Interpreters and Translators in the War Zone
Narrated and Narrators[1]

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Abstract. *For reasons to do with the spread and intensity of armed conflicts since the early 1990s and the increased visibility of translators and interpreters that accompanied this development, scholars both within and outside translation studies have begun to engage with various aspects of the role and positioning of translators and interpreters in war zones. Drawing on available studies and recent media reports on contemporary conflicts, and adopting a narrative perspective to make sense of the findings, this article focuses on two issues. The first is how translators and interpreters are narrated by other participants in the war zone, including military personnel, war correspondents, mainstream media, alternative media and local populations. The second is how they themselves participate in elaborating the range of public narratives of the conflict that become available to us, and, in so doing, influence the course of the war in ways that are subtle, often invisible, but nevertheless extremely significant. The discussion is set within the broader context of recurrent, stock political narratives that constrain and define relationships and identities in all war contexts, and demonstrates that despite attempts to contain them within those narratives, translators and interpreters retain their agency and exercise their power in diverse ways.*

Keywords. Difference, Homogeneity, Identity, Narrative theory, Positioning, Role, Wartime translation.

Translators and interpreters working in war zones operate against a particular backdrop which inevitably has an impact on their role, their experience of the

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[1] This article is based on a keynote presentation at a workshop entitled 'The Role of Interpreters, Translators and Linguists in Conflict', organized by the Languages at War Project and held at the Imperial War Museum in London on 29 May 2009. See http://www.reading.ac.uk/languages-at-war/ (last accessed January 2010).

war, and how they are viewed by other parties. Two essential and interrelated elements of the public narratives that precede and accompany all wars constrain practically every form of interaction in this context, including the interaction between translators and their employers, compatriots, the media, government agents and other members of the societies in which they operate.

First, the issue of *difference* becomes central to each society's vision of the world and its relationship with others. Specifically, the 'other', the enemy, has to be narrated as radically different from ourselves if the violence of war is to be justified. The same stock political narrative is sold to publics on either side of every conflict, past and present: the enemy is evil, threatening, dangerously out of control and intransigent. It represents the opposite of everything we stand for: we are civilized, fair, level-headed, peace-loving, reasonable and open to compromise. *We* value life and freedom, *they* are out to kill and enslave us (or our allies, or their own people). The potency of this storyline is such that despite its recurrent use to justify numerous wars, it continues to be easily and almost instantaneously activated as soon as an 'enemy' is identified by politicians and the media and war is declared. Where the translator or interpreter is then positioned, as one of *us* or potentially one of *them*, becomes extremely important and has concrete and often life-threatening consequences.

Second, a closely related element of this storyline is the assumption of *homogeneity* that heightens the perception of radical difference between *us* and *them* and leaves members of each society, including translators and interpreters, little or no room for manoeuvre – no room to negotiate a more tolerant, more accommodating relationship even with the odd member of the 'enemy' camp, and no 'in-between' space of the type that romantic theories of translation tend to assign them to.[2] The enemy is typically narrated as consisting of a single, homogeneous group, as sheer evil, or "an undifferentiated menace" as Packer (2007) puts it with reference to the way in which Iraqis working in the Green Zone in Baghdad, including interpreters and translators, are perceived by their American employers. Germans in general were widely narrated as Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s; the word *German* itself became synonymous with *Nazi*. Similarly, Serbs were widely narrated as murderous during the recent Balkan wars, with Bosnians generally perceived as peaceful, helpless victims. Despite being portrayed as victims of an evil dictator in some narratives, with the rise in 'insurgency' since the invasion of their country in 2003, Iraqis have been consistently narrated as an undifferentiated source of threat, to the extent that, by 2006, the US military had replaced most Iraqi interpreters working in the Green Zone with Jordanians, and even invested in training citizens of the Republic of Georgia to take over in order to avoid relying on Iraqi interpreters – members of the *them*, enemy group

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[2] See Tymoczko (2003/2010) for a detailed and incisive critique of this trope. See also Baker (2009:222-24).

(Packer 2007). As Packer (*ibid.*) reports, "[t]he switch was deeply unpopular with the remaining Iraqis, who understood that it involved the fundamental issue of trust", an issue I will return to below when I discuss some of the ways in which interpreters and translators are narrated by other parties in the war zone, including the military.

A variant on the narrative of homogeneity, as far as the *them* side of the equation is concerned, involves constructing the enemy as consisting of a number of clearly delineated groups fighting with each other, with perhaps one group needing our assistance and worthy of some accommodation because, though still very different, at least they aspire to become like us one day. Our media and politicians have now succeeded in narrating the population of Iraq as either Sunni or Shi'a. Despite decades of intermarriage and largely peaceful co-existence,[3] these divisions are suddenly depicted as almost watertight, and as part of the problem that necessitates our intervention and poses a threat not only to those groups we deem worthy of our assistance (the Shi'a in the case of Iraq, for instance) but also directly to *us*. Stahuljak (2009:367, 2010:410) has observed a similar pattern with respect to recent wars in the former Yugoslavia (*ibid.*:362, 406; see also Stahuljak, this volume).

Ultimately, both elements of this storyline (difference and homogeneity) work to ensure that there is no room for ambiguity and ambivalence in a war context, no space for critical reflection or inconvenient questioning of the underlying narrative, nothing that might interfere with and slow down the operation of the war machine. The vast majority of the people in the enemy camp must be narrated as sharing the same outlook, the same prejudices, the same "propensity toward violent conflict" that the late Samuel Huntington attributed to all Muslims (1996:258)[4] – the quintessential prototype of an enemy culture today – if we are to justify bombing their civilians and destroying their cities, or even slowly starving them through various types of sanctions, as the so-called 'international community' did in Iraq between 1990 and 2003, and as in the case of the extreme sanctions inflicted on Gaza since 2006. To justify such brute violence, the enemy must be dehumanized, depicted as an undifferentiated, homogeneous mass. The corollary of this on *our* side is that we have to be narrated as a cohesive, united community with shared values, despite minor disagreements here and there, and these shared values cannot be open to negotiation. This push for homogeneity extends even to the use of language and can involve suppressing any form of linguistic diversity. Rafael (2009:10-11) offers an interesting example from World War I:

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[3] Following extensive field work that involved interviewing Iraqi translators and interpreters working for the US military in Iraq, among others, Packer (2007) asserts that "[a]lmost no Iraqi claimed to have anticipated … the terrifying question 'Are you Sunni or Shia?'".

