PART II

Translation as renarration

Introduction

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Translation as renarration: a critical introduction

The works reproduced in this section chart the development of a highly productive period in Baker's academic career in which she put forward an entirely new way of thinking about translation, taking narrative as a key theoretical concept. The version of narrative theory she developed, which she termed socio-narrative theory, was based almost exclusively on theoretical writing and concepts from beyond translation studies yet went on to enormously influence the discipline in ways which are still readily apparent today. This introduction to her work on "Translation as Renarration" addresses three issues: 1) the context in which she first developed the narrative approach in relation to translation; 2) the defining features of her approach; and 3) the wide-reaching influence of her work on the field as a whole.

Contextualizing Baker's work on translation as renarration

If the early 1990s had seen a radical realignment of translation studies during the so-called cultural turn, Baker's pioneering narrative work in the mid to late 2000s should be understood in the context of a further major shift. Translation scholars more decisively turned their theoretical gaze away from translation as a narrowly textual operation towards understanding translation within, and its impact upon, the wider social world. Although Baker was not the only figure calling for such a change,[1] she was instrumental in realigning the discipline in terms of its objects of inquiry, including a new focus on violent conflict and methods of investigation. Having made a significant contribution to affirming translation studies' status as an independent discipline during the 1990s and early

2000s, during this period she turned her attention outward and sought to show the value of a translational perspective to other academic disciplines, as can be readily observed in her choice to publish during this period in non-translation studies journals, including *The Massachusetts Review* (Baker 2006a), *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (Baker 2010), *Social Semiotics* (Baker 2007) and *Social Movement Studies* (Baker 2013).

Superficially, her work is similar to earlier "committed" approaches such as the "manipulation school" (Hermans 1985; Lefevere 1992), Canadian feminist translation scholars (von Flotow 1991; Godard 1983), and critical discourse analysis–inspired approaches (Hatim and Mason 1990; Schäffner 1997, 2002). Yet the extent to which her approach constituted a break from the dominant perspectives of previous eras is apparent in "Ethics of Renarration: Mona Baker Is Interviewed by Andrew Chesterman" (Baker 2008), reproduced in this volume. Chesterman specifically queries the distinctiveness of her approach, to which she responds that, in addition to drawing on different theoretical sources owing to her dissatisfaction with those available at the time, she is also bringing a new emphasis on self-reflexivity and a focus on contemporary political conflict, both of which broke the prevailing traditions of the time. That her conceptual approach marked a departure from earlier traditions is also shown in Chesterman's repeated attempts to turn the discussion to the kinds of static concepts that Baker explicitly set out to move away from, such as "equivalence", "loyalty" and traditionally conceived translator–client relationships. Chesterman even casts doubt on the idea that the narrative approach has anything to offer at all, suggesting that the key concept of the narrative remains "extremely vague and general; that it is so wide that it explains everything – and therefore nothing" (Baker 2008: 21), clearly showing his discomfort with the flexibility at the heart of the narrative approach.

To understand the significance of Baker's work on narrative, it is also important to see it in the context of narrative theory more broadly. Far from a unified theoretical approach, the notion of the "story" had been put to use as a theoretical concept by scholars working in a wide range of fields, including sociology (Somers and Gibson 1994), psychology (Bruner 1986; Polkinghorne 1991; Sarbin 1986), historiography (Danto 1985; White 1973; Mink 2001), philosophy (Ricoeur 1991, 1984; Macintyre 2007), anthropology (Geertz 1973), and narratology in its classic (Barthes 1975; Derrida 1974; Todorov and Weinstein 1969) and (then) modern forms (Fludernik 1996; Ryan 2004). With few exceptions, these traditions had remained separate from one another and had failed, not only to acknowledge the significance of interlingual mediation, but, in most cases, even to acknowledge translation at all despite its central role in the transmission of narratives across linguistic and cultural boundaries. As the years of publication in the preceding examples also show, with the exception of modern narratology (almost exclusively focused on fiction), relatively little work was being conducted on narrative during the mid 2000s. Baker's work at that time, then, which freely drew on several traditions of narrative inquiry, offered three major contributions to the broader theory of narrative by demonstrating that: 1) scholars should not

shy away from theoretical eclecticism; 2) to ignore interlingual mediation is to ignore a central aspect of the way narratives work in the real world; and 3) narrative still had much to offer as a theoretical concept.

The key features of her approach

The central concepts of socio-narrative theory are clearly communicated in the works included in this section. I will therefore restrict my discussion to the meta-theoretical level and briefly examine what I consider to be the two key features differentiating it from other approaches: 1) its pragmatism and 2) its emphasis on the specific and changing over the abstract and constant.

Pragmatism

Baker's approach is pragmatic in three ways. First, her emphasis lies on what translation *does* rather than what translation *is*. As she powerfully shows in "Accurate Translations, Suspicious Frames" (Baker 2010), an emphasis on accuracy or idealized relationships between abstracted texts, cultures, societies etc. can distract from the question of the real-world implications of translation as it takes place in specific times and places. This necessitates looking closely not only at translations themselves, or even the contexts which influence their production, but at the real-world effects they have and the uses to which they are put. This also relates strongly to her somewhat post-modern bracketing of the question of absolute truths when conducting narrative analysis. As she stresses throughout her work, whether a narrative is "true" or not (and whether it is ultimately possible for narratives to be either true or false) matters comparatively little, since real people take actions and live their lives according to stories, regardless of whether their truth claims are ultimately verifiable.

Second, her approach to narrative theory is pragmatic in the vein of Pragmatic philosophy. For Baker, theory should not primarily be assessed in terms of its internal coherence or beauty as an abstract system (which may partly explain her suspicion of literary narratology with its roots in structuralism). Rather, for Baker good theory is useful theory. In largely bracketing the question of absolute truth Baker adopts a stance close to the neo-Pragmatist Richard Rorty in rejecting the idea of theory as a "mirror of nature", providing a way to see reality "as it really is" (Rorty 1979). Instead of seeking to produce a totalizing system to replace all others, Baker's eclectic adoption of elements of narrative theory from scholars based in a variety of disciplines highlights that for her it is a tool which, as with all tools, should be assessed principally in terms of its ability to deliver insights into the issues under inquiry. This arises not only from scepticism regarding the totalizing approaches to theory building which dominated much of the twentieth century, including within translation studies, but also from the fact that her starting point was a desire to understand the interconnections between translation and violent conflict rather than to produce a general

theory of translation although, as highlighted in the final part of this introduction, her approach has since been successfully applied to a wide range of contexts, demonstrating its broad applicability.

Third, as is evident in the works reproduced for this volume, she also shifted during this period towards an increasing emphasis on conducting politically engaged research with real-world significance. Theory should not only elucidate the issues at hand but also provide ways of thinking which can be converted into practical activities and responses, an idea which would reach its zenith during her work on activist translation practices during the Egyptian Uprising of 2011. The narrative approach as seen in Baker's work relies on relatively simple concepts which can be easily and intuitively linked to lived experiences. It is light on jargon and, especially when communicated with Baker's clear and direct writing, does not require extensive academic training in order to be comprehensible. This contrasts sharply with the sometimes deliberately obscurant approach to theorizing and writing often seen in the academic world which renders scholarly knowledge effectively inaccessible to those outside academe, greatly limiting any capacity it might have to be employed by non-academics.

Fluidity over stability

The second defining feature of Baker's approach is its emphasis on fluid, frequently fragmented narratives which cannot be found in any single place over the more static concepts such as "norms", "culture" and "discourse" which had characterized academic discussion of translation for decades (Baker 2007). Her preference for a more flexible approach to theory is particularly clear in "Narrative Analysis and Translation" (Baker 2018), in which she explicitly contrasts the concepts of narrative and discourse. She argues that discourse-based approaches undervalue the significance of individual texts, practices and narrators by viewing them as deterministically produced by abstract and often reified discourses, ideologies and institutions understood through the critical discourse analysis mantra that "it is not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject" (Jaeger and Maier 2010: 37). Baker asks instead about the narratives informing subjects' understanding of the world and the stories they seek to promote. She proposes that emphasizing the active nature of narrative understanding, rather than beliefs or attitudes inhering within people, better reflects the frequently-changing narrative environments which characterize many sites of conflict and, indeed, many aspects of daily life. Rather than "having" a single, coherent ideology, according to Baker our worldviews are informed by the interplay between multiple, criss-crossing and shifting narratives.

Moreover, to reflect the messiness of our lives as we live them, her approach remains relatively theory-light. The key features of narratives as she understands them are clearly communicated but, rather than trading in abstract categories to be applied regardless of context, she strongly grounds her analysis in specific events happening in specific places. For example, in seeking to understand representations of conflict in the Middle East (Baker 2007), Baker asks not about

the general characteristics which define conflict nor the Middle East as a region, examining instead the specific narratives in play in the situation under consideration, in this case linking the metanarrative of "The War on Terror" with the theoretical narrative of Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* through a fine-grained analysis of representations of the Middle East conflict posted on the website "Watching America". This sensitivity to the unique features of the situation under consideration avoids the "streamlining" effect of attempting to understand human activity in terms of fixed and unchanging categories (Baker 2018), demanding instead that the analyst recognize the unique particularity of the situation under consideration.

This attitude is also extended to the researcher, with Baker frequently emphasizing the researcher's being embedded within narratives just as much as their objects of enquiry. She roundly rejects the notion of the objective researcher uncovering truths through a method which allows them to entirely set aside the influence of their own position and concerns, and recognizes instead the value of, with sufficient reflexivity, scholars studying contexts to which they have personal connections, an idea further explored in her subsequent work on activism during the Egyptian revolution. A similar fluidity is also seen in the ease with which her narrative approach moves between different levels of analysis. Rather than drawing a sharp line between individual and social, private and public, or text and context, her approach consistently emphasizes the constant interplay and interdependency between these levels. A typology of personal, public, theoretical and meta narratives is employed (Baker 2006b), but it is always emphasized that, while it is possible and useful to separate stories into distinct categories for the purposes of analysis, in practice there are ultimately no strict distinctions between them or, indeed, between the analyst and their objects of inquiry.

The influence of Baker's work

Baker's work during this period has been influential in three main ways. First, it enabled her to significantly broaden the focus of her own research. Her publications on the interplay between translation and activism, covered in the third part of this volume, directly build upon and further develop many of the ideas worked out during the period covered in this section of the volume. The influence of her work on narrative can also be seen in her current major project "Genealogies of Knowledge", which traces the evolution and development of concepts across space, time and language. Although not explicitly built around the narrative as key concept, its emphasis on charting the evolution of a number of specific concepts, rather than making generalizations about the transmission of knowledge; its emphasis on diachronic change; and interest in re-interpretations of key concepts by civil society groups show clear points of connection with her work on translation as renarration.

Second, Baker's socio-narrative theory has since been utilized by other translation scholars, often almost exactly as formulated by Baker, working on a wide range of issues, to the extent that it now forms a significant literature in its own

right. Sue-Ann Harding, Baker's one-time PhD student and perhaps now the most prominent proponent of the narrative approach, has used an adapted version of Baker's approach, tweaking some concepts and integrating elements of literary narratology to examine a wide range of issues, including witness testimony in police stations in South Africa (Harding and Ralarala 2017), the afterlife of Frantz Fanon in translation (Radin-Sabadoš, Gołuch and Harding 2017), the relationship between publishing and national narratives in Qatar (Harding 2014), shifting representations of migration on Russian television (Tolz and Harding 2015) and news coverage of the 2004 Beslan School Siege (Harding 2012). Baker's colleague at the University of Manchester, Luis Pérez-González, meanwhile, has combined elements of narrative theory with media theory in insightful analysis of activist amateur subtitling practice (Pérez-González 2012a, 2012b). Many others have also successfully employed Baker's approach; while some have focused on similar topics to Baker herself (Boéri 2008; Boukhaffa 2018; Dubbati and Abudayeh 2018; F.R. Jones 2010), others have adapted Baker's narrative approach to significantly different contexts, including the history of translated philosophy in Mexico (Castro 2014), disputes over Italian identity in TV broadcasting (Filmer 2019), the construction of global cities on Wikipedia (H. Jones 2018) and social-media-based communication practices (Sadler 2018).

Third, as a central element of the so-called sociological turn of the mid to late 2000s, Baker's work on narrative played a vital role in encouraging translation scholars to adopt a much more expansive view, both of what translation does in the world and of the legitimate field of study for translation scholars. It has since become commonplace to see translation scholars adopting engaged and activist positions in their work and tackling topics which are much less obviously textual than those studied in previous decades as part of a new "outward turn" (Johnston and Bassnett, forthcoming). It is difficult to overstate the significance of Baker's work on translation as renarration in bringing the discipline to this point.

Note

1 It was also apparent, for instance, in increasing interest in the theoretical ideas of Pierre Bourdieu (Inghilleri 2005), and a new empirical emphasis on conflict, as seen in the edited volume *Translating and Interpreting Conflict* (Salama-Carr 2007) following conferences on the same theme held in 2004 and 2006.

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6

REFRAMING CONFLICT IN TRANSLATION*

Mona Baker

Abstract: *This article draws on narrative theory and the notion of framing, the latter as developed in the literature on social movements, to explore various ways in which translators and interpreters accentuate, undermine or modify contested aspects of the narrative(s) encoded in the source text or utterance. Starting with an outline of the assumptions and strengths of a narrative framework compared with existing theories of translation, the article goes on to define the concept of framing in the context of activist discourse. It then outlines some of the sites – or points in and around the text – at which (re)framing may be achieved, and offers various examples of framing strategies used in written and screen translation. The examples are drawn from translations between English and Arabic in the context of the Middle East conflict and the so-called War on Terror, but the theoretical issues outlined are not language specific or context specific.*

Keywords: Narrative; framing; ''War on Terror''; Arabic; Middle East Conflict

This paper draws on concepts from narrative theory, sociology and the study of social movements to examine some of the ways in which translators and interpreters reframe aspects of political conflicts, and hence participate in the construction of social and political reality. The model of analysis I apply here is elaborated in greater detail in Baker (2006a) and elsewhere.[1] It relies principally on the notion of narrative as understood in some strands of social and communication theory, rather than narratology or linguistics. Here, ''narrative'' is used interchangeably with ''story'': narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live, and it is our belief in these stories that guides our actions in the real world. In this sense, narrative is not a genre, nor is it an optional mode of communication: narration, in the words of Walter Fisher, is ''not a mode of discourse laid on by a creator's deliberate choice but the shape of knowledge as we first apprehend it'' (1987, 193).

* 2007. 'Reframing Conflict in Translation', *Social Semiotics* 17(2): 151–169.

My choice of narrativity as a theoretical framework is motivated by a general dissatisfaction with existing theoretical notions that we tend to draw on in trying to explain the behaviour of translators and interpreters. In particular, much of the literature on translation tends to draw on the notion of norms, as elaborated in polysystem theory and the work of Gideon Toury. Norm theory encourages analysts to focus on repeated, abstract, systematic behaviour, and in so doing privileges strong patterns of socialization into that behaviour and tends to gloss over the numerous individual and group attempts at undermining dominant patterns and prevailing political and social dogma. Similarly, norm theory has nothing to say on the intricate patterns of interplay between repeated, stable patterns of behaviour and the continuous attempts at subverting that behaviour – the interplay between dominance and resistance, which is one aspect of translator behaviour I am particularly keen to highlight in my own work. Norm theory arguably also pays little attention to the political and social conditions that give rise to such patterns of dominance *and* resistance to them.

Another type of current theorizing that narrative theory allows us to move beyond is Lawrence Venuti's sweeping dichotomies of foreignizing and domesticating strategies (Venuti 1993, 1995), recast elsewhere as minoritizing and majoritizing strategies (Venuti 1998). Apart from reducing the rich variety of positions that translators adopt in relation to their texts, authors and societies, these dichotomies also obscure the shifting positions of translators within the same text – they reduce the intricate means by which a translator negotiates his or her way around various aspects of a text into a more-or-less straightforward choice of foreignizing versus domesticating strategy. Even a brief glance at some of the texts I have been examining in my own research suggests that translators oscillate within the same text between choices that Venuti would regard as domesticating and ones he would regard as foreignizing. And, importantly, this oscillation serves a purpose in the real world – it is neither random nor irrational.

To balance the emphasis in norm theory on abstract, repeated behaviour and the streamlining effect of Venuti's dichotomies, what we need is a framework that recognizes the varied, shifting and ongoingly negotiable positioning of individual translators in relation to their texts, authors, societies and dominant ideologies. Hence my interest in narrative theory and my attempt to apply it to a wide range of written translations and oral interpreting events. Without claiming that narrative theory can single-handedly address all the weaknesses of current theorizing on translation, nor suggesting that current theorizing (norm theory and Venuti's dichotomies included) is not productive in addressing a wide range of issues relevant to the behaviour of translators and interpreters, I see the main, interrelated strengths of narrative theory as follows.

First, narrative theory does not privilege essentialist and reductive categories such as race, gender, ethnicity and religion; instead, it acknowledges the ongoingly negotiable nature of our positioning in relation to social and political reality. Narrativity, as Hall et al. argue, "offers a way of conceptualising identity that is neither universal nor essentialist, but rather temporally and culturally specific"

(2003, 38). It thus allows us to move beyond the focus on supposedly inherent cultural differences and the type of identity politics that have informed much of the work on translation and interpreting so far, particularly work on cultural attributes and patterns of behaviour (for example, Katan 2004), on gender (Goddard 1990; Simon 1996; von Flotow 1997) and on sexuality (Harvey 1998, 2003a; Keenaghan 1998). Without dismissing the importance and worth of this type of work, I would argue that it is now time to move beyond it. Identity politics, and frameworks that thematize difference in general, are the last model we need at this precise moment in history, when pernicious theories such as Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" (1993, 1996) are striving to highlight, and indeed invent, a whole panorama of differences – not to empower oppressed groups in the tradition of identity politics, but to justify the most criminal and dangerous of foreign policies. These politically motivated theories of difference allow the likes of Huntington to claim, for instance, that there is such a thing as a "Muslim propensity toward violent conflict" (1996, 258) and that "[t]he survival of the West depends on Americans reaffirming their Western identity and Westerners accepting their civilization as unique not universal and uniting to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies" (1996, 20–1).

Pernicious theories and irresponsible foreign policies aside, it is also fair to point out that however attractive and potentially liberating in certain political contexts, identity politics has always suffered from some important limitations. The most serious of these is that it traditionally groups together people who share certain external attributes (women, blacks, homosexuals, Pakistanis) and disregards individual variation within the group. It also overdetermines the identities of individuals by giving precedence to one feature or attribute at the expense of others. What we need to be able to do instead is to locate individual translators and interpreters within the range of narratives they subscribe to and that inform their behaviour in the real world – including their discursive behaviour as translators and/or interpreters. This does not mean ignoring the obvious fact that our location in a particular cultural, racial or religious community at a given point in time is likely to influence our behaviour in specific ways. But narrative theory acknowledges that that influence is neither inevitable nor predictable. At this moment in time, for example, being Jewish could mean: (a) uncritical support for Israel and Zionism; (b) any number of variations on critical support for current Israeli policies; (c) refusing to self-identify as a Jew at all and taking no interest in the Middle East conflict whatsoever; (d) or, as is increasingly happening among large sections of the Jewish community, assuming a special responsibility to become heavily involved in activities designed to expose and undermine the Zionist enterprise. Even self-identifying as a Jew, then, does not tell us how a particular person might act in the real world, nor explain their behaviour, unless we know something about the kind of narratives to which they subscribe or can deduce them from the way they act and the discourse they produce.

Second, and following on from the above, narrative theory allows us to see social actors, including translators and interpreters, as real-life individuals rather

than theoretical abstractions. Whitebrook argues that theory in general "frequently fails to make the political agent concrete", and that "character is treated as a matter of the variables an observer must assess when trying to understand or predict anyone's behaviour" (2001, 15). Her critique certainly applies to theorizing about translation and interpreting, as does her proposal for adopting narrative theory as a way of breaking free from this abstraction:

> A turn to narratives allows for the de-personalized persons of theory, the bearers of a representative or typified identity, to be understood as separate persons – characters – with singular sets of characteristics, including but not confined to their political context and/or group identity.
>
> *(Whitebrook 2001, 15)*

Third, narrative theory allows us to explain behaviour in dynamic rather than static terms – it recognizes the complexity of being embedded in crisscrossing, even competing, narratives. Narrativity thus "embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space and . . . precludes categorical stability in action" (Somers and Gibson 1994, 65). There is no scope here for streamlining behaviour or choices into macro categories such as foreignizing versus domesticating, acculturating versus exoticizing, nor of course faithful versus free – not even within the space of a single text. Equally, because the actor is always "embedded" in relationships and stories, there is no question of assuming a privileged position from which we can claim "objectivity" or "neutrality" in relation to the narratives we are involved in translating, interpreting or indeed analysing. Narrative theory encourages us to reflect on and question the narratives we come in contact with and that shape our behaviour, but there is no assumption here that we can suppress our subjectivity or stand outside those narratives, even as we reason about them.

Fourth, and most importantly in my view, narrative theory recognizes the power of social structures and the workings of the "system" but does not preclude active resistance on a personal or group level. It pays equal attention to issues of dominance and resistance, to the ritual nature of interaction (in the tradition of Erving Goffman) as well as the means by which rituals are questioned and undermined. And finally, although hardly any of the work on narrativity in social and communication theory pays attention to issues of language, nor indeed translation, narrative theory does lend itself to being applied to both, and in a way that allows us to explain translational choices in relation to wider social and political contexts, but without losing sight of the individual text and event. This is one aspect of narrative theory that I have tried to elaborate in some detail in my own work and that I will attempt to demonstrate with an extended example at the end of this article.

Frames and framing

Narratives, as I explained above, are stories that we come to subscribe to – believe in or at least contemplate as potentially valid – and that therefore shape

our behaviour towards other people and the events in which we are embedded. As used here, narratives are not chronologies, not undifferentiated lists of happenings: they are stories that are temporally and causally constituted in such a way as to allow us to make moral decisions and act in the real world.

Somers (1992, 1994, 1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994) suggest that narratives are constituted through four interdependent features. *Temporality* means that narratives are embedded in time and space and derive much of their meaning from the temporal moment and physical site of the narration. *Relationality* means that it is impossible for the human mind to make sense of isolated events or of a patchwork of events that are not constituted as a narrative. Every element in a narrative depends for its interpretation on its place within the network of elements that make up the narrative; it cannot be interpreted in isolation. The third core feature of narrativity is *selective appropriation*. Given that it is impossible to weave a coherent story by including every detail of experience, narratives are necessarily constructed according to evaluative criteria that enable and guide selective appropriation of a set of events or elements from the vast array of open-ended and overlapping events that constitute experience. The final and most important core feature of narrativity is *causal emplotment*. Causal emplotment ''gives significance to independent instances, and overrides their chronological or categorical order'' (Somers 1997, 82). It allows us to turn a set of propositions into an intelligble sequence about which we can form an opinion, and thus charges the events depicted with moral and ethical significance (Baker 2006a, 65). It is our subscription to a particular pattern of causal emplotment in the Middle East narrative, for instance, that leads us to interpret another incident of suicide bombing in Israel as either a threat to Israeli security, providing evidence for the need for measures such as the Wall and targeted assassinations, or as an inevitable outcome of those very measures and hence providing ''evidence'' that the solution lies in adopting other alternatives. These alternatives, in turn, will vary depending on more specific patterns of causal emplotment that distinguish one individual's narrative from those of others, even within the same broad group of, say, political activists. Not all activists in the Palestine Solidarity Movement, for instance, necessarily agree that the solution to the conflict lies in simply ending the Occupation along the 1967 borders. Some insist that it lies in reconfiguring Palestine/Israel as a single secular state for all its citizens, the ''One State Solution'' as it has come to be known. Arguments for or against any solution are only coherent within the specific patterns of causal emplotment that distinguish one narrative from another.

For the above features of narrativity to become operative, and for a set of events to be constituted as a narrative with a specific pattern of causal emplotment, a considerable amount of discursive work has to be undertaken by those doing the narration. The notion of frame, and especially the more active concept of framing, can be productive in outlining some of the ways in which this discursive work is carried out. These notions are given several definitions in the literature, but broadly speaking they can be interpreted either passively, as ''understandings'' that *emerge* out of the interaction, or actively, as deliberate,

discursive moves designed to *anticipate* and guide others' interpretation of and attitudes towards a set of events. The first, generally passive, definition of frames is characteristic of the work of Erving Goffman, who argues that "an individual's framing of activity establishes meaningfulness for *him*" (1974, 345; emphasis added). Similar definitions can be found in the work of other scholars who follow Goffman's lead. Tannen and Wallat (1993, 60), for example, define frames as "a sense of what activity is being engaged in, how speakers mean what they say". The literature on social movements, by contrast, tends to treat framing as an active process of signification. For activists and those interested in studying their behaviour, the process of framing events for others is part and parcel of the phenomenon of activism; crucially, it involves setting up structures of *anticipation* that guide others' interpretation of events, usually as a direct challenge to dominant interpretations of the same events in a given society. This discursive work of framing events and issues for a particular set of addressees is important not only because it undermines dominant narratives of a given issue (the nuclear threat, Palestine, the so-called War on Terror), but also because it is a key strategy for forming networks and communities of activists, for enabling social movements to grow and attract adherents:

> While in daily life all social actors draw upon frames to engage in the production and maintenance of local meanings, frame analysts have recognized that the strategic process of frame construction and management is central to the mission of social movement organizations seeking to replace "a dominant belief system that supports collective action for change" (Gamson et al. 1982, 15). In this sense, framing processes provide a mechanism through which individuals can ideologically connect with movement goals and become potential participants in movement actions.
>
> *(Cunningham and Browning 2004, 348)*

The notion of framing is closely connected to the question of how narrative theory allows us to consider the immediate narrative elaborated in the text being translated or interpreted *and* the larger narratives in which the text is embedded, and how this in turn allows us to see translational choices not merely as local linguistic challenges but as contributing directly to the narratives that shape our social world. Here, we consider every choice – at least potentially – as a kind of index that activates a narrative, a story of what the world or some aspect of the world is like. Some choices, particularly those relating to how we label an event, place or group, as well as the way we position individuals and communities in social and political space through the use of pronouns and adverbs of place, among other things, allow us to frame the narrative for others, in the social movement, activist sense of framing.[2]

Translators and interpreters working between Chinese and English, for instance, are aware that the 1997 events in Hong Kong can be referred to either as *The Handover of Sovereignty*, the standard reference in English, or (literally)

as *The Return to the Motherland*, the standard reference in Chinese.[3] Also, they are generally aware that these choices do not exist in free variation but have serious implications in the real world. Similarly, in translating a text about the events of 1956 in the Middle East, one has to choose between two competing designations, neither of which poses a local linguistic challenge as such.[4] The first choice, prevalent in western discourse and embedded in a narrative that has currency in the West, is to refer to these events as *The Suez Canal Crisis*. The choice of *The Suez Canal Crisis* immediately activates the narrative of the invading powers: for Britain, France and Israel, it was useful and expedient to narrate these events as a political crisis. The designation that has currency in the Arabic-speaking world, on the other hand, and practically no currency in the West, is *The Tripartite Aggression*. This default choice in Arabic activates quite a different narrative framework, one that is embedded in the consciousness and alignments of those on the receiving end of that attack. Translators do not necessarily replace *The Suez Canal Crisis* with *The Tripartite Aggression* in rendering an English text into Arabic. They might reproduce the designation in a close translation, perhaps because they subscribe to a narrative of translation as a neutral and "professional" practice. But even then, their choice will have implications for promoting and legitimating one or the other narrative. And there are other choices: translators may leave the designation itself as it is but comment on it or even challenge it in the introduction or footnotes to the text. While the choice of *The Handover of Sovereignty* or *The Suez Canal Crisis* might frame the narrative in a particular way, this very frame can in turn be challenged, and the entire narrative *reframed*, at a variety of points or sites in and around the text.

