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Narrativity in Translation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction. Narrativity: Framed as follows <i>David Katan</i>	7
A Conversation about Narrative and Translation <i>Theo Hermans, Sue-Harding, Julie Boéri</i>	16
Future directions in socio-narrative research in translation <i>Neil Sadler</i>	40
Heteronymous Narratoriality: The Translator (as Narrator) as Somebody Else <i>Douglas Robinson</i>	56
Re-narrating the Red Brigades in translation: Questions for translator ethics <i>Matt Holden</i>	76
Louder than words: Videogame Localisation as Narrative (Re)telling”. <i>Quipeng Gao</i>	94
Re-narration in a Video Game Adaptation of Romance of the Three Kingdoms <i>Wengqing Peng</i>	115
Mediating Subversive Narratives during the Greek Military Dictatorship (1967-74): A Narrative Analysis of (Self-)Censorship Techniques in the Subtitling of Woodstock <i>Coralia Iliadou</i>	131
Animentaries of suffering: The metaphoric (re)narration of documented human rights violations in Palestine <i>Bushra Kalakb</i>	160
Notes on Contributors	178

Animentaries of suffering: The metaphoric (re)narration of documented human rights violations in Palestine

Bushra Kalakh
University of Queen's University Belfast

Abstract

With diverse media at the disposal of storytellers, animated documentaries (Honesty Roe, 2013), or animentaries (Plomp & Forceville, 2021), have received little attention as a form of narration. While documentaries take their names from documenting facts, animations have remained synonymous with children's entertainment and fictionality. However, in the context of documenting human rights (HRs) violations, activists have utilized animentaries as part of their campaigns for advocacy. These animentaries are used to promote their campaigns and give a compact message about the human suffering that is detailed in the published report or other visual forms of documentation. Defining animentaries as intersemiotic translations of HRs narratives, this paper analyses five short animated documentaries produced by the Israeli non-governmental organization (NGO) B'Tselem as part of related advocacy campaigns for HRs in Palestine. The analysis raises questions about why this medium is used and its viability for narrating the human suffering of the Palestinian people. These questions address (re)narration via multimodal metaphors translated in animated visualizations and soundtracks. This will allow us to investigate spaces of translator agency (Baker, 2018) and problematize narrations of the human ordeal to examine the affordances of the chosen medium as utilized in this unique context. This paper is centrally concerned with how animentaries could affect the narratives of human suffering since opting for them could (re)frame messages that are essentially rooted in verifiably documented events. While possibly intended as promotional to the campaigns they are part of, these animentaries still invite their viewers to engage with them as authentic resources that claim to speak for the victims while articulating the organization's stance from the violations. Guided by principles from socio-narrative theory, intersemiotic translation and multimodal analysis, this paper examines how HRs discourse could persuade the audience to believe or act against HRs violations through animation.

1. Introduction

Since the American cartoonist Winsor McCay animated a “crime that shocked Humanity”, his work *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (1918) pioneered as an animated documentary built on verifiably documented events. The apparent paradox between documentary and animated film as a means of storytelling might imply a well contoured definition of each. In reality, documentaries resist being confined within fixed boundaries as they have various modes of representation and also have aspects resembling fiction. They engender the trust of the audience thanks to the indexicality of “photographic and aural representations or likeness of the world” (Nichols, 1991: 111). The world here is historical rather than fictional, and reference is made to physically real people, places or events. This bond with reality contributes significantly to the perceived authenticity of a documentary, yet there is always an argument that is rhetorically presented using the Aristotelian triangle of ethics, logic and emotions with a set of proofs or contradicting views that invite audiences to engage in the construction of an argument rather than a story (Nichols, 1991: 118). Documentarists, then, want to convince the viewers of a standpoint regarding historical realism using “a kind of audiovisual variety of rhetoric” (Plomp & Forceville, 2021: 355). Consequently, they utilize perspective, which here we take to mean “the way in which a documentary text offers a particular point of view through its depiction of the world”, and commentary, “a particular statement about the world or about the perspective it has tacitly presented” (Nichols, 1991: 118).

