

# FROM TORRES BERMEJAS TO THE CRIMSON TOWERS: CHALLENGES ARISING AND CHOICES MADE IN TRANSLATING ARCHITECTURAL TEXTS IN SPANISH INTO ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** On translating into English three articles in Spanish by the architect Francisco Javier Gallego Roca (2012; 2014a; 2014b) we faced many challenges in order to render these texts on the architectural conservation of some of Granada's most emblematic edifices comprehensible, informative and thorough. When translating terms relating to the unique buildings, architectural features and construction materials Gallego Roca describes, we were often obliged to choose between "domesticating" or "foreignizing" (Venuti, 1995; 2008) our terminology for the sake of clarity and efficiency. In this article we give an overview of the original Spanish texts and their respective translations into English, providing examples of the complexities we faced and outlining how we made choices between domesticating and foreignizing many terms we used.

We are grateful to Dr. Javier Gallego Roca for giving us permission to quote from his texts and their translations.

**Keywords:** Torres Bermejas; Cultura Española; Hospital Real; Granada; Spanish-English translation; domestication; foreignization

**Resumen:** Al traducir de español a inglés tres artículos escritos por el arquitecto Francisco Javier Gallego Roca (2012; 2014a; 2014b), afrontamos muchos desafíos para hacer comprensibles e informativos estos textos sobre la conservación arquitectónica de uno de los edificios más emblemáticos de Granada. En la traducción de términos relacionados con la construcción, las características arquitectónicas y los materiales únicos descritos por Gallego Roca, a menudo nos vimos obligadas a optar por "domesticar" o "extranjerizar" (Venuti, 1995; 2008) nuestra terminología en aras de la claridad y la eficacia. En este artículo, ofrecemos una breve descripción de los artículos originales en español y de sus respectivas traducciones al inglés, y damos ejemplos de los términos "domesticados" y "extranjerizados" que utilizamos. Agradecemos al Doctor Javier Gallego Roca su permiso para citar sus artículos y nuestras traducciones de las mismas.

**Palabras clave:** Torres Bermejas; Cultura Española; Hospital Real; Granada; traducción español-inglés; domesticación; extranjerización

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## Introduction

In our recent translations into English of the Spanish articles by Francisco Javier Gallego Roca, *Torres Bermejas: Conservar el pasado* (2012), and *La cultura española y la tutela de los centros históricos: 40 años desde la carta de Amsterdam (1975) a hoy* (2014), as well as his abstract *La investigación arquitectónica, el Plan Director del Hospital Real de Granada (España) y el análisis de techos, armaduras y alfarjes para su conservación* (2014), we faced many challenges in order to render these texts on the architectural conservation of some of Granada's most emblematic edifices comprehensible, informative and thorough. When translating terms relating to the unique buildings, architectural features and construction materials Gallego Roca describes, we were often obliged to choose between "domesticating" or "foreignizing" (Venuti, 1995; 2008) our English terminology for the sake of clarity and efficiency. In this paper we give an overview of the Spanish texts and give examples of some of the domesticated and foreignized terms we used in their respective translations into English.

## Review of the literature

Translation is not merely the "carrying across", as the Latin origin of the word suggests, of meaning from a source language to a target language, as defined in the Oxford Dictionary ([www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)). Shamma (2005: 66) defines translation as "the outcome of a complexity of circumstances that comprise the intervention of the translator and the choices he or she makes in the large context of reception and the relation of the translated texts in its natural environment." Newmark (1988:5) defines translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that author intended the text.". Here we have two definitions which each highlight an opposing view. Mariam (2014: 25) states that "Shamma highlights the translator's vision and his/her own appreciation of the text, while Newmark limits the translator's role to faithfully following the vision of the author of the source text."

In the 19th century it was Schleiermacher who first discussed the problems of discrepancies between the language of the text to be translated and the translator's, or the target, language, concluding that the only acceptable approach is to bring the reader towards the linguistic-conceptual world of the source language. However, it was Venuti (1995; 2008: 240) who coined the terms "foreignization" and "domestication" as two translation strategies, indicating that

translation strategies “involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it.” In foreignization, the translator is concerned with loyalty to the source language text and attempts to be as faithful as possible to that text. This implies using literal translation or transliteration. The translator does not take into consideration whether the cultural aspects are clear to the target reader or not. In domestication, however, the opposite occurs and the translator’s concerns are centred on the target language and its meaning to the audience, thus employing strategies, such as normalisation or universalisation which enable the target readers to fully comprehend all aspects of the text.

