

## BIBLICAL METAPHORS AND THEIR TRANSLATION\*

It has generally been felt that the problems related to the translation of non-literal meanings of Biblical expressions have been insufficiently dealt with. In the otherwise remarkable study of Nida and Taber on the theory and practice of translation only a few pages are devoted to the problem of figurative meanings in the context of the chapter on referential meaning and still less attention has been paid to the problems of their transfer from the source to the target language.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly in disproportion to the importance of the problem, for the thesis can be defended that the judgment of any translation in general will be determined to a large extent by the particular evaluation of the efficiency or lack of efficiency with which non-literal meanings have been handled. Because of this void in the existing translation theory, study of the problems involved in the translation of figurative meanings has become a top priority in more recent research.<sup>2</sup> Within the scope of one article

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<sup>1</sup>E.A.Nida and C.R.Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden, 1969, pp.87-89, 106f. The French (C.R.Taber and E.A.Nida, *La traduction: théorie et méthode*, Londres, 1971) and German (*Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens*, 1969) adaptations of this book — sometimes enlarged and revised — show no improvement in this respect.

<sup>2</sup>The views expressed in this article are in part the results of the author's own research especially with regard to the translation of figures of speech into African languages. They reflect partly the outcome of a similar research carried out by colleagues in the UBS team. The author is particularly indebted to Dr. J.A.Loewen who worked out a series of preliminary papers on non-literal meanings and who made available in mimeographed form a workbook containing drills for translator training in which much attention is given to the identification and translation of different figures of speech. The tentative edition of this workbook — available from the author — is dated April 1972. It is, of course, not only in the field of biblical linguistics, but also in that of general linguistics that the study of figurative usage has received renewed attention. One of the most recent examples is M.B.Dagut's doctoral thesis, *A Linguistic Analysis of Some Semantic Problems of Hebrew-English Translation*, Hebrew University, December 1971 (mimeographed). See especially his chapter IV: *Figurative Usage* (pp.96-146).

it is, of course, impossible to deal with all the existing figures of speech such as metonymy, synecdoche, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, litotes, euphemism etc. Some of these received attention in earlier studies, others are still the subject of current research.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, only one particular figure has been selected, namely metaphor, though it should be stated right away that an exhaustive treatment of metaphors – given the necessary limitations of an article – is to be excluded. It will only be possible to pay a more general attention to their identification and function, the problems they present to translators and the principles and procedures which should be applied to their translation.

#### METAPHORS: IDENTIFICATION AND FUNCTION

Definitions of metaphor have been given as early as the fifth or fourth century B.C. Classical Greek authors already used the Greek word *metaphora* in a rhetorical sense for the transference of a word to a new meaning.<sup>4</sup> The standard English dictionary definition of a metaphor is that of a 'figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object to which it is not properly applicable'.<sup>5</sup> Both definitions, in spite of their imperfection, make already perfectly clear that metaphors are in no way static elements, but that they are involved in a dynamic linguistic process and further that they have to do with what might be called 'polysemy'. It is partly this dynamic character of metaphors which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to give precise definitions, even with the help of modern linguistic theory. There are simply no clear-cut boundaries between metaphor and polysemy on the one hand and metaphor and idiom on the other.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup>For euphemisms see the author's article, 'Do You Use 'Clean Language'? in *The Bible Translator*, 22, 1971, pp.107-115 and the literature quoted there, for other figures of speech see the unpublished articles by Dr. Loewen referred to in note 2. All the problems connected with the translation of figures of speech occurring in specific Bible texts do, of course, receive due attention in the *Translator's Handbooks* written on these texts and published by the UBS.

<sup>4</sup>So Isocrates *Orator* 9.9 (using the plural); Aristoteles, *Poetica* 1457b6, *Rhetorica* 1410b36; Epicurus *Philosophus*, *De rerum natura* 28.5 etc.

<sup>5</sup>W. Little-H.W. Fowler-J. Coulson-C.T. Onions, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1972, s.v.

