



Synaesthetic metaphors in translation

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have been devoted to the analysis of synaesthesia within individual languages, and to the description of properties shared by synaesthetic transfers in different languages. On the contrary, studies on the translation of synaesthesia from one language into another seem to be lacking. This article focuses precisely on this issue. The theoretical discussion is supported by the analysis of the translation of Süskind's novel *Das Parfum*, which includes many occurrences of synaesthesia, into three languages. Through the analysis of relevant examples, it is shown that the choices made by the translators – ranging from word-by-word reproduction of the synaesthesia to its deletion – correlate with the type of synaesthesia to be translated. While for creative synaesthesia (e.g., *rundes Parfum*) a word-by-word translation usually works, conventional synaesthesia (e.g., *scharf ansehen*) can be more challenging, and other strategies have to be found. The behaviour of synaesthesia in translation therefore seems to parallel that of other types of metaphors.

KEYWORDS: synaesthesia, metaphor, translation.

1. Introduction

The term *synaesthesia* can be found in studies from various disciplines and fields including, among others, literature and linguistics, neuropsychology, art, and advertising. In each of its uses, it refers to an at least partially different phenomenon. However, all of the meanings of *synaesthesia* have one aspect in common, that is, that perception is involved. More specifically, as the term itself reveals, *syn-aesthesia* is about the 'union' of different senses. In neurology and psychology synaesthesia is a relatively rare¹ condition by which the stimulation of one sensory modality triggers a perception (also) in another modality. For example, an individual may experience the vision of colours while hearing music (see Simner and Hubbard, 2013, eds., for recent contributions and references on this topic). Neuropsychological synaesthesia

¹ Estimates of the prevalence of synaesthesia in the population vary widely, from 1 in 2,000 (CYTOWIC, 2002: 54) to 1 in 20 (SIMNER *et al.*, 2006).

therefore concerns the association of different senses in perceptual experience. In literary and linguistic studies, on the contrary, synaesthesia is a figure associating *linguistic expressions* that refer to different sensory modalities (see, among others, Ullmann, 1957; Williams, 1976; Werner, 1987; Shen, 1997; Tsur, 2007; Cacciari, 2008; Strik Lievers, in press). It is with synaesthesia as a figure that this study is concerned. ‘Real’ perceptual experience will however also come as part of the discussion (see § 3.1).

Two examples of linguistic synaesthesia are given in (1) and (2):

- (1) *Warm voice*
- (2) *And then it was*
There interposed a Fly -
With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -
Between the light - and me -
 (Emily Dickinson)

(1) is an expression that we can commonly use in our everyday language. By *warm voice* a hearing experience (*voice*) is described using an adjective that usually refers to a touch/temperature experience (*warm*). The excerpt from Dickinson’s poem in (2) mixes the senses (*blue*, vision, and *buzz*, hearing) in a more creative and unusual way, typical of poetry. Both examples are analysed further in § 2, and the differences between them are discussed.

This paper focuses on the translation of both types of linguistic synaesthesia, and is structured as follows. As a first step, I define synaesthesia, briefly describing its status as a figure and distinguishing among different types of synaesthesia (§ 2). Based on the properties of synaesthesia, attention is drawn to the reasons why studying it from the angle of translation is particularly interesting (§ 3). Next, I analyse three translations of Patrick Süskind’s novel *Das Parfum*, which is particularly rich in synaesthesia (§ 4). The discussion of relevant examples taken from these translations leads to some tentative conclusions on the topic.

2. Defining linguistic synaesthesia

Given the very broad definition given above of synaesthesia as the association of linguistic expressions referring to different senses, we still need to clarify what kind of figure it is precisely. Although the theoretical debate

dedicated expressly to this issue is not large, it is nonetheless possible to recognise different views. It has for instance been suggested that synaesthesia has a metonymic component. Dirven (1985) claims that the interpretation of *warm colour* is metonymic because it is based on experiential contiguity: «[i]t is not the percept of touch itself which is transferred to sight, but some other experience that co-occurs with the touch of heat, e.g. the colours of the fire or of something glowing that is transferred» (Dirven, 1985: 99; alternative metonymic accounts can be found in Barcelona, 2000; Marks, 1990). Other studies propose accounts of synaesthesia (at least, of everyday-language synaesthetic expressions) that are substantially non-figurative. Under these accounts, for example, the use of *warm* in *warm colour* as referring to sight would not be interpreted as the meaning extension of a polysemous adjective. Rather, *warm* would be a monosemous adjective that can refer both to touch/temperature and to sight, reflecting the multisensoriality of our perceptions (see Rakova, 2003; Paradis and Eeg-Olofsson, 2013). The majority of studies, however, use the label 'synaesthetic *metaphor*' (among others, O'Malley, 1957; Leech, 1969; Yu, 2003; Cacciari, 2008), although the inclusion of synaesthesia within the class of metaphors is in most cases simply taken for granted.

This article shares the traditional interpretation of synaesthesia as a (type of) metaphor. This view is based on the kind of relation that holds between structural characteristics and conceptual level in synaesthesia (for a wider discussion, see Strik Lievers, in press). The key notion that helps understanding the nature of synaesthesia is that of conceptual conflict (Prandi, 2004; 2012). In synaesthetic expressions, syntactic links between sensory lexemes create connections that generate a conflict at the conceptual level. While in *loud voice* the syntactic link between noun and adjective describes a coherent conceptual structure, in a synaesthetic phrase such as *yellow voice* the syntactic link creates a conceptual conflict: it is shared knowledge that sounds do not have a visual manifestation. Creating conceptual conflicts is precisely a typical property of metaphors.

The notion of conceptual conflict also helps to draw a distinction between metaphor and metonymy, since these two figures essentially differ in the way they deal with it. In metonymy the conflict is resolved through a consistent conceptual connection (Prandi, 2012: 154). For instance, in *John likes playing Bach* the conflict between *play* and its object *Bach* is resolved thanks to the consistent relation that links the human being Bach to the music he wrote: what John likes to play is not the human being Bach, but the

music written by Bach. In metaphors, on the contrary, the conflict cannot be deactivated in the same way, and the only available solution is to transfer a concept into a different domain. As Prandi (2012: 154) writes, in Alcmán's line *They sleep, the mountain peaks* «the concept of sleep is transferred from the area of living beings into the area of inanimate nature; in order to solve the conceptual puzzle, one has to wonder in what sense mountains can be seen as sleeping living beings»².

