Translating Dissent

Discursive and non-discursive interventions in the political arena are heavily mediated by various acts of translation that enable protest movements to connect across the globe. Focusing on the Egyptian experience since 2011, this volume brings together a unique group of activists who are able to reflect on the complexities, challenges and limitations of one or more forms of translation and its impact on their ability to interact with a variety of domestic and global audiences.

Drawing on a wide range of genres and modalities, from documentary film and subtitling to oral narratives, webcomics and street art, the 18 essays reveal the dynamics and complexities of translation in protest movements across the world. Each unique contribution demonstrates some aspect of the interdependence of these movements and their inevitable reliance on translation to create networks of solidarity. The volume is framed by a substantial introduction by Mona Baker and includes an interview with Egyptian activist and film-maker, Philip Rizk.

With contributions by scholars and artists, professionals and activists directly involved in the Egyptian revolution and other movements, *Translating Dissent* will be of interest to students of translation, intercultural studies and sociology, as well as the reader interested in the study of social and political movements. Online materials, including links to relevant websites and videos, are available at http://www.routledge.com/cw/baker. Additional resources for Translation and Interpreting Studies are available on the Routledge Translation Studies Portal: http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/translationstudies.

Mona Baker is Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Manchester. She is author of *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (second edition, 2011) and *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (2006), and editor or co-editor of several reference works, including the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (second edition, 2009); the four-volume *Critical Concepts: Translation Studies* (2009); and *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (2009). She is Founding Editor of *The Translator* (1995–2013), and Founding Vice-President of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies.

"This is a volume of uncommon urgency, intellectual range, and political importance. Translation, which occupies the crossing point of discourse and power and which affects all networks of word, image and sound, must now stand near the centre of any study of global activism. The richly diverse set of contributors, the activists and scholars, the creators and analysts, located in and out of Egypt, uncover both the conceptual depth and the social force in the contemporary tasks of the dissenting translator."

Michael H. Levenson, *William B. Christian Professor of English, University of Virginia, USA*

"If you think you know what translation means, think again. This fascinating book uncovers translation as a political act that is negotiated within the spaces that lie between cultures and languages, between the local and the global, between the translatable and the untranslatable. With rich contributions from activist translators, journalists, writers, film makers, scholars, graphic and graffiti artists, all involved in 'translating' the Egyptian revolution, Mona Baker has produced a provocative and enlightening volume that will change the way you think about protest, language, culture, politics and translation. It also provides insight into the chaos and complexity of the Egyptian revolution from the perspective of many of the actors involved, highlighting the role art, culture and language play in shaping our perceptions of contemporary political reality, and our understandings of violence, emotions, power, resistance, solidarity, and revolution."

Dr Cristina Flesher Fominaya, *University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and author of* Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations and Uprisings are Changing the World *(Palgrave 2014)*

"Four years into the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, *Translating Dissent* showcases translation in its broad sense as a new, radical space of intercultural negotiation where discursive and performative representations of revolt in the local and global context take place. By focusing on the recent developments in Egypt and its ongoing contests over freedom of speech and the role of political activism and dissent, the contributors to the volume have brilliantly demonstrated the possibilities offered by translation to create networks of solidarity. The field of translation and cultural studies is that much richer for their efforts."

Faten I. Morsy, *Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Ain Shams University, Egypt*

"Reading these essays one is struck by the enormous force of creative energy that prevailed during the height of protest in Egypt. The writing underscores the ethical and political role that language, and especially translation, played in broadcasting the multi-media responses to events taking place on the ground. The writers reveal a newly imagined collective consciousness of an alternative global future. These essays ensure that this vision will remain an active force for human rights and international solidarity."

Moira Inghilleri, *Director of Translation Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA*

"Rarely has scholarly work on translation been transformed into such an affective experience. The choice to let people write from the streets and from their hearts has resulted in a book that is about much more than translation. This is a book about solidarity, and it is itself an act of solidarity. It tells stories that cannot be found elsewhere, that convey not the meaning of the revolution, but the feeling. Rather than offering us a coherent work on 'translation', the book brings the reader into the uncertain world of the Egyptian revolution, in which every form of translation becomes a political act that inspires, moves, depresses and challenges the reader."

Marianne Maeckelbergh, *Associate Professor of Anthropology, Leiden University, the Netherlands, and author of* The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy *(Pluto Press 2009)*

"In no other book did the term *translation* acquire its full significance in revolutionary networking that characterizes modern times. With the Egyptian Revolution in its focus, this is a valuable companion to all those who were or will be part of any protest movement around the globe. Brilliant."

Mourid Barghouti, *Palestinian poet and author of* I Saw Ramallah

"*Translating Dissent* offers a compelling case study of language, art, and the mediating powers of translation during the Egyptian Revolution. The range of authors—from Cairo's own artists, writers and film-makers to non-Egyptian activists and scholars—details translational strategies in a place-based context of revolution and dissent while expanding our understanding of translation itself. Building from Baker's illuminating introduction to the micro-studies that follow, the volume reveals translation's ongoing, if insufficiently recognized role in forging local solidarities as well as global networks."

Sandra Bermann, *Cotsen Professor of the Humanities & Professor of Comparative Literature, Princeton University, USA*

"This book offers a radical rethinking of translation and translators. By bringing together scholars of translation studies and social movements with a range of activists, it problematizes the unseen but crucial role of translation in protest and social activism. The reflections of activists on translational practices in documentary films, subtitling, web comics and street art position translation in its broadest sense as central to protest and dissent across the world."

Hilary Footitt, *University of Reading, UK*

"The rich studies and personal reflections that Mona Baker has collected here put translation at the dynamic centre of political praxis, while opening up the concept of translation itself, rethinking its meaning and scope by training a wide-angle lens on oppositional activism in and for Egypt since 2011. Examining a varied array of media and translational contexts, the contributors give eloquent voice to the intersections of physicality and narrative, language(s) and (other) visual forms, commitment and sheer determination that Egypt's many oppositional acts of translation have demonstrated."