On the other hand, animations, which are filmed frame-by-frame to create the illusion of movement (Wells, 1998: 10), are not exempt from controversy. Wells (1998: 27) notes that animations cannot document realism as they lack objectivity and referentiality to the real world. Reality though is open to interpretation, it is “a matter of how it is perceived or unconsciously mediated” (ibid: 24). Nichols (1991: 165) attests to this as he differentiates between documentary realism and realism in fiction. In the first, what is presented is *the* world, “life as lived and observed”; in the second, it is *a* world, “imaginary ... with moments of authorial overttness”. Despite that, animations are not fully divorced from realism as in many cases they pursue verisimilitude. For example, “(A)nimation with documentary tendency” seeks to be real via conventional contexts, characters or sounds that resemble those in live-action films (Wells, 1998: 28). Hyper-realism or subjective reality is what animations achieve when they seek to approximate their conventions to the ‘real’ world (Eco, 1986 cited in Wells, 1998: 25). The absence of the photographic trace, or what Currie (1999: 287) describes as “traces left by things on the world” recorded by the photographer or cinematographer as they are, does not automatically negate realism. Real things are not necessarily visible, in the same

way that mental states, feelings or memories are invisibly part of real experiences, and animations enable a subjective approach to document them.

This clearly shows the difference between external reality and intrinsic truths inherent in “the fluid conditions of the real world” (Wells, 1998: 28). Although documentaries are recognized as one of the discourses of the real, they still have modes of representation that contribute to the “*construction* of social reality” (emphasis in original) (Nichols, 1991: 10). For instance, re-enactments of events are techniques that loosen the documentary’s indexical bond with realism as, in this case, the bond is between the image and what is re-enacted for the camera to record, and is not happening spontaneously in front of it (ibid: 21). Similarly, Currie (1999: 292) suggests that there could be misleading non-documentary parts in documentary films, such as testimonies by people other than the character that is the subject of the documentary. Ultimately, documentaries can benefit from the blurry boundaries of documentary (Currie, 1999) using animations “to enable truth claims of a different order to live-action documentary” (Honesty Roe, 2013: 39). By doing so, they offer “an enhanced perspective on reality by presenting the world in a breadth and depth that live action alone cannot” (Honesty Roe, 2011: 229). Hence, animation could function as a non-fictional “representational strategy for documentary” (Honesty Roe, 2013: 39) visually representing, interpreting and inferring subjective reality.

2. Intersemiotic translation and narrativity

Narrating via documentaries can be deemed a process of intersemiotic translation whereby the translator, i.e. the (activist) animator, documents a real narrative by presenting it in an animated form. This involves decisions that maintain the link with reality while carrying activist messages that aim at raising awareness and mobilising the audience to act or simply believe the message. In Marais’ words, translation in this sense is “the semiotic work that is done in order to create society and culture” (2019: 179). This liberates translation from the limited view of it as an interlingual meaning-making process to that of being from “a text into a medium or discourse” (Sutiste & Torop, 2007: 202). A written text might become simultaneously available in an audio-visual mode, such as a report by the Israeli NGO, B’Tselem (to which we will return), on “Arrested Development”¹, which was translated into the animation “The prohibition game”. Although this problematizes the distinction between original and translated, it does allow us to account for “meaning in all of its myriads of forms, shapes, shapelessness,

¹ https://www.btselem.org/publications/arrested_development/app [accessed 19/12/2022].

materialities, instances” (Marais, 2019: 84), including aesthetic forms of expression.

As echoed in Marais (2019: 22), Steiner views semiosis, i.e. translation, as “a process that explains all meaning-making and meaning-taking” (1998: 293). This universal view paves the way for a better understanding of audio-visual narrativity as an outcome of intersemiotic translation processes conducted by activist organizations to resist injustice. In this context, narrativity is firstly guided by the conceptual frame of HRs discourse, one of the “discourses of sobriety” that have the power to change the world through an undisputable immediate connection with the real (Nichols, 1991: 3). Researchers or activists in the field of HRs elaborate stories or explanations for themselves and others about their object of inquiry (Baker 2006: 39). The conceptual (Somers & Gibson, 1994) or disciplinary (Baker, 2006) narrative of HRs is probably best represented in the struggle to ensure “equal and inalienable rights to all members of the human family” (United Nations, 1948). Guided by this explanation, activist NGOs act as gatekeepers that conduct field work, collect evidence and publish findings to narrate suffering and document violations of HRs. This work necessitates the documentation of ontological and public narratives, the personal stories and the stories elaborated in social or institutional communities larger than the individual (Somers & Gibson, 1994; Baker, 2006), as forms of witness that have the power and ability to construct social reality. The audience receives the narrative as constructed according to the organization’s approach to HRs, potentially lowering its credibility due to perceived interference.