If we look at its behaviour with respect to conflict, it clearly appears that synaesthesia is a metaphor. It displays a conflict between concepts that cannot be connected through a consistent relation. For instance, in Keats' synaesthetic line *taste the music of that vision pale* (from Downey, 1912) there is no evident consistent link between the sensory concepts involved. In which sense can music be tasted? In which sense can a visual perception produce music? It is these questions that the interpreter has to answer when reading Keats' verse. Summarising, synaesthesia is a type of metaphor, which can be distinguished from other metaphors because the conflicting concepts are both sensory, referring to two conceptually separate senses. As will be shown in § 4, in specific examples synaesthesia can coexist with other figures (such as metonymy and synecdoche), and interact with them.

2.1. *Types of synaesthesia*

Before introducing the topic of translation, one more point needs to be mentioned, namely that different types of synaesthesia can be distinguished (Strik Lievers, 2015b). The main distinction at play is that between conventional synaesthesia and living synaesthesia.

Most synaesthetic expressions commonly used in everyday language, as for instance *warm voice*, are conventional. More specifically, *warm voice* is an instance of a consistent metaphorical concept. That is, the connection between hearing and touch/temperature may likely be regarded as an instance of a coherent conceptual system, at least for English language speakers. *Voices* can be *warm*, but they can also be *cold/soft, rough, smooth, scratchy*; a *sound* can be *warm*, etc. This kind of synaesthesia is productive, because it is possible to imagine new instances that are creative expressions of the same synaesthetic metaphorical concept (e.g., *burning voice, tepid melody*, etc.).

² There is also an alternative, metonymic reading of Alcmán's line, by which it is the creatures that live in the mountain that sleep (PRANDI, 2012: 151).

A subtype of conventional synaesthesia is catachresis, that is, «the putting of new senses into old words» (Black, 1954: 280). More precisely, catachresis is characterised by being isolated and non-productive (Prandi, 2010). As an example of catachrestic synaesthesia we can take *round taste*. Unlike *warm voice*, *round taste* is isolated: we have *round taste* (originating in wine-tasting lexicon), but we do not have, for instance, *square* or *oval taste*. And it is non-productive: we cannot say that that a well-rounded wine is *circular*, or that it can *roll*, etc.

In both cases of conventional synaesthesia (isolated or non), the meaning of the focal word (the adjective in our examples) is adapted to the tenor's meaning. In *warm voice*, *rough voice*, etc., for instance, the noun *voice* keeps its meaning, while the meanings of the adjectives are modified: they lose the properties that are not compatible with *voice*, that is, their reference to the domain of touch. The same happens with *rounded taste*, in which *taste* keeps its meaning while *rounded* has acquired a new sense that may be used to describe the taste of beverage and food.

I just mentioned that we do not have phrases such as *square* or *oval taste*. This means that these expressions are not part of our lexicon, and it may be the case that no one ever used them. However, someone *might* use them. In that case, we would have a synaesthesia which is creative and living. Example (2), by Dickinson, is a living synaesthesia. The connection between sight (colour) and hearing created by the syntactic link between *blue* and *buzz* is not part of a coherent conceptual system. The direction of conceptual pressure (Prandi, 2010: 308) is opposite with respect to conventional synaesthesia. Both *blue* and *buzz* keep their meaning, so that it is left to the reader to make sense of this conflict. It is the tenor, *buzz*, that is put under pressure: it is the buzz that, somehow, acquires colour.

3. *Synaesthesia and translation*

3.1. *Cross-linguistic properties of synaesthetic metaphors*

It has been shown by many studies (starting with those by Stephen Ullmann, and especially Ullmann, 1957) that there are clear preferences as concerns which sensory modalities are connected in synaesthetic metaphors. Transfers tend to go from the 'lower' senses (touch, taste, smell) to the 'higher' senses (hearing, sight)³. For instance, *sweet music* (from taste to hearing) has

³ The traditional distinction between lower and higher senses is based both on the role of the

more chances to occur in texts than something along the lines of *musical sweetness*. Moreover, transfers that follow the low-to-high direction seem to be judged more natural and easier to recall (Shen, 1997: 55). Although the reasons for these association preferences are not fully clear, it seems likely that the functioning and properties of human perception might (indirectly) play a role. In particular, the primacy of sight and hearing over the other senses in perceptual experience⁴ may explain why we talk more often of, and in terms of, these two modalities than the others⁵. It is therefore understandable that sight and hearing function as targets of synaesthetic transfers more often than the other senses (Strik Lievers, 2015a). Some scholars (e.g., Popova, 2005; Legallois, 2012) also seem to suggest that there could be a relationship between linguistic and neuropsychological synaesthesia, but there is no evidence supporting this hypothesis so far.

Many studies have analysed synaesthesia in individual languages, showing that the low-to-high directionality is a widespread tendency (among others, Whitney, 1952; Rosiello, 1963; Shen and Cohen, 1998; Yu, 2003; Salzmann, 2014). On the contrary, studies on the translation of synaesthesia from one language into another seem to be lacking.

The directionality tendency does not imply, of course, that the inventories of synaesthetic metaphors that can be used or created in different languages are isomorphic. However, it is worth investigating whether the (partial) perceptual explanation for preferences in linguistic synaesthesia does somehow ‘facilitate’ the translation process, as compared to other meta-

different senses in actual perception and on the varying cultural value that we attribute to them. As KÖSTER (2002: 27) writes: «In the nineteenth century, a distinction was commonly made between the ‘higher’ senses, vision and audition, and the ‘lower’ senses, touch, taste, and smell. In an age in which, at least in the Western world, faith in science and technological progress was almost absolute and bodily pleasures were viewed with suspicion, the senses of the intellect seemed to score a moral triumph over the senses of the body. Vision and hearing are involved in such vital human activities as spatial orientation (distance and depth perception, direction perception for sound sources, equilibrium) and communication (hearing, speaking and reading language, perception of body language, imitation of expressions and gestures). Furthermore, vision plays a very important role in form perception and in gross and fine manipulation of objects. [...] [T]ouch, kinesthesia, taste, and olfaction [...] also seem rather subjective and less universal – more related to feelings and emotions than to thoughts and decisions».