Pym (2010: 46) defines the concept of “Skopos” theory, a Greek word meaning purpose, aim, intention, objective or goal, as “a set of propositions based on the idea that the target Skopos or purpose has priority in the translator’s decisions”. Kussmaul (1995) states, “The function of a translation depends on the knowledge, expectations, values and norms of the target readers, who are again influenced by the situation they are in and by the culture. These factors determine whether the function of the source text or passages in the source text can be preserved or have to be modified or even changed. The main rule for any translation is thus the ‘Skopos rule’, which says a translational action is determined by the skopos; that is, ‘the end justifies the means’ (Reiss; Vermeer, 1984: 101).

Newmark (1988a: 81) describes the difference as he sees it between translation methods and translation procedures. He writes that “while translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language”. He proposes the following are different translation procedures (Newmark, 1988b):

- *Transference*: it is the process of transferring an SL [source language] word to a TL [target language] text. It includes transliteration and is the same as what Harvey (2000) named “transcription” (5).
- *Naturalization*: it adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL (82).
- *Cultural equivalent*: it means replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one. however, “they are not accurate” (83).
- *Functional equivalent*: it requires the use of a culture-neutral word (p. 83).
- *Descriptive equivalent*: in this procedure the meaning of the CBT [culture bound term] is explained in several words. (83).

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- *Componential analysis*: this means “comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components” (14).
- *Synonymy*: it is a “near TL equivalent” (84). Here economy trumps accuracy.
- *Through-translation*: this is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds. It can also be called: calque or loan translation (84).
- *Shifts or transpositions*: this involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL, for instance, (i) change from singular to plural, (ii) the change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL, (iii) change of an SL verb to a TL word, change of an SL noun group to a TL noun and so forth (86).
- *Modulation*: it occurs when the translator reproduces the message of the original text in the TL text in conformity with the current norms of the TL, since the SL and the TL may appear dissimilar in terms of perspective (88).
- *Recognized translation*: it occurs when the translator “normally uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term” (89).
- *Compensation*: it occurs when loss of meaning in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part (90).
- *Paraphrase*: in this procedure the meaning of the CBT is explained. Here the explanation is much more detailed than that of *descriptive equivalent* (91).
- *Couplets*: this occurs when the translator combines two different procedures (91).
- *Notes*: these are additional information in a translation (91).

Notes can appear in the form of footnotes although some theorists consider this to be intrusive. However, Nida (1964: 237-239) states that footnotes can be functional in providing supplementary information as well as highlighting to the reader the discrepancies in the source and target text. Newmark (1991: 10-12) emphasizes the coexistence of “semantic” and “communicative” translation. All translations can be “more, or less semantic — more, or less, communicative — even a particular section or sentence can be treated more communicatively or less semantically”.

### *Domestication and foreignization in translating architectural terminology*

In translations and in original texts on historical architecture there are numerous instances in which the translator and/or the author sees the need to domesticate or foreignize his or her terminology (Venuti, 1995; 2008). On occasion, however, the translator inserts foreign terms into his or her text without any explanation to the reader of their meaning.

#### *Domestication*

This technique is the one which perhaps makes for most ease of comprehension in the target readership. For this reason, it is often seen in non-specialist publications and in printed tourist information. Even so, it is also quite a common resource used in specialist literature. For example, in a bilingual Spanish-English architectural guide on Granada (Martín Martín; Torices Abarca, 1998; translators: Keane; Kornegay: 272-273), the authors describe the original sixteenth century facilities for patients in the *Hospital Real*, referring to a “galería” for convalescents (“*En dos de los flancos se abre una galería de convalecientes, estructurada por una loggia angular abierta...*”). The translators of the guide could easily have opted for the unproblematic translation of “galería” as “gallery,” but opted for a more ‘domestic’ term (“wards”), which for English-speaking readers blends in seamlessly with the hospital setting (“On two sides there are wards for convalescents built like open rectangular loggia”). This change from singular to plural is an example of a “shift” or “transposition,” as suggested by Newmark (1988b: 86).

#### *Foreignization*

This strategy, which leaves foreign words in their original form in the translated text or in the original target-language article, is particularly useful in specialized literature where no direct translation exists (because the object or concept does not exist in the target language), or where a literal translation might have unwanted connotations.

