

## Translating Psychological Space in Autobiographical Writing

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The study of memory, individual or collective, draws on a variety of disciplines, but it was not until this century that contributions such as those collected in the 2014 special issue of *Translation and Literature* titled *Holocaust Testimony and Translation* started to address the significant role translation plays in the expression, preservation, and transmission of memory, particularly in relation to Holocaust Studies.<sup>1</sup> As a result of global migration, intricate links between memory and translation are also found in present-day urban environments, as well as historically, as Sherry Simon's work has examined.<sup>2</sup> Siobhan Brownlie broadens the intersection between Memory Studies and Translation Studies by mapping different types of memory conceptualized in Memory Studies onto the study of translation.<sup>3</sup> To add to this developing intersectional field of memory and translation, this article proposes an approach to understanding the translation of psychological space in autobiographical writing. 'Psychological space' is used here as a working term to define the space inhabited by the autobiographical 'I' as manifested in narrative.

If language is the material with which a narrative is built, translating into another language inevitably involves a change in that material. This article investigates some features of remembering in autobiographical writing, as embedded in and facilitated by the characteristics of the language in which it is written. It suggests that the changes brought about through translation re-mould psychological space in autobiographical writing. The Chinese translation of Martin Amis' memoir *Experience* is used as a case study. Amis' writerly awareness and stylistic demonstration of self, time, and narrative situatedness provide an example to explain psychological space in autobiographical writing and the effects translation has on it.

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No autobiographical writing is possible without remembering. Developments in psychology, particularly cognitive psychology and cultural psychology, have long called into question the idea of memory as storage of the past. According to Daniel Schacter, memory is ‘a neural network [which] combines information in the present environment with patterns that have been stored in the past, and the resulting mixture of the two is what the network remembers’.<sup>4</sup> Frederic Bartlett, the psychologist who first advanced the reconstructive theory of memory, describes remembering as a more generative and dynamic process: it is ‘not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form.’<sup>5</sup> Bartlett’s definition puts the emphasis on the remembering subject, and identifies its agentive nature in relation to the remembered object. In this sense, memory is not the same as the object in its pristine form, but an output created in the process of remembering.

The reconstructive theory of memory confirms two points about remembering. First, the process naturally involves the present in which remembering is conducted. In other words, time, place, and other contextual factors at the point of remembering become part of the remembered past. Secondly, the formulation ‘imaginative reconstruction, or construction’ emphasizes that remembering may not reproduce a linearity of remembered events following the original timeline. It usually revolves around the most salient events. Mark Freeman explains how remembering as imaginative reconstruction works: ‘through the prism of my present world – I am both interpreting and creating, finding and making, at the same time: I discover a possible relationship between remembered events through imagining the possibility, and in so doing I refashion my past’.<sup>6</sup> At the moment of remembering, the past,

present, and future merge into an imagined temporal and spatial co-existence in the framework of today. For remembering to come into being as something communicable to other people, it needs to take the form of a narrative. While oral, visual, and other forms of autobiographical remembering become more and more popular, it is still predominantly presented in writing. The interplay between memory and imagination in the process of autobiographical remembering and narrative construction comprises part of the experience, as explained by Jerome Bruner:

Through narrative, we construct, reconstruct, and in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow. Memory and imagination fuse in the process. Even when we create possible worlds of fiction, we do not desert the familiar but subjunctivize it into what might have been and what might be. The human mind, however cultivated its memory or refined its recording systems, can never fully and faithfully recapture the past, but neither can it escape it. Memory and imagination supply and consume each other's wares.<sup>7</sup>

Hence narrative, a way of expressing and verbalizing this interplay between memory and imagination, takes on the characteristics of remembering itself in shaping and recounting a past experience. The narrative of an autobiographical piece of writing imagines, embodies, and enacts what I call 'psychological space'. Such a term avoids the possible confusion that could result from borrowing an existing term in psychology, and more specifically, in this discussion, it provides an image of an internal psychological site inhabited by the autobiography-writing 'I', where the imaginative reconstruction of remembering takes place. It is, therefore, where the key aspects of autobiographical remembering can be identified. To examine transformation in these aspects can give us a good understanding of what translating

autobiographical writing entails.