Marilyn Booth, *Khalid bin Abdallah Al Saud Professor in the Study of the Contemporary Arab World, Oriental Institute and Magdalen College, University of Oxford, UK*

"As new and established forms of activism swiftly move between local and global realities, translation, in its many forms, becomes integral to the life of social and political movements. *Translating Dissent* makes visible precisely this kind of deep and deeply influential translation, allowing us to hear its multiple voices."

Loredana Polezzi, *Cardiff University, UK*

Translating Dissent

Voices *from* and *with* the Egyptian revolution

Edited by Mona Baker

All royalties from the sale of this volume are donated to Hisham Mubarak Law Centre, founded in 1999 by the late Ahmed Seif El-Islam and other human rights activists to defend victims of torture and arbitrary detention in Egypt.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2016
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Translating dissent : voices from and with the Egyptian Revolution / edited by Mona Baker.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Translating and interpreting–Egypt–History–21st century.
2. Translating and interpreting–Political aspects–Egypt.
3. Egypt–History–Protests, 2011- 4. Arabic language–Translating. I. Baker, Mona, editor.
P306.8.E3
962.05'6014–dc23 2015020493

ISBN: 978-1-138-92986-9 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-138-92987-6 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-3156-8087-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Sunrise Setting Ltd, Paignton, UK

In memory of Radwa Ashour
Egyptian novelist, scholar, translator, political activist, and
lifetime campaigner for Palestinian rights

1946–2014

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Acknowledgements

Despite having edited numerous books and journal issues over the past 20 years, I found this volume exceptionally challenging. The ups and downs, the uncertainty, and the upheaval that characterized the political landscape in which it was conceived permeated every aspect of the project: from persuading activists with more pressing concerns to invest in reflecting and writing about a relevant aspect of their experience, to constantly adapting the plan of the volume and having to identify new authors as a number of initial contributors – some either too traumatized by the events of the past two years or too busy attending to colleagues in prison, or both – were unable to find the mental space necessary to write. Nevertheless, working with the contributors who finally submitted essays for the volume has been a privilege and a humbling experience. It taught me more about humility, integrity and solidarity than anything I have read or written in my long career as an academic.

I am grateful to Ahdaf Souief for advice on publishing outlets and for her moral support during the course of planning this project. Yasmin El Rifae provided considerable support during the initial stages, in particular helping me identify a number of contributors and commenting on the initial plan of the volume. Loredana Polezzi's feedback on the publishing proposal gave me confidence in the value of the collection and, in particular, of broadening the concept of translation to link different modalities of expression and avoid treating contiguous aspects of the complex experience of revolution as discrete categories.

I was able to devote my time over the past two years to examining the use of translation in the context of the Egyptian revolution, and editing this volume, thanks to an 18-month full-time Fellowship funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK, under the title 'Translating the Egyptian Revolution: Activist Use of Translation to Connect with Global Publics and Protest Movements'. The project has also benefited from additional support provided by the Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester.

I am grateful to Louisa Semlyen at Routledge for her continued support of my research, even when it does not quite fit into the established academic

model, and to Laura Sandford for assisting with various aspects of production. I am also grateful to Natalie Foster at Routledge and to my co-editors of *Critical Perspectives on Citizen Media*, Luis Pérez-González and Bolette Blaagaard, for endorsing the proposal to include *Translating Dissent* as the first title in the series.

I would like to thank Mark Nickolas, Founder and Principal of Mosaic Films, for permission to reproduce the photograph of Bahia Shehab, taken during the filming of *Nefertiti's Daughters* (www.mosaicfilmsnyc.com), and Ted R. Swedenburg (www.swedenburg.blogspot.com) for permission to use the photograph that appears on the book cover. I am grateful also to Henry Jones for compiling the index and for his assistance with uploading material to the Translating Dissent section of my personal website (www.monabaker.org).

Mona Baker
1 May 2015

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Brandt and Hochman Literary Agents Inc. for excerpts from 'Why Write', from *RED: PASSION AND PATIENCE IN THE DESERT* by Terry Tempest Williams, © 1998 by Terry Tempest Williams, originally published in *Northern Lights* magazine, summer 1998, which appear in the essay by Wiam El-Tamami
Jadaliyya for excerpts from Sinan Antoon's translation of Ahmed Fouad Nigm's poem 'This Script is My Script', available at www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3258/this-script-is-my-script-by-ahmad-fuad-nigm, which appear in the essay by Tahia Abdel Nasser
Mona Anis for excerpts from her translation of Ahmed Fouad Nigm's poem 'Bahiyya', in *I Say My Words Out Loud*, available at www.princeclausfund.org/files/docs/Poetry%20Book%20by%20Ahmed%20Fouad%20Negm_%20I%20Say%20My%20Words%20Out%20Loud.pdf, which appear in the essay by Tahia Abdel Nasser
Middle East Research and Information Project for excerpts from Elliot Colla's translation of Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi's poem 'The Will to Live', available at www.merip.org/mer/mer263/people-want, which appear in the essay by Tahia Abdel Nasser
Mark Nickolas, Mosaic Films, for the photograph of Bahia Shehab
Mohamed Anwar for his 'Militant on psychiatric couch' cartoon, which appears in the essay by Jonathan Guyer
Makhlouf for his 'Can I pretend to protest?!' cartoon, which appears in the essay by Jonathan Guyer
Walid Taher for his 'The Presidential Race' cartoon, which appears in the essay by Jonathan Guyer

1 Beyond the spectacle

Translation and solidarity in contemporary protest movements

Mona Baker

This chapter maps out the space of translation within the political economy of contemporary protest movements, using the Egyptian revolution as a case in point and extending the definition of translation to cover a range of modalities and types of interaction. It identifies themes and questions that arise out of the concrete experiences of activists mobilizing and reflecting on what it means to work for justice, both within and across borders, and to attempt to effect change at home while conversing with others who are fighting similar battles elsewhere. I argue that if our networks of solidarity are to become more effective and reflect the values of horizontality, non-hierarchy and pluralism that inform contemporary protest movements, translation, interpreting, subtitling and other forms of mediation must be brought to the centre of the political arena and conceptualized as integral elements of the revolutionary project. Translators, likewise, must be repositioned as full participants within non-hierarchical, solidary activist communities.