⁴ See, among others, CALVERT *et al.* (2004); SPENCE *et al.* (2012). See also STOKES and BIGGS (2014) for a philosophical perspective.

⁵ The low-to-high directionality of synaesthetic transfers is just one of the linguistic reflections of the primacy of sight and hearing in perception. A similar perceptual motivation has been invoked, for instance, in the discussion about evidentials (AIKHENVALD, 2004), and about perception verbs’ polysemy patterns (VIBERG, 2001). See also WIERZBICKA (1996: 78-82), where SEE and HEAR are claimed to be semantic primitives, while the concepts ‘touch’, ‘taste’, and ‘smell’ are not.

phors. Although it is doubtful that providing a definite answer is possible at all, the question itself is legitimate.

3.2. *Metaphor translation*

According to our definition, synaesthesia is a type of metaphor. Therefore, it is useful to recall here some issues concerning the translation of metaphors (cf. Prandi, 2010), to which we will refer in the discussion on the translation of synaesthesia.

Conventional metaphors, being instances of consistent metaphorical concepts, are often shared across different languages. However, the way these (even widely shared) concepts are expressed in actual metaphors can vary from language to language. Take, for instance, the metaphor ANIMALS ARE HUMANS, and one of its possible realizations in the following English example: *Come on, Harold, jump! Don't be such a chicken!* (the example is from Ahrens and Say, 1999: 96, which compares English and Mandarin Chinese ANIMALS ARE HUMANS metaphors). As far as the languages discussed here are concerned, French adopts a similar 'avian' solution to describe a coward behavior (*poule mouillée*, lit. "wet hen"). However, in order to convey a comparable meaning, German and Italian choose another animal (It. *coniglio* "rabbit", Ger. *Angsthase*, lit. "fear-hare"). In other cases, it might not be possible to find a corresponding metaphoric expression. Consider, for example, *dog* in *She/he is a dog*, conveying the derogatory meaning of "unattractive". In Italian neither *cane* ("dog") nor other animals show a similar metaphoric meaning extension⁶. In all such cases where an immediate 'equivalent' is not available, the translator therefore has two options: either he deletes the metaphor, or he finds in the target language a different metaphor with a comparable meaning.

Catachreses, as observed in § 2.1, are isolated, that is, they are not instances of shared metaphorical concepts. Therefore, finding perfectly matching expressions in the lexicon of different languages is in principle more rare. For instance, «the French expression *porte condamnée* and the English *condemned door* have no metaphorical equivalent in Italian; their translation cannot be in turn metaphorical» (Prandi, 2010: 319).

Although it may be counter-intuitive, the easiest case for translation is often that of creative, poetic metaphors (see van den Broeck, 1981; Prandi,

⁶ *Cozza* ("mussel") would be a possible translation, but it can exclusively apply to females, while *dog* also applies to males (e.g.: *Pretty well anyone could have stood next to the guys in Take That and looked like a dog. They were great-looking guys*, Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. *dog*).

2010). As already mentioned, in creative metaphors the conflicting expressions keep their original meaning. For instance, in *The forests [...] shouted of liberty* (Longfellow), *forest* still refers to «an extensive tract of land covered with trees and undergrowth» (OED), and the verb *shout* still refers to an activity peculiar to animate beings. It is precisely the fact that forests cannot shout in any consistent way that generates the conflict. The metaphor lies in a *contingent* interpretation of the conflicting concepts (in which sense forests could have shouted?), based on consistent thought. The translator, therefore, does not have to translate the content of the metaphor – unless he chooses one interpretation by providing a paraphrase, but in this case the metaphor would be lost. Given that conceptual conditions (e.g., animate beings shout, forests do not) are in most cases shared, regardless of the language, a word-by-word translation usually works. The word-by-word translation allows to reproduce, and to keep unchanged, the conceptual conflict (see Prandi, 2010; see also Steen, 2014: 23).

4. *Synaesthesia in translations of Süskind's Das Parfum*

As a case study, I analysed the translation of all instances of synaesthesia found in Patrick Süskind's novel *Das Parfum: Die Geschichte eines Mörders* (1985). Three major considerations led to the choice of this text. First, the topic of the novel. Very briefly, the main character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, is born with a strange functional anomaly: his body does not emit odours. In contrast to this lack of personal scent, he develops a peculiar sense of smell. Grenouille's olfaction is so sensitive that it allows him to perceive the external world entirely by means of his nose⁷. Grenouille soon realizes that the purpose of his life is to find the olfactory 'ingredients' to create the most pure and perfect scent that ever existed. The novel follows Grenouille, describing the (olfactory) perceptions that he experiences as he proceeds in his quest. Given the central role that perception plays in the story, many instances of synaesthesia can be found⁸. This is a very important element for the

⁷ The neurologist Oliver Sacks described Grenouille by a vivid synaesthesia as «a sort of Mozart of the nose» (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nU36JbnH-b8>).

⁸ The instances of synaesthesia found in *Das Parfum's* cannot tell us much about directionality preferences because, predictably, most of them have smell as a target (STRIK LIEVERS, 2015a). However, this is not a major problem here, since verifying the validity of the 'directionality principle' (SHEN and COHEN, 1998) is not the aim of this work.

purpose of this study: since synaesthesia is usually rare in language (see Marotta, 2012), other types of texts would not have provided enough instances of synaesthesia for the analysis.

Second, *Das Parfum* contains instances of both conventional and living synaesthesia. Conventional synaesthesia is used to describe ‘normal’ perceptions experienced by Grenouille or by other characters. Living synaesthesia is usually found when the exceptional need to describe everything in terms of smell forces the author to create unusual sensory connections.

Finally, there is a ‘practical’ motivation for choosing *Das Parfum*. Due to its success, the novel was translated into many languages (almost 50). The analysis presented here is based on the English, Italian and French translations⁹, but in the future this research might be easily extended to other languages.

4.1. *Synaesthesia in Das Parfum*

As expected, the novel is extremely rich in sensory figures, both synaesthetic and non synaesthetic. The latter include ‘mono-aesthetic’ metaphors, simile, and hypallage.

