

The Discourse of Intercultural Translation

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INTRODUCTION

By definition, intercultural communication involves contact, mostly through language, between two or more different, even opposing, cultures. On the one hand, this contact takes place in the same culture, between mini-cultures, so to speak, (feminist and non-feminist camps, pro-life and pro-choice groups, pro-war and antiwar policies, racist and anti-racist views, and many other "pro" and "anti" groups within the same culture/society). This situation may be defined as *intracultural* communication, whereby the tensions between the differing groups are manifested through different modes of representation and different discourses that may easily lead to violence. Contact between different cultures, as separate nations or societies, on the other hand, is the prime domain of *intercultural* communication.

While a breakdown in intracultural communication may lead to cracks in a particular culture (society) – civil wars, for example – societies tend to negate, even oppress, their internal differences when dealing with other nations or cultures. In such cases, the *inter* in *intercultural communication* assumes a particularly important dimension in demarcating difference and yielding a space between "us" and "them," the other. In terms of intercultural contact, one obvious tool, albeit marginalized in mainstream academia, has been translation: intercultural communication par excellence.

Particularly between civilizationally and power-unequally related cultures, intercultural translation demonstrates the need for the interface of many humanities and social sciences disciplines in order to analyse the complex process inherent in interlingual communication across cultures. The complex process stems from the carrying-over of specific cultural products (texts) to receivers that have at their disposal an established system of representation with its own norms for the production and consumption of texts. This system ultimately evolves into a *master discourse* through which identity, similarity, and difference are identified, negotiated, accepted, and/or resisted.

Drawing primarily on textual import from the Arab and Islamic worlds, the purpose of this article is to examine how a culturally defined *master discourse*, with its pressures, particularly *centripetal* ones, affects translation as a means of intercultural communication. In a rapidly globalized world, a *master discourse* emerges as the all-powerful in its hegemonic discursive norms, naturally leading to desperate and often violent measures from "other" equally self-perceived master discourses.

THE MASTER DISCOURSE OF INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION

By definition, translating involves the transporting (carrying-over) of languages and their associated cultures to "foreign" receivers. These receivers have at their disposal established systems of representation with norms and conventions for production and consumption of meanings vis-à-vis people, objects and events. These systems ultimately yield a master discourse through which identity and difference are marked and within which translating is carried out.

In this, the two fundamental components of translation are culture and language. Because it brings the two together, translation is by necessity a multifaceted, multi-problematic process with different manifestations in different cultures of the world. In general terms, culture can be defined as shared knowledge: what the members of a particular community ought to know to act and react in particular ways and interpret their experience, including contact with other cultures, in distinctive ways. Culture then involves the totality of attitudes towards the world, towards events, and towards other cultures and peoples, and the manner in which the attitudes are mediated (cf. Hatim, 2001; Fairclough, 1995). In other words, culture refers to beliefs and value systems tacitly assumed to be collectively shared by particular social groups and to the positions taken by producers and receivers of texts, including translations, during the mediation process facilitated by language, the system that offers its users the tools to realize their culture. The intrinsic relationship between culture and language is expressed by Bassnett (1998a: 81) in the following simple way: "Try as I may, I cannot take language out of culture or culture out of language."

The norms of producing, classifying, interpreting, and circulating texts within the contexts of one culture tend to remain in force when approaching texts transplanted through translation from other cultural contexts. As with native texts, the reception process of translated texts is determined more by the shared knowledge of the translating culture than by what the translated texts themselves contain. Overall, cultures remain by and large attached to and determined by their past(s). Edward Said (1993: 1) succinctly argues:

Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions – about influence, about blame and judgement, about present actualities and future priorities.

When cultures cross and mingle through translation, pasts clash and a struggle for power and influence becomes inevitable. Old formulations and modes of mediation appear on the surface, and their realization is made possible by language, the data bank of discursive options. The use of language as discourse is invested with ideologies in the production, circulation, and/or challenging of existing stereotypes or power relationships between communities of the same language or communities with different languages. Within such a context, language is seen as a systematic and consistent body of representations, and it is evident that the "language used is representing a given social practice from a particular point of view" (Fairclough, 1995: 56).