As “constitutive elements of documentaries” (Currie, 1999: 290), narratives in an animated form become ideal for (re)framing: “an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality” (Baker, 2006: 106). (Re)framing, or (re)narrating, in animentaries includes storytelling using animations along with other linguistic and non-linguistic resources. In line with Honess Roe’s view of animentaries as tools to show “unseeable aspects of reality”, this paper contends that animentaries as a medium for telling HRs narratives are (re)narrations of events that are documented elsewhere, presenting a unique form of subjective reality (Wells, 1998: 27). Subjectivity here is not at odds with truthfulness since realism can have a variety of forms, and this blurs the correlation between the real and its narrativization. Even photographs, which were once deemed inherently authentic resources, are frames “and to frame is to exclude” (Sontag, 2003: 33). It is true that photographs invite people to reflect and sympathize with, for example, mass suffering. However, learning the context of such photographs is essential to rally them to a cause (ibid: 33). Hence, subscribing to narratives of HRs relies on their photorealistic narration as well as on accepting “the potential existence and worth of multiple truths” (Baker, 2006: 19) as narrativised in HRs discourse of different

organizations. This becomes of paramount value when agreeing that in many cases these narratives deviate from or counter what mainstream media circulates, particularly when the narrative aims to change public opinion and mobilise people to take action. Put differently, “no narrative can represent the ultimate, absolute, uncontestable truth of any event or set of events” (ibid: 18).

Since this study draws on socio-narrative theory, it is worth noting that Marais (2019) criticizes Baker’s (2006) approach to narrativity. The key shortcoming of her work, according to him, is the limitedness in theory and data, i.e. she applies narrative theory only to analyse data that are principally language-based. What is missing is a semiotic perspective to include “the way in which material society is structured (narrated)” (Marais, 2019: 23). Baker does emphasize the narrative power to construct reality and highlights that people and organizations are inevitably embedded in narratives. Furthermore, she follows a theoretical framework that does not compare “original and translated texts stretch by stretch ... making statements about their relative accuracy or inaccuracy at a semantic, generic or semiotic level” nor does her approach “attempt to capture the broad norms of translation prevalent in any cultural space.” (Baker, 2018: 160). If this view is coupled with Marais’ view of semiosis, the possibilities of meaning-making available in animentaries can be studied to realize how they shape narratives and consequently the reality they construct in society. Mindful of the constructedness of animentaries, it is useful to view “communication processes as translation processes” (Sutiste & Torop, 2007: 189), so that within the broad framework of the socio-narrative theory, animating is taken to mean narrativizing through intersemiotic translation.

3. Animentaries as (re)narrations

As a medium of narration, an animentary substitutes or evokes reality. In the case of substitution, animations could be an attempt to recreate or stand for real-life action. For example, mimicking how a German submarine sank *The Lusitania*, the British ocean liner, killing innocent civilians made it possible to document this incident despite the lack of real footage. Sometimes, animentaries substitute the real using aesthetics that visually appeal to the viewer to potentially provoke a desire to learn more about the subject matter of the film (Honesty Roe, 2013: 69). Animentaries can narrate real stories with the protagonists’ identity visually replaced with an animation, as in *It’s Like That* (2004). In this film, young asylum seekers are animated as knitted puppets for the real radio interview (ibid: 24). Animated narratives sometimes are “an attempt to document the undocumentable” as they evoke “a hidden or masked reality” such as blindness (e.g. *Feeling Space*, 1999) or autism (e.g. *A for Autism*, 1992) (Ward, 2005: 93).