> Deep translation, as opposed to crisis translation, deliberately moves beyond image and spectacle, with the intention of building international solidarity networks that are nonetheless firmly rooted in the granular struggles of a particular place.
>
> (Samah Selim, p. 84)

> In order to fight back we must connect, we must communicate, we need to learn solidarity, we must translate in more ways than just verbal translation, we must attempt a translation of the streets, a deep translation. Collectively we must move on to somewhere new.
>
> (Philip Rizk, p. 237)

The Egyptian revolution has captured the imagination of audiences across the world and provided a model of citizen activism that is widely thought to have inspired other movements of protest in the USA and Europe, including the Occupy and 15-M movements (Teleb 2014; della Porta and Mattoni

2014:125). Despite the large volume of articles and books written about the revolution (Khalil 2012; Souief 2012; Sowers and Toensing 2012; Korany and El-Mahdi 2012; Gregory 2013; Golson *et al.* 2014; Salem 2015, among many others), one aspect that has received no attention in public or academic circles so far concerns the language-based practices that allow Egyptian protestors to contest dominant narratives of the events unfolding in Egypt since January 2011 and, importantly, to connect with, influence and learn from other place-based movements[1] and from global movements of collective action. Even the collection by Golson *et al.* (2014), which focuses on language and rhetoric and their impact on Egyptians' evolving sense of identity, does not engage with issues of translation, understood in the narrow or broad sense. The only notable exception is Mehrez (2012), who reports on a collective project undertaken in 2011 as part of a seminar on 'Translating Revolution' at the American University in Cairo.

Using the Egyptian revolution as a concrete case in point, this volume examines the role of translation in shaping the space of protest from a variety of perspectives that include, but are not limited to, the scholarly universe of translation studies and social movement studies. It brings together a range of Egyptian and non-Egyptian activists, as well as activist scholars engaged with a variety of struggles, in order to think through the many facets of translation and the way they impact the evolving political landscape today. Together, this diverse range of contributors draw on first-hand experience to reflect critically – some for the first time – on the different meanings and uses of translation in contemporary activism. They do so in the context of a domestic movement of protest that is nevertheless embedded in and seeks to engage with global movements of collective action and with global publics – much like any other placed-based movement today, from the anti-austerity movement in Greece and much of Europe to the Green Movement protests in Iran, and from the Girifna resistance movement in Sudan[2] to the Gezi Park protests in Turkey. As such, the volume does not set out merely to offer an analysis of different facets of translation by those who have thought about and analysed the practice for many years but, equally importantly, it sets out to begin a conversation with activists who have so far largely taken translation for granted, despite their heavy reliance on it as they strive to forge networks of solidarity. Deeply frustrated with the failure of all current forms of language, both verbal and visual, to effect change, many of the contributors question much of our received wisdom about how to communicate across borders and media, how to nurture networks of solidarity, and how to learn from past mistakes and envision a new world. As Omar Robert Hamilton argues in the final contribution to the volume, the momentous and deeply traumatic events of the past few years are forcing us to rethink everything, including our use of language and translation, as we look to the future: "If there is to be speech," he suggests, "it should be of something new, something that still has no language for the reality that it might create" (p. 244).

Against this background, in choosing the contributors and the themes for this volume I have not sought to reproduce the discourses and methods of the many books on revolution, dissent, and especially on the politics of translation, that often fall short of reflecting the way people experience the violence and vigour of revolution and political mobilization on the ground.[3] Instead, I have tried to work from the outside in, rather than the inside out: from where the activists and their translational praxis are to where the discipline of translation studies is or thinks it wants to be. Conscious of activists' deep frustrations with the hijacking of their struggle by 'expert' academic and media figures[4] who have little first-hand experience of the events they analyse – a theme that figures prominently in many of the essays in this volume – I have deliberately prioritized first-hand accounts of engaged activists, irrespective of whether I agree with their view of translation, however defined and conceptualized.[5] Whether or not their ideas about translation are always what translation scholars would like them to be, the experiences of these highly reflective activists shed light on the dynamics and complexities of a wide range of translational practices in protest movements, in ways that academics who are not totally immersed in the movements cannot hope to achieve. The reflections of these activists are particularly insightful when they reveal the interdependence of various movements and their inevitable reliance on different forms of translation to create networks of solidarity.

