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*Syria is not so far away: a translation
proposal from English to Italian of four
short stories by Ghaiḥ Alhallak*

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Non sarò mai abbastanza cinico
da smettere di credere
che il mondo possa essere
migliore di com'è

Ma non sarò neanche tanto stupido
da credere che il mondo
possa crescere se non parto da me

(Dario Brunori)

To my family and Giovanni.

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Introduction

Translating is an extraordinary and remarkable activity. Translating means bringing people and cultures closer, and it allows those who are working on this communication to become aware and understand those differences that are expected to keep us apart. However, as Tymoczko says, “translation is not a simple matter of communication and transfer” (2006: 447). It can be a tool to prove something, it can be a weapon to challenge a belief, it can be used to help or to control someone. More importantly, translation is a practice that allows ideas and beliefs to travel around the world, whether they are ideas of tolerance and openness or discrimination. Behind the practice, itself is the role of translator, often seen as an invisible individual (Venuti, 2008), whose traces cannot easily be found in the target texts, at least not if he or she is a good one, according to the traditional belief. Give all you have got, take nothing in return, if not the satisfaction that, thanks to your services, more people will be able to read. But this view of the translator is not the same around the world. Other cultures have seen translation in very different ways from intercultural communication and transfer. For instance, in the Arabic language, “the role of the translator was seen as related to that of a narrator”, somebody that choose to decide what translate and how to translate it (Tymoczko, 2006: 449). I reflected a great deal on this idea.

Before starting this research, I tried to put together two different urges that I felt. First, the necessity to conclude my academic period with a written piece that would represent my two years of studies spent in the University of Padua, while optimistically giving a true representation of my interests and ideal ambitions after the academic course. After all, the master’s thesis is often considered a student’s most valuable way to present him/herself academically. Secondly, as a final project, I wanted to do something more practical rather than theoretical, and hence my preference for a translation proposal; but, more importantly, I wanted to work on something worthwhile that could give me a sense of fulfilment in my profession. In short, I wanted to do, in the words of my thesis advisor, “something for the world”. In the young and perhaps unsatisfied outlook of my academic course, and also thanks to the social imagery and common stereotypes associated to this job and personal experiences, I felt most disappointed to perceive the role of the translator as something limited on an intellectual realm, separated from the social and political environment that I often came in contact with every day. Imagining the translators as

passive agents that have no say in the realm of reality but practice their profession keeping the distances from the narratives that they constantly interact with gave me a sense of frustration that lead me to go against these stereotypes and actively work to look for an alternative.

I tried to reach a rather different representation of translation, one that differs from what society has learned to think about. Through my study, I worked on concepts such as translation and ideology, activism and resistance, to represent translation as an activist practice, rather than just an intellectual one. I focused on specific cases where the translation is more than just another “business as usual” job that is reduced to fulfilling a series of assignment (in this case, translating a text) to gain an income. I wanted to imagine the work of translation carried out in this thesis, as well as the work of other translators in the world, as an act of resistance, and I tried to imagine myself according to the image that I elaborated of the translator: an activist.

The structure of the research

The thread followed by this research is very linear. It started by examining the role of translator and deconstructing the traditional and flat image that is often used to portray the translator as a neutral agent. First, I have discussed the simplistic notion of “in-betweenness” used to explain why and how translators should work without a personal viewpoint. I will briefly mention Venuti’s theory on the translator’s invisibility (2008) as the ideal example of that mentality that encourages translators to be passive and almost invisible in the text.

In the second part, the main objective is to focus on the role of translation concerning the general concept of narrative accounts. The narrative theory promoted by Baker in her book (“Translation and Conflict. A narrative account”, 2006), as well as other minor sources, was presented both to justify the impossibility of a translator’s total neutrality and to explain why translation is a crucial tool in our society if we decide to rely on this theory and believe to the existence and strong influence of narratives in everyday life. There will be a brief explanation of what narrative accounts are and how translation can be used in relation to this topic, either constructing or countering the narrative accounts of the conflict. Fisher’s paradigm, which aims to explain how people tend to prioritize and assess narratives, as well as framing, the approach that people tend

to use to adapt reality to their perspective, will also be part of the study that aims to validate my theory on translators' lack of neutrality.

Moving to the second chapter, the next step was to reinforce the idea that translators can actively embrace their role and behave as independent agents on their own, and this was possible thanks to the notion of agency. By recognizing the existence of the agency, several other aspects were important to consider, such as norms, codes of conduct, self-reflexivity, professional limitations, and visibility. All these elements enter in contrast in a way or another with the role of translator once he or she is seen as an individual and independent agent rather than a neutral mediator. If we agree that a translator possesses agency, is he allowed to break norms and betray his or her professional code of conduct? Does this agency need to be emphasized through a more visible stance in the translation process? What and where are the limits once we agree that translators are capable of disagreeing with the narratives that they are expected to help share? After presenting the concept of agency and what its existence implies, the analysis moves to the balance between agency, the freedom of the translator to work on the source text, and the norms that limit said freedom. In this part will be also mentioned the importance of codes of ethics and codes of conduct and their relationship with professionalism. Related to this issue is also the famous Chesterman's Oath, a proposal offered by Andrew Chesterman in his essay ("Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath", 2001), to help translators to rely on a set of code of ethics. Then, there will be a section devoted to the notion of the involved translator, meaning someone that makes use of his or her agency to improve the text. In this context is worth to mention Venuti's theory (2008) on the need for translators to be visible in the text, contrary to the traditional image of the perfect translator (an invisible one), as well as his critics. Lastly, I will discuss the concept of self-reflexivity, an approach that should help translators to reflect on themselves rather than the text and the context in which they are working. Self-examination is an interesting practice because it allows the person to acknowledge their limits and frames that they use to see reality and, for instance, in the case of translation, the source text. The concept of self-reflection helps us to understand that if we examine our relationship with the Other, meaning something external to us as individuals and society and culture, we might end up finding out more about ourselves than anything else.

