difficulties, one that has its own truth and resists "true" translation. In considering translation a difficult process, Derrida echoes Benjamin's ideas on "pure language" and his metaphorically rendering the "puzzling" quality of various translations of a given text by resorting to the image of a broken vessel whose fragments are to be articulated together. Paradoxically, while the translations of a particular work should be regarded as fragments of a perfect whole, undifferentiated in its purity, the collection of these translations remains essentially fragmentary and dependent on differentiation in order to be meaningful.

Sonja Rodić compares literal and transferred meanings of the color *green/zelena* in English and Serbian, in an attempt to highlight cultural differences reflected in its conceptualization in the two languages (assuming that the conceptualization of colors is not based on pan-human neural responses only, but it is also influenced by culture-specific factors). The author classifies the meanings of the color term *green* and its Serbian correspondent *zelena* in three groups: meanings that are similar in both languages, meanings that partially overlap and meanings found in only one of the languages. The analysis indicates that the literal meanings of *green/zelena* fall within the first category, while the other two categories may be illustrated by various figurative (metaphorical) meanings of the corresponding words under scrutiny, as the most valuable indicators of cultural specificities.

Starting from the prototype theory, whereby the central meaning of a word involves its basic sense within the physical domain, and its peripheral meaning(s) constitute(s) its metaphorical extensions within the abstract domain, and, at the same time, drawing on the conceptual metaphor theory, **Aleksandra Kardoš** analyzes various ways of metaphorically expressing the concepts *good* and *bad* in English and Serbian. The pairs of adjectives that carry metaphorical meanings, such as "moral purity", "happiness", "cleverness", "clarity of sound" (on the good

side) and "moral impurity", "sadness", "incomprehensibility" and "secrecy" (on the bad side), considered by the author are *white, black/beo, crn*; *clean, dirty/čist, prljav*; and *bright, dark/svetao, taman*. A closer look is taken at collocations, idioms and free word combinations of which these adjectives are part; they are compared and contrasted in the two languages.

Accepting the view that colors have a strong metaphorical import, **Sanja Krimer Gaborović** reports on English and Serbian metaphors based on the color *black*. When black is used metaphorically, the negative seme of its semantic content prevails. However, the word may be employed to convey positive associations, too. Both situations are illustrated and commented upon by the author. The chapter posits that the similarities between the ways in which English and Serbian resort to the color black to convey either positive or negative meanings are more prominent than the differences–a situation which is due, as the author points out, to shared perceptual and cultural experience and, in the more recent past, to globalization, or rather Anglicization. Yet, the linguistic embodiments of the metaphorical extensions of the meaning of *black* in one language do not always find a perfect match in the other.

Mira Milić contributes a contrastive, cognitive linguistics-based analysis of ball games and gymnastics metaphorical terms in English and Serbian, with the declared aim to postulate certain generalizations on the type of conceptualizations that characterize these terms. Her findings indicate that the selected metaphorical terms in ball games predominantly draw on the source domains of war and objects, whereas such terms in gymnastics rely more often on the source domains of objects and animals. As far as the terminological standard is concerned, metaphor productivity in the two sports domains may be correlated with the bi-univocal and transparent character of the terms under scrutiny and with the principle of language economy. From a contrastive point of view, metaphorical representation has been proved to be slightly more productive in English than in Serbian, with a high extent of formal correspondence between the two languages in terms of the war-related metaphorical terms in ball games and the animals-related ones in gymnastics.

Loredana Pungă discusses the anthropomorphic wine metaphors identified in one hundred wine tasting notes written in English. In the first part of her chapter, she approaches these metaphors along the traditional lines of conceptual metaphor theory, as linguistic manifestations of conceptual prestored mappings in the human mind, highlighting their peculiarities in terms of their cognitive function, nature, conventionality and universality. In the second part, the same metaphors are analyzed from the complimentary perspective proposed by Kövecses (2015)–that of the

role played by contextual factors (e.g., knowledge about the main elements of the discourse, the surrounding discourse, the previous discourses on the same topic, intertextuality, the physical environment, history, the ideology underlying discourse, the social and cultural situation, various interests and concerns) in creating circumstances that would activate mind mappings.