The point, then, is not to treat any specific translational choice as random, with no implications in the real world. Nor does narrative theory encourage us to treat a given choice (such as *The Suez Canal Crisis*) as a realization of some broad, abstract norm linked to other abstract choices such as choosing to stay close to the syntactic structures of the source text because there is an overriding norm of adequacy rather than acceptability[5] in the target culture at a particular moment in time. The narrative theory framework encourages us to avoid these broad abstractions and to think of individual choices as embedded in and contributing to the elaboration of concrete political reality.

Sites and strategies of framing

Processes of (re)framing can draw on practically any linguistic or non-linguistic resource to set up an interpretive context for the reader or hearer. This may include exploiting paralinguistic devices such as intonation and typography, visual resources such as colour, image and layout, and of course linguistic devices such as tense shifts, deixis, code switching, and the use of euphemisms. Language users, including translators and interpreters, can also exploit features of narrativity (temporality, relationality, selective appropriation and causal emplotment) to frame or reframe a text or utterance for a set of addressees. Translators of written

text can do so in the body of the translation or, alternatively, around the translation. This distinction can be very important in some contexts because of the key role that the notions of accuracy and faithfulness tend to assume in the context of professional – and particularly politically sensitive – translation.

For instance, neoconservative organizations such as MEMRI,[6] which specializes in circulating translations of carefully selected Arabic source texts to elaborate a narrative of Arab societies as extremist, anti-semitic and a threat to western democracies, are very careful about the accuracy of their translations, since their credibility can easily be undermined if their opponents were to identify and publicize a list of errors in these translations, whether the errors in question are presented as deliberate or not. Most of the framing in which MEMRI and its close affiliate, Watching America,[7] engage is effected outside the text/translation proper. For a start, the narrative feature of selective appropriation allows MEMRI and Watching America to frame the Arab World as extremist and dangerous by simply choosing to translate the worst possible examples of Arabic discourse, which they also circulate to the media and Congress free of charge. Interestingly, MEMRI now has a special category of what they consistently call ''reformist'' writers: a few voices from the Arab World and Iran that are translated and quoted on the site now and again; these ''reformists'' argue for freedom of thought, women's rights, and so forth. The occasional ''cosmetic'' selection of a non-extremist source serves to give a veneer of balance to MEMRI's coverage, at the same time as reinforcing the overall portrayal of the Arab World and Iran as a hotbed of extremism that suppresses the very few sane voices in the region that are now magnanimously being given space on an American site.

Secondly, while keeping the actual translation very close to the original, MEMRI and Watching America can change the title of a text to frame the narrative as extremist, threatening or simply ''discursively alien''. For example, a recent English translation of an article from the Palestinian newspaper *Alhayat Aljadeeda* is posted on the Watching America website under the title ''Oh, America . . . Oh, Empire of Contradictions''.[8] Closely backtranslated, the original Arabic title is far less flowery and ''exotic'': it reads ''Signs on the Road: America and Democracy!!!''.[9]

Third, Watching America inserts images, complete with suitable captions, in the English text that frame the translated narrative as part of the broad, meta-narrative of the War on Terror. Figures 6.1 and 6.2, for instance, together with the accompanying captions, appear in the translation of the article from *Alhayat Aljadeeda*.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, each English translation of an article from an Arab newspaper is accompanied by a suitably annotated link to a video clip, provided by MEMRI, which acts as a further framing device, encouraging the reader to interpret even the most reasonable of Arabic discourse as one that hides an extremist subtext. The article from *Alhayat Aljadeeda* is accompanied by a video link with suitable annotations, as shown in Figure 6.3.

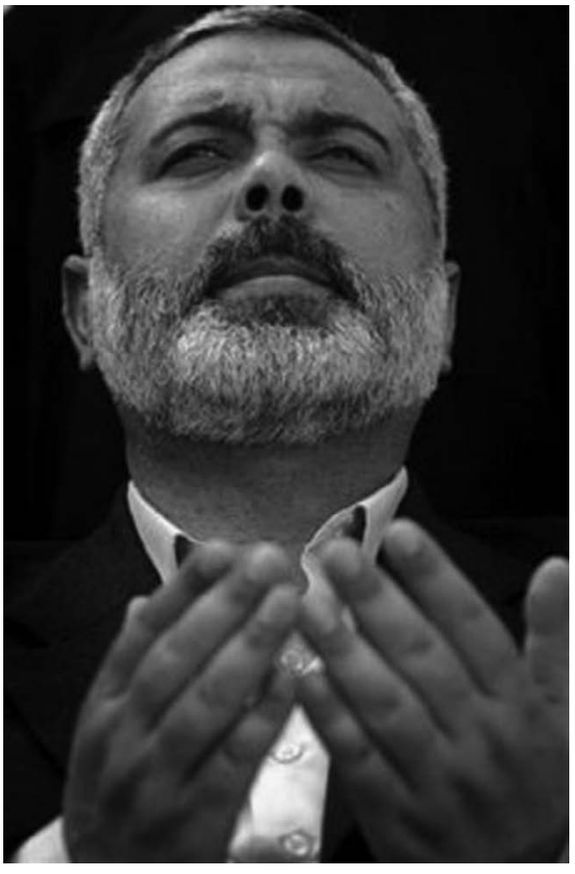

FIGURE 6.1 Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh prays before a speech, most likely for funds . . . most likely to come from Iran[10]

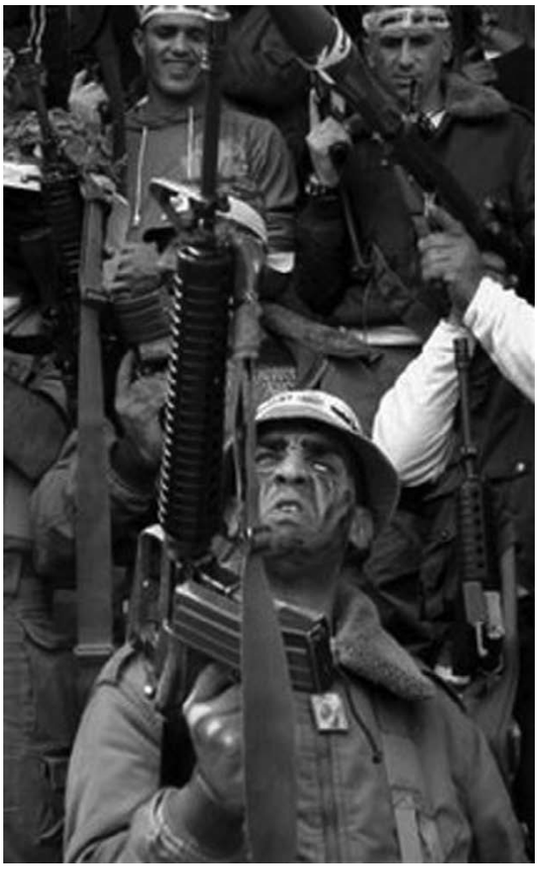

FIGURE 6.2 A militant from the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade on the West Bank, during an event to remember one of the many acts of violence that have taken place there

VIDEO FROM PALESTINE: PRAISE FOR SUICIDE BOMBING AT HAMAS FUNDRAISER

Iqra TV, Palestine: Excerpts from a fundraising speech delivered by Yemenite Cleric Abd Al-Majid Al-Zindani, 23 March, 00:08:18, via MEMRI

"After efforts, policies, and plans failed, and when people almost despaired, the whole world was surprised by a certain decision of Hamas. What was the decision? An intifada. An Intifada? Where? In Palestine. In Palestine!"

FIGURE 6.3 Yemenite Cleric Abd Al-Majid Al-Zindani. Annotated video clip accompanying *Alhayat Aljadeeda* article, courtesy of MEMRI

Interestingly, translations from other languages do not receive this treatment: translations from Chinese, Spanish, French, Dutch and a host of other languages are offered on the site *without* links to MEMRI videos that serve to demonize the community in question. The only other language that receives this special treatment (or is subjected to this framing strategy), as may be expected, is Persian.

Apart from images, captions, and the manipulation of titles, paratexts are an important site of framing in book translations: they include cover images and blurb, introductions, prefaces and footnotes. Cover images and blurbs are not generally provided by the translator,[11] but prefaces, introductions and footnotes normally are. Two Arabic translations of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* were released within a very short period of time, the first in 1998 in Egypt (translated by Tal'at Al-Shayib) and the second in 1999 in Libya (translated by Malik Obeid Abu Shuhayaa and Mahmoud Mohamed Khalaf). Both translations feature extensive introductions. The Libyan translation carries two. The first, by both translators, consists of four pages and offers a summary of the content of the book, tells us that it has been extremely controversial, and goes on to state the following (Huntington 1999, 11; my translation):

> Given what we have noted of the chaotic structure and incoherence of the text and the flaws in the methodology adopted by the author, and in an effort to identify the underlying agenda of the the clash-of-civilizations thesis, it was necessary to deconstruct the mechanisms and assumptions of the clash-of-civilizations discourse. Dr. Malik Obeid Abu Shuhayaa [one of the two translators] has therefore prepared a study of the political and intellectual assumptions of the clash-of-civilizations discourse and the mechanisms it relies on in outlining its conceptual apparatus, persuading others, and acquiring supporters. This study is entitled ''An Initial Contribution towards Awareness of the Other: The Assumptions and Mechanisms of the Clash of Civilizations''.

The study itself, written by one of the translators, as indicated in the above quote, constitutes the second introduction. It runs into an impressive 49 pages and directly challenges Huntington and his theory. The Egyptian translation released in 1998 has a 19-page introduction, not by the translator but by an Arab intellectual (Salah Qunswah), similarly undermining the thesis of the book and challenging its main tenets (Huntington 1998). All three introductions (two in the Libyan and one in the Egyptian translation) precede the Arabic versions of Huntington's own preface to his book and pre-empt the reader's response to the arguments presented in the source text. They frame the translated texts that follow them in very negative terms, encouraging the reader to interpret Huntington's thesis from a specific angle even before they start reading it.

Footnotes are often also provided by translators and can serve a similar framing function. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (Lawrence and

Howarth 2005), for instance, offers heavily annotated translations of Bin Laden's speeches, making extensive use of footnotes to reframe his personal narrative – and through this the narratives of Islamic fundamentalism, the so-called clash of civilizations, and the "War on Terror" – as a direct outcome of western foreign policies rather than the product of a mentality that, in the War-on-Terror discourse, is normally depicted as sheer, inexplicable evil. In his review of the volume in the *London Review of Books*, Charles Glass notes that Bin Laden "does not appear to be deranged, as his detractors insist he is. His message is plain: leave the Muslim world alone, and it will leave you alone. Kill Muslims, and they will kill you" (Glass 2006, 14). How is this impression achieved?

The book is edited by Bruce Lawrence but the individual speeches and statements are translated by James Howarth. The main introduction by the editor (Lawrence and Howarth 2005, xi-xxiii) and the Translator's Note (Lawrence and Howarth 2005, ix-x) make it clear that the editor explicitly takes responsibility for the mini introductions provided at the beginning of individual translations of Bin Laden's statements, and the translator for footnotes accompanying each translation. Together, the introductions and the footnotes frame Bin Laden as rational, as well as witty, educated, and lucid. For instance, the mini introduction by the editor to a letter from Bin Laden posted on the internet on 6 October 2002, and appearing in the collection under the title "To the Americans" (Lawrence and Howarth 2005, 160–72), tells us the following:

> This portrait of the US follows a call to the American people to convert to Islam. Fantastical as the prospect of such a conversion must be – as the letter itself implies ("I doubt you will do so") – the appeal has a practical function within the umma. Its purpose is to answer Muslim critics of 9/11 who argued that al-Qaeda did not offer Americans an opportunity to convert to Islam before attacking them, thereby violating God's ruling: "We never punish until we have sent a message." The exhaustive detail of the letter is bin Laden's proof to Muslims that he has explored every avenue to resolve this war by peaceful means, and given proper warning of the destruction that will be visited upon Americans if they refuse to listen to his advice.
>
> *(Lawrence and Howarth 2005, 160)*

A footnote by the translator to another statement made by Bin Laden in an interview with an Australian journal and appearing earlier in the same collection ("The Saudi Regime"; Lawrence and Howarth 2005, 31–43) makes the same point, striving again to depict Bin Laden as rational and as possessing considerable political acumen (Lawrence and Howarth 2005, 32):

> [22]Throughout the volume, the "invitation to Islam" denotes the Arabic term *dawa*. *Dawa* is particularly significant in the context of bin Laden's later statements to America and its allies after 9/11, in which he offers them

> a chance to convert before further assaults, thereby "clearing the decks in Islamic terms: he has warned and invited before attacking."
>
> *(Michael Scheuer, Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror [Potomac, 2005], p. 153)*

In addition to portraying Bin Laden as rational (rather than deranged), the introductions and footnotes also give us an impression of him as "human", smart, witty. The translator in particular makes a point of explaining witty word-plays in Bin Laden's discourse that undermine his normal portrayal as "our enemy" – we do not normally credit our enemies with verbal dexterity or a sense of humour. Here are two examples. The first (Lawrence and Howarth 2005, 194) comes from what the editor, in his mini introduction, describes as "the first and only statement of bin Laden that is framed as a sermon". It is part of a 53-minute audiotape published on various websites and in the *al-Hayat* newspaper.

Main Text

They sought to be with God, and deprived themselves of sleep while injustice was being done. They poured out the water of life, not the water of shame.[24]

Footnote

[24]This is a play on words in Arabic; "ma' al-hayat" ("water of life") and "ma' al-mahya" ("water of shame") use variations on the same root.

The second example comes at the end of an audio-taped statement aired on al-Jazeera on 4 January 2004 ("Resist the New Rome"; Lawrence and Howarth 2005, 236):

Main Text

If Bush's call for peace was honest, why hasn't he spoken about the one who slit open the bellies of pregnant women in Sabra and Shatila or the planner of the surrender process,[3] the "man of peace" [Ariel Sharon]; why did he not just come out and say "we hate freedom and we kill for the sake of it"?

Footnote

[3]Bin Laden is making a pun here. "peace process" is "amaliyat al-salam", but here he talks about "amaliyat al-istislam," the surrender process. The word for surrender is a cognate of the word for peace.

Footnotes such as the above, together with arguments and descriptions outlined both in the general introduction to the volume as well as mini introductions to individual translations, cumulatively serve to portray Bin Laden as rational and competent, although the editor makes it clear that this does not

mean he approves of Bin Laden's methods of expressing his grievances. The point he makes, and which the individual choices made by the translator indirectly support, is that a very different narrative, with a different pattern of causal emplotment, can account for the current ills of the world. Rather than explaining the so-called War on Terror as a necessary response to the horrors inflicted on an innocent West by deranged extremists from the Islamic World, this new narrative of Bin Laden suggests that the West is not innocent, and that its so-called War on Terror and similar atrocities are responsible for the horrific but "rational" extremism we are now witnessing. This narrative resists the effort to divest violence of all historicity by portraying figures like Bin Laden simply as deranged extremists.

Framing within the translation: an extended example

An Arabic documentary entitled *Jenin Jenin* was directed by Mohamed Bakri and released in 2002 following the Israeli attack on the Jenin camp in the Occupied West Bank. The documentary is shot in the Jenin camp in Arabic but is clearly aimed at an international audience: it was subtitled into English, Hebrew, French, Spanish and Italian (Mohamed Bakri, personal communication). The version with English subtitles seems to be aimed predominantly at an American audience, as we will see shortly. The following examples from the documentary demonstrate two attempts at (re)framing that respond to larger narratives circulating beyond the immediate text and cannot be explained by resorting to norm theory or Venuti's foreignizing versus domesticating dichotomy. Both examples are discussed from different angles in Baker (2006a, 99–100 and 64–6).

The Vietnam frame

The first instance of (re)framing activates a narrative framework that seems to have been judged as more effective in the target context. At one point in the documentary, an old Palestinian man expresses his shock at what happened in Jenin and the world's apparent indifference and reluctance to intervene to protect Palestinians. He ends his contribution by saying, literally in Arabic, "What can I say, by God, by God, our house/home is no longer a house/home". The subtitle for this frame is "What can I say? Not even Vietnam was as bad as this" (see Figure 6.4).

The decision to replace the original reference to the destruction of Palestinian homes with a reference to Vietnam would traditionally be interpreted in translation studies as an attempt to "acculturate" the source text, to render it more intelligible to the target audience (in this case envisaged as predominantly American). But this is not a very productive or satisfying explanation. Had this been the primary motivation here, it would have made much more sense to refer to a more recent and hence more salient event, such as 9/11. After all, Vietnam arguably has less resonance among a young American audience than 9/11, and appealing to the

FIGURE 6.4 Screen shot from Jenin Jenin

memory of the latter is thus more likely to secure the emotional involvement and sympathy of a wider section of American viewers. To appreciate the motivation for this translational choice and its implications, it is necessary to refer to the wider narratives in circulation at that time, in Palestine and internationally.

First, the immediate narrative of what actually happened in the Jenin camp and elsewhere in Occupied Palestine in April 2002 was and continues to be heavily contested – from why the Israeli Defence (*sic*) Forces invaded the camps, to how many houses they demolished and how many people they killed, and so on. One of the discursive loci of contestation at the time concerned the widespread description of the Jenin event in the English-speaking media as an ''incursion''. Activists in the Solidarity movement insisted that ''incursion'' was far too sanitized a description for the full-blown and sustained assault that left the camp in ruins and many people dead. The reference to Vietnam in the above subtitle reframes the event as a war of aggression, rather than a minor raid as the term ''incursion'' tends to suggest. Vietnam was certainly no incursion: it is widely perceived as a vicious and bloody war, among large sectors of the American public as well as internationally.

Second, one narrative that continues to have considerable currency among Palestinians as well as the growing international solidarity movement in support of Palestinian rights is that America is as responsible for Israeli atrocities as Israel itself – that Israel could not possibly get away with its oppression of Palestinians were it not for the extensive support it receives from the United States. The choice of Vietnam here activates that public narrative. Far from being either foreignizing or domesticating, the choice to evoke the narrative of Vietnam encodes both accommodation to dominance and resistance to it. It accommodates to dominance by opting for a reference (Vietnam) that has resonance for the dominant American audience, rather than one that can equally signal unjust and bloody

acts of aggression but would have no resonance for that dominant public: Kashmir, for instance, or even Darfur. It encodes resistance by simultaneously framing America as aggressor and signalling that the American audience is complicit in the injustices perpetrated by their government – and can choose to challenge them, just as they did in the case of Vietnam.

The secular frame

Another interesting attempt at reframing the wider Palestinian narrative by recasting aspects of the speech of several Palestinians interviewed in this documentary concerns the treatment of the recurrent word *shaheed*. The standard equivalent for this word in English is *martyr*, but this is problematic for two reasons. First, *shaheed* does not semantically map onto *martyr* in full. In Arabic, *shaheed* is generally used to refer to anyone who is killed violently, especially in war, whether they choose to be involved in that war or not, and irrespective of their religion. It therefore does not have the overtones of militancy and extremism that the term *martyr* has come to acquire in English, in connection with the Arab and Islamic world.[12] Second, *martyr* readily evokes associations of Islamic fundamentalism in this type of context, and using it repeatedly would play into the hands of those who would portray the Middle East conflict as a religious war, fuelled by young deranged Muslims in search of virgins in paradise. The subtitles consistently opt for different equivalents when the word *shaheed* is used by Palestinians interviewed on the documentary, as in the following examples (see Baker 2006a, 64–6 for further examples):

Example 1

"لسه بندوَّر شهدا من تحت الأرض".

Backtranslation
We are still pulling **martyrs** from underneath the ground.

English subtitle
We are still pulling **victims** out of the rubble.

Example 2

"متخلفين عقلياً استشهدوا عندنا، معاقين استشهدوا عندنا، أطفال استشهدوا عندنا، نساء استشهدوا عندنا".

Backtranslation
We have mentally retarded people who have been **martyred**; we have disabled people who have been **martyred**; we have children who have been **martyred**, we have women who have been **martyred**.

English subtitle
They **killed** some mentally disabled people, children and women in the camp.

The choice of equivalents such as *victims* and *killed* in the above examples (and *corpses* and *dead* in other instances) rather than *martyr* helps to frame the larger Palestinian and Arab narrative in more secular terms.

There are two exceptions in the entire documentary. The first occurs towards the end in a scene involving a young Palestinian girl about seven or eight years old who had been expressing defiance and determination to survive throughout the documentary. She draws an extended analogy between the Jenin camp and a ''tall, tall towering tree'', which ''consists of leaves'', with every leaf ''inscribed with the name of a *shaheed*, a *muqawim* [resistance fighter]'' (my translation). The subtitles retain the metaphor and the reference to ''martyrs'' in this instance, arguably because the innocent-looking, if defiant, young girl does not exactly fit the image of a deranged extremist in pursuit of paradise:

> The camp is like a tall, eminent tree. The tree has leaves, and each leaf of the tree bears the name of a martyr.[13]

The second instance in which the term *martyr* is used occurs in the final credits, and is therefore not a ''subtitle''. The documentary starts with the following dedication (reproduced here as is, without correction):

> Dedicated to
> The Executive Producer of ''Jenin''
> IYAD SAMOUDI
> who was murdered at alyamoun
> at the end of the filming by
> Israelian soliders on 23/06/2003
> Mohamed Bakri

The final credits include the following text:

> Executive Producer
> The martyr
> Iyad Samoudi

To sum up, narrative theory allows us to make sense of these apparently conflicting strategies, such as those relating to the choice of equivalents for *shaheed* at different points in the *Jenin Jenin* documentary, as well as ones (like the choice of *Vietnam* above) that are simultaneously foreignizing and domesticating. By contrast to static, power-insensitive concepts like ''norms'', narrative theory recognizes that dominance and resistance not only shape our behaviour and discursive choices, but that they are also always in a relationship of tension. This tension is often played out discursively, and the interplay between the two can produce a range of choices that are difficult to streamline. Rather than ignoring the choices that do not fit into the repeated pattern, recognizing this interplay

between dominance and resistance allows us to elaborate a more complex picture of the positioning of translators and to embed them in concrete political reality.

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Notes

1 See Baker (2005, 2006b).
2 Framing, in this sense, is not restricted to activism, however – although even this of course depends on how one defines activism. Some of the examples I discuss later come from sources I would personally regard as too pernicious to be labelled "activist". They include advocacy groups like the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) that set out to demonize Arab and Islamic communities and actively pit the West against the rest.
3 Similar choices in the Chinese context include *The Tiananmen Massacre* versus *The Tiananmen Incident* or *The Tiananmen Protests*. The source for these examples is Dr Kevin Lin, lead interpreter for the Foreign Office in Britain.
4 In 1956, Egypt was attacked by Britain, France and Israel following Egypt's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez.
5 In Toury's (1980, 1995) framework, the initial norm that governs any translation involves a choice between adequacy and acceptability. A translation will either subscribe to the norms of the source text, language or culture (and will hence be adequate) or to the norms of the target language and culture (and will hence be acceptable). Adherence to source norms determines a translation's adequacy with respect to the source text; adherence to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability within that culture.
6 See www.memri.org. For a detailed discussion of MEMRI and its translation activities, see Baker (2006a, 73–6, 108–9).
7 See www.watchingamerica.org.
8 www.watchingamerica.com/alhayataljadeeda000003.shtml.
9 www.alhayat-j.com/details.php?opt=1&id=22102&cid=394
10 Images and captions of Figures 6.1–6.4 are in Watching America's English translation of *Alhayat Aljadeeda* article, retrieved 25 October 2006 from http://watchingamerica.com/alhayataljadeeda000003shtml. The author has made every effort to trace the copyright holders and will deal with any problems that may be brought to her attention.
11 For interesting analyses of covers and blurbs of published translations, see Watts (2000), Harvey (2003b), Asimakoulas (2005).
12 *Martyr* of course has very different associations in other contexts, for instance in the discourse of Christianity.
13 Note that the subtitles nevertheless tone the image down by omitting "resistance fighter".

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7

ETHICS OF RENARRATION*

Mona Baker is interviewed by Andrew Chesterman

CHESTERMAN: Your recent book *Translation and Conflict. A Narrative Account* (2006a) raises some interesting and important issues concerning the practice and ethics of translation and interpreting. You argue that translation is especially significant in conflict situations, and (like most human inventions, I suppose) can be used both for good and for ill. It is thus important to consider both what is translated and how it is translated, and one way to do this is via narrative theory. I'll bring up some queries about narrative theory later, but let's start with some basic assumptions.

One of your fundamental assumptions is that translations (and translators) can never be absolutely neutral, objective, since every act of translation involves an interpretation – just as no observation of any scientific data is ever entirely theory- free. This reminds me of one of the starting points of the so-called 'Manipulation School' of translation studies in the 1980s (see e.g. Hermans 1985). They too argued that translators inevitably manipulate as they translate, and took many examples, mostly from literary translation, to illustrate this point. How do you see the relation between your approach and theirs?

BAKER: As with almost any writing on translation (or indeed writing on anything else), there is always some overlap with what others have written or argued. The particular overlap you point to with the so-called Manipulation School also exists with the work of postcolonial theorists, feminist scholars of translation, much of what goes under the banner of linguistic approaches (see, for instance, Mason 1994), work on dialogue interpreting (Wadensjö 1992/1998, Mason 1999, etc.) and many other types of theorizing on translation and

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interpreting. The difference lies in how this claim is elaborated, specifically: (a) the type of data one examines in order to support the claim, (b) the conceptual apparatus that is applied to the analysis of this data, and (c) the degree of self-reflexivity demonstrated by the analyst. In the case of, say, the Manipulation School, as you have chosen to call it, the data are strictly literary, the conceptual apparatus consists largely of one or another version of system theory, and (to my mind, at least) there is no specific effort to reflect on the analyst's own position. Lefevere (1992) is a typical example.