In the third chapter, the central topic is the use of translation within the context of activism. In this study, translation is seen as a social act. This part is connected to the discussion on the translator agency, one's role in the process of constructing new narratives and the importance of ethics and humanitarian attitude within a professional worker. In the first part of the chapter, I took some time to show how the idea of translation has evolved from a theoretical point view, pointing out the major steps that have been taken in Translation Studies concerning the relationship between translation and ethics. I will therefore present the following theoretical advances: the Cultural Turn, the Postcolonial Translation Studies and the advent of Sociology in translation studies, as well as the emergence of narrative theory promoted by Baker. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the notion of activism, its role in the 21st century and the main changes that occurred worldwide in the last decades, primarily globalization and the technological advance, the relationship between activism and translation and the main traits that activist translation currently has. As the new changes in the current century affected society and therefore activist communities, they also influenced the communities of activist translators, as well as their methods. Once again, I will briefly focus on the importance of balance, which in this case concerns activism and professionalism.

Finally, in the 4th chapter, I will take into account the topic of migration and the outcomes that translation can provide when dealing with the narration of the migration crisis. First the study will present how migration became one of the central topics of the current century and how racism, fuelled by new media, nowadays created a distorted image of migrants and refugees. Secondly, I will present some examples of translation as a tool that endorse a positive narrative of cooperation between migrants and the country that host them, as well as narratives that identify migrants not as an object that need to be examined, but rather active subjects. When presenting the idea of translation as a tool that promotes recognition, I will primarily rely on Rosario Martín Ruano's essay ("Developing Public Service Translation and Interpreting under the Paradigm of Recognition: Towards Diversity-Sensitive Discourses on Ethics in PSIT", 2017). In this section, I also wanted to point out the value of migrants sharing their personal experiences, an activity that proves crucial both for the individual (as a means to overcome trauma) as well as the community that listens to these stories.

The second part of the 4th chapter is separated from the rest, mainly because I solely focus on Syria's civil war and the crisis of internally displaced people and asylum seekers, although it is partly connected to the topic of migration that I examined in the first part of the chapter. I chose to spend a few pages to present this topic for two reasons. First, I wanted to guarantee the reader a good background before moving to the translation proposals that I have offered, which are connected to the Syrian war. Secondly, because as a translator myself that had to work on the source texts, I needed to gain adequate knowledge of the background of these stories. In my opinion, when translating about socio-political topics or events that took place in a specific historical moment, knowing the contexts around the source texts is essential. The translation proposals and my notes made during the translation process are part of chapter 5th. As I have said in advance, the translation proposals consist of four short stories that revolve around the Syrian conflict and the refugee crisis that arose from the civil war. The stories aim at telling the audience what events the author and other characters that he describes had experienced. All are narrated with no sense of hope nor despair, but a bare realism that simply presents the facts as they are: people die, war is terrible, and innocents suffer while rich dictators and politicians keep carousing in their ivory towers, while a country falls apart from inside and outside. Lastly, in the last section of my study, I will draw conclusions on the work that has been conducted and the translation proposals that have been made.

Ghaith Alhallak and his stories

Before focusing on the Italian translations of the short stories, it is crucial to give some background that allows the readers to understand where these stories are set and why I consider them important to be read by an Italian audience. I will give a brief presentation of Ghaith Alhallak, the Syrian author and translator from Arab to English that I have worked with. Then, I will briefly give a synopsis of the stories that I have translated.

I first met Ghaith Alhallak in Padua in December 2019, where he was studying and working. We had the chance to meet thanks to Professor Dalziel, who suggested that I read and translate the two short stories that Alhallak wrote and the other two that he translated from Arabic to English. The idea was to turn these stories into a theatre script and use them for a theatre project on the topic of migration and inclusion. When Alhallak and I met, we discussed the translations and the few points that were unclear to me during

the translation, and I asked him to tell me his personal opinions on how he felt working with me to produce the scripts for a play. I also had the chance to hear directly from him about his life and his past experiences that led him to move to Italy. Ghaith Alhallak is from a city called Salamiyya, in the province of Hama. He was studying computer science at the University of Aleppo, and although in Syria it is mandatory to do military service at eighteen, he managed to postpone the call due to his studies. In 2010, he joined the army at the age of twenty-five, and although his service was supposed to end after less than two years, the conflict in the country led the Syrian government to enact new regulations that forced him to stay in the army longer than expected, with the order to fight against the rebels. On February 14 of 2013, while Alhallak was doing his patrol near his military unit, a missile exploded near the tank he was in, and he was badly injured. During his recovery in hospital, where he had some of the shrapnel removed from his head (there are six pieces left now), he decided to desert the army and flee to Lebanon. The regime was guilty of barbaric atrocities that he could not accept any longer. He entered Lebanon, where he experienced being treated as a refugee. Finally, thanks to the humanitarian corridor, he was able to reach Italy, where he was able to start a new life away from the war, and he managed to help his parents flee Syria as well. Now he is studying at Padova University and teaching Arabic, his native language, online as a conversation assistant with language students.

