

**MEETING IN BETWEEN: On Spatial Conceptualizations within
Narrative and Metaphor Theory And their Relevance for
Translation Studies¹**

**[ENCONTRO NO ENTRE: SOBRE CONCEITUALIZAÇÕES ESPACIAIS
NA NARRATIVA E NA TEORIA DA METÁFORA E SUA RELEVÂNCIA
PARA OS ESTUDOS DA TRADUÇÃO]**

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In this paper I would like to explore the triadic relationship between narrative theory, metaphor theory and translation studies. This triangle not only defines three independent interactions but also a fourth perspective regarding the possible relevance of the relationship between narrative and metaphor theory for a theoretical and practical redefinition of translation studies.

A combination of narrative and metaphor theory could be used to metaphorize narratives on translation and to explicitate the implicit narratives of translational metaphors, that is, to reveal ideological aspects and to create new inspiring connections. Naturally enough, the interdisciplinary approach chosen here would also have to be complemented and critically expanded by an inter-cultural approach as the one suggested, for instance, by Maria Tymoczko (2003 and 2010). Another fascinating question I unfortunately cannot deal with here regards the inter-cultural status of spatial concepts. Are spatial conceptualizations typical for western culture or do they

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represent a trans-cultural concern? And what would this mean for the elaboration of a globally significant translation theory?

To start with, I would like to discuss some of the relevant research that has recently been done in the three interlinked areas. First of all, I would like to focus on Mona Baker's challenging contribution to a political and ethical redefinition of translation studies and the role of the translator from the point of view of narrative theory. Baker makes use of her narratological approach to reveal the ideological side of predominant metaphors combining, thus, at some points the two theoretical approaches. Secondly, I would like to sum up some of the significant insights about the connection between metaphor and translation theory that can be found in the newly published collection of essays edited by James St. André. And finally, I am going to focus on Michael Hanne's seminal essay dealing with potential parallels between narrative and metaphor theory. As Hanne does not explicitly reflect upon the theoretical and practical consequences of these parallels for translation theory and the possible fields of applications, I would like to outline a few paths of investigation myself, for instance, the points in common between Baker's narratological and Tymoczko's metaphorical readings of translation.

In presenting these different theoretical approaches I would like to highlight the all-encompassing importance of spatial conceptualizations both within the narrative and the metaphorical approach to translation studies, as well as within Hanne's own attempt at parallelization. In fact, while reading translation scholars interested in the relevance of narrative for translation and the cognitive role of translation metaphors, my impression was that their choice of a narratological or metaphorical perspective on translation seemed to go hand in hand with a refusal of spatial metaphors within translation studies, that is, with a more or less outspoken anti-spatial bias, opposing transformation and action to transference and equivalence. Interestingly enough, however, not only the basis of their own argumentation but also the metaphorical alternatives they suggest still heavily rely on spatial conceptualizations. Contrary to these approaches, I would like to focus on the actual status of spatial conceptualizations and metaphors within the three related theoretical fields. The point I am trying to make is that spatial conceptualizations can be regarded as the common

ground of the three theoretical areas and that only a critical study of this very aspect and the cognitive consequences it implies might help reunite the different fields of research and generate a new critical vision of translation studies. In other words: the impact of a combined narratological and metaphorical look on translation can best be measured by an analysis of the common significance of spatiality.

This leads to a series of questions: What new insights about the workings of translation would such a combined look from a double perspective entail? What is the theoretical status of spatial conceptualizations within translation studies? What new insights on the use of spatial concepts within translation theory could one gain from a new look combining narrative and metaphor theory? Are spatial considerations and spatial metaphors within translation studies to be done away with completely? Or should one try to redefine and redraw their use, by pointing to their weaknesses and limitations? And finally, are there any other possible spatial concepts – along with the metaphors and narratives they imply – that could be introduced into the discussion? I personally think that spatial conceptualizations within metaphor theory should not be completely discarded but critically revised, both from the perspective of narrative theory and from the point of view of metaphor theory. In this way, their ideological side would be revealed. Furthermore, I deem it necessary to focus on the hidden spatial dimensions to be detected within those translation metaphors that were suggested to avoid and supersede the problematic dimensions of metaphor of transference.

