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Linear and Nonlinear Chronotopics in Literary Translations as a Representation of Authors' Lived  
Experience

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The term chronotope originated from the Russian literalist, Mikhail Bakhtin, and refers to the distinctive configurations of time and space in a story (Lawson 386). Bakhtin argues that each narrative line in a story is marked by its own chronotope; Its own "distinctive bundle of time and space settings that define the reality of the world within a text." (Lawson 385). An example is chronotropic limbo which occurs when the narrative in a novel creates a sense of indeterminacy in the temporal and spatial settings. This can be achieved through the protagonists' movements as they engage in flashbacks or flash-forwards, traversing different locations and time periods. Bakhtin argues that it is through the departure from the actual chronotopes of our world that the constructed chronotopes of the real world emerge (Lawson 385). This implies that the chronotope in a narrative is not a means of escaping reality but rather a tool for engaging with reality itself (Lawson 385).

This paper will answer the research question: How does the interplay between time and space represent an imagined reality in a story narrative that engages with the reality of the author's world itself? It argues that it is through the use of linear and nonlinear temporal and spatial settings, authors create an imagined reality in the literature that resonates with their personal and historical connection to the real world. This includes the use of techniques in storytelling like representativeness of time and space, irregularity in time, and movement in space. To support this argument, one can compare certain works of literature from the Middle East on Palestinian exile and displacement, specifically the works Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* and Samira Azzam's *The Man and his Alarm Clock*. These works demonstrate that interplaying time and space in narratives helps construct an imagined reality that accurately reflects the realities of Palestinian existence, as displacement and exile caused by the Israeli occupation since the 1948 Nakba war, as experienced by the authors.

The first chronotope an author may choose to use is a linear chronological narrative of time and space. This includes employing a linear structure in storytelling, meaning regularity and consistency in time and space, as events in a narrative unfold sequentially from beginning to end. For example, a linear progression in time and space is what the Palestinian author Samira Azam employs in her story, *the Man and his Alarm Clock* to reflect her personal and historical connections to the real world. Azam, who was

born and raised in Acre, Palestine, was compelled to leave her homeland with her family and seek refuge in Lebanon following the 1948 Nakba (Piselli 93). This significant period marks the Zionist takeover of major coastal cities in Palestine, leading to the forced exile and displacement of its people (Manna 35). In her story *The Man and His Alarm Clock*, she tells the narrative of a young man, Fathi, who wakes up to the sound of an elderly man, Abu Fuad, knocking on his door, at the same time and place every day (Shilbi). Abu Fuad took on the task of waking up the protagonist, Fathi, and others in the town, to get to a train station in time to get to their workplaces (Shilbi).

In the story, Azam portrays time as being repetitively consistent, inferring that the protagonist was living in a reality where one could go about their daily lifetime without any sort of disruption. Specifically, the protagonist conveys this to the reader through an inner dialogue where he discusses his daily routine in a timely manner. In an inner dialogue, Fathi says, "When the alarm clock jingled loudly, I jumped out of bed. My mother, my aunt, and my sister all jumped too, my mother to heat up water for me to shave and wash, my aunt to prepare for me a generous breakfast the likes of which I had never seen before (after all I was employed now), and my sister to shine my shoes" (Frag et al. 87). Here, the simultaneousness of events reflects the stability in time, a sense of order and reliability, providing a comforting framework for the protagonist's life.

In fact, Azam's creation of a consistent reality in the narrative may draw upon her reality of living in Acre before the Nakba and her exile. The events depicted in the inner dialogue, such as waking up surrounded by family members in the same household, following a regulated schedule, and maintaining uninterrupted work, contrast with the disruptions and disarray caused by her exile from Acre. After being forced to leave Palestine in 1948, Azam became a refugee, residing in various places outside Palestine like Baghdad and Cyprus (Piselli 93). These experiences likely disrupted the routines and stability she once enjoyed being in Acre. Therefore, she may be reflecting on her once-lived timely and ordered life in Acre before the Nakba. This exemplifies how a chronological narration of time in narrative realities can effectively reflect the lived temporal settings of the author in the real world.