<sup>6</sup>Geoffrey N. Leech (*Towards a Semantic Description of English*, London, 1969, pp.89-91) seems to use the terms 'polysemy' and 'metaphor' indistinctively. D. Bickerton in his *Prolegomena to a Linguistic Theory of Metaphor*, Founda-

For translation purposes, especially in terms of possibilities of translation, it may be useful to make with Dagut<sup>7</sup> a distinction between 'simplex' and 'complex' metaphors. In a simplex metaphor only one polysemic form would be involved e.g. 'to be in the soup' or, to quote a Biblical example, 'prepare the way of the Lord' (Mark 1.3) whereas a complex metaphor would contain two or more polysemic terms e.g. 'dirty swine' or, in Biblical language again, 'my beloved is to me a bag of myrrh, that lies between my breasts' (Song of Solomon 1.13). Even then it remains true that the border-line between simplex metaphor and polysemy on the one side and complex metaphor and idiom on the other is fluid, because metaphors are subject to the drift of language.<sup>8</sup> At the moment in which they are created *ad hoc* by an author or quoted as particularly striking, they are fresh and alive (e.g. 'a dusty answer'). They may even be still alive when widely used, but then they will certainly not create the same impact. Then they get worn out, and finally they become dead metaphors.<sup>9</sup> Through this process of metaphoric usage, simplex metaphors can be gradually turned into polysemy and complex metaphors into those simplex signs which are usually called idioms such as 'put the wind up somebody' etc. This process, however, is by no means one-directional as especially worn-out metaphors can also be restored to life. So two conclusions impose themselves: it is very often impossible to decide at which point of the continuum between 'alive' and 'dead' the metaphor presents itself and it is sometimes hard to distinguish a dead metaphor from an idiom.

The procedure of making a distinction as to the degree of complexity of metaphors is certainly translationally relevant. However, a practically more useful approach may be possible and necessary, especially

tions of Language 5, 1969, pp.34-52, speaks nowhere of polysemy, but he classifies metaphors in two groups of what he calls 'permanent' and 'temporary' assignments. When U. Weinreich in his *Explorations in Semantic Theory* (in T.A. Sebeok, Ed., *Current Trends in Linguistics*, Vol. III, The Hague, 1966, p. 450) states that 'idiomaticity and polysemy are complementary', he clearly makes no distinction between polysemy and metaphor.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., pp. 96-146.

<sup>8</sup> For this terminology see E. Sapir, *Language*, New York, 1949, chapter 7.

<sup>9</sup> Compare also A. Malblanc, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'allemand*, Paris, 1961, p. 82: 'Plus une métaphore sert, plus elle perd de sa force et s'oriente vers le signe... A rebours, plus une métaphore est devenue signe, plus, en général, son extension a augmenté'. (quoted in Dagut, op. cit., p. 127).

if one takes into consideration the specific subject of this article: Biblical metaphors (which involve specific problems) and the fact that most Bible translators are not linguistically sophisticated. Such a different approach is largely based upon two important insights provided by Nida and Taber's definition of metaphor: 'a figurative expression used instead of another to make an implicit comparison between the items referred to by the two expressions, often based upon supplementary components. An expression in every way similar except that the comparison is explicit is a simile'.<sup>10</sup> The insight that metaphors are often based upon supplementary components, which means that they are often culture particulars, will be dealt with in the following section. The other insight that metaphors are functionally very similar to similes, except that in metaphors in any case the signal of the comparison (in English 'as', 'like') remains implicit, is retained here and – when dealing with principles and procedures of translation – it will be shown to contain certain translational possibilities.

If, by virtue of this definition, a metaphor can be considered as some form of a compressed simile, then it must be possible to analyse it in an analogous way. This means that a distinction could be made between full and abbreviated metaphors.<sup>11</sup> Full metaphors would then show explicitly all three of their constituents: (1) the object of the comparison, (2) the image of the comparison and (3) the ground of the comparison. In fact, many Biblical metaphors are of this particular type as may be seen from the following examples:<sup>12</sup>

Benjamin (object) is a ravenous (ground) wolf (image) (Gen. 49.27)<sup>13</sup>

The Lord your God (object) is a devouring (ground) fire (image) (Deut. 4.24)

go rather to the lost (ground) sheep (image) of the house of Israel

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., p. 205 (glossary s.v. metaphor).

<sup>11</sup> There is some analogy here with Dagur's distinction between 'complex' and 'simplex' metaphors.

<sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise stated the Hebrew and Greek texts are given in the translation of the Revised Standard Version which as a type of formal equivalence translation normally does fully justice to the form of the metaphor in the source text.

<sup>13</sup> Literally in Hebrew: Benjamin is a wolf (which) tears. The source text uses an asyndetic relative verbal clause as is often the case in Hebrew after an indefinite noun. See P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, Rome, 1947, par. 158a.

(object) (Matthew 10.6; comp. Jer. 50.6 = LXX 27.6)

I (object) am the bread (image) of life (ground) (John 6.48)

In abbreviated metaphors, on the other hand, one or sometimes even two of the three constituents remain implicit. Normally it is only one element which is usually the ground as the following examples show:

The mouth of a loose woman (object) is a deep pit (image).