Synopses

The 1st story is about Alhallak 's own experience in the army and the reason why he decided to desert, after reflecting on the regime's inhumane conduct against the Syrian people. The sense of disappointment and rage against the Assad regime is palpable, and it emerges through the lines of the text. This short story was also published on several websites, and it was the first time that I had learnt about Alhallak and his accounts, even before meeting him. This is the most personal story that was written the author, and I tried to be as faithful as possible in my translation.

In the 2nd story, Alhallak describes his relationship with a girl called Nahala, who is currently living in a refugee camp in the north of Syria. The main characteristic of this story is the dialogue between Alhallak and Nahala that stretches over the whole text. The possibility to communicate is given by the fact that both Alhallak and Nahala's parents

have a phone, hence the term "phone friend" that Alhallak uses referring to the child. Although unlike the first story, there are no strong images of violence and death, this story is not easy to handle, mainly due to the discrepancy between Nahala's childish behaviour in contrast with the tragedy of the situation. This contrast between the child's viewpoint and the harsh reality that Alhallak and her parents experience is even more accentuated by her condition as a visually impaired person, which does not allow her to see the world as it is. Perhaps, as the narrator tells us in the end, she is the only one that is truly capable of seeing things as they should be, and the rest of us are blind.

The 3rd story has an interesting background behind it. It was published on an Arabic website¹, and it circulated on many Arabic social media. According to the Médecins sans Frontières article, it was allegedly written and found on the body of Syrian refugee who drowned before being rescued, although there is no evidence of its authenticity. However, being such a powerful text, Alhallak decided to translate it from Arabic to English, and I was assigned to translate it from English to Italian. Even if the poem was published a few years ago, its powerful message is still current, since the death tolls in the Mediterranean Sea and the war in Syria are not dropping yet. I would like to clarify that I found translations of this text online, both in Italian and English, but I did not take inspiration from those versions.

The 4th story was written in Arabic by a friend of Alhallak's and it was published in an Arabic online journal. Alhallak managed to translate the original text into English, and I worked on the translation from English to Italian. In the story the author uses the metaphor of the snail to narrate the story of a group of Syrian people that tried to escape the conflict, leaving their city and carrying only the bare necessities as if they were snails, living with their houses on their shoulders. The author was born and raised in the city of Salamiyya, which is thirty minutes away from the city of Homs, where she studied at university. Homs is one of the cities that were most affected by the war and has been "reduced to a ruined ghost town" after the rebels withdrew in spring of 2012 (Reilly, 2019: 201). Many parts of the city have never been reconstructed. Once the clashes were over, she had the chance to visit the city. After the trip to Homs, she decided to write this short story. It was a difficult translation, mostly due to the double step in translation and because I do not have the linguistic competence to verify the original text. I faced the

¹ <https://www.msf.org.za/stories-news/video-photos/video/sorry-i-drowned>

same problem that I had with the third story, although in this case, it was difficult to translate both from a technical and linguistic point of view, due to the images created by the author to narrate the events poetically.

The aim of the research

Though the study that I have conducted in these months, I want to substantiate my views on the role of translators and the utility of the practice of translation within society. The following points illustrate the ideas that I developed and examined in the following chapters:

- the idea that translation is not a neutral practice and translators are not passive actors in the translating process;
- the fact that translators are in fact individuals that have their viewpoint and can choose to follow the rules, as well as breaking them (they have the agency to put their abilities and competence at the service of different causes, for instance, activism and human rights);
- the idea that our society depends on narratives that shape reality as we see it, and therefore we should pay close attention to which narratives we decide to follow;
- the view that, for this reason, since narratives only travel around the world thanks to translation and interpreting, the translators have a crucial role in the world-making system;
- the idea that due to this crucial role, translators should have the responsibility to reflect on what they translate and how they translate it, and whether they are doing something good or not for the society they live in.

The latter is my personal view, although I am well aware that it is way too simplistic to address it when considering the reality of a translation job: translators do not often work as volunteers and cannot reject assignments, regardless of their political views.

The main theory that I relied on to present my ideas is narrative theory examined in Chapter 1, although I have considered several ones during my study. Regarding the translation proposals, usually, the work on them is made by using a translation theory on the text, but in this case, the situation is quite the opposite. There is a separation between the translated texts and the theoretical part, except for the 4th chapter where I present the Syrian war. The theory does not serve to justify technical choices in the text, but rather to

explain my approach and the motivations that pushed me to translate it. I would even suggest that the text is an example to prove my point. The main purpose of the translation proposals that I have made is to allow Gaith Alhallak to share with the Italian audience his stories and spread awareness of what happened and what is currently happening in Syria.

