

# Defamiliarization and Literary Translation: Insights on Foregrounding Phenomena as Deviation<sup>1</sup>

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*Take that old, material utensil, language, found all  
about you, blank with familiarity, smeared with daily  
use, and make it into something that means more  
than it says.*

ADRIENNE RICH

*The delight of defamiliarization [...] is one of the  
genuine pleasures of languaging.*

A. L. BECKER

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<sup>1</sup> This work has not been presented at congresses, in whole or in part.

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## 1. Introduction

This study focuses on defamiliarization, a principle of dehabituating, renewing, slowing, making strange (*ostranenie*), and thus heightening literary perception, and some uses of a linguistic technique, foregrounding, used to achieve it. Shklovsky contends that “Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant” (“Art as Device” 6); the work of art “makes perception long and ‘laborious’” (ibid.). Foregrounding (*aktualisace*, in the Prague Structuralist term) has been present in literature across all cultures (Hogan, qtd. in Van Peer “Introduction to Foregrounding”).<sup>2</sup> While recent decades have found studies branching off in many directions, such as reader response and its connections to foregrounding (e.g. Bortolussi and Dixon 2003), this study will focus on foregrounding and awareness-raising of discourse features forming the “motivated prominence” (Halliday 1971) of literary language, that is, patterns that aid meaning-making against an automatized field not placed in relief. A conception of literature as a site for deviations, defined by Leech as “the degree of surprise it is capable of eliciting in the uninitiated reader (or listener)” (*Language and Literature* 14), guides our reflections. Two familiar ways of achieving foregrounding are violation (deviation) and repetition (Van Peer, *Stylistics and Psychology* 220; in translation, Boase-Beier, *Translation and Style* 151). This work will demonstrate these phenomena, evidenced by their associated literary effects, to be translation-relevant, and will illustrate ways they have, and have not, been sought in Spanish⇨English and Portuguese⇨English translation. Beyond issues of reflecting the foreignness of a work's natural language, *making strange* is a question of style. Boase-Beier calls a “stylistically aware translation” one that is informed by the theory and practice of style (*Stylistic Approaches* 128).

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<sup>2</sup> *Ostranenie* and *aktualisace* are primarily distinguished in that “Shklovsky[’s *ostranenie* refers] to specific estrangement devices, while in *aktualisace* the emphasis is on the position of deautomatized elements within the structure of a work of art” and the former “stressed the logic of perception, while Mukařovský and the Prague Structuralists called attention to the logic of artistic creation” (Šlaisová 161-62). Shklovsky’s “Art as Device” (1991) makes the relevant comparison that deautomized perception can be likened to speaking a foreign language for the first time.

More than awareness, perhaps, we can strive to hone “the human ability to produce poetic structures and understand their effect—that is, [...] *poetic competence*” (Bierwisch 98-99, emphasis in original). Cases of defamiliarizing translation can and do occur not only in source texts, of course, but in target-text strategies such as *abusive translation*, instances of “strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own” (Lewis 41).

The philosophy motivating this review is borrowed from one of the most pervasive tropologies in literary studies: that the poem, and perhaps the literary work more broadly, is a “machine made of words” (Williams 1944). We can take this to mean that there is a system to a poem, one dependent on, and yet more than, its parts. The image of the literary machine focuses attention on the effect, the functionalism, of works and the choices they contain.<sup>3</sup> A translation-as-machine image, by extension, recognizes the local-global cohesion of a text. Let's consider how this cohesion involves patterns of deviation.

## 2. Kinds of deviation

Discussing the foregrounding function of literariness, Eagleton (49) calls poetry “creative deformation”, “language intensely aware of itself”<sup>4</sup>, “an

<sup>3</sup> For more on this motif, see Zapruder (2017), who quotes Valéry: “The poem makes poetry happen in the mind of the reader or listener. It happens first to the poet, and in the course of writing, the poet eventually makes something, a little machine, one that for the reader produces discoveries, connections, glimmers of expression.” Note the location of poetry in the mind—catalyzed by, but outside, the “machine”. Vescia makes two interpretations of understanding a poem as a machine that seem apropos of translation: the image “serves to highlight poetry’s function as a device for transferring energy from poet to reader” (102)—or, poet through translator to reader; and second, “only the necessary parts are included”, and thus all mechanisms inessential to operation are redundant (ibid.). A redundant part has its homologue in an unmotivated or incoherent literary choice, a word or phrase with no contribution to unity. But I would stop short of imagining poems as, as Stefans does, as “autonomous entities that, like machines and living organisms, enact their own interactions with their milieus” (2). More persuasively, a machine, a poem, a translation: all are *constructed*, and interdependent entities.