The first of these key aspects is that, in the psychological space of autobiographical remembering, time is subjective and personal. Timepieces and calendars determine our notion of time, and, as Monika Fludernik points out, we are ‘tempted to see time as an objective, measurable and unambiguous category that can be pictured as a dotted line progressing from past to future’.<sup>8</sup> But in fact, time is perceived differently by different people and on different occasions. St Augustine concludes that ‘it is within my mind that I measure time ... When I measure time, I am measuring something in the present of my mind.’<sup>9</sup> Virginia Woolf’s Orlando also notices the ‘extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind’.<sup>10</sup> In discussing Marcel Proust’s ‘pool of time’, Jens Brockmeier suggests that another way of thinking about it is as ‘an analogy of our simultaneous existence in different temporalities, with remembering viewed as a constant oscillation back and forth in time’.<sup>11</sup> Psychological space is where the heterogeneous temporality of memories exists in their non-linear and non-chronological subjective and personal order.

The co-existence of different times means the co-existence of the experiencing ‘I’ of the past and the remembering ‘I’. The second aspect of psychological space is that it is a space inhabited by multiple selves. The ‘I’ appearing in the narrative is not as singular, unified, and organized as it seems. This is particularly true of autobiographical writing if compared with novels. The ‘I’ in a first-person novel is created by the author. As the sole creator, authors can plan and manage the lives of their characters in relation to the thematic coherence of the novel. In this sense, the life of ‘I’ is born in the world of the novel and neatly contained within it from cover to cover. For example, in *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway, the first-person narrator, serves as a lens through which the main character, Jay Gatsby, is presented. Carraway’s life is limited to what Scott Fitzgerald weaves into the pages; there is no more of his life beyond the book. However, in order for autobiographical

writing to take on a thematically developed and goal-oriented appearance, the method often adopted is to use for structuring purposes patterns of intention and direction which are identified, or created, only with hindsight. An example of such effortful rediscovery is described in Vladimir Nabokov's memoir *Speak, Memory*:

In probing my childhood (which is the next best to probing one's eternity) I see the awakening of consciousness as a series of spaced flashes, with the intervals between them gradually diminishing until bright blocks of perception are formed, affording memory a slippery hold.<sup>12</sup>

What complicates the matter even further is that multiple selves can be configured and narrated in different ways, which make a repertoire of potential narratives. Then the question arises: what factors determine the 'I' that finally gets manifested to the reader in a piece of autobiographical writing?

Derek Edwards points out that offering 'a particular version of things when there are indefinitely many potential versions' is 'action oriented in the sense that they are constructed in ways that perform actions in and for the occasion of their telling'.<sup>13</sup> This view emphasizes that the final selection and enactment of one version from the repertoire of potential narratives is situated in the circumstances of narrating. It indicates the intersubjective aspect of psychological space in the narrative: it is a personal space, but not an isolated one; it is informed and influenced by the external environment at the moment of autobiographical remembering and telling. Brockmeier concludes that 'autobiographical memory' is 'defined less by independent cognitive or neurocognitive operations than by the interactional, institutional, and ethical constraints of a given cultural situation'.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the 'I' in the narrative we read is a result of choice rooted in cultural, social, and historical realities. In

Brockmeier's words, 'there is no such thing as an autobiographical process that exists outside of the economy of remembering and its cultural traditions'.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the 'I' in autobiography is variable depending on the situation in which the narrating takes place.

To sum up, psychological space in the narrative of autobiographical remembering is the site where memory and imagination are entwined, while interacting with the situation in which they are taking place. Such a concept allows a perspective that avoids looking at autobiographical writing as entirely concerned with past events chronologically recorded, and opens up the possibility of investigating its interplay of memory and imagination, and its fusion of past, present, and future. Needless to say, we can only find evidential traces of these activities in the narrative itself, which are invariably linked with the specific semantic and grammatical resources of the language. Then the process of being translated, that is, of being carried across into a different linguistic, cultural, and social context, will impact on and cause changes to the three aspects previously outlined of psychological space in autobiographical writing.

First we will look at translating tense-indicated multiple temporalities. Apart from semantic references to time, such as 'yesterday', 'two weeks ago', or 'the year 2019', tense is the primary grammatical element to indicate time distinctions. In English, as in many other languages, tense is often expressed in a form taken by a verb, present tense and past tense to indicate the past and present time respectively, while future time is expressed in the same form of the main verb as present tense, with an auxiliary verb added ('I will go'). As autobiographical writing by its nature gives accounts of the events and episodes of the past, past tense is most frequently used (although, as discussed, the telling itself implies the present perspective), and present tense is sometimes employed to offer current reflection. Interestingly, multiple temporalities in autobiographical narrative have marked and telling manifestations that point to the psychological characteristics of the narrator in relation to the

original event. In ‘Remembering the Past in the Present: Verb Tense Shifts in Autobiographical Memory’, Pillemer *et al.* note that in their collected cases of personal accounts and oral history, shifts in verb tense from past to present occur when there is a heightened sense of excitement, danger, and fear.<sup>16</sup> They suggest that verb tense shifts have implications for the accuracy and authenticity of experiences reported in personal narratives. Often these shifts, as observed by Pillemer *et al.*, are spontaneous and unintentional. However, when they appear in autobiographical writing in an edited and published form, they are likely to be the result of conscious choice and decision, although they may well be first triggered by involuntary emotional spontaneity.

