

## IS METAPHOR LOST IN TRANSLATION: A COGNO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR IN CLOSE READINGS OF LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

*Zlatka Chervenkova*  
*Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv*

After 2000 years in which metaphor was strictly relegated to the domain of literature, during the last 40 years, after the revolution instantiated by Lakoff and Johnson, as a reaction, metaphor research was alienated from poetics. Instead, it focused predominantly on metaphor use in the real world, its experiential and embodied grounding, and its role in thinking and ideology. The methodology of the study of cognitive metaphor initially involved introspection, later the use of mono-lingual corpora which provided ample material for analysis and, lately, the use of parallel texts. They are seen as an efficient way to study the linguistic and culturally-defined differences that come into play during the process of translating metaphor. The aim of the research is, by identifying the conceptual metaphor behind the metaphorical linguistic expressions in key texts from one of the greatest stylists of the English language, Joseph Conrad, and comparing them to their translation in Bulgarian, to check whether metaphor is lost or transformed, where the conveyed message of the metaphor is similar, what kind of loss is most frequent. Conclusions are made regarding literature in translation, suggesting cases in which it is inferior to original writing in terms of metaphor type and density.

**Key words:** cultural linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Translation studies

### Introduction and theoretical grounds of the study

For 2000 years the predominant view regarding metaphor was that figurative language was a distortion which served aesthetic functions and that metaphor was a rhetorical device with an aesthetic function. Yet, in literary discourse, where it was supposed to belong, it was seen as the queen of tropes, subject to analysis by the literary critics. Lakoff and Johnson's publication (1980) relegated metaphor to the sphere of cognition. This change of perspective had reverberations in multiple areas of scientific inquiry related to language, culture, translation, and literature. Metaphor studies

developed into an important area of research. From a cognitive point of view, it generated interdisciplinary research with translation studies (Broeck 1981, Dagut 1987, Mandelblit 1995, Schaffner 2004, Dickins 2005), discourse analysis (Mussolf 2004; Charteris-Black, 2004), education (Cameron 2003), and recently, cognitive poetics (Stockwell 2002).

### **Metaphor and translation**

Though metaphor is one of multiple objects of research in translation studies, it is of paramount importance, with views varying as widely from metaphor being „no problem“ to „no solution“. Many attempts have been made to study various aspects of metaphor in translation, linking the two areas of research. They also happen to be very close, both structurally and etymologically: translation comes from Latin *translates* from *transferre*, *trans* – ‘across’, *ferre* – ‘carry’. Metaphor, similarly, derives from the Greek *meta* – ‘change’ and *pherein* – ‘carry’ (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). The metalanguage of both contains the concepts of source and target domains, languages, cultures. The Bulgarian word *npeboд* contains the same connotations. Tymoczko (2007: 68–77) concludes that in most Indo-European languages the words translation, metaphor, and transfer are conceptually related.

The study of metaphor is to a large extent supported by the study of language, where it occurs, along with thought. The scope of monolingual study of metaphor includes discourse analysis (metaphor in science, education, politics), multimodal metaphor (metaphor in the arts, gesture), psychology explains the universal motivation for metaphor, embodiment of experientialism, and neuroscience the process. Cultural variation, however, can only be found in comparative studies between languages, which used to be done intuitively, on the basis of expressions that come to the mind most easily, but later, more systematically, in corpora. Within the paradigm of cultural linguistics, interdisciplinary work involving parallel texts provides the research methodology for the study of metaphor variation across languages and cultures. Thus the study of parallel texts, i.e. originals and their translations, provides an unprecedented opportunity to study metaphor variation between languages and cultures in all possible socio-cultural environments as source concepts invariably differ from one culture to another.

On the other hand, language is the building blocks of literary discourse. Language is also closely influenced by thinking and has deep cultural motivation. Different languages, however, do not have direct correspondences between words, varying greatly on the basis of the

different cultural and historical contexts they have evolved in. Furthermore, individuals tend to use language differently. Both author and translator are specialists in conveying meaning through language. Indeed, ideally, the meaning in the original and in the translation needs to be identical. Given the professionalism of both, any differences in the conceptualization of metaphor between the two parallel texts are bound to be either culturally or linguistically motivated. In addition, other translation-related transformation, generalization and concretization, as well as domestication and foreignization, tend to occur in the process. This further alienates the source text (ST) from the target text (TT).

