

## Contagious Magic: Metonymic Shifts in Spanish-English Poetry Translation

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### *Abstract*

Metonymy has slowly begun to get its due in tropological research involving translation, although it lags well behind metaphor. This study starts from the difficult mapping of metonymy across several subtypes, its manifestations as conceptual metonymy, and its imbrications with cognitive poetics and metaphor; leaving aside translating metonymic instances themselves, the work examines the 'metonymic reading' performed in published Spanish-English poetry translations. The overarching goal is to explore how the metonymic characterization of translation processes can help nuance our understanding of related techniques such as modulation, and to recognize, translate, and assess semantic relations more knowledgeably through metonymic thinking.

### *Key Words*

Metonymy, Cognitive Poetics, Cognitive Semantics, Poetry Translation, Modulation.



### *Introduction. "Metonymic Shifts" in Poetry*

Metonymy has been called the "forgotten trope", though it is hiding in plain sight in many operations we perform subconsciously, or what Littlemore (2015) calls "hidden shortcuts". Barcelona, Blanco-Carrión and Pannain tell us language is metonymic, "since it tends to underspecify, i.e., to provide a mere blueprint, not only for intended meaning, but often also form" (2018: 2). Cognitive linguistics broadly agrees that metonymy "is fundamentally conceptual in nature, that it is experientially grounded, and that it involves contiguous elements of some kind", and that they draw on relationships within an Idealised Cognitive

Model, or abstraction representations of situations drawn from life, rather than the juxtaposition of two of them, as in metaphor (Littlemore, 2017: 408-9). Thus: metonymy is “a cognitive process in which one conceptual element or entity (thing, event, property), the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity (thing, event, property), the target, within the same frame, domain or idealized cognitive model (ICM)” (Kövecses, 2006: 99).<sup>1</sup> Metonymy, writes Matzner (2016: 8) “is best understood as a lateral shift within the terminology of one semantic field”.

Charles Denroche has done groundbreaking work on metonymy and its implications for translation. His arguments are premised on the idea that representation and meaning-making are *partial*: “Cognitivists argue that language does not provide information explicitly but merely mental access to it, that concepts are not accessed directly and fully but that language uses a part as a handle to gain access to the whole, discussed variously in terms of viewpoint, construal, perspective, figure-ground, reference point and metonymy” (2019: 6). The fact of language's under-referring means the same cognitive frame or schema can be referred to in multiple ways (*ibid.*), including encoding in ways that foreground a chosen aspect, a salient feature or *figure* profiled against a *base* (ground) (*ibid.*: 7). He further proposes a discipline, Metonymics, modeled on metaphor studies and drawing on multiple disciplines (2012a: 254-5). Scholarship such as González-García, Peña Cervel, & Pérez Hernández (2013) have furthered these interdisciplinary inquiries, including into different discourses and genres. The cognition of metonymy has been explored in Ruiz de Mondoza Ibáñez (2011), which distinguishes formal (higher-level) and content (lower-level) operations, the latter of which can take the form of domain reduction--the linking of conventional senses to lexical items--or domain expansion, which broadens the conceptual field of the domain.

We can attempt an examination of some cases of metonymic choices made in the translation of poetic texts, and metonyms used in texts that in their turn present special problems and both require and in fact elicit associative thinking by the translator. A guiding idea gaining currency in the field overarches these discussions: that a metonymical approach to translation seeks not a “faithful reproduction” of a text but a “dialogical relation” with it (Agorni, 2018: 323). Littlemore summarizes Denroche (2012b, 2013), where we find “metonymy itself as a translation strategy”, a “processing skill” for overcoming indeterminacy; metonymic thinking enacts “changes of focus within a given

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<sup>1</sup> See Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006) for some of the challenges to this well-known definition.

schema” through the use of inevitably partial correspondences, fuzzy matches, that are nevertheless metonymically suggestive, and ultimately that involve promoting or demoting aspects or features of a phenomenon (2015: 187-88). Ultimately, metonymy is an advantageous way to distance ourselves from thinking about translation in terms of identities and equivalencies, and instead approach textual relations as approximations (Denroche, 2019:1; see also Denroche 2015). This study builds on notions of metonymy as a translatable quality, but also as a creative operation or solution type in translation that often partakes of higher-order thinking. A major contribution here is the distinction of metonymy from the more general modulation, and as a window into metonymic thinking as an interlinguistic hermeneutics. By examining some Spanish-English source and target segments in this vein, which the research to date has neglected to do, we also shed light on histories of how literature travels, and how close reading can make for “distant” metonymies, which we can call renderings at several interpretive removes that create poetic effects through a kind of “contagious magic”.