What could happen to multiple temporalities when being translated into other languages? Calibration of time and calendar has been standardized across human societies. Many European languages have past and present tenses. However, there is no easy equivalence, especially when sub-forms of tense, nuanced differentiation in the use of tense, and combinations with different verb aspects come into play. Little research has been done on this, but the few studies that have been carried out propose the idea that choice of tense in translation can change narrative time, narrative perspective, and the relationship between author, narrator, and reader. For example, Clara Mallier discusses the implications for translation of the fact that ‘the narrative use of the *passé composé* has no equivalent in English’, using French translations of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* as a case in point.<sup>17</sup> Another example is Gillian Lathey’s article on the British version of Jean de Brunhoff’s *Histoire de Babar*. The translator’s deliberate choice, based on the conventions of the target language, to replace the original’s present tense with past tense affects the ‘narrative intimacy’ of a shared and performed reading of a children’s book.<sup>18</sup> If translational changes in the tense of fictional works influence reading experience, it can be inferred that they have a perhaps even greater affective impact on the reception of real-life accounts. For example, in

the cases given in Pillemer *et al.*'s study, the shifts of the tenses in translation are likely to reduce emotional intensity.

The challenge of translating tense-indicated multiple temporalities is especially acute in translation between languages that are unrelated, for example, between English and Chinese. Chinese does not use morphological change to indicate tense. Instead, Jo-Wang Lin explains, 'the temporal interpretation of Chinese sentences is determined via viewpoint aspect, verbal semantics, temporal adverbials, the definite/indefinite distinction, quantifier raising, informational status, pragmatics and people's knowledge of the world'.<sup>19</sup> While arguments can be made that Chinese does have tense, but not in the same sense as Indo-European languages,<sup>20</sup> it is clear that tense in English, when translated into Chinese, may not be realized, or be realized in different forms. Furthermore, even if we accept arguments such as Lin's that Mandarin Chinese has tense, the discussions in these articles focus on single sentences out of context, expressly constructed for explanation and illustration. In translation, other factors, such as stylistic choice, textual flow and coherence, preference for clarity and conciseness, and ultimately source-text constraints, often make it difficult to provide any linguistic evidence of tense. This is particularly true in the case of tense shifts. I use one sentence cited in the study by Pillemer *et al.* as an example:

The man stopped, said nothing, and pushes me out of the car<sup>21</sup>

那人停了下来，什么也没说，当下把我推出了车外

The sentence in English has three verbs, two in the past tense followed by one in the present. Evidently the last, 'pushes', denotes an action that caught the narrator by surprise and was thus recalled in a heightened sense of immediacy and vividness. In Chinese translation, the added '当下' is perhaps the best way to indicate the 'nowness' of that moment. However,

there is no way to indicate the change of tense in this succession of three actions, except for the translator to use an explanatory gloss or footnote. In the investigation of the Soham murders, Maxine Carr's inconsistent use of past tense during early interviews made the police realize that she already thought of the girls as dead despite her efforts to pretend she did not know what had become of them.<sup>22</sup> The unconscious slip, as with examples in Pellimer *et al.*, could not be reproduced in translation into a language such as Chinese. Different temporalities embodied in tense, therefore, may not be realized in translation into other languages, or a different form is needed. Either will change how temporality is perceived in the narrative.

The translational change also impacts on the presentation and consequently perception of the self in the psychological space of an autobiographical text. An obvious index of self is personal pronoun use. Some research has noted patterns of personal pronoun use signalling psychological disorder, for example, narcissism and autism, both of which concern the perception of oneself in relation to others and the external world.<sup>23</sup> The use of pronouns was also found to be an index of grief in emotional narratives of failed romantic relationships.<sup>24</sup> Pronouns can therefore be usefully employed as indicators of one's psychological state. It has been pointed out that 'pronouns may be an overlooked linguistic dimension that could have important meaning for researchers in health and social psychology. After all, pronouns are markers of self-versus-group identity... as well as of the degree to which people focus on or relate to others.'<sup>25</sup>