In a comparative study, **Daniela Gheltofan** talks about Romanian and Russian metaphors based on culinary terms. She focuses on eighteen of the most frequent frames these metaphors build on (the majority of which conceptualize humans' physical, intellectual and temperament peculiarities as well as their actions/activities), and on their linguistic embodiments. Attention is drawn to situations when both the frames and their manifestations in the two languages coincide and when either one or both are different. Particular emphasis is placed on the culture-specificity displayed by some of the metaphors considered. Their connotative (humorous, ironic or even sarcastic) meaning is also brought into discussion.

In Part II, **Codruța Goșa**'s study represents, in Long's (1980) words, "a glimpse inside the black box", i.e. inside the human mind with its thinking mechanisms. It brings together conceptual metaphor theory and diary studies, in an attempt to explore the conceptual metaphors used by fourteen students (both undergraduate and graduate) in the diaries they were invited to keep for a week. The author highlights the types of underlying conceptual metaphors employed and comments on their linguistic manifestations and attested or novel character, trying to see whether they represent general characteristics of the two sets of diaries analyzed or are dependent on the diarists' profile (more exactly, on their gender and the level of the study program they are enrolled in) and on the focus of their reporting (the MA thesis writing process, for the graduate students, and seven *Little Red Riding Hood* based literary texts that the undergraduate students had to read).

In her chapter, **Andreea Ioana Șerban** explores the types of metaphors used by six Romanian women belonging to four different age groups in "life story" interviews recorded within an international Grundtvig project concerning women's education (the focus of the interviews was on the education women received both at home and at school and its impact on their job opportunities and career choices). The author discusses the conceptual metaphors identified in these life stories, with particular emphasis on the image schemas revealing the Romanian women's life and career choices, in order to identify the variations in the subjects' attitudes and perceptions. Drawing on certain works by George

Lakoff (1993), Elena Semino (2008) and Zoltán Kövecses (2005, 2010, 2015), as well as on Kerr Inkson's (2004) study of nine key metaphors used in the conceptualization of careers, the chapter also compares the life and career metaphors employed by the Romanian interviewees with the English metaphors of the kind, identified by scholars and career specialists.

Luminița Frențiu's chapter reports on the results of a study which is part of a larger scale project aimed at investigating the role of metaphors in the political discourse of presidential election periods in Post-Communist Romania. The project has a chronological dimension; the first stage of the research focused on the 2004 presidential campaign, while the second stage, reported on here, targets the 2014 campaign. The purpose of Frențiu's study is to investigate the conceptual metaphors employed by the Romanian presidential candidates who have reached the runoff stage and to see whether their speeches are characterized by similar populism and lack of ideological identity as in 2004, or some major shifts have occurred.

Annamaria Kilyeni sets out to examine the way in which copywriters rely on metaphor in order to conceptualize a woman's body in a corpus of print advertisements published in the British and US editions of three women's glossy magazines. Unlike most cognitive linguistic analyses of metaphor in advertising, which deal with metaphors involved in the conceptualization of the advertised products, the focus of this chapter is on the metaphorical understanding of the feminine (culturally determined) body. In particular, the author illustrates how various parts of the female body or certain aspects related to them are recurrently personified. She investigates those metaphors that primarily personify the body as a socially active, and respectively, as a sentient human being, in light of the rhetorical functions they perform in advertising discourse, with emphasis on their role in the promotion of gender ideology.

Irina Diana Mădroane's chapter integrates insights from conceptual metaphor theory with the dialectical and rhetorical dimensions of argumentation in advocacy contexts. The author analyses the function of metaphor in practical arguments put forward in a Romanian media advocacy campaign for social policy change in the field of elderly care. She draws upon a recently developed framework for the analysis of political discourse as practical argumentation (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012) and an even more recent understanding of framing within this approach (Fairclough 2016). Alongside persuasive definitions and analogies, metaphors are viewed as framing devices, which can steer audiences towards making particular decisions about what should be done, on the basis of a transfer of entailments between the source and the target

domains. In this chapter, Mădroane illustrates the role played by metaphors in mobilizing the campaign public to sign a petition, but also in setting the policy problem, so that particular solutions can be envisaged. She shows that the main strategies undertaken by the campaign initiators (a Romanian TV channel) are to represent the circumstances of the elderly as unacceptable in light of civic entitlements as well as of moral values, and to assign responsibility for the situation to the Romanian authorities. The metaphors employed to refer to the ways in which the state has redefined old age in Romania (as advanced physical decay, deprivation, exclusion) and the personification of the Romanian state as a political actor who fails to fulfill its duties are aimed at persuading the public to take a stand, not least by arousing emotions of pity and indignation.