In *Translation and Conflict*, I drew on examples from a variety of genres, mostly non-literary – examples not only of political conflict, an area to some extent shared with postcolonial theorists, but specifically of *contemporary* political conflict, including the so-called 'War on Terror', state terrorism, Guantánamo, Israeli atrocities in Jenin and other parts of Palestine, bin Laden, Kosovo, etc. Scholars of translation by and large tend to shy away from dealing with issues relating to ongoing contemporary conflict of this type because they are inevitably controversial: consensus has not yet been reached on who is the victim and who is the oppressor, as it has in the case of South Africa or Nazi Germany, for instance. There is also still an element of risk – sometimes very high risk – involved in discussing these contemporary conflicts. The question of risk aside, I believe controversy is healthy, and that it is productive for the discipline to engage with issues that give rise to disagreement, even passionate disagreement, and for scholars using examples from such contexts to be open about their own positioning.

In terms of conceptual apparatus – perhaps you will want to come back to this in later questions – essentially narrative theory, or the version of it that I tried to elaborate in *Translation and Conflict*, offers new insights that simply have not been explored before in the discipline. It illuminates different aspects of translational behaviour and offers fresh explanations for it. One of its strengths is precisely the fact that it encourages self-reflexivity on the part of the analyst – it makes you constantly aware that you are not analysing other people's narratives from a privileged position but from a specific narrative location that restricts your own vision in specific ways. It also provides a basis for elaborating an ethics of translation, an issue that I tried to tackle in the final chapter of the book by drawing on Walter Fisher's work, commonly referred to as the 'Narrative Paradigm'. (See e.g. Fisher 1987.)

CHESTERMAN: Would you agree that the Manipulation scholars were descriptive, whereas you are trying to go beyond description towards some kind of prescription? As Marx said, we do not only need to interpret the world, we need to change it, right? Do you see yourself as lining up with scholars who have challenged a purely descriptive approach and argued for a more engaged, committed translation practice? (For instance, Peter Newmark with his insistence on the value of truth, Lawrence Venuti's advocation of foreignization strategies, feminist translators . . .).

BAKER: We do indeed need to change the world, especially at this point in history. But even those who think they are not out to change the world are constantly trying to change it, at the very least to change the direction of research within the discipline or change aspects of professional practice – towards what they view as 'optimal' modes of research or higher levels of professionalism. All this is also part of the world, so it's a question of how broadly you cast your net and what you regard as 'the world'.

It is also true, I think, that there is an element of prescription in *all* theoretical writing, however detached and 'descriptive' it attempts to be. It's a question of degree, and of whether scholars are prepared to be explicit about their agendas in prescribing, however subtly, a particular brand of research.

Even within what you might call a 'committed' approach, there are different levels of prescription. Venuti, for instance, strongly advocates specific strategies of translation in specific socio-cultural contexts. This is very different from the approach I have tried to develop in *Translation and Conflict*, particularly in the final chapter, where I attempt to apply Walter Fisher's work to translation. Fisher deals with ethical issues in a detailed way, and I have found him very useful in reconstructing the path along which individuals might proceed in making ethical decisions. Unlike the work of scholars like Berman and Venuti, in using Fisher's work my priority has not been to prescribe what is ethical *per se*, but rather to find a way of reflecting on how one arrives at deciding what is ethical in any given situation, translational or otherwise. I think this brings in a different insight and approach to ethics – one that is less rigid (to my mind) and more accommodating of different takes on the same issue, from potentially equally ethical perspectives. There is still an element of prescription, naturally, if only in terms of insisting that we must reflect on our behaviour and be ethically accountable to ourselves and others in our work as translators and translation scholars, as we are in other walks of life. To cease to be prescriptive in this sense would be to cease to make moral and ethical judgements, which would amount to becoming a non-person!

I don't see myself as lining up with anyone or any group in particular, but perhaps the scholar whose work I have most affinity with is Maria Tymoczko. What I like about Maria's work is the combination of commitment and reflexivity, both underpinned by a descriptive framework of the type that maintains a broad vision despite meticulous attention to detail, and does not pursue what I regard as naïve notions of detachment and objectivity. But I also have much affinity with and great admiration for the work of a number of other scholars, especially Carol Maier, Ian Mason and Moira Inghilleri.

Yes, I would argue for a more engaged, committed translation practice, and translation scholarship. This is particularly important at this juncture in history, when translators and interpreters are heavily engaged in mediating a wide range of violent political conflicts and are themselves being targeted for killing and arrest, where some translators have participated in torturing prisoners in places like Abu Ghraib (see e.g. Zernike 2004), and

when an increasing number of professional translators and interpreters are coming together to form groups that set out to use their language skills to effect political change. I am thinking here of groups like Babels, ECOS and Tlaxcala, among others (see Chapter 7 of *Translation and Conflict*, my article in *The Massachusetts Review*, 2006b, and the forthcoming article in the collection edited by Esperança Bielsa Mialet and Chris Hughes). As I have argued in the latter article, developments in the real world of translation and interpreting have now clearly outstripped any attempt at political engagement we have seen in the discipline thus far, and I believe we must start to make a serious effort to engage with these developments if we are to maintain credibility, both in the academy and among professionals.

CHESTERMAN: Yes, Tymoczko (1999:110) indeed talks about translation being a 'commissive act'. But she is referring to the translator's implicit promise that the translation does indeed represent a source text. This leads us to consider some of the interesting consequences of the position you put forward, for other aspects of translation studies. Take the concept of equivalence, for example. Does this depend on an untenable assumption of objective neutrality? Do you agree with the scholars who seem to have thrown the idea of equivalence out of the window, or would you like to keep it? Is it of any use, theoretically? If we continue to use it, how should we define it? If we reject it, what alternative concepts could we use instead in investigating the relations between source and target texts?

BAKER: Tymoczko has written on political engagement on several occasions and from different perspectives (see for instance her article 'Translation and Political Engagement' in *The Translator*, 2000, and her book *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 2007). She argues, and I agree, that political engagement in the context of translation is not tied to textual interventions (though these are not ruled out). Boéri (in press) makes the same point with respect to the work of Babels, the group of conference interpreters who service the World Social Forum. Political engagement in their case is a matter of choosing to volunteer their time and effort to support linguistic diversity within the WSF, and in so doing intervene in the way in which the Forum develops dynamically over time, to enrich the political debates that can be initiated within that space and the range of voices that can contribute to shaping an agenda of resistance. There is still a textual dimension here. For example, Babels' 'Lexicon Project' involves "building glossaries with 'politically responsible' equivalents for sensitive or innovative terms of the language of alter-globalization" (Boéri, in press). The use of 'equivalents' is interesting here, since you raised the issue of equivalence in your question. Equivalent to what? These terms are not selected or recommended in relation to specific source texts, but in relation to events in the world and to an agenda of resistance. This means, presumably (though I have no idea whether Babels volunteers have actually considered this question) that if an Africaans speaker uses the term 'Eskimo', and assuming the relevant terminology is covered in

the Babels' Lexicon, the interpreter into English would use the more politically responsible term 'Inuit' (or 'Inuktitut' for the language). Equivalence here would have to mean something like 'in tune with what is deemed moral and ethically responsible from a particular narrative location'.

There is also another important point to be made here, and which has been raised by both Tymoczko and Boéri, namely that, as Boéri puts it, we have a tendency "to view the individual translator as the single motor of change, thus downplaying the collective dimension of both translation and activism". Political engagement is not something the individual translator practises in a vacuum, and in relation to just a text. It inevitably involves collaboration with other individuals and groups; indeed the term 'engagement' itself signals this (you have to engage with others, not just with abstract ideas). Babels, Tlaxcala, ECOS, Translators for Peace and similar groups demonstrate precisely this sort of political engagement on the part of translators and interpreters. These are individuals who come together to put their linguistic skills at the service of specific political agendas. And the groups they form in turn interact with other groups who promote similar agendas (for instance Tlaxcala works closely with Axis of Logic, a separate group of activists who do not focus on the issue of linguistic diversity).

I don't think we should ditch the term 'equivalence'. If we did it would be very difficult to compare source and target texts, an exercise which will continue to remain very important to the discipline, and especially in training translators and interpreters. But we should take a more 'relaxed' attitude to it, adopting different definitions of the term in different contexts. As long as we are explicit about how we are using the term on any given occasion, and as long as we alert students and remind ourselves of the inherently problematic nature of the concept, I see no particular difficulty in continuing to use it where it might prove serviceable.

CHESTERMAN: So equivalence need not be defined a priori, as Toury has argued. But there is also a more serious question in the background here, which has to do with mediation. Translators and interpreters are commonly assumed to be mediators. For some scholars, this point is also theoretically central. Ubaldo Stecconi (e.g. 2004), in his semiotic analysis of the fundamentals of translation, suggests that it is ultimately composed of three basic elements: similarity, difference, and mediation. Does the approach that you explore in your book threaten this idea, of translators as mediators? I have recently seen the publicity flier for a new book called *Translation as Intervention* (Munday 2007). I have not read this book yet, but the theme seems to reflect the kind of position which you take yourself. Are we witnessing a kind of farewell to the idea of translation as mediation? Or would you say that although mediation is often an appropriate goal, it is not always enough: translators should sometimes do more than merely mediate? Or would you like to replace the notion of mediation by some other basic element? I know from your website that you are critical of the metaphor of translators being 'bridge-builders' between cultures. What alternative metaphor would you prefer?

BAKER: Mediation is one of those terms that are used everywhere but rarely defined. But since you specifically refer to Ubaldo's work, and since he does define the term, let's consider his definition and its implications. Ubaldo's concern is to distinguish translation from non-translation. He argues that mediation is one of three logico-semiotic conditions of translation, the other two being similarity and difference. From this semiotic perspective, he explains mediation as "speaking on behalf of another" (a person speaking on behalf of another person, a text speaking on behalf of another text). In this sense, mediation would be the same as reporting what someone else has said or written, in the same or another language, in speech or in writing. We all assume the task of a mediator in this sense at different times and in different contexts. Does this mean we do not intervene in this 'mediation'? Do we just repeat the words we heard or read verbatim, or do we interpret them from a particular vantage point and report them (selectively, to varying degrees) in a manner that is sensitive to contextual factors, including our own sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate, and what is ethical or unethical? Sometimes the most ethical thing to do (judged from a particular narrative location) is not to speak on behalf of another at all – it depends on who this 'other' is and what they want you to say on their behalf; or what kind of 'narrative' a source text elaborates and whether you want to give that narrative currency and legitimacy in a different environment; or whether even if you agree with what the speaker or text says, in your judgement it would be unproductive to repeat it as is, because it would be misunderstood in the target context, or would cause unnecessary hurt and offence, or could be unfairly used against one party in the interaction, etc. All this is a form of intervention, one that any responsible translator will want to make use of at some point in their career. Intervention can also mean proceeding with the mediation, and being as 'faithful' as possible in 'speaking on behalf of another', but at the same time distancing yourself from their ideas, even challenging them directly. Can you imagine a translator of *Mein Kampf*, for instance, not writing a preface or similar in which they set out their position in relation to this text?

Intervention is inherent in the act of translation and interpreting, as it is inherent in any act of reporting. A person who simply repeats what they heard other people say verbatim would be a social liability, even if, for example, they have been sent to a meeting explicitly as a rapporteur. They would also have to be a machine to be able to regurgitate without interpreting, without selecting and deselecting elements of what was said, and without weighting the importance and significance of some themes and comments according to their own understanding of what the speaker(s) meant – which may not be the same as the speaker's own understanding of what they said. Intervention means all of this, not just political intervention of the type that activist translators like members of Babels and Tlaxcala engage in.

So I wouldn't particularly want to replace the notion of mediation with anything else. It is not the term that is the problem, it's the way we understand it. As for the various metaphors we use in talking about translation, it

is true that I find the 'bridge building' metaphor particularly naive (I have used it myself in the past, of course, so I am not excluding myself from this criticism!). What I find particularly objectionable about it is the way it is used to suggest that there is something inherently good about translation, and by implication about translators. This romantic assumption only helps to intensify our blind spots and discourages us from confronting the complexity of our positioning in society. If I were to opt for a metaphor that avoids this tendency to romanticize translation and that reflects the agency of the translator, I would go for translation as renarration.

CHESTERMAN: What implications does your approach have for the relations between translators and clients? Personally, I think that the roles of the client and initiator (not synonymous) are rather undertheorized in our field. Where are the limits of the client's responsibility, as opposed to the translator's? Where does the responsibility of the translator end, and that of the client begin? Does the client's responsibility circumscribe that of the translator? And how much does your own position depend on which side the client is?

BAKER: You are right to want to distinguish between the client and the initiator. Translators often initiate their own translation projects, and they often intervene in these texts in a multitude of ways. They also intervene in texts that have been commissioned by clients. Whether you or I think their intervention is right or wrong does not alter the facts on the ground: the evidence is overwhelming. So, let's be clear that what we are debating here are our personal assessments of right and wrong, what we think should happen, rather than what is actually happening around us all the time.

Like any relationship between human beings, the relationship between translators and clients should, ideally, be one based on mutual respect. This would rule out – for a start – working with a client for whom you have no respect; I would not translate for the CIA, for instance, though I know very many translators do. Having said this, some translators clearly do not have the luxury of choosing not to work with specific clients. Translators in Iraq, for instance, don't have many options at the moment. They have to feed and clothe their families under extremely difficult conditions. If you do end up having to work for a client you do not trust or respect, especially a client who is invading your country and killing and torturing your people, then in my view it is perfectly legitimate to use your linguistic (and other) skills to undermine him or her, or their collective institutions. Michael Cronin puts it very nicely in a 2002 paper:

> The role of interpreters throughout history has been crucially determined by the prevailing hierarchical constitution of power and the position of interpreters in it. In this respect, if you or your people are seriously disadvantaged by the hierarchy, the most ethical position can be to be utterly

> "unfaithful" in interpreting in the name of another fidelity, a fidelity of resistance.
>
> *(Cronin 2002: 58–59)*

The rights of the client (meaning the individual or institution that hired the translator or interpreter) have to be assessed and balanced against the rights of other participants. Just because the client is paying doesn't mean they are entitled to more loyalty or respect from the translator – translators, in my view, should not behave like mercenaries. I am reminded here of an example I used in *Translation and Conflict*, taken from a paper by Marco Jacquemet (2005), about interpreting for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees in Tirana, Albania, in 2000. Because many Albanians were reportedly trying to get into Kosovo by pretending to be Kosovars, the UN established a strict routine to be followed by case workers and interpreters, which involved suppressing the claimants' narratives and focusing instead on their accents, clothes, and their knowledge of the Kosovo region and its customs. The examples cited by Jacquemet show the interpreter dismissing individual narratives of desperate refugees in order to deliver what the client demanded: a crude verdict on the likelihood of a given individual being a genuine Kosovar, based on things like their accent; in the case of a woman who claimed she was raped by Serbian soldiers, the verdict rested on whether she could identify the colour of the uniform worn by Serbian soldiers, with no concessions made to the possibility that she may have been too traumatised to remember such details.

Other things being equal, and the rights of other participants having been taken into consideration, where mutual respect does exist between a translator and his or her client, then I would consider it unethical in principle for the translator to intervene without alerting the client to this intervention.

CHESTERMAN: You mention that translators sometimes initiate their own projects. In such cases, there is indeed no other client to be loyal to; conflicts of client loyalty do not arise. From the ethical point of view, the situation is then more straighforward.

BAKER: Not necessarily. Initiating your own project doesn't mean that the author, for instance, has no rights, or that the people whose discourse you translate or interpret do not have to be treated ethically. The problem I have with the term 'client' is that it implies we are mostly responsible to whoever pays the cost of translation, but this would be a rather mercenary way of approaching the issue of loyalty, and for that matter the question of ethics. Take MEMRI for example (the Middle East Media Research Institute – www.memri.org). They initiate their own projects of translation, but to my mind what they do is extremely unethical, as I have argued in *Translation and Conflict* and elsewhere. They translate carefully selected extracts from a variety of Arab and Iranian sources, string them together into 'reports' under

headings which demonise the Arab World and Iran (like 'The Anti-Semitism Documentation Project') and then disseminate this material widely, free of charge, to journalists in North America and Europe and to members of the US Congress. You could say that these people initiate their own translations, but that doesn't make their 'interventions' ethical.

CHESTERMAN: No. But the situation is perhaps less complex than when a separate, initiating client is also involved. Agreed, translators and interpreters are not, and cannot be, entirely objective, passive. Absolute neutrality is usually impossible. But the trust given by society and clients to translators surely rests on the necessary suspension of this belief that such neutrality is impossible. Translators and interpreters are trusted to be faithful, not to distort messages in ways that break the prevailing norms. And most currently prevailing professional norms surely state or imply that a translator/interpreter should at least aim at neutrality, etc. If, as you write, translators decide "to strengthen or undermine particular aspects of the narratives they mediate" (105), will clients (and source-text writers) simply cease to trust them if it is eventually found out that they have indeed distorted or adjusted a narrative?

BAKER: What you are drawing attention to here is the inevitable discrepancy between lay expectations and real behaviour. On the one hand you have expectations based on illusions that both the academy and the profession participate in sustaining for pragmatic reasons. Those who rely on translators and interpreters need reassurance that they are being heard or read exactly as they want to be heard or read; without this reassurance, however implausible their expectations are in practice, communication cannot proceed satisfactorily. In fact, even with this reassurance being routinely provided by translators and interpreters, in certain contexts we can see that 'clients' still mistrust their translators and interpreters, for various reasons. What has been happening to translators and interpreters in Guantánamo and Iraq is just one example (see, for instance, the 2006 report by Levinson on Iraqi interpreters and the suspicion with which they are treated on *both* sides). On the other hand, there is what we know as specialists about the way language and translation work in practice. Unmediated, intervention-free translation is simply impossible, even when the translator is convinced that they should be totally neutral. And given that translators and interpreters are human beings, with a conscience and a sense of what is or is not ethical, there are inevitably situations in which they can find themselves unable to avoid intervening in a more direct sense. I am reminded here of John Le Carré's novel *The Mission Song*, which has an interpreter as the main character. This highly trained and gifted interpreter, his name is Salvo, works for top clients, including City corporations and law courts. He gradually realises as things unfold on one of his top level assignments that he is interpreting for parties that are planning a major intervention in Africa, one that will cost many lives. Earlier in the story, before he had had to face this dilemma, he had described himself in terms that are only too familiar to us:

> I'm not in their [the clients'] camp but I'm not in the other fellow's either. I'm stuck out there in mid-ocean . . . [I am] the bridge, the indispensable link between God's striving souls.
>
> *(Le Carré 2006: 15)*

His dilemma unfolds gradually as he begins to realise what he is involved in. Half-way through the book, as he continues to work 'professionally' with his clients, he says "I feel dirty and don't know why" (2006: 180). Before long, he finds himself smuggling evidence of their illicit activities in order to expose their plans and abort the 'operation'. Is his behaviour ethical? In my view, there is no question: it is, and its opposite – not acting against the client – would have been unethical. Does it unsettle clients and foster an atmosphere of mistrust to realise that interpreters and translators can and do take or switch sides under certain circumstances? Of course it does, but that doesn't mean we can do much to mitigate this anxiety. We are dealing with human beings, not machines, and no code of conduct or talk about 'professionalism' can ever change this reality.

One real-life (rather than fictional) example that proves the same point is Katharine Gun, the British government translator who was tried for treason in 2003 and won her case with the help of many international celebrities. Gun had leaked to the newspapers a top-secret American request for assistance in bugging United Nations diplomats in an effort to win a UN resolution authorising the invasion of Iraq (see *The Guardian*'s report, 2004). No existing Code of Ethics would recommend divulging a client's secrets, but in this case the translator (and her many supporters) were certain her behaviour was ethical. Gun is reported as saying "I didn't feel at all guilty about what I did, so I couldn't plead guilty, even though I would get a more lenient sentence" (*The Guardian* 2004).

Interestingly, something quite similar happens in academia. Academics too have to project an image of relatively detached scholarship and maintain a relatively clear distinction between teaching and political engagement. If they didn't parents would assume that their sons and daughters are being brainwashed at universities rather than 'educated' as such, and funding institutions would not provide us with grants. In practice, however, many academics do engage with political issues in the classroom, and many even argue that to do otherwise would be unethical. As Matisons (2003) puts it in relation to guidelines issued by her university (California State University, Sacramento) on discussing the Iraq War with students, "When you support the war, neutrality in the classroom may feel like the way to go. But when you are against the war, then not speaking out against it suggests complicity with an unjustified mass murder".

CHESTERMAN: Let us move now to another point: the concept of narrative, which is central to your argument. My first reaction, when reading the book, was that you are making this concept do a great deal of work. How would

you reply to critics who would argue that the concept remains extremely vague and general; that it is so wide that it explains everything – and therefore nothing? Does it mean no more than 'interpretation'? Or 'theory'? And why, in Chapter 6, do you switch to the notion of 'frame'? Do you need both 'narrative' and 'frame'? What is the relation between them?

BAKER: You are right in suggesting that the concept of narrative does an awful lot of things, and this is perhaps why it is often described as a meeting ground of disciplines. Narrative is not special in this sense; most key concepts in the humanities are similarly all-pervasive and similarly open to various definitions. The same could be said of 'culture' and 'context', for instance. I will return to this analogy shortly, once I've explained what I understand narrative to mean.

As I explained in *Translation and Conflict*, given its appeal and centrality across many disciplines, the notion of narrative is defined in different ways by different scholars. I choose to define it simply as a *story*: specifically, a temporally configured set of happenings or 'events' with a beginning, middle and (projected) end. A story, or narrative, is *situated* (anchored in time and place) and populated by participants, real or imagined, animate or inanimate. The term *configured* in this definition means that a narrative is different from a chronology: it is not simply a list of events, dates and participants. It must have a pattern of causal emplotment that allows us to make moral sense of the events and understand (or construct) the pattern of relationships among the participants. So far so good, and most scholars writing on narrative would accept this basic definition.

Where scholars differ is in whether they treat narrative as an ontological condition. I do, and so does Walter Fisher, who talks about narrative as "the shape of knowledge as we first apprehend it" (1987:193). The implication of this claim is that while things like chronologies and theoretical models (of, say, the evolution of the human species) do exist and can be differentiated from narrative as I have defined it above, the human mind's reliance on narrative to make sense of the world means that we do not process chronologies simply as chronologies (or theories simply as theories) but tend to construct narratives out of them – narratives that have implications in the real world. We soon configure something like *skopos* theory as a narrative in our minds: the theory evokes (for me at any rate) an industrialized, affluent society populated by clients and highly professional translators who belong to the same 'world' as their clients, who are focused on professionalism and making a good living, and who are highly trained, confident young men and women. These professional translators and interpreters go about their work in a conflict-free environment and live happily ever after. They do not get thrown into Guantánamo or shot at in Iraq, and they do not end up on the border of Kosovo and Albania in the middle of a nasty war, where they would have to decide whether or not to fulfil their commission at the expense of treating potential victims with compassion and respect. The point is not to suggest that this is the narrative that *skopos* theory necessarily evokes for

everyone, or indeed the majority of translators, but to point out that whether we recognise it or not our mind processes even the most abstract form of theorising using what is ultimately a narrative mode of thinking.

To give you another example, this time of a scientific theory, Landau (1997: 111) argues that the theory of evolution is simply a scientific narrative of human evolution: "The sense of a journey", she says, "is especially strong in the accounts of Keith and Elliot Smith, in which the hero [man] departs by leaving the trees, but is also conveyed by Darwin, Osborn, and Wood Jones, where bipedalism becomes the means by which the hero "walks away" or "escapes" from his former existence". All theories are ultimately narratives in this sense.

Another issue I would want to stress here is that rather than agonise about the exact definition of 'narrative' (or 'culture' or 'context') we can focus instead on the way people 'construct' these categories in practice in order to negotiate their way in the world – to pursue specific agendas (ethical or unethical), to define their relationships with others, to achieve consensus on the interpretation of a set of events, and so on. Numerous books and articles have been and will continue to be written on each of these concepts, some trying unproductively to pin it down to a single, all encompassing definition and others arguing (as I have done in the special issue on *Context and Translation* that I guest-edited for the *Journal of Pragmatics*, Baker 2006c) that it is much more productive to explore the processes by which people *construct* context, *construct* cultures, and *construct* narratives. And indeed many of the examples I discussed in *Translation and Conflict* and elsewhere are specifically concerned with the way people construct narratives rather than whether what they construct meets all the requirements of a given definition of narrative.

As for frames, I would argue that the concept is different from that of narratives and is helpful as a tool of analysis, to demonstrate how the 'same' narrative can be framed in very different ways by different narrators. Just as in the case of a photograph or painting that is surrounded by a 'frame', the notion of frame is subsidiary to that of narrative. The frame surrounds (or refers to) a narrative; at the same time, it undoubtedly plays an important role in defining the boundaries of the image (or narrative) and constrains our understanding or appreciation of it. In Baker (2007) I discuss in some detail two different translations into Arabic of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), published within a year of one another. They are both fairly close translations, with no intervention as such in the text itself, but both include extended introductions that challenge and refute the narrative elaborated in the source text. The introductions 'frame' the narrative, providing a lens through which it may be interpreted in line with the translators' own beliefs about the relationship between Islam and the West and what they regard as the real reasons behind the current conflicts.

As is evident in this example, frames also double up as narratives in their own right (you can think of the interaction between frames and narratives

in terms of a set of nested, or recursive relations). The cover image of Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* is very interesting in this respect. It shows the title in yellow against a black background, with a cross (symbolizing Christianity) at the top, a crescent (symbolizing Islam) at the bottom, both in grey, and a red star separating the first part of the title (*The Clash of Civilizations*) from the rest (*and the Remaking of World Order*). The most obvious interpretation of the red star is as a symbol of communism, especially given that the cover also features the following quote from Henry Kissinger at the bottom, printed in the same red as the star: "One of the most important books to have emerged since the end of the Cold War". The colour red of course also symbolises danger. The cover functions as a frame in that it anticipates and anchors our interpretation of the narrative elaborated in the book, namely that Islam has replaced communism as the new threat against Western democracies. At the same time, it can be read as a narrative in its own right, a compact version, if you like, of the narrative elaborated in the main text.