Employing these techniques can be a factor that makes animentaries capable of revealing “more of the ‘reality’ of a situation than any number of live-action documentaries” (ibid: 89). Furthermore, their role in narrating non-fictional events is maintained through paratextual authentication and a “visual dialectic of absence and excess” (Honesty Roe, 2013: 39). Firstly, paratexts include sources beyond the animentary itself, establishing a link between its content and the real world. Paratexts could be production information, such as behind-the-scenes clips, details of how interviewees are chosen, and websites or other published materials authenticating the animentary. Secondly, the disconnection with visual realism is compensated for through an excess of visual and aural cues that may well be indexical. Soundtracks, for instance, are one element that could approximate animentaries to documentary realism via recorded sounds accompanying the animated visual, “providing an aural indexical link with the realities being described” (ibid: 110). For instance, the recorded interviews of asylum seekers in the animentary *It's Like That* contribute to the veracity of narrative.

4. Data

This paper analyses five animentaries by B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. These animentaries are part of advocacy campaigns that include other materials such as reports, press releases, raw footage, interactive maps, and website briefings. These are taken as paratexts to interpret the animentaries themselves and are all indexical of reality via their audio-visual and linguistic content (Plomp & Forceville, 2021). The animentaries are: “The prohibition game” (A1), “Lift siege on Gaza” (A2), “Presumed guilty” (A3), “By hook and by crook” (A4) and “Security forces’ violence harms us all” (A5)². They are all short, animated films that fit the definition of documentary as they construct HRs narratives in the context of B’Tselem’s advocacy for justice in Palestine.

While the first two are fully animated, the other three are hybrid, containing real-world interviews or photographic images and footage of incidents. Arguably, these examples include animations that are integral to the story and without them the documentary would be incomplete or incoherent. In addition to being animentaries, A1, A2 and A3 can be classified as drama-documentaries (Roscoe & Hight, 2001) as they fictionally narrate to construct, rather than directly record, socio-historical reality. In other words, their documentary aspect is their rootedness in factual discourse, and they use animations as means of expression to (re)narrate.

² Henceforth, for ease of reference, animentaries will be referred to using the bracketed symbols.

Narratively, the Occupied Territories are the geographical area where these narratives take place; temporally, they narrate events that occurred after the Israeli occupation in 1967. Thematically, there is coherence between the narratives as they all characterize fragmentation, restriction and suffocation of the Palestinians under occupation. The harmony between the narratives is uncoincidentally indicative of the scale of actual HRs violations and seems symbolic of the Palestinian tragedy, ongoing for more than seventy years.

5. Analysis

Narration via Multimodal Metaphor

Animating narratives of HRs includes using metaphor to make meaning in the current study. HRs narratives are intersemiotically translated via multimodal metaphor, detailed in animated visualizations and soundtracks that help weave indexical or analogical cues of (re)narration. A metaphor can be made if there are two phenomena, a source and a target, that belong to different categories yet have one or more features that can be mapped from the source to the target. Based on metaphor being a conceptual phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), it helps us understand one concept in terms of another. Metaphors can be used to tell stories about HRs to imbue the narratives with new meanings that might “have the power to create a new reality”, by changing the perceptions people have about the world and how they act upon them (ibid.: 145, 146). When visual representation, sound, music and other features make meaning, the outcome is a multimodal metaphor where “the two phenomena are cued in more than one sign system, sensory mode, or both” (Forceville, 2008: 469). Our analysis begins by discussing how elements of the narratives in each animentary are intersemiotically translated into visual and audio cues that together build the multimodal metaphor. Then, we explain how each metaphor is situated in political and social reality to help the audience reach new understandings of HRs violations in Palestine.

Animated Visualizations.

To (re)narrate using metaphor, certain elements of the narrative, such as who, where or what happens, are animated to create meaning. Images that stand for people or things carry meaning and realize the metaphor by translating “a system of ideas in a more appealing or conducive image system.” (Wells, 1998: 84). Animation is a disconnect from photographic reality of HRs violations in Palestine; but it is this lack of groundedness that offers the possibility of more metaphoric readings that “materialize certain understandings of human rights ... make some possibilities more real, actualizing some ways of thinking and doing ... in our legal practice, our political imaginations or our day-to-day lives” (Golder, 2019: 324).

B’Tselem tries to challenge the mainstream narrative in Israel regarding the Palestinians by striving “to document and educate the Israeli public and policymakers about human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, combat the phenomenon of denial prevalent among the Israeli public, and help create a human rights culture in Israel.” (Baumgarten-Sharon & Stein, 2015) Therefore, it utilizes animations as spaces to recount counter narratives that reveal the hidden or commonly unbelievably reality.