[4] "Wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam", Huntington assures his readers, "Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbors" (1996:256).

Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1917 about the danger of harboring immigrants who by virtue of speaking a foreign language were most likely "paying allegiance to a foreign power." Riding the wave of anti-immigrant hysteria directed particularly at German speakers that swept the country amidst the First World War, Roosevelt explicitly links the question of language to national security: "We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language… It would be not merely a misfortune but a crime to perpetuate differences of language in this country."

As Rafael goes on to explain in terms that simultaneously demonstrate the importance of both elements discussed here – difference and homogeneity – in elaborating effective public narratives of war, "Roosevelt thus situates the monolingual citizen on the side of national identity and security. But in doing so, he also places him or her in relation to the menacing presence of his or her shadowy other: the polyglot foreigner whose uncertain allegiance and rootless existence make it into a dangerous enemy" (*ibid.*:11).

This is the oppressive backdrop against which translators and interpreters work during wartime. On the one hand, each translator or interpreter is ultimately an individual with a personal history, with a potentially complex, shifting and perhaps even ambivalent position in relation to different elements of the public narratives that orient the war, and often with a network of personal relations on *both* sides of the war. And yet translators and interpreters, like other members of society, soon find out that there is no place in war for fluid, shifting identities, for split or even strained loyalties, nor for negotiated narratives of any kind. Notwithstanding postmodern assertions of the nature of identity and the status of any categories we dream up as individuals or researchers – assertions that are shared by the theoretical framework I draw on here, namely narrative theory (see Baker 2006a) – the fact remains that in war situations, and particularly for those experiencing the war firsthand, one's identity is almost completely constructed and enforced by other actors, and once constructed to suit the exigencies of war, it becomes set in stone, independent of one's actions or beliefs, with little or no room for negotiation. Witness, for example, the forced relocation of all Japanese nationals and American nationals of Japanese origin to internment camps on the West Coast during World War II, irrespective of their individual views and behaviour.[5] The 'Japaneseness' of these individuals became the defining feature of their identities, whether or not they thought of themselves in those terms. For the rest of society, members of the *us* group proper, personal narratives have to be

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[5] Paradoxically, Takeda (2009:52) reports that the US government recruited and trained second-generation Japanese Americans from the internment camps as translators and interpreters "while continuing to detain their families and friends in the camps as 'enemy aliens'".

closely aligned with the public narratives that inform and justify the war: only traitors and terrorists can stand apart from their societies in such moments of national fervour and narrate themselves in significantly different terms. The 'you are either with us or against us' rule applies and is enforced across the board – more subtly and with slightly more flexibility in some cultures than in others, but it does apply all the same, and being different in terms of national origin or ethnicity is one reason for automatically branding an individual or group as 'against us', as 'one of them'.

These observations are important for making sense of some of the ways in which translators and interpreters in the war zone can reassert or disrupt the public narratives that fuel the conflict, and the way they themselves are made to fit within those narratives. In what follows, I will largely focus on two issues that interest me from a narrative perspective:[6]

- How translators and interpreters are narrated by various parties, such as the military, mainstream media, alternative media, peacekeeping personnel, NGOs, etc., and how they themselves might come to identify with the role assigned to them in an evolving narrative told by other parties in the conflict;
- How translators and interpreters working in war zones contribute to elaborating the range of public narratives of the conflict that become available to us, and, in so doing, influence the course of the war in ways that are subtle, often invisible, but nevertheless extremely significant.

I will return to these issues as I try to summarize the rather limited literature on translation and interpreting in or around war zones and look ahead to potential research avenues.

1. The scarcity of data and dearth of research in the field

Very little scholarly research is available on translators and interpreters in war zones. The two studies by media specialist Jerry Palmer (Palmer 2007, Palmer and Fontan 2007) are unique in their focus on the role of translators and interpreters on the ground, in war-torn Iraq, and the fact that they are based on interviews with media personnel who have direct experience of working with translators and interpreters in this context.

War documents – such as war archives and memoirs of key protagonists – typically pay little or no attention to language mediation. Members of the Languages at War Project run by the University of Reading and the University of Southampton have noted this problem as they search through the extensive

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[6] For an explanation and exemplification of narrative theory in the context of translation studies, see Baker (2006a, 2006b, 2007/2010, 2008, 2009, in press), Boéri (2008, 2009), Harding (2009, in press, forthcoming), Al-Herthani (2009) and Al-Sharif (2009).

archives and audio recordings of the Imperial War Museum in London, the third partner in the project.[7] Catherine Baker (in press), for instance, writes that

> [i]n published accounts of the peacekeeping operations in BiH [Bosnia-Herzegovina], the figure of the interpreter is usually on the margins. Usually, interpreters are the occasion for a story about the devastation of the area in which the memoirist served, the destruction of pre-war multi-ethnic Sarajevo or the atmosphere of suspicion among the three ethnic groups involved in the conflict. The interpreter flits in and out of recollections of meetings with hard-drinking generals, tense moments on patrol or off-duty nightlife.

Any attempt to address the two issues I wish to pursue here – how translators and interpreters are narrated in war contexts and how they themselves participate in narrating the war – thus has to contend with the dearth of research in this area and the fact that translators and interpreters are largely invisible in existing accounts of any war.

Slightly more scholarly literature is available on the role played by translators and interpreters in the aftermath of war, especially in the asylum system as it relates to political refugees: see Barsky (1993, 1996), Inghilleri (2005, 2007/2010), Jacquemet (2005/2010), Maryns (2006) and Pöllabauer (2004), among others. A few studies have also examined the work and dilemmas of translators and interpreters operating in peacekeeping and similar contexts (Catherine Baker, in press, Stahuljak 1999, 2000, 2009/2010, this volume). Understandably, the vast majority of this research is not based on direct observation but on simulated encounters (as in Barsky 1996), post-event interviews with interpreters and other parties (Catherine Baker, in press, Stahuljak 2009/2010, this volume), or the examination of written war archives, audio recordings and testimonial videos (Catherine Baker, in press, Footitt 2009, Takeda 2009). Given that people who document the war pay little or no attention to issues of language mediation, war archives clearly have their limitations as a source of data. Jacquemet's study (2005/2010) is an exception in that it is based on direct observation of interpreter-mediated registration interviews run by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees in Tirana, Albania, following the end of hostilities in 2000. This type of ethnographic field work is very rare.[8]