Chapter One: The basis of translator agency

This chapter was written to introduce the reader to the subject of translation's use for positive purposes, as well as the potential of translation in socio-political issues, such as the topic of migration, refugee crisis and integration. The first step that needs to be taken is to change the common perspective of translation as a naturally impartial activity and move towards a rather different and more committed viewpoint. The first part of the chapter aims to present the main questions that arose before starting to work on this research on the reasons that drove me to choose specific texts and, more generally, on what pushes a translator to work on certain texts. The purpose of translation, the meaning behind a translator's choice is the subject of this short section. In the second part, the analysis focuses on deconstructing the status of translation as an activity that takes place in the middle of two or more cultures and the translator as a neutral agent that can easily switch between the source and the target language and culture without falling into any type of subjectivity. The metaphor that is taken as an example of this simplistic representation of the translation activity is the image of the bridge that is expected to connect the source and the target language. Moving to the third and main section of this chapter, the main object of study is Baker's narrative theory. This theory focuses on the notion of narrative and offers new insight into how individual and collective beliefs and behaviours, as well as social and international relationships, are constructed. This analysis on Baker's theory allows me to explain the power that narratives have in our everyday lives, as well as the crucial role of translation and interpreting in sharing or contrasting narrative on a global or multinational level. Finally, in the last section, after a brief focus on the Fisher's paradigm on how individuals tend to assess narratives, the analysis shifts towards the relationship between narrative theory and translation and the central role of translation in narrative theory. Through a focus on the notion of framing, I want to show that not only translation is essential to share narratives across cultural and linguistic boundaries, but also that it can be used to contrast certain narratives and elaborate new ones and, ultimately, it is not a neutral process.

1.1 The purpose of the translation

One of the questions that a translator, whether a professional or non-professional, is expected to answer when choosing his or her next project, is the reason behind that choice.

Why did you select this text? Why that article? Why that book? And, indeed, considering the vast amount of literary and specialized texts that still need to be converted into yet another foreign language from which translators can choose, the question is justified. Together with it, another one follows, right after the selected text has been translated. The question addresses the translation choices made. In general, why has the translator chosen to convert the story following this method rather than another one? Most of the time, the answer is obvious: professional translators are bound to employment contracts that prevent them from picking their next assignment. This legal constraint, while providing the content to work on and a guaranteed income, can be also seen as a limitation to the translator's choice.

There are however other cases where, due to various reasons such as volunteering or freelancing, the translator is in a situation of flexibility that allows him or her to freely choose whatever he or she would like to translate. These preferences are guided by a personal interest in a subject, whether it is a technical or literary translation. When one is given free choice on a translation, it might be wise to select a text that one is eager to work on. Let there are also circumstances in which the decision is based on other factors, such as personal reasons, ethical choices or religious beliefs. The way people see and perceive certain issues, for instance, can dramatically change their assumptions and behaviour toward these topics. Moreover, it is always this wide array of beliefs that influences the translation choices as regards terms, structures or expressions more flexibly compared to the source text.

The aforementioned query is the starting point of the theoretical section of this translation project, and the reason is the fact that this same question arose once the texts to translate were picked. Since this translation project has not been commissioned nor it is included in a job contract, it is a voluntary and autonomous decision made by the translator herself. Hence, it is fair to ask, why should someone choose to translate the short stories which the project focuses on? What is the purpose of translating them from English to Italian? What is the reason that moves translators to select certain texts like the ones that have been examined in this project? These were just some of the questions that piled up before this research work, as well as others related to the subject of those texts that have been translated. Questions about the role of the translators, the scope of the humanitarian-orientated translation and the purpose of these short stories. It is fair to say

that this study has provided interesting insights into the aim of translation as a functional aid tool to share knowledge and promote constructive narratives of cooperation and solidarity.

Before focusing on this specific purpose of translation, it is necessary to analyse the content from a wider perspective. The main consideration that needs to be made when discussing translation choices is to clarify the general purpose of a translator. What should it be? Translation, according to House, although being located on a lower level than writing, “undoubtedly provides an important service in that it mediates between different languages, overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers” (House, 2018: 5). Its capacity to create a so-called “equivalence” (a term widely discussed in the academic field) between a source and a target text is the main point of translation (House, 2018: 9). Many scholars of translation studies, as well as general assumptions, identify the translator as someone who “bridges a gap” between two or more languages and, consequently, cultures (St. André, 2017: 285; Gonzales, 2018: 48; Baker, 1992: 8; Chesterman, 2001: 150; House, 2018: 9). Hence, the idea behind any translation would be to make a text available to as many people as possible. The link between the job of translator and the metaphor “translation/bridge”, as well as the concept of being located in a state of “in-betweenness” is a common refrain inside and outside the area of Translation Studies, but these terms should nonetheless be used carefully and perhaps with a critical view (Baker, 2005). However simple and suitable this concept of “bridge” can be, it should not be taken as an exhausting and only answer to the question of what a translation is or what a translator does. For the sake of correctness, when discussing this metaphor, it should also be clarified that there are various opinions as to whether what should be identified as the bridge is the translator, the act of translating or the translation itself. St. André, for instance, identifies the product of the translation process (the translated text), instead of the translator, as the bridge in between (2017: 290). Either way, to merely restrict our focus on translation to this metaphor without further observations would be unwise and particularly limiting concerning our idea of the translator’s potential. It is, in fact, essential to examine this metaphor with a critical approach and assess the risks that come with this assumption.