<sup>4</sup> The phrasing recalls Bakhtin’s “language first becomes aware of itself through contact with other languages” (Fet 63). Literariness and its attendant debates are beyond the scope of this paper, but we tend to

exhilarating illness of language” (though he resists thus describing literature broadly, for which the claims of the Formalists he found too sweeping [ibid. 49-51]). The critic is correct in calling deviation, or literariness, a relative term in that one person's estrangement is another's “taken-for-granted linguistic background” (ibid.). Leech notes that deviation, “avoidance of the predictable”, characterizes literary language, but that such language is not exclusive to literature (“Stylistics” 41). Literature, Leech argues elsewhere, shows the importance of foregrounding, of the autotelic nature of literature (i.e. its communicative goals are met by the work itself), and of the “multiplicity of significance”, but that these are not necessary preconditions for a work to be called literary (*Language and Literature* 7).

## 2.1 Collocational deviation / Violation of selectional restrictions

The first kind of deviation to note will be collocational. In this excerpt, collocational deviation is at work on the axes of concretion/abstraction and semantic fields (boldface used throughout this study is my own):

Hoy saldrás del carbón y del rocío.  
 Hoy llegarás a sacudir las puertas  
 con **manos maltratadas**, con **pedazos**  
**de alma** sobreviviente, con **racimos**  
**de miradas**, que no extinguió la muerte,  
 con **herramientas hurañas**  
 armadas bajo los harapos.

(Pablo Neruda, excerpt from  
 “América insurrecta (1800)”)

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avoid placing literary and non-literary language as binary but instead as falling along a cline, following Carter and Nash, “Language and Literariness” 130–139, *Seeing* 37–42, as cited in Xu 264).

This passage reveals the poetic economy of conceptual metaphor, whereby animate and inanimate, body and soul, partake of each other: hands become synecdoches of a human condition; the soul is thingified; glances are romantic gestures comprising living symbols; and mere objects take on the affective attributes of their users.

## 2.2 Syntactic deviation

Syntactic deviation plays a characterizing role right from the opening lines of a classic Horacio Quiroga tale, accomplishing agentive leaps as in the Neruda poem above:

EL HOMBRE Y su machete acababan de limpiar la quinta calle del bananal.  
Faltábanles aún dos calles; pero como en éstas abundaban las chircas y malvas  
silvestres, la tarea que tenían por delante era muy poca cosa.

(Horacio Quiroga, "El hombre muerto" 653)

Zamuner (25) explains the marked agency conveyed in the plural verb, and the translator's need to see strangeness in order to "make strange" in translation:

...despite its Brutus-like role in the murder of a friend, the machete is "downgraded" in the English version from a main character to a mere tool. Thus, in the original, both machete and man work side by side, with the verb conjugated in the third person plural: "El hombre y su machete *acababan* de limpiar" (Quiroga, *Cuentos completos* 687, my emphasis), whereas [Margaret Sayers Peden's] English translation is "With his machete *the man* had just finished clearing the fifth lane of the banana grove" (Quiroga, "The Dead Man" 121, my emphasis). This represents a significant "simplification" as the next line explains that both man and his machete were about to finish their day's work and were very pleased with their efforts.

And, consistently, but with the same neutralizing force, later "el machete *se le escapaba de la mano*" (Quiroga, *Cuentos completos* 689, Zamuner's emphasis) is rendered "dropped his machete" (Quiroga, "The Dead Man" 121) (*ibid.* 26). The translator's normalizing impulse overrides the strangeness of a

machete occupying a subject position in the Spanish; the subsequent agentive locutions fall by the wayside, and the chain of signification is broken.

“Hands”, from the story cycle *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson (1919), offers a related example in English. Some relevant excerpts (9):

The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of **hands**. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. **The hands alarmed their owner**. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads.

[...]

In Winesburg **the hands** had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame.

[...]

As for George Willard, he had many times wanted to ask about **the hands**. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and **their inclination to keep hidden away** and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind.

Wing Biddlebaum's hands are referred to as “the hands”, a highly marked locution in English. They are anthropomorphized with volition (“their inclination to keep hidden away”), and only described roundaboutly as his attributes (“the hands alarmed their owner”). The effect is to distance the character from his own actions and to signal the mystery surrounding his past. The hands’ “inclination” inverts the usual relation between whole and part, agentless and agented.