The volume also deliberately places a wide range of styles of writing, and of experiences, alongside each other. At one extreme, there are powerful, emotional pieces by writers such as Wiam El-Tamami and film-makers such as Omar Robert Hamilton, and, at the other, analytical essays by activist scholars of politics and sociology such as Todd Wolfson, Peter Funke and Helen Underhill, who draw on scholarly research and literature. The mix of styles and the combination of creative, visceral writing and research-based contributions brings different worlds together, or rather attempts to nurture the space of overlap between the two worlds since they are never completely separate. What all the contributions, including research-based essays, have in common is that their authors are deeply involved in social and political movements, whether in Egypt or elsewhere, and this experience clearly informs their writing – and, where relevant, their research. Hence, in designing their research, activist scholars adopt values that inform contemporary activism and social movements across the world today, as described by Wolfson and Funke in this volume. In choosing her interviewees for a study that examines the translation practices of diaspora Egyptians post-30 June 2013, for example, Helen Underhill strives to "challenge homogenizing representations that circulate within narrations of the Egyptian struggle, and the rigid categories that emerge from such representations – diaspora, migrants, foreigners, activists, Islamists, secularists, revolutionaries, among others" (p. 47). The same principle of challenging false divisions that undermine solidarity is evident in the conscious choice by Mosireen – one of the activist collectives discussed in several contributions – of its polysemous name, one potential interpretation of which is that it is a misspelling of *Masriyeen*, meaning 'Egyptians'. The pun, like Helen's choice of her interviewees and her refusal to put labels on them, is intended to challenge attempts to set different types of 'Egyptians' off from each other and from non-Egyptians and imply that some – especially those who speak a foreign language and presume to challenge authority – are not genuine members of the polity (Baker, forthcoming). This volume similarly aspires to challenge such false divisions, not only between activists and academics, but also between Egyptians and non-Egyptians. Alongside prominent Egyptian activists like Khalid Abdalla, Hoda Elsadda and Bahia Shehab, it also features contributions by non-Egyptians – whether working in Egypt or elsewhere – who share the same dream of creating a better world for all, and, importantly, the same set of values that have informed contemporary movements of protest since at least the Zapatista uprising in January 1994. It does so in the belief that the struggle against neo-liberal policies and heightened levels of repression is the same everywhere, from Tahrir and Gaza to Oklahoma and Ferguson, and that its success rests on the ability to tell stories "in a way that allows them to be heard" (p. 40), both *globally* and *locally*, as Khalid Abdalla argues in his contribution – not only in order to counter hegemonic narratives promoted by powerful institutions but also to allow activists to build networks of solidarity across linguistic and national boundaries.

Translation and solidarity in contemporary activism

The ability of contemporary movements to effect change and stage a robust challenge to existing power structures, Melucci explains, "hinges on the symbolic capacity to reverse meaning to demonstrate the arbitrariness of . . . power and its domination" (1996:358). Soraya Morayef (pp. 197–200) demonstrates how such a symbolic reversal of meaning is actualized in the work of Alaa Awad, an Egyptian street artist who painted graffiti on the walls around Tahrir Square between 2011 and 2013 using pharaonic styles and themes. Pharaonic art is traditionally understood as "supporting the status quo and a form of propaganda intended to glorify the ruling pharaoh", and yet Awad was able to turn it into "a street performance that subverts the established art form and empowers anti-regime protests in modern-day Egypt". This 'rewriting' or 'retranslation' of established, dominant codes, Morayef argues, "took something away from the state – something that had upheld the sanctity of the state – and gave it back to the people". Recent responses to heightened levels of repression and the increased risks of physical protest on the street across the world offer further examples of this type of symbolic challenge to power. The 'nano demonstrations' that swept through many cities in Russia in 2011–2012 involved staging dramatic flashmob protests using toys instead of human beings, and were so successful that "*The Forbes Magazine* included nanodemonstrations in Barnaul on its list of 'The 12 loudest art protest actions in Russia'" (Nim, in press). The activists who thought of this innovative form of protest exposed the fragility of power when they forced the police to seek formal advice from the prosecutor's office to determine whether protests involving non-human participants constituted public events and therefore required prior authorization from the authorities, and when the organizers of the third nano demonstration humoured them by filing an application for a demonstration "to be attended by 'toys from Kinder Surprise (one hundred pieces), Lego figurines (one hundred pieces), toy soldiers (twenty pieces), soft toys (fifteen pieces), miniature cars (ten pieces)'" (Nim, in press). Spanish activists responded to the draconian measures taken by their government to outlaw protest in July 2014 in similarly creative ways. The first hologram protest was organized in Madrid by No Somos Delito, a platform of over 100 groups, on 10 April 2015 (Flesher Fominaya and Teti 2015).[6] It involved "a screening of a previously filmed holographic protest" which used holograms, written messages and 'shout outs' collected online through the campaign webpage.[7] The film was screened in front of the Spanish parliament, in the presence of spokespeople from No Somos Delito and the media. Neither type of action (nano demonstrations or hologram protests) is intended to replace the presence of real protestors on the street, nor to suggest that activists are willing to accept restrictions on access to public space. What this type of symbolic challenge manages to do, with minimal risks, is raise awareness among the wider public, challenge and expose the arbitrariness and lack of imagination of those in power, and provide a further platform for connecting individual activists and groups and hence expanding the network of protest.

Beyond creative, dramatic responses such as nano demonstrations and hologram protests, Melucci's analysis suggests that activists have to transform a variety of codes in order to "modify the symbolic relationship with the world", that they must – and do – engage in the kind of "destructuring of meaning which opens up the way for other modalities of experience beyond instrumental rationality", and that one of their biggest challenges is to "subvert shared criteria of codification, the obligatory set of signs with which the social order seeks to impose a reality which is solely its own" (1996:358). This is a project that is deeply embedded in the politics of language and translation, especially if one accepts Melucci's more specific claim that "it is enough to structure reality using different words for the power monopoly over reality to crumble" (1996:358). Many of the contributors to this volume explicitly subscribe to one or another version of this view, as evident in Sherief Gaber's discussion of the challenge of translating the nomenclature around urban social justice and urban governance in Egypt, and his assertion that "[u]ncovering and developing new terms for the Egyptian city – or any city – is . . . a process of uncovering the mechanisms and tools that can create leverage to change the city" (p. 105).[8] The question of creating an aspirational terminology features prominently in several other contributions, including the essay by Khalid Abdalla, and recalls one of the defining features of new social movements, namely prefiguration. Prefiguration involves a commitment to creating the future in the present, by not allowing the present to shape or constrain the horizon of possibility and by rejecting the traditional logic of 'the ends justify the means'. In prefigurative politics, "change is brought about in the transformation of individual or collective practices, and must start in the 'here and now'" (Nunes 2005:304). Restricted so far to organizational and interactional modes of restructuring the present in the image of the desired future, extending the powerful concept of prefiguration to the use of verbal, visual and aesthetic languages to construct an alternative world in the here and now would allow us, as I have argued elsewhere (Baker, forthcoming), to pose the kind of challenge to the symbolic order that Melucci advocates.[9] As we do so, translation, interpreting, subtitling and other forms of mediation must be brought to the centre of the political arena and conceptualized as integral elements of the revolutionary project.

