A Study of Metaphors in the *Heart of Darkness* 
and their Swedish Translations

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to compare metaphors from the 1970 edition of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (originally published in 1902) with their Swedish translations in *Mörkrets Hjärta*, by Einar Hecksher (2006), to see how metaphors have been translated from English into Swedish, i.e. to see if there are any structural differences which cause semantic differences to the metaphors. By comparing the original metaphors with their translations, it is possible to point to difficulties, which may cause problems in the translation process. One example indicates that homonyms can be a problem. Nearly all of the English metaphors have been translated as metaphors in Swedish as well. About half of the metaphors studied have been semantically changed in their translations, yet without any pragmatic differences compared to the originals. It seems not that important which theory about metaphors (e.g. Lakoff, Leech, Levinson, Black) is more ‘applicable’ than the others with regard to translation. The result of translation of metaphors is more likely due to the translator’s perception of the source language, rather than to theories about metaphors *per se*.

Keywords: Translation; Vinay & Dalbernet; Metaphors; Conceptualization ; Lakoff; Conrad; Heart of Darkness.
1 Introduction

Metaphors are used for several purposes and aesthetic experience is not always the reason we use them. They are, however, an essential part of the embellishment in artistic work, such as literature, film and pictures, for example, *The Birth of Venus* (Boticelli, 1485), where Venus rises from the sea on a sea shell (sea shell – metaphor for female genitalia). Even music can be metaphorical, for example, *The Four Seasons* (Vivaldi, 1723), where staccato high notes evoke an “icy” feeling in the winter. We can use metaphors when we want to objectify abstracts to make them more comprehensible, for instance, *to get a lump in one’s throat* when it feels like one is going to cry. We can also use metaphors when we want to romanticize and to emphasize emotional situations, for instance, *Love is fire running through my veins,* or *I almost cried my heart out.* Sometimes we use metaphors when we want to avoid using words that may seem inappropriate in certain contexts. For example, *We had to put our dear cat down as he was very ill* could be used when the cat had to be put to death as the family were to move into a “no-pets-allowed apartment”, or *I have to powder my nose* could be used when someone needs to go to the bathroom (those metaphors are also called euphemisms). There is always an intention behind the use of a metaphor, albeit there is not as much a conscious intention when conventionalized metaphors are used in everyday speech. Conventional metaphors are called ‘dead’ metaphors. Black (in Ortony 1993:25) has defined dead metaphors as follows:

A so called dead metaphor is not a metaphor at all, but merely an expression that no longer has a pregnant metaphorical use. A competent reader is not expected to recognize such a familiar expression as “falling in love” as a metaphor. [...] Indeed, it is doubtful whether that expression was ever more than a case of catachresis (using an idiom to fill a gap in the lexicon).

The situation around the pivotal (central) phrase/word in a metaphor is necessary in order to explain the intentional meaning of the metaphor. This makes context (sentences that come directly before and after and help explain the meaning) the key to successful translation. The lack of proper context, in cases where it is crucial to understanding a metaphor, could lead to paradoxes (contradictory facts in a statement) and mistakes in translation. When we read the translation of, for example, a novel, we may find it an extremely memorable experience, where we praise the use of language. It is not unusual, though, that we change our minds once we have read the original version of the novel. However much we enjoyed reading the
translation, it is sometimes a totally different experience from reading the original. However, this does not automatically suggest that the translation is not good.

A translator can be, for example, a native speaker of Swedish, who has been living in Sweden and learnt English as a second language in Sweden. This person is not to be expected to have the same perception (awareness) of English as the native speaker of English, who has been living in Britain and learnt English as a first language in an English speaking community. The phenomenon of differences in perception is, of course, not specific for translation between English and Swedish only, but applies to translation between any languages. Hence, translation of texts is a challenge in terms of eliciting the same ‘effect’ in the target language as in the source language.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to see how metaphors have been translated from English into Swedish, i.e. to see if there are any structural differences which cause semantic (meaning of words) differences in the metaphors in question. This is conducted by using randomly chosen metaphors from the novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad (1970 edition) and its translation, Mörkrets hjärta by Einar Hecksher (2006). Semantic differences between the English original metaphors and their Swedish translations could result in finding evidence which can point to problems that can arise in translation of metaphors in general. Such problems may in turn cause differences in the pragmatic meaning (in relation to context) between the original metaphors and their translations. The secondary intention is to see if the metaphors have been translated as metaphors.