Moreover, the utilization of descriptive language to define spatial settings in narrative

is another technique that authors employ to immerse their lived experience in history. This includes defining the spatial characteristics in a narrative, such as geography, architecture, or even the presence of distinctive elements. For instance, in the *Man and His Alarm Clock*, although the spatial settings remained unnamed by the author, Azam employs descriptive language to reflect the spatial configurations from her own reality. Specifically, in the story, there was pointing to landmarks and distinct features to describe a city in the narrative takes place (Farag et al. 88). The city is described in the story with features such as “historical walls”, the “southern gate”, the “train station” and an “old market” bustling with activity where people trade goods, including grains weighed on scales (Farag et al. 88). Considering that the features like historical walls and an old bustling market are real defining spatial features of the city of Acre from the real world (Waterman 89), their use evokes that the narrative might unfold in Acre. As a Palestinian who became exiled from the city of Acre after the 1948 Nakba, Azam’s defining features could imply a form of personal connection to a city in the real world that she was no longer part of following the Nakba. Essentially, this demonstrates how descriptive language can be employed to depict lived realities within a narrative.

Just as techniques of a linear configuration of time and space are employed by authors to create realities that reflect on their connections to reality itself, so does the use of non-linear configurations. These include techniques such as analepsis, time flashbacks, and flash-forwards that authors employ, to emphasize certain events or reveal information about the imagined world in narrative in relation to their personal or historical connections to the real world. This is best showcased in the story *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani. Kanfani was born in Acre, Palestine in 1936 when Palestine was a British mandate (Bano 12). But unfortunately in 1948, his family had to flee to Lebanon from their motherland because of the illegal Zionist occupation of Acre. Since then, he and his family experienced a life of displacement and exile, residing in other places than Palestine and Lebanon like Damascus, Syria (Bano 12).

His story documents the forceful exile experienced by many Palestinians after the 1948 Nakba through the lives of three Palestinian refugees as they attempt to cross from Iraq to Kuwait with the help of people smugglers, where they hope to find work and a better future (Bano 14). One of the three

refugees in the story is Abu Qais, an old man of old age, who decided to emigrate to earn a living for himself and his children, to get the money to build a house and buy olive (Bano 14). He does this in response to the pressure exerted on him by Assad, one of the rich returnees who made a fortune from going to Kuwait (Bano 14). He finds himself fleeing across the Iraq-Kuwait border from Basra to Kuwait in order to obtain this better future (Bano 14).

In the narrative, Kanafani employs analepsis, a temporal time travel that takes us back to events preceding the present moment. He utilizes this technique to reflect on his real-world experience of exile and displacement during the time period following the 1948 Nakba (Kanafani 5). Specifically, at the age of twelve Kanafani went through the trauma of becoming a refugee, and thereafter he lived as an exile in various Arab countries with his family becoming scattered, many of them making a living in the camps (Kanafani 5).

An example of this analepsis is when Abu Qais recalls the death of Ustaz Salim:

“The mercy of God be upon you, Ustaz Selim, the mercy of God be upon you. God was certainly good to you when he made you die one night before the wretched village fell into the hands of the Jews... The mercy of God be upon you, Ustaz Selim. If you had lived, if you had been drowned by poverty as I have, I wonder if you would have done what I am doing now. Would you have been willing to carry all your years on your shoulders and flee across the desert to Kuwait to find a crust of bread?” (Kanafānī and Hilary 23-24)

Kanafani's utilization of this dialogue extends beyond the mere revelation of information about the protagonist's narrative; it serves to convey the author's own lived experience as a refugee from the Nakba. Like the protagonist in the story, Kanafani became a refugee during this tumultuous period. The Nakba forcibly expelled Kanafani and approximately 700,000 other Palestinians from their villages and towns, which were destroyed by Jewish settlers. Subsequently, they sought shelter in neighbouring countries or other parts of Palestine. By employing the analepsis, the author creates a time connection from the reality of their real world to the reality in the narrative.