Melucci's contention is echoed in various ways in more recent work on new social movements. This "has taken a decisively communicative turn", according to Lievrouw (2011:57), and now recognizes that the central challenge for movements today is 'translating' their particular concerns to other sectors of society, as well as globally, by employing appropriate idioms, signs, narratives and rhetoric. And yet, despite such statements in the social movement studies literature, and the growing interest in the political impact of translation within and beyond the field of translation studies (Niranjana 1992; Tymoczko 2000; Baker 2006; Inghilleri and Harding 2010; Stahuljak 2010; Hess 2012; Rafael 2012; Inghilleri 2012, among many others), little has been done to examine such discursive interventions nor, specifically, the concrete role played by translation in contemporary social and political movements – to ask how, in effect, social movement actors conceptualize and practise various forms of translation, and to what ends. With very few exceptions (Pérez-González 2010; Talens 2010), the few studies that have attempted to address this issue in recent years have mostly focused on interpreting in the World Social Forum (Boéri 2005; Hodkinson and Boéri 2005; Boéri 2008, 2012; Boéri and Maier 2010; Doerr 2012; Manuel Jerez *et al.*, n.d.). Similarly, despite the fact that recent uprisings in the Middle East in general and the Egyptian revolution in particular have commanded the attention of a very sizeable section of the academic community as well as intellectuals at large, not to mention the general public, very few studies have engaged with the politics of interlingual, intralingual and visual mediation by the actors themselves – the film-makers, street artists, writers, translators, cartoonists, creators of comics and poets, among others – and the way this mediation intervenes in negotiating concrete political reality. *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East* (Downey 2014) is an interesting exception for the wide range of artists and activists it brings together from across the region, but the collection is restricted to issues of visual culture and does not engage with translation as such.

The diverse senses of translation

It goes without saying, though it remains a seriously neglected issue, that discursive and non-discursive interventions in the political arena are heavily mediated by various acts of translation, and that this is precisely what enables protest movements to connect and share experiences across the globe. This volume explores the role of translation – understood in both its narrow and broad senses – in negotiating the space of protest at the local and global levels. In its narrow sense, translation involves rendering fully articulated stretches of textual material from one language into another, and encompasses various modalities such as written translation, subtitling and oral interpreting. This type of translation is part of the fabric of practically all oppositional groups, in Egypt and elsewhere – from the written translation of statements and campaigns by groups such as No to Military Trials to the subtitling of videos by collectives such as Mosireen and Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution. As Rizk (2013) explains, it is translation that allows activists involved in a group such as Mosireen to connect with protest movements elsewhere and to see themselves "within a broader struggle and not an atomized battle against local dictatorship".

In its broad sense, translation involves the mediation of diffuse symbols, experiences, narratives and linguistic signs of varying lengths across modalities (words into image, lived experience into words), levels and varieties of language (Standard Written Arabic and spoken Egyptian, for example), and cultural spaces, the latter without necessarily crossing a language boundary. As such, it also encompasses the use of languages other than Arabic in the case of the Egyptian revolution (or Turkish, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish, etc. in other cases) in writings and discussions about the revolution (any revolution), the use of (forms of) Arabic (or Spanish, or English) in addressing regional audiences, as well as the journey of visual and musical artefacts across social and national boundaries. All these different types of translation are practised every day, by every group of activists in every protest movement and every activist initiative across the globe, though they may remain largely hidden from view. For example, the implications of the tension between spoken Egyptian and Modern Standard Arabic and the need to 'translate' between them as part and parcel of the political project are evident in the essay by Hoda Elsadda, who focuses not on translation, as narrowly understood, but on the process of collecting and archiving the testimonies of women involved in the Egyptian protests since 2011. Practically all the interviews held in the Women and Memory Forum oral history archive were conducted orally in spoken Egyptian and translated into Standard Arabic for the purposes of archiving the testimonies in written form, with various consequences and reactions from the interviewees. Some, for example, were unhappy that their narratives had undergone this type of translation, arguing that "a shift from colloquial to Standard Arabic detracts from the authenticity of the written text and distorts the style and character of the narrative" (p. 157). Similar tensions relating to the choice of a given language variety in translation are evident in the contribution by Deena Mohamed, who explains that "topics like sexism, misogyny and patriarchy were largely unacknowledged and relatively little talked about in Egyptian society" when she was creating her webcomic *Qahera*, and that one of the main challenges she faced in translating from English into Arabic was that "[t]here were no words for these concepts in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, and Standard Arabic equivalents felt alien and melodramatic in the context of a webcomic" (p. 141).

Translation – in its narrow and broad senses – also permeates the personal experience of individual activists involved in revolutionary movements, as evident in many of the essays in this volume. Writers like Wiam El-Tamami, who focus mostly on the complexities of translating lived experience into words, also reveal in passing that translation in the narrow sense was very much part of their everyday experience of the revolution:

> October 2011. The Maspero massacre. Army APCs mowing down peaceful protestors in front of the state television building. Friends and I translated the eyewitness accounts as they came in, unable to comprehend the horror of the words we were trying to transcribe from one language into another.
>
> (p. 24)

The same contributor would typically move between the different senses of translation unproblematically, and with no attempt to differentiate between them:

> There were many more testimonies of torture and abuse, arbitrary arrests and military trials in the months to come. But it would still be some time before I would attempt to translate the turmoil into words of my own.
>
> (p. 24)