A number of more recent publications (Inghilleri 2008, 2009, Maier 2007) have examined the positioning of translators and interpreters in some of the facilities set up to process those who are captured by the intelligence institutions

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[7] See http://www.reading.ac.uk/languages-at-war/lw-home.asp.
[8] One or two studies are also (partly) based on the direct experience of the author; both Stahuljak (2009/2010) and Dragovic-Drouet (2007) draw on their own experiences as wartime interpreters.

or the military and accused of terrorism or insurgency. These studies are based on an analysis of published accounts written by the translators themselves,[9] or on media reporting on the treatment and fate of interpreters in contemporary wars, mostly in Iraq and Afghanistan (Inghilleri 2008, 2009, Rafael 2007/2010, 2009). Inghilleri (2009) also draws on a wide range of published accounts of the Iraq war which occasionally make mention of translators and interpreters, such as Thomas E. Ricks' *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (2006) and Tony Lagouranis' *Fear Up Harsh: An Army Interrogator's Dark Journey through Iraq* (2007).

To the best of my knowledge, the only study that examines the use of translators in intelligence gathering in the context of war is Footitt (2009, in press), who focuses on intelligence activities based at Bletchley Park (UK) during World War II, and specifically on the involvement of linguists in translating material from decrypted coded messages and captured enemy documents. By its very nature, and given official secrets acts and other restrictions on accessing such data during and for some time after a war has ended, research on the role of translators in intelligence gathering activities is inevitably scarce and subject to the same limitations as other research based on the examination of war archives. There is no doubt, however, that translators and interpreters continue to play an important though often undocumented role in intelligence gathering activities. Packer (2007) mentions several examples in the context of the recent invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq.

Journalists are better equipped to investigate the actual war context, and in more recent years, media reports – often quite detailed – of firsthand, witness accounts and interviews with translators and interpreters working on the battleground have been easier to find. These reports have appeared in a wide range of print and online media, both mainstream and alternative. English publications include *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *Harper's Magazine*, among others, and similar reporting has featured in print and online media in other languages. In recent conflicts, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, journalists have begun to engage with the issue of language mediation and to register more awareness of the translator as a distinct participant in the events being narrated. This is a largely untapped source that scholars ought to make much better use of in future. Surprisingly, to the best of my knowledge, virtually no sustained analysis of media reporting on the role of translators and interpreters in war contexts has been undertaken to date, nor have many scholars drawn on these reports as sources of data. Maier (2007) takes a very cursory glance at media reports. Inghilleri (2008, 2009) draws on media reports occasionally, but not systematically.

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[9] There have been several such accounts published in book form in recent years, including those by Erik Saar (Saar and Novak 2005) and Kayla Williams (2006).

2.   How translators and interpreters are narrated

The focus of the scholarly studies I surveyed in the previous section varies from an interest in the impact of interpreter and translator behaviour on other parties in the conflict, and the way they align or do not align with the institutions that employ them (Jacquemet 2005/2010), to the impact of the war situation and proximity to violence on the interpreters and translators themselves (Stahul-jak 2009/2010, Inghilleri 2008, 2009, Maier 2007). Maier (*ibid.*) particularly regrets the lack of scholarly interest in the turmoil that interpreters and trans-lators undergo in war contexts. This observation is relevant to the first of the two issues I wish to address here: how translators and interpreters are narrated by other parties in various war zones, including those who report on the war, whether in the media or in personal memoirs and/or institutional records.

The turmoil that interpreters and translators experience clearly results not just from what they witness of the violence of war but also from the way they are narrated by others, and the chasm that gradually opens up between their own sense of identity, their own personal narrative, and the identity and narra-tive imposed on them by other parties who both need *and* fear them. As Rafael explains in the context of the US occupation of Iraq and with respect to Iraqi nationals working for the military, the identity of translators and interpreters is "unsettled and unsettling inasmuch as their presence generates both relief and suspicion among soldiers" (2009:15). As will become clear in the discussion that follows, different parties tend to cast the translator in different roles within the broader narrative of war: as victim or villain, as friend or foe.

2.1   Victim vs. villain: (de)romanticizing the role of the translator

Media reports provide interesting insights into the way locally hired transla-tors and interpreters are narrated by different parties. From the perspective of a number of narrators, most typically the war correspondent, translators and interpreters tend to be readily depicted as victims of the ongoing violence. In the context of recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, they are often portrayed as victims of the insensitivity and indifference of the military and the politi-cians who exploit their skills but offer them no protection and treat them as second class citizens. They are also narrated as victims of sectarian violence or insurgency: other Iraqis or Afghans threaten them and their families because they belong to a different religious sect or because of the assistance they offer to the invading forces or to foreigners in general.

A widely read and detailed media account that casts translators and in-terpreters in this role appeared in *The New Yorker* in March 2007. Written by George Packer and entitled 'Betrayed: The Iraqis Who Trusted America the Most', this extended narrative of Iraqi interpreters and the treatment they receive from the US military and their compatriots was later turned into an award-winning play under the same title, *Betrayed*, which was staged in New

York and London in 2008. Both the article and the play revolve around the various forms of injustice endured by Iraqi interpreters since the start of the war. In particular, Packer condemns the indifference of the politicians who refuse to give visas to these individuals, whom he identifies as faithful, hard-working allies of the US. He is extremely critical of the military who treat them as second-class citizens, who would not allow them to wear face masks[10] to protect themselves and their families from attacks by insurgents, nor give them accommodation on the base when their lives are being threatened. Despite risking their lives for the US and Britain – for *us* – these interpreters, some of whom "had longed for the arrival of the Americans, expecting them to change their lives" (2007:1), have, according to Packer, consistently been treated as dispensable cannon fodder: the US military "typically provided interpreters with inferior or no body armor" (*ibid.*:5), and contractors like Titan refused to compensate them when they were wounded in roadside explosions (*ibid.*:6). Joshua Foust (2009), reporting for *The New York Times*, tells a similar story of one interpreter in Afghanistan, named Basir Ahmed, who "was fired for 'failing to show up for work' … when he was recuperating from shrapnel wounds to his leg received from a homemade bomb that exploded while he was on patrol with American forces near the Pakistani border".