However, different languages have different systems of pronominal indexicality. Pennebaker *et al.*'s observation needs to be contextualized within a specific language at two levels. First, whether the use of pronouns is obligatory in the language. In English, a subject pronoun is often grammatically obligatory, while in other languages, subject pronouns are not necessary or can be inferred from verb inflections, as, for example, in Spanish. In Chinese, by

contrast, pronouns can often be omitted, and there is no verb inflection or grammatical necessity for subject-verb agreement. What is more, possessive pronouns in Chinese are generally dropped, although there is no verb agreement as there is in most European languages. The use of the possessive form, ‘pronouns + de (的)’, is often marked, intending an emphasis on the owner. Second, the use of pronouns is sometimes indicative of the social relations the speaker perceives he/she has with the interlocutor. In this respect, languages also vary greatly. Pronouns in Modern Chinese have a vastly diminished role in indicating social relations compared with those in Classical Chinese. Japanese, on the other hand, with its four ways of conveying ‘I’, is often cited as a prime example of complicated pronominal references to social relations. In European languages other than modern English, an indication of social relations can also be found in the second-person pronoun distinction known as the T-V distinction between familiar and formal address.<sup>26</sup>

The significance of pronominal references in indicating one’s sense of self, and their status as grammatically obligatory, or optional, in different languages, cause problems in translation that are often underestimated. Chinese classical poems, for example, typically do not include clear pronominal references. However, when translated into European languages, the poems’ grammatical structure requires certainty, and demands a single interpretation of what is otherwise poetically ambiguous (for example, when either a masculine or feminine pronoun is possible).<sup>27</sup> When texts are translated from European languages into Chinese, it can also be an issue when the pronouns which signal one’s psychological state have to be dropped. This is particularly relevant in autobiographical writing which focuses on the narrating ‘I’. A simple example is the following paragraph from Jack Kerouac’s autobiographical novel *On the Road*:

In Newburgh it had stopped raining. I walked down to the river, and I had to

ride back to New York in a bus with a delegation of schoolteachers coming back from a weekend in the mountains - chatter-chatter blah-blah, and **me** swearing for all the time and the money I'd wasted, and telling **myself**, I wanted to go west and here I've been all day and into the night going up and down, north and south, like something that can't get started. And **I** swore I'd be in Chicago tomorrow, and made sure of that, taking a bus to Chicago, spending most of my money, and didn't give a damn, just as long as I'd be in Chicago tomorrow.<sup>28</sup>

A total of ten pronominal references in this paragraph point to a confused and frustrated 'I', an 'I' that seems lost on the way to the destination. The language Kerouac uses, including the prominent use of present participles ('swearing', 'telling', 'going', 'taking', 'spending'), is symptomatic of the ongoing search for self-identity. However, in the Chinese translation, the number of pronominal references has dropped to four. These are emboldened here, and are the ones also signalled in bold in the Kerouac quotation above:

到牛堡时，雨停了。**我**走到河边，不得不搭一辆在山区度周末的教师们包乘的公共汽车回到纽约——车上人声嘈杂，话说个没完，而**我**一直在骂**自己**浪费了这么多时间和金钱，本来说是要去西部，从白天到晚上来来去去，折腾了一整天还没有出发。**我**发誓明天一定要到芝加哥，不惜用身边的钱买了去芝加哥的公共汽车票，只要明天能到芝加哥，什么都顾不上了。<sup>29</sup>

It might be argued that the translator chose, in the interests of readability, to make the passage conform to the conventionally economical use of pronominal references in Chinese, and

reduce their incidence in the paragraph. But a couple more could easily be retained without producing any sense of redundancy. In the Chinese translation, the sense of self-obsession on a restless journey which is created through the repeated use of first-person pronouns, together with present participles, is reduced. In a word, the function psychologists suggest pronominal references have of indicating psychological state does not remain intact in translation.

In the process of translation, changes in multiple temporalities and selves in the psychological space are further complicated by the 'situatedness' of autobiographical writing. In autobiographical writing, the narrator generally uses the first-person singular, 'I', but occasionally the second- or third-person pronoun will figure. The 'I' comes into being not only through remembering, but also through a dialogue with the 'imagined other' towards whom the telling is directed.<sup>30</sup> As discussed above, the perspective and voice of the telling are dependent on the situation of the telling, in other words, the author's interaction with their social environment. The concept of situatedness is borrowed from cognitive science.