CHESTERMAN: To me, narratives (in your sense) seem to be interpretive hypotheses. These are tested in practice, on criteria such as pragmatic usefulness, as well as on the power and coverage of the explanations they offer. If they turn out to be not useful, or less useful than competing hypotheses, we can reject them – see your Chapter 7, on assessing narratives. ('Useful' needs to be defined, of course; but that would take us too far away from the more specific issues we are discussing here.) One reason why I think narratives are interpretive hypotheses is that they do not seem to be falsifiable, which I take as a crucial criterion for other kinds of scientific hypotheses (descriptive, explanatory, predictive). If someone says 'X is a narrative', is there any way in which this claim can actually be falsified? Can someone else say, on some evidence or other, 'no, X is not a narrative'? (This is not the same as claiming that some other narrative is better than X.) I ask this because the book mentions a huge variety of things that are said to be narratives. So are narratives hypotheses? If so, in what sense?

BAKER: In one sense they are hypotheses: they are dynamic, open to reassessment continually as we engage in interaction with other people, witness new events, read new texts that offer us a different angle on a narrative, etc. We may revise our narratives in the light of new experience, or we may (as some scholars do with hypotheses) assimilate the new experience into our existing narratives by finding a way of explaining the contradiction while maintaining the narrative intact.

The question of falsifiability is a little more complex. I see no more sense in attempting to 'falsify' the claim that something is a narrative than in attempting to falsify the claim that something is a culture, or a context. Just as a culture-less or context-free entity or event is impossible to envision, so an element that is not configured in narrative form is by (my) definition of narrative unimaginable and/or incomprehensible to the human mind. At

the same time, a clearly-bounded entity that you can point to and say 'this is a culture', 'this is a context', 'this is a narrative' will always be an elusive thing to capture. This is ultimately also a meaningless pursuit.

CHESTERMAN: All definitions are ultimately revisable interpretations, yes; so we seem to agree on this point. Let me turn next to a bigger problem: the relation between narratives, reality and truth. Early in the book (around pages 11–16), you are sceptical of the narrative of science, because science has sometimes been spectacularly wrong. Yes, in time most scientific hypotheses are proved either wrong or inadequate; but would you not agree that scientific hypotheses do, on the whole, seem to progress towards better descriptions and explanations of reality?

If I did not believe that the relevant science narrative is good enough, I would never send you an email; I would never dare to board an aeroplane, and so on. I trust that the underlying science, and its applied technology, electronics, engineering etc. are OK – at least OK enough to be going on with. In this sense, surely, the science narrative of aeronautics is better than, say, the narrative of little green men in flying saucers. Modern life would be impossible if we had no belief at all in the accuracy of the science narrative. One of the norms of science is surely that it should seek to approximate to the ideal of true theories, just as the traditional norms for translation appeal to ideals of fidelity, equivalence, neutrality etc. This is not to say, of course, that everything science does, or every application of science, is a Good Thing. Nor is it to say that scientists never betray this ideal. Do you take your examples of bad or racist science to be typical of all science? Is *all* science no more than 'politics in a lab coat' (11)?

As an academic, you are also involved in the search for true or better theories of translation, right? Aren't you also a scientist, in this sense?

BAKER: You have a lot more faith in science than I do; I am not inclined to talk of science in such glowing terms.

First, for many people around the globe, religion (be it Islam, Catholicism or Judaism, etc.) is far more reliable and believable than anything that the scientists in lab coats can ever tell them. You may think that people who believe in angels and rivers of honey that await them in heaven have no more sense than those who believe in little green men in flying saucers, but the fact is that many people do, and that it is their belief in such narratives that shapes their behaviour, not what the scientists tell them. If there is ever any contradiction between (contemporary) science and the Bible, rest assured that the Christian Fundamentalists who exercise considerable influence in the United States will reject and openly challenge the former. You only need to think of the speed with which Creationism (or the theory of intelligent design as it is now called) has taken hold in US schools and universities in the past decade or so, effectively replacing the theory of evolution in many instances. Parents in several parts of the US now refuse to send their children to schools that teach the theory of evolution. The issue is so important in the US that there are

entire university courses dedicated to debating the difference between the two competing 'theories', Creationism and Evolution (e.g. at Syracuse University).

Second, scientific theories are revised, and sometimes totally discredited all the time. They are also often difficult to assess by non-scientists, especially when the scientists themselves disagree. And where there is disagreement, it becomes very obvious just how 'political' science is. At least in Britain, we are constantly hearing different scientists arguing about climate change, some insisting that it is very serious indeed and others accusing them of scaremongering and exaggerating the danger. If science is objective, apolitical, and totally rational, and especially given the technology scientists have at their disposal today, where does the disagreement come from? Unless we accept that much of the disagreement is politically motivated?

Third, I am not sure I subscribe to the narrative of progress that underpins your question, if by progress you mean overall, consistent improvement in our quality of life. There are many who would argue that the meta narrative of 'progress' is too linear and too insensitive to the complexity and dynamics of change. For example, while you and I may appreciate the ability to travel and see the world, we cannot ignore the fact that the same scientific and technological advances that have made our lives easier and more enjoyable in these respects have also brought the world more pollution, alienation, a culture of consumerism and, of course, the nuclear bomb, biological weapons, and untold suffering! And so I would argue that it is untenable to think of 'progress' in positive terms only. And similarly in terms of science, I don't find it convincing to think of a linear process of progress towards better understanding.

Having said all this, we have no option as human beings on the whole but to 'trust' in whatever the experts (including the scientists) tell us at any given moment in time. Since we have no way of testing their theories for ourselves, we have to believe in them until new theories 'prove' them wrong. In our own work, on the other hand, we continue to search for better explanations for the phenomena we are studying, not because there is a linear process by which we can advance towards better science as we move on, but because our theories have to adapt to our changing environment. As the world around us changes, so our perspectives on different phenomena change, and we feel we need a different explanation, or a different framework from which to engage with our object of study. This is necessary because the object of study itself is dynamic – it does not sit still while we develop better and more comprehensive theories to explain it. It changes because the world changes, and our theories have to follow that dynamic. 'Translation' today is not the same as it was 50 years ago. And our theories of translation are not better (in absolute terms) than those elaborated 20 years ago. They may, however, succeed in relating more meaningfully to the way in which translation functions in society today.

CHESTERMAN: Glowing terms? I certainly do not assume that scientific progress necessarily means a better quality of life for all. I would distinguish

between progress in understanding, on one hand, and what we (or the scientists) then decide to do with this understanding, on the other. As you say, we are not all happier because some nations now have nuclear bombs. On your second point, I think there is plenty of space for legitimate *non*-political debate within science: about what are interesting research questions (what is *worth* trying to understand), what counts as evidence, how given evidence is best interpreted, whether and how one explanation is superior to another, and so on – just as there are disagreements about the fundamental nature of the reality we are trying to understand.

On p. 17 you cite Bruner on 'the possibility of narrative as a form not only of representing but of constituting reality'. That is, narratives both represent and construct reality. You then seem to focus more on the constructing side than on the representing side. But if there is indeed a something to be represented, that representation can surely be more or less accurate – we are back at the equivalence debate! Agreed, translations do not *only* represent; but they do aim to represent, in some way. Does this aim get lost in your focus on the 'spins' given to representations by conflicting narratives? Even if we agree that perfect representation is impossible, that does not mean that we should give up any attempt to represent. After all, we know we shall never reach complete understanding of anything, I suppose; but we can still try to understand a bit better . . .

BAKER: Bruner is among those scholars who do not subscribe to the view of narrative as an ontological condition. He treats it as one of two modes of cognitive functioning, the other being paradigmatic cognition. This is why he talks about narrative representing as well as constructing reality. I am more inclined to agree with Hayden White, who insists that the world does not come to us "already narrativized", already "speaking itself" (1987: 25); it has to be 'constructed' in order to be apprehended and communicated to others. This doesn't mean that people simply make up stories out of thin air (though sometimes they do). It does, however, mean that direct, unmediated representation is impossible. So, at best we might speak of narratives as selective representations of reality. As Novitz puts it with respect to personal narratives, "although my story purports to be about certain real-life events, and so is nonfictional, the way in which I relate and organize my memories of these events, and what I treat as marginal or central to my life, can be more or less imaginative" (1997: 146).

You are right of course in suggesting that despite the fact that 'accurate' representation per se is impossible we always aim to understand better, to be more fair, objective, and truthful in our narration of events. Human beings aim for ideals even as they acknowledge that they are unreachable; such is human nature.

CHESTERMAN: Should we only translate texts that 'do good'? At the beginning of Chapter 6 (p. 105), you write: "Translators and interpreters face a basic ethical choice with every assignment: to reproduce existing ideologies as

encoded in the narratives elaborated in the text or utterance, or to dissociate themselves from those ideologies, if necessary by refusing to translate the text or interpret in a particular context at all." You also cite Séguinot here, who thinks that translators are normally in a position to turn down assignments. How realistic is this? How many professional translators, who translate for a living, can really turn down work?

BAKER: Making texts available in translation can 'do good' even if we disagree passionately with the narratives they promote. It depends on how we frame the translation. Tlaxcala and other groups of activist translators often translate and circulate texts produced by the neocons in the White House (for example the text of the Project of the New American Century), because they believe people should be aware of them. But they clearly signal their detachment from the narratives encoded in these texts, and they challenge them by translating many other texts that promote very different narratives.

Many professional translators are in a position to turn down some assignments, and many do. The fact that some translators and interpreters do not have the luxury of choice does not mean that others should take no responsibility for theirs.

CHESTERMAN: In the same context, you write: "Like any other group in society, translators and interpreters are responsible for the texts and utterances they produce" (105). But to what extent? Are they responsible for any possible use made of their translated texts, even years later? How can they predict all possible undesirable consequences? Don't blame the translator? Can't *any* text be used for 'bad' ends?

BAKER: I don't think translators are different from any language user in this respect. We all produce texts and utterances which, despite our best intentions, can be used unethically by anyone in a position to do so. Indeed, sometimes our own texts can be manipulated and decontextualised in order to be used against us, never mind anyone else. But this doesn't mean we abrogate all responsibility for the texts we produce. Some uses at least we should be able to anticipate and should consider distancing ourselves from.

Yes, of course: practically *any* text can be used for bad ends. It depends on how it's framed, when and where it is released, and how selectively it's quoted. Translations are open to this type of manipulation in the same way as other texts.

CHESTERMAN: Translators also seek to stay alive. So do underpaid workers in unethical sweatshops around the world. Should we tell these exploited workers that they should not agree to help make products which may be environmentally damaging or which may encourage an ideology (a narrative?) of rampant consumerism – even though this may mean that they then starve? (Is this a fair comparison with translators who need to accept all the work they can get?)

BAKER: Yes, I think it is a fair comparison, but only in relation to *some* translators in particularly difficult situations. Not all translators need to accept all

the work they can get. Many, especially in the Western world, where most of the influential theorising about translation takes place, are in a position to turn down a few jobs, and to seek employment either as freelancers or with reasonably ethical organisations, rather than the CIA, Wallmart or the Israeli Defence [sic] Forces, for instance. Similarly, I would argue, the fact that many people less fortunate than ourselves have to work in sweatshops and cannot survive or feed their families without the money they earn there doesn't mean that you and I should not raise our voices against the companies that exploit them; not only raise our voices but also boycott these companies and their products. I am not alone in adopting this logic – many activists across the world boycott companies like Nike and Nestlé precisely for these reasons, without however blaming the workers for the unethical behaviour of the companies that employ them. Compassion does not preclude action, and action similarly does not preclude compassion.

CHESTERMAN: Agreed. Your main point about narrative adjustment also applies to other forms of rewriting, not just translation. At some points in the book, I wondered whether you are also doing some narrative 'tweaking' yourself (inevitable?). On p. 14, for instance, you paraphrase Bokor's 'regret' for all civilian casualities as implying that collateral damage is 'acceptable' to him. Is your representation of Bokor a fair one here? Isn't he saying that collateral damage and deliberate slaughter of civilians are both regrettable, i.e. unacceptable, but that the latter is even worse than the former?

BAKER: I would argue that on the whole my representation of Bokor's position is fair. You have to place this statement in context in order to arrive at (my) understanding of his narrative position.

First, there is the amount of textual space he allocates to his editorial of October 2001 (following the 9/11 attack) vs. the space he allocates to the editorial of April 2003 (which coincided with the invasion of Iraq). The first, entitled 'Translation and International Politics', is 493 words in length. The second, titled 'War and Peace', is a mere 156 words. Bokor clearly attributes much more importance to the events of 9/11 than to the impending invasion of an entire country, bearing in mind that US politicians were already publicly promising Iraq the 'shock and awe' treatment by the time Bokor was writing his second editorial.

Second, you have to look at the overall tone of the two editorials. The October 2001 editorial is passionate and indignant, repeatedly describing the events of 9/11 as "mass murder". Not only does Bokor go on to tell us that the (military) response of the US is "inevitable", but he expresses unequivocal and unqualified support for it: "I believe that mass murderers should be punished and ideologies that encourage such crimes should be decisively resisted". As for who these murderers are and what ideologies they promote (and remember these were very early days, and no one knew then who exactly carried out the attacks), Bokor clearly implies that they are Arab, by singling out Arabs and Muslims for special mention: "the attacks which resulted in the

death of thousands of innocent people, certainly including Muslims and other sympathizers of Arab causes"; "In the past few days, I've received messages of sympathy from many countries, including from the Arab world". These are the words of someone who is absolutely confident about who is right and who is wrong and is not going to lose any sleep over some shock and awe campaign that is bound, by his own admission, to result in many civilian deaths.

By comparison, Bokor's brief April 2003 editorial merely tells us that "It is not the policy of this publication to take sides in political disputes". No indignation, and no condemnation of mass murder. Remember that the sanctions that preceded the attack on Iraq and were sustained by the US since 1991 had already resulted in what can only be described as a mass murder: the lowest and most conservative estimate (by UNICEF) puts the death toll at 500,000, many of them children. This was already common knowledge when Bokor wrote his editorial.

CHESTERMAN: That additional contextual information certainly clarifies your interpretation.

My final question is prompted by a citation on p. 46, where you quote Alexander (2002): 'The endpoint of a narrative defines its telos.' Skopos theory has highlighted notions of purpose and aim in translation studies. We now have a well-formulated concept: the *skopos* of a translation. This is defined as the intended function of the translation, as required by the client and accepted or adjusted by the translator. What interests me in this context is the way the *skopos* is tied to a text: it is the function of a text, not the goal of a person. It occurs to me that translation theory might need a new concept to describe the ultimate motivation of the translator (or interpreter, of course). Translators work to stay alive, yes. But they also have a number of other motivations: a love of languages no doubt, an interest in other cultures, perhaps a desire to improve communication, and so on. What your book argues is that translators could (or should) take the consequences of their actions more seriously, and thus be more aware of their own motivations and opportunities.

There is a traditional Stoic distinction between *skopos* and *telos* that has been much commented on by classical scholars and theologians. *Skopos* is usually taken to refer to more immediate intentions, the visible target literally aimed at by an archer for instance (originally, *skopos* means a watcher, an observer), whereas *telos* refers to a more distant or ultimate state, such as the more abstract goal of life as a whole, ideally perhaps a final harmonious state. The *telos* is a result rather than an intention.

Suppose, alongside *skopos*, we adopt the term *telos* to describe the personal goal of a translator, firstly in the context of a given task. Some tasks are done just for the money, but others might have different *teloi*. If a translator is asked, especially during a voluntary translation task, 'why are you doing this?', the answer could be a formulation of this primary *telos*. Formulating a more general *telos* might be one way of answering a bigger question: why

did you become a translator? Or more generally still: to what ultimate goal should all translators and interpreters be committed? What is (or should be) the ultimate *telos* of the profession as a whole?

How do you react to this idea, Mona?

BAKER: I think it is a very interesting suggestion. Perhaps the idea of a *telos* as you describe it can help us think our way through the ethics of our profession, not in romantic terms, as when we talk about bridge-building and promoting understanding between different people, but in more concrete and politically-aware terms. I can see it working quite well within a narrative framework. One would have to construct a narrative of the profession (and the discipline) in order to project a *telos*, or a set of *teloi*, since a goal lies at the end of a path that has a beginning and is temporally and spatially configured. A *telos* is a more productive concept than *skopos* because it connects with the wider context of a whole society, and potentially of humanity at large.

This will require a fair bit of thinking to elaborate in any useful detail, but I like it in principle and await your next publication to learn more about it!!

CHESTERMAN: Well, let's say that the idea is open for potential development! – Thank you for answering these questions, Mona. Let us hope that CULTUS readers will add their own voices to the debate.

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8

NARRATIVES OF TERRORISM AND SECURITY: "ACCURATE" TRANSLATIONS, SUSPICIOUS FRAMES*

Mona Baker

Abstract: *Constructing and disseminating 'knowledge' about a number of communities and regions widely designated as a security threat is now a big industry. Much of this industry relies heavily on various forms of translation and, in some cases, is generated by a team of dedicated translators working on full-blown, heavily funded programmes that involve selecting, translating and distributing various types of text that emanate from Arab and Muslim countries: newspaper articles, film clips, transcripts of television shows, selected excerpts from educational material, sermons delivered in mosques. Drawing on narrative theory and using examples from institutions involved in constructing this type of knowledge, this article argues that attempts to discredit such efforts by questioning the 'accuracy' of individual translations miss the point. What is needed, instead, is a more nuanced understanding of the subtle devices used to generate dehumanising narratives of Arabs and Muslims through carefully planned and generously funded programmes of translation.*

Keywords: translation; narrative; Arab; Muslim; MEMRI

Introduction

The narratives we elaborate about any aspect of the world through translation do not have to be linguistically 'inaccurate' in relation to their source to mystify and mislead. Because translation is a textual activity that is closely scrutinised and generally treated with suspicion, undermining a narrative elaborated in any given source text does not necessarily mean direct intervention in the text itself.

* 2010. 'Narratives of Terrorism and Security: 'Accurate' Translations, Suspicious Frames', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3(3): 347–364.

More can often be achieved by intervening in the space around the text (footnotes, prefaces, addition of visual material) and by the very selection of texts to be translated. This is particularly the case in politically sensitive contexts, where translators and/or those who commission them are aware that other advocacy groups working on the same or similar issues are likely to have access to the source texts and to scrutinise the translations they produce carefully. Maintaining close semantic resemblance to the source text, or those stretches of it that are translated and made available in another language, allows those who produce the translations to claim that they are objective, non-partisan and a trustworthy source of information. Thus, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), one of the major providers of such 'accurate' translations, can safely claim in its 'About Us' page[1] not only that it is 'non-partisan' but that its heavily funded translation programme merely 'bridges the gap that exists between the West and the Middle East'.

This is not to say that examples of blatant mistranslations do not exist, or that they are not contested, nor that the organisations involved in demonising various groups and regions as terrorist are not occasionally tempted to throw caution to the wind to hit the headlines with highly effective sound bites, such as 'wipe Israel off the map'. Indeed, the translation of this particular sound bite from Persian has been widely contested (see, e.g. Steele 2006, Norouzi 2007) – though the phrase continues to have considerable currency and to be flagged every time the subject of Iran and terrorism comes up. Similarly, a video clip from *The Pioneers of Tomorrow*, a children's programme aired on Hamas TV in April 2007, is often cited as evidence of Palestinian antisemitism and Hamas's attempt to recruit even children to its terrorist agenda. The clip, subtitled and widely circulated by MEMRI, showed a young girl, Sanabel, in conversation with another young girl, Saraa, and a Mickey Mouse character called Farfour.[2] Various mistranslations, as indicated in the following stretch, were discussed at the time by Whitaker (2007), among others.[3] I have added a close gloss in square brackets where relevant to highlight the gap between what Sanabel can be heard to say in Arabic and MEMRI's subtitles in English.

HOST SARAA, A YOUNG GIRL: 'Sanabel, what will you do for the sake of the Al-Aqsa Mosque? How will you sacrifice your soul for the sake of Al-Aqsa? What will you do?'

SANABEL, YOUNG GIRL ON PHONE: 'I will shoot.' [I'm going to *draw a picture*.]

FARFOUR, A MICKEY MOUSE CHARACTER IN A TUXEDO: 'Sanabel, what should we do if we want to liberate . . .'

SANABEL: 'We want to fight.' [We want to *resist*.]

FARFOUR: 'We got that. What else?'

SARAA: 'We want to . . .'

SANABEL: 'We will annihilate the Jews.' [*The Jews are shooting us*.]

SARAA: 'We are defending Al-Aqsa with our souls and our blood, aren't we, Sanabel?'

SANABEL: 'I will commit martyrdom.' [I will *become a martyr*.[4]]

This translation by MEMRI was contested even by the CNN Arabic desk, who advised talk show host and commentator, Glenn Beck, not to air it. Rather than listen to his own staff translators, Beck decided to invite the Director of MEMRI, Yigal Carmon, to his programme to respond to their charges of mistranslation. Carmon's response to their criticism of one instance of mistranslation is worth quoting, as it provides an insight into how far an organisation might go to protect its credibility when that credibility rests on the question of accuracy in translation. In the following extract, the Octavia Carmon refers to is Octavia Nasr, a member of staff in the CNN Arabic Department[5]:

> She said the sentence where it says . . . 'We are going to . . . we will annihilate the Jews', she said: 'Well, our translators hear something else. They hear "The Jews are shooting at us".'
>
> I said to her: 'You know, Octavia, the order of the words as you put it is upside down. You can't even get the order of the words right. Even someone who doesn't know Arabic would listen to the tape and would hear the word "Jews" is at the end, and also it means it is something to be done *to* the Jews, not *by* the Jews.'
>
> And she insisted, no the word is in the beginning. I said: 'Octavia, you just don't get it. It is at the end' . . . She didn't know one from two, I mean.

As Whitaker (2007) rightly points out, Carmon does not just challenge the expertise of the CNN Arabic department here but also ignores what all Arabic grammars have to say on the structure of Arabic and the mobility of the object in Arabic syntax.

Instances of such blatant mistranslations aside, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that organisations such as MEMRI are generally very careful about the 'accuracy' of their translations and invest heavily in elaborating an image of themselves as non-partisan, trustworthy and highly qualified to comment on and explain issues relating to terrorism and security. MEMRI's own name signals this very clearly: it calls itself a *Research Institute*, rather than an advocacy, interest or pressure group, for instance. Repeated challenges to the accuracy of its translations would undermine this image.

MEMRI is not the only organisation that promotes the terrorism and security agenda through translation, but it is by far the largest, most heavily funded and most influential with politicians and the media, especially in the United States. Other organisations engaged in similar programmes, though on a relatively smaller scale, include Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), Middle East Strategic Information (MESI) and The Medialine. I focus largely on MEMRI in the rest of this article and begin by outlining a theoretical framework that should allow us to look beyond the accuracy of individual translations to reach a better understanding of how MEMRI's entire translation programme participates in constructing Arab and Muslim communities as terrorist and extremist. Following Pappe (2009, p. 128), my interest is in the use of 'terror', 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' as 'negative nouns and adjectives which intuitively and politically

exclude those described in such a way from a legitimate role in the normative and conventional world'.

Narrative theory

The model of analysis adopted here, and which makes it possible to demonstrate how narratives elaborated about Arab and Muslim communities through translation do not have to be 'linguistically inaccurate' to be misleading, is elaborated in greater detail in Baker (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) and elsewhere. Rather than limiting itself to the local analysis of linguistic or visual material and linking these to the broad notion of 'discourse' as 'social practice determined by social structures' (Fairclough 1989/2001, p. 14) or as 'social construction of reality, a form of knowledge' (Fairclough 1995, p. 18), narrative theory assumes that the unit of analysis is ultimately an entire narrative, understood as a concrete story of some aspect of the world, complete with characters, settings, outcomes or projected outcomes and plot. A model of analysis based on this theoretical framework makes it possible to investigate the elaboration of a given narrative in an individual text or event as well as across several texts and events, and across different media. Using 'narrative' as the unit of analysis, and proceeding on the basis that local narratives, those elaborated in a specific text or event, have porous boundaries and are ultimately embedded in and contribute to the elaboration of larger narratives, provides precisely the kind of interface that is necessary to move us beyond the unproductive and widespread tendency to compare original and translated texts stretch by stretch and settle for making statements about their relative accuracy or inaccuracy at a semantic level.

A focus on narrative also allows us to move beyond the longstanding preoccupation in translation studies with examining regular patterns of abstract choices, in the tradition of norm theory (Toury 1995). Scholars of translation typically examine norms of translational behaviour by studying a collection of authentic translations (say, Arabic translations of English detective fiction during the 1990s) and identifying repeated choices, including types of strategy that are typically opted for by the translators represented in that collection, such as how they might deal with culture-specific references and whether or not they break down long sentences into shorter ones. One of the most influential approaches to the study of translation since the 1980s, norm theory arguably privileges behaviour that displays strong patterns of socialisation and tends to gloss over the numerous individual and group attempts at undermining dominant patterns and prevailing political and social dogma (Baker 2007). By contrast, a focus on the narratives being elaborated within and across texts allows us to engage with the potential motives for both repeated *and* individual (one-off) choices, and encourages us to look beyond the text into the political and social context of interaction.

Another popular type of theorisation that the notion of narrative allows us to move beyond involves describing and assessing translations with reference to a dichotomy or taxonomy of strategies, with or without elaborating the ethical

implications of using such strategies. Perhaps the best known and most nuanced dichotomy to emerge in recent years is Lawrence Venuti's distinction between foreignising and domesticating strategies (Venuti 1993, 1995). Despite its appeal, Venuti's dichotomy has also been widely critiqued from a range of perspectives (Tymoczko 2000, Gentzler 2002, Shamma 2005, 2009). In the context of this study, its main weakness lies in the fact that, like all dichotomies, it is ultimately reductive. More specifically, classifying translations as 'foreignising' or 'domesticating' has the effect of obscuring the intricate way in which translators shift positions within the same text as they negotiate their way around various priorities and challenges (Baker 2007). Analysis of authentic translations often reveals that translators can oscillate within the same text between choices that Venuti would regard as domesticating and ones he would regard as foreignising. And, importantly, this oscillation serves a purpose in the real world – it is neither random nor irrational.

Types of narrative

Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live. These stories provide our main interface with the world. The strand of narrative theory adopted in this article distinguishes between four types of narrative: personal, public, disciplinary and meta-narrative (Baker 2006).

Personal narratives, as the term suggests, are narratives of individuals, who are normally located at the centre of narration; in other words, the individual is the subject of the narrative. They include the ephemeral narratives we exchange with family and colleagues when they ask us what we did or how we felt on a particular occasion, the narratives we tell ourselves and others about who we are and how we relate to the world around us and the narratives of public figures such as Nelson Mandela, Edward Said or Ilan Pappe, whose lives attract wider interest. Biographies, including autobiographies, are all personal narratives in this sense.