Interestingly, although media accounts such as these acknowledge that locally hired wartime translators are largely seen by their compatriots as traitors, this element of the narrative is used not to question their ethics or role in the unfolding conflict but to further affirm their status as victims. This unquestioning sympathy may be explained by the fact that many wartime correspondents come to rely on and in some cases develop a close personal relationship with their interpreters. Likewise, a number of military personnel come to form a bond with their interpreters over time and begin to see them as allies who need protection, as victims, rather than as potentially complicit in the violence of war, or even merely as service providers. Media reports tend to romanticize this relationship between correspondent and interpreter or officer and interpreter and to project the interpreter as a helpless protagonist, an in-nocent victim whose cause is being championed by a fair and caring member or members of the *us* group:

> When Lt. Col. Michael Zacchea left Iraq in 2005, he was torn. His yearlong mission to train an Iraqi Army battalion had left him wounded

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[10] *The Washington Times* reported on 17 November 2008 that "[t]he U.S. military has barred Iraqi interpreters working with American troops in Baghdad from wearing ski masks to disguise themselves, prompting some to resign and others to bare their faces even though they fear it could get them killed". Responding to criticism, "Steve Stover, a spokesman for the U.S. military, … expressed appreciation for the service and sacrifice of the inter-preters but said those dissatisfied with the new policy 'can seek alternative employment'" (Londoño 2008).

and emotionally drained, and he was eager to go. But leaving Iraq also meant leaving Jack, his Iraqi interpreter, to face an insurgency that has made a point of brutalizing those who help the Americans.

In their year together the two had, among other things, thwarted an assassination plot and survived the second battle of Falluja. Even before he departed, Colonel Zacchea began working to ensure that Jack would not be left. (Mulcahy 2008:A1, in *The New York Times*)

Other narratives of personal bonding between interpreters and officers or war correspondents include a widely reported story covered in *Weekend America*, among other media outlets, under the title 'Saving Iraqi Interpreters' (King 2009). The lead paragraph describes it as "the story of one soldier who is trying to help his Iraqi colleagues"; the article itself begins as follows:

Soldier Jason Faler and his friend Mustafa had the same mission when they met in Iraq in 2005. They worked long hours gathering intelligence for high level U.S. and Iraqi officials fighting the insurgency. But there was one crucial difference: Faler was an American living in the Green Zone, while Mustafa was an Iraqi living without protection.

"In the midst of the bloody conflict", the narrative goes, Faler and Mustafa "bonded over the fact that both of their wives were pregnant" (*ibid.*), and on his return to the US Faler worked relentlessly until he managed to secure a visa for Mustafa and his family to settle there. Faler later founded the Checkpoint One Foundation, "named after a gate outside the Green Zone where several interpreters have been killed" (*ibid.*), to help Iraqi and Afghan interpreters obtain visas to the US.

The media thus tends to narrate interpreters within the constraints of the dominant public narratives of the conflict, as "a vital link between the international forces and the inhabitants of a country crippled by insurgents and militia", as *The Telegraph* puts it (Snow 2008). These public narratives project local protagonists such as the insurgents in Iraq as extremist and the invading army as moral – whatever the merits or otherwise of individuals within it, and whatever the limitations and (unintended, unforeseen) failings of the enterprise. Casting interpreters in the role of victims is an integral part of this overall narrative, as evident in an exchange on *Face the Facts*, a programme aired on BBC Radio Four on 20 July 2007. At one point, the presenter of the programme says the following (emphasis added):

WAITE (Presenter): The Ministry of Defence told us it only knows of four deaths among interpreters – which had occurred whilst they were working alongside British forces. But, as we'll be reporting, many more interpreters have been murdered on the streets, in their homes as a reprisal. In fact we estimate that as many as 250 Iraqi civilian interpreters who've worked for the coalition have been killed during

> the conflict. *That's almost a hundred more than the death toll among British soldiers*.

The interpreter is clearly positioned here as a member of the coalition, on the *us* side of the conflict. Comparing deaths among interpreters with deaths among soldiers – rather than deaths among Iraqi civilians, or even insurgents – implies that interpreters who work for the coalition belong to the *us* group. Neither the interpreters nor the soldiers are narrated as perpetrators of violence when they suffer casualties, but only as victims and heroes. This positioning of locally hired interpreters within the overall narrative of the war explains why so many US and British journalists and returning soldiers felt it necessary to pressure their governments to grant visas and rights of residence to interpreters who served in Iraq and Afghanistan – rather than to all Iraqis or Afghans who have been displaced by the war. Once depicted in this broad public narrative constructed by the media as victims who are targeted by our enemies because their work is vital to our mission, the way translators and interpreters are narrated by other parties, most notably their compatriots, can then be acknowledged and simultaneously dismissed as unfair, extremist, criminal.

Interviewed on the same radio programme, the General Secretary of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in Britain, Alan Wheatley, continues in the same vein:

> **ALAN WHEATLEY:** The interpreter offers a method of communication that brings trust and understanding in very, very difficult circumstances. They understand the Iraqi culture. An interpreter is also a local knowledge specialist. They're one of the key factors in bringing democracy to these countries.

According to Wheatley, the interpreters' activities are moral because Britain's mission is moral: "bringing democracies to these countries". They allow the UK government to pursue its 'just' agendas against extremist groups – the intransigent, threatening and immoral enemy.

Many members of the interpreters' own society would narrate them quite differently – not as victims but as collaborators, though interestingly this also involves positioning them within the same group of invading soldiers, but with very different implications. As Rafael (2007/2010:388) explains, "Iraqis see in the translator one of their own used against them, a double agent who bears their native language now loaded like a weapon with alien demands". The translator who works for foreign forces is not a victim in this narrative but a villain who deserves the same treatment as the invading army. As already noted, although media reports acknowledge that locally hired interpreters are considered collaborators and villains by their own people, they tend to weave this element within a narrative of insurgency and factionalism in which interpreters are ultimately portrayed as innocent victims of extremism.