Modulations in translation are *changes in perspective*. Vinay and Darbelnet (1977) exemplify modulation with procedures, changes in cognitive categories, such as “abstract for concrete”, “part for whole”, “part for another part”, “change of symbol”, “active to passive”, and “cause-effect”. The poetry translator by contrast turns to outside the stock of fixed modulations and thinks metonymically, *consciously or not*, sometimes compulsorily, due to the constraints of a language’s genius, and sometimes electively, through artful readings; the term “modulation” is so broad as to encompass many rhetorical figures of speech, and even, as Scavée and Intravaia (1979) found, can subsume other translation procedures. Metonymy is discernible *within* modulation as a cognitive strategy or tool that can help reach clearer granularity in process and product, in translating and in assessing translation.

### 1. Examination of Cases

We can begin to exemplify the trope with a case in which the part and the whole appear textually in a poem, Reinaldo Arenas’ “Mar”, excerpted here (boldface added in all examples):

No tenemos el mar,  
pero tenemos **náufragos**,  
tenemos uñas, tenemos dedos cercenados,  
algunas oreja y un ojo que el ahíto tiburón no quiso aprovechar.  
Tenemos uñas,  
siempre tendremos uñas  
y las aguas hirvientes de las furias,  
y esas aguas, las pestilentes, las agresivas aguas,  
se alzarán victoriosas con sus víctimas  
hasta formar un solo mar de horror, un mar unánime  
un mar  
sin tiempo y sin orillas sobre el abultado vientre del verdugo.  
(319-20)

This passage demonstrates a lexical item acting as a *metonym of the poem as a whole*, and thus, if we are translating on the level of the text and not the word, it clues us as to which mappings to activate. Paradigmatic considerations of *náufragos* are swayed by the overwhelming frequency of the word meaning “castaways”. We read the word into many previous scripts that feature: 1) seagoing; 2) an accident; 3) survival; and 4) stranding, that is, as a shorthand for one who goes through a shipwreck, often by storm.

But how would Bulfinch be able to write of Halcyone’s worry over her husband Ceyx’s fate, “Utter not words of comfort, he is shipwrecked and dead?” ([1859] 2000: 59) That is, *shipwrecked* is independent of living or dead. In the Spanish poem above, those fleeing Cuba in the poem are *drowned*. The syntagms in the poem--body parts, a clinging skeleton (linked conceptually to life as an absence-in-presence)--we read *metonymically* as deaths (the published English, in fact, reads “but we have the drowned” [Arenas, “Sea”, 2014: 159-160]). Thus the scenes are not of castaways but of victims of violence--the poem ends with the hangman’s belly swollen (a metonym of the ocean replete with horrors from the crossings, and “sea” overflows into “seas” to hold the subjective memories of the lives of the missing, a CONTAINER-CONTAINED relation).<sup>2</sup> Both senses of *náufrago*--survivor, and victim--stand in relation to each other. Through

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<sup>2</sup> Ancient rhetoricians argued that the metonymic principle was a form of meaning change, and could take the form of several kinds of proximity between source and target concepts: spatial, temporal, cause-effect, or a container-contained relationship (Koch 38).

underspecification, the reader and translation must access the sense congruent with the poem's constructed frame.

Let's now examine some images from the poetry of César Vallejo to further explore metonymic relations:

XXVIII

He almorzado solo ahora, y no he tenido  
madre, **ni súplica**, ni sírvete, ni agua,

XXVIII

I've had lunch alone now, and without any  
mother, **or may I have**, or help yourself, or water,  
(Vallejo, 2015: 55, C. Eshleman, trans.)

The metonymic shift produces a line of fragments of a scene: *mother, request made of mother, reply from mother, nutrients from mother*. The *súplica* becomes a *specific* request in the English, or rather, a fragment standing for a request. In this way it is a particularizing transposition, and heightens the poetic "I" and the dialogics ("I"- "yourself"). We recall in this connection Littlemore's reminder (2015: 111) that in art, metonymy is often used, as in Cubist painting, to create the negative space around what is *missing*; note then that the negation of this list of presences (person, voices, things) might have been strengthened with anaphoric "nor" connections instead of "ors", combinatory negations, as it were. In another line of the poem, the missing element--*madre*--is emphasized, but rendered more conspicuously absent thereby:

torna tierra el brocado que no brinda la  
MADRE,

In "Trilce LII", two passages from the third stanza of Gifford and Tomlinson's English stand out in particular, in which particularizations/explicitations are metonymic readings:

Otro día querrás pastorear  
entre tus huecos onfalóideos  
ávidas cavernas,  
meses nonos,  
**mis telones.**