‘Mono-aesthetic’ metaphors are metaphors that involve only one sensory modality. In the novel, the most common case is that exemplified by (3) and (4), in which smell is depicted as a liquid substance:

- (3) *Er trank diesen Duft, er ertrank darin.*
 “He drank in the aroma, he drowned in it.”¹⁰
- (4) *Der herrliche Duft des Mädchens, der plötzlich warm und massiv aufquoll.*
 “The glorious scent of the girl, welling up so suddenly warm and massive.”

The other two sensory figures, simile and hypallage, involve different senses, but do not connect them metaphorically.

The similes in (5) and (6) compare smells to musical sounds, suggesting that they are similar under some respect. But neither the identity of smells

⁹ The translations from which the examples are taken are the following:
 English: *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*, Transl. John E. Woods, Vintage International, New York, 1986.
 Italian: *Il profumo*, Transl. Giovanna Agabio, Longanesi, Milano, 1985.

French: *Le Parfum: Histoire d'un meurtrier*, Transl. Bernard Lortholary, Fayard, 1986.

¹⁰ Here and in the following examples the translations are taken from the English version of the novel.

nor that of sounds is undermined (we can compare them precisely because they are different).

- (5) [*Das Parfum*] *es ist wie eine Melodie.*
 “[The perfume] it’s like a melody.”
- (6) *So erlesen die Qualität der einzelnen Produkte war [...] so unerträglich war ihr geruchlicher Zusammenklang, gleich einem tausendköpfigen Orchester, in welchem jeder Musiker eine andre Melodie fortissimo spielt.*
 “However exquisite the quality of individual items [...] the blend of odours was almost unbearable, as if each musician in a thousand-member orchestra were playing a different melody at fortissimo.”

In hypallage there is a mismatch between the syntactic and semantic scope of the attribute (Paillard, 2002: 176). The instances of hypallage in (7) and (8) involve different senses:

- (7) *Das ledrig verdorrte Odeur ihrer Hände.*
 “The bone-dry, leathery bouquet of her hands.”
- (8) *Der zarte grüne Geruch schwellender Rosenknospen.*
 “The tender green bouquet of a bursting rosebud.”

However, in both (7) and (8) the senses are only apparently mixed. In (7) the adjectives *ledrig* and *verdorrte* are syntactically connected to the noun *Odeur*, but semantically they modify the noun *Hände*. In (8) *grüne* is syntactically linked to *Geruch*, but semantically it applies to the *schwellender Rosenknospen*. In cases like (7) and (8), if the hypallage is recognized by the reader there is no place for synaesthesia.

Finally, there are of course many examples of authentic cross-sensory metaphors, i.e. of synaesthesia. The instances of synaesthesia identified in the novel are about 60 (the estimate is approximate because the interpretation of a few examples as synaesthesia may be disputable).

This abundance of synaesthetic metaphors is probably due not only to the primary role of perception in the novel, but also to the fact that smell is, at least in German and other European languages, a sense with a particularly poor lexicon (the ‘sense without words’, Howes, 1986, the ‘mute sense’, Ackerman, 1990). Smell therefore needs to borrow lexical material from other senses. Consequently, many examples of synaesthesia with smell as target are found in the text. Incidentally, it may be noted that the problem of the inef-

fability of smell is explicitly acknowledged in the novel:

- (9) *All diese grotesken Missverhältnisse zwischen dem Reichtum der geruchlich wahrgenommenen Welt und der Armut der Sprache.*
 “All these grotesque incongruities between the richness of the world perceivable by smell and the poverty of language.”
- (10) *Unsere Sprache taugt nicht zur Beschreibung der riechbaren Welt.*
 “Our language is of no use when it comes to describing the smellable world.”

4.2. Analysis of the translation data

For each instance of synaesthesia identified in *Das Parfum*, I searched for the corresponding translation into the target languages. While in *Das Parfum* the instances of synaesthesia have been found entirely manually, by carefully reading the text, a parallel corpus aligner and concordancer (CasualPConc)¹¹ has been used to facilitate the identification of the translations. *Das Parfum*'s instances of synaesthesia can be found in the Appendix, together with their translation.

Based on the analysis of the translation data, the following typology of cases is found:

- The synaesthesia finds a perfectly matching translation in the target text.
- The translation is partly different in form or meaning.
- The synaesthesia gets completely ‘lost’ in the translation.

Differences may, of course, in part be due to the translator’s choices and preferences. However, it is possible to find a correlation with the type of synaesthesia that has to be translated.

4.2.1. Conventional synaesthesia

As it happens for conventional metaphors, the way conventional synaesthaesiae are realised can vary from language to language, so that even in closely related languages word-by-word translations are often not available or appropriate.

Take, for instance, the following example:

¹¹ Available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/casualconc/utility-programs/casualpconc>.

(11) *Und so säuselte und flötete er denn weiter in den süßesten Tönen.*

As observed in the literature (Dirven, 1985; Barcelona, 2000), PLEASURABLE EXPERIENCES ARE SWEET FOOD is a conventional metaphor. *Süßesten Tönen* is likely an instance of it. The English and the Italian translator both use a corresponding synaesthesia:

(12) *E così continuò a mormorare con voce flautata nei toni più dolci.*

(13) *And so he went on purring and crooning in his sweetest tones.*

In the French translation, however, the synaesthesia is lost:

(14) *Il continua à murmurer et à chuchoter sur le ton le plus suave.*

Although the translator could have used the adjective *doux* (“sweet”) in this context, he chose *suave* instead, which means “pleasant to the senses” in general. The reason is probably that, in German and in the other languages considered here, the word for “sweet” is now polysemous, displaying both the sensory meaning and the (conventional) metaphoric extension of “pleasurable”. The French translator, therefore, did not identify *süßesten Tönen* as a synaesthesia, and simply chose another lexeme with a meaning similar to “pleasurable”. As Steen (2014: 16) observes, «[i]f metaphors are not always recognised as metaphors by readers, that is, if metaphors do not always cause readers to set up cross-domain mappings in their minds, then not every metaphor in a ST [source text] requires a metaphor in a TT [target text]».

