

## **(Re)Translating Space into Time**

### **Temporal Metaphors in Translation Studies**

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But, it is necessary to keep in mind that the enunciation of translation is unrepresentable; the enunciation of translation (a practice that is essentially temporal) and the representation of translation (a representation of translation that is essentially spatial) are in disjunctive and mutually negative relation with one another; the practice of translation remains radically heterogeneous to the representation of translation that is facilitated through the schema of configuration. (Sakai 1999, 54)

#### **Abstract**

*This chapter focuses on different ways in which temporal metaphors can be used to rethink the process of translation, the relationship of source and target text, and the role of the translator. In the West, time has been mainly defined in spatial terms, as an arrow that positions the past behind and the future before us. This restrictive view of time is intimately linked to the transference metaphor of translation based on the notion of a straightforward irreversible movement across an intermediate gap. There are, however, other possible ways of conceiving time. Walter Benjamin's concept of the presence of the now, Henri Bergson's duration, Homi Bhabha's third space as a time lag, and Michel Serres's topological view of time try to break away from unilateral linearity revealing the profoundly unstable and multilayered nature of time and the fundamental inappropriateness of our understanding of the temporal as a straight line rushing ahead. These fruitful theoretical insights can be applied to translation revealing, among other things, that source and target are not binary opposites but as Sarah Maitland aptly puts it, "different threads of textual possibility intertwined and inextricably linked through the subjective work of translation" (2016, 17).*

In this chapter, I will discuss how temporal metaphors can be used to rethink the role of the translator, the process of translation, and the relationship of source and target text. I will focus on four interrelated points: (1) the metaphorical relationship of time and space; (2) the use of spatial metaphors within Western translation theory and their implicit temporal dimension; (3) the question of how the implicit temporality of spatial metaphors of translation can be brought to the fore by re-translating space into time (Trivedi 2006, Sakai 1999, Benshalom 2010); and, finally, (4) the many-layered heterogeneous time(s) of translation, as it has been discussed in recent research (Hjorth 2014, Batchelor 2008, Cua Lim 2009, Vaisman 2013).

### Mapping Space onto Time

Time is evanescent and slippery. We cannot really grasp it. It is invisible like the wind, which can only be perceived by its effect in three-dimensional space: swaying branches and treetops, trembling leaves, clouds swiftly rushing past, or the ruffled surface of the sea. Contrary to the relatively solid world of objects, that suggests a certain, even if illusory, kind of permanence and fixity, time always implies passage, transformation, and constant change. Because of its fundamentally ungraspable nature, the conceptual domain of time has called for a series of metaphorical mappings.

In a *Master Metaphor List* compiled in 1991, George Lakoff, Jane Espenson, and Alan Schwarz list the most common source domains for time in the West. Time is money (“He spends his time unwisely”), a resource (“We are almost out of time”), a bounded container (“In 2016”), a pursuer (“Time will catch up with you”), and a changer (“Time heals all wounds”). However, time is conceptualized above all in terms of space. It is either something moving toward you (“The end of the symposium is approaching”) or a landscape you move through (“Christmas is looming on the horizon”). Two special cases can be associated with the first metaphorical mapping: something is moving without a specific point of reference (“Time flies”) and foreseeable future events are perceived as being up (“The upcoming event”). Along these lines, Gentner, Imai, and Boroditsky (2002) distinguish between two fundamental space-time metaphoric systems: the ego-moving metaphor and the time-moving metaphor. In the first case, it is the observer and his or her context that move along the time line from the past into the future; in the second, it is time that is moving from the future toward the observer into the past (see also Boroditsky 2000).

In the West, the horizontal time arrow positions the past behind us and the future before us. As Nuñez and Sweetser (2006) pointed out, the Aymara people, an indigenous nation in the Andes, also think of time as an arrow but position

the future at the back (because it is unknown and we cannot see it) and the past in the front (because we have already seen it and have it constantly in front of our eyes). In Chinese culture, there also exists a vertical axis, pointing from the past (which is up) to the future (which is down), inverting thus the Western vision of the future as an upcoming event.