'Situated cognition' proposes that 'agents need and actively use environmental, contextual information to shape their behaviour'.<sup>31</sup> The agentive nature of interaction in a specific case is what differentiates 'situatedness' from 'context', a much broader and more commonly used concept. The concept has been adopted in Translation Studies to direct attention to the translator's interaction with the environment, artefacts, and other human beings.<sup>32</sup> However, 'situatedness' as used in this article is to be understood as an autobiographical author's response to their own social circumstances. In this sense, to translate means to negotiate a narrative outcome of a situated interaction into a new environment with new recipients.

This conception illuminates the difficulties associated with the translation of psychological space in autobiographical writing. If the 'I' is situated in its environment of telling, is it necessary, and indeed possible, to activate this interaction in a different reading

environment? If so, how and to what extent? A case in point is the translations of the diary of Ma Yan. Ma Yan was a Chinese schoolgirl who was forced to quit school during her secondary education because of her family's poverty. She kept a diary which recorded her daily life and thoughts, prominent among which was her eagerness to study and her worries about not being able to continue her education. A French journalist, Pierre Haski, happened to encounter the family, and was entrusted with Ma Yan's handwritten diary by her mother. Deeply moved by the diary, Haski had it translated, then edited the translation and had it published in France in 2001. Since then, Ma Yan's diary has been published in many other languages, including Chinese.

The original diary written on school exercise books was a response from a helpless 'I' to an external world in which Ma Yan could not find a sympathetic ear. When a personal diary enters the public arenas of different cultures and societies through translation, the imagined interlocutor no longer remains the same, and translation negotiates and accommodates this change. In other words, the autobiographical 'I' needs to be re-situated, which leads to a changed 'I'. A brief comparison between the English and Chinese versions of Ma Yan's diary can reveal how the 'I' varies. In the published Chinese version, the account comes over as less mediated. It even retains errors which the reader is to understand Ma Yan made in her use of Chinese characters, presumably to reflect her handwritten original and suggest the diary's authenticity. In comparison, the English translation from the French reads as more artful and less naive. For instance, the opening chapter titled 'I want to study', is much more melodramatic than the Chinese version. It has expressions on the opening page such as 'death sentence' that point to an obvious intention to evoke strong emotional responses.<sup>33</sup> As a 2005 reviewer put it, Ma Yan had become a 'poster child for improving educational opportunities for Chinese children'.<sup>34</sup> What was originally written for no particular reader turns into a publication that deliberately solicits as many readers as possible.

The psychological space in the translated diary has thus become more intentional, anticipatory, and interpersonal.

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The last part of this article will explore these conceptual issues from a more empirical perspective. I will use the Chinese translation of Martin Amis' *Experience* as a case study to illustrate what translating psychological space in autobiographical writing entails. The choice is motivated by Amis' writerly awareness and demonstration of the three aspects of psychological space in his memoir: subjective multiple temporalities, the self in pronominal references, and the situatedness of the writing. I will not discuss the translatorial approach and the translator's decisions, but focus on my reading and perception as translator, since these are the factors that lead to my observation that a change of psychological space in autobiographical writing is often necessitated by its being carried across linguistically and culturally.

Martin Amis' *Experience*, published in 2000, is a book of and about midlife. Around the years 1994 and 1995, at the age of forty-five, Amis underwent a number of troubling, destabilizing experiences: the aftermath of his divorce from Antonia Phillips and the beginning of a new relationship with Isabel Fonseca (to whom his memoir is dedicated); a long and painful course of dental treatment and jaw surgery, accompanied by tabloid attention; the traumatic revelation that his cousin Lucy Partington, who had disappeared more than two decades previously, was one of the victims of the infamous serial murderer Frederick West; the much-publicized negotiations for an advance on his novel *The Information*, which caused him to part from his long-term agent Pat Kavanagh and led to the acrimonious ending of his friendship with Julian Barnes, Kavanagh's partner; the life-threatening illness of his literary father, Saul Bellow; and the illness and eventual death of his biological father, Kingsley Amis. Trials and tribulation, losses and lamentations: Amis

reports this as a period when he saw ‘a darkness, a void, a tunnel that led all the way to my extinction’.<sup>35</sup> Midlife also leads to gains and new life: the reunion with his eldest daughter, the nineteen-year-old Delilah, and the birth of two daughters by Fonseca. The book has two parts respectively titled ‘Unawakened’ and ‘The Main Events’. Each section of Part One, ‘Unawakened’, includes episodes of his memories and the text of a letter, from his school and university days, to Martin’s father and stepmother, Jane Howard. Part Two, ‘Main Events’, centres on the loss of his father, but the arrival of his daughters is presented both preceding and following. It is further complemented by a Postscript, an Appendix, and an addendum, as well as copious footnotes which provide explanation, comment, and reflection. The footnote text sometimes serves to make Amis’ provocative views (as when he compares the Booker Prize to a lottery) less conspicuous than they would be in the main text.