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Another day, you will graze  
between your omphaloid hollows  
avid caves  
ninth months  
**curtains-across-my-stage.**  
(Vallejo, 1967: 229)

We can perceive a relationship between explicitation and metonymy; explicitation includes the optional, interpretive varieties (we might call them) in which “something is expressed in the translation which was not in the original, something which was implied or understood through presupposition in the source text is overtly expressed in the translation, or an element of the source text is given a greater importance in the translation through focus, emphasis, or lexical choice” (Séguinot, 1988: 108). Often this “something” is a function of anything from high/low context cultural divide to the idiolect of a given poet. Or perhaps Matzner’s (2016) own term, *amplification metonymy*, suffices; he uses it to refer to cases in which a passage’s focus or emphasis is expanded in tropic language. We can also relate this to the literary phenomenon of foregrounding whereby an element is activated against a “ground”. The translators’ coinage is an occasionalism (created for this context alone), and a compound, thus a *nonce compound*. The translators manipulate the degree of conceptual metonymy via the supplement of the whole--“stage”--of which “curtains” is a part. To phrase this idea another way: Vallejo gives the part contingently suggesting the whole; the translator gives the part but also *indicating* the whole. Despite Berger’s claim that metonymy is “something we see; we didn’t make it up; it was already there”, unlike a metaphor, which we *make* (2015: 4), Panther and Thornburg claim for metonymy the characteristic of non-necessariness: “We define conceptual metonymy as a contingent, i.e. non-necessary, relation within one conceptual domain between a source meaning and a target meaning, in which the source meaning provides mental access to the target meaning” (2004: 91). An

interpreting consciousness must establish the relations in question, in a strategic range from oblique to explicit, as we see in the case of the *telón*.

Eshleman uses “drop curtains” here, another theatrical reading of *telón*’s semantic intension. In other words, the metonymic strengthening (*telones* as *specific kinds of curtains*) heightens in translation.

The poem in question begins thus in the Spanish:

Y nos levantaremos cuando se nos dé  
la gana, aunque mamá toda claror  
nos despierte con **cantora**  
y linda cólera materna.

The English (1967):

And we shall get up whenever the inclination  
takes us, although Mamá, all dayblaze,  
awakes us with a **songbird burst**  
of lovely maternal rage.

(Vallejo, 1967: 229, Gifford and Tomlinson, trans.)

In the English, the pattern of violent imagery clusters around the mother: *dayblaze*, *burst*, *rage*. But it is the embodiment of the *cantora* as an *ave cantora*, a songbird, that concerns us most here. The mother is personified as the morning through this choice in combination with *claror*. An *ave cantora* is involved in a *kind-of* relationship with *cantora*. The hyponym “songbird” activates an *inference*. A songbird is both a bird and a female singer, thus it is simultaneously a metaphor and a metonym. By contrast, a polar opposite tone or semantic prosody<sup>3</sup> is struck in Eshleman’s first stanza of “LII”, which evokes light, “rousing” (waking but also lifting one’s spirits), charm:

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<sup>3</sup> Semantic prosody is “a consistent aura with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (Louw, 1993: 157).

And we'll get up when we feel  
like it, even though mama all luminosity  
rouses us with **melodious**  
and charming maternal anger.

(Vallejo, 2007: 271)

The metonymies of the poem cohere into a heightened reality, particularly by overlaying the antimonies “charming” and “anger” or “lovely” and “rage”; and for that matter, “maternal” and “anger”, and the unpunctuated, merely juxtaposed, “mama all luminosity”.

Metonymic thinking is seldom revealed as such in translators’ metacommentary. Recalling a certain word choice, translator-theorist Susan Bassnett (2011: 45) discusses the following decision made on Alejandra Pizarnik’s poem, “Fiesta”:

He desplegado mi **orfandad**  
sobre la mesa, como un mapa.  
Dibujé el itinerario  
hacia mi lugar al viento.  
Los que llegan no me encuentran.  
Los que espero no existen.

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I unfurled my **homelessness**  
across the table, like a map.  
I traced my journey as far  
as my place in the wind.  
The ones that get there never meet me.  
The ones I wait for don’t exist.