Most importantly, metaphors in ST and TT have to fulfill the same functions, expressed by Goatly (1997: 148): to fill language gaps; create meaning and memorability; express attitude and ideology. Metaphors have aesthetic value, simultaneously functioning as a powerful cohesive device of the literary work, linking themes and ideas within the text and intertextually, between the work and the other texts. Thus metaphor and translation studies have crossing points with literature and ever more scholars venture into its realms in their attempt to study it in all its manifestations.

The study of literature at university level invariably involves working with original texts, very often with select excerpts from works of fiction, to which an analysis is made in the form of close reading, more in line with the empirical study of literature, based on Lakoff, G., Turner M. (1989), cognitive stylistics (Semino, Steen, Tsur) and cognitive poetics, with its foundational principles of embodiment, prototypicality and naturalness (Stockwell) than with literary historiography.

All this has led to the formulation of **the aim of this study**: to compare the metaphors in the original literary text and their translation in terms of their effect on the readers' ability to comprehend them and perform close reading on. The results will yield important information about the relevance of using translated literature in literature classes, both in secondary and tertiary education. In other words, to check whether the translation contains the same metaphors that will convey the same ideas as the original.

The methodology of the study involves the use of key passages from Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, which are typically used for close readings in literature classes at undergraduate level. The metaphorical linguistic expressions found by applying the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) in these excerpts, and their translations are subject to analysis. This methodology provides an opportunity for the

study of metaphor as manifest in different languages and different socio-cultural environments in which the speakers interact with the world around them. The same content is presented in two different languages, with the metaphors typical of each language, which has evolved differently and has coined similar or different expressions in the attempt to conceptualize the surrounding world. Parallel texts provide an opportunity to study metaphor universality and variation in culture in similar linguistic context and to analyze the different metaphors used in the two languages while conveying the same message. Overlaying all this is the common practice in descriptive translation studies to study translational problems through target-source comparison of metaphor translation procedures.

The setup of the study consists of a detailed analysis of the metaphors and their translation in the first six pages of Joseph Conrad's highly multilayered symbolic novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and its translation into Bulgarian. The first step is metaphor identification and analysis in both texts, using Steen's MIP VU approach. This approach has the following steps: Each of the metaphors that were identified through the metaphor identification procedure (Pragglejaz Group 2007) was tested against the Cognitive translation hypothesis formulated by Mandelblit (1995: 492) in which he identifies two possibilities: similar mapping conditions and different mapping conditions, depending on the extent in which metaphoric images are preserved or transformed in the course of translation due to differences of conceptual systems of the source and target cultures. As translation of metaphor requires a verbal process of transfer between languages, a cognitive process requires a transfer between conceptual systems and cultural knowledge for transfer of meaning across cultures. This poses high demands on the translators, who have to be not only bilingual, but also biconceptual and certainly bicultural. Kövecses (2005) suggests a similar test of the translation of metaphor, applied to parallel texts: is the literal meaning the same or different in the two languages; is the figurative meaning of that word form the same or different in the two languages; is the conceptual metaphor underlying the word with that particular literal and figurative meaning the same or different in the two languages?

The metaphors are then broken up in types, and conclusions are drawn regarding metaphor translatability in literary discourse.

## **Results and discussion**

Let's have a look at a short excerpt from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which is often subject to close readings in British literature

classes with undergraduates of English Philology. It is necessary here to make the provision that I view metaphor in the broad sense, including simile, analogy, even allegory, through all of which conceptual metaphor may have a realization in the literary texts.

We were (1<sup>1</sup>) **cut off** from the comprehension of our surroundings; (2) **we glided** past like (3) **phantoms**, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic (4) **outbreak** in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were (5) **too far** and could not remember because we were travelling (6) **in the night** of first ages, of those ages that are (7) **gone, leaving hardly a (8) sign**—and no memories.