In a book (Irwin, 2004) which examines the layout of the Alhambra in Granada, its historical and political setting, as well as the philosophy and mathematics behind its construction, the author frequently resorts to foreignization. For example, when introducing the *codó* measurement, he first briefly defines it and supplies the

etymology of the word. From then on, he inserts *codo* naturally into the English text, in italics:

... Antonio Fernández-Puertas [,] has argued that the men who built the two main palaces of the Alhambra 'combined an incommensurable proportional system with the use of fixed Hispano Muslim units, called *codos*, based on the Roman *pedes*' or foot. He refers to the Arab unit as the Rashashid *codo*. [...] The reason for thinking that the *codo* was the relevant unit is that this is the unit employed in a seventeenth-century *Mudéjar* manual on carpentry, *Primera y segunda parte de las reglas de la carpintería*, by a certain López de Arenas. *Mudéjar* is the word used to refer to a Spaniard of Moorish descent, especially one who remained in Spain after 1492. The *codo* was certainly the unit of measurement employed in the eleventh-century Great Mosque of Cordoba... (Irwin, 2004: 109-110).

Similarly, several examples of foreignization may be observed in an article in English (Sarrazola Martins; Sousa Gago; Caldas, 2012) on wooden roof and ceiling structures in Portuguese churches. For instance, the authors include the Portuguese word “*Laço*” in an explanation in parenthesis of Islamic geometric decoration: “Regarding the use of the Islamic geometric decoration (known as *laço* in Portuguese and Spanish carpentry) integrated into the roofing structure ...” (The authors do not use italics to highlight the Portuguese word) In subsequent sentences, the word “*laço*” appears several times without further definition and without italics to indicate its Portuguese origin: “[Matauco] also considers the *laço* as a unique feature of the roofing Spanish carpentry [*sic*]...”. After several pages, however, the authors remind the reader of the meaning of “*laço*” (a “compensation” strategy, as suggested by Newmark, 1988b: 90): “From its simplest form, which consists of using small pieces with Islamic decoration (*laço*) connecting pairs of tie-beams, to the most complex, were [*sic*] all structure is decorated by Islamic motifs, there are examples that cover all varieties” (Sarrazola Martins *et al.*, 2012).

The same authors introduce Spanish terms into their text (for example, *cinta* and *saetina*), recognising that no Portuguese terms exist for the architectural elements they describe, and in the first instance, aiding the reader with a definition, but again, omitting italics:

In this church the structural elements of the roof also have a particular type of decoration: the *cinta y saetino* (This is the Spanish nomenclature, because till the moment, no Portuguese name was found for this elements) decoration. This decorative and structural system consisted on [applying perpendicular wood boards over the

rafters (the cintas), to stabilize the structure, and after that put small wood boards (saetinos) connecting the cintas, to fill the gap over the rafters [...] The use of cinta y saetino was also used in rafter structures, having besides the decorative function a structural purpose, improving the longitudinal stability of the structure. (Sarrazola Martins *et al*, 2012).

Occasionally authors go so far as to introduce foreign words into their texts (in italics, to show that they are indeed foreign), but give no definition. This facilitates the task of the translator, who will in all probability leave the foreign word alone, just as the author did. (See above citation from Martín Martín and Torices Abarca, 1998: 272-273), which includes the Italian architectural term *loggia*: "...destrutturada por una *loggia* angular abierta"). Following the authors' example, the translators (Keane & Kornegay) did not touch the Italian term ("... built like open rectangular *loggia*"). However, this strategy may give rise to grammatical errors, as in this case. The translators opted for a plural construction, yet used *loggia* in the singular. It should have been *loggias* or *loggie* (Word Reference Online Language Dictionaries).

*The insertion of foreign words into text without translation or explanation*

Even though, as we have seen, the translating resource of domesticating or foreignizing terms is widely employed in order to render technical terms more comprehensible, occasionally neither of these techniques is used. In a Spanish book (Gallego; Burín, 1992) about Granada for non-specialist readers, surprisingly the translator left untouched some architectural terms in the Spanish, without any indication, such as italics, that they were indeed Spanish words, and without the help of a context to aid in understanding. In a section on the *Hospital Real*, the original Spanish text reads "... alzándose en el crucero un cimborrio, adornado de pirámides y antepechos ojivales" (Gallego; Burín, 1992: 310), and the translation by Taylor incorporates the word "ojival", as if it were an English term ("... above the crossing there is a dome adorned with finials and balusters in the ojival style," Gallego; Burín, 1992: 365) The Collins online dictionary gives the translation of the Spanish noun "*ojiva*" as "pointed arch", or "ogive", but the adjective "*ojival*" does not appear.

## Domestication and foreignization in our translations of three of Francisco Javier Gallego Roca's texts on architectural conservation

1) *Torres Bermejas: Conservar el pasado* (Gallego Roca, 2012), translated as "The Crimson Towers: Conserving the Past" (Stephenson; Stephenson, 2012).