Apart from their own compatriots, some foreign media and eyewitness accounts, usually published in alternative rather than mainstream outlets, or in small local newspapers, also narrate translators and interpreters in war zones as villains and perpetrators of violence. These accounts depart significantly from the dominant public narratives of the war and put quite a different spin on the treatment that interpreters receive from what are variously described as 'militia', 'insurgent' or 'resistance' groups in the relevant country, depending on one's narrative location. For example, in a piece published in *Harper's Magazine* in May 2009, Jeff Sharlet tells the story of a Special Forces group based in Samarra, one of the holiest cities in Iraq. The journalist's informant, a US soldier called Humphrey, was assigned to this group, which called themselves 'the Faith element', in 2004. Humphrey describes what happened at one point when the group's compound came under attack and they tried to draw fire away from it (Sharlet 2009):

> As dusk fell, the men prepared four Bradley Fighting Vehicles for a "run and gun" to draw fire away from the compound. Humphrey headed down from the roof to get a briefing. He found his lieutenant, John D. DeGiulio, with a couple of sergeants. They were snickering like schoolboys. They had commissioned the Special Forces interpreter, an Iraqi from Texas, to paint a legend across their Bradley's armor, in giant red Arabic script.
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> "What's it mean?" asked Humphrey.
>
> "Jesus killed Mohammed," one of the men told him. The soldiers guffawed. JESUS KILLED MOHAMMED was about to cruise into the Iraqi night.
>
> The Bradley, a tracked "tank killer" armed with a cannon and missiles – to most eyes, indistinguishable from a tank itself – rolled out. The Iraqi interpreter took to the roof, bullhorn in hand. The sun was setting. Humphrey heard the keen of the call to prayer, then the crackle of the bullhorn with the interpreter answering – in Arabic, then in English for the troops, insulting the prophet. Humphrey's men loved it. ....
>
> "Jesus kill Mohammed!" chanted the interpreter. "Jesus kill Mohammed!"
>
> A head emerged from a window to answer, somebody fired on the roof, and the Special Forces man directed a response from an MK-19 grenade launcher. "Boom," remembers Humphrey. The head and the window and the wall around it disappeared.

This is one of several media and other types of eyewitness reports that narrate translators and interpreters not as victims but as complicit in the violence of war. The involvement of translators contracted by the Titan corporation in the Abu Ghraib scandal, for instance, has received wide coverage. One source of alternative media, *The New Standard*, stated that "a recent military report

recommend[ed] criminal charges be filed against at least two Titan employees contracted as translators at Abu Ghraib prison" (Croke 2004). Another report in *The Independent* quoted one Abu Ghraib prisoner describing part of his ordeal in graphic terms (Buncombe and Huggler 2004):

> Mr Abd said he recalled having his hood removed and being told by the soldiers' Arabic translator to masturbate as he looked at Ms. England. "She was laughing and she put her hands on her breasts," he told the newspaper. "Of course I couldn't do it, so they beat me in the stomach and I fell to the ground. The translator said, 'Do it, do it. It's better than being beaten.' I said 'How can I do it?' So I put my hand on my penis, just pretending."

These and similar reports undermine the narrative of wartime interpreters and translators as victims who deserve our sympathy and protection. Rather than innocent mediators who help bring democracy to countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, they are depicted as villains, as willing participants in heinous crimes.

Ultimately, both victim and villain are abstract, polarized and polarizing categories that obscure important details in the way any war is conducted. But it is precisely because of their polarizing effect that they are so readily embraced by all parties in situations of violent conflict.

2.2   *Friend or foe: trusted ally or security threat*

The victim vs. villain trope reflects one dimension of the way translators and interpreters are narrated in the context of war. Another dimension concerns the issue of trust and its implications for security. Wartime translators and interpreters are variously narrated as trustworthy and reliable, or as a (potential) threat to security. Here, again, they tend to establish different types of relationship with different parties and are narrated accordingly. Palmer, who interviewed seventeen British and French journalists with experience of working in Iraq, reports that all the journalists he interviewed "trusted their fixers,[11] and several made the point that they regularly trusted him/her with their lives" (2007:20). Similarly, individual soldiers who 'bonded' with native interpreters after working with them for some time in Iraq often declare that they trust them completely, without reservation. Referring to the bond between Jason Faler and his interpreter colleague Mustafa discussed above, *Weekend America* (2009) tells us that "[a]s far as Jason Faler was concerned, Mustafa was part of his band of brothers. He trusted Mustafa with his life". These statements, however, tend to be the exception rather than the norm,

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[11] The term 'fixers' is now widely used to refer to interpreters and translators in war zones, especially those working for the media, because of the wide range of duties they undertake to 'fix' things for the journalist.

and to reflect one aspect of the relationship between interpreters and some individuals they work for or with during a war, rather than their relationship with the military and political establishment.

Translators and interpreters, specifically those who are locally recruited and/or ethnically belong to the 'enemy' group, are generally not seen by politicians and the military establishment as trustworthy and reliable interlocutors. Thus, Japanese-born translators were kept out of most code-breaking work during World War II for security reasons (Takeda 2009:54). The American military in Afghanistan "consider interpreters to be necessary evils, and even those who are Americans of Afghan descent are often scorned or mistreated for being too obviously 'different'" (Foust 2009).[12] Iraqi interpreters were accused of passing information on personnel movements to insurgents following the murder of fifty newly trained Iraqi soldiers in October 2004 (Palmer 2007:20). In 2005, when Iraqi interpreters pleaded with John Frese, the then US Embassy regional security officer, to allow them to enter the Green Zone through the priority lane in order to avoid being easy targets for suicide bombers as they stood in long queues, Frese replied that he was not willing to jeopardize Embassy security (Packer 2007:6). As Packer explains, the interpreters "understood that this security did not extend to them – if anything, they were part of the threat" (*ibid.*). Interestingly, Packer notes that interpreters working in Iraq "were distrusted and despised even by officials of the new government that the Americans had helped bring to power" (*ibid.*:10).

Perhaps one reason for this distrust towards locally hired or second-generation interpreters who belong to the 'enemy' community, even those who embrace the invading army and declare their belief in its mission, is their exposure to a range of public narratives that are not sanctioned by the dominant institutions of the *us* group. Given their heritage, their roots in the 'enemy' community, they remain resistant to at least some aspects of the typical public narratives that define the war in the opposite camp. As McNaughton explains with respect to second generation Japanese American interpreters in World War II, "[t]hey had a capacity, all too rare at that time, for seeing their opponents as human beings, rather than animals" (quoted in Takeda 2009:55).