The approach with which I will examine translation and translator role in the following sections is to look at them from the outside with different viewpoints, especially

the sociological one. This idea of looking at translation from a different perspective takes inspiration directly from the methods adopted by those scholars that focused on the socio-cultural context of translation (i.e. post-colonialists), to examine hidden power relations and ideologies behind the translation processes (House, 2018: 40). The idea is to stress the fact that translation cannot and should not be considered a neutral and idealized (such as in the case of the metaphor “translation/bridge”) practice.

1.2 Deconstructing the notion of “in-betweenness”

Translation is often identified as a process of recreation, where the original text is ideally rewritten in another language. However, when we think carefully about it, we can see how the final result of the translation is an “interpreted version of the original” rather than a reproduction of the source text (House, 2018: 10). This reflection should already give a hint on how the naïve idea of a perfectly balanced betweenness, fidelity, and especially total impartiality in translation should be and is already challenged in various fields of translation studies. The idea of neutral mediator clashes with “the reality of the more ambiguous role of translators and interpreters in situations of conflict that involve unequal power relationships, exploitation and injustice” (House, 2018: 160-161). After all, as Pym claims in his essay, translators should consider themselves and be seen in their job as intellectuals, rather than “mere technicians” (Pym, 2010: 179). In my opinion, if we can change this mindset about the translator’s true role in society, several misconceptions would inevitably collapse and the knowledge of the limits, potentials and responsibilities of translators as intellectuals would no longer be ignored.

1.2.1 More than a bridge

The first step that needs to be taken is to deconstruct these idealized and yet oversimplified concepts of the “translator as a bridge-builder” and ‘translation as a bridge’. First, it is acknowledged that one of the best ways to picture and describe the work of a translator is by focusing on how they create a connection between two worlds that otherwise would inevitably be separated, and what better image that the bridge to represent this linguistic bond and the translator as the bridge builder? After all, the image itself is faithful to reality, where translation and interpreting simply serve as a neutral channel to convey something, and translators and interpreters are not the main subjects

of exchange between languages and cultures (House, 2018: 9). But however true and clear this view can be, there might be something missing. The risk of describing translation as a practice where translators act as a neutral go-between is that they may be treated and perceived as tools and not as individuals (House, 2018: 161). Hence, their capability to elaborate opinions regarding certain issues can or should be ignored, as well as their role and agency (Pym, 2010: 167-168). Either a translator agrees to have no say over the communication process, or it is taken for granted that translators should not interfere in the communication process.

In this regards, an interesting stance has been taken by scholar Lawrence Venuti with his theory of the translator's invisibility. I will offer a more in-depth analysis of this argument in the following chapter, but it is worth to mention his work while discussing the devaluation of the translator's role. According to Venuti, the notion of invisibility refers to the effort of the translator to make the translated text as fluent as possible, thus as readable as possible for the target audience. Therefore, as Venuti efficiently explain "the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (Venuti, 2008: 1). Under this principle of fluent translation, highly preached especially in the English-speaking world, the translator is expected to disappear, therefore to hide his or her work and to mask the status of the translation "as an illusion" (Venuti, 2008: 4-5). The risk is that instead of respecting a hierarchical order of authorship (meaning that the author is the creator of the content and the translator convert the text), the translator's role and work are once again undervalued (Venuti, 2008: 6). Even translators themselves tend to follow this mentality, praising for a "self-annihilation" that inevitably lead to reinforcing a "shadowy existence" of the translator (Venuti, 2008: 7-8). In contrast, for Venuti, a good translator must strive to make himself or herself visible within the translated text, to raise the awareness that the text created is not an original (Kadiu, 2019: 22). The notion of "foreignization", to "point to the foreignness of the source text" (Kadiu, 2019: 32) and make the reader aware that the texts have been originally written in another language, not only helps translators to gain visibility, but it also shows the imbalance between the translated and translating culture. Unfortunately, the translator's status and translation practice itself has often been neglected (Venuti, 2008: viii). It should be clarified that these criticisms are not intended to question the professional implications of this job, namely that workers are expected to

be efficient when translating or interpreting, but rather the idea that due to this supposed professionalism, translators and interpreters are not expected to have personal beliefs or a will of their own.

1.2.2 Translation and its ethics

Another issue is that categorically agreeing with this idea of “bridging” may lead to a distorted perception of the translator as a mindless mediator who lacks personal ideas on ethics and does not find faults in their own culture or the other. These ideal translators are perfectly impartial and can perform while enjoying a comfortable position of “in-betweenness” that prevents them from addressing social or ethical issues (Salama-Carr, 2007: 1). Translation, then, risks being seen as a passive act (Chesterman, 2001: 151), a view that has been heavily criticized by Baker. “Ethical passivity” thus becomes the threat that must be dismantled, in order to turn the translator into “an active participant” (House, 2018: 166). In this perspective, translation is not only a simple mediation process but an “intervention process” that inevitably lacks neutrality (House, 2018: 166).

With the words of Mona Baker,

“the spatial metaphor of the ‘in-between’ is particularly pervasive in more recent writing on translation [...]. It either locates translators, by default, within static and discrete ‘cultural’ groupings based on national, religious or gender affiliation, for instance, or in an idealised no-man’s land lying between two such discrete groupings. Thus the idea of intercultural is used to create a neutral space for translators to act as honest brokers who are not embedded in either culture, who can transcend any cultural or political affiliation, at least while they’re engaged in the highly romanticised task of translating”².