By translating time into space, the ungraspable nature of temporality can be overcome and the passage of time made visible for the senses. However, by entering the realm of spatiality, the exuberance of time is radically tamed and its contradictory and heterogeneous nature streamlined and standardized like a wild mountain river or the many ramifications of an estuary forced into a single-minded canal. There are many different contradictory forms of time coexisting together, not only the linear, irreversible time line, an arrow steadily moving ahead in one direction only, from beginning to end, and from cause to effect. As the French philosopher Michel Serres puts it in an interview with Bruno Latour, time is neither a river quietly flowing from its source to the sea, nor a stream of parallel neatly separated lines. It is a complex, turbulent, chaotic phenomenon, both irreversible and reversible. Time is an “extraordinarily complex mixture, as though it reflected stopping points, ruptures, deep wells, chimneys of thunderous acceleration, rending, gaps—all sown at random” (Serres and Latour 1995, 57).

#### The Transfer Metaphor of Translation

One of the predominant metaphors for translation in the West is the transfer metaphor stressing duality, separation, and a straightforward irreversible movement across an intermediate gap. The success of this particular interpretation of translation can be traced back to specific historical and cultural developments in Western culture and is linked to the etymology of the word *translation* itself (Guldin 2016, 18–21; 2019, 324–25). The transfer metaphor is not to be understood in strictly spatial terms. It also possesses a partially erased and hidden temporal dimension, which, however, plays a secondary role and is clearly subordinated to the spatial aspect. The exuberance of time is domesticated and reinterpreted in terms of a linear movement from the past to the present, which confirms the unilateral orientation of the transfer metaphor.

Furthermore, the transfer metaphor has to be considered in conjunction with other metaphors that endorse its binary focus: the bridge building, the imitation, and the mirror metaphor of equivalence. Theo Hermans (2002) interprets the metaphors of imitation and bringing across, which interconnect on different levels as the two sides of an integrated overall view of translation that has deep roots in Western society. Metaphors tend to operate in coherent clusters based

on cross-metaphorical coherence. This is generally achieved by overlap and unity of purpose. The different metaphors organize and structure different aspects of a single concept and provide distinct but internally coherent perspectives on the same subject. When used in conjunction with the transfer and the mirror metaphor of equivalence, the acting metaphor generally emphasizes a binary vision of translation that privileges the original over the translation and operates within a spatial framework. This use of the acting metaphor of translation is part of a specific tradition of translation theory, but as I will show shortly, a different interpretation focusing on time rather than space is also possible.

I am using the transfer metaphor and the one-dimensional time conception it entails mainly as a conceptual backdrop to highlight a different multidimensional approach both to time and to translation. The transfer metaphor is still a pervasive but no longer an undisputed way of looking at translation processes. In recent years, it has been repeatedly criticized within translation studies (see, for instance, Tymoczko 2010).

The two poles that define the transfer metaphor—the source and the target text—are conceived as fixed and stable. They do not touch or overlap. The original and its translation are positioned on opposite riverbanks. Their relationship is hierarchical insofar as the original always precedes the translation and is superior to it. The conceptual pair of source and target implies a point of departure and a point of arrival, as well as a one-way motion in between. When we translate, we wade across a river, cross a bridge, or jump across an abyss. The solidity and stability of the two separate riverbanks is contrasted with the uncertainty and fluidity in between. Because of the permanent threat to go astray or to lose one's bearing during the crossing and to spill some of the precious meaning of the original, the transfer metaphor does not focus on intermediate stages but emphasizes an efficient and swift movement across a space in-between; from the firmness of one riverbank to the other. Celia Martín de León makes use of an arrow pointing from the left to the right to illustrate the functioning of the transfer metaphor. In fact, the path from the original to the translation is also a passage from the past to the present (2010, 82–86).

The transfer metaphor is associated with and conceptually bolstered by the conduit metaphor (Reddy 1979), which proceeds on the assumption that language is a channel through which thoughts can flow freely. Words act as containers for thoughts. Thoughts are inserted into words at one end of the communication chain and extracted at the other. Form and content, language and thought are separate entities. Thoughts can be stripped of their external linguistic form without major loss (see also the body/clothes metaphor, Van Wyke 2010). In translation processes, the meaning of the original is carefully extracted from the source text, carried safely across to the other side, and poured into the container of the

target language. During this movement, the transported meaning is not supposed to be changed. No intermediate stages are envisaged. As in the transfer metaphor, time is clearly subordinated to space and its destabilizing dimension is erased.