The question of trust is thus very much tied up with the two mutually exclusive categories that define a war – *us* and *them*. Several studies have noted how

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[12] Foust (2009) recounts one event he witnessed in Afghanistan that demonstrates the mistrust with which 'ethnically' different – rather than just locally hired interpreters – are treated: "Earlier this year, I traveled through central Afghanistan as a civilian member of an American Provincial Reconstruction Team. We had a translator – we called her Brooklyn – who had been born and raised in California. During the initial briefing before our convoy set out, however, the team's commander, an Air Force colonel, demanded that Brooklyn leave the briefing area, referring to her as "that local woman." The briefing slides were marked "SECRET," which caused the colonel understandable alarm. Brooklyn, however, had a security clearance allowing her to be present. Perhaps the real problem was that she wore a headscarf, as one would expect a pious Muslim woman to do".

the military typically attempt to recruit interpreters from their own ranks or at least from their own country, the assumption being that 'foreign' interpreters are by definition untrustworthy, and interpreters who are formally part of the *us* group but are of the same origin as the enemy (Iraqi Americans, for instance) are equally untrustworthy. Footitt (in press) talks about the problematics of foreignness in this sense, noting that "how national authorities assure themselves of the loyalty of people who have close associations with the enemy culture revolves around what might be seen as the acceptable compensatory limits within which difference can be safely accommodated". Like Rafael (2009), Footitt shows that foreignness in wartime can be so unsettling that even linguists who belong to the *us* group can be tainted by the mere fact that they speak a foreign language, the very skill for which they are recruited in the first place. Referring to British nationals employed by UK Intelligence as translators at listening posts during World War II, she notes:

> It was almost as if the language abilities which had got them the jobs in the first place also gave them a quasi-foreign identity which the prevailing intelligence and service cultures could find occasionally unsettling. When Freddie Marshall for example first started translating intercepted German messages, he observed that his superiors regarded him, 'with complete disbelief and I was even charged with being a spy'.

One implication of the lack of trust in native wartime translators, including those who belong to the same ethnic group as the enemy, is that their activities have to be closely monitored. War crime tribunals set up by the British in the British Occupation Zone in Germany at the end of World War II had to make use of German nationals, but as Tobia (2009) reports, "Germans could only operate as war crimes interpreters if they were supervised and moderated"; they were never allowed to work alone. Similarly, leaders of language teams at the US Military Intelligence Service Language School during World War II "were secretly instructed to keep an eye on their *Nisei* [second generation Japanese-American] enlisted men while overseas to make sure they were translating and interpreting accurately and not providing misleading or false information" (McNaughton 2006:115; cited in Takeda 2009:54).

From the military's point of view, then, the issue of trust is heavily dependent on ethnicity, one of the major criteria for allocating various actors to the *us* or *them* group, and this applies to interpreters as it does to other groups in society. Subsequently, the interpreters themselves come to reproduce and embody the very categories that define the conflict. Irrespective of their own personal narrative and sense of identity, they come to play specific parts in a preset public narrative enforced by the media, the politicians and the military. Catherine Baker (in press) describes this process clearly in the context of the Bosnian conflict:

> The understanding of the Bosnian conflict as an ethnic or ethno-religious war ... required hiring interpreters from the three different ethnicities in order to liaise with Croat, Serb and Muslim interlocutors. For these purposes, interpreters who had a mixed family background and/or had identified themselves before the war as 'Yugoslav' would find themselves classified into one of three ethnic groups.

These categorizations clearly reproduce and reinforce the narratives of the conflict and give them an immediate material dimension. The military and associated personnel, and the translators and interpreters themselves, thus perpetuate the causes of the conflict by assuming or being forced to play a particular role in the mainstream narrative of the region.

Categorizations of this type, and the mistrust associated with them, can also have important material consequences for the interpreters themselves. Packer (2007:4) describes some of the concrete implications of the US military's distrust towards Iraqi interpreters working in the Green Zone in Baghdad: "When interpreters drove onto the base, their cars were searched, and at the end of their shift they would sometimes find their car doors unlocked or a mirror broken – the cars had been searched again".[13] McNaughton (2006:130, quoted in Takeda 2009:54) reports that the US War Department did not trust second generation Japanese American translators sufficiently to commission them as second lieutenants during World War II, and that the translators found this particularly upsetting because they felt they "met all the qualifications for commissioning but one – race". Catherine Baker (in press) reports that the US army in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo split the linguists into three groups, with three types of security clearance. Category I consisted of locally recruited linguists and Categories II and III of linguists recruited in the US: "Only Category II and III interpreters could wear a US flag on their uniform. The intelligence officers' report also recommended that the security-cleared interpreters should not share living quarters with the locals".

Mistrust of translators, often based on their ethnicity, can also have material consequences for those who are associated with them. Footitt (2009) observes with regards to the recruitment of linguists for listening stations during World War II that when "the authorities considered employing civilian German refugees, or German-speaking foreigners" as interpreters, they had to proceed cautiously because "the security-vetting procedure was long, and stations with non British-born employees might find their security classification down-graded, so that they would not get access to highly secret information".

These practices and the pervasive sense of mistrust that defines their inter-action with several parties during a war must impact on the translators' own

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[13] By contrast, there have been no reports suggesting that interpreters brought into the country from the US, whether contracted or employed by the military, were ever subjected to similar measures.

sense of identity. Irrespective of the range of public narratives to which they may or may not subscribe, they often find that national and ethnic attributes are thrust upon them as core means of identification. As already noted, identity is ruthlessly circumscribed in war zones, with attributes such as ethnicity overriding any dimension that the person being narrated would independently see as more central to their sense of who they are and what they believe in. Translators in this type of context have been reported to experience significant and lasting ruptures. McNaughton (1994) comments that "[w]hether translating captured diaries or radio messages, or interrogating prisoners of war", second generation Japanese Americans working for the US military during World War II "had to confront issues of identity and heritage in ways that most other American soldiers could not even imagine" (quoted in Takeda 2009:55). One of the issues that research needs to address in more detail is precisely the impact on the interpreter of functioning in such a hostile and rigid institutional environment.