The contrast between narratives that use linear and nonlinear temporal configurations reveals the authors' experiences of stability versus disruption in their lives. As shown, in Samira Azam's story, the linear chronotope represents stability, reflecting her own reality of living in Palestine before the Nakba. The consistent daily routine and depiction of time as reliable contrast with the disruptions and disarray caused by her exile. On the other hand, Ghassan Kanafani's use of non-linear configuration analepsis reflects his experiences of displacement and exile after the Nakba. He uses it to connect back to the historical event of the Nakba, emphasizing the disruptions and challenges faced by Palestinians. These contrasting narrative techniques highlight the authors' personal and historical connections to the real world, showcasing their experiences of stability and disruption in their own lives.

Moreover, Kanafani employs temporal anticipation, which is a future portrayal of a narrative event that will happen later. This technique allows Kanafani to reflect on his own real-world narrative through the narrative at hand. By incorporating temporal anticipation into his storytelling, Kanafani effectively expresses his hopes associated with a particular outcome, aligning them with the sense of anticipation within the narrative.

This came in one of the dialogues between Abu Qais and his wife:

"What do you think, Umm Qais?"

She gazed at him, whispering:

"It's just as you think."

"We'll be able to send Qais to school."

"Yes."

"And perhaps buy one or two olive shoots."

"Of course."

"Maybe we'll be able to build a shack somewhere."

"Certainly."

"If I arrive. If I arrive." (Kanafānī and Hilary 27)

In this passage, temporal anticipation is present in how Abu Qais and his wife discuss their future aspirations and dreams. By mentioning sending their son Qais to school, buying olive trees, and building a house somewhere in Kuwait, Abu Qais expresses his hopes and plans for the future. However, the repeated phrase "If I arrive" indicates uncertainty and anticipation about the future. It implies that Abu Qais is aware of the risks present in their situation, and his aspirations are contingent upon his safe arrival to Kuwait.

The use of descriptive language to depict the spatial setting evokes how Kanafani employs temporal narration to express hope in his real-world reality. Specifically, in the story, the mention of olive trees, which serve as a cultural and historical motif of resistance and hope for Palestinians, symbolizes Abu Qais's yearning for the future, his deep connection to his ancestral background, his sense of identity, and his longing for a new home. Due to the occupation of Acre since the 1948 Nakba, which resulted in Kanafani's exile and displacement from his homeland, there is a profound disconnection from his own identity and history. Consequently, Kanafani's incorporation of spatial elements like olive trees and home can be seen as a reflection of his personal and historical loss, representing the land and trees of his past reality that he may hope to recreate in his own future reality through the temporal anticipation employed in the narrative. This demonstrates that spatial configurations, when accompanied by non-linear temporal narratives, can effectively reflect an author's lived experiences, much like a linear narrative, as exemplified in Azam's "The Man and His Alarm Clock."

As this paper shows, the interplay between time and space plays a crucial role in representing an imagined reality in story narratives that engage with the reality of the author's world itself. By utilizing linear and nonlinear temporal and spatial settings, authors create narratives that resonate with their personal and historical connections to the real world. The use of linear chronotopes, such as consistent time progression and descriptive spatial settings, reflects stability and order in the author's lived reality. In contrast, non-linear chronotopes, including analepsis and temporal anticipation, convey disruptions, challenges, and hopes associated with the author's experiences of displacement and exile. By examining works like Ghassan Kanafani's "Men in the Sun" and Samira Azam's "The Man and His Alarm Clock," it

becomes evident that the interplay between time and space constructs an imagined reality that accurately reflects the realities of Palestinian existence, such as displacement and exile caused by the Israeli occupation since the 1948 Nakba war. In light of these observations, one is prompted to wonder: How can the use of chronotopes in storytelling help individuals make sense of their own lived experiences and engage with the realities of the world around them?

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