The same pattern of alternating between different conceptualizations of 'translation' and the same sense of pervasiveness of all types of translation in the revolutionary experience are evident throughout the volume. While most of Jonathan Guyer's essay focuses on the nitty gritty of interlingual translation of Arabic cartoons into English, he also argues that "[c]artoonists themselves are in a sense performing a particular type of translation: they are turning the day's news into a series of words and symbols" (p. 209) and, further, that "[a]ny narrow act of translation is deeply linked to the broader translation – how Egypt, or any other place, is presented to a global audience" (p. 220). Likewise, Tahia Abdel Nasser alternates between the broader, more metaphoric sense of translation, stating for example that Arabic poetry produced since 2011 "translated and documented the development of the revolutionary movement" (p. 108), and the narrower sense of interlingual translation, to which she devotes most of her discussion. Helen Underhill's essay deploys several conceptualizations of translation and reveals that interlingual translation has been part of the activism of diaspora Egyptians even before June 2013, and that they regularly translated reports and subtitled videos as part of their political mobilization. Focusing on the production and subtitling of documentary film, Philip Rizk goes further by explicitly distinguishing three types of translation in the context of the Egyptian revolution: translating the street to a local audience, subtitling from Arabic into other languages to inform the outside world of what is going on and strengthen networks of solidarity, and subtitling documentary films produced by other protest movements into Arabic for a local audience, again to exchange experiences and extend networks of solidarity.

Others, like John Johnston, discuss fascinating examples of visual translation across struggles, as in the appropriation of the iconic Free Derry Wall mural in Belfast by Palestinians for a mural that appears on the wall of the Dheisheh refugee camp in the West Bank. Here, the Belfast message "You are Now Entering Free Derry" is replaced by the bilingual "You are Now Entering Free Dheisheh/أنت الان تدخل الدهيشة الحرة". This form of visual-cum-textual translation, Johnston argues, points to "the capacity of street art to translate revolutionary realities across cultural and linguistic boundaries" (p. 191) and thus effect "a bond of solidarity between peoples and context" (p. 95). The difference between this form of translation and the appropriation of canonical works like *The Merchant of Venice* (Abend-David 2003) and *Antigone* (Selaiha 2011) to intervene in the political reality of another culture is arguably one of degree, not kind. Interestingly, in rethinking the role of subtitlers in collectives such as Mosireen, film-maker Salma El Tarzi (p. 95) explicitly compares her own work on adapting a novel into a film with the work of translators:

> Writing the script, I realized, was a form of translation – translating a literary text into the language of cinema. I began to see my vacillation between a slavish obedience to the text and presenting it from my subjective viewpoint as similar to the dilemma experienced by subtitlers working on films.

Other types of translation are evident within and across the essays themselves. Both Bahia Shehab and John Johnston discuss the well-known Tank vs Biker mural in Cairo at length. Each brings in a different set of experiences to interpret the mural for his or her readers and makes connections that the other contributor does not make, just as individual translators inevitably produce different interpretations of the same work. The differences in interpretation of this single mural recall Venuti's definition of translation as "a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides *on the strength of an interpretation*" (1995:17; emphasis added).

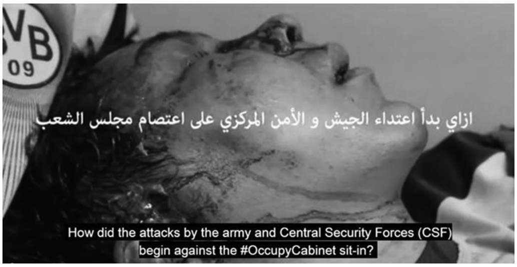
This entire spectrum of translational activity, which is part of the fabric of all protest movements, remains quite hidden from view, taken for granted, unexamined and unproblematized – not only by scholars of translation and social movement studies, but also by the activists themselves. Salma El Tarzi makes this very clear in her contribution to this volume: "The truth is that I have no idea who translates my films. I don't know their names, I don't know what they look like, and I certainly don't discuss the film with them" (p. 90), a rather odd situation for a collective that genuinely believes in collaborative work and non-hierarchical structures, as she herself has come to recognize. Hence the urgency of engaging in the kind of conversation this volume attempts to initiate. The essays in this volume begin the conversation and offer some insights into this practically uncharted territory, but much remains to be thought through and interrogated. For the time being, irrespective of how we understand 'translation' and wherever we attempt to draw its boundaries, what is important in the context of protest movements is to recognize that the contours and effectiveness of every instance of translation – however defined – are deeply contingent on its ability to connect to the movement as a whole and to actualize the values that inform the political project in which it is embedded, as I have argued elsewhere (Baker, forthcoming).

Rethinking translation in protest movements

The values that inform contemporary social movements differ significantly from those that oriented traditional politics, as discussed by Wolfson and Funke in this volume (see also Flesher Fominaya 2007; Maeckelbergh 2011). They include a commitment to horizontal, non-hierarchical forms of interaction; rejection of representational practices; an embrace of diversity and pluralism; "an internationalism based on strong solidarity and communication between activists all over the world" (Maeckelbergh 2009a:8); and a belief in the strategic use of prefiguration. All these values are evident in the work of collectives involved in the Egyptian revolution, such as Mosireen (Baker, forthcoming), and in the individual essays in this volume. They are also evident *visually* on the walls of Cairo: as Johnston points out, for example, Cairo murals "exemplify a democratic process of visual enquiry. There is no artistic hierarchy at play, as naive paintings sit alongside and at times on top of highly skilled works" (pp. 185–6). In this respect, street art in Cairo reflects very different values from those that inform the street art of Belfast, which is mired in the antagonisms and divisions of traditional politics and much more focused on claiming and defining territory as belonging to one party or another.