Things can get more difficult when it comes to synaesthetic catachreses. An example among *Das Parfum*’s synaesthesiae is the following:

(15) *Es war Terrier, als sehe ihn das Kind mit seinen Nüstern, als sehe es ihn scharf und prüfend an.*

Scharf ansehen is a ‘dead’ synaesthesia in German, where *scharf* displays the stable meaning of “carefully, intently”, together with the touch-related meaning of “sharply”. Translating it word-by-word into languages that do not have the same catachresis in their lexicon would result in a creative synaesthesia. Italian, English, and French do not have a word for “sharply”, which also means “carefully, intently”. Unsurprisingly, all translators choose to definitively ‘kill’ this synaesthesia:

- (16) *Per Terrier era come se il bambino lo vedesse con le sue narici, come se lo guardasse attento.*
- (17) *It seemed to Terrier as if the child saw him with its nostrils, as if it were staring intently at him.*
- (18) *Il semblait à Terrier que l'enfant le regardait avec ses narines, l'examinait sans complaisance.*

Admittedly, languages that are genealogically and culturally close, as those examined here, have good chances to have highly comparable inventories of conventional synaesthetic expressions, and even to share some synaesthetic catachreses (cf. Paissa, 1995 on Italian and French; Catricalà, 2012: 39 on Italian and Spanish). However, the examples discussed in this section show that there is – at least – no full isomorphism. This anisomorphism is clearly reflected by the translators' choices.

4.2.2. *Creative synaesthesia*

As it happens for other types of creative metaphors, also for creative synaesthesia a word-by-word translation is usually appropriate. In fact, most instances of synaesthesia in *Das Parfum* that are translated by a perfectly corresponding synaesthesia in the target text are instances of creative synaesthesia. An example of creative synaesthesia is (19), which is successfully translated word-by-word into the three languages:

- (19) *Grenouille sah den ganzen Markt riechend.*
- (20) *Grenouille voyait tout le marché par l'odorat.*
- (21) *Grenouille vedeva tutto il mercato con l'olfatto.*
- (22) *Grenouille saw the whole market smelling.*

The synaesthesia in (19) displays a counter-directional transfer, going from sight to smell. Among *Das Parfum*'s instances of creative synaesthesia, this is the most common case. This preference is easily explainable, again, by the main character's atypical way of perceiving the world. For most people, vision is the main source of information, it is perceiving *par excellence*. This is reflected in language: *seeing* something by the sense of smell is therefore perceiving something by the sense of smell.

The description of smell experiences through sight is testified not only by synaesthetic metaphors associating lexemes pertaining to the two senses.

As Popova (2003) has observed, analysing the English version of the novel, the syntactic constructions used to describe smell experiences are often ‘borrowed’ from those typically associated to sight. For instance, it is common in the novel «the use of verbs of smell with prepositions specifying direction and target such as *at* and *through* which are more commonly associated with verbs of visual perception» (Popova, 2003: 143; cf. also examples 23-26 below). The SMELL AS SIGHT metaphor has consequences also on the meaning extensions towards other domains, and especially towards that of knowledge. While usually – at least in the languages considered here – such extension has sight as a source sense (Sweetser, 1991), in the novel there are many cases of semantic extension from smell to knowledge¹²:

- (23) *Grenouille roch sofort, dass noch kein lebendes Wesen diesen Platz je betreten hatte.*
- (24) *Grenouille flaira tout de suite que jamais être vivant n’avait pénétré en ce lieu.*
- (25) *L’olfatto di Grenouille avvertì subito che nessun essere vivente era mai penetrato in quella caverna.*
- (26) *Grenouille could smell at once that no living creature had ever entered the place.*

Coming back to synaesthesia, an interesting example is in (27) and its translations:

- (27) *Es sieht der Narr mit der Nase.*
- (28) *Le fou voit avec son nez.*
- (29) *Il matto vede col naso.*
- (30) *The fool sees with his nose.*

It displays, again, a sight – smell association. Here, however, synaesthesia coexists with synecdoche. We first have to interpret the synecdoche whereby *nose* refers to olfaction, in order to have a sight-smell synaesthesia. A similar case is found in (31) and its translations:

¹² There are some cases of conventional semantic extension from smell to knowledge (e.g., *I smell something fishy about this deal*, SWEETSER, 1991: 37; cf. EVANS and WILKINS, 2000: 576 for similar examples in Australian languages). However, they are rare compared to those from sight, and the range of meanings is more restricted: the extended meaning is usually “to discover or suspect something by instinct”, often with negative nuances.

(31) *Seine Nase geschärft wie ein Skalpell.*

(32) *Le nez affûté comme un scalpel.*

(33) *Il suo naso aguzzo come uno scalpello.*

(34) *His nose sharp as a scalpel.*

This phrase can be interpreted non-figuratively, as describing the shape of Grenouille's nose. However, if *nose* is recognised as a synecdoche (which is preferable in the novel's context), then there is also a touch-smell synaesthesia. If interpreted as a figure, (31) therefore displays a coexistence of synaesthesia and synecdoche similar to that in (27).

Another interesting example is (35):

(35) [*Das Parfum*] *rund und harmonisch war es.*

(36) [*Le parfum était*] *rond et harmonieux.*

(37) [*Il profumo era*] *rotondo e armonico.*

(38) [*The perfume was*] *full and harmonious.*

It is a creative synaesthesia, and although being clearly counter-directional (going from sight and hearing to smell), it can be translated word-by-word, generating a comparable conflictual meaning in the target text¹³. Interestingly, in English only part of this synaesthesia is translated: instead of *round(ed)*, the translator uses *full*. This takes us to a further, though rather trivial, consideration.

Although translation strategies may differ depending on the type of synaesthesia, the final choice is of course the translator's. In the case of the examined *Das Parfum*'s translations, the English translator 'kills', without a specific linguistic motivation or necessity, many more synaesthesiae than the Italian and French translators. The following is another such case, where French and Italian reproduce the synaesthesia, while English deletes it:

(39) *Er drehte sich im Kreise und ließ den Blick seiner Nase über das gewaltige Panorama des vulkanischen Ödlands streifen.*

¹³ The word-by-word translation strategy for creative metaphors does of course not work equally well in every case. For a detailed analysis and a typology of counter-examples, see VAN DEN BROECK (1981: 80 ff.).