(Bassnett and Pizarnik, 1999: 55)

Bassnett discusses her process in terms of poetic effect, transformation, and Pizarnik’s larger body of work:

...‘orphanhood’ [...] seemed so extreme that readers might pause to wonder whether it really was a word at all and so lose the significance of what for Pizarnik was one of the many keywords she used throughout her oeuvre. I chose ‘homelessness’, in the end, because it conveyed a sense of not belonging, albeit



one that did not have the connotations of abandonment in childhood. I also felt that ‘homelessness’ is a powerful word in English [...] because it has a physical and an emotional meaning. (Bassnett, 2011: 45)

Bassnett does not call her rewriting process metonymic, but it most certainly is: homelessness *is an aspect of* orphanhood (if we consider “home” metaphorically or abstractly). Thus we see facetization at work, whereby one meaning facet is elevated over others (see Paradis 2004), with the activated senses *rootlessness*, *unprotectedness*, and *unconnectedness*, but canceling the senses of a child’s forsakenness or loss, and we could argue, “homelessness” suppresses the sociological dimensions of the word in favor of its spiritual ones. The very denotation of *orphan* is problematic cross-culturally and in translation. Bassnett is right about the low frequency of “orphanhood”, according to results from both the COCA Corpus and the British National Corpus, thus to use the word metaphorically would have been abstruse. Associative thinking, or metonymic thinking, leads instead to a resonant word in keeping with the quest theme of the poem, and Pizarnik’s work considered broadly.

A passage from José Martí’s *Versos sencillos* I presents a case of facetization that the translator misses:

Todo es hermoso y constante,  
Todo es música y razón,  
**Y todo, como el diamante,**  
**Antes que luz es carbón.**

(Martí, 1982: 181)

All is permanence and beauty,  
And all is melody and reason,  
**And all, like diamonds rather**  
**Than light, is coal.**

(Martí, 2003: 24, trans.  
Elinor Randall)

Coal’s transformation into diamonds, or rather, the frame of refinement, reflects the Kraussist belief in perfectability. The *luz-diamante* metonymy is particularly productive in that the polyvalence of *luz* allows it to map onto multiple frames: enlightenment, reason, education, maturity, perfection, understanding, etc. The progression of coal to diamond depends not only on geological world-knowledge, but also the poetic association of light with gems (which the Spanish language innately does in nouns like *brillante*, a word for diamond). The translation “all... is coal” is a distortion of the encyclopedic knowledge, or the semantic frame, the reader must draw upon to understand the utterance, and

*música* and *diamante*, standing for kinds of cultural and natural *order*, connect natural and spiritual realms and laws in a modernista ethos. But the passage's contiguities may also be read as something platonic alongside something primal and its "productive reality" (Price, 2014: 57-58).

A case of a metonymic expression translated by a non-metonymic one now is worth reviewing. In Pablo Neruda's poem "Walking Around" (*Residencia en la tierra*, three volumes, 1933-1947), a world-weary narrator describes a wish, amidst a catalog of things of which he has grown tired:

Sólo quiero un descanso de piedras o de lana,

Here is a fuller passage:

- (1) Sólo quiero **un descanso de piedras o de lana**,
- (2) sólo quiero no ver establecimientos ni jardines,
- (3) ni mercaderías, ni anteojos, ni ascensores.
- (4) Sucede que me canso de mis pies y mis uñas
- (5) y mi pelo y mi sombra.
- (6) Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.

(Neruda, 1958: 85-86)

The translators use non-metonymic solutions because they clearly miss the sense of *descanso* here. A sampling of their rendition of the line (1) follows:

- (1) All I ask is **a little vacation from things: from boulders and woolens** (Belitt, in Neruda, 1961: 76)
- (1) I want nothing but **the repose either of stones or of wool** (Merwin, in Neruda, 1970: 105)
- (1) All I want is **the quiet of stones or wool** (Felstiner, in Neruda, 2003: 3)
- (1) All I want is **a break from rocks and wool** (Gander, in Neruda, 2004: 43)

The reading of "from" is illogical; a reading using "made of" (a rest made of stone / the rest of stones / a stony rest etc.) is possible but has no objective correlative—the reader has to transfer some quality (rest) to inanimate elements. The speaker in fact is longing for a shrine with something simple—stones or

wool—marking it, in opposition to the gaudiness of man-made artifacts in the cityscape around him.

If we read the *descanso* as itself a metonym, or an index in semiotic terms, the schema of the poem comes more clearly into view. The cultural tradition of the *descanso* from Hispanic Catholicism, which marks the spot of a soul leaving the body, often a victim, with an altar, a practice reaching back perhaps to ancient Rome. The *descanso* marks an “interrupted journey... a manifestation of unexpressed grief, a communication, a eulogy, an apology” (Fletcher, 2021: 6). The metonymic chain of signification in the poem then proceeds thus:

1
2
3  
*descanso* (rest) >> eternal rest (death) >> place of memorialization

The translators take us part of the way from 1 to 2, but only by a leap of interpretation do we understand death (from “quiet”, or “repose”). And it is an open question whether the signifiers “vacation” or “break” stand in any peripheral or asymptotic relation to the signified “death”.