The main theoretical drawback of the transfer metaphor is not so much the fact that it projects a spatial view of time but that its spatial definition of the temporal is highly limiting. As I would like to show in my chapter, most of the recent theoretical attempts at a temporal redefinition of the translation process do also operate with a spatial dimension. It is difficult, if not impossible, to deal with time on its own terms. Conversely, as we shall see, the spatial metaphor of translation always, more or less implicitly, gestures toward a hidden or erased temporal dimension.

One of the reasons for the absence of an explicit temporal dimension in the Western tradition of translation theory is the fact that the predominant view of time is fundamentally a spatial one. Time is seen as an arrow pointing toward the future, a line made of singular concrete moments succeeding one another.<sup>1</sup> Explicitly reintroducing time into the metaphorical field of translation must therefore also lead to a reinterpretation of the notion of time itself, liberating it from its constricting spatial definition. These new time conceptions allow for new possibilities of interpreting the subjective role of the translator, the complexities of translation processes, and the relationship of source and target text.

In the following, I will focus on two possible theoretical strategies that attempt to crack and break open the apparent self-contained nature of the transfer metaphor of translation by reintroducing the destabilizing element of time. The first strategy does not fundamentally question the directional movement of the transfer metaphor but calls attention to the implicit dimension of time showing that translation is a journey with a certain duration that can be divided into a series of overlapping or interlocking stages. The second strategy operates with a radical redefinition of the time(s) of translation, which moves beyond the simple linearity of the time arrow associated with the transfer metaphor and looks for alternative time conceptions, for the multiple, heterogeneous times coexisting within translation processes.

### Retranslating Space into Time

Time introduces an element of instability and unpredictability. It tends to disjoint and rupture the homogeneous one-directional line. By looking for the time dimension in the transfer metaphor of translation—that is, by retranslating space

1. This is particularly true of modernity with its notion of unlimited endless linear progress, which superseded the earlier cyclical conception of seasonal change.

into time—the open-endedness of translation processes and the existence of alternative diverging paths become visible.

A particularly revealing example of such a process that introduces also a historical and a cross-cultural dimension is Harish Trivedi's narrative of the use of the Sanskrit word *anuvad*, which was used to describe the new practice of translation imported by the colonial powers into the Indian subcontinent. Contrary to the West with its extensive history of translation, in the Indian subcontinent there had been little translation up to that point. Because of this, one had to find a name for it in Indian languages. Originally, the word *anuvad* did not carry any spatial connotation; it meant "saying after or again, repeating by way of explanation, repetition or reiteration" (Trivedi 2006, 110). However, in the late nineteenth century, the word acquired the new Western meaning of *translation* as a transfer between languages. The modern meaning of *anuvad* is a neologism "invented to cope with the English word 'translation', it is, so to say, a translation of 'translation'" (Trivedi 2006, 112). A fundamental difference, however, persists. *Translation* is based on a spatial metaphor, whereas *anuvad*, in the sense of repetition, is fundamentally a temporal metaphor.

In an attempt to explain the difference between the two readings of *anuvad*, Trivedi points to the dissimilar language regimes predominant in India and the West. In Europe, the "chauvinistic tradition of linguistic nationalism," originating around 1800, dominated the field of translation theory up to the second half of the twentieth century. In India, with its Sanskrit hegemony uniting the huge subcontinent, "all that was required was for everyone to say the same thing in the same language, though not necessarily at the same time." The subtle irony of Trivedi's comment points to the radical difference between the two historical models. It is an invitation to reconsider the Western concept of translation—"a transaction between languages . . . visualized spatially" and "across boundaries" (Trivedi 2006, 113)—and its claim for universal significance. Trivedi's critique is a retranslation of a spatially conceived temporal element. Spatialized time is thereby restored to its original temporal meaning.