- (40) *Si girò tutt'intorno e lasciò che il suo naso visionasse l'imponente panorama del deserto vulcanico.*
- (41) *Il tourna sur lui-même en laissant errer le regard de son nez sur le gigantesque panorama de ce désert volcanique.*
- (42) *He turned full circle and let his nose move across the vast panorama of the volcanic wilderness.*

It can be observed that the Italian translation keeps the sight-smell synaesthesia, but it does so through a rather 'free' translation. The translator uses a verb phrase (*[lasciò che] il suo naso visionasse*), while Süskind used a noun phrase (*[ließ] den Blick seiner Nase*). Changes in syntactic construction are quite common, see also (43) and (44):

- (43) *Kinder rochen fad.*
- (44) *I bambini avevano un odore insipido.*

In this case, the choice is due to fact that in Italian the verb for "smell" cannot be used with a predicative complement, and therefore an analytic form ("have an insipid smell") has to be used.

5. Concluding remarks

The analysis of *Das Parfum's* data has shown that the behaviour of synaesthesia in translation is similar to that of other metaphors. In fact, languages are anisomorphic synaesthetically as much as they are anisomorphic metaphorically (Dagut, 1976: 32), notwithstanding the cross-linguistic and partially perceptually motivated tendencies shared by synaesthesia in many languages.

The strategies adopted by the translators to deal with such anisomorphism have been shown to correlate with the type of synaesthesia to be translated. In conventional synaesthesia, culturally close languages often share similar cross-sensory mappings, which allow to easily find a corresponding translation (cf. *süßesten Tönen – toni più dolci*). But such shared mappings can also be realised by different lexical means in different languages, or by lexical items whose polysemy does not match in the source language and target language. In these cases, the translator has to find more creative solu-

tions, if he wants to reproduce the synaesthetic association in the target language. As for living, creative, synaesthesia, a word-by-word translation does in most cases succeed in conveying the conflictual meaning of the source text into the target text.

Based on the data analysed, no specific role of the directionality of synaesthetic transfers emerged with respect to easiness/difficulty of translation. It might be that, since conventional synaesthesiae that follow the directionality are more frequent within and across languages, they are also instantiations of shared metaphorical mappings. These synaesthesiae could therefore be more likely than others to find a corresponding synaesthesia in other languages. This is, however, just a very tentative hypothesis. In order to prove or dismiss it, much more data, possibly from culturally distant languages, would be needed.

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Appendix. Instances of synaesthesia in Siskind's *Das Parfum and their translations*

GERMAN	ITALIAN TRANSLATION	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	FRENCH TRANSLATION
<i>dem stechend süßen Duft der Nachtöpfe</i>	<i>l'odore pungente e dolcissimo di vasi da notte</i>	<i>the pungently sweet aroma of chamber pots</i>	<i>le remugle âcre des pots de chambre</i>
<i>warmen Dunst</i>	<i>caldo odore</i>	<i>warm vapours</i>	<i>effluve chaud</i>
<i>warmen, wolligen Milchdunst</i>	<i>il caldo odore di latte e di lana</i>	<i>woolly, warm milkiness</i>	<i>effluves de laine et de lait chaud</i>
<i>scharfen Augen</i>	<i>vista acuta</i>	<i>keenness of the eye</i>	<i>yeux perçants</i>
<i>es sieht der Narr mit der Nase</i>	<i>il matto vede col naso</i>	<i>the fool sees with his nose</i>	<i>le fou voit avec son nez</i>
<i>es war Terrier, als sehe ihm das Kind mit seinen Nüstern</i>	<i>per Terrier era come se il bambino lo vedesse con le sue narici</i>	<i>it seemed to Terrier as if the child saw him with its nostrils</i>	<i>il semblait à Terrier que l'enfant le regardait avec ses narines</i>
<i>als sehe es ihn scharf</i>	<i>come se lo guardasse attento</i>	<i>as if it were staring intently at him</i>	<i>l'examinait sans complaisance</i>
<i>Brenzlig süß rochen</i>	<i>odore dolce di bruciaticcio</i>	<i>a sweet burnt smell</i>	<i>une odeur sucrée et rousie</i>
<i>und roch sie als so deutlich unterschiedene Gegenstände, wie andre Leute sie nicht mit Augen hätten unterscheiden können</i>	<i>all'odore ne percepiua le diversità con una chiarezza che altri non sarebbero mai riusciti ad avere con gli occhi</i>	<i>and could clearly differentiate them as objects in a way that other people could not have done by sight</i>	<i>les distinguait à l'odeur mieux que d'autres gens n'eussent pu le faire à l'œil</i>
<i>all diese grotesken Missverhältnisse zwischen dem Reichtum der geruchlich wahrgenommenen Welt und der Armut der Sprache</i>	<i>tutte queste disparità grottesche tra la ricchezza del mondo percepito con l'olfatto e la povertà del linguaggio</i>	<i>all these grotesque incongruities between the richness of the world perceivable by smell and the poverty of the language</i>	<i>toutes ces grotesques disproportions entre la richesse du monde perçue par l'odorat et la pauvreté du langage</i>