We can analyze this discursive technique in other terms, such as *figure* and *ground*. Stockwell indicates that the visual or textual field will exhibit one of the following features, conferring prominence on it: it will have well-defined borders and be “self-contained”; it will be moving; it will “precede the ground”; it will stand in greater relief than the field; it will be “in front of, or

above, or larger” than the ground (15). Correspondingly, the prominence of a figure, or more accurately, the relationship between figure and ground, attracts readerly attention (ibid. 18). Foregrounding, salience, and figure and ground constitute different nomenclature in the critical toolkit:

In cognitive stylistics, the linguistic foregrounding which Jakobson, Mukarovsky and others spoke of can be seen with reference to what is frequently termed salience (Leech and Short 212ff.) [...]. Tabakowska (46-47), discussing the translation of foregrounding, also links it [...] to “the psychological principles” (48) of figure and ground, a principle implicit in the Prague Structuralists’ concern to link literary with other forms of art. This psychological approach allows us to see foregrounding not simply as something based on stylistic deviation, but also on different ways of describing an object or event. (Boase-Beier, *Stylistic Approaches* 90)

Boase-Beier notes, importantly, that ground and figure can change in translation. We notice that at least two possessives are supplied, for example, in one Spanish translation of the excerpts from the Anderson tale (2009), a shift in the ground-figure ratio: “En Winesburg **sus** manos habían llamado la atención debido sólo a su actividad” (*Winesburg, Ohio: Colección de relatos* 17); “En cuanto a George Willard, muchas veces había querido preguntarle por **sus** manos” (ibid. 18). As with Spanish, many languages routinely express possession of body parts with generic articles, not possessives, their markedness becoming unmarked.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, a Portuguese translation of Emily Dickinson's opening line “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” as “Eu sou ninguém” (Magagna 251-252) contrasts instructively with “Eu não sou ninguém” (Augusto de Campos 92-93). Here is an excerpt from the close transcription of the English (emphasis added, “Dont” sic in original):

**I’m Nobody!** Who are you?  
Are you - Nobody - too?

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<sup>5</sup> The reader may protest that the translator into Spanish has little recourse but to use generics where the English uses them, as Spanish norms prefer definite articles; here, however, the choice of possessives goes beyond flattening the effect to undoing it.

Then there's a pair of us!  
Dont tell! they'd advertise - you know!

How dreary - **to be - Somebody!**

(Dickinson, "Franklin #260" 116)

The first line of Dickinson's second quatrain brings into focus that "Nobody"/ "Somebody" parallel. The latter translation mentioned above, De Campos', follows the syntactic norms of the double negative in Portuguese, as obtain in other Romance languages. The short-circuiting lies in that "Nobody" is employed in English like a *proper name*, much like Ulysses introduces himself to Polyphemus as "Nobody" (chapter 9 in the *Odyssey*), perhaps triggering what Riffaterre (1978) calls an *agrammaticality*, an anomalous grammatical disruption that signals intertextuality. Editors over the century who have "fixed" Dickinson's "Nobody" as "nobody"—and indeed, standardized her dashes and unorthodox punctuation—have engaged in a similarly naive, disjointed reading. The De Campos translation, by contrast to the first one named above, denies the nihilistic name instead of asserting it. The logic of "Também" then makes little sense, aesthetically or grammatically: "Não sou Ninguém! Quem é você? // Ninguém – Também?" (2008: 92-93)<sup>6</sup> In Spanish, the same incongruity appears in Costa Picazo's translation: "¿Yo no soy Nadie! ¿Quién eres tú? / Eres - Nadie -también?" (Dickinson, "Yo no soy nadie" 87), and a similar divergence in strategy appears in the overall architecture: Ezequiel Zaidenwerg's first line is "No soy nadie. ¿Vos quién sos?", and the corresponding "Someone" washes out completely of the second stanza; Silvina Ocampo organizes her translation around Nobody/Somebody: "¿Soy nadie! ¿Quién eres? ¿Eres — nadie — también?" // "¿Qué horrible — ser — alguien!" (Dickinson, "Nº. 288" 68).<sup>7</sup> Some translators are shown in this case to be

<sup>6</sup> More convincing is Jorge de Sena's rendition of the two opening lines (*I'm Nobody! Who are you? // Are you – Nobody – Too?*): "Não sou Ninguém! Quem és tu? // Também – tu não és – Ninguém?" (Dickinson, "Não sou ninguém"). "Também...não" is at least coherent with the first line, despite the latter's double negative construction.