2 Background

This section is divided into two parts. Part 2.1 gives a short presentation of what metaphors are considered to be. Four different theories are discussed in order to explicate the subject from different angles. Part 2.2 illuminates some translation techniques which are used in this study to categorize metaphors with regard to structural differences. The same part also points to what translators may need to consider in the translation process.
2.1 Metaphors

All researchers may not agree on one definition of what metaphors really are. In any case, one definition falls into the category of cognitive linguistics. The cognitive theory refers to *conceptualization*, a system in terms of which we both think and act (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Lakoff states (in Ortony 1993:209) that “[m]etaphor, as a phenomenon, involves both conceptual mappings and individual linguistic expressions. If metaphors were merely linguistic expressions, we would expect different linguistic expressions to be different metaphors”. This basically means that all linguistic expressions, such as ‘their marriage is on the rocks’, ‘they’ve hit a dead-end street’ and ‘they can’t turn back now’, belong to one metaphor, in which love is conceptualized as a journey (Lakoff in Ortony 1993:209).

Experiences must be remembered, and since our brains are to a certain extent limited in their storing capacity, we need to categorize those experiences in suitable ‘compartments’. An example is provided with the *Argument Is War* theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:7).

We saw in the *ARGUMENT IS WAR* metaphor that expressions from the Vocabulary of war, e.g., *attack a position, indefensible, strategy, new line of attack, win, gain ground*, etc., form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of arguing. [...] A portion of the conceptual network of battle partially characterizes the concept of an argument, and the language follows suit.

Metaphors like ‘Argument is war’ are often *conventional*, that is they are agreed upon within a language community (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:7). We use these expressions without much further thought, since they have become part of our everyday language.

Three other theories are described below to demonstrate different aspects of what metaphors are considered to be. Thus, the *comparison theory* states that “[m]etaphors are similes with suppressed or deleted predications of similarity” (Levinson 1983:148), which means that the metaphors take on the literal meaning of the corresponding simile, for example, “Iago is an eel is thus semantically equivalent to *Iago is like an eel*” (Levinson 1983:148). “The claim then is that a metaphor of the *x is y* variety is not actually a comparison between two objects *x* and *y* but between two *propositions*.” Thus, the ‘Iago’ example “might be decoded as ‘Iago’s ability to get out of difficult situations is like an eel’s ability to wriggle off hooks’” (Levinson 1983:152).

The *interaction theory* states that “[m]etaphors are special uses of linguistic expressions where one “metaphorical” expression (or focus) is embedded in another “literal” expression
(or frame), such that the meaning of the focus interacts with and changes the meaning of the frame, and vice versa” (Levinson 1983:148). This means that features are mapped from one lexical item on to another, and that the additional features may be conjoined or disjoined from the existing ones, or they may replace them. The stone died becomes the stone ceased to be “where the feature non-living is added disjunctively to the verb’s specification for a living subject and the specification living simply dropped from ceased to be living, to yield cease to be” (Levinson 1983:149).

The complementarist position about metaphors is that “[a] metaphor is said to arise through a process by which the morphological and syntactic specification remains the same and only the semantic specification changes” (Leech 1981:215-217 referred to in Persson 1990:167). This is a combination of a pragmatic and a semantic approach. Take, for example, Bill is a machine, assuming that the hearer knows that the referent is an ordinary human being. “The search for an alternative proposition utilizes the perceived similarity between the known sense of the pivotal lexeme and the unknown but potential sense implied by the context” (Persson 1990:170). The utterance Bill is a machine could, for example, either mean that Bill is cold (having no feelings) or that he is not very flexible (machines are programmed to do certain things in certain ways).

It seems more accurate to claim that the various theories illuminate aspects of what metaphors can be or occasionally are, than to state that they exclude each other. Imagination and experience along with language proficiency provide each and every one of us with possibilities to express our own truths in our own ways. Lakoff and several people with him seem to believe that meaning is formed by experience. Several others do not.