In intercultural communication, the characterization of language use as such leads to the production of a master discourse through which users establish hierarchies of meaning

(chains of signs) with particular modes of representation. But a master discourse does not necessarily reflect reality; instead, it makes use of language in such a way that a given reality is constructed as Bakhtin argues: “The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher ... It is a prior discourse” (cited in Conklin, 1997: 239). According to Bakhtin, two types of pressure always affect discourse: *centripetal* and *centrifugal* (1994). Centripetal pressures “follow from the need, in producing a text, to draw upon given conventions, of two main classes; a language, and an order of discourse – that is, a historically particular structuring of discursive (text-producing) practices” (Fairclough, 1995: 7). Centrifugal pressures on discourse relate generally to the discursive choices to serve particular situations. Fairclough expounds: “Centrifugal pressures come from the specificity of particular situations of text-production” (*ibid.*: 7) Of the two types, centripetal pressures are more ideologically oriented and tend to map the way out for decisions to deal with the centrifugal ones.

Through adherence to the requirements and constraints of the centripetal pressures of a master discourse, source texts, through translation, become situated into ways of representation ingrained in the shared experience and institutional norms of the translating community or communities (self, selves, us). Source texts and their associated peoples are transformed from certain specific signs into signs whose typifications translators and others involved in the translation enterprise claim to know. As the antonym of the self (the translating culture), the other (them, the translated culture) is used to refer to all that the self perceives as mildly or radically different. Historically, the other and otherness have been feared, rather than appreciated, with the possible exception of the phenomenon of exoticism, wherein the other, though often misunderstood and misrepresented, is perceived as strange but at the same time strangely “attractive” (cf. O’Barr, 1994).

In intercultural contacts through translation, otherness is measured according to a scale of possibilities within a master discourse: when the other is feared, the lexical strategies (centrifugal pressures) one expects are those that realize hierarchy, subordination and dominance. Otherness can and often does lead to the establishment of stereotypes, which usually come accompanied by existing representations that reinforce the ideas behind them. Some critics argue that stereotypes are as complex, ambivalent, contradictory modes of representation, and as “anxious as they are assertive,” and tend to dehumanise certain groups, making it easier for those formulating and using the stereotypes to control, appropriate and subvert the stereotyped other while minimising the complex web of “emotions of guilt and shame” (Bhabha, 1994). The representation of others through translation is a powerful strategy of exclusion used by a self as normal and moral (Said, 1995). This exclusion is also accompanied by an including process of some accepted members from the other as long as these accepted individuals adopt and adapt to the underlying master discourse and its associated representational system and ideology of the accepting self (cf. Faiq, 2000a).

Approached from this perspective, translation yields sites for examining a myriad of intercultural issues: race, gender, (post-) colonialism, publishing policies, censorship, and otherness, whereby all parties involved in the translation enterprise tend to assume that their readers expect exotic and bizarre aspects in foreign lands and peoples. In this regard, Lawrence Venuti (1998: 97) suggests:

[T]ranslation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures. The selection of foreign texts and the development of translation strategies

can establish peculiarly domestic canons for foreign literatures, canons that conform to domestic aesthetic values and therefore reveal exclusions and admissions, centres and peripheries that deviate from those current in the foreign language.

Postulating the concepts of *domestication* and *foreignization*, Venuti further argues that the Anglo-American translation tradition, in particular, has had a normalizing and naturalizing effect. Such an effect has deprived producers from translated cultures of their voice and culminated in the re-expression of foreign cultural values in terms of what is familiar to the "dominant Western culture." Venuti discusses the linguistic hegemony of English in terms of the *invisibility* of the translator. Invisibility is apparent when translations yield fluent readability and feel like originals rather than translations. Invisibility requires a great deal of manipulation on the part of the translator because: "The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (Venuti, 1995: 2). Invisible translators, accordingly, produce *transparent* translations, which mirror the master discourse of the translating culture. Related to invisibility is the issue of foreignizing which is "a strategic cultural intervention in the current state of world affairs, pitched against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges in which they engage their global others" (ibid.: 20).

Along similar lines, Bassnett & Trivedi (1999: 2) summarize the far-reaching ramifications as well as the complexities inherent in translation as intercultural communication:

[T]ranslation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in the process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with signification at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems.