Public narratives, by contrast, are elaborated by and circulate among social and institutional formations larger than the individual, such as the family, religious or educational institution, a political or activist group, the media, the nation and larger entities. The narratives elaborated by MEMRI and similar groups are all public in this sense.

There is a certain overlap between personal and public narratives – and indeed among all types of narrative. The narrative of Edward Said is both personal and public: personal because it is about a specific individual and public because it is shared and elaborated by many groups and individuals. At the same time, no personal narrative can be elaborated merely by the individual at the centre of the narrative: our own narrative is not entirely our own because others participate in elaborating it, and the way they story us inevitably becomes part of that narrative.

Personal and public narratives are highly interdependent in another sense: individuals cannot narrate themselves in a vacuum but must draw on public

narratives to develop and legitimise their sense of self, and public narratives can only persist and gain legitimacy if enough individuals are willing to subscribe to them and narrate themselves in line with the values and beliefs they embody. Moreover, just as dominant public narratives – for example, those that currently depict British Muslims as the enemy within, a threat to 'our' way of life – can constrain and frustrate individuals' sense of self, personal narratives can be woven into public narratives to generate a range of effects, including empathy, and to strengthen stereotypes of a given community. The following extract from an email circular distributed by the activist group CODEPINK on 19 February 2010 and signed by Gayle Brandeis provides a good example of the way in which a personal narrative can be evoked to generate empathy and lend potency to a public narrative (emphasis in original):

> As I write this, **my three month old baby has pneumonia.** He is doing quite well, given the circumstances, but it breaks my heart to see him suffer in any way. My mother took her own life a week after the baby was born, so I feel especially vulnerable right now, especially attuned to potential loss. **In this raw, open state, the latest news from Afghanistan hits hard**.
>
> Last weekend, **twelve members of one Afghan family – including six children – were killed during NATO's Afghanistan offensive in Marjah.** As I grapple with the grief over my mom's death, as well as worry over my sick baby, I can't begin to comprehend the grief of those affected by this massive loss. NATO Commander, US General Stanley McChrystal has apologized to President Karzai, but how can his words be anything but cold and empty to those left behind?

Hijazi Al-Sharif (2009) provides an example of the way a personal narrative can be used to strengthen stereotypes. She examines a number of MEMRI despatches that focus on Hanadi Jaradat, a young Palestinian lawyer who blew herself up in October 2003 at the Maxim restaurant in Haifa. Her analysis demonstrates how important episodes of a personal narrative elaborated by a powerful institution can be suppressed to bolster a broader public narrative, in this case that of Palestinians being prone to violence because Islam teaches them to seek martyrdom, implying that the conflict is motivated by religious beliefs rather than political grievances. MEMRI's elaboration of this personal narrative, Hijazi Al-Sharif argues, strips Jaradat of her humanity and portrays her as sheer evil, in part by failing to mention that her actions were motivated by a range of events that left her traumatised, including the murder of her brother and fiancé by Israeli soldiers.

Disciplinary narratives have at their centre the object of enquiry in a scholarly field: this journal engages in elaborating a range of disciplinary narratives about terrorism, just as medical scholars elaborate narratives about the human body and translation scholars elaborate narratives about various forms of interlingual mediation. The boundaries between disciplinary and public narratives,

like those between personal and public narratives, are porous. Many disciplinary narratives come to exercise considerable influence on public life and may form part of the narrative world of lay members of society. The theory of evolution is a good example, as are the various narratives of climate change that permeate our lives today.

Finally, *meta-narratives* are particularly potent public narratives that persist over long periods of time and influence the lives of people across a wide range of settings. The boundary between public and meta-narratives is particularly difficult to draw, but good candidates for meta-narratives include the Cold War and the various religious narratives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, given their temporal and spatial reach. The narrative of the so-called War on Terror, like that of the Cold War, may remain potent for a relatively short period of time, compared to Islam for instance, but its impact on the daily lives of people across the world lends it the kind of power and sense of inescapability that justifies its treatment as a meta-narrative. Ultimately, narrative theory acknowledges that where we choose to draw any boundaries, including boundaries between theoretical categories, is part of the narrative world we are constantly engaged in constructing for ourselves and others.

How narratives are constructed and framed

Narrative theory assumes that to elaborate a coherent narrative, it is inevitable that some elements of experience are excluded and others privileged. All narratives are thus constructed according to evaluative criteria that enable and guide *selective appropriation* of a set of events or elements from the vast array of open-ended and overlapping events that constitute experience. The notion of selective appropriation also covers ways of identifying protagonists rather than just the foregrounding of events or parts of events. Thus, for example, a recent study of British media found that 'Muslims are often identified simply *as* Muslims . . . are much less likely than non-Muslims to be identified in terms of their job or profession, and much more likely to be unnamed or unidentified' (Moore *et al.* 2008, p. 4). The selective foregrounding and backgrounding of individuals, groups and features attributed to them is part of the elaboration of characters that play particular roles in a larger narrative under construction. Selective appropriation is particularly important in this study, where the choice of whose voice, which texts and which extracts from these texts are translated and made to 'represent' the values and ethos of the communities in question, is as important as the accuracy with which the selections are rendered into English and other languages.

Narratives also have distinct patterns of *causal emplotment*. Causal emplotment gives significance to independent instances; it is only when events are emplotted that they take on narrative meaning. Emplotment thus 'allows us to *weight* and *explain* events rather than just list them, to turn a set of propositions into an intelligible sequence about which we can form an opinion' (Baker 2006, p. 67).

An interesting pattern of causal emplotment generated by narratives circulated in British media in recent years is reported by the Glasgow Media Group (Philo and Berry 2004), who interviewed a large sample of 800 British adults in connection with the Palestine/Israel conflict and found, among other things, that 'viewers who were informed by the TV news and had apparently no great interest in the area were more likely to believe that the casualties were about equal *or that most had been sustained by Israel*' (Philo and Berry 2004, p. 236; emphasis added). These deductions were derived from the way in which individual episodes of the conflict were narrated in the news, including the extent of coverage of casualties on either side. Together, rather than separately, these individual narratives of events construct a pattern of causal emplotment associated with the Palestine/Israel conflict that is quite familiar to viewers (and readers) of North American and European media.

Narratives are characterised by their *temporality*, meaning that they are embedded in time and space and derive much of their meaning from the temporal moment and physical site of the narration. The now familiar narrative of sectarianism, which depicts Muslims as belonging to one of two warring sects (Shi'a or Sunni) that are unable to live together in peace, is a product of recent wars and invasions that have swept over the Muslim part of the Middle East, particularly the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Packer's research attests to this: based on extensive fieldwork that involved interviewing Iraqi translators and interpreters working for the US military in Iraq, he asserts that '[a]lmost no Iraqi claimed to have anticipated . . . the terrifying question "Are you Sunni or Shia?"' before the invasion (Packer 2007). In this new narrative environment, individual incidents that might have been explained 10 or 20 years earlier merely as disagreements between neighbours or instances of personal revenge are now routinely interpreted as evidence of growing sectarian tension. Another facet of *temporality* concerns the temporal and spatial ordering of the elements that constitute the narrative. Events are rarely recounted in the order in which they took place, especially in the media, and the way in which time, sequence and spatial setting are used to construct a narrative is therefore meaningful in its own right.

Finally, *relationality*, another characteristic of narrative, means that individual events (and elements within an event) cannot make sense on their own but only insofar as they constitute elements of an overall narrative. Thus, for example, the concept of martyrdom takes on a very different meaning and value depending on whether it forms part of a contemporary narrative of Islamic 'Jihad' or a narrative of the persecution of Christians in the first century. As this example demonstrates, meanings and values vary considerably depending on the temporal and spatial context of narration.

The concept of 'frame' overlaps with but is sufficiently distinct from that of narrative to be helpful as a complementary tool of analysis – specifically in terms of demonstrating how the 'same' narrative can be framed in very different ways by different narrators. Just as the frame that surrounds a photograph or painting can influence the way we experience it but remains subsidiary to it, the notion

of frame is subsidiary to that of narrative. But frames also double up as narratives in their own right; we might think of the interaction between frames and narratives in terms of a set of nested or recursive relations. Thus, for example, the cover image of one English edition of Samuel Huntington's (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations* shows the title in yellow against a black background, with a cross (symbolising Christianity) at the top, a crescent (symbolising Islam) at the bottom, both in grey and a red star separating the first part of the title (*The Clash of Civilizations*) from the rest (*and the Remaking of World Order*). The most obvious interpretation of the red star is as a symbol of communism, especially given that the cover also features the following quote from Henry Kissinger at the bottom, printed in the same red as the star: 'One of the most important books to have emerged since the end of the Cold War.' The colour red also symbolises danger. The cover functions as a frame in that it anticipates and anchors our interpretation of the narrative elaborated in the book, namely, that Islam has replaced communism as the new threat against Western democracies. At the same time, it can be read as a narrative in its own right, a compact version of the narrative elaborated in the main text (Baker 2008).

Drawing on both concepts, 'narrative' and 'framing', I offer below an analysis of a range of data connected with the 'industry' of constructing knowledge about Arab and Muslim communities through translation. As the analyses will attempt to demonstrate, one of the strengths of narrative theory lies in the fact that it does not encourage us to treat any specific translational choice as random, with no implications in the real world. Nor does it encourage us to treat a given choice (such as *Jihad* vs. 'Holy War') as a realisation of some broad, abstract norm linked to other abstract choices such as favouring loan words or choosing to stay close to the syntactic structures of the source text. What narrative theory requires us to do instead is to think of individual choices as part of a larger mosaic that is embedded in and contributes to the elaboration of concrete political reality.

MEMRI's renarration of Arab and Muslim communities

MEMRI is a strongly pro-Israel advocacy group[6] established in February 1998 by Col. Yigal Carmon,[7] a former member of the Israeli intelligence service (Whitaker 2002).[8] It elaborates a public narrative of itself as 'independent' and 'non-partisan' and repeatedly taps into the meta-narrative of the 'War on Terror' by claiming to be a major player in the fight against terrorism. For example, a newly added section to its website, entitled 'E-Tributes', offers its supporters an opportunity to donate a sum of money and send an e-card to their family and friends to inform them of this donation. The header for this page reads as follows:

> For 10 years MEMRI has been committed to bringing reformists in the Arab and Muslim world to the attention of the West, exposing antisemitism in the Arab and Muslim media, researching Islamist ideology and Islamist organizations that threaten the West, and promoting a greater understanding

> and awareness of the Middle East media and assist [sic] those who are fighting the War on Terror.

The header of another section of the site, entitled 'Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor', reinforces the same message[9]:

> MEMRI's Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM) scrutinizes Islamist terrorism world-wide, with a special focus on the Arab world, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. By monitoring strategic, tactical, ideological, military, and conventional and non-conventional threats to public safety and security, both imminent and potential, and to crucial interests and assets of states targeted by terrorism, it enables those under threat to effectively address and confront these threats.

MEMRI also taps into the meta-narrative of the 'War on Terror' by aligning itself with many of its architects and with staunch advocates of the so-called fight against terrorism. Its Board of Directors includes Elliott Abrams, former Special Assistant to George W. Bush, and Oliver Revell, former member of the Senior Review Group of the Vice President's Task Force on Terrorism; its Board of Advisors includes James Woolsey, John Bolton, John Ashcroft, Ehud Barak and Jose Maria Aznar, Former Prime Minister of Spain.[10]

MEMRI's 'About Us' page, which has been revised a number of times over the years, offers more interesting insights into the nature of the narratives it promotes and some of the ways in which it uses translation to construct these narratives. At the time of writing, the page outlines MEMRI's aims and activities as follows (emphasis added):

> The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) explores the Middle East through the region's media (both print and television), websites, religious sermons and school books. MEMRI bridges the language gap which exists between the West and the Middle East, providing timely *translations of Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, Dari, Hindi, and Turkish* media, as well as original analysis of political, ideological, intellectual, social, cultural, and religious trends in the Middle East.
>
> Founded in February 1998 to inform the debate over U.S. policy in the Middle East, MEMRI is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization. MEMRI's headquarters are in Washington, DC, with branch offices in London, Rome, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Shanghai and Tokyo. MEMRI research and *translations appear in several languages – English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Hebrew.*

It is worth noting that in the current as well as older versions of its 'About Us' page, MEMRI maintains offices in various parts of the world, including Jerusalem, but surprisingly none in the regions from which it collects material to

be translated (Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan). The only exception – and a recent addition (c. 2008) – is Baghdad, the capital of a country that remains under US occupation. More importantly, the source languages associated with the 'Middle East' and targeted by MEMRI are Arabic, Persian (MEMRI has now reverted to referring to this as Farsi), Urdu, Pashtu, Dari, Hindi and Turkish. Hebrew, another language spoken in the Middle East, is currently not included as a source language. However, one of the earlier versions of MEMRI's 'About Us' page, discussed in Baker (2006, p. 74), listed Turkish as a target rather than a source language and Hebrew (but not Arabic or Persian/Farsi) in both categories (emphasis added):

> The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) explores the Middle East through the region's media. MEMRI bridges the language gap which exists between the West and the Middle East, providing timely *translations of Arabic, Farsi, and Hebrew media*, as well as original analysis of political, ideological, intellectual, social, cultural, and religious trends in the Middle East.
>
> Founded in February 1998 to inform the debate over U.S. policy in the Middle East, MEMRI is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501 (c)3 organization. MEMRI's headquarters is located in Washington, DC with branch offices in Berlin, London, and Jerusalem, where MEMRI also maintains its Media Center. MEMRI research is *translated to English, German, Hebrew, Italian, French, Spanish, Turkish, and Russian*.

A later version of the same page (c. 2006) listed *Arabic*, *Persian* and *Turkish* as source languages and *English*, *German*, *Hebrew*, *Italian*, *French*, *Spanish* and *Japanese* as target languages. Japanese appeared as a target language at that stage; Russian disappeared from the list but was introduced again as a target language, together with Chinese, in March 2007. Table 8.1 summarises the highlights of MEMRI's evolving public narrative of terrorism and security as expressed through the choice of source and target languages of translation. These choices reflect one aspect of the patterns of selective appropriation and causal emplotment that characterise the overall public narrative of terrorism and security as elaborated by MEMRI: which languages are chosen, and whether they are assigned to the source or target category, has implications for the way we understand the relationship between the protagonists represented by these languages.

The pattern of selective appropriation evident in the choice of source and target languages of translation here (not to mention the location of offices) constructs a narrative that divides the world into two camps: those who represent a threat to progressive, democratic societies, and who therefore have to be monitored very closely (through translation), and those who bear the burden of monitoring these sources of security threat to protect the innocent, democratic, civilised Western world against terrorist activities. The source languages index those societies that are depicted as sources of threat in this narrative; the target

TABLE 8.1 MEMRI's evolving narrative of terrorism and security (four versions of 'About Us')

Source languages (to be monitored)	*Target languages (to undertake the monitoring)*	*Approximate date*
From Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew	Into English, German, Hebrew, Italian, French, Spanish, Turkish, Russian	c. 1999
From Arabic, Persian, Turkish	Into English, German, Hebrew, Italian, French, Spanish, Japanese	c. 2006
From Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Pashtu	Into English, German, Hebrew, Italian, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese	c. March 2007
From Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, Dari, Hindi, Turkish	Into English, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Polish and Spanish	February 2010

languages index those that must police the world and fight terrorism. This in turn activates a specific pattern of causal emplotment that characterises MEMRI's overall narrative. The source language group, which represents protagonists who pose a threat to the free world, is emplotted as aggressor, and the target language group, which represents protagonists who are under threat from the first group, is emplotted as victim. The implication is that in invading countries such as Iraq or Afghanistan, or bombing Lebanon or Gaza, the victims are merely *responding* to the aggression being visited on them. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the source language group. These are the people who initiate violence, the ones we should condemn.

Relationality, a feature inherent in all narratives, is also at work here. Each language accrues a specific value by virtue of its positioning within the narrative. Any change in position in this narrative, from target to source language, signals a change, or an attempt to effect change, in political reality. Turkey was constructed at an earlier time (when it appeared as a target language) as part of the democratic, civilised world entrusted with monitoring the sources of security threat. It has now been moved to the source language camp, perhaps because it is less sympathetic to the United States and Israel than it once was. Hebrew's brief inclusion as a source language in the early stages may have been intended to signal 'balance' of coverage and mask MEMRI's pro-Israel agenda, but the fact that it is the only language to have ever appeared in both categories (source and target) raises questions about the nature of the narrative being constructed from the very start. Its inclusion as both source and target language, and the exclusion of other source languages from the target group, suggests that speakers of these other source languages do not need to be informed of what goes on elsewhere. Unlike speakers of Hebrew, they simply need to be monitored.

As can be seen from its own description of its activities, MEMRI's highly successful attempt to narrate Arab and Muslim countries as the major culprits

in the 'War on Terror' meta-narrative relies primarily on translation. MEMRI's founder, Yigal Carmon, made the point clearly in an online debate with Brian Whitaker in January 2003: '[m]onitoring the Arab media is far too much for one person to handle', he explained, 'We have a team of 20 translators doing it.'[11] These translators locate material from primarily Arab and Iranian sources – newspapers, TV programmes, political speeches, sermons delivered in mosques and school textbooks – and translate it into whatever set of target languages MEMRI chooses to depict as the guardians of the free world at any point in time. The translations are then posted on MEMRI's website. Individuals and institutions anywhere in the world can subscribe, largely free of charge, to receive this material regularly in one of MEMRI's target languages. More importantly, MEMRI sends unsolicited translations of selected material to members of the US Congress and journalists in various parts of the world completely free of charge. Brian Whitaker first alerted British readers of *The Guardian* newspaper to MEMRI's generous contributions to the media in 2002:

> For some time now, I have been receiving small gifts from a generous institute in the United States. The gifts are high-quality translations of articles from Arabic newspapers which the institute sends to me by email every few days, entirely free-of-charge. . . . The emails also go to politicians and academics, as well as to lots of other journalists. The stories they contain are usually interesting. . . . Whenever I get an email from the institute, several of my Guardian colleagues receive one too and regularly forward their copies to me – sometimes with a note suggesting that I might like to check out the story and write about it.

The stories that MEMRI selects for translation, Whitaker further argues, 'follow a familiar pattern: either they reflect badly on the character of Arabs or they in some way further the political agenda of Israel' (Whitaker 2002). Harris (2003) acknowledges the same pattern of selective appropriation, noting that 'MEMRI engages in the practice of publishing selective and decontextualized excerpts of the Arabic press in ways that can present opponents of [Israel's] occupation as religious extremists or anti-Semites.' The former Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, describes MEMRI as a 'very well-funded' organisation 'which specialises in finding quotes from Arab media for circulation in the West. The translation and selection of quotes tend to portray Islam in a very negative light' (Livingstone 2005, p. 4).

MEMRI's influence, particularly on politicians and the media, is widely acknowledged. Thomas Friedman, the well-known columnist with the *New York Times*, frequently cites MEMRI as his source of information (see, e.g. Friedman 2005, 2006). MEMRI's translations even constituted the main source of 'evidence' in a dossier submitted to London's Metropolitan Police in 2004 calling for the expulsion of Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi from Britain (Baker 2006, p. 75). Dr. al-Qaradawi, a well-known Muslim scholar, had been invited at the time to speak

at an interfaith conference organised by the Mayor of London. The controversy was widely debated in the British press, and according to the *BBC News* (7 July 2004), the Muslim Council of Britain consequently 'accused sections of the media of conducting a "character assassination" campaign against Dr Al-Qaradawi'.

The press reports on MEMRI's work, proudly quoted by MEMRI on its site in the past,[12] confirm Whitaker's, Harris's and Livingstone's analysis of the type of narrative that MEMRI's translations seek to promote through careful selective appropriation:

> 'MEMRI, the indispensable group that translates the ravings of the Saudi and Egyptian press . . . ' *Weekly Standard, 28 April 2003*
>
> 'I am full of admiration for the work MEMRI has done . . . in its dedicated exposure of Arab antisemitism. Until MEMRI undertook its effort to review and translate articles from the Arab press, there was only dim public awareness of this problem in the United States. Thanks to MEMRI, this ugly phenomenon has been unmasked, and numerous American writers have called attention to it.' *US Rep. Tom Lantos, 1 May 2002*
>
> 'www.memri.org – What they do is very simple, no commentary nothing else. What they do is they just translate what the Saudis say in the mosques, say in their newspapers, say in government pronouncements, say in their press.' *1 October 2002, BBC*

As noted at the beginning of this article, MEMRI is very careful about the accuracy of its translations, because its credibility can easily be undermined if its opponents were to identify and publicise a list of errors in these translations, whether the errors in question are presented as deliberate or not. Rather than manipulate specific stretches of the text in translation, then, it relies much more heavily on exploiting the narrative feature of selective appropriation, choosing to translate the worst possible examples of Arab, Iranian and Muslim discourse. This serves to activate a pattern of causal emplotment that features Arabs and Muslims as extremist and threatening, and hence culpable for the violence witnessed in Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Guantanamo and elsewhere.

MEMRI further strengthens this public narrative by grouping its translations under damning headings. The headings, which act as powerful frames that signal the culpability of the protagonists it depicts as sources of threat, include 'Antisemitism Documentation Project', 'Jihad and Terrorism Studies Project' and 'Islamist Websites Monitor Project'. These and similar categories structure the massive archive of translations available on the site.[13] Their choice and arrangement, like the choice of source and target languages, establish a pattern of relationality in which disparate elements such as Islam, terrorism and antisemitism (the latter a phenomenon traditionally associated with Europe rather than the Muslim World) come to be depicted as closely connected and best understood as aspects of the same phenomenon. Other headings such as 'U.S. and the Middle

East' and 'Arab-Israeli Conflict' subtly align Israel with the United States, placing the rest of the Middle East, including Arab countries, in the opposite camp. One section is entitled 'Reform in the Arab and Muslim World', but there are no sections entitled 'Reform in Israel' or 'Reform in the US', suggesting again – in terms of causal emplotment – that the fault lies with Arab and Muslim countries. Under this heading, MEMRI features translations of texts written by what it designates as 'reformist' writers: a few voices from Arab and Muslim countries who argue for freedom of thought, women's rights and similar causes. The occasional 'cosmetic' selection of a non-extremist source serves to give a veneer of balance to MEMRI's coverage, at the same time as reinforcing the overall portrayal of Arab and Muslim countries as a hotbed of extremism that suppresses the very few sane voices in the region, voices that are now magnanimously being given space on an American site with strong Israeli connections.

A brief glance at the content of one of these sections, the 'Antisemitism Documentation Project', offers further insight into some of the ways in which MEMRI constructs its public narratives of Arab and Muslim communities. The header to this section reads as follows (emphasis added):

> This section of MEMRI's website documents *Arabic* newspaper reports, editorials, and other media sources which are primarily based upon antisemitic themes. During recent years, *Arab antisemitism* has become a main catalyst of antisemitic incidents throughout the world.

And yet, this page regularly features translations of material from *non-Arab* sources, especially Iranian newspapers and TV. The following are examples of some of the titles/links to translations that featured in this section of the site on 20 October 2009 (the non-Arab source is highlighted in bold in each case):

> *Special Dispatch – No. 2108 – Antisemitism Documentation Project – November 9, 2008*
> Director of **Iranian TV Series** 'Secret of Armageddon' Comments on MEMRI TV's Translation of Series; Confirms 'Protocols of Elders of Zion'; Claims 'Discovery of America by Columbus was Made Possible by Money of Jewish Aristocrats' – Who Thought America Was Promised Land
> *Special Dispatch – No. 2095 – Antisemitism Documentation Project – October 27, 2008*
> **Iranian News Channel IRINN** Reports on Newly Published **Iranian Book** On 'The Great Distortion Of The Historical Event Called The Holocaust, Using The Art Of Satire'
> *Special Dispatch – No. 1975 – Antisemitism Documentation Project – July 2, 2008*
> "The Secret of Armageddon" – **Iranian TV Series** Affirms Protocols of Elders of Zion, Promotes Conspiracy Theories, Claims Jews Are Planning

"the Genocide of Humanity" and Iranian Jewish, Baha'i Communities are Plotting to Take Over Iran
Inquiry and Analysis – No. 445 – Antisemitism Documentation Project – May 30, 2008
In Friday Sermons Across **Pakistan**, Islamic Clerics Accuse Jewish-Qadiani Nexus of Conspiring Against Islam. By Tufail Ahmad
Special Dispatch – No. 1748 – Antisemitism Documentation Project – October 25, 2007
Iranian President Ahmadinejad Reiterates Proposal for **'**Zionist State**'** in Canada or Alaska, Suggests International Committee of **'**Truth-Seekers**'** Examine Holocaust, 9/11

What is interesting here is the disconnect between the header to this section, which specifically speaks of 'Arab antisemitism', and the sources of many of the items that are routinely included in it. This disconnect reveals MEMRI's ongoing attempt to blur the distinction between Arab countries and Iran – just as it routinely blurs the distinction between 'Arab' and 'Muslim' – where it suits it to project the entire region as teaming with Muslim fanatics and to associate Islam *per se* with terrorism.

This blurring of distinctions between Arabs and Iranians, between Arabic and Persian and between the categories of 'Arab' and 'Muslim' throughout MEMRI's output feeds into one of the larger public narratives it painstakingly elaborates in its translations, commentary and the frames it sets up around its various 'dispatches'. This narrative depicts the conflict in Palestine/Israel as ultimately a religious conflict between Jews and Muslims, rather than a political conflict over territory and resources. Attributing antisemitism to Arabs and Muslims and depicting what it calls *Arab antisemitism* as 'a main catalyst of antisemitic incidents throughout the world' also feeds into this larger narrative of a 'religious war', one fuelled by an irrational hatred of Jews rather than resistance to a Zionist colonialist agenda that deliberately collapses the distinction between 'Jew' and 'Israeli'.

The title of one of the items listed under the 'Antisemitism Documentation Project' on the same day reads as follows:

Special Dispatch – No. 2014 – Antisemitism Documentation Project – August 5, 2008
Members of the Egyptian Unique Moustache Association: We Respect the Moustache of Hitler Because He Humiliated the World's Most Despicable Sect

The choice of source here – the Egyptian Unique Moustache Association – is highly amusing and betrays the length to which MEMRI is prepared to go to dig up material that can be used in demonising Arab and Muslim communities. Acknowledging that all stories are selective representations of reality, Bennett and Edelman (1985, p. 164) explain that '[t]he issue with selectivity is whether a

representation funnels emerging reality back into stereotypical terms, or whether it introduces new information in terms of unfamiliar dilemmas, puzzles, and contradictions of the sort that promote critical thought and a self-consciousness of problem-solving behavior'. They further argue that '[m]ost stock political formulas drive out the stuff of critical thought and action and replace it with self-fulfilling ideas and habituated action imperatives' (Bennett and Edelman 1985, p. 164). This is certainly true of MEMRI's deliberate selection of material that portrays Arabs and Muslims as extremist, antisemitic and a threat to Western democracies.