For example, the expressions He is a warm person and She is so cold could be associated on the linguistic level because of the high lexical association between hot and cold. Therefore, if conventionalized expressions only support the use of other associated conventional expressions, then one need not postulate the mediation of an underlying conceptual mapping, only a set of highly related linguistic expressions.
Since this study is about the translation of metaphors, it would be convenient to adopt Lakoff’s theory of conceptualization as being the most relevant one. The source domain would thus be the concept described and the target domain would be the concept eliciting the ‘image’ of the metaphor. There will not, however, be such a limitation to this study. A translator’s task is, of course, to convey the utterance in context and not just the lexical meaning of a sentence. However, for example, for the expression to be at one’s last gasp to be translated into sjunga på sista versen (‘be singing the last verse’), we need to know the sense (one of the possible meanings of a word) of gasp. As mentioned before with regard to the complementarist position, “[t]he search for an alternative proposition utilizes the perceived similarity between the known sense of the pivotal lexeme and the unknown but potential sense implied by the context” (Persson 1990:170-171). If we, on the other hand, find no similarities, i.e. if we are not familiar with the pivotal lexeme, we will regard the utterance as incomprehensible. Thus, only after acquiring the crucial knowledge about this particular lexeme gasp we are able to transfer the pragmatic meaning of the expression into a Swedish equivalent one. If we know that gasp means ‘quick breath’ and we also know that if we stop breathing, we stop living, to be at one’s last gasp must, if metaphorically interpreted, at least mean that something is ending.

2.2 Translation

As far as translation is concerned, there are several things to consider when a text is about to be translated. One model of the translation process is Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995:30-42) taxonomy (a system of naming and organizing). It is also the one used in this study to categorize the metaphors that are being studied. Munday (2004:56-61) refers to two general strategies in the Vinay and Darbelnet model: Direct translation and oblique translation. The direct translation strategy covers three procedures. Firstly, borrowing is a word transferred directly from the source language to the target language, which is sometimes used to “fill a semantic gap” in the target language, and sometimes to “add local colour”. Secondly, calque is an expression or structure transferred in a literal translation (for example, superman into German Übermensch). Thirdly, literal translation is word-for-word translation of entire sentences.

The oblique translation strategy covers four procedures. Transposition is the substitution of one part of speech for another without changing the sense (Munday 2004:56-61). This is applicable where there is a difference between the languages with regard to, for example, compounds and derivational lexemes, such as, paw-strokes translated into små puffar med
tassen (‘little pushes with the paw’), where the Swedish language has no equivalent noun compound.

*Modulation* changes the semantics and the point of view (Munday 2004:56-61). It is applicable where there is a difference between languages with regard to, for example, prepositional or adverb phrases, such as, *burst into a peal of laughter* translated into *brista ut i ett flatskratt* (‘burst out in a peal of laughter’). The original and the translation have the same pragmatic meaning but different viewpoints. The changes in viewpoints in cases like this are due to the situation being considered from another point of view, either by the translator or by the target language (Ingo 2007:152).

*Equivalence* means describing the same situation by different stylistic or structural means, i.e. by using idioms and proverbs (Munday 2004:56-61). For example, *I smell a rat* in English becomes *Här ligger en hund begraven* (‘here a dog lies buried’) in Swedish.

*Adaptation* concerns changing the cultural reference (Munday 2004:56-61). If, for instance, Britons prefer plum pudding on Christmas day and Swedes prefer Ris á la Malta, it may be beneficial to translate *Ris á la Malta* from a Swedish original text into *plum pudding* in the translation into English, so that the English readers can easily identify themselves with what is written (unless the author’s intention is to describe typical foods eaten in Sweden at Christmas), and vice versa.

According to Ingo (2007:15-20), translation is affected by many situational factors. The languages between which we translate affect the contingency to transfer structural and stylistic properties of the source language onto the target language (cf. Lado (1957), Ellis (1994)). Hence, it would be easier to transfer those properties between closely related languages which have similar linguistic features.

3 Method and material
I have compared 21 randomly selected metaphors (by reading a few pages, taking out the metaphors, leaving some pages, reading another few pages etc.) in the novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, an edition published in 1970, to the Swedish translations of those metaphors in *Mörkrets Hjärta*, translated by Einar Heckscher in 2006. In order to analyze them and to be able to compare them with their translations, all metaphors have been studied in context (two sentences that come directly before and after and help explain the meaning). Firstly, the metaphors were studied with regard to structural differences and were divided into four categories, namely ‘direct translation’, ‘transposition’, ‘modulation’ and ‘equivalence’.
Secondly, the structural differences found were studied in order to find out whether or not they affect the meaning of the translated metaphors compared to the originals, i.e. whether the translations convey the same meaning as the originals, or whether they give rise to semantic clashes (contradictory facts or abnormalities) with the context. Lastly, the translations of the metaphors were studied to see if they are translated as metaphors.

4 Results

This section presents the results of the present study. First, there is a short presentation of the structural differences found, and then a presentation of the semantic differences. Both structural and semantic differences are discussed in detail later on. Examples of the metaphors in question are provided in section 5.