Implicit ground: ruinous.<sup>14</sup> (Prov. 22.14)

The Lord (object) is my rock (image) (Ps. 18.2 = 2 Sam. 22.2).

Implicit ground: security, immovable.<sup>15</sup>

Go and tell that (object) fox (image) (Luke 13.32).

Implicit ground: cunning.<sup>16</sup>

And the tongue (object) is a fire (image) (James 3.6).

Implicit ground: dangerous.

Sometimes the object of the comparison is left implicit e.g.:

Tend (ground) my sheep (image) (John 21.16).

Implicit object: my followers.<sup>17</sup>

Occasionally neither the object nor the ground are explicitly stated e.g.:

Beware of the leaven (image) of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16.6; comp. 11, 12). Implicit ground: corrupting; implicit object teaching.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For the interpretation of Hebrew *zarot* see W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, Lieferung I, Leiden, 1967, s.v. *zar* and the commentaries *ad hoc*. 'Mouth' is, of course, a metaphor for seductive speech. See also C.H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, Edinburgh, 1970, *ad loc*.

<sup>15</sup> Or: refuge. Compare also Ps. 31.2 and 42.9 and the comments on the last text by A.A. Anderson, *Psalms*, Vol. I, London, 1972.

<sup>16</sup> The fox is a figure of Herod's craftiness, not of his rapacity as sometimes has been argued. In the Talmud the fox is defined as 'the sliest of beasts'. For references see A. Plummer, *St. Luke*, Edinburgh, 1969, *ad loc*. In classical Greek *alopeks* is metaphorically used in the same sense. See H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1951, s.v.

<sup>17</sup> In the particular instance of the 'sheep' metaphor, the often occurring implicitness of the object is due to the fact that this figure was widely spread and frequently used in oriental as well as Greek culture. For literature on this subject and discussion of this metaphor see especially R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Göttingen, 1953, p. 277ff.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note the differences between the synoptic parallels. Though the implicit ground is the same, the implicit object differs. In the Matthew text, the editor adds an explanation in verse 12 in which the object is

## METAPHORS: PROBLEMS OF TRANSFER

Dagut in his interesting analysis of translations into English of a total of 23 uses of modern Hebrew metaphors, comes to the conclusion that only three times a similar metaphor has been used in the target language whereas eight times the modern Hebrew metaphor has been replaced by a different metaphor in English. On the other hand, in twelve instances the source metaphor has been translated by a non-metaphor. On closer evaluation one learns, however, that two of the three cases of similar metaphors are mistranslations and that the remaining one is not satisfactory. This means that in his list of analysed data no real case of translation by a similar metaphor can be found.<sup>19</sup> Almost the same conclusions are drawn after the translational analysis of what Dagut calls 'primary' Hebrew metaphors (belonging to a large extent to the Biblical Hebrew stratum of the language) such as *leb*, *'ayin*, *panim*, *da'at*, *ruah*, *nephesb*.<sup>20</sup> This does not mean, of course, that English is not as rich as (modern) Hebrew with regard to metaphoric usages of – let us say – the word 'heart'. It simply means that there is almost complete incongruity between the two sets of figurative extensions in Hebrew and English. And it is not the distance between these two particular languages which is at issue here. One glance at the concise French-American dictionary of figurative and idiomatic language<sup>21</sup> is sufficient to see that the picture in more related languages is not virtually different. Such a picture is not astonishing. It simply illustrates the fact that metaphors like many other figures of speech are largely based on supplementary or conventional components so that it will only rarely happen that another language will attach them to the same word. In one of the examples quoted above it was seen that the supplementary component of 'cleverness' was attached in Hebrew and Greek to the word

explicitly stated. The Lucan text (12.1) reads 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy' and provides thus a different explicit statement. Mark 8.15 has the reading 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod' and though no interpretation is given, the implicit object is very probably something as 'evil disposition'. See the discussion in V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London, 1959, *ad loc.*

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit., p.119.

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., p.126.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Perreau and Margaret J. Langford, *Concise French-American Dictionary of Figurative and Idiomatic Language*, Paris, Editions Ophrys, 1972.

for 'fox'. At least here there seems to be some congruence with European languages though historically the possibility that one has to do with a so-called loan-metaphor is not to be excluded. However, in e.g. African cultural settings, this particular component is assigned to a variety of different animals such as tortoise, hare, spider etc. So the translation of metaphors as such – with the exception of loan-metaphors – appears to be very frequently impossible.