Embracing 1-3, then, we might suggest, then: **“I want only a roadside memorial of stones or of wool”, or “I ask for nothing but a resting place of stones or wool”,** i.e., a simple, elemental shrine, a “death” to artifice into the embrace of the authentic. Or we can front this facet thus: **“I only want stones or wool to mark my shrine”**.

Poetic translation of metonymy can take several forms, including “cognate” metonymies, different but related metonymy-for-metonymy translation (examples of which we suggest in bold above), and that “a non-metonymic expression can be translated by a metonymic one, and conversely, a metonymic expression can be translated by a non-metonymic one” (Brdar and Brdar-Szabó, 2014: 232). In “Walking Around”, the *descanso* stands in many ways metonymically for *the whole poem*, as a death wish, a haven or symbolic death from the living death surrounding the speaker.

We turn to Neruda again, this time to provide a case study of abstraction, more precisely what we might call the temptation to concretion. “La United Fruit Co.” (*Canto General* 1950) ends with these lines:

Mientras tanto, por los abismos  
azucarados de los puertos,  
caían indios sepultados  
en el vapor de la mañana:  
un cuerpo rueda, una cosa  
sin nombre, **un número caído**,  
un racimo de fruta muerta  
derramada en el pudridero.

(Neruda 1971 [1950]: 87)

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Meanwhile the Indians fall  
into the sugared depths of the  
harbors and are buried in the  
morning mists; a corpse rolls, a thing without  
name, **a discarded number**,  
a bunch of rotten fruit  
thrown on the garbage heap.

(Neruda, 1991: 179, Jack Schmitt, trans.)

The cause-effect relations are in doubt: who discarded the number--a lottery player, society? We have an effect with no cause.<sup>4</sup> “caído” and “derramada” both are RESULTS FOR ACTION. The anonymity suggested by “number” is curiously lost through modification by “discarded”, which de-emphasizes death in the semantic cluster including *corpse* and *rotten*, instead stressing (human being as)

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<sup>4</sup> The metonymic relationship of cause and effect is not always as clear-cut as one imagines, as causes can be quite implicit. A basic illustration is found in the translations from Basho's most famous haiku; Allen Ginsberg renders the lines causally:

The old pond  
A frog jumped in,  
Kerplunk!

Many well-known versions, by contrast, render the lines in a way that de-metonymizes the action from the reaction, instead the sound pre-exists the jumping frog, who jumps into *it*, the sound, not water:

old pond  
a frog jumps into  
the sound of water

(Jane Reichhold, trans.)

refuse. The pathos can be adjusted in translation on this score: a solution such as “statistic” for *número* (*x* is a kind of *y*) is offered on one version (“**forgotten statistic**”, Neruda 2014, Cavazos trans.), connoting victimhood and anonymity. Robert Bly's version reads the *número* as an impersonal, and unknown, zero or blank slate:

a body rolls, a thing  
that has no name, a **fallen cipher**,  
a cluster of dead fruit  
thrown down on the dump.  
(Neruda, 1971: 87, Robert Bly, trans.)

The metonymic chain, then, is:

*número* (number)      >>      cipher (kind of number: zero)

It is tempting to see a rewriting of Horace in Bly's reading: “Nos numeros sumus et fruges consumere nati.” (“We are mere ciphers, / born but to consume the fruits of earth”) (Horace, 1940: 36). Bly's (1975) favoring of leaping poems, featuring bold associative thinking that strains against conventional figuration, here extends briefly into *leaping translation*, or at least hopping.

Jack Hirshmann foregrounds the death motif in his last lines of the text,<sup>5</sup> underscoring perhaps Neruda's *impure poetry*, a “consummate poetry soiled by the pigeon's claw, ice-marked and tooth-marked, bitten delicately with our sweatdrops and usage”, evincing “the sumptuous appeal of the tactile”, and especially “the confused impurity of the human condition, the massing of things, the use and disuse of substances, [...], the abiding presence of the human engulfing all artifacts...” (Neruda, 1974: xxi-xxii):

a body rolls, a thing  
without a name, a **fallen number**,  
a bunch of **dead** fruit  
**spills** into the **pile of rot**.  
(Neruda, 2004: 97, Jack Hirshmann, trans.)

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5 Compare Jack Schmitt's third line: “a bunch of lifeless fruit” (Neruda, 1991: 179). “Lifeless” can refer to something inanimate that never had life to lose.