In *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism*, Naoki Sakai makes a similar point. The new regime of translation that came about in Japan and Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was directly linked to the creation of nations and national languages conceived as homogeneous, self-contained units. The "schema of cofiguration" (Sakai 1999, 15) posits the existence of a specific (national) language always in relation to other similar linguistic entities, as one among many. In the wake of this change, translation was recast in spatial terms, as an interlingual transfer between separate units. This new "representation of translation," as Sakai calls it (1999, 17), successfully erased the transformative, hybridizing nature of translation and its fundamental temporality.

As Trivedi in his analysis of the Sanskrit word *anuvad* before its translation into English, Sakai defines translation as “difference in repetition” (1999, 15) stressing its temporal dimension. In his view, translation comes first as it is the very basis of any kind of communication. The schema of configuration, however, defines it as a derivative activity linked to the existence of separate languages. These self-contained bordered linguistic units and their specific spatial setting with respect to each other metaphorically reproduce the essential nature and relationship of the source and target text.<sup>2</sup>

Strictly speaking, it is not because two different language unities are given that we need to translate. . . . It is because translation *articulates* languages so that we may postulate the two unities of the translating and the translated language as if they were autonomous and closed entities through *a certain representation of translation*. . . . it is extremely difficult to comprehend what we perform in translation outside the discourse of the modern nation-state, and this difficulty only teaches us how massively we are confined within the discourse regulated by the idea of the national language and what I call the schema of configuration. (Sakai 1999, 2–3)

I will now turn from instances that address the historical dimension of translation to an example that focuses on the work of the translator.

In his analysis of the acting metaphor of translation, Yotam Benshalom does not discuss the temporal dimension of translation and its link to space explicitly. However, he uses the acting metaphor to focus on the different stages the translator goes through and the roles he impersonates in the course of his activity. By doing this, he focuses on the complex heterogeneous duration of translation processes.

As I have already pointed out, the acting metaphor was traditionally associated with the mirror metaphor of equivalence, which stressed the imitative subservient role of translation with regard to the original, confirming thus the spatial setup of the transfer metaphor. Yet this is only one way of looking at it. In his analysis, which focuses on the internal systematicity of the acting metaphor—the logical structure of the metaphor—Benshalom discusses how different aspects of performance can be mapped onto the process of translation and the work of the translator.<sup>3</sup> He is breaking up the spatial linearity of the transfer metaphor, with its focus

2. This notion has also been criticized within studies on code switching and multilingualism (see, for instance, Gardner-Chloros [2009]).

3. That is, the way the different aspects of translation—the role of the translator, the status and relationship of the source and target text, etc.—are related to each other. Metaphorical concepts are coherent with each other by virtue of having a connecting structure—external systematicity—and form systems based on subcategorization—internal systematicity (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 7–9).

on the point of departure and arrival, into separate interrelated time units. Acting can help one to understand the performative state of mind both from the point of view of continuity and spontaneity. Translation is often described as a repetitive, circular process of continuous refinement and retouching. A performance-oriented approach to translation, however, suggests “an ever-progressive line of translational attention, curving its way gradually and . . . intuitively between source and target texts” (Benshalom 2010, 54). Spontaneity depends on subconscious elements, which are the result of different parallel mental processes. Actors can rehearse sustained spontaneity by developing their skills. Similarly, translators can experiment with different working rhythms, rehearse first drafts of translation under less restrictive conditions, or perform posttranslational rehearsals. In this specific case, the translator goes through her or his text several times in an attempt to relive its creation process. In his analysis, Benshalom integrates a creative unsettling moment into the smooth linearity of translation. Steadiness is complemented and questioned by suddenness.

I will now turn to the final part of my chapter, which deals with time conceptions that disrupt the linear temporal homogeneity of the transfer metaphor of translation. As Ben Hjorth pointed out, “any practice of translation entails a corresponding concept of temporality” (2014, 135). In this sense, Lydia H. Liu speaks of the “eventfulness of translation” (2014, 147). Challenging the underlying time conception of translation (especially with regard to the transfer metaphor) amounts to a radical reevaluation of the role of the translator, the relationship of the source to the target text, and the functioning of translation processes.