The limited number of publications that have engaged with interlingual translation and its position within this new political landscape have mostly focused on the World Social Forum, as mentioned earlier, and hence shed little light on processes of mediation within place-based movements like the Egyptian revolution, the Sudanese Girifna initiative, or the Gezi Park protests. What they do reveal, and what is also evident in the case of the Egyptian revolution, is that translation is undertaken almost entirely by volunteers who are committed to the same set of values that inform new social movements (Baker 2013). At the same time, these studies point to a persistent tension between the volunteers' conceptualization of their role – as primarily political activists who are able to mediate linguistically between fellow activists – and the conceptualization of that role by non-translators in the movement, who often seem unable to think of translators as anything other than service providers positioned outside the main struggle (Boéri 2008; Baker 2013). The same pattern of interaction between activist translators (mostly subtitlers in this case) and activist film-makers is evident to a large extent in the case of the Egyptian revolution (Baker, forthcoming) and is critically reassessed in this volume by Salma El Tarzi, a film-maker and member of the Mosireen collective. It is a pattern that needs to be urgently revisited and critiqued. We need to prefigure a more productive mode of interaction between non-translators (be they film-makers, writers, urban planners or other types of activists) and those who offer their specific skills as translators, interpreters and subtitlers in support of the same cause, and as part of the same political project. Reassessment of the relationship and pattern of interaction between translators and non-translators is necessary if our networks of solidarity are to become more effective and reflect the values of horizontality, non-hierarchy and pluralism to which most activists subscribe. Several of the contributors to this volume demonstrate growing awareness of this issue, and a willingness to rethink practices involving translation in future. Looking back at the work of Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution, for instance, Leil-Zahra Mortada admits that:

> [w]ith hindsight, it is now clear that it would have been more productive to involve the subtitlers in the creative process from an early stage. After all, for the majority of viewers, who do not speak the interviewee's language and are not familiar with the cultural codes and references she deploys in telling her story, the subtitles are the only way into her world. They therefore cannot be divorced from the film-making process nor, indeed, from the political project as such.
>
> (p. 135)



ازاي بدأ اعتداء الجيش و الأمن المركزي على اعتصام مجلس الشعب

How did the attacks by the army and Central Security Forces (CSF)
begin against the #OccupyCabinet sit-in?

Figure 1.1 Addition of #OccupyCabinet in the subtitles of a Mosireen documentary.

In revisiting this issue, as Salma El Tarzi's contribution makes clear, the burden of effecting change cannot fall on the shoulders of non-translators alone. Translators not only "must be allowed" but they must themselves "claim…a greater degree of freedom", as El Tarzi argues (p. 92). They must adopt an active role and be willing to experiment with new and innovative ways of actualizing the vision of the future in the practices – including linguistic practices – of today. There is evidence that at least some do, even in collectives like Mosireen where film-makers as well as subtitlers mostly operated in extreme crisis situations, as described by Samah Selim in this volume, that left them little time to reflect on the nuances of subtitling choices and how they might amplify the revolutionary message and strengthen the political project beyond the confines of the original text or film. The subtitler or subtitlers of one of the Mosireen documentaries discussed by Philip Rizk on p. 228, *Testimony of Aboudi*,[10] was clearly thinking of how they can advance the political project rather than simply reproduce the original text when they decided to add the hashtag #OccupyCabinet in the subtitle shown in Figure 1.1. Interventions of this type are fully coherent with the political project and cannot be theorized within traditional models of equivalence and faithfulness to the source text. But what I have been arguing for is a much more radical rethinking of the parameters of translation within protest movements, a rethinking that involves reconceptualizing translators as full participants within non-hierarchical, solidary activist communities.

Concluding remarks

One issue I have not touched on so far, although it features in several contributions, concerns the use of social media and digital technologies, recognized by Wolfson and Funke (this volume) as one of the defining features of new social movements. Social media is an important space of protest that is permeated by various forms of translation, but its role in the Egyptian revolution has been seriously exaggerated in shallow analyses that claim the uprising was elite-driven, planned and executed by a Twitter and Facebook generation (Baker and Guthrie 2014). These and other reductive explanations of all revolutions in the Middle East by media and academic 'experts' are well documented in Azeez (2015), who links them to broader strategies historically used to undermine uprisings in the region and explain them away as "mere attempted failures at capitalist modernity and nationalism by a few hopeful Westernized or Western-supported Orientals importing foreign philosophies, ideals and concepts" (2015:120–1).[11] In the specific case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the so-called 'Arab Spring', Azeez points out, "political commentators attributed the revolutions to 'social media' and the 'shy American intellectual Gene Sharp,' or the 'Obama factor,' 'Google Earth,' 'Israel's democracy' or even the know-how of a Serbian organization" (2015:129). Like El-Tamami (p. 24), I do not wish to traffic in such facile storylines.

Most of the essays in this volume make reference to various Arabic lexical items or stretches of text. These appear in Arabic script and where relevant are accompanied by a transcription in Latin alphabet, to allow the non-Arabic speaker to refer to the term or phrase if it is the subject of analysis or commentary. Transcription is a form of translation in its own right, and as such always involves decisions that reflect the position of the transcriber/translator. I have deliberately avoided the complex scholarly apparatus associated with the study of Arabic as a foreign language and culture and with orientalist work, an apparatus that would make the text less accessible to a broader range of readers and position most of the contributors, including myself, outside their 'cultural habitat' and zone of comfort. Where a widely circulating lay spelling is available, as in the case of *Ittihadiya* and *Rabaa Al Adawiyya*, I have used it. Otherwise, I have adopted a system described by Ahdaf Souief in *Cairo, My City, Our Revolution* (2012), which she believes was initiated by Arab bloggers, including the use of the numeral *7* to represent ح, as in *al-7ayy* ('neighbourhood') and the numeral *3* to represent ع, as in *masha3a* ('commons'). Souief outlines the two main features of this system of transcription in the front-matter of her book as follows:

1. Where there is a traditional accepted – and unique – spelling in Latin letters for an Arabic sound [it is retained]. As in: gh for غ – like the French 'r'; kh for خ – as in the Scottish 'loch'.
2. Three sounds are written as numerals:

   The hamza, ء, pronounced as a glottal stop in the middle or at the end of a word, is written as a 2. So, if we were doing this in English, the cockney 'butter' would be written as 'bu2er'. The ain, ع, a soft vibration in the back of the throat, is written 3. The 'heavy h' ح, is written 7.