*Derramar* derives from the Latin *diramare*, to sever branches, which Neruda employs to suggest decomposition of a living thing; the *pueridero*, denotatively a dump, becomes the more visceral site of decay, a *pile of rot*. No one has “thrown” the fruit-number-body there; Hirshmann’s dead fruit “spills”, a word which etymologically, in Old English, meant destruction, then over time evolved to a specific kind of destruction--killed--then bloodshed, then finally liquid being squandered or running wastefully (Peters, 1980: 144). The translation exploits the ancestral links of kindredness of meanings. And by simply using “fallen” for “caído”, Hirshmann introduces the resonances of fallen soldier, casualties, avoiding the culpability of “discarded” and “thrown”. Again, the translator, through metonymy, can shift agency: *a dead body spills* and *a dead body thrown down* presume different events happening “out of frame”.

Neruda uses *número(s)* in his work as a whole in ways often suggesting death<sup>6</sup>, burdens, and obstacles, and with non-random frequency:

como abejas muertas o <b>números</b> ,	(“Galope muerto”)
De lo sonoro salen <b>números</b> , /	(“Residencia en la tierra”, 2, 1933-
<b>números</b> moribundos y cifras con estiércol,	35, “Un día sobresale”)
y una paloma muerta, con un <b>número</b> .	(“Oda con un lamento”)
hacia la muerte en ríos con <b>números</b> de mármol	
y coronas podridas, y aceites funerales:	(“Oda a Federico García Lorca”)
un saco de <b>números</b> grises,	(“Guayaquil (1812)”)
No hay <b>número</b> ni hay nombre	
para tantos dolores,	(“Tu sangre”)
con un <b>número</b> a cuestras,	(“Henri Martín”)
los <b>números</b> , los años son infieles	(“Fin de fiesta”)
se enredó, al volar, en un <b>número</b>	(“Los pajarantes”)
con <b>número</b> y congoja,	(“Sucesivo”)
dineros y derrotas en los <b>números</b>	(“A plena ola”)
Quién da los nombres y los <b>números</b>	
al inocente innumerable?	(“LXIV”, <i>El libro de las preguntas</i> )
en que se lanzaban <b>números</b> con frío furor.	(“Deuda externa”)

Table 1: concordance lines for <número> in the poems of Pablo Neruda

<sup>6</sup> Neruda also has a poem titled “28325674549” (2008) in which the invention of numbers leads to a metonymic nightmare of creation run amok, of numbers emerging from numbers, and ultimately of destruction.

The translator's choice turns in part on several factors, some micro and others macro, for instance the level of abstraction of "*número*": Does English prefer to avoid an abstract noun modified by a concrete verb? And do the demands of the poem override the genius of a given language? (Notice how many "*números*" in the concordance lines behave as concrete nouns.) Departing perhaps from the principle that the translation of metonymy implies reconception and replotment in new cultural systems beyond the universe of the text, Matzner provides this insight on poetic effect: "while a metonym may be translatable, the abrasiveness of the metonymic shift (and the strength of the poetic effect) may be felt more or less strongly in the target language depending on whether the terms in question co-occur with greater or lesser frequency and regularity in that language" (2016: 173). Accordingly, then, are there patterns of usage of a given word in other Neruda poems--and their translations--that call for intertextual coherence, or that highlight the poetic charge of novel co-occurrence?

In "La pasión"/"The Passion" (2009: 10-11) Neruda writes:

Soy sólo un **número caído**  
de un árbol que no tuvo objeto  
porque llegó con sus raíces  
al otro lado de la tierra.  
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And in William O'Daly's translation (ibid.):

I am only a **number fallen**  
from a tree that had no purpose  
because it reached with its roots  
to the other side of the earth.

In Neruda's poem, "A numerarse" (1972: 24), the narrator takes exception to the temporary, arbitrary, divisive and oppressive fate of being assigned a number: "nos enrollan en números que pronto / se caen de sus listas al olvido" (we're wrapped up in numbers that before long / fall out of their ledgers into forgottenness), the same sense of a vulnerable identity that is lost in "United Fruit". "Nombre" y "número" are used *together* frequently in Neruda to suggest words + numerals, i.e. the realm of representation, and human identity and its lack, dehumanization. We find another instance of metonymic concretion, if the coinage may be permitted, almost at random in an early Neruda poem, "Walking Around" (*Residencia en la tierra*); compare Belitt's second line to the others below:

Por eso el día lunes arde como el petróleo  
cuando me ve llegar **con mi cara de cárcel.**  
(Neruda, 1958: 28-29)

when it seems me up close, **with the face of a jailbird,**  
(Neruda, 1961: 28-9, Belitt, trans.)

at the sight of me arriving **with my jail-face**  
(Neruda, 1970: 104-7, W.S. Merwin, trans.)

when it sees me show up  
**with my mugshot face**  
(Neruda, 2004: 43-5, Gander, trans.)

when it seems me  
coming **with my jailhouse face**  
(Neruda, 2003: 3, Felstiner, trans.)

