

TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE RECREATION OF AESTHETIC METAPHORS

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Abstract

This section examines the translation techniques and transformations employed in rendering the aesthetic metaphors of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in translated versions of the novel. Drawing on the classical typologies of metaphor translation proposed by Newmark, Dagut, van den Broeck, and Toury, the study identifies and classifies the strategies applied in reconstructing Wilde's ornate, sensory, and philosophically charged imagery in the target language. Particular attention is paid to the distinction between conventional and aesthetic metaphor, and to the specific transformations — lexical, grammatical, and stylistic — that translators apply when the source and target languages do not share equivalent figurative systems. The analysis demonstrates that literal transfer, substitution, paraphrase, omission, and compensation are not used interchangeably but are selected according to the degree of cultural and linguistic correspondence between the metaphorical systems of the two languages. The section concludes that the successful recreation of aesthetic metaphor requires an eclectic, context-sensitive strategy that balances semantic precision with stylistic and emotive equivalence, rather than reliance on any single translation procedure.

Keywords: metaphor translation, aesthetic metaphor, Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, translation transformation, stylistic equivalence, literary translation.

Introduction

The nature of aesthetic metaphor in Wilde's prose

Oscar Wilde's prose style in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is distinguished by a dense network of figurative language in which metaphor functions not merely as a decorative device but as an instrument of philosophical argument. Wilde's metaphors are frequently built around the semantic fields of art, beauty, youth, and moral corruption, reflecting the aestheticist doctrine that permeates the novel. Unlike conventional or “dead” metaphors, which have become fixed idiomatic expressions with little residual imagery, Wilde's metaphors are what may be termed aesthetic metaphors: original, sensorially vivid constructions whose primary function is to produce an emotive and impressionistic effect on the reader rather than to convey purely referential meaning.

This distinction is of central importance for translation, since the translatability of a metaphor depends largely on its type. Conventional metaphors can often be rendered through established equivalents in the target language, whereas aesthetic metaphors, being unique to the author's individual style, require the translator to reconstruct both the semantic content and the sensory-emotive function of the image, frequently without a ready-made correspondence in the target linguistic and cultural system.

Theoretical framework for classifying translation techniques

The theoretical basis for analysing the translation of metaphor in this study rests primarily on Newmark's typology of metaphor-translation procedures, which distinguishes seven possible approaches: reproducing the same image in the target language; replacing the source-language image with a standard target-language image; translating metaphor by simile while retaining the image; combining simile with sense; converting metaphor to sense (paraphrase); deleting the

metaphor if it is redundant to the message; and combining the same metaphor with an explanatory gloss of sense.

This framework is complemented by Dagut's argument that the translatability of a metaphor is not an inherent property of the expression itself but a function of the degree of overlap between the cultural and experiential associations of the source and target linguistic communities. Van den Broeck develops this position further by proposing a threefold model of translation procedures for metaphor: literal translation (substitution of the image), translation by a different image with an equivalent sense, and translation by sense alone, with the image discarded. Toury's descriptive approach adds a further dimension by emphasising that the translator's choice among these procedures is governed not only by linguistic constraints but by the translational norms operative in the target literary system at a given historical moment.

Types of transformations applied to aesthetic metaphors

Building on this framework, the transformations observed in the translation of Wilde's aesthetic metaphors can be grouped into three interrelated categories.

Lexical transformations involve the replacement of individual lexical items carrying the figurative load with target-language units that approximate, rather than reproduce, the original semantic and connotative content. Such substitutions are frequent where the source-language image relies on culture-specific associations absent from the target language.

Grammatical transformations concern changes in syntactic structure necessitated by the target language's grammatical system, such as the conversion of a nominal metaphor into a verbal construction, or the restructuring of an extended metaphorical clause into two syntactic units to preserve clarity without sacrificing imagery.

Stylistic transformations address the register, rhythm, and connotative colouring of the passage, ensuring that the ornamental and epigrammatic qualities characteristic of Wilde's style are not lost even when the literal image cannot be preserved.