4.1 Structural differences

With regard to the structure of the metaphors, there is a significant difference between the original and the translation in all of the metaphors but one. The metaphor that deviates from the pattern has been translated literally, see example (1), where EO is the English original and ST is the Swedish translation.

(1) EO: We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness.

ST: Vi trängde djupare och djupare in i mörkrets hjärta.

'We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness.'

(1) has been translated literally as a whole. *We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness* is translated word for word into *Vi trängde djupare och djupare in i mörkrets hjärta*. The loss of the *of*-construction in translation is due to Swedish grammar not considering gender in the genitive but almost always using the s-inflection. In English, the *of*-construction is mainly used “with nouns that belong to the bottom part of the gender scale, that is, especially with inanimate nouns” (Quirk & Greenbaum 1973:97). Furthermore, *mörkrets* is definite, while *darkness* is not. The pivotal words in this metaphor are *heart* and *darkness*,
which make the reader instantly recognize the interaction between the similarities of *heart* and the context around *darkness*. Considering that the heart is the ‘centre’ of the human body, we can assume that *into the centre of darkness* could be a literal way of expressing the same notion.

Eight metaphors involve transposition in their translations, i.e. there is grammatical change of some kind, but no change of semantic or pragmatic meaning can be observed. An example of transposition is provided in figure I.

![Figure I: Transposition in translation (adapted from Ingo 2007:71)](image)

Consider *a blow on the very heart*, vs. *it hits straight in one’s heart*. The translated version shifts prepositions, shifts focus from the noun phrase (*a blow...*) to a verb phrase (*it hits...*), and hence falls into the category of transposition. A further discussion about this metaphorical expression is provided in example (2), section 5.1 with regard to structural differences.

Apart from the structural differences, one metaphor is also focused on for another reason later on in 5.1 in order to demonstrate just how problematic translating a metaphor can be.

### 4.2 Semantic differences
As indicated earlier in 4.1, more than half of the metaphors studied show semantic differences in their translations, i.e., differences in meaning between the English metaphors and their Swedish translations, which are discussed in section 5.2. Thus, ten out of twenty-one metaphors involve modulation in their translations. The viewpoints and the semantic meanings have been changed, yet the translated metaphors still convey the same pragmatic meaning as the originals. An example of modulation is provided in figure II.
Consider into the mystery of an unknown earth, vs. out towards the mystery of unknown parts of earth, which is a change of direction in the Swedish translation compared to the English original. A further discussion about this metaphorical expression is provided in example (13), section 5.2 with regard to semantic differences.

Furthermore, there are only two cases out of twenty-one involving equivalence. Those two English metaphors include adverb phrases that are, in their contexts, not possible to translate merely on a semantic level into Swedish. Instead they are regarded as idiomatic expressions, which are semantically different from each other, yet convey the same pragmatic meaning. This is further explained in 5.2. Of the two metaphors which are considered to be idiomatic expressions, only one has been translated as such. An example of equivalence is provided in figure III.
Seemed at her last gasp has been translated into verkade sjunga på sista versen, which is a Swedish idiom equivalent to the English one and literally means ‘seemed to be singing the last verse’. A further discussion about this idiom is provided in example (21), section 5.2 with regard to semantic differences.

5 Discussion
This section consists of two parts, where the first part discusses the structural differences. The second part discusses the differences in semantic meaning. The division between structural and semantic differences in this section is based on translation techniques. Both parts show examples of the metaphors and their translations, where EO refers to the English originals and ST refers to their Swedish translations.

5.1 Discussion of the structural differences
Structural differences between the original metaphors and their translations may or may not cause differences in the meaning of the metaphors. The following example, which at a first glance could be claimed to be translated literally, illuminates a grammatical difference in the translation compared to the original, yet the semantic meaning remains the same.

(2) EO: A blow on the very heart.

ST: Den träffar rakt i hjärtat på en.

‘It hits straight in one’s heart’.

A blow on the very heart differs from the translation den träffar rakt i hjärtat på en (‘it hits straight in one’s heart’). The translated version shifts prepositions, shifts focus from the noun phrase (a blow...) to a verb phrase (it hits...), and hence falls into the category of transposition. This change from a noun phrase to a verb phrase is not semantically relevant, since the referent (not identified in the sentences) is the same in both the original and the translation. In the context, this metaphor describes a feeling which the character describing the feeling claims not to be able to escape from. The interpretation of this metaphor would be firstly to recognize the consequences of a blow, and then to apply the concept (ideas) of those to the heart.
Example (3) demonstrates what seems to be an attempt at a literal translation, except for the fact that the structure of the original seems to have been seriously misinterpreted.

\[(3)\] 
EO: the tanned sails of the barges [...] seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. 