Deliberate selective appropriation is a feature that both sides to a conflict can exploit more or less effectively, depending largely on the resources they have available at their disposal. In his *Guardian* article, Brian Whitaker (2002) proposed that Arabs should also use translation to fight back against demonisation programmes of this type:

> As far as relations between the west and the Arab world are concerned, language is a barrier that perpetuates ignorance and can easily foster misunderstanding. . . . All it takes is a small but active group of Israelis to exploit that barrier for their own ends and start changing western perceptions of Arabs for the worse . . . It is not difficult to see what Arabs might do to counter that. A group of Arab media companies could get together and publish translations of articles that more accurately reflect the content of their newspapers.

A year or so later, an organisation called Arabs Against Discrimination (AAD) was set up, almost as a direct response to Whitaker's suggestion. The web site of this organisation no longer seems accessible, but while it lasted it too relied very heavily on translation to promote a counter-narrative of what its members believed Arabs stand for and to expose patterns of racism and discrimination in Israeli society. Without mentioning MEMRI explicitly, their 'About Us' page referred to 'facing up to the campaigns organised by Israeli and Zionist organisations which, through the translation and distribution of Arabic media materials, try to create an impression of rampant anti-Semitism in the Arab world'. Its aims, it declared, were 'to promote and foster the values and traditions of tolerance, acceptance and respect for otherness, and coexistence between different cultures, religions, civilisations and peoples. Such values are integral to Arab culture throughout its history'. Sadly, AAD does not seem to have had sufficient resources and support to continue its mission.

Narrative features and framing devices

Advocacy groups as well as individual translators and interpreters can exploit features of narrativity (temporality, relationality, selective appropriation and causal emplotment) to frame or reframe a text or utterance for a set of addressees. But

effective narratives also rely on subtle processes of (re)framing which can draw on practically any linguistic or non-linguistic resource to set up an interpretive context for the reader or hearer. This may include exploiting paralinguistic devices such as intonation and typography, visual resources such as colour, image and layout and linguistic devices such as tense shifts, deixis, code switching and the use of euphemisms. Translators of written text can employ such devices in the body of the translation or, alternatively, around the translation. This distinction can be very important because of the key role that the notions of accuracy and faithfulness tend to assume in the context of professional – and particularly politically sensitive – translation, as is the case here. Below are a few examples of such devices as used by neo-conservative organisations that produce knowledge about Arab and Muslim communities.

First, while keeping the actual translation very close to the original, MEMRI and other groups such as PMW and MESI often add their own titles to translations to frame the narrative as extremist or threatening. Examples of titles that some of these groups add to their translations and 'reports' (the latter often consisting of very carefully selected extracts translated from longer texts in Arabic, Persian and other source languages) include the following:

> *Koran Commentary for Children Published in Egypt Features Incitement to Fight Christians and Jews*[14]
>
> *(MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 1744)*

> *Egyptian Government Preacher Incites Children to Martyrdom*[15]
>
> *(Title of MEMRI's Special Dispatch No. 1197)*

> *Kids Seek Shahada Martyrdom for Allah. Palestinian children: Martyrdom for Allah is preferable to life and suicide terror is natural*[16]
>
> *(Title of video subtitled by PMW)*

> *Hamas Blood Libel: Jews drink Muslim blood*[17]
>
> *(Title of PMW report by Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook which features subtitled video of Hamas TV skit)*

> *The Nexus Between Iranian National Banks and International Terrorist Financing*[18]
>
> *(Title of report by MESI)*

> *Major Anti-semitic Motifs in Arab Cartoons*[19]
>
> *(Title of report by MESI)*

An existing title (in the source text) can also be replaced by one that is simply 'discursively alien' in English. For example, an English translation of an article from the Palestinian newspaper *Alhayat Aljadeeda* was posted on the Watching America web site under the title 'Oh, America . . . Oh, Empire of Contradictions' (see Baker 2007 for an extended discussion of this example).[20] The original Arabic title is far less flowery and 'exotic': it reads 'Signs on the Road: America

and Democracy!!!' Together with other framing devices used in this particular translation, this new title contributes to elaborating a different narrative from that outlined in the original article. For example, the original *Alhayat Aljadeeda* article,[21] by Yahya Ribah, argues that the United States preaches democracy only when the results promote its own policies in the Middle East, citing its opposition to the election of Hamas as an example. There is no sense in the original Arabic text of any confusion on the part of the writer or his compatriots. The article is clear in its condemnation of US policy in the region, including its unremitting support for Israel. A summary added by Watching America precedes the translation of the article itself and constrains the reader's interpretation of it. It reads as follows:

> When America urges nations to espouse democracy and democratic elections, what is it really asking for, what is it really saying? According to this op-ed article from Palestine's Arabic-language Alhayat Aljadeeda, Washington's reaction to the election of Hamas has left Palestinians, and others, scratching their heads.

Together, the English title and the summary reconfigure the pattern of causal emplotment established in the original by evoking a public narrative that has considerable currency in the United States in particular, namely, that the problem with American policies in the region is not that they are wrong in and of themselves, but that they are not properly explained to the 'natives'; that American politicians and military personnel are failing to win the hearts and minds of people in part by sending confusing signals to Arabs and Muslims.

In addition to titles and various types of heading, sub-heading and summaries that can be and are used to reframe narratives in translation, images are also often added to serve similar purposes. In the English translation of the *Alhayat Aljadeeda* article, for example, Watching America inserts its own images (which do not appear in the source text), complete with suitable captions that frame the translated narrative as part of the broad, meta-narrative of the War on Terror. One such image shows Ismail Haniyeh with his hands extended in prayer. The caption above the photo reads: 'Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh Prays Before a Speech, Most Likely for Funds . . . Most Likely to Come from Iran.' Another photo shows a fierce-looking man holding a large gun and surrounded by other armed men. The caption below the photo reads: 'A militant from the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade on the West Bank, During an Event to Remember One of the Many Acts of Violence that Have Taken Place There.' These photos and the accompanying captions bear no relationship at all to the content of the article or the argument of its author, but they succeed in establishing a narrative framework – and a pattern of relationality – in which what might otherwise be seen as unconnected elements are brought together and made to look like interdependent phenomena: criticism of the United States, Palestinians

(particularly Hamas), Islam (evoked through the mention of prayer), Iran as a source of funds for terrorist activities, violent militancy and martyrdom.

And finally, English translations of articles from Arab and Iranian newspapers are often accompanied by a suitably annotated link to a video clip, usually provided by MEMRI, which acts as a further framing device, encouraging the reader to interpret even the most reasonable of Arabic discourse as one that hides an extremist subtext. The article from *Alhayat Aljadeeda* is accompanied by a video link, also provided and subtitled by MEMRI, with a suitable photo and annotation. The photo shows a Muslim cleric speaking to a crowd, and is preceded by the title: 'Video from Palestine: Praise for Suicide Bombing at Hamas Fundraiser.' A translated quote that appears underneath the photo and functions as a hyperlink reads as follows:

> 'After efforts, policies, and plans failed, and when people almost despaired, the whole world was surprised by a certain decision of Hamas. What was the decision? An intifada. An Intifada? Where? In Palestine. In Palestine!'

The various elements of the video link thus reinforce the same pattern of relationality as the captions accompanying the photos and the header introducing the translation, and further contribute to establishing a pattern of causal emplotment that depicts Muslims as deranged, violent extremists with no genuine grievances against the United States or the 'West' in general. Interestingly, translations from other languages do not receive this treatment: translations from Chinese, Spanish, French, Dutch and a host of other languages are offered on the Watching America site *without* links to MEMRI videos that serve to demonise the community in question. The only other language that receives this special treatment (or is subjected to this framing strategy), as may be expected, is Persian.

Ultimately, what these examples suggest is that in the context of a violent conflict over territory and resources that is being widely emplotted as a religious war waged by irrational fanatics against innocent and peace-loving nations, it is imperative that we develop a more robust understanding of the processes involved in effecting such representations, as well as resistance to them. These processes rely on extensive acts of translation at almost every point of interaction.

Concluding remarks

Public narratives of terrorism and security now pervade our lives and are elaborated by a range of influential institutions, including some that present themselves as non-partisan and apolitical. These institutions have a vested interest in portraying certain communities as inherently terrorist and extremist and do so largely by making a range of carefully selected translations available to audiences around the world, especially politicians and the media. Narrative theory allows us to make sense of their entire programmes of translation as well as individual choices at text level.

A more important argument that I have tried to elaborate here is that attempts by Arab and pro-Arab activists to challenge neo-conservative organisations such as MEMRI by casting doubt on the accuracy of their translations miss the point. A group called MEMRI Watch,[22] for instance, operated for a short while in 2007 and described itself as 'a central resource for critiques of MEMRI' and as 'a small collective of translators and analysts who are bothered by the output of MEMRI for various reasons'. This group worked hard to 'highlight instances of mistranslation and doctoring in MEMRI's translations', but clearly did not find enough such instances to justify continued engagement. For, as the examples discussed in this article suggest, MEMRI does not have to mistranslate to promote negative perceptions of Arabs and Muslims. The nature of narrativity is such that much more subtle devices can be used to achieve such ends. Activists who wish to challenge the discourse of security and terrorism and promote a more tolerant, more just narrative of the sources of unrest and violence in our world today would do well to look beyond the semantics of discourse and attempt to understand the narrative mechanisms by which neo-conservative organisations continue to manipulate our perception of reality.

Notes

1 See www.memri.org/content/en/about.htm [Accessed 21 February 2010].
2 The video clip is no longer available on MEMRI's website or on YouTube. However, MEMRI's translated transcript can still be accessed here: http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP157707 [Accessed 21 February 2010].
3 I examined the clip carefully when it was available on YouTube. As a native speaker of Arabic, I can attest to the validity of Whitaker's analysis. See Hijazi Al-Sharif (2009) for further discussion of this translation.
4 In Arabic, a *shaheed* (martyr) is anyone killed in a conflict, whether or not they choose to be involved in that conflict. What Sanabel is saying here, given her earlier comment, is that she will be killed and hence become a martyr, not that she will *commit martyrdom*.
5 This exchange is transcribed in Whitaker (2007) but the relevant clip from the CNN programme is also available on various sites. See, for example, http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=25423_Outrage_CNN_Covers_Up_Death_Cult_Mickey_Mouse_Video&only [Accessed 21 February 2010].
6 An early version of MEMRI's website, preserved in the web archives, included this mission statement: 'In its research, the institute puts emphasizes [sic] the continuing relevance of Zionism to the Jewish people and to the state of Israel.' The website was revamped after September 11 but the earlier version is still available at http://web.archive.org/web/19990220054656/www.memri.org/about.html [Accessed 21 February 2010].
7 The archived early version of the website introduced Yigal Carmon as follows: 'Col. (Res.) **Yigal Carmon** is MEMRI's *President*. He served in the IDF/Intelligence Branch from 1968 to 1988. From 1977 to 1982 he was the Acting Head of Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria and the Advisor on Arab Affairs to the Civil Administration. Following Col. Carmon's retirement from the IDF he was Advisor to Premiers Shamir and Rabin for Countering Terrorism from 1988 to 1993. In 1991 and 1992 he was a senior member of the Israeli Delegation to peace negotiations with Syria in Madrid and Washington.'
8 Hijazi Al-Sharif (2009) provides the most detailed analysis of MEMRI's composition, activities and translation strategies to date.
9 www.memrijttm.org/ [Accessed 21 February 2010].

10 www.memri.org/content/en/about.htm [Accessed 20 February 2010].
11 See www.guardian.co.uk/israel/comment/0,,884156,00.html [Accessed 20 February 2010].
12 I am no longer able to locate these quotes on MEMRI's site, which is constantly revamped to project MEMRI as less partisan and more balanced following the exposure of its origins and activities by various individuals and activist groups.
13 MEMRI changes and updates its site constantly. The current list of 'Subjects' consists of the following: Jihad and Terrorism Studies, U.S. and the Middle East, Reform in the Arab and Muslim World, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Inter-Arab Relations, Economic Studies, Anitsemitism Documentation Project, Islamist Websites Monitor Project and Urdu-Pashtu Media Project.
14 http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=egypt&ID=SP174407#_edn1 [Accessed 19 October 2009].
15 http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=egypt&ID=SP119706 [Accessed 20 February 2010].
16 www.palwatch.org/site/modules/videos/popup/video.aspx?doc_id=446 [Accessed 20 February 2010].
17 www.pmw.org.il/Bulletins_Apr2009.htm#b050409 [Accessed 20 February 2010].
18 www.mesi.org.uk/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=94 [Accessed 20 February 2010].
19 www.mesi.org.uk/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=113 [Accessed 20 February 2010].
20 www.watchingamerica.com/alhayataljadeeda000003.shtml [Accessed 21 February 2010].
21 www.alhayat-j.com/details.php?opt=1&id=22102&cid=394 [Accessed 21 February 2010].
22 The web site of this group is no longer available.

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9

TRANSLATION AS RE-NARRATION*

Mona Baker

Abstract: *This chapter offers an overview of narrative theory as it has been applied in the field of Translation Studies. It starts by outlining the theoretical assumptions that underpin the narrative approach, and then explains and exemplifies two sets of conceptual tools used in the analysis of translation and interpreting events from a narrative perspective. The first set consists of a narrative typology (personal, public, conceptual and meta narratives). The second set consists of features that account for the way in which narratives are configured: selective appropriation, temporality, relationality, causal emplotment, genericness, particularity, normativeness and narrative accrual. The chapter concludes with a narrative analysis of a subtitled political commercial that demonstrates some of the strengths of the narrative framework.*

9.1 Introduction

The notion of 'narrative' has been part of the theoretical vocabulary of many disciplines, particularly in the humanities, for several decades, and has acquired a wide range of definitions across and even within the same discipline. Scholars of Translation have drawn profitably over the years on the long-established concept of narrative as a literary category, but the approach outlined in this chapter – often referred to as a socio-narrative or sociological narrative approach (Baker 2006; Harding 2012a, 2012b) – draws systematically on a much broader, constructivist understanding of narrative as our only means of making sense of the world and our place within it. It proceeds from two basic assumptions about the relationship between human beings, their environment and the stories that circulate within that environment. The first is that we have no direct, unmediated access to reality; specifically, our access to reality is filtered through the stories we narrate to ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live.

* 2014. 'Translation as Renarration', in Juliane House (ed.) *Translation: A Multidisciplinary Approach,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 158–177.

The second assumption is that the stories we narrate do not only mediate our access to reality, but also participate in configuring that reality. Translation is thus understood as a form of (re-)narration that *constructs* rather than *represents* the events and characters it re-narrates in another language. Translators and interpreters do not mediate cultural encounters that exist outside the act of translation but rather participate in configuring these encounters: they are embedded in the narratives that circulate in the context in which they produce a translation and simultaneously contribute to the elaboration, mutation, transformation and dissemination of these narratives through their translation choices. From this perspective, the most important aspect of what translators and interpreters do is that they intervene in the processes of narration and re-narration that constitute all encounters, and that essentially construct the world for us. The narrative approach thus grants translators and interpreters considerable agency and acknowledges the decisive and highly complex role they play in their own societies (Ayoub 2010; Karunanayake, in progress; Summers 2013) as well as globally (Baker 2006, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Boéri 2009).

An important methodological characteristic of the narrative approach, and one that distinguishes it from discourse studies, is that it ultimately assumes the unit of analysis to be a narrative, understood as a concrete story of some aspect of the world, complete with characters, settings, outcomes or projected outcomes, and plot. It therefore neither exclusively nor primarily concerns itself with capturing a set of recurrent linguistic patterns in a given text or set of texts and linking these to the abstract, institution-driven[1] notion of 'discourse' as 'social construction of reality' or 'a form of knowledge' (Fairclough 1995: 18). The focus instead is on the various ways in which both institutions *and* individuals, the powerful as well as the less powerful, configure and circulate the narratives that make up our world, and the myriad ways in which translators and interpreters intervene in this process.[2]

The focus on narrative as the unit of analysis has a number of important implications. First, the search for recurrent, textual patterns does not constitute a favoured methodological starting point in the narrative approach. An individual, one-off textual or non-textual choice is considered potentially as important as a recurrent pattern.[3] Second, a narrative is assumed to be realisable across a variety of media, with narrators able to draw on an open-ended set of resources in elaborating any story: written and spoken text, images, diagrams, colour, layout, lighting in theatre and film, choice of setting, and style of dressing, among other resources. Third, individual narratives have immediate, local significance but also function as episodes in larger narratives, which they participate in enhancing, legitimising, undermining, challenging and so on. Every translation operates within a specific, local environment, but it also contributes to the stock of narratives circulating within and beyond that environment. Finally, any narrative is understood to be inextricably connected to a range of other narratives: narratives have porous boundaries, are constructed out of a continuous stream of experience, and hence cannot be 'objectively' identified and delineated. This elusiveness is inescapable within narrative theory. If we accept that narratives

are constructed and that they mediate our experience of the world, we have to concede the impossibility of stepping outside all narratives in order to identify boundaries between them or establish their fit with some objective 'reality'. Ultimately, 'rather than agonise about the exact definition of "narrative"' or any other concept, the narrative approach invites us to focus instead on the way people construct narratives 'in order to negotiate their way in the world' (Baker, in Baker and Chesterman 2008: 22).

A model of analysis based on the above theoretical and methodological assumptions makes it possible to investigate the elaboration of a given narrative in an individual translation or interpreter-mediated encounter as well as across several translations and encounters, and across different media. It does not proceed by comparing original and translated texts stretch by stretch and making statements about their relative accuracy or inaccuracy at a semantic, generic or semiotic level, nor does it attempt to capture the broad norms of translation prevalent in any cultural space. Instead, it attempts to identify the stakes involved in any encounter and the narrative means by which these stakes are fought over and negotiated, as will be demonstrated later with an extended analysis of a subtitled political commercial aired on CNN in 2010. First, a brief explanation of the main conceptual tools elaborated in the narrative approach is necessary.

9.2 Conceptual tools

Like any systematic approach to the study of translation and other forms of cultural encounter, narrative theory has to draw on typologies and concepts that provide a meaningful vocabulary of analysis, even as it acknowledges the contingency of the categories it deploys. Given the constructivist nature of the approach, the typologies and concepts are treated as constructs that can and should be critically questioned, extended, modified and reconfigured as necessary for the purposes of a given research project. Similarly, no strict boundaries are assumed to separate the categories deployed: all categories are interdependent and none can be operationalised in isolation.

The conceptual tools outlined here are based on Baker's (2006) synthesis of theoretical elements drawn from the work of Bruner (1991), Somers (1992, 1994, 1997), and Somers and Gibson (1994). Further development of some of these categories can be found in later studies by Boéri (2009) and Harding (2009, 2012a, 2012b).

9.2.1 Narrative typology

The version of narrative theory elaborated in Baker (2006) distinguishes between four types of narrative and attempts to demonstrate their relevance to the study of translation and interpreting. *Personal narratives* are stories we tell ourselves and others about our place in the world and our own personal experience, while *public narratives* are shared stories that are elaborated by and circulate among a

group as small as a family or potentially as large as the whole world. *Conceptual* or *disciplinary narratives* are theoretical constructs elaborated within a scholarly or specialist setting in order to account for an object of study. Piaget's developmental theory is a good example: it tells a story of how children mature over time, passing through a set of transitional stages, and how they develop awareness of the world around them through a process of assimilation and accommodation. Conceptual narratives cross cultural boundaries through a variety of routes, including translation, and evolve in different directions as they enter a new narrative environment. Min Dongchao's (2007) study traces the journey of the feminist paradigm from North America to China through translation, revealing the complex process by which various terms and concepts are imported and the links between scholars' understanding of feminism and other concepts such as individualism and human rights. Mehrez (2008) offers a similar analysis of the complex choices involved in translating the term *gender* into Arabic, because of the different narratives of feminism that have emerged in that context and their interaction with wider public narratives in society. Finally, *meta narratives* are highly influential, resilient narratives with a high degree of geographical and temporal reach and a very high level of abstraction. These are narratives that have become so pervasive over such long periods of time that we simply tend to take them for granted: nationalism, progress, Enlightenment, capitalism vs communism and globalisation are all examples of meta narratives. As Somers puts it, meta narratives are the 'epic dramas of our time' (1992: 605).

Of these different types, the interplay between personal and public narratives is particularly interesting in the context of translation and interpreting. Although they ultimately remain focused on the self and its immediate world, personal stories are constrained by and in turn constrain shared, public narratives in a variety of ways. On the one hand, the scope for elaborating personal narratives is constrained both by the range of symbols and formulations derived from public narratives, without which the personal would remain unintelligible and uninterpretable, and by the blueprints for social roles and spaces that the public narratives in which we are embedded allow us to inhabit. At the same time, personal narratives feed into and can undermine the elaboration and maintenance of shared public narratives, hence the investment by powerful agents such as the state, political lobbies and religious institutions in a range of initiatives and policies designed to socialise individuals into the political, religious and social narratives of the day.

Personal narratives that threaten to undermine shared narratives promoted by powerful agents are often marginalised or suppressed through non-translation. Yitzhak Laor's 2006 review of a book by the Israeli novelist Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, offers a pertinent example. Zertal argues that the victims of the Holocaust were instrumentalised, and only stories that contributed to the evolving narrative of Zionism and Israel as the defining elements in Jewish history were recognised and circulated. Mark Edelman, described by Laor as 'a prominent figure first in the socialist Bund movement and then as one of the commanders of the Warsaw uprising' (2006: 9), was practically erased

from the official Israeli history of the uprising because, as Zertal explains (quoted in Laor 2006: 9):

> Edelman persistently refused to view the establishment of the State of Israel as the belated 'meaning' of the Holocaust [. . .] Consequently, his narrative of the uprising was silenced and his role was played down. His book, *The Ghetto Fighting*, published in Warsaw in 1945 by the Bund, was translated into Hebrew only 56 years later, in 2001.

Personal narratives that threaten mainstream public narratives in a target culture are not necessarily suppressed through non-translation. They may be allowed into a cultural space but translated and framed in ways that ridicule or undermine them, whether this is done in the service of powerful institutions such as the state or a domestic audience whose narratives are at odds with those promoted by other agents in the target culture. Thus, for example, Adel Abd El Sabour's 1999 Arabic translation of Joseph Finklestone's biography of the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat undermines that version of Sadat's personal narrative in various ways, as described in detail in Baker (2006: 130–131). Finklestone offers an account of Sadat's life that is seriously at odds with public narratives circulating in Egyptian society. In line with public narratives of Sadat promoted by the West, which present him as a man of peace and a leader who was able to rise above the prejudices of his people, Finklestone's biography is entitled *Anwar Sadat: A Visionary Who Dared*. The Arabic translation, on the other hand, is literally entitled 'Sadat: The Illusion of Challenge'. The Egyptian reader will immediately recognise in this title an acknowledgement of domestic public narratives of Sadat as a deluded politician who thought he could challenge his people by imposing on them a peace without dignity. This initial signal of narrative dissonance is supported by further choices within the text, starting from the publisher's Preface and continuing in the body of the translation (ibid.). Translations of other memoirs and biographies of leaders and public intellectuals whose personal narratives are at odds with shared narratives of the target audience offer a rich source of data that can be interrogated using narrative theory. Ultimately, how a personal narrative fares in translation will be heavily influenced by its divergence from or alignment with the dominant narratives upheld by the public for whom the translation is produced.

Personal narratives can also be deliberately used to unsettle the social order. They can be 'rescued' and emphasised in order to resist mainstream narratives, and to elaborate an alternative account of some aspect of the world. This is precisely what many feminists attempt to do by making space for neglected or suppressed accounts of the female experience of life, such accounts often being mediated through translation. A recent example is *Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution* (Figure 9.1).[4] This group posts videoed interviews of individual women who give an account of their personal involvement in the Egyptian Revolution in Arabic, with subtitles available in English for a global audience.

FIGURE 9.1 Opening screen shot from 'Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution' Videos

The group describes its aim as 'creating a time-capsule, storing the stories and a chunk of the lives of women for History to remember' because 'history [. . .] tends in most cases to ostracise the participation of women and keep them in the shadow while highlighting the participation of men and attributing leading roles exclusively to them'. In other words, the archive of personal stories documenting women's participation in one of the most important uprisings in Egyptian history, for domestic as well as global audiences, is intended to undermine public narratives of the event as exclusively male-inspired, led and executed.

Attention to the power of personal narratives is among the main strengths of narrative theory and one that makes it particularly attractive to scholars who engage in certain types of research, including research into social and political movements and various strands of activism. A good example is Pérez-González's (2010) analysis of the way in which members of ad hoc networks of activist translators bring aspects of their personal narrative to bear on the translation and discussion of public narratives with which they are not aligned. The theory acknowledges that the individual, one-off, personal stories that we tell and retell constitute a site where we exercise our agency, and can be a tool for changing the world. It is the detail of everyday life, of individual dilemmas, personal suffering, fear, joy and apprehension that appeals to our common humanity and therefore opens up a space for resistance and for empathy. Entire genres such as the Holocaust memoirs, which are translated and retranslated into numerous languages, can be approached from this perspective of the interplay and tension between personal and public narratives. Similar genres emerge with almost every major and sustained conflict, and the bulk of texts produced is translated in order to reach a global audience embedded in a variety of narrative environments.

Understanding the relationship between personal and public narratives can have important implications for what is selected for translation, and how it is translated. In her study of translation in the context of the Chechen conflict, Harding (2009, 2012a) found that powerful personal narratives of eye witnesses of the Beslan hostage crisis in 2004 were used very effectively by Caucasian Knot, a human rights agency, in its original reporting on the events in Russian. Unlike the mainstream Russian media, the agency took the trouble to interview eye witnesses of the events and to include their personal accounts in its reporting on Beslan. These personal accounts contributed to questioning the reductive public narratives of the conflict that dominated mainstream media. And yet they were absent from the English translations provided by the same agency on its website. One of Harding's conclusions is that given the cost of translation and the limited resources available to groups like Caucasian Knot, some things have to be sacrificed in translation, and that what is sacrificed tends to be the kind of material that is thought of as incidental, because it consists of individual personal narratives rather than streamlined official accounts. The result is that a resistant agency inadvertently comes to reinforce dominant public narratives in its translated output. The issue of selecting what to translate, when resources are restricted, is thus one that can be informed by a better understanding of the contribution that personal narratives, unique and incidental as they are, can make to a broader project of questioning dominant, reductive public narratives of any conflict.