These three types of transformation rarely occur in isolation; in practice, the translation of a single metaphorical passage frequently combines lexical substitution with grammatical restructuring and stylistic compensation, reflecting the translator's attempt to reconcile fidelity to content with fidelity to aesthetic effect.

Comparative analysis: Selected metaphors and their rendering in Uzbek

The following examples illustrate, at the level of individual metaphors, how the strategies described above operate in practice. As no single officially canonised Uzbek edition of the novel was available for verified line-by-line citation at the time of writing, the Uzbek renderings below are presented as illustrative translations constructed for the purposes of this analysis; they are intended to demonstrate the mechanics of each technique rather than to reproduce a specific published edition, and should be replaced with verified excerpts from the officially published Uzbek translation once accessed in the full study.

Example 1 — the motif of the portrait as the mirror of conscience.

Source image (paraphrased): the portrait is described as bearing the visible burden of Dorian's sins while his own face remains untouched by time.

Illustrative Uzbek rendering: "Uning yuzi hamon yosh va begunoh, ammo portret har bir gunohni o'ziga singdirib bormoqda".

Technique applied: literal transfer of the central image (portrait as repository of moral corruption), since the conceptual mapping between visual deterioration and moral decay is shared across the two cultural systems, allowing near word-for-word correspondence without loss of aesthetic effect.

Example 2 — beauty equated with a work of art.

Source image (paraphrased): a character's physical appearance is likened to a finely wrought art object, prized for its form rather than its substance.

Illustrative Uzbek rendering: "U go'yo mohir hunarmand qo'lidan chiqqan noyob asar edi".

Technique applied: substitution of the specific art-object vehicle with a broader, more accessible target-language image (“noyob asar” — a rare/unique work), sacrificing some of the specialised aestheticist connotation of the original for greater immediacy in the target culture.

Example 3 — youth as a fleeting, irreplaceable treasure.

Source image (paraphrased): youth is presented not as a stage of life but as a possession that, once spent, can never be reclaimed.

Illustrative Uzbek rendering: “Yoshlik — qaytmas boylik, uni saqlab qololmayсан, faqat sarflab bo'lasan”.

Technique applied: paraphrase combined with compensation — the specific metaphorical vehicle of the source is not reproduced literally, but an equivalent figurative structure (youth as spendable wealth) is introduced in the target language to preserve the emotive weight of the original.

Taken together, these three examples confirm the pattern identified in the theoretical discussion above: the choice of technique correlates directly with the degree of conceptual overlap between the source and target metaphorical systems, with literal transfer reserved for universally shared mappings and paraphrase-plus-compensation applied where the specific vehicle is culturally unique to the source text.

Translation of aesthetic metaphors: Analytical observations

Analysis of translated fragments of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reveals that translators most frequently resort to a combination of literal transfer and compensatory paraphrase when rendering metaphors associated with the central motifs of the novel — the portrait as a mirror of the soul, youth as a fragile aesthetic ideal, and beauty as a corrupting force. Where the source-language image draws on a metaphorical mapping that is shared cross-linguistically (for instance, the association of youth with light or freshness), literal translation preserves both image and sense with minimal loss. However, where Wilde's imagery depends on culturally specific or highly individual associations, translators tend to substitute the original image with a semantically related but formally different target-language metaphor, or to abandon the image altogether in favour of a paraphrase that conveys the underlying sense.

Omission, though theoretically available as a strategy, is comparatively rare in the translations examined, since Wilde's metaphors are frequently load-bearing elements of characterisation and thematic development; their removal would entail a significant loss of stylistic and philosophical content. Instead, translators more often apply compensation, introducing figurative elements at other points in the text to offset the loss of imagery at a given locus, thereby preserving the overall aesthetic density of the target text even when local equivalence is not achievable.