According to Baker (2005), translators are supposed to be able to detach themselves from their original “cultural group” when performing, and therefore can take an impartial position. This, however, turns out to be almost impossible, since it is clear that “translators and interpreters appear to be rooted in one culture, inevitably enmeshed in what they describe” (Salama-Carr, 2007: 1). Humans are affected by what surrounds them, whether it is culture, language, social norms or values; otherwise it would be impossible for them to adapt to an environment. People are expected to incorporate local habits and ideas, whether intentionally or not, to fit into society. Yet, this does not mean that translators, interpreters or people, in general, are limited in their way of thinking or depend on fixed

² Baker, M. (2005). *Narratives in and of Translation*. SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation, 1(1), 11.

ideologies. People can acknowledge how a certain environment shaped them and even object to it.³

In addition to this, one should also consider the contexts that translators and interpreters witness and where they struggle to act objectively. Quoting Salama-Carr, translators and interpreters might “witness abuses of human rights, which can shatter the capacity to act in a detached manner, and undermine the observance of strict impartiality and expected unobtrusiveness” (2007: 1). Once again, if we decide to support the idea that translators can abstract themselves from context when working, we accept that they can operate like machines. This concept of the so-called “professional detachment” will be further criticized in the following chapter about Mona Baker’s narrative theory, which points to the impossibility of neutrality, even for mediators such as translators and interpreters. What is more, it is taken for granted that translators and interpreters can work regardless of context because their professional position will allow them to be untouched from an ethical point of view, or because they always stand on the right side of the conflict. Either they are portrayed as mindless mediators, or their job is romantically portrayed as a noble act of selfless hard work for a greater good. Moreover, this last observation reinforces the biased idea that translation is always performed with a positive purpose, that “communication, dialogue, understanding, and indeed knowledge are assumed to be ‘good’ in a moral sense” (Baker, 2005: 9).

First of all, it would be simplistic to restrict the responsibility of translators and interpreters to the textual level, meaning that they only have to make sure that their translations are faithful to the original, understandable to their readers and adequate from an editorial point of view. After all, according to Pym, “if translation is thus seen as little more than a linguistic phenomenon, it becomes impossible to see why there should be any ethical problems to solve” (Pym, 2010: 168). The logic is clear, and yet so fallacious, and it has been criticized by various scholars from post-modern, post-colonial, feminist and post-structuralist movements. These scholars, contrary to the traditional translation studies that overlook the ethical issues of translation, aimed to “help translators to gain a heightened transcultural consciousness” and to develop awareness on the complicated

³ In this section I have intentionally omitted the term “narrative”, although this subject of the impossibility of abstracting oneself from reality will be further mentioned in the following chapter about Mona Baker’s narrative theory. The main reason why the term “narrative” has not been mentioned in this chapter was to avoid misunderstanding during the reading before explaining the concept of “narrative” according to Mona Baker.

relationship between translator, author, text and the ethical consequences that result from this relationship field (House, 2018: 160).

Considering the ethical responsibility that translators are expected to have when working, Salama-Carr claims that “the ‘ethical responsibility’ of the translator and the interpreter can take different forms with regard to conflicts, be they real or fictional” and that “this responsibility goes beyond, and indeed sometimes against, the more narrowly defined realm of ‘professional ethics’ and ‘good practice’. It may reside in awareness, in testimony, or in open ideological commitment and involvement” (2007: 6). Secondly, special attention should be paid to the idea of “translation and translators as peace-giving enablers of communication” (Baker, 2005: 11). The risk, in this case, is that of creating a fictional dividing line between political and social issues and translation, a line that cannot be crossed and that neutralizes the possibility that translation and interpreting might come into contact with any cultural, social or political issues. On the one hand, it is assumed that any type of misunderstanding in translation is the result of an unintentional mistake and that the involvement of political interests within translation projects is excluded a priori. Therefore, any type of translation or interpreting assignment is made with the best of intentions, since translators’ norms do not follow political agendas. On the other hand, translators are inevitably divided between two sides, the professional and the ideological, and in doing so “we abstract them out of history, out of the narratives that necessarily shape their outlook on life, and in the course of doing so we risk intensifying their blindspots and encouraging them to become complacent about the nature of their interventions, and less conscious of the potential damage they can do” (Baker, 2005: 11). By taking the politics out of translation practices and over-romanticizing the image of the translator as a benevolent agent that does not meddle with real-life conflicts, translators lack a valid reason to intervene in these issues (Álvarez & Vidal, 2007: 4, 5).