This article, written by Gallego Roca in 2012, is about *Torres Bermejas* (the Crimson Towers), and was published both in the proceedings of a conference (First International Conference on Rammed Earth Conservation, Restapa 2012, Valencia) and in a book (Mileto; Vegas López-Manzanares; Cristini, Eds., 2012) aimed at specialist readers. *Torres Bermejas* is one of the less well-known edifices of the Alhambra in Granada, Spain, dating from the end of the VIII century (Gallego Roca, 2012: 31-33). The author describes the Towers before and after the conquest by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492, and identifies techniques and materials employed in their construction, including "walls of limestone mortar" and "mixed masonry of stone slabs and bricks." The study examines additions, adaptations and restorations to the Towers, and outlines the many uses to which they have been put over the centuries, for example, as a prison or a military barracks. After making a "Pathological Analysis" (Gallego Roca, 2012: 36-38) of the Towers complex, in 2007 Gallego Roca's research team carried out an "Archeological Study", and in 2009 they reached a "Scientific Diagnosis" as a basis for interventions on the monument.

In translating the name of the edifice, we used a straightforward 'domesticated' term (the Crimson Towers) and throughout the text we varied our expressions: the Crimson Towers or simply the Towers, or indeed the Spanish name *Torres Bermejas* or *Bermejas* in italics, for example, "...the eastern and northern sides of the main *Bermejas* tower" (Gallego Roca, 2012: 33).

As regards the Towers' setting as part of the fortified city of Granada, in the first place we used the Spanish word *alcazaba* in italics followed by its English translation in brackets, and from then on we left the word in its original, 'foreign' form. So we translated "...*realmente no conocemos su funcionamiento ni su relación con el resto de la Alcazaba*" as "...we really do not know its function or its relation to the rest of the *Alcazaba* (citadel)" (Gallego Roca, 2012: 33). Then we deemed that only the 'foreign' form was necessary: "*En el siglo XI se fortalecieron y se unieron [los restos más antiguos] a la*



*Alcazaba mediante una muralla*" we rendered as "In the XI century these remains were strengthened and joined to the *Alcazaba* by means of a city wall" (Gallego Roca, 2012: 33).

We employed a similar 'foreignizing' strategy with the names of certain building materials and techniques. Even though the readers for whom the article was intended may have been familiar with the specialized architectural terminology contained in the article, in most cases we first gave a short explanation in English of the very specific Spanish expression, and afterwards we left only the original Spanish term, in italics. For example, "*tapial*" is a crucial word in this article and refers to the Crimson Towers' walls. We felt that it was not enough merely to explain that a *tapial* is made of "rammed earth" (which happened to be the theme of the Conference where this paper was presented), and so the first time it appeared we offered quite a detailed explanation of its composition ("multi-layered walls rammed with earth and pebbles" (Gallego Roca, 2012: 33); this is a "descriptive equivalent," as suggested by Newmark (1988b: 83). From then on we used only the Spanish 'foreignized' term ("We believe that [another tower] was also constructed of *tapial* walls, although it is difficult to specify more data about its construction" (Gallego Roca, 2012: 343). Similarly, in the heading of section 3 in the Spanish text, the building materials "*cal y canto*" and "*calistrado*" were mentioned by the author without any explanation (3 *Técnicas constructivas del tapial: tapial de cal y canto y tapial calicastro*). In the translation, however, we provided short definitions of *cal y canto* and *calicastro*, and, in the subsequent paragraph, we felt that the Spanish words in italics would be clear enough:

### 3 TAPIAL BUILDING TECHNIQUES: WALLS OF "CAL Y CANTO" (LIME AND PEBBLES) AND "CALISCASTRADO" WALLS (EARTH, LIME AND VEGETABLE FIBERS)

The walls are of two types. The first is a *cal y canto* wall which is whitish in color in which the lines of caissons are separated by rows of bricks (a technique similar to the one used in the city wall which joins the Towers to the Alhambra Citadel). The second is *calicastro* and is reddish in color, in which the openings are made of brick. (Gallego Roca, 2012: 35; translation by Stephenson; Stephenson, 2012).

This use of the foreign word accompanied by an explanation, then subsequent insertion of the foreign word only is a technique we have seen in other authors and translators (Irwin, 2004; Sarrazola Martins *et al.*, 2012) in their descriptions of edifices and building

techniques of the Iberian Peninsula, where no English word existed for these terms.