Apart from these conventions, I represent long vowels by doubling the relevant vowel rather than adding a line above, as in scholarly transcriptions of Arabic, thus *faraagh 3aam* rather than *farāgh 3ām* ('public space'). I have also prioritized transcriptions that reflect the way Egyptians pronounce the item in question (thus *maghood zaati* rather than *majhood thaati*).

Finally, like the volume as a whole, the overview I offered in this introductory essay has been less concerned with surveying the literature as such than with teasing out themes and questions that arise out of the concrete experiences of activists mobilizing and reflecting on what it means to work for justice, both within and across borders, and to attempt to effect change at home while conversing with others who are fighting similar battles elsewhere. Beyond the few, central issues I have focused on so far, there are other themes covered by the contributors that cut across many genres and types of practice, including film-making, poetry, cartoons, webcomics, graffiti, archival projects, urban planning, and creative writing. Among other things, contributors discuss the role of translation in situating the Egyptian revolution within broader struggles, especially in the global South; fault lines in translating events between contexts and the interpretative lapses that threaten meaningful solidarity; the challenge of translating complex, lived experience into streamlined, intelligible narratives; the ethical and political import of aesthetic forms of intervention such as poetry and their potential for giving new life to revolutionary ideals during moments of crisis; the transformative power of translation as a space of interaction between immediate, local concerns and global perspectives on issues such as sexual harassment and misogyny; the role played by subtitling in empowering Egyptian women by connecting them to networks of rebellion across borders; the reclaiming of public space and the challenge of translating new concepts in urbanism into Arabic; the process of constructing historical continuities, ruptures and narratives as a creative form of selective translation; the challenge of contesting official narratives by translating and archiving personal testimonies; the impact of the experience of translating in a state of emergency on our understanding of concepts such as 'profession' and 'objectivity'; ethical contours of the activist film-maker/subtitler relationship; the translation and packaging of political satire rooted in local contexts for a global audience, and much more. All these topics are relevant to and have resonance for protest movements in many different parts of the world. I have not been able to do them enough justice in this introductory article, nor to categorize them under clear-cut headings for the purposes of structuring the volume. Ignoring the extensive overlaps among essays, I grouped them according to the most prominent theme in each, under four broad headings: (1) Narrating revolution: historicizing revolutions; (2) Translation as political intervention; (3) Challenging patriarchy; and (4) Translation and the visual economy of protest.

The interview with Philip Rizk ('Solidarity, translation and the politics of the margin') offers one activist's critical analysis of the still unfolding narrative of the Egyptian revolution and the place of translation within it. The volume concludes, as it starts, with a visceral piece of writing by Omar Robert Hamilton: 'Moments of clarity'. Like the opening essay by El-Tamami, Omar's reflections remind us that the spectacles we watch on our television screens bear little relationship to the experience of revolution on the ground; that revolutions are complex, highly affective experiences that cannot be rationally dissected and packaged into coherent, structured blocks of text capable of conforming to scholarly standards or media expectations.

Notes

1 'Place' in 'place-based movements' is understood as "a particular geographical territory and people's culturally and historically informed experience of, and engagement with, this territory" (Stephansen 2013:512). See also Selim (this volume).

2 See www.girifna.com (last accessed 30 April 2015).

3 There are of course notable exceptions, especially in the literature on social movement studies, including the work of Marianne Maeckelbergh (2009a, 2009b, 2011), Juris (2005, 2008), Mehrez (2012) and the collection by Notes from Nowhere (2003), among others.

4 General distrust of the media and of mainstream institutions – including academia of course – is identified by Wolfson and Funke (this volume) as part of the contemporary logic of social movement politics, with the Indymedia initiative as one type of activist response to these institutions. Although not discussed in the contribution to the current volume, Leil-Zahra Mortada's involvement in Indymedia and in training Indymedia volunteers in Iraq during the 2003 invasion points to long-standing, concrete connections between Arab activists and the Global Justice Movement. See the video recording of Leil's plenary at the Globalizing Dissent conference in Cairo, 6–8 March 2015. Available at www.monabaker.org/?p=1202 (last accessed 30 April 2015).

5 This means that many of the essays do not conform to the established scholarly model of writing – a model which is increasingly being questioned, especially in the context of studying protest movements (Luchies 2015). The collection deliberately departs from this model where applying it seems irrelevant, and focuses instead on attempting to engage a broad audience that is likely to be less concerned with how many references each article lists and whether it pays tribute to canonized authors, and more interested in making new connections and understanding events from the perspective of those engaged in them.

6 A video recording of the actual protest can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnT-Az3kKlY (last accessed 30 April 2015).

7 See www.hologramasporlalibertad.org/en.html#home (last accessed 30 April 2015).

8 Gaber also asserts that "attempts to transform the native language, by infusing it with specialized terms, borrowed words, and even excavating terms from popular or historical use, go hand in hand with concrete efforts to transform the city" (p. 100).

9 This is clearly the kind of project that feminism and queer activism have long pursued, and often with much more recognition of the role of translation than is evident in contemporary protest movements.

10 www.youtube.com/watch?v=MChw2kqlRG8&feature=youtu.be (last accessed 30 April 2015).

11 Rizk (p. 227) refers to the same pattern when he argues that "the narrative of 25 January that has gained the most traction amongst elites both in and outside Egypt is that the revolt was flamed by an Internet-savvy middle-class milieu" and that "this narrative would later clearly reveal itself to be part of the strategy of the counter-revolution's undermining of the revolution".

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