Valentina Carina Mureșan switches the research focus to a different public space, that of school. Her chapter brings into discussion the conceptual metaphors used by two secondary school teachers of English and their students, during eight lessons. The metaphors identified and their linguistic embodiments are analyzed in the context of developing not only language proficiency, but also communicative and metaphoric competence. The conclusion drawn is that equipping students with such competence in the (foreign language) classroom environment presupposes building both general and more specific message decoding competences, ranging from lexical to strategic and culture-related ones, and including group-specific sub-competences (such as the ability to understand the jargon constructed within that specific group, which is meaningless to outsiders).

The last three chapters of the volume are dedicated to metaphors in films, and in particular, to bringing their multimodal character into the limelight.

In her analysis of three "New Wave" short cinematic productions, **Gabriela Tucan** redefines the recent cultural coordinates of post-1989 Romania. She focuses on how the movie narratives reflect shared cultural and social experiences, while devoting special attention to the employment of multimodal metaphors (metaphors of a sensorial nature) and of audio-visual metaphors (correlated with the metaphorical use of the camera, music, the protagonists' movements) for shaping socio-cultural models that viewers are familiar with, recognize and react emotionally to. The author details on a series of pervasive metaphors of entrapment, confinement, surveillance, and stagnancy which may reflect collective involvement with what is peculiar of the transition from the uncomfortable pre-1989 past to an, unfortunately, equally alienating future.

Anna Finzel details on gendered conceptualizations of the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor in four films recently produced in the UK (2), India (1) and Nigeria (1). She insists on the culture-influenced and language-variety related choices of source domains in metaphorically portraying men and women characters. The author highlights not only the linguistic embodiments of the overarching zoomorphic metaphor, but also its manifestations in images, sounds and music, in an environment which is unquestionably multimodal by nature.

Eliza Filimon also goes beyond the language level and looks at how non-linguistic metaphors are created by means available within the grammar of film. In the painstaking process of weaving layers of language, sound and image, filmmakers use metaphors both intentionally and intuitively to help the audience think and feel: framing, mise-en-scène, pacing, sounds, types of shots are key pieces of the filmic puzzle, teaching viewers how "to read" a movie. With this as the background assumption, Filimon's chapter focuses on the excitingly crafted movie *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014). A selection of metaphorical constructs–chosen on the basis of Trevor Whittock's (1990) theory of rule disruption–is brought into discussion along with the mechanics of film-making at work to guide the spectators in getting deeper than the surface coating of the movie. Once engaged in the sense-making process, spectators become active partners in shaping the multimodal metaphors the film director has created.

In bringing together such diverse perspectives on metaphor within the covers of the same volume, the editor hopes to have demonstrated the intricacies of the human mind for which the use of metaphor stands proof. Just like human mind, metaphor is an extremely rich topic to investigate and a variety of instruments for doing this are available. This makes further research possible and welcome. Each of the chapters in *Language in use: Metaphors in non-literary contexts* could be a starting point for shedding (more) light or casting doubt on a number of issues that may prove still open.