2) *La Cultura Española y la Tutela de los Centros Históricos: 40 años desde la carta de Amsterdam (1975) a hoy* (Gallego Roca, 2014), translated as “Spanish Culture and the Guardianship of Historical Sites: 40 years after the Charter of Amsterdam (1975)” (Stephenson; Stephenson, 2014a).

Gallego Roca (2014) wrote this article on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the European Architectural Heritage Year (1975), and examined the development of Spain’s historical sites since it became a member of the European Council on 24 November 1977.

The translation of this article involved much less decision-making on our part as regards 'domestication' or 'foreignization,' but at one point we felt it necessary to give short explanations about three specialized architectural terms. Gallego Roca described an exhibition, held in 1975 in the Cristal Palace in Madrid to mark the close of the European Architectural Heritage Year, and displaying almost three hundred panels on some of Spain's most outstanding monuments, from the most ancient to the most modern: “*Se trataba de exponer en menos de trescientos paneles los más importantes monumentos [...], abarcando, eso sí, desde las taulas, navetas y talayots prehistóricos hasta la arquitectura modernista del templo de la Sagrada Familia, de Gaudí...*” On translating the three terms, *taulas*, *navetas*, and *talayots*, we added brief information about their purpose and geographical location (inserting “notes,” as proposed by Newmark, 1988b: 91): “[The monuments] ranged from prehistoric *taulas*, *navetas* (ceremonial monuments typical of Menorca), and *talayots* (shrines typical of Majorca), to the modernistic architecture of Gaudí’s *Sagrada Familia* temple...”.

3) “*La investigación arquitectónica, el Plan Director del Hospital Real de Granada (España) y el análisis de techos, armaduras y alfarjes para su conservación*”, abstract by Francisco Javier Gallego Roca (2014), translated as “Architectural research, the Master Plan for the Royal Hospital (*Hospital Real*) in Granada, Spain, and the analysis of its ceilings, wooden roof frameworks, and *alfarjes* (horizontal beamed ceilings), for its conservation” (Stephenson; Stephenson, 2014b).

This abstract outlines the content of an article on the conservation of the roofs and ceilings of the *Hospital Real* in Granada, stating that there are links between the style of their carpentry and that of other buildings of the Iberian Peninsula constructed over the same historical period. Research on the building has revealed different construction techniques and the uses to which its spaces have been put since its construction. The article describes analyses carried out on the *Hospital Real's* ceilings and roofs and puts forward proposals for intervention within the Master Plan for its conservation.

The translation of the title of the abstract and the captions to the accompanying illustrations contained many terms pertaining to roof and ceiling carpentry which were difficult to locate or non-existent in conventional or online architectural dictionaries. Within the title itself, we offered a short explanation to clarify the word *alfarje* (“horizontal beamed ceiling”), which we paraphrased from an online document in Spanish about *Mudéjar* art, buildings and documents.

Caption 2 posed two main translation problems: *Carpinteros de lo Blanco* and *armaduras de lazo*. We opted to ‘domesticate’ *Carpinteros de los Blanco* completely as “White Carpenters”, and also added a footnote (as described by Newmark, 1988b: 91) supplying more information as to the speciality of these carpenters. We located the term *armaduras de lazo* in an online architectural dictionary and rendered the whole caption (“02\_Página del primer manuscrito de Diego López de Arenas, gracias al cual se puede conocer el método seguido por los Carpinteros de lo Blanco para la realización de las complejas armaduras de lazo”) as “02\_Page from the first manuscript by Diego López de Arenas, which explains the method followed by the “White Carpenters” (*Carpinteros de lo Blanco*) in making complex tie-beam frameworks.” We added a Footnote: “White carpenters” used light-coloured softwood from conifer trees”.

The translation of caption 08 and section DV1 was particularly problematic as they contained a string of very specific architectural terms; “los tirantes dobles de las armaduras apeinazadas de tres paños”, and we domesticated the whole phrase, expressing DV1 thus: “Sagging of horizontal wooden supports placed along the double tie-beams of the rail-assembled, three-panelled wooden beams, present mainly on the second floor”.

## Conclusion

Translating texts on the architectural conservation of historical buildings from Spanish into English is for us a challenging endeavour. We strive to make texts comprehensible for specialists and non-specialists alike, and where no straightforward word-for-word translations are readily available, we face the difficult option of domesticating or foreignizing certain words and phrases, in the hope of rendering the whole text clear, concise, and enjoyable for the reader.

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<sup>1</sup> ***De Torres Bermejas a Crimson Towers: Retos y opciones en la traducción del español al inglés de textos sobre la arquitectura***

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