An example of such practices is given by Mason (1994) and used by Venuti (1998) to represent the negative consequences of translation. Mason refers to the April 1990 monthly magazine, *Courier*, published by UNESCO to promote intercultural understanding. In this issue an article appeared in both the Spanish and English editions of the magazine. The article deals with the history of the Mexican peoples. For Mason and Venuti, the problem lies in the English translation, which represents pre-Columbus Mexicans as inferior, for example, "antiguos mexicanos" (ancient Mexicans) became "Indians." According to Mason and Venuti, such a translation represents "ideological slanting" against a particular people. I would personally posit that translators may not have been entirely aware of the ideological slanting, but worked rather, perhaps unwittingly, within the demands of the master discourse with which they were brought up and which formed their frame of reference when dealing with other cultures, in this case the ancient Mexicans. In other words, the centripetal pressures of the master discourse seemed to have guided the translation.

... AND THE CASE OF ARABIC

Particularly in the 1980s, the view of culture modelling through translation ushered in questions that cannot be adequately answered by the conventionalised notions of

equivalence, accuracy, and fidelity. The focus has shifted from (un)translatability to the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of translation. In modern times, the treatment of translation from such an angle of vision refers primarily to the Western European and American hegemonic consideration of all that is other and the effects of such a treatment on translating the cultural heritage of this other.

Translation from Arabic has generally suffered from influences of the master discourses of the translating cultures in terms of invisibility, appropriation, subversion, and manipulation. Such a situation not only distorts original texts but also leads to the influencing of target readers. Carbonell (1996), for example, reports that, in his comments on Burton's translation of the *Arabian Nights*, Byron Farwell wrote:

The great charm of Burton's translation, viewed as literature, lies in the veil of romance and exoticism he cast over the entire work. He tried hard to retain the flavour of oriental quaintness and naïveté of the medieval Arab by writing as the Arab would have written in English. (cited in Carbonell, 1996: 80)

Such views of translation and, by extension, of readers, lead to translations that imply the production of subverted texts at all levels, "not only the source text, but also the target context experience the alteration infused by the translation process when their deeper implications are thus revealed" (Carbonell, 1996: 93). This alteration ultimately leads to manipulations of the target text through the process of translation, thus regulating, and/or satisfying and agreeing with, the expected response from the readers, given the pressures of the master discourse through which Arab and Islamic culture (s) are perceived prior to the translation activity itself.

Starting from the premise that cultural and translation studies deal with the conditions of knowledge production in one culture and the way this knowledge is interpreted and relocated according to knowledge production in another culture, it is not too difficult to lament the situation of translating Arabic works into mainstream Western languages. This is because, historically, the perception of the Arab and Islamic worlds has been regulated by *topos* (singular: *topoi*): primary stereotypes which constitute reservoirs of ideas and core images (preserved in the collective memory of the translating cultures,) from which most representations and translations generate their specific discourse features (Karim, 1997). Generally, Arabs and Muslims have been – and still are – seen as trouble-makers and sources of nuisance for the Western world, which finds itself time and again having to intervene to solve their problems and bickering. Particularly in such a context, translation

... becomes a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity. The context is one of contested stories attempting to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages. (Niranjana, 1992: 1)

Translation from Arabic has followed representational strategies within an established framework of institutions with its own vocabulary and scripts (Said, 1993), that is, a particular master discourse and its centripetal pressures. In this framework of relations of power and knowledge, the West, satisfied and content with its own representations, has not deemed it necessary to appreciate and know fully, through translation, the literatures and respective cultures (with their differences and heterogeneity) of Arabs and Muslims. (There are, of

course, exceptions but they do not affect mainstream trends.) Reporting on personal experience of translating contemporary Arabic literature into English, Peter Clark (1997: 109) writes:

... I wanted ... to translate a volume of contemporary Syrian literature. I ... thought the work of 'Abd al-Salam al-'Ujaili was very good and well worth putting into English. 'Ujaili is a doctor in his seventies who has written poetry, criticism, novels and short stories. In particular his short stories are outstanding. Many are located in the Euphrates valley and depict the tensions of individuals coping with politicisation and the omnipotent state ... I proposed to my British publisher a volume of 'Ujaili's short stories. The editor said, "There are three things wrong with the idea. He's male. He's old and he writes short stories. Can you find a young female novelist?" Well, I looked into women's literature and did translate a novel by a woman writer even though she was and is in her eighties.