<sup>7</sup> The *Poemas selectos* (José Manuel Arango, trans., poema 288, 40) rendition is similar in construction but strikes a more demanding tone: "Soy nadie. Tú quién eres? / ¿Eres tú también nadie?"



conceding to the periphrastic impulse that defaults to the normative double negative construction, to the detriment of the gestalt at work in the poem. *What the language prefers* and *what the poem requires* constitute a tension surrounding linguistic deviation. Walter Benjamin, following the ideas of Rudolf Pannwitz (Benjamin 81), declares: “The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue...”. Benjamin is speaking of natural language, but he also might have warned against the translator’s failure to be “powerfully affected” by *style*. Or to conceive of the idea in another way, forces of foreignness hide within one’s own language.

### 2.3 Semantic fields

Note the semantic fields signaled in bold in the following excerpt:

Nocturno de San Ildefonso (excerpt)

Octavio Paz

**Signos-semillas:**

la noche los **dispara**,

suben,

**estallan** allá arriba,

se precipitan,

ya **quemados**,

en un cono de sombra,

reaparecen,

**lumbres** divagantes,

**racimos** de sílabas,

incendios giratorios,

**se dispersan**,

otra vez **añicos**.

(66-67)

The lexical set of the semantic fields here are *signification*, *seeds*, and *fireworks*. The *absent object* is the fireworks, which “appear” in the field markers *dispara*, *estallan*, *quemados*, *lumbres*. The sign-seeds scatter (*se dispersan*) once they are set off and burst, shattering into pieces. COMMUNICATING IS SOWING is the activated conceptual metaphor (by extension, communication spreads, scatters, bursts or breaks down). We can isolate a case of *lexical foregrounding* achieved in “*racimos de sílabas*”, which combines two fields in a single overlapping isotopy of the ancient topos of *nature as book*: biology (nature) and language (culture). This is one key to the passage's cohesion, and exemplifies Leech's notion (“This bread I break” 122) that *metaphor is manifested in unpredictable collocations*. Weinberger's Paz (103) uses “rambling sparks” for the image “*lumbres divagantes*”. As the gerund, “rambling” coordinates with material things and discourse both; “sparks” for *lumbres* anticipates their imminent dispersal and fragmentation.

We might think of the interaction of abstract and concrete nouns as a form of collocation. Poetry, as part of its capacity to renew perceptible relationships, allows abstractions to act on concrete nouns or on other abstractions<sup>8</sup>, such as this passage in Eliot:

And through the spaces of the dark

**Midnight shakes the memory**

As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

(T.S. Eliot, “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” 27)

More than a mere personification is at work here: an abstract entity, midnight, acts via a concrete verb on an abstract object; the force of the imagery lies perhaps in the parallel appearing in the following line, a visual image to overlay the virtual one: the narrator's simple algebra compares the

<sup>8</sup> An example of the latter: “What words / Can strangle this deaf moonlight?” (“Voyages V”, Hart Crane, 38; see also Levin).

poetic schema, midnight's actions, to those of a concrete entity, a madman performing a concrete—if absurd—act. While it is true that different languages have different thresholds for abstraction, and preferences for concretion, it does not follow that a translator can declare “Midnight cannot ‘shake the memory’ in my language”, as it cannot in English either, at least not strictly as propositional content. Compare how one translation accentuates the merely attributive deadness of the geranium through a transposition to a noun, foregrounding the noun—rather than, or in addition to, the verb, through a highly marked collocation:

y, a través de los dominios de lo oscuro,  
la medianoche agita la memoria  
como agita un demente **el cadáver de un geranio**.  
(Eliot, “Rhapsodia”, trans. Benítez Reyes 295)

Translation solutions in this mold serve as reminders that translators *familiarize* and *defamiliarize* in translation, and manipulate the degree of these effects as they occur in the source. Translators can also familiarize and defamiliarize across translations, or rather, with an eye to translational intertextuality. A notable example occurs in chapter 22 of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, wherein Friday receives his name, after the day the narrator saved his life. In one Spanish translation, the obvious “Viernes” is rebaptized “Domingo” in one peninsular translation (carried out via the French translation). Crusoe explains: “por ser este día de la semana en que lo libré de los salvajes” (Defoe, *Aventuras*, trans. D. José Alegret de Mesa 202), though the English only gives the reason as his life was saved that day. This intervention even prompts an editorial note (ibid.) admitting that the English name corresponds to Friday but sheepishly avoiding the rationale. It is easy to speculate that the translator, an abbot, wished to heighten the contrast of a holy day—Sunday—with the “savages” from which the man was apparently freed.