One way animations visualize meaning is by using game-avatars as representations of characters in the narrative. An avatar is an electronic image that may be manipulated by a gamer. The chosen avatar in A1 belongs to the source domain of a video game to personify a Palestinian in the narrative. As avatars personify the intended metaphor, there are subtle visual cues with overtones of mockery.

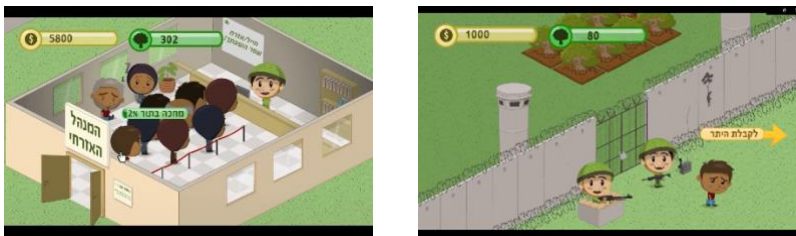


Figure 1. Avatars standing for the oppressor vs. oppressed (stills from A1)

Avatars mock reality here by using subtle cues to highlight the opposition between oppressor and oppressed. A1 is framed in the source domain of a video game to metaphorically narrate how Palestinians suffer from the bureaucratic permit system implemented after building the Separation Barrier between Israel and Palestine, and cutting a number of Palestinian farmers off from their pastures and farmlands. The fictional story, “Old Mousa had a farm”, revolves around the imagined Palestinian farmer, Mousa, whose farm was divided by the Barrier. Reaching it requires a permit which in itself requires numerous documents, takes a long time to be processed and issued, and is dependent on gate opening times. In figure 1, the oppressed Mousa has dark skin, his facial expression is sad and he is shown with his head-lowered. In contrast, Israeli soldiers are white, armed, with fixed smiles on their faces throughout the video. This semiosis seems to be echoing Orientalist representations, which Said (1979) describes as a colonizing tool: the Orientals are recreated as ‘others’, inferior to the West and subjugated to it. Seen from a postcolonial perspective and considering B’Tselem’s 2021 report

designating Israel as an apartheid regime³, these animations within the game frame point to the colonizing practices of the Israeli bureaucracy depriving Palestinians of the freedom to move, thus locating this narrative within grander narratives of Western colonization.



Figure 2. Skin colour as a meaning carrier (still from A2)

Similar cartoonish characters feature human suffering in Gaza, a “manmade humanitarian disaster” (B’Tselem, 2017). The animation in A2 attempts to narrativize the lives of Gazans by showing how they are being denied their basic needs, only to be taken advantage of by Hamas⁴, which although set up to defend Palestinian rights, has also imposed taxes on them. As figure 2 shows, B’Tselem graphically portrays those it interprets to be the main cause of suffering in Gaza: Israeli soldiers and Hamas militants. They are both depicted as oppressing people and benefiting from their suffering. Again, avatars reflect colonial superiority via the skin colour, ignoring the ethnic diversity in Israel, and instead depicting the soldiers with white freckled skin and stern facial expressions. This is paralleled by the manipulative smile on the face of the Hamas militant: someone who, although resembles the victims in appearance, thrives on their misery.



Figure 3. Visualizations of the court system (stills from A3)

³ https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid [accessed 29/11/2022].

⁴ Hamas, founded in 1987, is an Islamic militant nationalist movement that started ruling Gaza after democratic elections held in 2006 (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hamas>, accessed 16/05/2022).

In addition to animating people, an animatory can (re)narrate injustice using a meaningful sequence of contextualized frames. A3 is entitled “Presumed guilty”, which implies that the generally accepted Israeli rule is for Palestinians to be presumed guilty before being tried at the Israeli military courts. B”Tselem subjectively ridicules Israel’s abuse of defendants’ right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. To this end, the gavel is used as a synecdoche that renders the abusive measures of Israeli military courts. Being the only real visual element, it functions as the “part” (gavel) that is associated to the “whole” (court) “to signify the specificity of a narrative event” and “to operate as a metaphor within a narrative” (Wells, 1998: 80). In other words, the gavel symbolizes authority and striking it refers to rulings. These meanings are then enveloped through the performance theme introduced with the visual cues of a theatre, red curtains and spotlights (figure 3). The Israeli military court could have been depicted in a photograph to denote its existence, nonetheless, it is painted. This might be intentionally symbolizing its ‘theatrical’ procedures that start with ‘indictment’, remanding and plea bargaining, but almost always end with ‘conviction’, as the sequence of screenshots in figure 3 demonstrates. This concludes with B”Tselem’s clear statement of position against this; “no trial” means “no justice”, appearing with the final slam of the gavel.