This account shows that translation from Arabic into mainstream European languages is essentially still seen as an exotic voyage carried out through a weighty component of representation in the target culture, in which the objective knowledge of the source culture is substantially altered by dialectic of attraction and repulsion. The *Arabian Nights* (a title preferred for its exotic and salacious resonance to the original *A Thousand and One Nights*), for instance, is more famous in the West than in the Arab East. The exotic, and often distorted, view of the Arab and Islamic worlds has led to a situation where the proportion of books written about this world in Western languages is greatly disproportionate to the small number of books translated from Arabic, a situation that may have contributed to the low status of translation in the Arab world (Faiq, 2000b). Available statistics show that, of all translations worldwide for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984, the numbers of translations from Arabic into English were 298, 322, and 536, respectively. Compared with translations from Spanish or Hungarian, or even Classical Greek and Latin, one can easily notice the insignificance of the number of translations from Arabic. Translations from these three sources were 715, 847, 839; 703, 665, 679; and 839, 1116, 1035; for the three years, respectively (cf. Venuti, 1995). On this situation, Edward Said (1995: 97) aptly remarks:

For all the major world literatures, Arabic remains relatively unknown and unread in the West, for reasons that are unique, even remarkable, at a time when tastes here for the non-European are more developed than ever before and, even more compelling, contemporary Arabic literature is at a particularly interesting juncture.

Despite interesting junctures and despite excellent literary works and a Nobel Prize in literature (awarded to the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz in 1988), there seems to be a tacit embargo, except for texts that reiterate the usual clichés about "Islam, violence, sensuality, and so forth" (Said, 1995: 99). In intercultural discourse of translation, the Arab/Islamic world has become a homogeneous sign invisibly constructed, defined and *toposed*, so to speak. This, in turn, ultimately leads to the conclusion that translation also becomes the site of conflictual relationships of power and struggle between the cultures being translated and those doing the translating, with potentially dire consequences and accusations

and counteraccusations of misrepresentation and subversion (events of the first three years of this century attest to this).

Translating from Arabic, with specific traditions for the production, reception and circulation of texts, into "fixed texts" has meant shifting the *chosen* Arabic texts into mainstream world culture. World culture means, of course, the western canons of production that also stand as signs of universalism and humanism. And as Talal Asad (1995: 331) argues, texts from the other can be accepted by the self, as long as they conform to existing norms of the master discourse expected and accepted by the self's readers: "Modern world culture has no difficulty in accommodating unstable signs and domesticated exotica, so long as neither conflicts radically with systems of profit."

The centric assumptions about others – races, nationalities, literatures – have provided, in the West, the site for critiques of representations, language, and ideological control towards writers from the Arab/Islamic worlds. These assumptions return time and again to haunt the production, reception and circulation of Arabic texts, and in turn complicate the issue of translation. Translation from Arabic still proceeds along a familiar and established master discourse whereby

... stereotyping, strategies of signification and power: the network in which a culture is fashioned does appear as a texture of signs linked by endless connotations and denotations, a meaning system of inextricable complexity that is reflected, developed and recorded in the multifarious act of writing. (Carbonell, 1996: 81)

Some cases in point follow. In his translation of Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Yawma qutila z-za'iim* (*The Day the Leader was Assassinated*) into French, André Miquel, for example, explains in his foreword that he kept footnotes to the very minimum. Yet, Jacquemond (1992) counted 54 footnotes in a translation of 77 pages. What transpires is that the translator-cum-orientalist expert assumes total ignorance on the part of readers, and proceeds to guide them through assumed authoritative knowledge of an unfathomable world where backwardness and the assassination of peacemakers are the norms. But this would be acceptable compared with Edward Fitzgerald's infamous comment on the liberties he had allowed himself to take with his version of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam*, in which he asserted that such texts "really need a little art to shape them" (Bassnett, 1998b). Concerning these same issues, Thomas (1998: 104-5) examines the general relationship between the Arab world and the West and the politics behind the awarding of the Nobel Prize in literature to Naguib Mahfouz:

Arab culture ... vis-à-vis the West, has largely been positioned through the selection of translation material. The prevailing view of Arab culture as a mixture of the quaint, the barbarously primitive and the comfortably dependent, is to a large degree a product of those texts which have been selected for translation. ... In this regard it is interesting to consider Naguib Mahfouz – the only Arab writer to have been given the full western seal of approval through his winning of the Nobel Prize. He worked as a censor throughout the Nasser and Sadat eras, eras not noted for liberal attitudes to the arts or critical awareness. He also appeared on Israeli television on a number of occasions supporting a pro-western position. Despite what one may think of the literary merits of his work ... the fact remains that nearly all of his work has been

translated, which compares very favourably with translations of other Arab writers who have been much more critical of the West.

Arabic literary texts are rarely chosen for translation for their innovative approaches or for their socio-political perspectives. Rather, texts chosen are recognizable as conforming to the master discourse of writing about and representing Arabs, Arab culture and Islam. This situation has led many Arab writers to write in and for translation. Discussing the discursive strategies of the female Arab writer Hanan al-Shaykh in her novel *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, Dallal (1998: 8) appropriately comments:

That *Women of Sand and Myrrh* was written specifically for English-speaking audiences is clear in the opening chapter. References specific to Western culture which would be unfamiliar to Arabs go unexplained, whereas references to customs or practices specific to Arab contexts are consistently accompanied by explanations. Suha explains why “the [imported] soft toys and dolls had all been destroyed” by the authorities: “every one that was meant to be a human being or animal or bird [was confiscated] since it was not permissible to produce distortions of God’s creatures”. This explanation of a particular interpretation of Islam (or outright fabrication, as most Arab Muslims would believe) used by the Gulf regimes would need no explanation for Arab audiences. However, the narrators’ references to “Barbie dolls and Snoopies and Woodstocks” would not be recognized by most in the Arab world, and yet are left without explanation.

With regards to the representational norms of Arabs/Islam in the West, Karim (1997) provides striking examples of headlines in American magazines and newspapers across the political spectrum. The examples demonstrate adherence to a master discourse on Arabs and Islam, a discourse that usually portrays the approximately one billion Arabs and Muslims of the world as a monolith. Only a basic understanding of semantics is required to infer the ultimate aim of the structures:

Muslim Rage, An Angry Faith, Dark Side of Islam, The Vatican’s Dark Marriage to Islam, The Crescent of Crisis, Moslems Battle Police in Malaysia Bloodbath, Egyptian Police [and] Moslems Clash, Algerian Muslims Seek Power, Islamic Death Threat, Islamic Suicide Mission, Islamic Powder Keg

I have pointed out above that the self (the translating culture) tends to accept some individuals from the other (the translated culture) as long as they do not challenge the self’s master discourse and its norms of handling and representing the other. With regard to translation from and writing about the Arab World and Islam, the reception of Arabs and Muslims writing in Western languages, particularly English and French, has depended on the extent to which these authors adapt to and adopt existing norms of translating from and representing the Arab World and Islam. Those Arab and Muslim authors in Western languages who received attention from academic and critics as well as the general readership and were awarded prestigious prizes generally produce texts that conform both to dominant representations of Arabic culture and society and to dominant ideological, moral, and aesthetic values of the translating culture. Tahar Ben Jelloun, the most celebrated Arab writer

in French, seems particularly to have opted to conform to both conditions. In his *La Nuit Sacrée* (1987), for which he was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1987 and which is said to have sold in millions and translated into many languages, as well as in his other writings, Ben Jelloun inhabits the space of the *délire*, *fantasmes*, and *fabulation*; and his obsession with sex has become his trademark. What Ben Jelloun does in his prize-winning text is to give a number of accounts of fantasy, sex, irrationality, and mental diseases: the very accounts used in orientalist texts to describe the Arabs and Islam. Building on certain concepts of Islamic mysticism, albeit ignoring their historical contexts, Ben Jelloun produces a text that sits comfortably within the domain of the master discourse of the French culture vis-à-vis Arabs and Islam. Such images are precisely what mainstream orientalist discourse maintains in its depiction of the Arabs and Islam; precisely what Bobby Sayyid (1997: 1) describes:

Ghosts are the remains of the dead. They are echoes of former times and former lives: those who have died but still remain, hovering between erasure of the past and the indelibility of the present -- creatures out of time. Muslims too, it seems, are often thought to be out of time: throwbacks to medieval civilizations who are caught in the grind and glow of 'our' modern culture. It is sometimes said that Muslims belong to cultures and societies that are moribund and have no vitality -- no life of their own. Like ghosts they remain with us, haunting the present.

