

## **Translation and Film: On the Defamiliarizing Effect of Subtitles**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper brings together aspects of film theory (Benjamin, Dayan) and translation theory (Venuti, Nornes) in order to investigate some of the aesthetic and political implications of subtitling. It sets out by comparing film and translation as distinct modes of representation in which the wish for realism and authenticity is revealed and concealed in equal measure. The paper then examines the ways in which this paradox complicates the act of subtitling. It is argued that interlingual subtitles have a defamiliarizing effect over both “dominant” and “peripheral” audiences. Subtitles give rise to perceptions of foreignness which have to do with linguistic and cultural difference as well as with the semiotic difference between the verbal and the audiovisual dimensions. However, even as subtitles emphasize questions of alterity, the extent of editorial manipulation they normally undergo is such that their potential for enhancing awareness of the foreign is drastically restricted.

**KEYWORDS:** Film, Translation, Subtitling, Defamiliarization, Foreignness