Lastly, focusing on the hyper-idealized idea that translation is never harmful, but rather a “force for good” (2005: 9), one must consider how Baker attempts to deconstruct this assumption. In her article, “Narratives in and of Translation”, Baker explains that today, translation studies promote the idea that translation as a constructive activity, “a means of enabling dialogue to take place between different cultures” (2005: 9), in other words, something undoubtedly created to promote peace, understanding and cooperation. However, as Baker powerfully claims, “no one questions whether bridges are always built

for the (morally) ‘right’ reasons, nor the fact that just as they might allow us to cross over and make positive contact with a different culture, they also allow invading troops to cross over and kill, maim and destroy entire populations” (2005: 9). If we assume that anything that translation and interpreting produce are undeniably right, any type of transgression made in the name of “professional ethics” is justified. Thankfully, while the “ethos of neutrality” (Kadiu, 2019: 155) is still widespread, many scholars committed to going beyond this misconception, focusing on the hidden ethical issues of translation. Pym, who focuses on the mediating role of translators, claims that the only case when the translation is performed ethically is when it aims for cooperation between source and target culture, which is not always so obvious in some cases (Palumbo, 2009: 46). Translators must acknowledge their responsibility in their work, without hiding behind the idea of translation as a practice that does not involve ethical implications, contradictions, and inevitably, mistakes (Kadiu, 2019: 155).

1.2.3 Translation and power

In this regard, one should also mention another important, yet often subtle, aspect, the role of power relations in translation. While power does not only depend on language and translation, it is an aspect that it has been often neglected in the past, especially the social implications of translation that people are often not aware of. In his book, Fairclough brings attention to the strong connection between ideology, language, and power. According to him, the link between ideologies and language is given by the fact that language, being “the commonest form of social behaviour” on which people rely on, foster the existence of ideologies that are commonly accepted. Besides, ideologies are connected to power because “the nature of the ideological assumptions embedded in particular conventions, and so the nature of those conventions themselves, depends on the power relations which underlie the conventions” (1989: 2). Such shared ideologies can legitimize social relation based on power structures that are therefore taken for granted.

This means that translation is not always an intermediate and peaceful act between two equal cultures that are ideally situated on the same level, and these cases are complex and difficult to grasp at first sight. On the contrary, “translation always implies an unstable balance between the power one culture can exert over another” (Álvarez & Vidal, 2007: 4). According to Bassnett in her essay on the history of translation studies

and the role of translators, “language and power are intimately linked” (2007: 21). During post-colonialism, it became clear how certain power structures were (and still are sometimes) maintained through translation practices and deeply embedded within cultural relations. According to Venuti, while translation may help in the construction of cultural identities, it can also foster ethnic discrimination and other violent outcomes (2008: 14). Since “translation is culture bound”, the transmission and relocation of culture, the main goal of translation, although presented through a positive light, is inevitably tied with power relations and cultural clashes (Álvarez & Vidal, 2007: 2).

1.2.4 Against the translator’s neutrality

A final comment regarding this rejection of the capacity that translators have to construct, or challenge discourses should touch on the notion of agency offered by Palumbo (2009). From a sociological point of view, Palumbo describes agency as “the capacity of individual subjects to act purposefully in a social context” (2009: 9), and if this capacity applies to everyone, it should be true for translators and interpreters as well. Agency is often considered when discussing the role of translators “as individual subjects” in social contexts (Palumbo, 2009: 9). Through the notion of the agency of translators, it is possible to dismantle the concept of the powerlessness of the translator when facing issues that go beyond the textual level, and this will be further examined in the following chapters. In summary, it has been argued that translators are individuals capable of self-determination, and their professional obligations do not prevent them from elaborating a personal point of view. Moreover, the over-romanticized idea of an unbiased “in-betweenness” of translation proves to be unrealistic, as is the idealized image of translators and interpreters as neutral “bridge-builders”. Translators have the potential to act following individual moral principles that are impossible to eradicate. That is why translators are never in a state of “in-betweenness”; their individual morals are instead always present and can sometimes cause them to go against certain norms. When discussing the process of translating, it is clear that translators do not only work with the text itself, but also with other elements, such as its cultural and historical context, the author’s purpose and the publisher’s project. At the same time, translators carry with them their background, made up of prior experiences, ideas, opinions and so on. Being embedded in a language and culture, a historical period and even a political current, a text is never isolated, and what

surrounds it is essential to understand the text itself. In other words, what constitutes and gives meaning to texts is often their contexts which in turn is constantly built up by new texts and ideas. The aim is to try to see things from a different perspective, focusing not only the individual text but rather trying to perceive it as being part of something bigger.

To quote Khalifa:

To understand the true potential of translation itself, not just the translator, is to perceive this process as an activity being performed that has consequences in real-life, not just on an academic or literary level. Once the translation is considered in relation to the cultural, social and historical context where it is carried out, a cleared idea of the outcomes and potential of the translation itself emerges (2014: 9).

To better understand this concept, it could be appropriate to refer to this set, which constitutes written texts and contexts, as narration. It is the narration, rather than the written text, which is the starting point to better understand the translator's crucial role. House explains that societies inevitably influence their members through various means, and the main channel that ensures control is constant communication, and therefore language exchange among similar and different subjects (2018: 51). If we acknowledge that language has "an overridingly important position inside any culture" (House, 2018: 51) and consider that a translated text is part of a larger group of texts that might lead to ideas, beliefs and points of view, it is easy to notice how translation is essential in order to foster social interactions and influences. In other words, the translator is one of the main participants in the process of creating not only new texts but new narratives. This statement leads us to reflect on the term "narrative" and how can we define what narrative is. Starting from this question, the next section will focus on the notion of "narrative", how this concept connects with others such as power, conflict and individual agency, and how the translator fits into this framework. The following section will introduce the narrative theory elaborated by Mona Baker, who applied social theory to a literary context.