And its officially published translation by the renowned Bulgarian translator, Grigor Pavlov,

Не (1) **проумявахме** какво става около нас, (2) **плъзгахме се** като (3) **призраци**, смяяни и [secretly is omitted – Z. Ch.] ужасени, както нормални хора биха се ужасили от (4) **крясъците** в някоя лудница. Не можехме да разберем, защото **сме отишли (5) твърде далеч**, и не можехме да си спомним, защото (6) **пътувахме в нощта** на първите векове, на тези (7) **изчезнали векове**, които не са оставили никаква (8) **следи** и никакъв спомен.

The first metaphor here is *cut off*. It is a conventional, lexicalized metaphor, based on the conceptualization that . In the course of translation, however, it disappears as a metaphor and is substituted by a paraphrase, which does not convey to the recipient the complete interruption in communication, similar to that occurring when cutting off a telephone cable.

In the next sentence we have some other metaphors, which suggest ideas that are relevant to the interpretation of the text in the tradition of close readings: (2) **we glided** past like (3) **phantoms**. In the manner suggested by Lakoff and Turner (1989), in which poets draw upon conventional conceptual metaphors and make use of the reader's knowledge of them in order to convey their ideas through either innovative or conventional metaphorical linguistic expressions, during close readings the identification of the conceptual metaphors behind the metaphorical linguistic expressions is the shortest way to understanding the message of the writer, encoded in them. In the original text there is a simile which maps our conventional knowledge of phantoms and their „gliding“ mode of travel onto the Europeans penetrating the „Dark“ continent via a steamer

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<sup>1</sup> The numbering has been inserted by the author for the sake of the study.

on the Congo River. The implications from the conceptual metaphors are that the boat is manned not by people, but ghosts from the beyond – Europe is presented as a different world, inhabited by white (ghosts are white) people who are alien to the African continent, like creatures from a different world, inhuman, dead to emotions, bodiless. The translation contains a similar mapping and the same interpretation is possible in the target text. Not all translations, however, due to differences in languages, cultures and the transformations made by the translators, preserve the same mapping conditions. In some cases they lead to changes in the metaphorical mapping or the complete loss of metaphor, causing a change in the message in the translated text altogether. The next simile in the original maps our knowledge of the behavior of madmen in lunatic asylums onto the natural behavior of the savages in the jungle, suggesting that Africa is governed by other laws, deemed insane because they are incomprehensible to the white colonizers. However, the translator has applied some concretization by narrowing down *outbreak*, which implies not only the production of cries, *крясъци*, but also violent action, which is characteristic of the natives according to Conrad's stereotype of representing them. Thus the reader's perception of the translated text is limited to only one of the five senses (hearing), rather than the more complex perception available to the reader of the English text.

Due to the fact that Joseph Conrad is describing a setting entirely foreign to anything his readers have ever experienced, he often resorts to similes and metaphors that allow the readership to relate the new information to the information they are already familiar with. This accounts for the unnatural number of similes in his work. This is one of the most widely-spread functions of metaphor: to convey new knowledge, or link old knowledge with new. The next sentence, according to the MIP suggested by the Pragglejaz group, contains four metaphorical expressions which are based on primary metaphors, as defined by Grady (Goatly 2007): “We could not understand because we were 5 **too far** and could not remember because we were travelling 6 **in the night** of first ages, of those ages that are 7 **gone**, **leaving hardly a 8 sign**—and no memories. (see Table 1, 2, and 3). “Too far” is part of the conceptual metaphor, suggesting how incomprehensible Africa is for European reason and logic. The Bulgarian translation „**зашото сме отишли твърде далеч**“ conceptually has the same mapping conditions, which is only natural for primary metaphors with an experiential motivation. The use of the participle “gone”, rather than “been” suggests another primary metaphor which is not evident in the original. The next metaphorical expression in the ST is “we were travelling (6) **in the night** of first ages”,

based on the metaphor and and the The target text TT „пътувахме в нощта на първите векове“ has preserved the same mapping conditions, but “ages” becomes more concrete as „векове“ –centuries, marking a shift in category from general to concrete.