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PART I

METAPHORS AT PLAY AND WORK

CHAPTER ONE

METAPHORS OF/IN TRANSLATION

ÉVA ANTAL

Tatsächlich ist das Geheimnis des Lesens
wie eine grosse Brücke zwischen den Sprachen.
[Truly, the secret of reading is actually that it is
like a huge bridge vaulting between languages.]
(Gadamer 1993, 283)

Nothing is more serious than a translation.
(Derrida 2007, 207)

1. Introduction

Hermeneutics and deconstruction offer two ways of interpreting a text. Both practices, exemplified by Hans-Georg Gadamer's and Jacques Derrida's work respectively, are rooted in Heidegger's recognition of the primacy of language in our existence. In '*Destruktion' and Deconstruction* (1989a), Gadamer admits his profound debt to Heidegger, which he undoubtedly shares with Derrida. Although he sharply differentiates between his philosophical hermeneutics and Derrida's deconstruction, in several of his concepts, ideas (for instance, letting the other speak in conversation or the emphasis on the importance of reading), and doubting questions, he recalls Derridean notions. Let me quote his famous questions in *Text and interpretation* (1989c):

> How do the communality of meaning, which is built up in conversation, and the impenetrability of the otherness of the other mediate each other? What, in the final analysis, is linguisticality? Is it a bridge or a barrier? Is it a bridge built of things that are the same for each self, over which one communicates with the other, over the flowing stream of otherness? Or is it a barrier that limits our self-abandonment and that cuts us off from the possibility of ever completely expressing ourselves and communicating with others? (Gadamer 1989c, 27)

I do not intend to elaborate on the impasse of the "Gadamer-Derrida encounter", since the present chapter focuses on metaphors implied in theoretical discourses on translation (although it is relevant that, after the failure of their dialogue, in his *Letter to Dallmayr* (1989b), Gadamer wrote to Derrida that "special difficulties" had occurred due to "the language barrier"). In their conversation, both had insisted on their mother tongue, so that their exchange of ideas happened–or rather *were to* happen–in translation. As he points out, "in German, Derrida's style of deconstruction loses some of its suppleness. On the other hand, my academic philosophizing would *probably* lose some of its earnestness when rendered into French" (Gadamer 1989b, 93). Interestingly enough, when accusing translation and languages of causing their non-dialogue, Gadamer comes close to echoing Derrida's ideas, "probably". Recalling his famous questions in *Text and interpretation* on whether linguisticality is a bridge or a barrier to communication, this time, we receive a less optimistic–and more Derridean–answer. It seems that, in the hermeneutic experience of translation, the gap, or the gulf between the reader-interpreter-translator and *die Sache* is highlighted.

2. Gadamer and Derrida on translation

In *'Destruktion' and Deconstruction*, Gadamer, referring to the Biblical story of the tower of Babel, recalls the metaphors of the wide, open sea and of crossing it. Instead of seeing the "Babylonian captivity of the human mind" (1989a, 106) as something devastating, he presents it as a possibility, since one can reach the other through learning and using different languages.

In contrast with his optimism, in *Des Tours de Babel* (2007), Derrida sees things rather differently. In his reading of the arch-story of naming and confusion, God is to deconstruct, proclaiming the proper word, *Bavel*, over the city. The word *proper* refers not only to "his name" but also, figuratively, to "confusion", which makes translation "necessary and impossible" (Derrida 2007, 196).

In his *Text and interpretation*, Gadamer touches upon the hermeneutics of translation, saying that "every translation, even the so-called literal reproduction, is a sort of interpretation" (1989c, 32). Thus, it is not only the reader's and the interpreter's, but also the translator's task "to let the printed text speak once again" (1989c, 35). He speaks of translation in a similar vein, in one of his most exciting later writings, *Lesen ist wie Übersetzen* (1993), where he claims that the demand of hermeneutics is to

consider the degrees of 'untranslatability' (*Unübersetzbarkeit*) rather than those of 'translatability' (*Übersetzbarkeit*) (1993, 280). Gadamer goes even further when he refers to translation and reading as two seemingly different but essentially similar hermeneutical endeavors. Every reader is partly a translator (*ein halber Übersetzer*), as s/he transfers (cf. *Über-setzen*) meanings from one domain into another, that is, from one text into another (*von Text zu Text*), from one side of the sea to the other (1993, 284). Here, reading/translating becomes a bridge whose potential existence is questioned in the aforementioned writings:

> Truly, the secret of reading is that it is like a huge bridge vaulting between languages. [...] We should admire all translators of poetry who do not totally hide the separating distance from the original, but at the same time, bridge this distance [...] In our understanding and reading [the translator's text], there always remains a safely grounded and stable arch; a bridge, which can be crossed from both sides. Translation is like a bridge between two languages, as if between two banks [of a river] in the same land. (Gadamer 1993, 283-285, my translation)

The metaphor of the bridge connecting "the banks in the same land" is more comforting than the one building on the far-off seacoast. How can one transfer/transport (*Über-setzen*) safely from one shore to the other, over a considerable distance?