Figure 4. Animated scenario of land seizure (still from A4)

Israel’s settlement policy in the West Bank is partially animated in A4 documenting the government’s policies to grab land. The title clearly articulates B”Tselem stance against the Israeli government’s approach to Palestinian lands through an unusual narrative expression: “by Hook and by Crook”. Modifying the idiom, ‘by hook or by crook’, or ‘by any means’, achieves a rhetorical effect that exaggerates how the practices of flouting laws reflect Israel’s relentless effort to expropriate Palestinian land for settlement building. As figure 4 shows, fictional Palestinian and Israeli characters are represented as identical. This can be justified by the purpose of the animated parts which is mainly to explain the process of land seizure. Victims in

this example need no specific animations since they are interviewed in real-time in the animentary with their names, villages and narratives, following documentary practice.



Figure 5. The fracture metaphor realized via metamorphosis (stills from A5)

The animated narration in A5 is an imaginary scenario that (re)narrates a real shooting by means of audio-visual effects. The animentary begins with a written text naming an Israeli staff sergeant, Leonardo Kora, as the one who “shot a bound Palestinian”. After the soldier briefly tells how he did it, a fracture spreads from the victim to the soldier, the commander and lastly a collage of photographs (figure 5). According to Wells (1998: 84), the meaning of metaphors cannot be specific because they “emerge from a second-order notion of representation” which offers a “parallel narrative” and other discourses that invite engagement. The animator presents an interpretation of the narrative using the fracture, which can be understood as the potential irreparable repercussions of such crimes. This is left to the viewer to interpret as either the gradual erosion of conscientiousness, as Kora himself admits (figure 6) or other threats that Israel could be exposed to.



Figure 6. Kora’s reference to conscience (stills from A5)

Soundtracks. Soundtracks, which include “(v)oice, music, song and sound effect” (Wells, 1998: 99) complement the metaphor in the visual image and tend to “condition an audience’s response to it” by creating the mood and emphasis (ibid: 97) in the animentary. One way soundtracks function is through diegetic character monologue (ibid: 97). For instance, A5 features a speaker in Hebrew, which links the voice and language in the mind of the listener to the soldier who committed the crime of shooting. B’Tselem does not clarify if this is the soldier’s voice, which leaves it to the listener to build this connection with the real world knowing that it is based on an actual interview. Additionally, the monologue accompanies the sequence of images with the cracking sound of the fracture spreading, which creates the illusion of movement to restructure the flow of events, allowing the viewer to assemble the cues and interact with the narrative. An indexical point is the actual sound of the shooting, taken from raw footage of the event and dramatized by being repeated twice to signify the shooting’s possible ripple effect, thus compacting the message of the animentary in sound.

In A3, repeated diegetic sound also functions as non-diegetic to exaggerate the narrative and create “the emotional synchrony of the voice ... reinforcing modes of naturalism” (Wells, 1998: 98). The sound of a gavel congruent with courts is combined with the dramatized effect of repetition to narrate the violations and symbolize the far-reaching impact of court rulings on the lives of Palestinians. This sound is synchronized with that of continuous drumming, which might not happen in a theatre yet assimilates what happens in courts to a show aiming to entertain (e.g. in a circus). Again, diegetic and non-diegetic sound in A4 concurrently create authentic meaning: the documentary parts feature voices of the interviewees, while the animated parts are accompanied by audible expressions, such as shushing to express the cunning secrecy of the land seizure, and the fast tempoed music once land is taken to show how quickly settlements are built.