GERMAN	ITALIAN TRANSLATION	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	FRENCH TRANSLATION
<i>es war, als besäße er ein riesiges selbsterlerntes Vokabular von Gerüchen, das ihn befähigte, eine schier beliebig große Menge neuer Geruchssätze zu bilden und dies in einem Alter</i>	<i>era come se possedesse un gigantesco vocabolario di odori appresi automaticamente che lo metteva in grado di formare, quasi a suo piacere, una quantità di proposizioni olfattive nuove</i>	<i>if he were an autodidact possessed of a huge vocabulary of odours that enabled him to form at will great numbers of smelled sentences</i>	<i>c'était comme s'il avait appris tout seul et possédait un gigantesque vocabulaire d'odeurs, lui permettant de construire une quasi infinité de phrases olfactives nouvelles</i>
<i>beißendem Dunst</i>	<i>vapori caustici</i>	<i>caustic fumes</i>	<i>vapeurs âcres</i>
<i>Grenouille sah den ganzen Markt riechend</i>	<i>Grenouille vedeva tutto il mercato con l'olfatto</i>	<i>Grenouille saw the whole market smelling</i>	<i>Grenouille voyait tout le marché par l'odorat</i>
<i>der zarte grüne Geruch schwellender Rosenknospen</i>	<i>odore delicato e acerbo</i>	<i>the tender green bouquet of a bursting rosebud</i>	<i>le délicat parfum vert de boutons de roses qui se gonflent</i>
<i>ein höchst eintöniges Duftgemisch</i>	<i>odore estremamente uniforme</i>	<i>a very monotonous mixture of smells</i>	<i>une odeur extrêmement monotone</i>
<i>wie ein Band kam der Geruch die Rue de Seine herabgezogen, unverwechselbar deutlich</i>	<i>come un nastro, l'aroma si srotolava giù per Rue de Seine, inconfondibilmente chiaro</i>	<i>the odour came rolling down the rue de Seine like a ribbon, unmistakably clear</i>	<i>comme un ruban, le parfum s'étirait le long de la rue de Seine, net et impossible à confondre</i>
<i>dieser Geruch hatte Frische [...] er hatte zugleich Wärme</i>	<i>quell'odore aveva in sé una freschezza [...] e nello stesso tempo aveva un calore</i>	<i>this scent had a freshness [...] at the same time it had warmth</i>	<i>ce parfum avait de la fraîcheur</i>
<i>beißender Pubergestank</i>	<i>puzzo acre di polvere</i>	<i>biting stench of gunpowder</i>	<i>l'air lui paraissait poussiéreux, rêche</i>
<i>exquisiter Duft</i>	<i>un odore tanto squisito</i>	<i>exquisite scent</i>	<i>un parfum aussi exquis</i>
<i>Kinder rochen fad</i>	<i>i bambini avevano un odore insipido</i>	<i>children smelled insipid,</i>	<i>les enfants sentaient fade</i>

GERMAN	ITALIAN TRANSLATION	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	FRENCH TRANSLATION
<i>seine exquisite Nase</i>	<i>il suo raffinatissimo naso</i>	<i>his exquisite nose</i>	<i>son nez extraordinairement subtil</i>
<i>betäubend riechenden Zimmer</i>	<i>quella stanza che già emanava un odore stordente</i>	<i>stifling, odour-filled room</i>	<i>la pièce déjà pleine de parfums</i>
<i>einem ultraschweren Moschusduft</i>	<i>un profumo al muschio ultrapesante</i>	<i>heavy musk scent</i>	<i>un parfum musqué extrêmement lourd</i>
<i>das Parfu m war ekelhaft gut</i>	<i>il profumo era disgustosamente buono</i>	<i>the perfume was disgustingly good</i>	<i>le parfum était ignoblement bon</i>
<i>[das Parfum] rund und harmonisch war es</i>	<i>[il profumo] rotondo e armonico</i>	<i>full and harmonious</i>	<i>rond et harmonieux</i>
<i>[das Parfum] es war frisch</i>	<i>[il profumo] era fresco</i>	<i>fresh</i>	<i>c'était frais</i>
<i>[das Parfum] schmalzig</i>	<i>[il profumo] sdolcinato</i>	<i>unctuous</i>	<i>pâteux</i>
<i>[das Parfum] Es besaß Tiefe, eine herrliche, haftende, schwelgerische, dunkelbraune Tiefe</i>	<i>[il profumo] aveva una sua profondità, una profondità stupefacente, perenne, voluttuosa, bruno-scuro</i>	<i>it possessed depth, a splendid, abiding, voluptuous, rich brown depth</i>	<i>cela vous avait de la profondeur, une magnifique profondeur, tenace, flamboyante et d'un brun foncé</i>
<i>ein ekelhaftes Geräusch</i>	<i>un rumore disgustoso</i>	<i>a repulsive sound</i>	<i>bruit répugnant</i>
<i>herrlichsten Parfums</i>	<i>splendidi profumi</i>	<i>splendid perfumes</i>	<i>deux parfums splendides</i>
<i>die schärfsten Augen von Paris</i>	<i>la vista più acuta di Parigi</i>	<i>the keenest eyes in Paris</i>	<i>la vue la plus perçante</i>
<i>und so säuselte und flötete er denn weiter in den süßesten Tönen</i>	<i>e così continuò a mormorare con voce flautata nei toni più dolci</i>	<i>and so he went on purring and crooning in his sweetest tones,</i>	<i>il continua à murmurer et à chuchoter sur le ton le plus suave</i>
<i>mit einer Stimme, die in ihrer Klarheit und Festigkeit von bevorstehendem Untergang wenig abnen ließ</i>	<i>una voce che per limpideità e fermezza lasciava presagire ben poco l'imminente decesso</i>	<i>a voice whose clarity and firmness betrayed next to nothing of his immediate demise</i>	<i>une voix dont la netteté et la fermeté n'évoquaient guère une fin prochaine</i>