Another area where attention to personal narratives can help us make sense of certain aspects of translation and interpreting concerns the way in which communities come to negotiate and present to the outside world a public narrative of who they are, what they do, and why they do it. Narrative theory allows us to examine the way in which the public narrative of the group is inflected by numerous personal narratives and negotiated over time through the input of many individuals. The activist group Babels[5] narrates itself as follows on its website:

> Babels is an international network of volunteer interpreters and translators *whose main objective is to cover the interpreting needs of the Social Forums.*
>
> *[emphasis added]*

Boéri's (2009) analysis of exchanges between members of Babels over a period of time makes it clear that arriving at this public narrative involved considerable negotiation that featured constant appeal to personal narratives of individual members. What appears as a seamless, rather smooth public narrative of Babels on its official website hides a lengthy process of arguing over a range of issues, specifically, in this case, Babels' exclusive relationship with the Social Forum. Boéri (2009: 99) quotes one member of Babels arguing against extending the scope of Babels outside the context of the Social Forum by offering free interpreting to any non-profit group promoting a worthy cause:

> As one of the coordinators of Babels in the WSF2005, I had to turn down many parallel activities that wanted volunteer translators from Babels, such

> as the Parliamentary Forum, the Health Forum, the Migration Forum, in addition to workshops held by NGOs etc, from [sic] which process Babels did not participate. In fact, they did not care if we were militants or not, they just wanted to be provided free interpretation services. Many of us are professional – we earn our living interpreting conferences.

The statement quoted above, which argues for restricting Babels to *covering the interpreting needs of the Social Forums*, reveals the extent to which personal narratives ('I had to turn down many parallel activities . . .') and the individual's situatedness within a given context ('we earn our living interpreting conferences') can shape the public narrative a group eventually elaborates of itself and shares with the world.

9.2.2 Narrative features

In addition to the typology of narratives outlined above, the application of narrative theory in Translation Studies has also drawn on a set of categories that account for the way in which narratives are constructed and function. Four core features of narrative are derived from the work of Somers (1992, 1994, 1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994). These are selective appropriation, temporality, relationality and causal emplotment. A further set of features is drawn from Bruner (1991): particularity, genericness, normativeness and narrative accrual. Both sets of features are exemplified in relation to translation and interpreting in Baker (2006) and have since been applied, collectively or individually, in a range of case studies (Boéri 2008; Valdeón 2008; Al-Sharif 2009; Baker 2010a; Morales-Moreno 2011, among others).

No coherent narrative can be elaborated by attempting to incorporate every detail experienced by or available to the narrator. Inevitably, some elements of experience are excluded and others privileged. This process of *selective appropriation* is inherent in all storytelling and is guided by evaluative criteria that reflect the narrative location of the individual, group or institution elaborating the narrative. Selective appropriation is involved in the decision to include or exclude, and to background or foreground, any narrative element, including events, details within events, and the way in which a protagonist is identified by particular attributes rather than others. The fact that 'Muslims are often identified simply *as* Muslims' in British media, rather than by reference to their profession (Moore et al. 2008: 4), for example, involves a decision to foreground one aspect of the identity of the person featuring in the news story and deselect others, with consequences for the way in which the overall narrative is configured and received. Selective appropriation is at play in every translation and every interpreter-mediated encounter, in part because differences between the resources provided by each language inevitably oblige the mediator to make choices that involve suppressing some elements and foregrounding others. For example, Brennan (1999) explains that all signs relating to 'murder' in British Sign Language specify the manner in which a person was killed. Some signs

indicate that the murder happened by stabbing, others by strangling, and still others by slitting the throat. Whatever sign the interpreter chooses to render 'murder' in BSL will lead to foregrounding some aspect of the event, and whatever word they use to render one of the more specific signs of 'murder' from BSL into English will involve suppressing some aspect of the experience as narrated by the Deaf participant. Selective appropriation is also of course involved in deciding what to translate in the first place, with serious consequences at the aesthetic, social and political levels (Jacquemond 1992, 2009; Baker 2010a).

Temporality refers to the embeddedness of narratives in time and space and highlights the fact that all narratives are temporally and spatially constituted. We rarely recount events in the order in which they took place, whether in everyday life or fictional works, because narratives are not chronologies, and the way in which time, sequence and spatial setting are used to construct a narrative is meaningful in its own right. Nevertheless, certain types of encounter mediated by interpreters impose a rigid temporal structure on narrators and use adherence to that structure in evaluating the veracity of the narrative. As Maryns (2006: 15) explains, one of the major difficulties faced by asylum seekers is 'their inability . . . to stick to a temporal order of the events'. They tend to organise their narratives topically – for example, in terms of types of torture to which they have been subjected – rather than chronologically. Interpreters in this type of context vary considerably in their ability to anticipate institutional requirements, and in their levels of linguistic competence. The result, as Maryns explains, is that 'the input of the interpreter can be advantageous to the applicant (when inconsistently produced discourse is transformed into a coherent translation) but can also have a disadvantageous effect (when consistently produced and persuasive discourse is transformed into a muddled translation)' (2006: 251).

Relationality, the third core characteristic of narrative, means that individual elements (events, characters, linguistic items, layout, imagery, etc.) derive their meaning from the overall narrative within which they are configured as building blocks. This means that meaning cannot be transferred intact, without modification, and assumed to function in the same way within another narrative. Thus, as Ross (1996) explains, the biblical term *kingdom of God* cannot be carried over without mediation into an Arabic translation of the New Testament, because the target audience is embedded in a specific set of narratives in which 'kingdom of God' (or *malakuut* in Arabic) has acquired a very different meaning. Islamic narratives configure 'kingdom of God' as 'the complete dominion of God', making it 'inconceivable that a person could enter (or leave) the kingdom of God since there is nowhere else for him to be' (ibid.: 32). In addition, the kingdom of God 'cannot be enlarged, since it already encompasses everything' (ibid.). Ross offers numerous suggestions for translating *kingdom of God* into Arabic, but they all involve various types of paraphrase and glossing. Relationality also has implications for another area of difficulty for translators, namely, the choice of dialect or register as an index of social standing, level of education, or age group. Queen discusses some of the implications of opting for an urban variety of German

associated with working-class youths to dub African American English: such a choice aligns AAE speakers with German speakers of that variety 'and in so doing constitutes them ideologically along similar lines' (Queen 2004: 522–523). Any dialect or register acquires a certain value or set of associations as a result of being configured within a specific narrative or set of narratives, and cannot be detached and made to shed these associations in order to replace a dialect or register in another narrative environment unproblematically.

Most importantly, every narrative has a distinct pattern of *causal emplotment*, and it is this pattern that gives significance to the individual items and events configured within it. Narrative items take on narrative meaning only when they are emplotted, when the narrator has engaged in the crucial process of weighting them and signalling what links obtain between them rather than simply listing them randomly and 'neutrally', without indicating relationships such as cause and effect, praise and blame, who or what is responsible for certain events unfolding, and so on. Baker (2010a) offers an example that demonstrates how a pattern of causal emplotment is powerfully signalled through the choice of source and target languages and the direction of translation. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), a neo-conservative political lobby that situates itself within the meta narrative of the 'War on Terror' and claims to undertake its extensive translation work in order to expose terrorists and extremists, has changed and extended its selection of source and target languages over the years. Source languages have included Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Dari, Urdu, Pashtu and Hindi; target languages now include English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Polish, Spanish and Chinese. Translations are provided, mostly free of charge on the website, in one direction only: from the designated source to the designated target languages. As Baker (2010a: 355–356) explains, this choice:

> constructs a narrative that divides the world into two camps: those who represent a threat to progressive, democratic societies, and who therefore have to be monitored very closely (through translation), and those who bear the burden of monitoring these sources of security threat in order to protect the innocent, democratic, civilised Western world against terrorist activities. The source languages index those societies that are depicted as sources of threat in this narrative; the target languages index those that must police the world and fight terrorism. This in turn activates a specific pattern of causal emplotment that characterises MEMRI's overall narrative. The source language group, which represents protagonists who pose a threat to the free world, is emplotted as aggressor, and the target language group, which represents protagonists who are under threat from the first group, is emplotted as victim. The implication is that in invading countries like Iraq or Afghanistan, or bombing Lebanon or Gaza, the victims are merely *responding* to the aggression being visited on them. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the source language group. These are the people who initiate violence, the ones we should condemn.

Genericness, a narrative feature discussed in Bruner (1991), draws our attention to the fact that individual narratives have to be elaborated within established frameworks of narration in order to be intelligible and effective: a poem, a petition, a detective story, a news editorial, a business meeting, an asylum hearing. These established frameworks are associated with a variety of meanings that contribute to developing the narrative in subtle ways. A petition, for instance, is a genre that casts the petitioner in the role of the weaker party and those being petitioned in the role of a powerful but possibly unfair protagonist. Translation plays an important role in reconfiguring and renewing generic systems (Selim 2010), and in so doing participates in creating new models and potentialities of narration. Translators are also constantly faced with new genres and subgenres that do not always provide ready frameworks for intelligible narratives within the target culture.

Particularity means that while each narrative refers to specific events and people, it can only be intelligible and communicate more than it formally encodes by being embedded within a familiar 'story type', such as 'boy meets girl and falls in love' or 'proud nation resists powerful invader'. These skeletal storylines come complete with character types and scenarios, and have a strong hold on our minds. They include stock political narratives of the type 'domestic population suffers onslaught of greedy and criminal migrants' and 'national security is threatened by external or internal enemies'. For a very good example of the exploitation of such a generic storyline in contemporary US politics, see McAdam (2004).

Bruner argues that the 'tellability' of narrative 'rests on a breach of conventional expectation' and makes it 'necessarily normative' (1991: 15). This means that all narratives have to depart from the 'norm' in some way, but the departure must nevertheless 'be effected within circumscribed, normative plots if [the narratives] are to be intelligible at all' (Baker 2006: 98). Even the most innovative and norm-breaking of translations must adhere to some norms in order to be understood. *Normativeness* is a feature of all narratives, whether elaborated by the powerful or the marginalised. Even activist communities and rebel groups elaborate repressive narratives that oblige their adherents to conform to specific norms of discourse and behaviour.

Finally, *narrative accrual* concerns the way in which we 'cobble stories together to make them into a whole of some sort' (Bruner 1991: 18): it refers to the process by which different stories are linked together to form larger and larger narratives over time. Narrative accrual enables the myriad individual stories about acts of violence in different parts of the world to contribute to a specific narrative of terrorism, Islamic extremism, or resistance to Western aggression, depending on the location from which a narrator elaborates these larger narratives.

9.3 Translation, narration and political conflict

Perhaps because they are so lucrative, wars are often carefully planned many years in advance, and they start not on the battlefield but on television, in newspapers, social media networks, children's stories, political speeches, films and

cartoons. Those with a stake in maintaining or preparing for a state of war are increasingly dependent on many acts of translation and interpreting, primarily but not exclusively in the media. Politicians in 'democratic' countries rely on voters' support to remain in office, and therefore have to weave convincing and sanitised narratives of their involvement in any war, using the narrative feature of particularity to evoke familiar, taken-for-granted storylines. Given the investment in stock political narratives that require the constant presence of a foreign threat, a potential range of protagonists is constructed as enemies over a long period of time, to be deployed as necessary in activating the same storyline, and to justify the brutality of war to domestic populations. It is in this context that translation becomes an important site and tool for negotiating the various relations and images that make war acceptable, indeed demanded by domestic voters.

A recent example that illustrates the importance of translation in generating narratives that construct potential targets for future wars is a political commercial first launched in the US in October 2010 and aired on CNN as part of a national campaign against government waste; it is now widely available on the Internet.[6] The commercial, entitled *Chinese Professor*, is commissioned by 'Citizens Against Government Waste',[7] a group that narrates itself as 'a private, non-partisan, non-profit organisation representing more than one million members and supporters nationwide'.[8] It elaborates a public narrative of government spending on areas such as healthcare as an example of waste and mismanagement, and a factor that will ultimately contribute to the demise of the US Empire. Their commercial casts America as a weakened nation, unprepared to deal with a shrewd and ruthless enemy that is waiting for an opportunity to enslave it. Bob Barr, a prominent US politician and one of the commercial's many fans, offers a useful summary of its content:[9]

> The ad is set in Beijing two decades in the future, in 2030. It opens to a huge lecture hall filled with attentive Chinese students. The Chinese professor begins lecturing the class on why great nations like the United States have fallen. He explains it is because they all made 'the same mistakes, turning their back on the principles that made them great.' The professor explains further that America's problems were compounded when it 'tried to spend and tax itself out of a great recession . . . enormous so-called "stimulus" spending, massive changes to health care, government takeovers of private industries, and crushing debt.'
>
> The ad closes with the professor looking directly at the camera and concluding, with an eerie laugh, 'Of course, we owned most of their debt . . . so now they work for us.' The class then enjoys a collective and knowing laugh at the state of affairs presented by the professor.

The Chinese-looking actor in this commercial speaks in Chinese; his speech is subtitled into English. In this context, whether or not the English subtitles are accurate renditions of the Chinese is irrelevant. Narrative theory allows us to look beyond accuracy and equivalence in cases such as this and to recognise

that a much more complex process is involved, one that does not even start from a source text and proceed to a translation and does not allow for any boundary to be drawn between the two. The producers of this commercial did not have to invest in writing a speech in Chinese (or in English and then having it translated into Chinese for the actor to deliver), nor in producing subtitles in English. They could have used a strategy very commonly deployed in films, namely to make foreign characters speak in the language of the audience, as German soldiers do in Hollywood movies. Having the constructed enemy speak in a foreign tongue, unintelligible to the audience, exaggerates the sense of threat being communicated. But the feature of genericness discussed above can offer further explanation for the use of subtitles. As a genre in its own right, translation carries connotations similar to those of a documentary, or reportage. It is assumed to report on something that exists independently of the reporting, and like media reporting, it is naively thought of as a matter of objective recounting of factual material. It therefore indirectly bestows a factual character on the representations it generates. This generic feature is exploited widely in politics, where translation is a cornerstone of intelligence work. Lobby groups like the MEMRI use it to construct a narrative of a dangerous world that can only be made safe by constant monitoring of what members of enemy societies say to each other *in their own language*. The translations provided merely allow readers to 'listen in' on these exchanges; they do not invent or adapt the texts but merely make them accessible. This impression of translation as a factual genre lends it a sense of authenticity and objectivity. At the same time, the presence of subtitles constitutes the Chinese speech as an 'original', a source text, and therefore indirectly constructs it as 'authentic'. Points of origin are traditionally constructed in narrative terms as authentic and trustworthy, 'the real thing'.

The powerful elite's attempts to construct evil enemies to serve as legitimate targets for current or future wars do not necessarily go unchallenged, and challenges posed to them often also draw on translation as a tool of resistance. In this case, several parodies of the Chinese Professor commercial have been produced and made available on the Internet.[10] One of the most popular among them is entitled *Chinese Professor: The Real Translation*. The subtitles for the first few screenshots are identical to the original commercial, but then they diverge radically to elaborate a very different public narrative of the sources of US decline, with a different pattern of causal emplotment. The English subtitles offer us the following as reasons: 'The rich bought control of the government and media [. . .] and distracted the poor with spectacle [. . .] while they stole the nation's wealth'. The penultimate subtitle states that in order to safeguard their interests, the rich 'manufactured fear of a foreign devil'; the final subtitle asks 'But who's stupid enough to fall for that one again?'. The threatening, menacing Chinese Professor and his heartless students of the original commercial are projected here as smart and critical. The same visual elements are reconfigured into a very different public narrative with the help of a new set of subtitles.

In both cases, the original commercial and its parody, viewers must be able to hear the foreign speech and to accept the illusion that this speech is being

mediated via subtitles, despite the fact that the speech itself is constructed to suit the producers' agenda and the subtitles may indeed have been written before, rather than after, the Chinese monologue. The title of the parody exploits the notion of translation to undermine the original commercial.

Ultimately, as this example demonstrates, translation does not 'mediate' a narrative that exists separately from it: it is part and parcel of the narrative being elaborated. Acknowledgement of the complex role that translation plays in the very construction of a narrative as it is being configured is one of the major contributions of narrative theory.

9.4 Future directions

Although various versions of narrative theory have exercised considerable influence across the humanities for several decades, Translation Studies has only recently begun to engage with this powerful theoretical tradition. The particular strand of narrative theory introduced in Baker (2006) and discussed in this chapter remains underdeveloped in a number of respects. First, future work must engage with a wider range of genres and themes that lend themselves readily to narrative analysis. Among these the most obvious are translated children's literature, comics, news reporting, political speeches, documentary film, various types of citizen media (such as subtitled YouTube clips), public-service interpreting in a wide range of venues, sign-language interpreting, and TV interpreting. Second, methods of narrative analysis applied in Translation Studies so far remain relatively imprecise, and many scholars who find the theory attractive also find it difficult to apply in a sustained manner. Explicit and more sustained engagement with methodological issues is therefore necessary to enable a greater range of case studies to be carried out. Such issues might include more robust definitions of categories such as 'public narrative' and 'meta narrative', as well as more extended illustrations of the interdependency among the various features of narrativity (causal emplotment, selective appropriation, particularity, etc.). The tendency of less experienced scholars to separate such features and try to identify them mechanistically in a set of data, one by one, should be discouraged by providing models of analysis in which the features are integrated and invoked only as and when they become relevant. And finally, future case studies should also provide models for applying narrative theory and demonstrate how narrative analysis can be operationalised at the micro level, by exemplifying a greater range of textual and non-textual devices through which a narrative may be elaborated. These might include verbal devices such as proximal/distal deictics, modes of address and neologisms; paralinguistic devices such as italics and block capitals in written discourse and intonation and pitch in spoken interaction; visual devices such as colour, images and layout, and a wide range of other elements that cannot easily be included under a specific category, such as choice of actors in a film or play. Future studies should be able to demonstrate that the ability of narrative analysis to draw on an open-ended and diffuse set of features and devices is empowering rather than intimidating, and that it can and should be undertaken systematically.

Notes

1 Practically all definitions of discourse share a focus on abstract forms of knowledge that are institutionally generated and sanctioned, and the way this abstract knowledge is constructed and mediated textually.
2 A very useful reference to consult on methodological issues relating to narrative analysis in general is Riessman (2008).
3 Both approaches recognise that one-off choices are only interpretable against the backdrop of established, recurrent patterns.
4 www.indiegogo.com/herstoryegypt.
5 www.babels.org/.
6 www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTSQozWP-rM.
7 See www.cagw.org/ (accessed 18 April 2011).
8 www.cagw.org/about-us/missionhistory.html (accessed 18 April 2011).
9 http://blogs.ajc.com/bob-barr-blog/2011/03/30/hollywood-caves-to-chinese-pressure-citizen-watchdog-group-doesn%E2%80%99t/.
10 See http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/evil-chinese-professor (accessed 18 April 2011).

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10

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION*

Mona Baker

Interest in narrative has a long and complex history that spans centuries and a diverse range of modem disciplines. Herman, Jahn and Ruyan (2005, 344) date the concept back "a couple of millennia, both in Western and non-Western cultures", but credit French structuralists, especially Roland Barthes and Claude Bremond, with emancipating it from the restricted bounds of literature and elevating it to "a semiotic phenomenon that transcends disciplines and media". Lyotard's work further expanded the definition of narrative beyond any form of textual realisation with the claim that Grand Narratives "may exist as collective beliefs rather than the message of particular texts" (Herman *et al.* 2005, 344), thus paving the way for the now widespread use of the term in this diffuse sense, as in 'gendered narratives' and 'narratives of race'.

Among the many definitions and uses of narrative adopted by scholars in various disciplines today, the strand that has taken root in Translation Studies draws on developments in social theory, and has come to be known as socio-narrative theory (Harding 2012a). To date, the most detailed exposition of socio-narrative theory and its application in Translation Studies remains *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (Baker 2006). Case studies that have developed the approach or some aspect of it include Boéri (2008), Pérez-González (2010), Morales-Moreno (2011), Harding (2012b; 2014), Erkazanci Durmus (2014) and Bassi (2015), among others, and a detailed engagement with the theoretical underpinning of the approach can be found in Robinson (2011). This chapter focuses on the analysis of translated texts and interpreted events across different media using the tools afforded by socio-narrative theory, and begins with an outline of the theory's assumptions and the difference between narrative, as understood in this approach, and discourse, especially as defined in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

* 2018. 'Narrative Analysis and Translation', in Kirsten Malmkjær (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Linguistics*, London & New York: Routledge, 179–193.

Basic assumptions

A narrative is a story with a perceived beginning and a projected end, and with a pattern of emplotment that allows both narrator and audience to make sense of the events depicted. Narratives are populated by protagonists, whether animate or inanimate, configured in relation to each other and the unfolding story. Socio-narrative theory takes as its point of departure the idea that narrative is *the* principal mode by which we experience the world, rather than merely a genre or particular type of text. The claim is not that everything comes to us already configured in narrative form, hence the distinction between narrative and chronology, list or database (White 1987; Herman 2013). Rather, our minds construct narratives out of various types of input in order to comprehend and make sense of the world; Herman (2013) refers to this process as storying the world. Texts of different types and in different media feed into this process, and Herman (2013, 9) includes translations and other types of retellings among the network of narratives that mediate our understandings and memories of specific experiences.

A related assumption is that the narratives we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live construct rather than represent reality. Translation can then be understood as a form of (re)narration that participates in constructing the world rather than merely a process of transferring semantic content from one language to another, accurately or otherwise. This raises the question of the status of "the real" in narrative theory, and the related question of the limits of neutrality in the context of translation and interpreting. The claim is not that there is no reality, nor that translators necessarily do or should set out to disregard the source text and re-narrate from their own perspective. Rather, what socio-narrative theory suggests is that "real events do not offer themselves as stories" (White 1987, 4), and that in order to make sense of them we have to narrativise them, to bestow a structure and an order of meaning on them. This order of meaning is informed by our own location within a variety of public and personal narratives and reflects the inescapable prejudices and limitations of that location. The same argument holds for physical entities as it does for events. As Harding (2012b, 23) argues, drawing on Sarbin (1998), while it is not possible to deny the reality of a brick wall given that we cannot walk through it, whether we assign that wall the function of protection or imprisonment is part of the process of narrativisation and reveals one of the ways in which the narratives we weave inform how we act in the world and hence constitute reality for us and others.

To complicate matters further, deliberate fabrications are widespread, and we do not always recognise them as such. A powerful example is the case of the Syrian-American LGBT blogger Amina Abdallah Arraf al Omari, better known as the "Gay Girl from Damascus", whose story captured extensive media attention in 2011 and generated widespread sympathy on social media, until *The Electronic Intifada* exposed her as a hoax (Abunimah 2011). She turned out to be a fictitious character created by Tom MacMaster, a doctoral student at the University of Edinburgh. By then the fictitious Amina had developed a romantic relationship

with a real-life French-Canadian gay blogger, and her alleged abduction by three men working for the Syrian President's family had mobilised various groups to lobby the US government to use its influence to set her free. Despite many clues that should have raised doubts about her authenticity, such as the fact that she was never available on Skype or on the phone and the nude pictures she sent her lover never showed her face (O'Hehir 2015), she was real because she had a real-life girlfriend and because *The Guardian*, a highly respected British newspaper, interviewed her and included a photograph she provided in the report (Marsh 2011). While this example does not involve translation, it reveals the same kind of logic that underpins the phenomenon of pseudotranslation, which has attracted much scholarly attention. In both cases, and irrespective of their status as real or fictitious, the narratives we weave about events, people and texts actively construct the world because they generate responses and consequences that may or may not be anticipated by those who play a role in elaborating and disseminating these narratives, and these consequences cannot simply be written off when a narrative turns out to be fictitious. Hence, as Rambelli (2009, 211) explains, James Macpherson's pseudotranslation of the Ossianic poems "supported the romantic hypothesis that poetry was not a matter of rhetorical devices but a natural and primitive form of expression", and the poems eventually came to constitute "a major point of reference for Scottish national pride [and] served as a model for other cultures which sought epic cycles of foundation, such as Finland". The impact of the Ossianic poems on the development of poetic or national traditions remains, irrespective of their fictitious status.

Narrative and discourse

Narrative and discourse are both key notions in the humanities, and scholars continue to define them in a variety of ways. They also overlap, as evident in the fact that narrative analyses frequently refer to hegemonic and other types of discourse, and discourse-oriented analyses often feature references such as corporate narratives. Despite the overlaps and diversity of definitions, however, the two concepts remain distinct in terms of the underlying assumptions of the theoretical frameworks in which they are embedded and, consequently, the types of analysis they support. Given the growing popularity of CDA among scholars of translation and interpreting, this section will focus on the partly overlapping concepts of discourse, as defined in CDA, and narrative, as used in socio-narrative theory, in order to address the question of whether narrative analysis can offer alternative insights that a CDA framework does not already afford us.

The starting point for definitions of discourse, including its definition in CDA, is Michel Foucault's work, but as Mills (2003) points out, Foucault himself offered various and often contradictory definitions of this concept. Nevertheless, practically all definitions of discourse, including its conceptualisation in CDA and CDA-informed studies of translation and interpreting, share a focus on abstract forms of knowledge and the way knowledge is constructed

and mediated, primarily through text. Importantly, knowledge is understood as institutionally generated and sanctioned, as evident in Mason's (1994/2010, 86) definition of discourse as "systematically organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution". The emphasis on text and institutions has important consequences for the types of analysis that can be supported by CDA, as opposed to socio-narrative theory.

First, although a number of scholars who work with the notion of discourse have attempted in recent years to extend its purview beyond verbal material, the emphasis continues to be placed on text, hence Wodak and Meyer's (2001/2009, 6) distinction between discourse as "structured forms of knowledge" and text as "concrete oral utterances or written documents". A narrative, by contrast, is assumed to be "realisable across a variety of media", such as "written and spoken text, images, diagrams, colour, layout, lighting in theatre and film, choice of setting, and style of dressing" (Baker 2014, 159–160). This lends narrative greater versatility in analysing complex instances of translation, such as web-based material (Baker 2007; 2010a; McDonough-Dolmaya 2010) and illustrated children's literature (Sinbaldi 2011). Narrative also lends itself much more readily to the analysis of paratextual material such as book covers (Al-Herthani 2009; Summers 2012), and to relating their verbal and nonverbal features to the wider cultural and political context in which the translation is embedded. For example, Al-Herthani explains that the front cover of the 1993 English edition of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* shows a large faded globe, with a crowd underneath, including an Asian officer wearing a turban and bowing to a white man who is dressed as a high-ranking official. Here, as Al-Herthani (2009, 152) explains,

> The globe may serve as a frame that evokes several narratives, including complicity between scholars and imperialism, since it is scholars who produce scientific and systematic means of controlling the other, such as maps and globes. The globe, a map of the world, may also signal the expansionist nature of imperial powers which have the whole world as a target, ultimately seeking to rule both the natives and "the waves", as Said (1993, 378) puts it. The way the Asian man is portrayed reminds the reader of the imperial narratives of "subject races" (Said 1995) who are happy to pay obeisance to their Western masters.