### The Multiple Temporalities of Translation

In “‘We’re Standing in/the Nick of Time,’” Hjorth discusses Anne Carson’s *Antigonick*, the staged reading of her translation of Sophocles’s Ancient Greek tragedy performed in New York on February 22, 2013. Translation, as Hjorth put it, is always concerned with “bridging temporal gaps, and thus with the nature of time itself,” with carrying something across and forward—that is, with “the survival, or living on, of a text in and through *time*” (Hjorth 2014, 135). Carson enacts the anachronism of any contemporary staging of Sophocles’s tragedy by introducing right from the beginning the voices of Friedrich Hegel and Samuel Beckett, adding subsequently also Bertolt Brecht and Virginia Woolf. The uniform homogeneous time of the original is contaminated and cracked open by other heterogeneous temporal instances. The opening of the text is conceived as a “temporal paradox, giving voice (or, more precisely multiple voices) to ideas of translation” and pointing to the “temporal instability of the practice” (Hjorth 2014, 136) of translation.



George Steiner lamented Carson's lack of fidelity to the source text: "Translation should embody an act of thanks to the original. It should celebrate its own dependence on its source" (2012, 8). "Carson's apparently 'unfaithful' translation," however, as Hjorth pointed out, explicitly and willfully "constitutes and performs a challenge to conservative, chronological, teleological temporal frames that . . . threaten to bury the irruptive potential" (Hjorth 2014, 136) of Sophocles's tragedy.

Hjorth's criticism of traditional views of translation, based on the fidelity to a timeless original, is grounded in Walter Benjamin's concept of *Jetztzeit* (the presence of the now) from his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (Benjamin 1968), which questions unilateral ideas of progress and the historicist vision of the past as something that can be viewed "the way it really was." Conservative philosophies of translation are based on a temporal structure that stresses a fixed immutable original and fundamentally denies conflictual points of contact or overlapping. This notion calls for the undisputed preservation of the original's stable meaning across time. Such a theoretical position can be unhinged with the help of Benjamin's disruptive power of the "now," which questions the idea of a continuous historical progress. The irruption of the present pierces the linear time line and shatters stable chronologies. Benjamin's vision "strives for the development of a non-chronological, non-teleological temporal frame. Within this frame the original, or the past, can only be approached through a defining and irreducible relation to the present" (Hjorth 2014, 138). The translator is always operating in a specific historical and cultural context and because of this cannot have a direct, unmediated access to the original. His subjective presence and the traces of the present are ineradicable.

Benjamin's text operates with a series of images of suddenness and unexpectedness capturing the rupture of the linear time continuum. "The true picture of the past *flits by*. The past can be seized only as an image, which *flashes up at the instant* when it can be recognized and is never seen again. . . . History is the subject of a structure whose site is *not homogenous, empty time*, but time filled by the presence of the now . . . *a tiger's leap into the past*" (Benjamin 1968, 255, italics mine).

Hjorth contrasts the visual metaphor of translation as a mirror image of the original, which is predominant in translation theories based on the notion of equivalence—and to be seen in connection with the binary nature of the transfer metaphor—with Benjamin's acoustic metaphor of translation as an echo of the original in "The Task of the Translator." In Benjamin's description, the original and the translation occupy different places in space. The translation is positioned outside the forest of language "facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (Benjamin 2000, 15). Despite the spatial setting, the two texts are not linked by an act of transpor-

tation along a straight line. Their exact whereabouts and position with respect to each other remain uncertain. Visual contact is not possible. Instead of a package safely carried across an intermediate distance, we are faced with ambiguous reverberations, with “distortion, indeterminacy and irreparable loss, quite distinct from the full and faithful transfer or reproduction of a past original” (Hjorth 2014, 138). The channel as a source of noise and a place of many deviating disturbances takes center stage. The countless trees of the language forest not only prevent direct visual contact but also suggest the possibility of different connecting paths, and the constant danger of going astray. Furthermore, the metaphor of the echo implies a repetition with a difference occurring in space, but also in time. In this interpretation of translation processes, the clarity and distinctness of the visual and spatial are questioned by the ambiguity and the indistinctness of the acoustic and temporal.