GERMAN	ITALIAN TRANSLATION	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	FRENCH TRANSLATION
<i>ließ den Blick seiner Nase über das gewaltige Panorama</i>	<i>lasciò che il suo naso visionasse l'imponente panorama</i>	<i>let his nose move across the vast panorama of the volcanic wilderness</i>	<i>il tourna sur lui-même en laissant errer le regard de son nez sur le gigantesque panorama de ce désert volcanique</i>
<i>die Luft atmete eine feuchte, salzige Kühle</i>	<i>l'aria emanava una frescura umida e salata</i>	<i>the air he breathed was moist, salty, cool</i>	<i>l'air exhalait une fraîcheur humide et salée</i>
<i>das ledrig verdorrte Odeur ihrer Hände</i>	<i>l'odore secco e coriaccio delle sue mani</i>	<i>the bone-dry, leathery bouquet of her hands</i>	<i>le goût de cuir desséché qu'avaient ses mains</i>
<i>kostete vom Gestank der rohen, fleischigen Häute</i>	<i>gustava il puzzo delle pelli grezze</i>	<i>a whiff of the stench of raw, meaty skins</i>	<i>goûtait à la puanteur des peaux crues</i>
<i>unsere Sprache taugt nicht zur Beschreibung der riechbaren Welt</i>	<i>la nostra lingua è inadatta a descrivere il mondo percepibile con l'olfatto</i>	<i>our language is of no use when it comes to describing the smellable world</i>	<i>notre langage ne vaut rien pour décrire le monde des odeurs</i>
<i>die Düfte verströmten sich weiter und mischten sich in der Bläue der Nacht zu immer phantastischeren Noten</i>	<i>i profumi si diffusero nell'aria e nel blu della notte si unirono in note sempre più fantastiche</i>	<i>the scents spilled over still and united with the blue of night to form ever more fantastic airs</i>	<i>les parfums déferlaient au loin en se mêlant au bleu de la nuit pour donner des notes toujours plus fantastiques</i>
<i>das Glas kühlten Geruchs</i>	<i>bicchieri di odore fresco</i>	<i>glass of cool scent</i>	<i>verre d'odeur fraîche</i>
<i>frische Geruch</i>	<i>odore fresco</i>	<i>fresh odour</i>	<i>odeur fraîche</i>
<i>ekligen Gerüche</i>	<i>odori disgustosi</i>	<i>revolting odours</i>	<i>odeurs répugnantes</i>
<i>warmen Holzgeruch</i>	<i>caldo odore del legno</i>	<i>warm scent</i>	<i>odeur du bois chaud</i>
<i>seine Nase geschärf wie ein Skalpell</i>	<i>il suo naso aguzzo come uno scalpello</i>	<i>his nose sharp as a scalpel</i>	<i>le nez affûté comme un scalpel</i>

GERMAN	ITALIAN TRANSLATION	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	FRENCH TRANSLATION
<i>strömte einen beißend scharfen Duff aus</i>	<i>emanava un odore acre e pungente</i>	<i>gave off a biting, pungent odour</i>	<i>une odeur aigre et forte</i>
<i>der Geruch war so stechend</i>	<i>l'odore era così pungente</i>	<i>the odour was so pungent</i>	<i>une odeur si âcre</i>
<i>und wenn er schärfer hinroch</i>	<i>e quando acuiua l'olfatto</i>	<i>and when he smelled his way more penetratingly</i>	<i>et lorsqu'il flairait plus attentivement encore</i>
<i>sie roch beinahe schmerzhaf intensiv, scharf und beizend</i>	<i>aveva un odore quasi dolorosamente intenso, acuto e pungente</i>	<i>its smell was almost painfully intense, pungent, and acrid</i>	<i>une odeur forte et âcre, presque douloureuse</i>
<i>Rosen, deren Duff die Stadt für einen ganzen Monat in einen cremig-süßen unsichtbaren Nebel tauchte</i>	<i>rose, il cui aroma immerse la città per un mese intero in una nebbia invisibile dolce come crema</i>	<i>roses, the scent from which submerged the city in a creamy, sweet, invisible fog for a whole month</i>	<i>roses, dont l'odeur plongea tout un mois la ville dans une invisible brume crémeuse et sucrée</i>
<i>beide Blumen waren von so exquisitem und zugleich fragilem Parfum</i>	<i>entrambi i fiori avevano un profumo così squisito e fragile</i>	<i>the perfume of these two flowers was both so exquisite and so fragile</i>	<i>ces deux plantes avaient des parfums si exquis et en même temps si fragiles</i>
<i>süß-baftende, erotische Duff</i>	<i>profumo dolce e avvincente, erotico</i>	<i>sweet, erotic scent</i>	<i>l'odeur érotique des fleurs, douce et tenace</i>
<i>dem Duffbild</i>	<i>immagine odorosa</i>	<i>the fragrant tableau</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>zunächst machte er sich einen Unauffälligkeitseruch, ein mausgraues Duffkleid für alle Tage</i>	<i>dapprima si fece un odore non appariscente, un abito profumato grigio-topo per tutti i giorni</i>	<i>first he made an odour for inconspicuousness, a mousey, workaday outfit of odours</i>	<i>d'abord, il se fit un parfum de banalité, un vêtement olfactif gris souris pour tous les jours</i>

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hatte er sich ein etwas rassereres, leicht schweißsüßes Parfum zurechtgemixt, mit einigen olfaktorischen Ecken und Kanten	<i>un profumo un po' più piccante, con una leggera traccia di sudore, con alcuni angoli e spigoli olfattori</i>	<i>a somewhat more redolent, slightly sweaty perfume, one with a few olfactory edges and books</i>	<i>il s'était composé un parfum un peu plus dru, sentant légèrement la sueur; un peu plus anguleux et encombrant</i>
das Parfum roch deutlich nach dem feuchten, frischtaigen und ein wenig scharfen Duft des Hundefells	<i>il profumo sapeva chiaramente dell'aroma umido, fresco e grasso della pelle del cane</i>	<i>the perfume smelled clearly of dog-moist, fresh, tallowy, and a bit pungent</i>	<i>le parfum avait nettement l'odeur moite et un peu forte des poils gras du chien</i>
individuelles Duftbild	<i>immagine olfattiva individuale</i>	<i>olfactory personage</i>	<i>le profil individuel de son odeur</i>
kein schöner Mensch, geruchlich	<i>non certo un bell'uomo dal punta di vista olfattivo</i>	<i>not a handsome man, aromatically speaking</i>	<i>Il n'était pas joli, olfactivement</i>
exquisiter Schönheit	<i>una bellezza squisita</i>	<i>exquisite beauty</i>	<i>une beauté exquise</i>
wegen seines Unauffälligkeitseruchs	<i>per rendere ancora più manifesta quell'impressione di innocenza</i>	<i>augmenting the impression of obvious harmlessness</i>	<i>l'air inoffensif que lui conférait</i>
ausstrahlte, noch augenscheinlicher zu machen	<i>che già dava soltanto grazie al suo odore insignificante</i>	<i>exuded with his odour of inconspicuousness</i>	<i>déjà en lui-même son parfum de banalité</i>
herrlichen Duft	<i>profumo squisito</i>	<i>glorious scent</i>	<i>magnifique parfum</i>
ein kaltes dunkelblaues Licht	<i>luce fredda color azzurro scuro</i>	<i>a cold, dark blue light</i>	<i>une froide lumière bleu sombre</i>