This structure, unlike the linear chronological order often seen in autobiographical writing, suggests that remembering is a process of patching and reassembling. A similar structuring can also be found at sentence level:

I arrive at my future mother-in-law’s house in Greenwich Village and I call you at home.

(p. 182)

The present tense used here describes something that has already happened. The ‘future’ in ‘my future mother-in-law’ is the future of the past, which has now become the present. What is more, the simultaneous retrospective-prospective reference of ‘future’ also suggests that this ‘I’ is the ‘I’ of that moment as well as the ‘I’ constructing that moment in the present. This example, and many others, contrasts with the conventional uses of tense and pronominal reference which are also present in Amis’ memoir. The deliberate inconsistency projects the

presence of psychological space within the otherwise traditional genre of autobiographical writing in English. Amis' reproduction of a literary tradition becomes the backdrop for an Amisian arrow, pointing to his novelistic yet realistic representation of remembering. In this way, Amis' psychological space is made salient: co-existence of different temporalities and multiplicities of autobiographical 'I' textually realized in tense, pronominal references, and sometimes a combination of both.

Pronominal reference has another function in this memoir: to imply that memoir is a genre of situated self-exposure. In the example above, the first half of the sentence addresses a general readership, while the second half switches to an intimate conversation with 'you' – Amis' then 'future' wife Isabella. In the introductory chapter, Amis explains three reasons for writing this memoir: the first is to commemorate his father, who did not receive enough attention when he was ill, and whose last days were inaccurately described in the media; the second is to give his version of the events so as 'to set the record straight' (p. 7); and the third is that he has to tell the story of his own life instead of 'read(ing) about it in the newspaper' (p. 7). The memoir is a response to media intrusion on his personal life. James Wood points out in his review that Amis 'wanted the book to vibrate with an atmosphere of wounded privacy'.<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, the memoir is an effort to confront inaccurate reports and give his account of the story; on the other, with further exposure of his private life, Amis is deliberately stoking more curiosity and media interest. The switch between the personal pronouns in the example above turns the reader who is comfortably consuming other people's privacy into an eavesdropper. Sometimes the reader even becomes a voyeur in the bedroom:

That night you came bellydancing out of the bathroom wearing (a) your silk bathrobe and (b) my teeth.

(p. 125)

In what follows, I will examine what happens to psychological space in the Chinese translation of Amis' memoir.

As explained previously, the differences between English and Chinese in expressing tense make it impossible to indicate clearly the present tense used in the example above. A further complication in Amis' memoir is his juxtaposition of different tenses in one scene, which can be found in his remembering of those dear to him - his cousin, Lucy, and his father, Kingsley:

She is off to one side, always off to one side, with a book, with a scheme or a project or an enterprise. Or with an animal. There were animals everywhere – it was like Big Red Barn with additional humans (p. 147).

她到一边去，她总是到一边去，带着一本书、一个想法、一个方案或是一个大项目。也可能是带着一只动物。那儿到处都是动物——就像是“红色大农场”，再加上几个人。<sup>37</sup>

On this Sunday the boys are elsewhere, absent. As they will be next Sunday, too. He never saw them again (p. 303).

这个星期天，两男孩在别的地方，不在场。他们下一个星期天也不在。他再也没见过他们。<sup>38</sup>

In the first scene, the present tense used is to suggest how Lucy was perceived when she was alive, as well as how she continues to remain alive in his memory. With the mention of a

farm he knew as a boy in the past tense, Amis sets in relief the image of Lucy in his psychological spatial-temporal construction. Yet another layer of past is implied in the reference to *Big Red Barn*, the picture-book he used to read with his sons. In the background of the past tense are the young boy, the young father, as well as the remembering narrator who brings them together, while the murdered Lucy stays foregrounded and present. Arguably the Chinese translation also presents a vividly remembered Lucy, yet without the layered temporal dimension achieved in the change of tense.

The second scene refers to the regrettable fact that Amis' two sons did not get to see Kingsley before his death. Again, Amis defies the conventional use of tense, reversing the direction of the arrow of Newtonian time, moving from the present to the future, and then back to the past. The psychological temporality thus constructed indicates the imagined movement of memory: the narrator steps into the past, re-experiencing it as he once was, and then retreats to the present, giving a conclusive comment on the lamentable situation. The alternation between past and present is ubiquitous in the scenes of his father's last days. As in the first scene, no part of the factual account is lost in the Chinese translation, yet less movement is evidenced in the psychological space of Amis' remembering. Tenseless Chinese leaves possibilities of interpretation to the reader's imagination.