The second example I want to discuss here is Kathryn Batchelor’s (2008) analysis of Homi Bhabha’s third space, which she forcefully retranslates into temporal terms as a time lag, or a time split, between an event and its enunciation. In this sense, her essay can be linked to Trivedi’s (2006), Sakai’s (1999), and Benshalom’s (2010) work mentioned earlier. Batchelor explicitly criticizes spatial readings of Bhabha’s third space in translation theory suggesting an ethnocentric limitation—that is, a Western bias inspired and dictated by spatial views of translation. The third space is an indeterminate, “unrepresentable” (Bhabha 2004, 55) space in constant flux through which all acts of speaking have to pass and at the same time the very sum of all conditions relevant to the interpretation of cultural signs.

Bhabha’s definition of the third space is reminiscent of Sakai’s critical description of the new regime of translation as a representation of translation, which is achieved by erasure of the transformative and temporal aspects of translation processes. Representations of translation rely on visual and spatial parameters suggesting stability and ascertainability. In this sense, translation processes are unrepresentable.

The translator negotiates meaning in the passage from source to target text. Both freedom and constraint act upon this process. There is neither strict causality nor free-floating signifiers or an endless number of possible textual solutions. There are, however, predictable sequences and facilitated trajectories, impediments and constraints, based on norms and procedures, which often subconsciously influence the decision of the translator and do not become visible in spatial metaphors of translation based on the simple notion of meaning transfer.

The third space is less a place and more a gap, a delay, an interval, a space in time. Not only the translation but also the original are the result of one particular passage through this never entirely identifiable space. Others would have been possible. Meaning is indefinitely negotiable. By conceiving the third space as a time lag, the source text loses its fixity as an entity in space and time and translation becomes

a “dynamic, non-linear process of travel from source to target text” raising “many intriguing questions” (Batchelor 2008, 66). If the translation process, for instance, involves a continuous back-and-forth movement, the two poles between which the translator alternates are no longer simply the original and the translation but something much more complex (Batchelor 2008, 66). As Sarah Maitland puts it, the source and the target text are not reified binary opposites but intertwined “threads of textual possibility” (2016, 17) linked to each other by the subjective work of the translator.

As a result, the personality of the translator has to be recast in new terms. She or he becomes a nomadic figure in constant motion (Cronin 2000), a “subject in transit” (Sakai 1999, 11), “internally split and multiple”—as the languages and the cultures she or he is dealing with—operating at an elusive point of discontinuity in the social. The translator establishes continuity in discontinuity, “instituting a relation at the site of incommensurability” (Sakai 1999, 13). Sakai speaks of the “oscillation” and “indeterminacy” (1999, 13) of the personality of the translator while she or he goes about his or her business linking it to the wavering motion of the process itself.<sup>4</sup> The heterolingual role of the translator and the resulting process of translation directly impinge upon the notion of the source and target languages and their relationship to each other. “Precisely because of her positionality, the translator has to enunciate for an essentially mixed and linguistically heterogeneous audience. [She] addresses herself from a position of linguistic multiplicity: she necessarily occupies a position in which multiple languages are implicated within one another” (Sakai 1999, 9).

The third example I want to mention here is Bliss Cua Lim’s *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*, which engages with ghost films from the Philippines and Hong Kong, American remakes of Asian horror films, and videos on cannibalism. Cua Lim argues that fantastic cinema portrays other modes of being alongside everyday life, revealing the coexistence of multiple temporalities, which fundamentally question modern conceptions of time as linear and measurable by mechanical clocks. Besides Benjamin’s (1968) criticism of the time of historical progress, Cua Lim makes use of Henri Bergson’s concept of *durée* (duration), which stresses the contemporaneity of past and present and the *compearance* of a radical plurality of heterogeneous durations.<sup>5</sup> The past is not gone once and for all but coexists alongside the present as a condition for its existence. The present cannot completely overcome the past but is constantly haunted by its return. Like Hjorth, Cua Lim uses an acoustic instead of a visual metaphor to describe the layered complexity of the times of translation. She speaks of diverging

4. Sakai’s “oscillation” calls to mind Benjamin’s “reverberation.”

5. Jean-Luc Nancy (1992) uses the term *compearance* (co-appearance) as a compression algorithm that stitches different temporalities together.

temporal dimensions “coexisting cacophonously at different rhythms” (2009, 13).