Sometimes, the soundtrack comes to “delineate specific narrative information” (Wells, 1998: 99). The game-like soundtrack in A1 is an instance of music creating the ambiance of an imagined game context to solidify the metaphor and engage the audience. Likewise, A2’s cartoonish musical background conveys the message of manipulation as it builds the aural atmosphere to narrate the suffering of a helpless population. In both, music distances the animentary from reality to ridicule it through B’Tselem’s metaphoric framing of the narratives.

Multimodal metaphors.

Having explained how meaning can be subtly made using visual and audio cues in animentaries, we now proceed to explain the metaphors and their relevance to the reality of HRs in Palestine. Each metaphor is capitalized in smaller font after Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

From the game context in A1, we see that Palestinians are objectified as toys that the occupation manipulates through the military and the civil administration. The animatory concludes with their failure to meet the requirements of the permit system, hence creating the metaphor *THE PERMIT SYSTEM IS A LOSING GAME*. This metaphor is a parody of reality, though it is not far removed from how matters are on the ground. Weizman (2007) has extensively studied the architecture of the occupation citing the Israeli activist Jeff Halper who likens the reality there to the Japanese game *GO* in which one wins by immobilizing the opponent (p. 81). Thus, the dramatization in the animatory gains evidentiary power that comes from drawing the audience toward “the affective, experiential dimension of lived reality” (Nichols, 1991: 158). This ties in with B’Tselem’s organizational narrativity of pursuing the ending of the occupation’s abusive policies⁵.



Figure 7. People get more miserable, Hamas gets richer (still from A2)

In a similar vein, A2 narrates how Gazans are caught between the hammer of the Israeli siege and the anvil of Hamas’ manipulation of their basic needs. With the closing scene showing a Hamas militant’s triumphant smile alongside people’s misery (figure 7), the suggested metaphor *BLOCKADE IS CARTOON* ridicules the futility of the siege by exposing how it only increased suffering. Considering the political reality, Israel is internationally recognized as an occupying power; and its restriction of entry and exit from Gaza - designed to topple Hamas - is also understood as the main cause of the severe economic and humanitarian crisis. Another politically contested issue is that Hamas is the democratically elected government there, and imposing taxes on the people does not violate any known

⁵ B’Tselem initiated its activism in 1989 against the occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza, https://www.btselem.org/about_btselem [accessed 30/05/2022].

law. Stirring controversy over these issues, which are entangled with broader narratives about terror, in a cartoon metaphor leaves human suffering to fade in the background. Decentering the victims and defaming Hamas in the animentry produces a pale narrative to campaign for a population that is 80% below the poverty line, with 1.1 million reliant on aid to survive and 20,000 homeless⁶.

The opening of A3 with curtains to introduce the ‘so-called court’ (figure 3) criticises outright the military courts of the occupation. The animentry progresses through the metaphor ISRAELI COURTS ARE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE, connoting the absurdity of these courts as they operate in the West Bank and can remand Palestinians “in custody for the duration of the proceedings” (Baumgarten-Sharon & Stein, 2015: 6). Detainment humiliates defendants, deprives them of securing legal defence and subjects them to the confinement of prison life (ibid: 5). Real stories or faces of Palestinians are not shown, which means that this animentry could be considered a docudrama, as it provides “the re-creation, by dramatic means, of certain actually occurring events” (Currie, 1999: 295)⁷. Despite the name, docudramas are not considered documentaries, at best ‘fact fictions’, because each “morsel of assertion is thickly coated with fictional detail” (ibid: 295). The fictional scenario though is validated in this instance by B’Tselem’s report entitled “Presumed Guilty” (Baumgarten-Sharon & Stein, 2015) that cites specific case studies and functions as a paratext. So, A3 can be considered a dramatized non-mimetic version of actual events in analogy of the truth about the legal procedures that in reality hide numerous infringements of international law. Hence, the organization’s lighthearted presentation of this injustice makes a more powerful narration.