ST: de barkbruna seglen på pråmarna [...] tycktes stå helt stilla i roströda buketter med brant pikade gafflar och små blänk här och där från spristiångernas fernissa. 

' the brown sails of the barges [...] seemed to stand completely still in red bouquets with forks steeply peaked, and gleams from the varnish of the sprits.' 

It is evident that we are dealing with a comparison, since the verb seem to links the subject \((the tanned sails of the barges)\) to the predicate \((stand still in red...)\), and that the predicate points to similarities. However, \(the tanned sails of the barges\) being translated into ‘de barkbruna seglen på pråmarna’, turns, as the metaphor continues, into a semantic clash within the Swedish translation. The continuation of the original metaphor, \(seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked\), can not be translated into 'tycktes stå helt stilla i roströda buketter (‘rust-coloured (red) bouquets’) \(med brant pikade gafflar\). Firstly, the sails have already been given the colour brown in barkbruna (‘barque-brown’) seglen. Secondly, buketter (‘bouquets’) cannot have brant pikade gafflar (‘forks sharply peaked’). Tanned is a homonym (a word that sounds the same or is spelled the same as another word but has a different meaning (Cambridge dictionary)), and the tanned in \(tanned sails\) most likely refers to the chemical preparation of the sails rather than the colour itself, which would give the Swedish translation a more sensible meaning, if translated ‘de garvade seglen på pråmarna’. This would then help avoid the clash between the two different colours describing the same item in the same sentence.

In addition, the omission of translation of of canvas, makes the sharply peaked refer to something that does not exist in the Swedish translation. Knowing what the sails look like in reality may justify the use of gafflar (‘forks’). However, since the adjective refers to the
preceding object, another clash arises within that same metaphor by the combination of *buketter* (‘bouquets’) and *gafflar* (‘forks’).

The following examples in this section involve transposition in their translations. The next three examples illustrate translations that are likely translated the way they are in order to maintain stylistic consistency in the target text.

(4) **EO:** The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, *brooding motionless* over the biggest, and the greatest town on earth.

**ST:** Over Gravesend var det mörkt och ännu lite längre bort tycktes luften ha förtätats till en dyster gråvädersmassa *som orölig ruvade* över den största och mäktigaste staden på jorden.

‘It was dark above Gravesend, and a little farther away still, the air seemed to have condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest and the greatest town on earth.’

(5) **EO:** the sun […] stricken to death by the touch of that gloom *brooding* over a crowd of men.

**ST:** solen dräpt av kontakten med dunklet *som ruvade* över människorna där nedanför.

‘the sun […] killed by the touch of that gloom brooding over the people below.’

(6) **EO:** death *skulking* in the air, in the water, in the bush.

**ST:** död *som smyger* omkring överallt i luften i vattnet i snären.

‘death skulking around everywhere, in the air, in the water, in the bush.’
(4), (5) and (6), show changes in aspect from being in the present participle into a translation of the simple past and the simple present. *Brooding motionless* becomes *som orörlig ruvade* (‘which motionless brooded’) and *skulking* becomes *som snyger omkring* (‘which skulks around’). There is no grammatical need for these changes in aspect in the translations, since the present participle can be used in Swedish as well (there is, however, a register difference in Swedish between the two aspects). The translations would hence be *orörligt ruvande* and *smygande omkring*, which the translator has chosen not to use. There is, however, a slight difference in the way of interpreting those metaphors. (4) is a comparison (by *seemed*) which points to similarities, whereas (5) and (6) are dependent on the reader finding similarities between the known sense of the pivotal lexemes (*the sun* in (5) and *death* in (6)) and the potential sense implied by their contexts.

*Det finns en anstrykning av död, en arom av förgänglighet hos lögnen* contains a change in preposition, from *in lies* into *hos lögnen* (‘with the lie’) in (7).

(7) **EO:** There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies.

**ST:** 
*Det finns en anstrykning av död en arom av förgänglighet hos lögnen.*

There is a taint of death a flavour of mortality with

lögnen.

lie-DEF.

‘There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality with the lie.’

*There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies* - also changes from plural *lies* into the singular with a determiner (*lögn-en* – ‘the lie’), which is a more common way of expressing this adverbial in Swedish. To make sense of this metaphor, however, we need to find the characteristics most in common for the ‘metaphorical’ expressions in this metaphor (*death* and *mortality*), and the ‘literal’ expression (*there is a [...] in lies*). Whichever characteristics we find being the most in common between *death, mortality* and *lies*, they are likely to fall into ‘negatives’ of and hence make sense to the metaphor one way or another.