Different representations of the *cárcel* are chosen: place, person within the place, likeness of a person in a place; these may be read through prototype theory, whereby categories of thought are represented by associations, from more central—the perceived essence of that class—to peripherality. We see translators moving across this imaginary range to find a prototype. Merwin leaves the images “unpacked”, phenomenological rather than analytical--“jail-face”--compounding two nouns for the reader to make the associations, as the Spanish does. Spanish adjectivization, as in these lines from Federico García Lorca’s “Romance sonámbulo”, can seed productive readings of the relationship to the thing modified:

Grandes **estrellas de escarcha,**  
vienen con **el pez de sombra**  
que abre **el camino del alba.**

Great **stars of frost,**  
arriving with **the shadow-fish**  
that clears the **way for dawn.**  
(García Lorca, 2007: 109, Martin Sorrell, trans.)



Notice how the first image, *grandes estrellas de escarcha* is rendered in English with a noun + adjective construction, “stars of frost”. But the “pez de sombra” image complicates the relationships—a “shadow-fish” here is ambiguously, and productively, *from* the shadows and *made* of shadows (and perhaps caster of, or harbinger of, shadows). The compound in English takes one characteristic of the fish, shadow--inherent or attributed--and elevates it virtually to an essence, as if the shadow had the quality of fishness instead of the other way around. In the third line, *el camino del alba* is closer to a genitive for the well-worn image of the *camino del alba* (attested back to the 1600s) and the *path of dawn* (of more recent vintage, the 1830s). That is, we perceive the relationship as “natural”, though the translator misses or eschews it here. But it is the partitive *pez de sombra* relationship that creates the most complex matrix of relations (See Hollander [1987: 296] on what he calls the “latent allegorizing” often involved in these *x of y* constructions and their translation). Metonymic thinking results from such considerations, which in this case are bound up with a grammatical form of the source. To that end, an observation: *frost-stars* and *dawn-paths* make for less poetic renderings, less easy to parse surely than the kennings--“whale-road” for sea--of an earlier aesthetic.

Our last case is Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén’s “Sensemayá”. Metonymic figuration is at work perhaps as much as any poem in the canon surveyed here. Kaup (2000: 95) calls it a “translation/transculturation into Cuban poetry of an Afro-Cuban ritual chant.” Matibag explains the connection between language and action in this, the Lucumí, belief system:

In Afro-Cuban religious practice, homeopathic or imitative magic works by way of analogy or resemblances under the law of metaphor [...]: performing a ritual on a portrait or effigy of a person amounts to performing an operation on the person so represented. Contagious magic works by way of contiguity or imputed causality, under the law of metonymy (or synecdoche): performing an operation on a person’s belongings or even the person’s name also signifies the will to do the same to the person so represented [...]. Metaphor, obeying the law of similarity, is the trope of selections, substitutions, or condensations; metonymy, working by virtue of contiguity or contagion, is the trope of displacement or combination. The operations of these master tropes—metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche—thus account for the “magic” of narrative causality and symbolization as well. (2018: 14-15)

The heightening of sensation into altered consciousness attends this sympathetic linguistic magic, whereby “sensory translations” occur, for “the undoing of automatic perceptual and cognitive structures permits a gain in sensory intensity and richness at the expense of abstract categorization and differentiation” (Deikman, 1968: 224, ctd. in Matibag, 2018: 15). Guillén uses onomatopoeia and rhythm from Bantu in “Sensemayá”, subtitled “Canto para matar una culebra” (Chant for killing a snake), indicating the words’ causal connection to the phenomenal world. This invocation (a prayer beseeching aid) features foreign words, spirits, personages, names of dances, and “talking drums”. Adeniyi informs us that Guillén’s snake is a referential index to the ritual dance practiced among the Congo, and that the poem uses sound symbolism, phonosemantic features, for the sacred Yoruba “Iya” and “bata” drums. The poem in Spanish is well known, but is excerpted here for reference:

*Sensemayá*

Canto para matar una culebra

[...]

¡Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!  
¡Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!  
¡Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!

Tú le das con el hacha, y se muere:  
¡dale ya!

¡dale ya!  
**¡No le des con el pie, que te muerde,  
no le des con el pie, que se va!**

Sensemayá, la culebra,  
sensemayá.  
Sensemayá, con sus ojos,  
sensemayá.  
Sensemayá con su lengua,  
sensemayá.  
Sensemayá con su boca,  
sensemayá . . .