The metaphor in A4 is not clear, yet we contend that building on its title and the following commentary, “How to build an illegal settlement”, the animated sections indirectly communicate the metaphor ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT BUILDING IS CARTOON, implying critique by mapping the playfulness from children’s cartoons to the manipulations that take place to expropriate land. Through an acted scenario, the animated sections recreate how Israeli citizens claim to have bought land from Palestinians without official documents, ask the government secretly to manage this land for them and eventually declare it state-owned to give it to the Israelis. Visualizing this unknown process can “facilitate awareness, understanding and compassion from the audience for a subject-position potentially far removed from their own.” (Honesty Roe, 2011: 228). In addition to the non-fictional animated acting, the narration is supported by a realistic element: in the testimonies of two named Palestinian farmers from Bil’in, a Palestinian village whose people lost their land to this law. Another realistic aspect is that Israeli law is explained by Michael Sfar, an Israeli HRs law expert

⁶ https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20091227 [accessed 18/05/2022].

⁷ A1 and A2 can also be considered docudramas narrativizing unseen suffering.

who represented the residents of Bil'in in court. The fact that he is an Israeli citizen involved in the case enhances credibility.

As a narration, *A5* evokes what cannot be shown using photorealism: the reverberations of soldier misconduct. So, the Israeli staff sergeant's reference to his eroded conscience (figure 6) is the unreported area that the animator pinpoints to alert Israelis to the unseen damage of such misconduct on its own individuals and communities. This evocative framing creates meaning by deflecting attention from HRs breaches to the repercussions. The shooter and the shot are real people whose names appear in reports of the incident, yet the animatory mentions the soldier's name only⁸. While this might be intended to highlight the crime, the victim is almost put on a par with the victimizer as they both metamorphose into black-and-white faceless figures (figure 5), dehumanising both. Metamorphosis (Wells, 1998: 69) is an important narrative strategy employed to build the multimodal metaphor, whereby all the characters metamorphose from photographic to animated, then from intact to fractured. In this instance, the transmutation enables preserving narrative continuity when linking narratives of 'victims versus victimizers' and to extend the individual to the collective by utilizing "the fluid abstract stage between the fixed properties of images before and after transition" (ibid: 69). As such, the narrative of human suffering is backgrounded to put more emphasis on directing the message to Israelis. This presents the metaphor SECURITY FORCES VIOLENCE IS FRACTURE. The fracture metaphor narrativizes the layers of suffering in a sequence that shows how pain transfers from victims to their victimizers via features enabled by animation.



Figure 8. Photographic documentation of the shooting incident (still from *A5*)

The animatory uses an actual photograph depicting the soldier, the back of a blindfolded bound Palestinian, and an Israeli lieutenant-colonel (figure 8). The photograph was captured from raw footage taken by a Palestinian youngster from

⁸ The Israeli soldier is Leonardo Kora and the Palestinian young man is Ashraf Abu-Rahma, https://www.btselem.org/firearms/20110127_nilin_shooting_sentence [accessed 25/08/2022].

her window⁹. It is worth noting here that one of the indicators of referentiality between B’Tselem’s work and the reality on the ground is its Camera Project¹⁰. By giving cameras to Palestinians in the West Bank, B’Tselem trains them to become citizen journalists; it then publishes the recordings of incidents from their daily lives under occupation. This solidifies B’Tselem’s credibility as an NGO that has direct contact with the victims and is consequently able to authenticate the personal and public narratives it documents through collaborative activism.

6. Conclusion

Animentaries as intersemiotic translations enable the metaphoric (re)narration of real stories. Narrative rootedness in realism is maintained through pertinent raw footage, news reports, statistics, interviews and sound. As discussed, documenting narratives of suffering could be more powerful via animations to understand unseen aspects and maintain the stance of the reporting organization. Examples from the analysis show that B’Tselem sometimes fails to foreground the human tragedy in (re)narrations, which risks that such short messages could misrepresent the victims and cause their narratives to be dwarfed by deflecting attention to other issues. In other examples, metaphors show the animentary potential to represent, interpret and infer reality through unreal visuals and studio-constructed audio. Generating metaphors in animentaries translates meaning visually and aurally to (re)narrate reality to once again stimulate audiences to take action against injustice. Due to the longevity of the Palestinian tragedy, HRs narratives could be a subject that the public conscientiousness has become desensitized to. Consequently, these narratives will need unconventional methods to fight against the “compassion fatigue” (Moeller, 2018: 75) that has normalized Palestinian suffering.

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⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qY92YOlV54> [accessed 30/05/2022].

¹⁰ <https://www.btselem.org/video/about-btselem-video> [accessed 30/05/2022].

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