It will be clear that a literal translation of metaphors should not easily be attempted for the simple reason that one has to do with non-literal meanings. Also with it be clear that a literal translation especially of dead metaphors/idioms can give rise to a semantic distortion. For the figurative expression does sometimes admit of literalizations which give a perfect sense in the receptor language, but a wrong one. So the famous 'children of the bridechamber' (Mark 2.19 King James Version)<sup>22</sup> still literally figure in translations and in some languages nobody thinks of 'wedding guests' (RSV) or 'bridegroom's friends' (New English Bible), but of illegitimate children of the couple or the consummation of the marriage!<sup>23</sup> The distortion is even greater if the literal equivalent in the target language also happens to have figurative extensions, but in a semantically quite different domain. So the expression 'Son of Man', literally translated into the Indian language Zapotec (Mexico) would suggest that the father is unknown due to the indiscretions of the mother.<sup>24</sup> Or note the following metaphorical usages of the 'sheep' in a number of different Indian languages: 'one who does not understand' (Pame); 'a drunkard who does not hit back when he is hit' (Teutla Cuicateco); 'a person who does not answer properly when he is spoken to' (Otomi); 'a young fellow who is often seen waiting for or following a girlfriend' (Zapotec of Vila Alta).

On the other hand, rendering the metaphor of the source text by a non-metaphor is also a problematic procedure. For such a demetaphorization of the source in the translation necessarily implies a considerable loss of impact as to the message. A radical application of such a

<sup>22</sup> For this tolerable translation-Greek idiom see especially Taylor, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

<sup>23</sup> See Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, Leiden, 1961, *ad loc.*

<sup>24</sup> See J. Reiling and J.L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, Leiden, 1971, p. 245.

procedure which would have to be judged as an 'under-translation' unless some compensation is made through the rendering of non-metaphors in the source by metaphors in the receptor.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, such a demetaphorization cannot be undertaken regardless of the type of text in which the metaphor occurs. It makes a difference whether one has to deal with prose or with poetry, in which one frequently finds many figurative expressions in a very condensed formal structure. Katharina Reiss who makes a distinction between 'inhaltsbetonte' and 'formbetonte' texts, is certainly right in saying that when the metaphor occurs in the first text type the rendering with a non-figure is adequate, whereas metaphors in the second text type need to be rendered with metaphors.<sup>26</sup> 'Metaphors' in this context means 'different' metaphors or metaphors created *ad hoc*. Malblanc<sup>27</sup> gives a good example of the first one with regard to French-German translation: 'quel bon *vent* vous amène'/'welch guter *Stern* hat Sie denn hergeführt'.

There are additional problems related to the difficulty of identifying dead metaphors as such, or of defining the degree in which a metaphor has lost its vitality. This is translationally important, since dead metaphors should not be revived and thus 'over-translated'.<sup>28</sup> In order to get the right information in this respect, Dagut would like to rely upon the intuitive semantic competence of the native speaker.<sup>29</sup> Fortunately, nearly all Bible translators nowadays are native speakers of the target language and such a subjective criterion may be helpful for the selection of dynamic equivalents from the figurative stock of the receptor language. But what about the source languages? Translators are no foreign users of OT Hebrew or NT Greek! In the best of cases they only

<sup>25</sup> Dagut pays no attention to the necessity of such a compensational procedure.

<sup>26</sup> Katherine Reiee, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Übersetzungskritik* (Hueber Hochschulreihe 12), München, 1971, p. 62f. 'Bei einem formbetonten Text wäre dagegen, je nachdem ob es sich um eine bereits lexikalisierte oder eine vom Autor geschaffene Metapher handelt, entweder eine in der Zielsprache sprachübliche Metapher gleichen Aussagewertes und-gewichtes oder eine vom Übersetzer ebenfalls für die Zielsprache neu zu schaffende Metapher zu fordern'. p. 62)

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>28</sup> So rightly J.P. Vimey and J. Darbelnet, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*, Paris, 1960, p. 199: 'Il importe en effet que le traducteur... ne traduise pas une métaphore usée par une métaphore vivante, ce qui serait un cas de surtraduction'.