The main thrust behind Mona Baker's narratological redefinition of translation studies is a profoundly ethical and political attitude. She criticizes the narrative of the well-intended translator and the metaphors that underpin it. As she aptly points out, the translator's role has very often been described in an uncritical and unrealistic way, as that of an honest intermediary helping people and mediating conflicts at times of political upheaval. "Ultimately, my aim is to foreground the active role that translation and translators play in mediating conflict [...], and to find more realistic and nuanced models for conceptualising this role, based on actual rather than idealized practices and behavior." (Baker 2006: 4) At the outset, Baker distinguishes between two possible readings of the significance of narrative theory: within literary theory narrative has been treated as an optional interpretative approach among others, with

special attention given to internal structure, to phases, sequence, plot, episodes and the unfolding of the story-line, that is, to spatial conceptualizations. Within social

theory, on the other hand, narration has been defined as the principal and inescapable mode by which we experience the world. Everything we know is the result of numerous crosscutting story-lines in which social actors locate themselves. What matters from a sociological point of view is not how narrative is constructed as a text but how it operates as an instrument of the mind in the construction of reality. The sociological perspective, however, has to be completed with textual methods of analysis in order to offer a productive application of narrativity within translation studies. Baker intends to reunite these two perspectives in a broadly literary, linguistic *and* sociological approach to the workings of narrative within a translational context, using the combination of the two points of view in a critical sense, in order to enrich and complement her overall theoretical stance. Apart from the already mentioned focus on plot and sequence to be imported into sociology from literary studies, the importance of a spatial perspective can be traced throughout her text. Particularly interesting from a spatial point of view are some of the features of narration Baker focuses on. From the point of view of relationality events are structured in a temporal and spatial relationship to other events. As a consequence, single parts of narratives cannot simply be imported into other narratives without taking the whole context into account: “[...] narrativity being what it is, the translator [...] necessarily reconstructs narratives by weaving together relatively or considerably new configurations in every act of translation” (ibidem: 8). Causal emplotment, another feature of narrativity, gives significance to independent instances, interpreting different elements in relation to each other. Baker, furthermore, suggests for the ensemble of narratives in a given social and historical context a spatial structure of multiple implications: the same way single elements are embedded into a narrative, single narratives are embedded within other narratives. This echoes a similar spatial argument by Maria Tymoczko (2003: 182) who describes translation processes in terms of a complex layering.

In his foreword, James St. André (2010: 1-16) reiterates the necessity for a critical stance looking for the ideological dimension in metaphors of translation – a methodological aspect already highlighted by Baker with regard to narratives. Within narrative theory the feature of selective appropriation points to the danger of privileging some elements at the expense of others. Similarly, a metaphorical approach to translation should always be wary of the danger of misuse, especially with regard to the well-established foundational metaphors of translation that have accompanied the practice of translation for centuries, defining the way we perceive it, but also obscuring other relevant elements in the process. Metaphors should always be tested for their cognitive value. St. André suggests three relevant criteria: process, status of the translator and status of the translation.

A critical and historical approach to the relation of metaphor and translation theory would have to examine key metaphors in depth in order to change the way we think about translation; it would also have to analyze the metaphors that were used in the past to describe translation processes, in order to explain what these metaphors tell us about the way translation has been theorized and finally it should find out which influence on the development of translation studies these metaphors have had in 20th and 21st century. Before coming to a closer reading of Hanne's essay and the spatial dimension of his argumentation, I would like to point to two possible ways of interpreting St. André's proposal of a critical reinterpretation of foundational metaphors within translation studies – in this case the spatial transference metaphor.

In order to criticize and ultimately supersede the transference metaphor Celia Martín de León makes use of Round's (2005:58) distinction between two fundamental groups of metaphors: the *trans-group* revolving around appropriation and the bringing across and the *re-group* revolving around imitation, recreation and reproduction. I will discuss further implications of this interpretation further on. What I wanted to point out here is de León's use of implicit spatial conceptualizations – implying movement across space – in her presentation of the alternative set of metaphors. The footsteps metaphor, for instance, also implies movement along a path, following the trajectory of another person. The same holds true for the target metaphor which as a goal-oriented metaphor involves movement towards a destination and the projection

metaphor implying, as the author puts it, a mental transfer or a projection across an intermediate space. Unfortunately, De León does not reflect upon the status of the

spatial conceptualizations underlying the two groups of metaphors creating a simple opposition between transference and conservation of meaning on the one hand and transformation and change on the other.

In my contribution to St. André's volume I have tried to show how the specific interpretation of the idea of transference without change – rightly criticized by de León – can be traced back to the asymmetrical relationship of the literal and the figural underlying both the traditional view of metaphor as well as the concept of transference within translation studies. If one accepts this thesis, then the connection between transportation and moving across, the notion of equivalence as the transference of a detachable sense and the superiority of the original and the source language over the translation and the target language seem less forceful. In fact, in the course of the 20th century a redefinition of the workings of metaphor from a transactional point of view, implying the notion of a hierarchical reversal has been accompanied by a similar paradigmatic shift within translation studies. This new way of looking at the once unilateral metaphor of transfer is best expressed in the idea of mutuality advanced by Wolfgang Iser (1996) who redefines the relationship between source and target as an un-hierarchical two-way reciprocal flow. In this reinterpretation of translational processes the link between transference and equivalence has been severed. The underlying spatial metaphor has not been given up but redefined.