This kind of analysis was applied to several pages from the beginning of the novel, and the results have been summarized in Table 2. They allow us to draw the following conclusions: 1. Innovative metaphors do not pose a problem for translation, as they are grounded in conventional metaphors and are easy to translate and analyze. 2. A considerable number of metaphors are omitted or mapped differently in the course of translation; 3. A large number of metaphors in translation, however, have the same mapping conditions in English and Bulgarian, due to common cultural background; 4. In literary discourse, due to the clustering of metaphors in nodes, in spite of loss of metaphor as a result of linguistic and culture-related differences or translator-related preferences, the author’s message still gets across in translation, mainly because of the metaphor network that spreads throughout the text and the possibility of the translator to compensate for the ‘zero solutions’, or the loss of a metaphor by introducing another metaphor in a place where no such metaphor exists in the original. 5. Terminology, (nautical), abundant in the English text, which is largely made up of metaphor (Dagnev 2015), is standardized and substituted by common words and phrases in translation, because, as a language of a sea-faring nation, English has more sea-related words than Bulgarian; 6. Formulaic language (Wray 2002) is preferred by translators as it is the easiest to retrieve from memory; 7. Toury’s law of growing standardization definitely applies to metaphor. It is evident in the general tendency to substitute specific terms with more general ones, i.e. the shift in translation is more often towards generalization. It can be illustrated as follows:

Specific term → general term → paraphrase → omission

8. Some types of metaphors tend to get lost in translation more than others do: the easiest ones to translate are the lexicalized, decorative and creative metaphors if the systems are culturally close; 9. Foregrounded metaphors, grammatical metaphors and culturally bound ones are most difficult to translate.

Table 1

Linguistic metaphorical expressions in the Source Text and their Conceptual Metaphors	Parallel texts: English - Bulgarian	Linguistic metaphorical expressions in the Target Text and their Conceptual Metaphors
	Joseph Conrad <i>Heart of Darkness – Excerpt 1</i>	
<p>(1) Cut off from the comprehension UNDERSTANDING IS COMMUNICATION BY WIRE LEXICALIZED</p> <p>(2) we glided past like (3) phantoms THE BOAT IS A GHOST FROM THE BEYOND – A DIFFERENT WORLD ALTOGETHER WHITE PEOPLE ARE ALIENS, INHUMAN, DEAD TO EMOTIONS</p> <p>an enthusiastic (4) outbreak in a madhouse</p> <p>AFRICA IS DIFFERENT / INSANE</p> <p>We could not understand because we were too (5) far</p> <p>DISTANCE IS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING</p> <p>AFRICA IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO EUROPEAN REASON &amp; LOGIC</p> <p>we were travelling (6) in the night of first ages</p> <p>THE HISTORY OF MANKIND IS A DAY</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT</p> <p>PAST IS DARKNESS</p> <p>BLEND</p> <p>of those ages that are (7) gone, leaving hardly a (8) sign</p> <p>TIME IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY</p>	<p>We were (1) cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; (2) we glided past like (3) phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic (4) outbreaks in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were (5) too far and could not remember because we were travelling (6) in the night of first ages, of those ages that are (7) gone, leaving hardly a (8) sign—and no memories.</p>	<p>(1) Не проумявахме какво става около нас, (2) плъзгахме се като (3) призраци, смаяни и == ужасени, както нормални хора биха се ужасили от (4) крясъците в някоя лудница. Не можехме да разберем, защото сме отишли (5) твърде далеч, и не можехме да си спомним, защото пътувахме в (6) нощта на първите векове, на тези (7) изчезнали векове, които не са оставили никаква (8) следи и никакъв спомен.</p> <p>(1) Не проумявахме какво става около нас PARAPHRASE</p> <p>(2) плъзгахме се като (3) призраци SAME MAPPING CONDITIONS (SMC) lead to the conveyance of the same ideas as in the source text от крясъците в някоя лудница metonymy (крясъци са част от цялото на outbreak) SMC</p> <p>But outbreak is a more general category than крясъци Shift of category from general to specific Outbreak is more violent than just shouts. защото сме (5) отишли твърде далеч SMC</p> <p>пътувахме (6) в нощта на първите векове векове е метоним на “age” SMC</p> <p>Shift of category from general to specific. изчезнали векове, които не са оставили никаква следи SMC</p> <p>на тези (7) изчезнали векове SMC</p> <p>(8) следи и никакъв спомен. SMC, concretization</p>