Example (8) involves a change in aspect from the past progressive to the simple past (*were simply squirting lead into that bush* translated into *sprutade bly in i snären på måfå*).
(8) EO: and were simply squirting lead into that bush.

ST: och sprutade bly in i snären på måfå

and squirted lead in-PV in-PREP thicket-PL-DEF at random

‘and squirted lead randomly into the bush.’

På måfå means ‘randomly’ and is probably supposed to be the translation of simply. However, the Swedish expression for that is really helt enkelt, and the two do not have the same meaning. The adverbial is, however, not essential to the metaphor. Hence, the translation of this metaphor still falls into the category of transposition. The context of this expression is “A fusillade burst out under my feet. The pilgrims had opened with their Winchesters,” and makes the reader search for similarities between gun-shooting and squirting.

The translation of paw-strokes in (9), is due to the lack of an equivalent noun compound in the Swedish language, and is therefore paraphrased into små puffar med tassen (‘little pushes with the paw”).

(9) EO: I had often ‘a little fever’, or a little touch of other things -the playful

paw-strokes of the wilderness.

ST: Jag hade ofta en smula feber eller en liten antydan till andra

I had often a little fever or a little touch of other

krämpor -vildmarkens lekfulla små puffar med tassen.

ailments -wilderness-DEF-GEN playful little pushes with paw-DEF.

‘I had often ‘a little fever’ or a little touch of other ailments -the playful paw-strokes of the wilderness.’

Here we must search for an alternative proposition, since we know that the wilderness per se is inanimate. The similarities between the sense of the lexeme paw-strokes, and the sense implied by the context is thus what makes the expression comprehensible. Something or, in this case, someone is somehow physically affected by staying in the wilderness.

5.2 Discussion of the semantic differences

Semantic differences, between the original metaphors and their translations, may or may not cause differences in the pragmatic meaning of the metaphors. The examples in this section
involve either modulation or equivalence in their translations. The first example illuminates a semantic difference, yet the pragmatic meaning remains the same.

(10) EO: In the offing, the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint.


‘Out on the open sea, water-surface and sky merged seamlessly.’

In (10), ‘the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint’ has been translated into smälte vattenyta och himmel sömlöst samman. This involves a semantic difference in ‘were welded together’ being translated into smälte samman (‘melted together’ or ‘merged’). Metaphorically there is no difference, however, since the similarities between the pivotal lexemes (the sea and the sky), and the metaphorical verb phrase are concerned with the ‘joining’ itself.

Example (11) demonstrates a syntactic change, which changes the semantic, although not the pragmatic meaning of the metaphor.

(11) EO: The sky without a speck was a benign immensity of unstained light.

ST: Himlen var alldeles molnfri, en välsignad ändlöshet av obefläckat ljus. Sky-DEF was completely cloudless, a blessed immensity of unstained light.

‘The sky was completely cloudless, a blessed immensity of unstained light.’

The sky without a speck... in (11) has been transformed from a noun phrase into a main clause, where the verb phrase is in the simple past by Himlen var alldeles molnfri (‘the sky was completely free from clouds’). This changes the meaning, insofar as the noun phrase a benign immensity of unstained light, functioning as subject predicative of the sky without a speck in the English original, changes focus into being synonymous with molnfri (‘cloudless’) in the Swedish translation. However, for the metaphor to make sense, we need to find the similarities between the known sense of the sky without a speck and the sense implied by the context.

The metaphorical expression in (12), can be regarded a conventionalized expression used in order to fill a gap in the lexicon.
and lose myself in all the glories of exploration.

ST: och försjunka i upptäcktsresornas hela förtjusning.

‘and lose myself in the complete fascination of the exploring expeditions’.

All the glories of exploration in (12), has been translated ‘upptäcktsresornas hela tjusning’. This shifts the glories from being a definite noun in plural into being an indefinite noun in the singular and meaning ‘fascination’ rather than ‘glories’. In addition, exploration shifts from being in the singular into the genitive plural. This does not, however, change the pragmatic meaning of the metaphor, which is about ‘losing oneself’ in something abstract.

In (13), (14) and (15), there are changes in semantic meaning with regard to the viewpoint.

(13) EO: What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth!

ST: Vilken storslagenhet hade inte flutit med denna flodens ebb, ut mot okända jordiska trakters mysterium!