Michael Hanne, recalling Baker's interpretation of the term narrative, defines both narrative and metaphor as fundamental cognitive instruments by which we make sense of the world we live in. Both play a primary and above all complementary role. All theories are built from narrative and metaphorical elements which are irreducible to each other. Hanne, drawing on a text by Paul de Man, makes use of two metaphors: the plot and the knot. The partial phonetic consonance of the two words suggests similarity and difference at the same time. Plot implies movement in space and time, a notion of unfolding and travel. Etymologically speaking plot originally meant *a small piece of ground, a map, a chart*. The other meaning that matters here, *set of events in*

a story, was first used in the early 17th century. The additional meaning of *plan and scheme* – that can be found in the late 16th century – probably arose by similarity with the French *complot*. The verb to plot, in the sense of *laying plans for*, is first attested in the 1580s. Knot, on the other hand implies an intertwining of ropes and cords, a tight point in space where different lines of argumentation meet and interconnect.

How do the two cognitive instruments relate to each other? According to Hanne, metaphors are nodal points where the threads of narrative join and divide. If metaphors are compressed and condensed narratives – Hanne speaks of metaphors as “narrative shorthand” –, narratives are defined as extended, that is, outspread metaphors. One could also say that in metaphors different threads are rolled up and that in narrative these threads are unrolled, but with the important difference that these threads are intertwined forming knots and operating at different levels of sense. Metaphors are inherently dynamic and unstable flashes of insight, charged with explosive narrative energy. When transformed into narratives metaphors are deployed in a linear but also four-dimensional time-space-continuum. Metaphors can be used to highlight certain aspects of reality, but they can equally be used to obscure or skip over important narrative details. As Mona Baker, Hanne seems to imply, that when we translate metaphors into narratives we also critically evaluate their cognitive relevance. When interpreting a specific phenomenon one can either begin with the metaphorical or the narrative model: “In either case, the second rhetorical device answers the ‘why’ questions which the first cannot answer. [...] theories [...] are built from both narrative and metaphorical elements.” (Hanne 1999: 38) This defines two possible forms of interpretation of the process of translation that would ultimately enrich each other. Metaphorical interpretations of translation could be integrated by narrative answers and vice versa.

Narrative and metaphorical utterances are active interventions into the world projecting unity out of disparate elements. By means of storylines we generate meaningful totalities out of scattered events and by coining new metaphors we create links between categories that normally are not associated with each other. Narratives impose form on the shapeless heterogeneity of reality excluding those data that do not fit. They select, exclude and tidy up. This is why both models basically and fundamentally have to be distrusted and treated with suspicion. Narrative and

metaphor are not only similar to each other; they also generate and contain each other. Here, however, the idea of reciprocity put forward by Hanne seems to break down. New metaphors are created through narratives and category-shifts within the narrative realm can be seen as imaginative connections or metaphorical leaps. Narrative processes lead us sequentially from one metaphorical cluster to another. Hanne does not deal explicitly with the question if metaphors can contain narratives and if metaphors can generate new narratives. He argues that at the moments narrative is least reliable, we have to trust metaphors for an interpretative way out. In fact, if narratives are the prime mechanism for describing reality, metaphors are the key device for a re-description of reality. It is through metaphors and not narratives that we arrive at new fresh conceptions of familiar phenomena by developing new models or paradigm.

Metaphors imply category shift, they create an imaginative connection. The generative force of metaphors, conducive to innovation and creative thinking, directs the mind to new unexplored directions and breaks traditional moulds, for its acceptance of the impossibility of pinning down singular meaning. What about narratives? Do they not also create new visions and break up old established metaphors? In her narrative account of the metaphor of the bridge Baker exposes the hidden ideological agenda: “No one questions whether bridges are always built for the ‘morally’ right reasons, nor the fact that just as they might allow us to cross over and make positive contact with a different culture, they also allow invading troops to cross over and kill [...]” (Baker 2005:9) In this particular instance Hanne’s illuminating description of the relationship of metaphor and narrative would have to be worked out more thoroughly.