<p>(9) Unearthly = AFRICA IS A DIFFERENT WORLD (10) shackled form of a <b>conquered monster</b> ORI EVIL IS A MONSTER IN AFRICA EVIL IS AT LARGE IN EUROPE SAVAGERY IS SUBORDINATE TO CIVILIZATION <b>men were—No, they were not inhuman</b> Raises the question whether humanity is a biological or moral characteristic if you were <b>man</b> enough BEING A BRAVE IS BEING A MAN Based on: have balls Remote kinship = PROXIMITY IS SIMILARITY</p>	<p>The earth seemed (9) <b>unearthly</b>. We are accustomed to look upon the (10) <b>shackled form of a conquered monster</b>, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the <b>men were—No, they were not inhuman</b>. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would (11) <b>come slowly</b> to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what (12) <b>thrilled</b> you was just the thought of their <b>humanity-like yours</b>—the thought of your (13) <b>remote kinship</b> with this wild and passionate uproar.</p>	<p>Земята изглеждаше (9) <b>неземна</b>. Свикнали сме да гледаме (10) <b>окованата фигура на победено чудовище</b>, но там — там гледахме свободно чудовище. То беше неземно, а хората бяха... не, те не бяха <b>нечовеци</b>. Това бе най-страшното — подозрението, че те не са нечовеци. (11) <b>Подозрението се вселяваше в нас бавно</b>. Те виеха и скачаха, въртяха се и правеха ужасни муцуни; но мисълта за <b>тяхната човечност – като нашата</b> – (12) <b>ни караше да тръпнем</b>, (13) === с тази дива и страстна връва.</p>	<p>(9) Неземна SMC (10) <b>окованата фигура на победено чудовище</b> Original metaphor ORI SMC a хората бяха... не, те не бяха <b>нечовеци</b> SMC Подозрението се вселяваше в нас бавно. DMC UNDERSTANDING/SUSPICION IS INHABITING/HAUNTING Подозрението се вселяваше в нас бавно. DMC - UNDERSTANDING IS BEING HAUNTED THOUGHTS ARE GHOSTS HAUNTING PEOPLE Shift of category from general to specific 13 omission of a clause</p>
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<p>(14) Ugly HARMONY IS BEAUTY (15) If you were <b>man</b> enough (16) <b>faintest trace</b> PROMINENT IS STRONG COLOUR IS INTENSITY</p> <p>(17) the terrible <b>frankness of that noise</b> <b>ORI</b> Blend: clear = frank=truthful a <b>dim</b> suspicion KNOWING IS SEEING the <b>night of first ages</b> <b>ORI</b> DARKNESS IS EVIL DARKNESS IS SAVAGERY DARKNESS IS IGNORANCE truth <b>stripped of its cloak of time</b> <b>ORI</b> TRUTH IS A PERSON CLOTHES ARE DECEITFUL SURFACE Based on: <i>naked truth</i> Mega-metaphor – source domain : Morally strong man in a foreign environment / white man / civilization</p>	<p>(14) <b>Ugly.</b> Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were (15) <b>man</b> enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the (16) <b>faintest trace</b> of a response to the terrible (17) <b>frankness of that noise</b>, a (18) <b>dim</b> suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so (19) <b>remote</b> from the (20) <b>night of first ages</b>—could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage—who can tell?—but truth—(21) <b>truth stripped of its cloak of time</b>. Let the <b>fool gape and shudder</b>—the man knows, and can (22) <b>look on without a wink</b>. But he must at least be (23) <b>as much of a man</b> as these on the shore. He must (24) <b>meet</b> that truth with <b>his own true stuff</b>—with his own inborn strength.</p>	<p>(14) <b>Грозно.</b> Да, грозно. Но ако сте достатъчно (15) <b>храбри</b>, ще признаете <b>пред себе си</b>, че <b>едно съвсем</b> (16) <b>малко зърно</b> във вас откликва на страшната (17) <b>откровеност на този шум</b>, че в него се (18) <b>крие</b> смисъл, който вие, така (19) <b>отдалечени от</b> (20) <b>нощта на първите векове</b>, можете да проумеете. И защо не? Човешкият ум е способен на всичко – защото в него се съдържа всичко: и минало, и бъдеще. Какво се криеше в този шум? Радост, страх, мъка, преданост, доблест, ярост, кой може да каже – но най-важно истината, истината, (21) <b>от която бе смъкната наметката на времето</b>. Нека глупакът зяпа и трепери – човекът знае и може да продължи да гледа, (22) <b>без да му трепне окото</b>. Но той трябва да (23) <b>бъде достатъчно човек</b>, като онези на брега. Той трябва да (24) <b>посрещне истината с истинските си качества</b> – със собствената си вродена сила.</p>	<p>(14) <b>Грозно</b> SMC (15) <i>paraphrase</i> ако сте достатъчно <b>храбри</b> In Bulgarian language there is no expression similar to “have the balls”, meaning to be brave, therefore the translator has opted for paraphrase. The expression that exists, <i>ако ти сгъска</i>, is not associated with any male organs. DMC (16) <b>едно съвсем малко зърно</b> във вас THINGS ARE MADE OF GRAINS A SMALL PIECE IS A GRAIN Based on the common expression: <i>Няма зърнце (истина)</i>. <b>откровеност на този шум</b>, SMC ORI che в него се <b>крие</b> смисъл - omission KNOWING IS SEEING SMC DIM → КРИЕ – blend “vague” is translated as “hidden” <b>отдалечени от нощта на първите векове</b> ORI SMC истината, <b>от която бе смъкната наметката на времето</b> ORI SMC There is a common expression with the SMC in Bulgarian language: <i>Голата истиница</i></p>
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**Table 2.** Table of results