‘What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river out towards the mystery of unknown parts of earth!’

Floated into the mystery of an unknown earth becomes flutit ut mot (‘out towards’) okända trakters mysterium, which is a change of direction in the Swedish translation compared to the English original. This example, just like (12), demonstrates a way to intertwine concrete (river) with abstract (mystery) and can also be regarded a conventionalized expression to fill a gap in the lexicon.
Before my heart flew out has been translated into då hjärtat var på väg upp i halsgropen (‘as the heart was on its way up the throat’), which really is a Swedish idiom. The viewpoint is changed with the choice of using the conjunction before in the English original and as in the Swedish translation, which creates a slight difference in spatial orientation. We can also see a change in the direction of the heart. This change, however, is not relevant to the metaphor, since the Swedish translation is an idiomatic expression that pragmatically conveys the same meaning as the original. The meaning of the metaphor is due to the replacing of, or adding to, the known sense of characteristics of the heart, with a new characteristic whose sense is implied by the context.

The wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter has been translated into vildmarken brista ut i ett skallande flatskratt in (15). This illuminates, as mentioned in section 2.2, a change in the viewpoint insofar as the movement in the preposition changes from burst into laughter in the English original into burst out in laughter in the Swedish translation. With regard to metaphorical meaning, the context implies the wilderness being occupied by some abstract being (for instance, a ghost or a spirit), able to make noises and hence burst into a laughter.
The following metaphor, in (16), can be considered a conventional way of filling a semantic gap between something abstract and something concrete.

(16) EO: the silence of the land went home to one’s very heart –its mystery, its greatness, the amazing reality of its concealed life.

ST: trängde landskapets tystnad ända in i ens hjärta
penetrated landscape-DEF-GEN silence all the way in-PV in-PREP one’s heart

-dess mysterium dess majestät den förunderliga verklighet som dvaldes
-its mystery its greatness the amazing reality which lived

i dess hemliga liv.
in its concealed life.

‘the silence of the land penetrated all the way into one’s heart –its mystery, its greatness, the amazing reality which lived in its concealed life.’

The silence of the land went home to one’s very heart in (16), has been translated into trängde landskapets tystnad ända in i ens hjärta (‘penetrated into’). Went home to indicates that the silence affected the person exactly the way it should and that it was welcomed, whereas penetrated into indicates force and/or resistance. An alternative translation could be kändes ända in i ens hjärta (‘was felt in one’s very heart’), which would be more neutral. This observation may be subjective, yet there still is a semantic difference in the verb phrase between went home to and penetrated into. This, however, does not constitute a pragmatic difference to the metaphor.

There has been made a semantic difference in the Swedish translation by using massor av nitar (‘loads of rivets’) instead of just rivets in (17), if for no other reason than maybe to increase the sense of drama.

(17) EO: Rivets had rolled into the grove of death.

ST: Massor av nitar hade trillat ner i dödens lund.
Loads of rivets had fallen down-PV in-PREP death-DEF-GEN grove.

‘Loads of rivets had fallen into the grove of death.’
In addition, *rolled* in the English original has been changed into *fallen* in the Swedish translation. Metaphorically, however, ‘*the grove of death*’ is the part to ‘decode’ and urges us to search for logical sense between that phrase and ‘rivets’.

The viewpoint in (18), has changed from *the painting arrested me* into *Jag fastnade för tavlan* (‘I took a liking to the painting’), where *the painting* is active in the English original and *jag* (‘I’) is active in the Swedish translation.

(18) EO: It [i.e. the painting] arrested me.

ST: Jag fastnade för tavlan.

I attach-PAST for painting-DEF.

‘I became attached to the painting.’

The English original is a conventionalized expression which is slightly different from, for example, ‘*I took a liking to...*’ or ‘*I became attached to...*’, and makes us look for similarities between the sense of being ‘arrested’ (attract notice) and the sense of a painting. The Swedish translation is also a conventionalized expression with no information on the degree of liking.

(19) EO: since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others

ST: eftersom ens styrka bara är det tillfälliga resultatet av andras

since one’s strength just is the temporary result-DEF of others-GEN

svaghet.

weakness.

‘s since your strength is just the temporary result of others’ weakness.’

In (19), the semantic difference lies in the changing of *an accident* into *det tillfälliga resultatet* (‘the temporary result’). This however, does not change the pragmatic meaning of the metaphor, which is implying the necessity of opposites.

Examples (20) and (21) show the translations of English idioms.
(20)  EO:  I had to [...] and get the tin-pot along **by hook or by crook**.