Speaking of the translation of poetry, in *Lesen ist wie Übersetzen*, Gadamer uses a language that is somewhat poetic, figurative. He says that a true poet is the best translator of other poets' works, as he is able to compose music, while listening to the 'tonos' (*der Ton*) that must resonate under the sounds and words of the original (Gadamer 1993, 284-5). Similarly, in his essay, *Che cos'è la poesia?* (1995a), Derrida also offers a metaphor: he suggests that each poetic work has its own truth and that it resembles a hedgehog rolled up in a ball. He deliberately keeps the Italian word for hedgehog, *istrice*, protesting against the possibility of a "true" translation of a given literary work. His central metaphor deliberately makes the intended connections via a humble and insignificant animal: not the conventionally sublime phoenix or eagle, but the short-sighted, down-to-earth hedgehog. Derrida suggests that a poem is (like) an *istrice* in that, while in its habit of self-defense, the hedgehog rolls itself into a ball and bristles its spines, a text is spiked with difficulties. However, the hedgehog–in French, *hérisson*–in its self-defense on the autoroute (i.e. on its own way) cannot see its death coming: "rolled up in a ball, prickly with spines, vulnerable and dangerous, calculating and ill-adapted (because it makes itself into a ball), sensing the danger on the autoroute, it exposes

itself to an accident" (Derrida 1995a, 297). In Derrida's text on the origin of the poetic and its untranslatability, we can also sense the breath of the former,

> whence the infinite resistance to the transfer of the letter which the animal, in its name, nevertheless calls out for. That is the distress of the *horizon*. What does the distress, *stress* itself, want? *Stricto sensu*, to put on guard. Whence the prophecy: translate me, watch, keep me yet a while, get going, save yourself, let's get off the autoroute. (Derrida 1995a, 295)

3. Benjamin's metaphoric patterns of translation

In *Che cos'è la poesia*, Derrida questions not only the Heideggerian "truth-revealing" capabilities of poetry and the existence of "pure poetry" and pure rhetoric, but also Benjamin's "pure language" (Derrida 1995a, 297). Here, one can find a clear reference to Benjamin's essay "*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*" (1980), which I read in Harry Zohn's translation entitled *The task of the translator* (1999). I must admit that the English translation offered a radically new reading of Benjamin's essay. Being a deconstructor, I would welcome such a "deconstructive" translation; however, I came to realize that Zohn radically *distorted* several passages of the text, by misreading not only its argumentation but also its rhetoric.[1] Indeed, even if Zohn's critics admit that his "lucid translations have made a decidedly meaningful contribution to the understanding of Benjamin by an English-speaking audience" (Jacobs 1975, 755), they also agree that, in several fragments, he not only "blurs" the logic of the German essay but also "overlooks the metaphorical patterns whose significance seems central to Benjamin's text considered a poetic artifact" (Rendall 1997, 199).[2] Well, the Derridian poetic *istrice* metaphor–or its German relative–seems to defend itself quite effectively here.

Benjamin's essay is written as a preface to his translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens* (1923). In his *Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The task of the translator'*, Paul de Man also believes that the

[1] Although Steven Rendall corrected Zohn's mistakes, in an article entitled 'Notes on Zohn's Translation of Benjamin's *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*' and published his revised translation of the original German essay, I could mostly find Zohn's translation in Benjamin-collections and in reference books.

[2] Rendall also tries to give a metaphorical recipe of good translation, where the minor flaws do not prevent the reader "to get the gist", that is, the core/essence of the text, and to follow the writer's "drift", or thinking flow. According to Rendall, Zohn failed to help the reader "get the gist" and "drift" of Benjamin's text (Rendall 1997, 202).