The cover of Kamal Abu-Deeb's Arabic translation, on the other hand, depicts a picture taken from the Palace of Versailles, which shows two large Roman statues lying helpless and defeated on the ground "with a rope coiled around the neck of each statue" (Al-Herthani 2009, 150). Al-Herthani (2009, *ibid.*) interprets this image as "symbolising the defeat of imperial powers at the hands of resistant communities", and argues that it "hints at one facet of Said's intellectual project, namely the decolonisation of symbols of colonial heritage, which are depicted here as lifeless statues, with no power and no legitimacy". Thus, while the image on the cover of the English text "evokes and anchors the narrative of

imperial hegemony" which is the focus of the first part of the book, the image on the cover of the translation "elaborates a narrative that challenges imperialism and declares its defeat" (2009, 157), the topic of the second part of the book. Each image gives salience to a different element of the overall narrative elaborated by Said, in the same way as foregrounding and backgrounding textual elements through omission, addition and reordering are a facet of one of the key dimensions of narrativity, namely selective appropriation.

Second, CDA's emphasis on textual material and abstract structures of knowledge is rendered more restrictive by a tendency to downgrade the individual text in favour of repeated occurrences across a large body of material produced by institutional actors, because individual texts are assumed to have "minimal effects, which are hardly noticeable and almost impossible to prove", while "a discourse, with its recurring contents, symbols and strategies, leads to the emergence and solidification of 'knowledge' and therefore has sustained effects" (Wodak and Meyer 2001/2009, 38). A corollary to the dismissal of individual texts is that "individual resources" and "the specifics of single-exchange situations" are not deemed relevant to CDA analyses – only "the overall structural features in social fields or in overall society" (Wodak and Meyer 2001/2009, 10). This has important implications for the types of genre that lend themselves to productive analysis using CDA, with obvious restrictions relating to literature and any form of creative endeavour. By definition, much literature deliberately breaks away from recurrent discursive patterns, which makes it difficult to isolate textual patterns repeated across many literary texts. Media texts, on the other hand, lend themselves extremely well to CDA analysis and continue to attract considerable attention from CDA scholars.

Socio-narrative theory is not hampered by assumptions relating to the value of individual texts and resources, nor by the highly deterministic claim that "it is not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject" (Jäger and Maier 2001/2010, 37). Unlike CDA scholars who argue that "[t]he subject is of interest not as an actor, but as a product of discourses" (2001/2010, 37), narrative theory recognises the role that individuals can play in shaping the world around them to varying degrees and pays equal attention to the personal and the public, the hegemonic and the resistant. Although some types of narrative – specifically meta narrative – tend toward the abstract and the hegemonic, and in this sense overlap more clearly with the notion of discourse as structures of knowledge and the emphasis on institutional power, narrative theory also pays considerable attention to the detailed, concrete stories of everyday life and the personal dimension of experience. It further acknowledges that individuals can and do exercise agency and are not mere products of discourses nor of dominant narratives. This attention to the personal and the non-mainstream is reflected in the typology of narratives that informs studies of translation and interpreting which have adopted the socio-narrative approach to date, as explained in the following section.

Finally, narrative and discourse seem to generate different resonances, irrespective of the claims made about their relative epistemological status by leading scholars in each field. While discourse is associated with knowledge, and hence objective reality, narrative is associated with stories and hence with fictional accounts. Herman (2013, 344) thus argue that an expression such as 'narratives of science' now

> carries the implication that scientific discourse does not reflect but covertly constructs reality, does not discover truths but fabricates them according to the rules of its own game in a process disturbingly comparable to the overt working of narrative fiction.

At the same time, in the context of the epistemological crisis that has come to define our contemporary world, many increasingly see narrative as all that is left "when belief in the possibility of knowledge is eroded" (2013, 344).

A fluid typology

Revisited and adapted to different contexts by scholars such as Boéri (2008) and Harding (2012a; 2012b), the typology of narratives that informs socio-narrative studies consistently pays equal attention to personal and institutional narratives, however labelled. The typology was first proposed by social theorists Somers and Gibson (1994) and later elaborated in Baker (2006) with specific reference to translation and interpreting. It initially consisted of four categories: ontological (personal), public, conceptual (disciplinary) and meta narratives, discussed in more detail below. Boéri's (2008, 26) study of conference interpreting introduced an additional category, professional narratives, to cover "stories and explanations that professionals elaborate for themselves and others about the nature and ethos of their activity". Harding's (2011; 2012a; 2012b) revision of the typology is more substantial: instead of a flat model, she proposes a more detailed taxonomy that foregrounds the difference between personal and collective narratives at the top level, with subcategories under each. In both cases the position of personal narratives within the typology remains intact; indeed, personal narratives are specifically foregrounded in Harding's typology, and the studies themselves draw on the tension between the personal and the public to explain important aspects of the data. While all theoretical models are open to extension and adaptation as scholars apply them in different contexts, socio-narrative theory is particularly amenable to this type of intervention because of its underlying assumption that all narratives are constructed, and hence "where we choose to draw any boundaries, including boundaries between theoretical categories, is part of the narrative world we are constantly engaged in constructing for ourselves and others" (Baker 2010a, 351–352).

To return to the original typology proposed by Baker (2006), ontological narratives, referred to in subsequent publications as personal narratives, were first

defined restrictively as "personal narratives that we *tell ourselves* about our place in the world and our personal history" (2006: 28; emphasis added). This definition unduly confined them to the domain of cognition and was later refined to strengthen the interpersonal dimension, allowing the category to further encompass the narratives an individual tells others and those that others elaborate about the individual, with the main criterion being that a given individual "is located at the centre of narration . . . is the subject of the narrative" (Baker 2010a, 350). Personal narratives in this expanded definition include genres such as autobiographies as well as biographies, eyewitness accounts and courtroom testimonies, whether delivered by the defendant or a witness. In all cases what is disseminated is an account of events that explicitly features either the narrator or another individual at the centre of the narrative.

The attention paid to personal narratives reflects socio-narrative theory's interest in discordant voices and how they challenge streamlined, reductionist accounts of the world or some aspect of it. The role played by translation in foregrounding or occluding such voices has been the subject of several studies. Harding's (2012b) extended study of media reporting on the 2004 Beslan hostage crisis found that eyewitness reports which figured to varying degrees in the original reporting in Russian practically disappeared in all English versions offered by state-controlled as well as independent news outlets. The effect of translation was ultimately to "emphasise and reinforce simplistic, reductionist framing narratives and to weaken or even eliminate complex and multivalent narratives" of a major trauma in modern Russian and Chechen history (2012b, 223). Similarly, van Rooyen (2011) cites an example of a radio news item translated from English for the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Afrikaans service, which omitted a long stretch where a township resident explains why he wants to see an end to coal mines in his area. Van Rooyen (2011, 26) explains this example partly in socio-narrative terms, as reflecting "obscured patterns of domination and oppression". People living in townships, she argues, "did not have a voice" in apartheid South Africa, but now they are "given the opportunity to speak but [are] silenced once more in the Afrikaans news bulletin".

Like all categories proposed by socio-narrative theory, the boundaries between personal and other types of narrative are porous and the categories themselves highly interdependent. Unless a personal narrative remains locked in the mind of a single individual, as the initial definition of the category unintentionally implies, it simultaneously constitutes a public narrative, to a greater or lesser degree. Public narratives are "stories elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual" (Baker 2006, 33), obvious examples of the overlap being the personal-cum-public narratives of high-profile individuals such as Nelson Mandela and Simone de Beauvoir.

Conceptual narratives are "the stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate for themselves and others about their object of inquiry" (Baker 2006, 39). Said's (1978) critique of the narratives produced by orientalists is a good example, but this critique is itself a conceptual narrative. Similarly, in the

context of translation and interpreting studies, Baker (2008, 22) argues elsewhere, Skopos theory constitutes a conceptual narrative that evokes representations of "an industrialized, affluent society populated by clients and highly professional translators"; the latter are projected as "highly trained, confident young men and women [who] . . . go about their work in a conflict-free environment and live happily ever after". This corporate narrative of the world of translation clearly does not accommodate locally sourced, trained translators and interpreters, let alone untrained taxi drivers and doctors who often have to scrape a living in various conflict zones by working for military forces and media outlets. The US military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, narrated not only locally sourced interpreters but also American interpreters of Iraqi or Afghan origin as potential sources of threat and denied them basic rights of protection, including "enter[ing] the Green Zone through the priority lane in order to avoid being easy targets for suicide bombers as they stood in long queues" (Baker 2010b, 210). As with any narrative, Skopos theory foregrounds certain aspects of experience and downplays others, with consequences for those excluded from its purview. The corporate account of the world it elaborates is shared by many other approaches in the professional and academic worlds and has been extremely influential. In recent years it has been challenged by both professionals and scholars, however, leading to significant developments in the way professional associations such as the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) position themselves. Kahane's (2008) article in the *AIIC Webzine*, which frames the argument in socio-narrative terms, called on AIIC members to acknowledge the predicament of interpreters in war-riven countries (Kahane 2008). On the scholarly side, Boéri (2008) mounted a similar challenge in the same year, and one year later the AIIC launched a project to support "Interpreters in Conflict Areas" irrespective of their professional or membership status. Attention to such dynamic processes that involve individuals and small groups challenging and adjusting powerful mainstream narratives, be they public, professional or conceptual, has rendered socio-narrative theory particularly attractive to scholars interested in the activist dimension of translation and interpreting.

Meta narratives are "particularly potent public narratives that persist over long periods of time and influence the lives of people across a wide range of settings" (Baker 2010a, 351). They are characterised by "a sense of inescapability" (Baker 2010a, 351) and a high level of abstraction (Harding 2012b, 39). Examples include religious narratives such as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as political narratives such as the Cold War and the so-called War on Terror. The latter has attracted particular attention in socio-narrative studies of translation and interpreting (Baker 2007; 2010a; Harding 2012a; 2012b; Bassi 2015).

The porosity of the boundaries between personal, public, conceptual and meta narratives does not compromise an analysis that draws on this typology, because the idea is not to identify the types of narrative evoked in a given text or set of materials mechanistically, but to capture the interplay and tensions between them in order to explain meaningful differences that can be observed over time or

between different sets of data. For example, Bassi (2015) draws on socio-narrative theory in a detailed analysis of the way in which Roberto Saviano, author of the Italian non-fiction best seller *Gomorra* (2006), was branded in his home country and internationally through translation. The book is a first-person account of the criminal organisation Camorra, which is involved in the disposal business and considered responsible for the widely publicised rubbish crisis that started in Naples in 1994. Its publication angered the organisation, whose bosses were reported to have issued threats against Saviano's life. Umberto Eco's 2006 broadcast message, in which he urged the state to offer Saviano protection and compared him to well-known figures killed by the Mafia in 1992, set the scene for branding the author domestically and "plac[ing] his personal story within the public narrative of the national struggle against organized crime" (Bassi 2015, 53). When an Italian newspaper broke the news in October 2008 that an ex-Camorra boss had revealed details of a plot to kill Saviano, a series of events began to unfold that included six Nobel Prize Winners signing a letter expressing solidarity with the author. Saviano's high-profile appearances with Salman Rushdie outside Italy paved the way for branding him as "Italy's Salman Rushdie" and for his association internationally with the meta narrative of the War on Terror and, more broadly, of "a meta-narrative of history as a coherent movement towards 'democracy' and 'freedom'" (2015, 58). Bassi's (2015, 57) meticulous analysis shows that over time, and with the intervention of various narrators, this branding became "part of a coherent timeline linking the 'Rushdie affair' with 9/11" and the War on Terror. Ironically, Saviano's own narrative of *Gomorra* explains it "as a modem organization perfectly integrated within capitalism and democratic Europe", but this explanation is undermined by the narratives in which the author is embedded internationally. As Bassi (2015, 59) explains,

> in Saviano's narrative, the "global threat" comes from the Western project of capitalism; in the narrative of the label "Italy's Salman Rushdie" and "writer under threat", a good West is threatened by something that is located outside Europe and on its borders, and which is imagined as culturally distant.

An interdependent set of dimensions

Socio-narrative studies investigate translation as a form of mediation with a complex relationship to other forms of mediation assumed to precede and directly inform it to varying degrees. From close translations of sacred texts to the transediting of news items, fansubbing, volunteer interpreting, theatre translation and even pseudotranslation, the focus is not on establishing the degree of match between a putative original and a putative target text but on what dimensions of narrativity are deployed and how they impact the new context of narration. According to Baker (2006), who draws on both Somers and Gibson (1994) and Bruner (1991), the eight dimensions of narrativity are temporality, relationality, selective

appropriation, causal emplotment, particularity, genericness, normativeness/canonicity and breach, and narrative accrual. The most important of these are discussed and exemplified here.

Temporality has received the most sustained level of attention from scholars of narrative. White (1987, 177), following Paul Ricoeur, distinguishes between "the experience of time as mere seriality and an experience of temporality in which events take on the aspect of elements of lived stories, with a discernible beginning, middle, and end". The emplotment of stories along a timeline not only projects a certain pattern of coherence onto a set of events but also endows the narrative with moral force, allowing us to attribute blame, responsibility, victimhood or credit to various protagonists. The order in which a story develops is therefore an intrinsic part of the narrative being told and is meaningful in its own right. For example, a non-chronologically ordered narrative may allow the narrator to complicate the perspective from which the story is told, which explains Milan Kundera's outrage at the first English translation of *The Joke*, an intricate narrative told in a different way from the perspective of each key protagonist. The translators, David Hamblyn and Oliver Stallybrass, apparently "found the lack of strict chronological order in the book misleading" and "decided to introduce chronology by cutting, 'pasting' and shifting the chapters around" (Kuhiwczak 1990, 125). A polyphonic narrative about the ambiguity and complexity of human experience thus became a flat, localised story about the relationships between specific protagonists.

The passage of time impacts the meanings assigned to verbal, visual and behavioural signs deployed in articulating a narrative, in ways that cannot be anticipated or controlled by narrators, including translators. Abdel Nasser (2016) offers several examples of the impact of the changing context of the Egyptian revolution on the way poems written and (re)translated before or during 2011–2012 are reread after the military takeover in 2013. One example, not discussed in these terms by Abdel Nasser (2016, 119), comes from her own translation of Amin Haddad's poem "Freedom is from the Martyrs", written to commemorate the massacre of demonstrators in October 2011 and later published in 2013 as part of a collection of the same title. The translation follows the original closely in referring to "the blood of martyrs *on the asphalt*" (my emphasis) which "blooms flowers and blooms light". The expression, "on the asphalt", acquired a particular resonance following the military takeover in June 2013, and especially after the issuing of a protest law in November of the same year that continues to allow the authorities to imprison very large numbers of activists. Whatever the intention of the poet and the translator, this phrase now strongly evokes public narratives of the long-awaited release of some of the many youths arrested on Egyptian streets, and the cheering of other activists at the end of each protracted trial as a prisoner is announced free and "on the asphalt". This new meaning does not invalidate the initial reading of the poem and its translation, but it evokes other layers of experience – other public and personal narratives – unlikely to have been anticipated by the poet or the translator.

Like other dimensions of narrativity, temporality is not necessarily or solely realised in textual form, so that "even where explicit verbal indicators about the temporal position of events are absent, the rendering of a character's appearance or of the setting can suggest the position of a given scene or occurrence on an overarching timeline" (Herman 2013, 126). Moreover, as Herman's comment makes clear, the concept of temporality extends to spatiality in narrative theory, with time and space being regarded as deeply interdependent notions. Translations can then relocate source narratives not only temporally but also spatially, and can do so through verbal as well as non-verbal means, as demonstrated in Karunanayake's (2015) study of theatre translation in the context of recent conflicts in Sri Lanka (1983–2009), *Saakki*, the 1986 Sinhala translation of Dario Fo's *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, relocates the events of the play in Sri Lanka partly through verbal means, such as introducing references to Buddhism alongside the original references to Christianity (2015, 214). This strategy proved successful, Karunanayake (2015, 213) argues, because "both religions are familiar to the target audience". At the same time, the Sinhala translation anchors the new setting within *Kolam*, "an early 20th century community or non-urban theatre form that made extensive use of masks" (2015, 215). The director of *Saakki* drew on the *Kolam* tradition of engaging with space by using the auditorium for performance and situating the audience on the stage of a formal theatre space in Colombo (2015, 221), in a reversal of canonical practices that reconfigures the relationship between actors and audiences. This reversal of norms reminds us that breach is "part of the inherent potentiality of narrative" that allows it to "disrupt the legitimacy of a canonical storyline or genre" (Baker 2006, 98). All these choices cumulatively relocate the events narrated in the source text within the temporal and spatial context of 1990s Sri Lanka, with important implications for the way the audience interprets the unfolding political narrative.

Relationality is a dimension of narrativity that translators and interpreters can easily relate to: it means that individual elements acquire meaning and value from the way they are configured within a narrative and cannot mean in the same way once transformed into a different narrative environment. Translation scholars have traditionally treated this issue as a facet of culture specificity, but the notion of relationality covers much more and is not tied to verbal elements of a narrative. One example which allows us to think beyond the semantic meaning of lexical items is the occurrence of typographical and grammatical errors in activist subtitling, as in Figures 10.1 and 10.2.

Unpolished output such as the subtitles shown here is traditionally considered unprofessional and, from the perspective of the corporate world, would not inspire confidence in the film makers or subtitlers involved in the two Egyptian collectives. Babels, the network of volunteers who provide interpreting at World Social Forum events, have come under heavy attack from some professional interpreters precisely on the basis that their output fails to meet the standards of high-quality, polished performance, as set by the AIIC (Boéri 2008). In the world of contemporary activism and citizen media reporting, however, and

FIGURE 10.1 Typographical error in *Freedom for Hassan Mostafa*

Source: The Mosireen Collective www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQH3LCebMJU (accessed 16 May 2016).

given the attendant pressures and precariousness associated with these contexts, "unpolished" and "polished" acquire reverse values. Thus, for instance, "images produced via the use of mobile camera phones" during such crises as the London bombings in July 2007 have now become iconic "because of – rather than despite of – their shaky, grainy look" (Cross 2016, 228). Typographical and minor grammatical errors are an intrinsic element of what Selim (2016, 83) refers to as "'crisis translation', . . . done in the urgency of the moment, when a specific event or series of events require immediate dissemination to the outside world", and are thus not only tolerated but may suggest a greater degree of authenticity and commitment. Indeed, as Cross (2016, 229) argues, "the amateur" now "forms a point of resistance for the professional" and authenticity is gradually acquiring greater value than expertise, to the point where the professional world itself is beginning to appropriate some of the features associated with unpolished, "authentic" output.

Relationality combines with other narrative dimensions to elaborate specific narratives, as exemplified in Baker's (2010a) study of the Middle East Media Research Institute. A pro-Israel advocacy group that claims its work "directly supports fighting the U.S. War on Terror" and boasts "providing thousands of pages of translated documents of . . . print media, terrorist websites, school books, and tens of thousands of hours of translated footage from Arab and Iranian television" (the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), "About Us" page), MEMRI's narrative of the world is partly elaborated through its choice of source

FIGURE 10.2 Grammatical error in Episode 2: Sabah Ibrahim

Source: Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9aXkZCr5hE (accessed 16 May 2016).

and target languages and the strictly uni-directional flow of its translation. Source languages always include Arabic and Persian, with other languages like Turkish, Daru, Pashtu and Hindi being included or excluded at different points in time. These are "index . . . societies that are depicted as sources of threat" and therefore have to be monitored (Baker 2010a, 355). Target languages consistently feature English, French, Spanish, German and Hebrew, with languages such as Russian and Chinese included or excluded according to the political climate of the day. They "index those [communities] that must police the world and fight terrorism", that are entrusted with monitoring sources of threat (2010a, 355). This pattern of selective appropriation, together with the flow of translations in one direction only, are in keeping with the meta narrative of the "War on Terror", with its non-negotiable "us" and "them" binary. Speakers of the source languages do not need to be informed of what speakers of the target languages say to each other, "they simply need to be monitored" (2010a, 356). The source language group is emplotted as aggressor and the target language group as bearing the burden of monitoring these sources of threat and, importantly, as victim. The implication is that in invading other countries "the victims are merely responding to the aggression being visited on them" (2010a, 356). In terms of relationality, "[e]ach language accrues a specific value by virtue of its positioning within the narrative" at any given moment in time (Baker 2010a, 356). Russian and Chinese appeared as target languages in 2007, part of the community entrusted with policing the world, but by 2016 they were no longer included in this category. Turkish began

life as a target language in 1999 and became a source language in 2006. These changes in the choice of target and source languages, Baker (2010a, 356) argues, signal "a change, or an attempt to effect change, in political reality". The value accrued to each at different points in time is specific to this unfolding narrative.

Baker (2006, 85–98) discusses and exemplifies various aspects of genericness at length. An important aspect of genericness is how a given narrative signals its factual versus fictional status. Genres understood or presented as factual, such as autobiographies and films presented as based on true stories, invite questions about their truth from critical recipients of the narrative, though uncritical recipients often accept the version of reality they depict. Baker (2014, 172) argues that translation is a genre in its own right which, like media reporting, "is naively thought of as a matter of objective recounting of factual material", of a prior reality, and therefore "indirectly bestows a factual character on the representations it generates". The entire MEMRI project plays on this assumption: MEMRI claims to simply report, through translation, what the sources of threat are saying to each other, which is quite different from what they tell "us" in English or other languages. Translation, as a genre, thus derives its status as objective reporting from its association with texts assumed to pre-exist it. The highly contested *Tiananmen Papers* is a case in point. Published in January 2001 and presented as an English translation by Andrew Nathan and Perry Link, it purported to be based on a pre-existing Chinese document that included transcripts of secret conversations among China's political elite during the 1989 Tiananmen events. The Chinese "original" appeared later, in April 2001. Moody (2002, 150) suggests that "even in the Chinese text the raw data have already been considerably massaged", and points out that there are differences between the English and Chinese versions, irrespective of the authenticity of the latter: in length, style and the attribution of statements to specific politicians, among other things. And yet, on 8 January 2001 the BBC casually reported extracts from the purported English translation, presented as a set of "secret Chinese official documents on the 1989 . . . uprising" (BBC News 2001), without any reference to its contested status. The extracts included statements such as "The spear is now pointed directly at you and the others of the elder generation of proletarian revolutionaries", attributed to Li Peng.

Baker (2014) discusses a US political commercial entitled *Chinese Professor* aired on CNN in October 2011 in similar terms. The commercial, she argues, chooses to have the Chinese-looking actor speak in Chinese, rather than English, in part because "the presence of subtitles constitutes the Chinese speech as an 'original', a source text, and therefore indirectly constructs it as 'authentic'" (2014, 173). Many (uncritical) viewers will get the impression that the foreign speech came first, that it is a prior, original communication, and hence "accept the illusion" that the subtitles are there simply to report what the Chinese are saying behind our back, so to speak, "despite the fact that the speech itself is constructed to suit the producers' agenda and the subtitles may indeed have been written before, rather than after, the Chinese monologue" (2014, 173).

Future directions

One of the difficulties of working with socio-narrative theory is that it goes against the grain of established research traditions in Translation Studies. It refrains from streamlining translator choices into types of strategy; does not focus on identifying recurrent linguistic patterns as in norm theory and corpus-based studies; and assumes – indeed requires – the embeddedness of the researcher in the narrative world under analysis, both as a theoretical premise and as a prerequisite to making sense of the data. This makes the theory challenging for those who are used to thinking of research analysis as a matter of identifying categories, patterns or types of strategy and drawing "objective" conclusions about the motivations behind systematic choices. The challenge is exacerbated by the relative dearth of existing studies of translation and interpreting that draw on socio-narrative theory. The field would therefore benefit from more extended case studies that address a broader range of contexts and genres, including interpreting and translating asylum narratives, autobiographies, testimonies and children's literature – all of which lend themselves very readily to narrative analysis. It would also benefit from studies that examine how communities of translators and interpreters, whether professional or non-professional, elaborate narratives of who they are and how they relate to the public, conceptual and meta narratives of the day. Boéri (2008) offers an excellent starting point in this respect, but narrative studies of this type can go further, to examine areas of dissonance or coherence between the public narrative of a community and the actual strategies its members adopt as they translate and interpret in specific contexts.

Further reading

Baker, M. 2006. *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*. London: Routledge.
This book introduced socio-narrative studies and hence remains a central reference point for scholars in the field. It does not include extended case studies, but it offers a detailed exposition of the theoretical assumptions and conceptual tools needed to apply socio-narrative theory, with examples from a wide range of genres and contexts.

Baker, M. 2010. Narratives of terrorism and security: "accurate" translations, suspicious frames. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3(3), pp. 347 364.
A detailed case study of an entire programme of translation that offers examples of socio-narrative analysis of a wide range of data, including choice of source and target languages, directionality of translation, the grouping of translations under specific categories, the selection of material to be translated, and paratextual framing through choice of titles for individual translations.

Bassi, S. 2015. Italy's Salman Rushdie: the renarration of "Roberto Saviano" in English for the post-9/11 cultural market. *Translation Studies* 8(1), pp. 48–62.
An extremely detailed and sophisticated application of socio-narrative theory, this article analyses the branding of authors in their home countries and internationally, the movement of cultural products across highly charged political territories, and the type of representations this dynamic generates.

Boéri, J. 2008. A narrative account of the Babels vs. Naumann controversy: competing perspectives on activism in conference interpreting. *The Translator* 14(1), pp. 21–50.
A very well-argued socio-narrative analysis of an encounter between two communities of conference interpreting with vastly different values, this detailed case study addresses important controversies relating to professionalism and volunteer work and reveals the narrative dynamism of a fast-changing area of practice.

Harding, S.-A. 2012a. How do I apply narrative theory? *Target* 24(2), pp. 286–309.
Offering a detailed, extended case study of mainstream and non-mainstream news reporting of the 2004 Beslan hostage crisis, this article is particularly useful for its overview of some studies informed by socio-narrative theory, and its focus on exemplifying how the theory can be applied and extended to accommodate concepts from narratology.

Related topics

Discourse analysis, interpreting and translation.

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