In the first chapter of her book, she also introduces postcolonial forms of temporal critique that question the notion of a culture-neutral and universal approach to time (2009, 69–95). This is particularly relevant as in her analysis she touches upon cultures in which the existence of gods, supernatural forces, and the spirits of the dead and their constant intrusion in everyday life is taken for granted. In the course of colonization, Western powers tried to impose their own modern secularized and disenchanting vision of time as a progressive linear succession, relegating other cultures to the bottom of the evolutionary ladder (see Fabian 2014). In “The Time of History and the Times of Gods,” Dipesh Chakrabarty not only questions Western conceptions of chronological time, which leave us with a time “bereft of gods and spirits” (1997, 39), but the very “naturalism of historical time” itself, which “lies in the belief that *everything* can be historicized . . . that it is always possible to assign people, places, and objects to a naturally existing, continuous flow of historical time” (1997, 36). The universalist claim inherent in Western culture and the specific vision of time it projects onto other cultural worlds also implies an assumption of general translatability, which needs to be fundamentally challenged.

I will conclude this section with Noa Vaisman’s essay on temporality and memory. Vaisman explores the relationship of time and translation with regard to recollection and trauma. In her analysis, she highlights the disrupting power of time on translation processes in critical situations. Narratives of censorship, dictatorship, violence, war, and mass killings make it possible to set the clock anew. Traumatic experiences and the time in which they occurred can be retold, repeated, and recaptured; a new yet undefined temporality projected into the future can emerge. These processes of translation, however, as all acts of translation, are “never seamless.” The apparently linear time sequences of the narratives and the linear temporal flow of the related events are “repeatedly disrupted . . . producing alternative temporalities that “[loop] back and [shoot] forward in time.” The same happens with fiction and documentary film making that deals with past atrocities. Filming can create a place “to experiment with alternative temporalities that are non-linear and non-modern (i.e., not moving from the past towards the future)” (Vaisman 2013).

### Conclusion: The Crazy Flight of the Wasp

Time does not flow like a river, it “percolates,” folds, twists, and trembles “as the dance of flames in a brazier” (Serres and Latour 1995, 58).<sup>6</sup> Time can suddenly

6. One of the different meanings of the Chinese character *fan* 翻, which is part of the word *fanyi* (to translate 翻譯) is “to tremble”: to translate is to tremble like a flame. I thank Lorenzo Andolfatto for pointing out this interesting cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary connection.

flow back and be folded; it can be crumpled or wrinkled like a piece of paper or a handkerchief. In dynamical systems theory, the baker's transformation (Serres and Latour 1995, 65) is named after a kneading operation that bakers apply to dough: the dough is extended to double its length and then folded back on itself. This operation is repeated several times. In this way, points that were seemingly very far apart end up being close to each other and conversely, neighboring points turn out to be at a great distance from each other (Serres and Latour 1995, 58). Serres links this operation to the wild flight of a fly or a wasp, which does not follow a straight line but performs a dippy-doodle, a zigzagging movement, going left and right, up and down, forward and backward again.

Follow the flight pattern of a fly. Doesn't time sometimes flow according to breaks and bends that this flight seems to follow or invent? Likewise, my book *Rome* describes in its own way the baker's transformation . . . a certain folding of a half a plane of dough . . . produces a design precisely comparable to the flight of the fly or the wasp, the one Verlaine in his famous sonnet describes as drunk from its crazy flight. . . . This is an extremely complex design, incomprehensible and appearing chaotic and random, but made admirably understandable by the movements of the baker kneading his dough. He makes folds; he *implicates* something that his movement then *explicates*. The most simple and mundane gestures can produce very complicated curves. (Serres and Latour 1995, 64–65)

In a similar vein, Batchelor describes the passage between the original and the final version of the translation, which "should not be envisaged as a consecutive series of operations, but as something much more complex and less easily defined involving a hither-and-thither, or to-and-fro movement" (2008, 66).

In English and German, *time* and *weather* are clearly separated, but in French (and other Romance languages) *temps* means both. "At a profound level they are the same thing" (Serres/Latour 1995, 58). This indeterminacy has been criticized by European philosophy. But perhaps, this challenging linguistic overlap reveals the profoundly unstable and complex nature of time and the fundamental inappropriateness of our understanding of the temporal as a straight line rushing ahead.

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