## 2.4 Constructed languages

Wordplay and syntactic violations can play a role in making strange, though there are unsubtle creations that are no less than what Malamatidou calls Anthony Burgess' Nadsat: a *radical defamiliarization* (293). Nadsat, of course, is a constructed language in *A Clockwork Orange*, made of Russian and English natural language components. The violence done to language in this way both reflects and "allows readers to distance themselves from the violence described in the book, [as the] Nadsat words [...] are void of emotional connotations" (ibid. 294). Malamatidou studies how foreign and native elements in translators' hands are used to effect a creative new linguistic system (ibid.).

## 2.5 Dialectical deviation (visual dialect)

Language need not be artificial to be made strange. Notice the child's spoken dialect rendered on the page:

Uh, qué lino

– ¿Mo me quelé?

– Chi.

– A mer...¿cuánto?

– Muto.

– ¿"Muto" o "muto muto"?

– Mtísimo...¡Achí!

– Uh, qué lino.

– ¿Y mó? ¿Me quelé?

– ¡Uh! Maquel chol.

– ¿El chol nomá?

– El chol, la luna, lasteyas, la tiela...toro. Toro, toro, toro. Achí, má que toro nel nivercho.

(Luis María Pescetti n.p.)

The effect here is the use of verisimilar orthographics that perform a double estrangement: The text invites the realization that conventional spelling is what in fact deforms phonetic realism, not experimental spelling as is used here. That is, the artifice of spelling correctness effaces difference, and deviational spelling in fact is the sharper tool for characterizing and humanizing speech representations on the page. The violation of the norm, we can say, casts a shadow over the norm until we become aware of it as if for the first time, whereupon suddenly it seems insufficient to the purpose of distinguishing non-standard voices.

## 2.6 Pattern poetry (visual poems, concrete poems)

Weinberger writes “Metaphor makes the familiar strange; translation makes the strange familiar” (23). A good aphorism, but does it hold up to scrutiny when we consider translations that keep the strange *strange*?<sup>9</sup> Or more nuanced: Translation may make the strange language familiar, but it does not necessarily “domesticate” style or markedness. Consider Augusto de Campos’ intersemiotic translation of Blake’s “The Tyger” (Fig. 1), which features Sufi artwork of a lion composed of characters, and borrows the idiosyncratic archaic spelling of “tiger” into Portuguese:

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<sup>9</sup> Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz (27), for instance, argues that translating Surrealist poetics requires “unmimetic turns” to recreate the illogic of the source text.

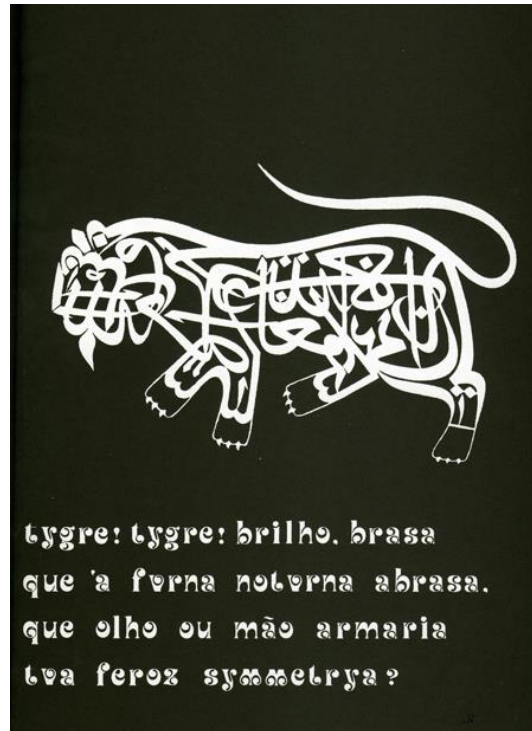


Fig. 1 Augusto de Campo's 'o tygre', a 'transtextualization' of William Blake

In the Portuguese, which the translator published *en face* with the English accompanied by a mirror image of the illustration, the spelling is even more highly figured. "*symmetrya*", the word ending the stanza, and "*tygre*" show instances of orthographic, cross-linguistic intertextuality. "Symmetry" is unmarked in the English, but is foregrounded in de Campos' "multi-languaging" translation, which he supplements by referencing Blake's stylistic signature. De Campos characterized his translation work as *intraduções*

(“playing with the meanings of ‘in’ and ‘intra’ to underline these artistic intrusions into works by others” [translation by and cited in Jackson 148]).<sup>10</sup>

Whole-work structures may be less visible. Rodríguez Pazos, following Nänny, performs a perceptive analysis of Hemingway’s prose that shows barely perceptible “chiasmus”, an inverted parallel, a reversal of elements forming lexical or semantic symmetries, and how various translators respected or altered the scheme in Spanish translation. He argues that these are complex architectural elements beneath the apparent stylistic simplicity, and provides a breakdown of a representative passage:

The fiesta was really started. It kept up day and night for seven days. The dancing kept up, the drinking kept up, the noise went on. The things that happened could only have happened during a fiesta. Everything became quite unreal finally and it seemed as though nothing could have any consequences. It seemed out of place to think of consequences during the fiesta. All during the fiesta you had the feeling, even when it was quiet, that you had to shout any remark to make it heard. It was the same feeling about any action. It was a fiesta and it went on for seven days. (*The Sun Also Rises* 142)

1 The **fiesta** was really started. It kept up day and night **for seven days**.

2 The *dancing* kept up, the *drinking* kept up,

3 the *noise* went on.

4 The things that happened could only have happened **during a fiesta**.

5 Everything became quite unreal finally and it **seemed** as though *nothing could have any consequences*.

5 It **seemed out of place** to think of **consequences**

4 **during the fiesta**. All **during the fiesta** you had the feeling, even when it was quiet,

3 that you had to *shout* any remark to make it heard.

2 It was the same feeling about *any action*.

1 It was a **fiesta** and it went on **for seven days**.

<sup>10</sup> The original Portuguese: “(jogando com os significados de ‘in’ e ‘intra’) para destacar essas intromissões artísticas em obra alheia” (p. 8 in original interview; Jackson 148).

(Rodríguez Pazos 131)

Only one of four Spanish translations surveyed recreates the chiasmus structure, the others simplifying instead (132-133); the critic attributes the oversight, or non-execution, to “a mismatch between the sensitivity or design awareness of the source text writer and the sensitivity of the translator” (ibid. 132). Hemingway's work famously enacts lexical defamiliarization as well in works such as “A Clean, Well-lighted Place”. The text uses English as if it were Spanish: “It was all **a nothing** and a man was nothing too” (383). Secondly, it engages in code-mixing: “Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was **nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada**,” descending into desacralizing parody: “Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name...” (ibid.). The effect is estranging, to be sure, emptying out signification into a hopeless cipher, nada.

e.e. Cummings’ poem “l(a” acquires temporal and spatial dimensions by introducing a falling leaf into “loneliness”:

l(a  
  
le  
af  
fa  
ll  
  
s)  
one  
l  
  
iness

The poem troubles linear reading habits by splitting words, as Cummings had experimented with other means of illegibility in such works as his famous grasshopper poem, “*r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r*”, with its scrambled spellings. “l(a” underscores the motif of solitariness by visually exploiting the similarity between the letter ‘l’ and the numeral ‘1’, “oneness” graphically and



conceptually inhabiting “loneliness”.<sup>11</sup> Unreadability, or the slow reading imposed on the reader through visual, syntactic, or conceptual means, forms part of the defamiliarizing arsenal. The text would undergo further estrangement through new media incarnations, such as in the form of interactive poetry in a digital environment.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.7 Anaphora

Ben-Ari observes something consistent with our own sense of translators’ standardizing or conventionalizing treatment of repetitions, namely that the “old-fashioned norms still have the upper hand in translated [texts],” and thus repetitions are often omitted or paraphrased (3). Weinberger’s handling of Vicente Huidobro’s avant-garde poem *Altazor* is a creative exception; first, consider the Spanish:

Viene gondoleando la golondrina

Al horitaña de la montazonte  
La violondrina y el goloncelo  
Descolgada esta mañana de la lunala  
Se acerca a todo galope

Ya viene viene la golondrina  
Ya viene viene la golonfina  
Ya viene la golontrina  
Ya viene la goloncima  
Viene la golonchína

Viene la golonclima  
Ya viene la golonrma  
Ya viene la golonrma  
La golonniña  
La golongira

La golonlira  
La golonbrisa

<sup>11</sup> Gómez analyzes Augusto De Campo’s Portuguese ‘untranslation’, which makes use of musical intertexts; Gómez Jiménez (152-152) considers the versions into Spanish.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Clifford (n.d.).