I would now like to focus briefly on two instances of a critical, both narrative and metaphorical reappraisal of two essential spatial metaphors of translation: transference and in-betweenness. I have already mentioned de Léon’s attempt at substituting the transference metaphor for a group of metaphors revolving about the idea of transformation and change. The problematic point about her argumentation is the link between transference as a directional movement and the notion of a container of information to be carried over. It is not so much her description of the transference metaphor itself, based on the conceptual conduit metaphor, that I want to criticize

here but the simple opposition she suggests between the notions of transference and transformation. Are spatial metaphors in translation to be avoided simply because the conduit metaphor allowed for the creation of a link between transference and equivalence, that is, are the two terms consubstantial or is their connection the result of a historical construction? In her contribution to James St. André's collection of essays Maria Tymoczko makes a similar point, arguing however, less from a structural than a historical and intercultural perspective. Sandra Halverson (1999b) has pointed out that within the English language a spatial conceptualization of translation processes existed well before the term *to translate* was imported from the Latin: the verb *wendan*, to turn, to change in position or state, and the related *awendan*. Even the Latin-based *translate* had originally different meanings, one of which was to change in form, appearance or substance, to transmute, to transform to alter. De Leóns simple pair of oppositions does therefore seem rather questionable. In fact, transportation and transformation are self-exclusive opposites only from a very specific historically datable point of view.

Mona Baker and Maria Tymoczko have rightly criticized the metaphor of in-betweenness. Tymoczko calls it "the heart of the ideology of translation." (Tymoczko 2003: 185) "The spatial metaphor of the 'in-between' is particularly pervasive in more recent writing", writes Baker, "and is completely at odds with narrative theory [It] locates translators within an idealized no-man's land lying between two discrete groupings. [...] Narrative theory does not allow for 'spaces in between' [...]." (Baker 2005: 11-2) Tymoczko draws a rather negative picture of the recent diffusion of spatial thinking linking it, among other things, to the diffusion of post-structuralist thought. The metaphor of in-betweenness, she argues, breaks down, as soon as we apply a system theory of language. In fact, as soon as one leaves a system one ends up in another system. One is always acting within systems, the same way as one is embedded within a multiple crisscrossing of narratives. One can never stand in a neutral or free space in between. Tymoczko proposes a spatial metaphor to describe this particular situation: two small separate circles within a larger one, a system of Chinese boxes "with given systems always nested inside more inclusive ones." (Tymoczko 2003: 197) But is the metaphor of in-betweenness within translation studies really all about a no man's land, a free and empty space between languages and

cultures? In a footnote Tymoczko very briefly mentions Anthony Pym's definition of inter-culture as an overlapping of two circles dismissing it as an insufficient explanation. Although not against in-betweenness per se, Tymoczko also argues for a change to non-spatial metaphors stressing the importance of the notion of a construction of meaning with a call to translators to "act as ethical agents of social change [...]"(ibidem: 201)

Before coming to the end, I would now like to explore the spatial metaphor of the strait and its possible relevance for processes of translation focusing on Franco La Cecla and Piero Zanini's *Lo stretto indispensabile* and Zakya Daoud's two volumes on the history of the strait of Gibraltar - *Gibraltar croisée de mondes* and *Gibraltar improbable frontière*. La Cecla and Zanini deal with the strait from a geopolitical and philosophical point of view. Daoud, on the other hand, discusses cross-cultural relationships in terms of a specific geopolitical setting: the strait as a site of manifold contradictory crossings.

Straits are narrow navigable passages of water that connect two larger also navigable bodies of water. They share some attributes with rivers but articulate a very different point of view, especially if viewed as possible metaphors for translation. Contrary to the steady and quiet one-way flow of rivers, straits articulate an idea of risk, challenge, of danger and fear even. They are tangible metaphors for tension, dynamism and the permanence of passages. Straits are complex geographical and meteorological settings where sudden changes suggest different options for crossing. Winds, violent currents, whirlpools and eddies ruffle their surface, especially in the middle. They are like rivers, but generally much larger; fluid borders joining two bodies of water and two land masses at the same time, articulating, thus, two separate pairs of space: from sea to sea and coast to coast. La Cecla and Zanini describe straits as interpretative models for the possibilities created when two bodies are separated by a margin of transition. Straits are porous membranes, exchanging filters regulating the passage from one world to another. Sometimes a world infiltrates another, sometimes it takes its place or lies on top of it. Straits allow a circulation between antagonistic spaces that cannot completely fuse into each other because they are of different nature. The essential aspect of straits, so La Cecla and Zanini, are their fluctuating, composite waters, meeting between two shores and two seas, linking and separating

them simultaneously. Straits are thresholds in Walter Benjamin's sense. They introduce the possibility of a change of state. A threshold, so Benjamin, is not a border but a zone. Not a straight line but a field of possibility. The German word for threshold, *Schwelle*, implies a swelling, a change, a passage and a flood tide. Straits articulate duality and at the same time move beyond it.