La culebra muerta no puede comer;  
la culebra muerta no puede silbar;  
no puede caminar,  
no puede correr.  
La culebra muerta no puede mirar;  
la culebra muerta no puede beber;  
no puede respirar,  
¡no puede morder!  
(1974: 148-149)

The greatest translational flaw would be prosaism here. Metrical stresses and line lengths in extant translations vary:

**Don't hit him with your foot or he'll bite;  
Don't hit him with your foot, or he'll get away.**  
(Guillén, 1963: 78, Jones, trans.)

**Don't hit it with your foot, it will bite you,  
Don't hit it with your foot, it will flee!**  
(Guillén, 2010: 222, Márquez, trans.)

**Don't kick it with your foot, it'll bite,  
don't kick it with your foot, let it go!**  
(Guillén, 1948: 93, Hughes and Carruthers, trans.)

**Don't kick it with your foot, for it bites,  
don't kick it with your foot, it will escape!**  
(Guillén, 2005: 35, Ortiz-Carboneres, trans.)

There are unmistakable jazz idioms in Hughes and Carruthers' syncopations: "Dead snake can't eat a thing, dead snake can't hiss or blink, can't slide or slink, can't coil to spring! Dead snake can't lap its drink, dead snake can't lie a-hiding. No instinct, can't kill by biting!" (1948: 94; originally published in Guillén, *Cuba libre*, 1948: 33). The cultural distinctiveness of the Cuban *son* is still at issue, the mastery of these verses notwithstanding; Nwankwo discusses how "Motivos del son", the first section of *Cuba Libre*, is titled "Cuban Blues" in Hughes and Carruther's rendition, accommodating the Cuban to the African-American but

threatening the imposition of the domestic on the unfamiliar (1999-2001: 64). The translators choose localisms such as “cane knife” for the *bacha* (Langston Hughes, in Cobb, 1972: 16-17). The poem proceeds through whole-part inventories to anaphorize the line endings: serpent, eyes, tongue, mouth; and things it cannot do when dead: eat, hiss, walk, run, see, drink, breathe, bite (Marquéz’ translation, 221-23). Accordingly, translators Robert Marquéz and Willis Knapp Jones have left the Bantu refrain from the Palo Monte religion intact. Olliz Boyd makes a strong case that, contrary to the long-standing critical claims that these are *jitanjáfora* (nonsense words), *sensemaya* is a

call to worship, a call to the mystical force that is associated with divine figures. Translations and attempts at literal interpretations of Guillén's African-based lexicon do not always result in making denotative/connotative levels transparent for the culturally uninitiated or culturally insensitive. Furthermore, there are many natives who understand the sense of what is being said even though a word-for-word translation may escape them. The concepts are a lived experience for many. (2010: 125)

This poem is a fitting one to end on, as the incantatory suggestiveness of language itself, not individual words but the spells or effects they summon as a whole, is at play, as if the metonymy were LANGUAGE: PERFORMANCE, the poem as speech act. Consider that the poem on the page stands for whole different traditions of poetry--orature, music, chanting, and worship.

### *Conclusions*

Metonymy relies on many shared, unspoken assumptions held by communities, and thus its translation depends on the active construction and negotiation of such assumptions; requiring far more than a simple search for ready-made words and phrases that seem to map commensurate terrains, metonymy in translation calls for the artistic, higher-order thinking of association and creation, and a complex perception of conceptual and linguistic relationships. As metonymy depends on the user's world knowledge, it presents problems of cognitive semantics and pragmatics, and the development of a cognitive stylistics (Steen, 2005: 2-5), and reflects dialogical relations between texts and languages. We have surveyed how metonymy has been employed as a heuristic, a strategy in translation to signal shifts that may be cultural or linguistic, but always involves

the interpretive response to the underspecificity of language, often to create what Balkin (1998: 242) has called the imaginative extension of cognitive models. Metonymy, or “*metonymia*”, Greek for a change of name, is an operation itself like the transformations undergone in any translation; metonymy at bottom enacts changes that attempt access across concepts, as cognitive linguistics teaches us. In poetry translation, we saw how metonymic shifts can affect all manner of emphasis: the proportions of explicit and implied, concrete and abstract, and even intellectual and sensorial.

Metaphor-metonymy interactions (or even metaphor’s dependency on metonymic mappings--“metaphonomy”) are a possible future horizon for literary translation scholars. Much work remains to be done to illuminate the relationships of poetry translation to prototype theory, frames and domains, image-schemas, and conceptual metaphor, to name only a few more avenues of inquiry. We have explored readings of mostly Spanish American poems here, although more work remains too in metonymy across specific languages, authors, and translators. Total access to the poem, or a work in any genre, may not be provided by translation any more than the language of the original is mimetic or transparently representational, a fact born out through incursions in the realm of the metonymic, where no fullness is promised.

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