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 137f.

have a good passive mastering of 'dead' languages. And so they depend completely on doubtful dictionary codifications and on an analysis of metaphors as far as the available data in a restricted domain (only literature) permit such an analysis. The importance of even such a doubtful dependence has to be particularly underlined, since Bible translators – especially in the case of first translations presupposing often a first acquaintance with the Biblical text – are liable to what Dagut has rightly called a 'hypnotization' with regard to metaphors.<sup>30</sup> The Biblical metaphor with which they were not acquainted before will have such vitality for them that – though it may be actually 'dead' in the source text – they cannot free themselves from its domination. So metaphors are formally transferred and forced upon the receptor language.

#### METAPHORS: PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES OF TRANSLATION

Again it has to be said that no attempt will be made to deal in an exhaustive way with all the necessities and possibilities of translation. What will be given here is a mere outline of principles and procedures with special focus on translational priorities.

A basic principle of Bible translation in general is that an effort should be made to give a linguistic and not a cultural translation of the source text.<sup>31</sup> To state an extreme and also improbable case: a translation into language X should not read in such a way that the receptors of X take it to be the original source! In other words, in spite of the temporal and cultural distances the Biblical form should be respected with or without modification wherever possible. This statement has immediately to be counterbalanced by a second basic principle, in fact its opposite, that no translation into language X should read in such a way that it is different from anything a native speaker of that language would spontaneously say or write. Between the Scylla of extreme cultural adjustments and the Charybdis of translationese the translator has to go his dangerous and – alas! – often lonely way. It is, however, the present author's conviction that it is safer to steer near the six-headed monster Scylla than to approach too closely the whirlpool Charybdis!

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., p.117. Compare p.139f.

<sup>31</sup> On this see also Chaim Rabin, *Cultural Aspects of Bible Translation*, Sion, 1971, No. 7/8, pp.237-246.

These basic general principles when applied specifically to the translation of metaphors, give rise to the following procedures which are given here in an order of priority. First of all, an attempt should be made to retain the source form of the metaphor in the translation. As already stated, this is frequently impossible if one excludes the category of loan-metaphors. In fact, this is only possible if there is a certain identity in form and meaning between a metaphor in the source text and in the target language. For example, it was possible to retain the metaphor of Ps. 23.1 'The Lord is my shepherd' (poetry!) in all modern English translations (TEV, NAB, NEB). Sometimes a formal translation of full metaphors is possible because the explicitness of all three constituents, especially that of the ground, is a guarantee against semantic distortions. So the full metaphor 'I am the bread of life' (John 6.48) has frequently been retained in translations though sometimes and rightly so – the ground has been made even more explicit. So in the new German translation (Die gute Nachricht): 'Ich bin das Brot, das Leben schenkt'. However, even full metaphors are often on the border line of literal translation possibility. So it can be argued that the explicitness of the ground in the metaphor 'Issachar is a strong ass' (in the poem Gen. 49.14) – provided 'strong' translates the right component of meaning of the right Hebrew form!<sup>32</sup> – guarantees a fairly correct understanding, but it is clear, on the other hand, that the metaphorical meaning of 'ass', at least in English, is quite different!

Secondly, if the source form of the metaphor as such cannot be retained, and if the metaphor belongs to the so-called abbreviated type, an effort should be made to make the implicit constituents explicit and to render the metaphor as a full one. So in its treatment of the metaphor in the poetry of Ps. 23 'thou anointest my head with oil' (vs. 5), TEV makes the implicit ground conveniently explicit: 'you welcome me by pouring ointment on my head'.

If these two procedures give no positive result – and this will often be the case – the translator should nevertheless try to keep the elements of the metaphor by expressing them in the form of a simile. Very frequently a simile is a very effective way of rendering a metaphor. Linguistic signals such as 'like' and 'as' in English warn the reader

<sup>32</sup> Hebrew *qerem* may mean 'bony' in the sense of 'strong-limbed', 'strong'. The Samaritan Pentateuch reads *qarim* 'ass of sojourners' or more probably 'castrated ass'. NEB opts for this meaning: 'Issachar, a gelded ass'.

immediately that the semantically exocentric expression is not to be interpreted as endocentric but to be understood in a very special sense.<sup>33</sup> So it is not to be wondered at that this procedure has very often been applied in modern dynamic equivalence translations. In TEV the metaphor James 3.6 'And the tongue is a fire' has been rendered as a simile: 'And the tongue is like a fire' (compare Gute Nachricht: 'Mit der Zunge ist es wie mit dem Feuer'); likewise 'your eye is the lamp of your body' (Luke 11.34) becomes 'your eyes are like a lamp for the body' and 'the moon (shall be turned into) blood' (Acts 2.20) becomes 'the moon (will become) red as blood' (with explicit statement of the ground). In the same way in the Bamiléké language of Cameroun the metaphor in Zech. 7.12 'they made their hearts adamant' has been turned into a simile, the ground being made explicit: 'they made their hearts hard as an adamant'.