In a similar manner, much more sparing use of pronominal reference in Chinese also shifts the personal level intended in Amis' memoir and deflects the situatedness of psychological space. The frequencies of pronominal possessive determiners, like 'my' in 'my father' and 'you' as a self-reference, are much reduced. Taking the latter as an example, while second-person self-reference is not unusual in autobiography, as Lejeune *et al.* point out, it is 'simply a figure which may be used in very different ways'.<sup>39</sup> In Amis' memoir, it is often used to suggest an internal monologue, and to place the 'I' in a more detached and objective light for self-examination. Sometimes it is also used to align the writer with the

reader and simulate the ‘I’ under public gaze. In the following sentence, Amis refers to the way in which the writer’s life feels secondary to the work:

On good days, when you have the sense that you are a mere instrument of the work you were sent here to do, this is what a writer’s life actually feels like: an interesting extra (p. 117).

好日子里，感觉到自己不过是来这儿要干的活的工具，这就是作家的生活真正的感觉：一篇有趣的番外。<sup>40</sup>

The repeated use of ‘you’ could be referring to Amis himself as well as writers in general. It is used to indicate a contrast between a sense of self-awareness and of one’s diminished role. Situated in the context of the publicization of Amis’ personal life in the British tabloids, this reads particularly poignantly. For the sake of economy and clarity of translation, the pronoun ‘you’ has to be suppressed, and only one self-referential pronoun is retained in the Chinese translation.

Amis’ writing embodies and enacts remembering through his unconventional use of tense and pronominal reference. He builds a dynamic and situated psychological space, which has to undergo changes in translation. Shifts like those explained above are not unique to English-Chinese translation, but are likely to occur in other forms in translation between other language pairs. If narratives are a critical link between memory and self, then the roles of language and social interaction are paramount. Any writing is enabled and constrained by the existing resources of the language being used. So is translation. As the cases gathered by Guy Deutscher show, it is possible that the world looks different in different languages.<sup>41</sup>

This article has attempted to establish the concept of psychological space in autobiographical

writing, and what changes it may undergo through translation. The concept serves as a useful lens in thinking about how translation can reshape memory as something constructed in the process of remembering. The purpose of this discussion is not to repeat the clichéd lament about what is ‘lost in translation’, but to cast some light on how memory might travel between languages, and recognize that psychological reality is reconstructed rather than transferred untouched in translation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Holocaust Testimony and Translation*, edited by Peter Davies = *Translation and Literature*, 23.2 (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Sherry Simon, *Cities in Translation: Intersections in Translation and Memory* (London, 2011); *Speaking Memory: How Translation Shapes City Life*, edited by Sherry Simon (Montreal, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Sibhan Brownlie, *Mapping Memory in Translation* (Basingstoke, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York, 1996), p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> Frederic Bartlett, *A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932; reprint Cambridge, 1995), p. 213.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Freeman, *Hindsight: The Promise and Peril of Looking Backward* (New York, 2010), p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome Bruner, ‘Narrative Distancing: A Foundation of Literacy’, in *Literacy, Narrative and Culture*, edited by Jens Brockmeier, David R. Olsen, and Min Wang (Richmond, VA, 2002), pp. 86-93 (p. 93).

<sup>8</sup> Monika Fludernik, ‘Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters’, in *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*, edited by David Herman (Stanford, CA, 2003), p. 119.