Beyond questions of trust based on ethnicity, it is also interesting to note that the criteria used to assess interpreters in general – whether in terms of trustworthiness, allegiance or even competence – tend to reproduce and reinforce the dominant narratives not only of the war but of society at large. Translators and interpreters recruited for British War Crimes Trials in Germany at the end of World War II, for instance, were assessed in terms of their class and upbringing, criteria that carried much weight in British culture at the time (Tobia 2009; see also Tobia in this volume). Footitt (in press) similarly explains that in order to overcome the dilemma of having to recruit linguists/translators who had sufficient understanding of enemy language and culture but could still be trusted by the military and intelligence services, "the authorities relied on the tried and tested networks from which the ruling class had long been drawn. Membership of these networks – public schools, universities, London clubs – was seen as a proxy for institutional loyalty". Ultimately, it would seem, the war is but a microcosm of the larger social and political environment which gives rise to violent conflict in the first place.

3.   Translators and interpreters as chroniclers and narrators of war

Reading what little literature is available on language mediation in war zones makes one thing abundantly clear: native translators and interpreters, those who are hired locally, are invisible but important chroniclers of the war. Both military staff and journalists come and go, spending relatively short periods in a war zone, but the local interpreters remain there throughout the war and provide the continuity of narration that ultimately makes it possible for others to write a history, a chronicle of the events and relationships that define the war. It is local translators and interpreters who help piece the narrative together for the next group of military personnel, journalists, charity workers or peace keepers.

Tom Peter's report in the *Christian Science Monitor* focuses very much on this issue, as evident from its title: 'An Iraqi Interpreter as Chronicler of the War' (Peter 2008). Referring to Iraqi interpreters as "unofficial historians" in the lead paragraph, Peter goes on to explain:

> While many US soldiers have served multiple tours in Iraq, a core group of Iraqi interpreters have worked with the US for almost the entire war. But unlike the soldiers that they work for, they don't leave. Rooted in the conflict, they've become the unofficial chroniclers of the war, watching its ups and downs, and passing along to military newcomers the story of the battle for Iraq.

In addition to the impact they have on shaping the narrative of any war merely by being there and piecing the story together for transient groups and individuals, interpreters and translators exercise considerable influence on the way the war is narrated in other respects. To start with, and despite the mistrust with which they are generally treated, they are paradoxically often given considerable freedom in construing the nature of their task and interpreting the immediate event for their interlocutors. Referring to translating for media personnel in Iraq, Palmer observes that "[i]nterpretation in interviews frequently takes the form of a mixture of summary and translation, rather than word-for-word interpretation" (2007:19). The distinction Palmer draws between interpretation and translation here is obscure; he does not write as a translation studies scholar but as a media specialist with a largely lay person's appreciation of translation issues. Nevertheless, the point he makes is clear. Translators and interpreters are trusted to be selective in what they communicate of the utterances of others. They can give journalists the 'gist' of what others say, as they understand or wish to present it, rather than being obliged to translate their utterances closely. This is also likely to be their *modus operandi* as they mediate daily interactions between military personnel and civilians on the street, and may well reflect, at least occasionally, the way they function in military interrogations and other contexts. The way they perform their task in war zones is thus highly consequential: they have considerable latitude as narrators and can influence the unfolding narrative in ways that are hardly ever acknowledged by their interlocutors.

Translators and interpreters operating in war zones also engage in a multitude of vital tasks that have little to do with the type of linguistic mediation they are ostensibly hired to undertake. Takeda (2009:52), for example, states that second generation Japanese Americans recruited and trained by the US military during World War II "translated captured enemy documents, interrogated Japanese prisoners of war, persuaded Japanese soldiers and civilians to surrender, and participated in propaganda activities". The combination of considerable latitude in the way they translate utterances and the wide range of tasks in which they engage allows them to shape the narrative of the

war by exercising different types of gatekeeping. One form of gatekeeping they exercise involves suppressing the personal narratives of those being interviewed. For example, Jacquemet (2005/2010) reports how interpreters working with personnel from the UN High Commission on Refugees on the border of Albania in 2000 routinely prevented applicants from telling their own stories, the idea being that they were not there to recount what happened to them personally but to answer questions posed by the case worker and interpreter in order to satisfy the institution that they are legitimate refugees. All those suppressed personal narratives, which if told would have been part of the record, could have influenced the larger narrative of the conflict, at least to some extent. They could have filtered into some of the reporting, whether scholarly or journalistic, that feeds into the public's understanding of the conflict. As it is, they were simply lost.

Palmer's study reveals a different pattern of gatekeeping. He explains that "the fixer has the language skills and the contacts necessary to arrange an interview, and this may extend to being better able than the western journalist to select the exact individual who best corresponds to the journalistic demands of the situation" (2007:19). This means that the fixer also has the freedom to *deselect* potential interviewees. Indeed, not only interviewees, but also venues. The fixer, Palmer continues, is "better able than a westerner to assess whether going to a particular place in order to get material is likely to be possible, or excessively dangerous" (*ibid.*). Given that the public narratives of any war are predominantly elaborated by the media, it is remarkable that this type of gatekeeping, which is routinely exercised by interpreters and translators in various war zones, remains largely unacknowledged and its implications so far unexamined.

Journalists interviewed by Palmer seem aware of the significant role played by interpreters in shaping their understanding of the war. They noted, for instance, that "constant use of a single fixer would lead to the fixer either intentionally or otherwise 'forming the horizon' of the journalist through a consistent pattern of interpretation of events and of contacts with the local population" (*ibid.*:22). Perhaps because of the nature of their work, journalists are more likely to be aware of these issues than military personnel, but this type of gatekeeping is not restricted to the media. Askew (2009) notes a similar pattern in the use of linguists by military personnel in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

> In a small office where the only local employees were linguists they were expected to fulfil the role of 'fixer' in the sense of knowing who to contact, arranging meetings and sorting out problems by themselves rather than as a linguistic intermediary.

Apart from blocking personal narratives and acting as gatekeepers in a variety of respects, there is yet another sense in which interpreters exercise indirect influence on the way the war is narrated. Because local interpreters are

themselves firmly embedded in the conflict and feature as protagonists in their own right in the unfolding narrative of the war, they inevitably reproduce and strengthen particular narrative takes on the conflict. For example, interpreters who worked for the journalists interviewed by Palmer assessed security risks very differently. Some said they could not enter Sunni areas because they were Shi'a, while others maintained that this was not a problem. The way they behaved will have inevitably influenced the narratives elaborated by the journalists in two ways. First, journalists whose interpreters could not or would not go into Sunni or Shi'a areas, as the case may be, will have had a restricted range of contacts to interview, and hence a more 'homogenous' range of narratives to tap into. Secondly, the willingness or otherwise of the interpreters to cross sectarian boundaries will have either asserted or undermined the centrality of the sectarian divide as a major element in the Iraq narrative in the minds of the relevant reporters; this, it is reasonable to assume, must have filtered into their reporting in some way.