La golonchilla  
Ya viene la golondía  
Y la noche encoge sus uñas como el leopardo

(*Altazor* 60-61)

The pattern recognition required by the translator includes noticing:

- \* inversion of morphemes in first two lines
- \* repetition ('*Ya viene*' constructions; lexemes beginning *golon-*)  
with variations
- \* portmanteau ('*lunala*')
- \* anaphora

Now compare Weinberger's work on this passage (Huidobro, *Altazor*, or *A Voyage* 89):

At the horslope of the hillizon  
The violinswallow with a cellotail  
Slipped down this morning from a lunawing  
And hurries near  
Look here swoops the swooping swallow  
Here swoops the whooping wallow  
Here swoops the weeping wellow  
Look here swoops the sweeping shrillow  
Swoops the sheeping woolow  
Swoops the slooping swellow  
Look here swoops the sloping spillow  
The scooping spellow  
The seeping swillow  
The sleeping shellow  
Look here swoops the swooping day

And the night retracts its claws like a leopard

*Altazor* shows here the goal of autonomous language, the “deliberate rupture with any ‘practical’ function” of language (Genette 238), that is, the relative independence of the sign’s referential function *vis-à-vis* the object. The work simulates speed, and the blurring of identity boundaries, in such passages. Weinberger even blurs linguistic boundaries with nouns such as “lunawing”.

## 2.8 Ambiguity

Julio Cortázar’s “Instrucciones para subir una escalera” comically relies on an ambiguity, another kind of lacuna caused by not naming and by the deliberate flouting of the reader’s need for cohesive ties. The left and right feet in this parody of the instruction manual are both called “*el pie*”:

Para subir una escalera se comienza por levantar esa parte del cuerpo situada a la derecha abajo, envuelta casi siempre en cuero o gamuza, y que salvo excepciones cabe exactamente en el escalón. Puesta en el primer peldaño dicha parte, que para abreviar **llamaremos pie**, se recoge la parte equivalente de la izquierda (**también llamada pie, pero que no ha de confundirse con el pie antes citado**), y llevándola a la altura del pie, se le hace seguir hasta colocarla en el segundo peldaño, con lo cual en éste descansará el pie, y en el primero descansará el pie. [...] Cuidese especialmente de no levantar al mismo tiempo **el pie y el pie**. (Cortázar, “Instrucciones” 21-22)

The author uses the interdiscursive model of the style of the user manual to defamiliarize an everyday act. The manual as a genre eschews ambiguities, but here it exploits them, making going up stairs a logistical marvel. It would seem obvious that, like Joseph K. calling his two identical assistants by the same name in Kafka’s *The Castle*, a translator calling the feet by two different names in translation would miss the joke. And yet in Paul Blackburn’s *Cronopios* we read in the relevant passage two different means of distinguishing the deliberately identical terms from the source:

Said part set down on the first step (to abbreviate **we shall call it “the foot”**), one draws up the equivalent part on the left side (**also called “foot” but not to be confused with “the foot” cited above**), and lifting this other part to the level of “the foot,” makes it continue along until it is set in place on the second step, at which point the foot will rest, and “the foot” will rest on the first. [...] Be especially careful not to raise, at the same time, **the foot and “the foot”**. (Cortázar, “Instructions” 22)

In other words, Blackburn—using the definite article, and quotation marks—distinguishes them *so they are not confused*; he has translated the work as a manual, not as a literary parody of a manual.

## 2.9 Neologism/Lexical deviation

A translator can no more justifiably familiarize “Hats not unbleached and not hats” (Faulkner, 91) than the foreign speech of the Houyhnhnms (Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, chapters 3 and 4). Authors of science fiction, satire and other genres showing civilizations in contact commonly present instances of pseudotranslation. As the highly rational equine creatures had no word for lower human impulses such as lying, and they did not believe there was a land beyond the sea, they called Gulliver’s claim “*the thing which was not*”. Translators into Spanish have dealt with this as “la cosa que no es” (e.g. Torres Oliver translation, 2018), carefully avoiding the addition of “cierta”. Shklovsky claims that there are many means to accomplish the “removal of this object [of art] from the sphere of automatized perception” (“Art as Device” 6) including *not calling things by their names*, or calling them by corresponding names for other things. Perhaps it is in the idea of *negative space*, the constructive potential of the absence of things, that we can best embrace the presence-in-absence. For the translator, to explicitate is to name something that deliberately or artistically is nameless. Mallarmé argues instead—and writers and translators alike may take heed—in favor of suggesting, “evoking an object by degrees to reveal a state of mind” (“*évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d’âme*”, 235). Berman agrees: “[I]n a negative sense, explicitation aims to render ‘clear’ what does not wish to be clear in the original” (289).