Instead of presenting an exploration of the relationships between opposites: racial, religious, social and linguistic, or a critique of 1980s society in Morocco – as an Arab-Islamic society – Ben Jelloun's *La Nuit Sacrée* merely affirms its status as a Western text, but written by a non-Westerner: an oriental. Emanating from the other, this is a gratifying situation, as Jacquemond (1997: 157) writes:

And the 'documents' are all the better received since they confirm at the same time the otherness of the other culture (backward, authoritarian...) and the representation French culture bestows on itself (modern, democratic...) – confirmation all the more gratifying since it stems from the other. [*Author's translation from the French*]

Another fitting example is the book *Autumn of Fury*, written in English by Heikal (1983). Like Ben Jelloun's, this text represents an instance of translation giving the English-language readers what they are generally familiar with as represented and stereotyped through the politics and ideologies of the power dictated by the other: Anglo-American culture, invisibility, subversion, or appropriation that is the master discourse of representation and translation. In this respect, the figure of the author and/or translator appears as authority to the unknown: Arab politics and culture, an exotic yet violent and bloodthirsty East (cf. Faiq, 2001).

CONCLUSION

The complexities of intercultural communication notwithstanding, the ethics of translation, in theory, postulates that it should lead to a rapprochement between the *au-delà* (Bhabha, 1994: 1), the Arab/Muslim World for our purpose here, and the Western World, as the translator of this *au-delà*. And, since it covers the space-between, the *inter* in *intercultural translation* could render the encounter less painful, less conflictual, less antagonistic, and less

bloody. To achieve such a goal, translation traffic from Arabic into Western languages, particularly English and French, as well as translation from these languages into Arabic, needs to revisit, reappraise, and recast the master discourse of translation and its centripetal pressures. But this is easier said than done. The cultural dimension of translation and the master discourse that underlies any intercultural translating activity generally lead to the reconstruction of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist translation in the target culture, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts. Regarding this dimension of translation, Venuti (1996: 196) aptly writes:

Whatever difference the translation conveys is now imprinted by the target-language culture, assimilated to its positions of intelligibility, its canons and taboos, its codes and ideologies. The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an imperialist appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political.

In this context and concerning the relationship between Arabic and Islam and the West (Europe and North America), the last two decades of the 20th century and the first three years of the new century (particularly after the events of 11 September 2001 in New York), have seen an unprecedented use and abuse of stereotypes of Arabs and Islam. The same old story has been repeated over and over again, often with damaging consequences, injecting the centripetal pressures of the existing master discourse with more potency, often deadly. But this has also led to the rise of counter-discourses in the translated culture.

There have been genuine attempts by many Western journalists and intellectuals to cut through stereotypical portrayals of the Arabs and Islam and to challenge and disturb the master discourse and its norms for translation from Arabic and writing about the Arabs and Islam, but they are usually overwhelmed by the ubiquity of the dominant discourse that provides the frames within which representations take place. A better understanding of the ways in which discourses operate might contribute to more efficient self-monitoring on the part of producers of master discourses, and might lead to making translation a true process of intercultural understanding rather than reinforcing existing representations and images of one culture to and for another. This can be achieved through a cross-cultural appraisal of the discourses underlying translation and translating with a view to better understanding the issues of identity (self and other), the translation enterprise (patronage, agencies, translators), and norms and pressures of representation (the master discourse). If we are to examine the process of intercultural communication through translation, we ought to carefully consider the culture of translation, since it ultimately informs and shapes the translation of culture. An ethical negotiation of the *inter* in *intercultural communication* may lead to a celebration of cultural differences, particularly through translation.

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