A final sense in which translators and interpreters influence the public narratives of the war has to do with their own command of the languages involved and their professional experience. Many of the individuals who provide translation and interpreting services in war zones may have no more than a basic command of the language of their employers (whether military or media personnel) and little or no experience as translators or interpreters, having never worked in this capacity before the outbreak of war in their region.[14] They take up translation work perhaps out of desperation, because it pays relatively well at a time of intense crisis, when most members of the local population are lucky to find any work at all. Palmer found that many of the 'fixers' who provided interpreting for French journalists in Iraq were ex-military, and some were former employees of the Ministry of Information. Fixers working for UK journalists were typically ex-students or professionals: teachers, doctors, non-official tour guides. Catherine Baker (in press) similarly mentions a doctor who worked as an interpreter for the British general Michael Rose in Bosnia-Herzegovina; her most recent interviews reveal that a large number of the interpreters who worked in the same zone were engineers or engineering students (personal communication). But even linguists who are recruited and trained by the military and other foreign organizations at home (i.e. in the US, Britain, etc.) often have limited proficiency in the language

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[14] The University of Geneva's École de traduction et d'Interprétation – in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Labour Organization and the Graduate Institute of Development Studies – has now launched an initiative to offer online training to interpreters and translators in war zones via their Virtualinstitue e-learning platform. The title of the project is 'Interpreting in Zones of Crisis and War'. The project team recognizes that most interpreters working in war and crisis zones have never been trained in this capacity. See http://www.ruig-gian.org/research/projects/project. php?ID=141 (accessed 16 March 2010).

of the 'enemy', not to mention translation-specific skills or experience. Takeda (2009:53), for instance, reports that "[a]fter one year of intensive training" in the US during World War II, "graduates were commissioned regardless of their Japanese proficiency … and assigned to work in interrogation, code-breaking, translation, interpreting and other language-related capacities". Without distinguishing between locally hired and foreign translators, Palmer (2007:20) asserts that "[m]ost of the people used as interpreters in Iraq do not meet the normal standards of professional competence of trained interpreters".

This is a serious issue given the role that translators and interpreters play in narrating the conflict. How reliable can they be as narrators – not in terms of loyalty or trustworthiness, but in terms of the ability to articulate the kind of nuances and shades of meaning that are so vital to effective narration, especially in a tense and conflictual context – if all they have is a basic command of the language and little or no experience of language mediation? The journalists interviewed by Palmer seemed content with using interpreters to obtain basic information, for example on where someone was when an explosion took place, and felt that they could build the rest of the picture themselves. But if the linguistic skills of those acting as interpreters and translators in war zones are so limited, and what they are able to convey so restricted to basic information, the risk is that they may well end up contributing to the elaboration of the type of streamlined, homogenizing narratives that typically fuel all conflicts. Effective narration cannot generally bypass language, and indeed Palmer notes that many of the journalists he interviewed were aware that "lack of linguistic competence led to lack of understanding of the local culture, with all its associated risks of not understanding what is said when it is translated, and even not understanding events and situations" (*ibid.*:21). There is thus a serious issue to be addressed here, one that concerns reliability of narration – not in terms of interpreters' ethnicity or nationality, not in terms of trust or security, not in terms of gatekeeping or the way they position themselves as protagonists in the conflict, but in terms of their sheer ability to articulate narratives of the war in ways that reflect the complexities of the ongoing conflict.

4. Concluding remarks

Translators and interpreters play a significant role in shaping the narratives, and hence the events, that define any war. Various parties need and fear them, trust or mistrust them, respect or despise them. Depending on various factors, including their ethnicity, they are narrated as victims or as villains, as trustworthy allies or security risks. They 'bond' with individual journalists, army officers and other personnel and come to win their sympathy and respect. At the same time, they are dismissed by the military and political establishment as a necessary evil, an undifferentiated menace. By and large, the military and politicians treat locally hired interpreters as cannon fodder and refuse them basic protection.

However they are narrated, and however they wish to narrate themselves and the ongoing conflict, translators and interpreters cannot escape the violence of war. They are made to fit into the dominant accounts of the war irrespective of what they themselves believe and how they wish to interpret the events in which they are embedded. They find themselves being defined in terms of their ethnicity or religious affiliation. They have to perform tasks that strain their loyalties and disrupt their sense of identity. Footitt (in press) mentions one translator working for the intelligence services during World War II who "remembered her feelings of ambivalence as she warned Spitfire and Hurricane crews to prepare for incoming Messerschmitts – 'It seemed so stupid to me,' she explained, 'as I also had German friends on the enemy side and to be fighting one's friends was hard to come to terms with'". The violence and hysteria of war leave no one untouched, including translators and interpreters. In situations of intense conflict, translation becomes a war zone in its own right (Stahuljak 2009/2010:352, 398).

At the same time, translators play an extremely significant if largely unacknowledged role in narrating any war. They act as "proxy journalists" (Palmer 2007), selecting and deselecting interviewees and venues, and in some cases carrying out the interviews themselves. They suppress personal narratives that might disrupt institutional agendas or complicate the story of the war as the military or peacekeeping forces wish to narrate it. They reinforce or undermine sectarian and ethnic divides by merely behaving according to their own understanding of events. They 'interpret' the gist of what their interlocutors say rather than translate their utterances closely, thus exercising considerable latitude in shaping the unfolding narrative. Whatever their own experience and understanding of events, so much ultimately rests on their skill in communicating the nuances of what is said and what they witness of the events of war – a skill that many reports suggest is beyond the grasp of at least some interpreters working in battle zones.

The story of war, like any story, has multiple narrators who also often feature as protagonists in the story and are themselves cast by other interlocutors in different roles. The roles in which interpreters and translators are cast are rigidly defined and mutually exclusive: victim or villain, friend or foe. Their own actions – linguistic and non-linguistic – are partly constrained by the roles in which they are cast and simultaneously participate in shaping the narrative of the war as it unfolds. How they are narrated and how they themselves narrate the war are thus highly interdependent and cannot be understood in isolation from the overall narrative of the war.

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