In Daoud's view straits are above all sites where currents meet and mix: "It is a history of fluxes and refluxes: the waters bump back and forth, from shore to shore [...]. The strait is a channel where waters mingle and overlap in a very complex way. Because these waters, (continuously) exchanging places, are not similar." [translation RG]." (Daoud 2002a: 29-30) The metaphorical dimensions attributed by La Cecla / Zanini and Daoud to the strait correspond to a great extent to those Chambers attributes to the sea. In the dialectics of the strait, writes Daoud, "borders overlap vertically and horizontally and tend to be blurred" [translation RG]" (ibidem: 12): linguistic currents moving against each other in different directions and at different levels; the blue warmer water of the Mediterranean and the green colder of the Atlantic. In this view translation is more than simply the crossing of a river, moving from shore to shore, from solid land to solid land. Languages are different but overlap continually. They seep into each other without losing their identity because of this. The priority of the liquid over the solid basically abolishes the idea of the border as a straight line. The border itself liquefies and all the attention goes to that which takes place in an indistinct zone in between. The strait presents us with a more complex metaphor for translation processes.

The metaphor of the strait, in fact, implies a shift from the carrying over of a specific content to the process itself. The traditional spatial metaphors for translation ignore the in-between area which is mostly viewed as an obstacle to be overcome. The strait implies a mixing of contradictory forces (currents and winds) reminiscent of Tymoczko's more static but structurally equivalent metaphor of layering. The strait is a fourfold cross-road, implying the meeting of two landmasses but also of two bodies of water. The idea of crossing is still there in the background, but the departure and the arrival are no longer central. Essential is that which happens in between. Furthermore, the languages are no longer only static river banks joined by a body of water, but also contradictory overlapping currents at different heights and with differing temperatures.

Let me, finally, test the metaphor of the strait for its cognitive value, applying the three criteria suggested by St. André. The first, process, seems to be satisfied, as the risky and hazardous practice of translation (the crossing) take center stage. The other two, the translator and status of the translation, which seem to guarantee stability, actually dissolve. The intermixing of different currents might point to the hybrid nature of the final outcome. The translator is situated in between, moving both ways.

To conclude: What can translation studies gain from the interplay of narrative and metaphor theory? First of all, the importance of a critical perspective, revealing the ideological side of narratives and metaphors of translation and the way the two aspects are related to each other. In fact, ideological narratives of translation are always underpinned by specific metaphors and conversely the use of metaphors within translation is always linked to specific narratives. By moving back and forth between narratives and metaphors the ideological content and its specific functioning could be understood better and explained more precisely. Plots can be folded into knots and knots unfolded into plots. Secondly, by using narrative theory to criticize metaphors of translation and by using a metaphorical point of view to answer the questions left unanswered by a narratological analysis, an integrated more dynamical view could be achieved. Thirdly, this combined approach would have to focus on spatial conceptualizations and metaphors in particular, because these seem to be at the very heart not only of the single theories but also of their relationship to each other. As I have already pointed out, Baker's, Tymoczko's and Martín de León's critical reading of the spatial metaphors of transference and in-betweenness is more than justified but is not doing justice to the fundamental role of spatiality advocated here. Instead of simply rejecting the metaphors of carrying-across and in-betweenness, substituting them with metaphors of action and transformation, one would have to activate the remaining critical and descriptive energy of these older metaphors, redefining and reinterpreting them in the process. I have tried to do this by introducing the notion of mutuality which overcomes the traditional idea of the transference of a stable content, without, however, discarding the spatial dimension of the metaphor. Fourthly, a combined narratological and metaphorical view of translation processes can sharpen our awareness for the spatial and its manifold often implicit presence within our theories. Perhaps we should not only use it for an ideological criticism of the tradition-hallowed

spatial metaphors within western culture but also for the discovery of more implicit spatial aspects within metaphors that seem to stress completely different aspects and for the creative formulation of new spatial metaphors that take into account the ideological dimension of earlier metaphorical interpretations of translation.

And finally, there is the question of the relevance of translation studies for a redefinition of the relationship of narrative and metaphor theory, the two tribes that, as Hanne puts it, live on opposite sides of the river, ignoring each other's existence. In fact, the triangle explored so far can also be looked at from another point of view, translation theory no longer being a point of arrival but a starting point. Narrative and metaphor theory would then be able to meet in between the two riverbanks thanks to the mediating intervention of translation theory.

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