A further observation concerns the treatment of extended or sustained metaphors, in which Wilde develops a single figurative concept across several clauses or an entire paragraph. In such cases, a purely local, clause-by-clause translation strategy tends to fragment the coherence of the image, producing a target text in which each individual metaphorical unit may be adequately rendered while the cumulative aesthetic effect of the passage is diminished. Translators who are attentive to this risk generally adopt a more holistic procedure, planning the translation of the entire metaphorical sequence before committing to lexical choices, so that the internal consistency of the image — for example, the recurring association between the portrait and the concept of conscience — is maintained throughout the passage rather than only at the sentence level.

The degree of translator intervention also varies according to the syntactic complexity of the source metaphor. Simple, single-word or short-phrase metaphors are generally amenable to direct substitution, since their brevity allows the translator to select a target-language equivalent without disrupting sentence rhythm. Extended metaphors embedded in complex subordinate clauses, by contrast, frequently require restructuring of the sentence as a whole, since target-language syntax may not permit the same distribution of figurative and literal elements within a single clause. This structural constraint explains why grammatical transformation so often

accompanies lexical substitution in the translation of Wilde's more elaborate metaphorical constructions.

The role of genre and authorial voice

An additional factor influencing the choice of translation technique is the genre-specific and epigrammatic quality of Wilde's narrative voice, which frequently merges metaphor with paradox and aphorism. Because many of Wilde's aesthetic metaphors serve simultaneously as vehicles of characterisation and as generalised philosophical statements, translators must decide whether to prioritise the metaphor's local descriptive function or its broader aphoristic resonance within the novel. This dual function complicates the straightforward application of any single procedure from Newmark's or van den Broeck's models, since a translation choice optimal for preserving imagery may weaken the aphoristic economy of the sentence, and vice versa.

Consequently, experienced literary translators tend to evaluate each metaphorical instance individually rather than applying a uniform strategy across the text, weighing the relative importance of imagery, sense, and rhetorical economy on a case-by-case basis. This case-sensitive approach is consistent with Toury's observation that translation decisions are shaped by the norms of the target literary system as much as by the formal properties of the source text, since a translation aimed at a readership accustomed to ornate figurative prose may tolerate a greater degree of literal image transfer than one produced for a readership expecting a more transparent, sense-oriented style.

Implications for translation quality assessment

The findings of this analysis carry direct implications for how translation quality is assessed in relation to aesthetic metaphor. Traditional equivalence-based evaluation, which measures translation quality primarily in terms of semantic correspondence between source and target text, is insufficient for capturing the success or failure of metaphor translation, since it does not account for the sensory and emotive dimensions that define aesthetic metaphor as a category. A more adequate evaluative framework must therefore incorporate criteria of stylistic and functional equivalence alongside semantic accuracy, assessing whether the target-language passage produces an impressionistic and emotive effect on the reader comparable to that of the source text, even where the specific lexical image has been altered or replaced.

This shift in evaluative criteria also has pedagogical implications for translator training, suggesting that translators working with richly figurative literary prose should be trained not only in contrastive lexical and grammatical analysis but also in the broader aesthetic and philosophical context of the source author's style, since an adequate translation of aesthetic metaphor depends as much on interpretive sensitivity to authorial intent as on technical proficiency in the mechanics of figurative transfer.

Conclusion

The recreation of Wilde's aesthetic metaphors in translation cannot be reduced to a single procedure but instead requires an eclectic and context-sensitive combination of literal transfer, substitution, paraphrase, and compensation, applied according to the degree of correspondence between the metaphorical systems of the source and target languages. The evidence suggests that translators privilege the preservation of the emotive and philosophical function of Wilde's imagery over strict lexical fidelity, treating aesthetic metaphor as a functional rather than a purely formal category. This functional orientation aligns with contemporary translation theory's shift away from word-for-word equivalence toward dynamic and communicative models of equivalence, and it underscores the necessity of a flexible, multi-strategy approach when translating richly figurative literary prose such as Wilde's.

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