ST:  Jag var tvungen att [...] och ta till diverse tricks för att hålla plåtlådan igång.

keep-INF tin-pot-DEF going-PV.

‘I was forced to use various tricks to keep the tin-pot going.’

**By hook or by crook** in (20), is a conventional expression which basically means ‘in any way necessary’. A literal translation would not make any sense to Swedish readers, so the Swedish translation *och ta till diverse tricks för att* is not an idiomatic expression, yet carries the same pragmatic meaning.

(21)  EO:  The steamer **seemed at her last gasp**.

ST:  Ångaren verkade sjunga på sista versen.

Steamer-DEF seemed sing-INF on last-DEF verse-DEF.

‘The steamer seemed to be singing the last verse.’

**Seemed at her last gasp** in (21), has been translated into *verkade sjunga på sista versen*, which is a Swedish idiom equivalent to the English one and literally means ‘seemed to be singing the last verse’. We are metaphorically told that the steamer is about to break down.

### 6 Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to see whether English metaphors in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of darkness* were translated into Swedish conveying the same semantic and/or pragmatic meaning as the original metaphors. Secondly, I aimed to point out the difficulties that can arise in translating metaphors. In order to be able to translate a metaphor, the metaphor must be interpreted. In my opinion, there is not one theory of those described in 2.1 which is more applicable in general than the others to the metaphors with regard to this study. It would be easier to make a choice, should the study only regard metaphors *per se* and not the translation of them. Whichever theory we choose to accept, though, of what metaphors are considered to be, the main issue with regard to translation still stands, namely how to transfer the pragmatic meaning of the metaphors from one language to another, without giving rise to semantic
clashes with the context at hand. The experiences and conventionalized expressions, to which Lakoff & Johnson refer, are most likely to differ from one language community to another. This brings forward the problem regarding perception, which can differ between a native speaker, who has written the original, and a translator who may have acquired the source language as a second language. Looking up words in a dictionary may not always point the translator in the right direction with regard to nuances in meaning.

The main differences in the structure of the 21 randomly selected original metaphors and their translations in this study have to do with prepositions, genitive and tense. The change in tense is sometimes a choice made by the translator to maintain stylistic consistency in the target text. The procedure of transposition has been used to nearly the same extent as the procedure of modulation, in translating the metaphors demonstrated in this study. No cases of borrowing, calque or adaptation have been observed. When it comes to semantic differences, there have mostly been changes made with regard to viewpoint in order to elicit the same pragmatic meaning in the translations as in the originals. In none of the metaphors studied has there been a change in pragmatic meaning except maybe in (3). Whether or not this is the case, however, depends on the knowledge of the reader with regard to the implicit meaning. One difficulty that can arise in translation, according to this study, seems to be the lack of knowledge of, for example, homonyms. This is shown in one of the examples, i.e. (3). The translator is likely to have misread the word and thus made mistakes in the translation with semantic clashes within the metaphor as a result. In conclusion, all metaphors have been translated as metaphors except for the one in (20), which is an idiomatic expression with no equivalent expression in Swedish. This may have been the reason for it being slightly ‘demetaphorized’.
References:


Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary Online


Appendix I

Abbreviations used in morphemic glossing:

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I had often 'a little fever', or a little touch of other things - the playful *paw-strokes* of the wilderness.

In the offing, the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint.

; the sky without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light

,Jag hade ofta 'en smula feber', eller en liten antydan till andra små krämpor - vildmarkens lekfulla *små puffar med tassen*.

Ute på öppna havet, *smälle* vattenytta och himmel sömlöst *samman*,

Himlen var alldeles molnfri, en välspänd ändlöshet av obefläckat ljus

och försjunka i *upptäcktsresornas hela tjusning*.

Vilken storslagenhet hade inte flutit med denna flodens ebb, *ut mot* okända jordiska trakters mysterium.

Jag lärde mig bita ihop då *hjärtat var på väg upp i halsgropen*.

att få höra vildmarken *brista ut i* ett skallande flatskratt.

, *trängde* landskapets tystnad ända in i ens hjärta - dess mysterium, dess majestät, den förunderliga verklighet som dvaldes i dess hemliga liv.

Massor av *nitar* hade trillat ner i dödens lund.

It [i.e. the painting] *arrested* me.

Jag *fastnade för* tavlan.

, ens styrka bara är det *tilfälliga resultatet* av andras svaghet

Jag var tvungen att [...] *och ta till diverse tricks för att* hålla plåtlådan igång.

*Kaptenen verkade sjunga på sista versen*.