Item	Source Text	Target text
Number of words	3684	3095
Type / token ratio	1231/ 3684 or 0.33	1139 / 2941 or 0.39
Classification on the basis of linguistic form by Steen 2007		
Number of identified metaphors	55	45
Number of lexicalized metaphors	21	18
Number of conventional metaphors	47	40
Number of original metaphors	10	10
Culture related classification by Kovecses		
Number of culture-specific metaphors	5	2
Number of universal	50	40
Translation-related classification		
Same mapping conditions	26	
Different mapping conditions	7	
Metaphor to Paraphrase	8	
Metaphor to 0	3	
0 to metaphor	1	
Functionally relevant conceptual metaphors for the purpose of close reading		
EVIL IS A MONSTER; IN AFRICA EVIL IS AT LARGE; IN EUROPE SAVAGERY IS SUBORDINATE TO CIVILIZATION; WILDERNESS IS DARK AND HIDDEN; AFRICA IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO EUROPEAN REASON & LOGIC; THE BOAT IS A GHOST FROM THE BEYOND – A WORLD ALTOGETHER; WHITE PEOPLE ARE ALIENS, INHUMAN, DEAD TO EMOTIONS; THE HISTORY OF MANKIND IS A DAY; KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT PAST IS DARKNESS; UNDERSTANDING IS ARRIVING; MAN IS CONTAINER; WILDERNESS IS ENIGMATIC; DANGER IS DARKNESS; THE HIDDEN IS DARK; EVIL IS DARK; JOURNEY AS PENETRATION INTO THE DANGEROUS UNKNOWN; STATES (OF EXPERIENCE) ARE CONTAINERS; THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE IS A PATH; THE FASCINATION OF THE IRRATIONAL IS PHYSICAL ATTRACTION; CURIOSITY IS A DRIVING FORCE.		

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