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- <sup>9</sup> Cited in Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, translated by Erica Segre and Simon Carnell (Harmondsworth, 2018), p. 157.
- <sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London, 2000), p. 72.
- <sup>11</sup> Jens Brockmeier, *Beyond the Archive: Memory, Narrative, and the Autobiographical Process* (New York, 2015), p. 270.
- <sup>12</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (London, 2000), p. 6.
- <sup>13</sup> Derek Edwards, 'Discursive Psychology', in *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction*, edited by Kristine Fitch and Robert Sanders (Mahwah, NJ, 2005), p. 564.
- <sup>14</sup> Brockmeier, p. 123.
- <sup>15</sup> Brockmeier, p. 230.
- <sup>16</sup> David Pillemer, Amy Desrochers, and Caroline Ebanks, 'Remembering the Past in the Present: Verb Tense Shifts in Autobiographical Memory Narratives', in *Autobiographical Memory: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives*, edited by Charles Thompson *et al.* (London, 1997), pp. 145-62.
- <sup>17</sup> Clara Mallier, 'Tenses in Translation: Benveniste's "Discourse" and "Historical Narration" in the First-person Novel', *Language and Literature*, 23.3 (2014), 244-54 (p. 244).
- <sup>18</sup> Gillian Lathey, 'Time, Narrative Intimacy and the Child: Implications of the Transition from the Present to the Past Tense in the Translation into English of Children's Texts', *Meta*, 48.1-2 (2003), 233-40.
- <sup>19</sup> Jo-Wang Lin, 'Time in a Language without Tense: The Case of Chinese', *Journal of Semantics*, 23.1 (2006), 1-53 (p. 49).
- <sup>20</sup> Tzong-Hong Lin's view in 'Tense in Mandarin Chinese Sentences', *Syntax*, 18.3 (2015), 320-42.
- <sup>21</sup> Lenore Terr, *Too Scared to Cry* (New York, 1990), pp. 6-7. Cited in Pillemer *et al.*, p. 148.
- <sup>22</sup> 'Carr "kept referring to missing girls in past tense"', *Telegraph*, 21 November 2003.

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<sup>23</sup> For the studies on the use of personal pronouns and narcissism, see articles such as Robert Raskin and Robert Shaw, 'Narcissism and the Use of Personal Pronouns', *Journal of Personality*, 56.2 (1988), 393-404; Angela L. Carey *et al.*, 'Narcissism and the Use of Personal Pronouns Revisited', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109.3 (2015), e1-e15. For studies on the use of personal pronouns and autism, see articles such as Peter Hobson, Anthony Lee, and Jessica Hobson, 'Personal Pronouns and Communicative Engagement in Autism', *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 40.6 (2010), 553-664; Alexandra Perovic, Nadya Modyanova, and Ken Wexler, 'Comprehension of Reflexive and Personal Pronouns in Children with Autism: A Syntactic or Pragmatic Deficit?', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 34.4 (2013), 813-35.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Adriel Boals and Kitty Klein, 'Word Use in Emotional Narratives about Failed Romantic Relationships and Subsequent Mental Health', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 24.3 (2005), 252-68.

<sup>25</sup> James Pennebaker, Matthias Mehl, and Kate Niederhoffer, 'Psychological Aspects of Natural Language Use: Our Words, Our Selves', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54 (2003), 547-77 (p. 569).

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, 'The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity', in *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, MA, 1960), pp. 253-76.

<sup>27</sup> Valerie Pellatt and Eric Lau, *Thinking Chinese Translation: A Course in Translation Method* (London, 2011), p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (London, 1999), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Zai Lushang (On the Road)*, translated by Wang Yongnian (Shanghai, 2006), p. 15.

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- <sup>30</sup> Rom Harré, *The Singular Self: An Introduction to the Psychology of Personhood* (London, 1997), p. 139.
- <sup>31</sup> Monica Gonzalez-Marquez, 'Language, Thought, and ... Brain', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, edited by Michael Spivey, Ken McRae, and Marc Joanisse (Cambridge, 2012), p. 683.
- <sup>32</sup> See studies such as Hanna Risku, 'Situatedness in Translation Studies', *Cognitive Systems Research*, 3.3 (2002), 523-33; Sandra Halverson, 'Reorienting Translation Studies: Cognitive Approaches and the Centrality of the Translator', in *Translation: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, edited by Julian House (London, 2014), pp. 1116-39.
- <sup>33</sup> Yan Ma, *The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl*, translated from French by Lisa Appignanesi (New York, 2009), p. 1.
- <sup>34</sup> Hope Morrison, 'The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl (review)', *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, 59.1 (2015), 26.
- <sup>35</sup> Martin Amis, *Experience* (London, 2000), p. 85. Further page references appear in brackets in the main text.
- <sup>36</sup> James Wood, 'The Young Turk', *Guardian*, 20 May 2000.
- <sup>37</sup> Amis, *Jingli (Experience)*, translated by Ai Li (Shanghai, 2008), p. 152. I have not provided back translations since equivalence is achieved on a semantic level, except that the tense change is not reproduced in translation.
- <sup>38</sup> *Jingli*, p. 315.
- <sup>39</sup> Phillippe Lejeune, Annette Tomarken, and Edward Tomarken, 'Autobiography in the Third Person', *New Literary History*, 9.1 (1977), 27-50 (p. 48).
- <sup>40</sup> *Jingli*, p. 122.
- <sup>41</sup> Guy Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages* (London, 2011).