Collocations can reference unsuspected formulas, as in these lines by Federico García Lorca:

Hay una juventud de brisas locas  
sobre el río  
(García Lorca, “Hora de estrellas (1920)” 16)

English translations must negotiate the abstract noun “*juventud*” used as a collective noun (in the mold of an unkindness of ravens, a mob of deer, a stud of horses, a shrewdness of apes, etc.). Brown’s translation reconfigures the adjective modifying the particular to the general (*locas*>collective noun) and recategorizes the collective noun into an adjective modifying the particular (*juventud*>young):

A wild crowd of young breezes  
over the river.  
(trans. Brown, 17)

What is normalized is the collective category of the “*juventud*” through a supplement, “crowd”. In some ways a supplement is the antipoetical feature *par excellence* in that it reinstates the “missing” term: collectivity is activated in the formula “an x of y”. But the image of a “juvenescence of” breezes, for example, is a wholly different proposition from a “crowd”; usually the poetry lies in the more elusive formulation of the idea.

## 2.10 Puns

One translator offers an incongruous renunciation in the face of the nonsense verse and wordplay of *Alice in Wonderland*:

En esta versión de Alicia se han suprimido aquellos párrafos que por estar basados

en juegos de palabras perdían todo sentido de la traducción u obligaban a buscar

equivalencias siempre falsas. Se han suprimido igualmente todos los poemas, parodia de otros enormemente famosos en la Inglaterra de Carrol, que pierden su

gracia para el lector que no conoce aquellos.

(*Alicia en el país de las maravillas*, 1973/1980, qtd. in González-Davies 53)

Carroll's *Alice* offers an example of Shklovsky's contention that form is renewed in art through replacement of existing forms: a "work of art is perceived against a background of, and by means of association with, other works of art....[...], a parallel and a contradiction to some kind of model" ("On the Connection" 53). Parody is another obvious example. Carroll praised the German translator of *Alice* not only for the adroit wordplay in handling puns but also for his cultural substitutions of English poetry with German ones (Fet and Everson 55). The defamiliarization occurs *relative to the ground* of known texts. López Guix notes that this is a shifting ground, as the poems that were parodied have fallen into obscurity, and Carroll's parodies have become well-known (López Guix 101; see also Orero, 2007).

### 3. Conclusion

The executive competence of noticing, strategizing, and recreating stylistic patterns found in texts, often with other means, includes deviations and repetitions.<sup>13</sup> Roger Scruton writes that style "must be perceivable: there is no such thing as hidden style" (91), but that style reveals itself "by virtue of our comparative perceptions: it involves a standing out from norms that must also be subliminally present in our perception if the stylistic idioms and departures are to be noticed" (ibid.). Translation itself ideally dehabituates reading and writing, making of it a deliberate, aesthetic activity, that is, inevitably, a pattern-spotting and pattern-solving act. Perhaps defamiliarization sounds an

<sup>13</sup> Of course, one kind of defamiliarization is conceptual; consider Stephen Crane's poem, "Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind." "War is kind" can only be a provocation, or a resemanticizing of "kind".

instructive note for the translator to learn to identify in texts what is strange and what is ground—more reason to argue for L2 mastery in translation, as one needs to recognize not only the meaning of words, but *how* they mean, and how they mean goes hand in hand with how they disrupt norms. Without this deviational subcompetence, we are merely translating information. For translations-as-machines to run, translators need procedural competence with foregrounding as the very combustion of literary strangeness.

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to demonstrate how literary works are marked by linguistic deviation and phonetic, grammatical, and semantic foregrounding. The works of Shklovsky, Leech, Van Peer and others will be used to show how stylistic effects are created, analyzed, and translated. Often lost in the conversation about the domesticizing/ resistant translation axes is the aesthetic dimension of patterns, the 'motivated prominence' (Halliday, 1971) of literary language. Accordingly, norms and violations, defamiliarization, figure and ground, are surveyed. Examples will be drawn from literary works and translations into and out of Spanish, Portuguese and English.



**Keywords:** Defamiliarization; Deviation; Foregrounding; Figure and ground; Cognitive poetics

### Resumo

Este artigo procura demonstrar como as obras literárias são marcadas pelo desvio linguístico e pelo *foregrounding* (o colocar em primeiro plano) fonético, gramatical e semântico. As obras de Shklovsky, Leech, Van Peer e outros serão usadas para mostrar como os efeitos estilísticos são criados, analisados e traduzidos. Frequentemente na conversa sobre os eixos da tradução domesticadora/resistente, a dimensão estética dos padrões, a “proeminência motivada” (Halliday, 1971) da linguagem literária, fica perdida. Nesse sentido, normas e violações, defamiliarização, figura e fundo, são pesquisados. Extraem-se exemplos de obras literárias e traduções entre o espanhol, o português e o inglês.

**Palavras-chave:** defamiliarização; desvio; primeiro plano; figura e fundo; poética cognitiva