If the metaphor cannot be retained, either with or without modifications such as those cited above, one should try to replace it with a different metaphor from the figurative stock of the target language, especially if the source metaphor is found in a poetic text. But it can be said in general that this procedure always has priority over the next one of replacing the figure by a non-figure. Care should, of course, be taken that with the new metaphor no semantic distortion in the form of negative or unwanted components is introduced. In earlier articles, the present author has given several examples of new metaphors.<sup>34</sup> So in Bamiléké 'the gates of death' (Ps. 9.13b) is rendered as 'the mouth of death', 'he puffs at all his foes' (Ps. 10.5) as 'he spits on all his adversaries', 'the cords of Sheol' (Ps. 18.5) – though the lack of identical figurative extensions of hunting vocabulary – as 'the odour of death', 'thou hast loosed my sack cloth' (Ps. 30.11) as 'you have taken the bag of mourning from my hand', 'I will throw filth at you' (Nahum 3.6) as 'I will throw ashes at your back'. The enigmatic figure (upon Edom I cast my shoe' (Ps. 60.8 = Ps. 108.10) has been rendered in the Bamoun language of Cameroun as 'I plant my war spear in the land of Edom'. In Xapotec 'you will be speaking into the air' (1 Cor. 14.9) has been rendered as 'you will be speaking only in your mouth'. Numerous other examples could be added.

<sup>33</sup> On this see especially E.A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating*, Leiden, 1964, p. 219ff.

Sometimes, however, it will prove inevitable to apply the next procedure and to replace the figure by a non-figure. So 'the cup in the Lord's right hand' (Hab. 2.16) has been reduced to a non-metaphor in Bamiléké: 'the anger of the Lord'. In the same language 'and her daughters on the mainland shall be slain with the sword' (Ez. 26.6) has been rendered as 'and the towns on the mainland allied to her shall be destroyed'. In the same way TEV reduces the metaphor Prov. 20.27: 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord' to a non-metaphor: 'The Lord gave us mind and conscience' (after restructuring). Such a reduction becomes especially necessary in the case of metaphors based on verbs. However, as already stated, a compensational procedure of occasionally replacing non-metaphors in the source by metaphors in the receptor will be needed. So the non-figure 'justice never goes forth' (Hab. 1.4) has been rendered in Bamiléké as a metaphor: 'justice never lifts up its head'.

Dead metaphors, in so far as they can be identified, should not be resurrected in translation, but rendered with equivalent dead metaphors of the receptor or with non-figures. In spite of all the problems involved in the evaluation, it seems that e.g. many of Dagut's primary metaphors were already near the dead end of the continuum in Biblical Hebrew, at least in its later stage. Though the border line between dead metaphor and idiom is fluid, and the translational treatment of idiom sometimes becomes virtually indistinguishable from that of dead metaphor, it seems nevertheless to be wise to treat the translation of idioms separately.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of everything that has been said in this article, one should remember Aristotle's word: 'The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others. It is the mark of genius'.<sup>36</sup> The only way in which this article may be of a

<sup>34</sup> 'The Translation of Some Figures of Speech from Psalms in Bamiléké and Bamoun', TBT 20, 1969, pp.143-150; 'Selected Translation Problems from the Prophets with Particular Reference to Bamiléké', TBT 22, 1971, pp.146-154.

<sup>35</sup> Dagut is probably right in his criticism of all those studies on translation theory which lump together idiom and metaphor. Indeed, for the translation of idioms, the translator needs to have, in addition to polysemic competence, a separate idiomatic competence which comprises the faculty of distinguishing between idioms with and without 'literal' counterparts in both languages. (see p.130f.)

<sup>36</sup> *Poetica*, 1459.

little help is to prevent one from becoming a victim of metaphor in the sense of being used by it.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For this see Colin Murray Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor*, New Haven and London, 1963.

In addition to the works quoted in the notes, the following selected bibliography of the most important and more recent studies on the subject of metaphor can be given:

Hedwig Konrad, *Etude sur la métaphore*, Paris, Vrin, 1958

Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1958

Albert Henry, *Métonymie et métaphore*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1971

B. Leondar, *The Structure and Function of Metaphor*, Ed. D. Thesis, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.)

Michel Le Guern, *Sémantique de la métaphore et de la métonymie*, Paris, Larousse, 1973.