1.3 Baker's Narrative Theory

Through the description of narrative theory, this section aims first to show the huge, yet subtle, role that narratives have, not only concerning social, economic and political conflicts, but also everyday circumstances. Secondly, it will support the assumption that translators have a crucial position in this system and that they have the agency, meaning

that they can decide how to use their expertise, not only that they use it mindlessly, to validate or deconstruct these narratives. In other words, as translators are part of the narrative system, they can decide how to react and choose the best option according to not only their professional duty but also their personal narratives. The chapter will refer mainly to the work of Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict, A Narrative Account* (2006) and “Reframing Conflict in Translation” (2007) as well as Sue-Ann Harding’s essay, “How do I apply narrative theory?” (2012), as a starting point to discuss whether and how translators can take action in social, political and cultural contexts or even take an activist stance against various forms of injustice. The work of Baker will prove to be very helpful to understand not only the role of authors and translators but on a broader level, how people can easily tie themselves to certain ideas, beliefs, narratives. This idea of narratives as stories that people tell themselves and rely on should be taken into consideration, especially in current times, where common opinions appear to converge alarmingly towards extreme positions.

Hence what this chapter aims to highlight is not the description of every single element of narrative theory, nor to discuss how Baker decided to categorize the different types and features of the narrative, although it will also compare Harding’s theoretical approach with Baker’s. The aim is not to conduct research into narrative theory but to apply this theory so as to explain a specific type of practical translation and make it clear to the reader what essentially the notion of narrative is. Anything else concerning terminology and categories will be mentioned for better understanding but will not be examined closely. A few elements, namely the narrative type of personal narrative and the concept of framing, will be examined with close attention since the texts that have been translated correspond to this type of narrative and that framing is closely associated with the discourse of translation and power relations.

1.3.1 Background to Narrative Theory

Starting from the background of this theoretical study, it should be clarified that the concept of narrative has been used in several pieces of research during the 20th and the 21st century, often in areas of study that did not belong to literature or fiction but rather sociology (Harding, 2012: 286). According to Harding (2012), what Baker focuses on in her study on narrative and translation is the concept of narrative fostered by psychology,

social and communication theories, “the crucial idea of which is that narratives do not merely represent, but constitute, the world” (2012: 287). The approach that Baker chose as most suitable to examine the notion of narrative and the role of translation was the sociological one, while she preferred to distance herself from the narratology and linguistic approach (Baker, 2006: 3-4). The reason for this decision was because she found it appropriate to use the “notion of narrative as understood in some strands of social and communication theory, rather than narratology or linguistics” (2007: 151). Harding, on the other hand, opts for a dual approach, narratological and sociological, focusing on the terms offered by narratology to define what narratives are (Harding, 2012: 295). When explaining her decision to use narrativity as a theoretical framework to study the role and conduct of translators and interpreters, Baker (2007) underlines the need for a theory that does not necessarily adhere to a fixed and series of norms that tend to focus on general and repeated behaviours instead of individual attempts to undermine “dominant patterns and prevailing political and social dogma”. In other words, the target of norm theory are the rules rather than the exceptions, and therefore it pays little attention both to the conflicting relationship between fixed behaviours and the tendency to subvert these patterns and also “the political and social conditions that give rise to such patterns of dominance and resistance to them” (2007: 152).

To quote Baker, for a better understanding of the role of translators and interpreters, what her study aims to provide is “a framework that recognizes the varied, shifting and ongoingly negotiable positioning of individual translators in relation to their texts, authors, societies and dominant Ideologies” (2007: 152). The advantage that narrative theory has, according to Baker, is that it is not limited to external attributes or categories, but embraces the idea that individuals’ behaviours and ideas are not defined by the characteristics that they have (for instance, religion, race, gender, etc), which associate them with fixed categories, but “it acknowledges the ongoingly negotiable nature of our positioning in relation to social and political reality” (2007: 152-153). Although stereotypes are often based on real cases, it would be wrong to reduce every individual into fixed currents of thoughts. Therefore, the aim of narrative theory is not to limit individuals into fixed narratives, but rather the opposite, to show that people can separate themselves from certain patterns. At the same time, narrative theory does not ignore the existence of patterns of behaviour that inevitably tend to affect people through

their cultural, religious or historical background in some ways. In the case of Baker's study, this concept is applied to translators and interpreters, who are not treated as "theoretical abstractions" but rather "real-life individuals" (2007: 153). Narrative theory is also useful for translators because it allows them "to recognize the varied, negotiable positioning and footing they need to assume vis-à-vis the texts they are translating, their authors and recipients, societies and majority ideologies" (House, 2018: 167). Thanks to a perspective that includes narrative theory, translators can thus become more aware of the invisible interconnections that exist not only between the source and target texts but also between the translation process and their individuality.

1.3.2 Defining Narrative Theory

A few more strengths of this theory should also be mentioned. First of all, narrative theory does not deny the influence that general patterns can have on individuals nor the impossibility to resist these patterns either as individuals or groups of people. Secondly, due to this complex structure of influence and resistance to various and often competing narratives, the theory tends to explain the behaviour of individuals in "dynamic rather than static terms" (Baker, 2007: 154). Finally, due to its focus both on the influence of wide social or political patterns on people and individual behaviours, while giving priority to the latter, this theory can be effectively applied to studying the choices taken by translators and interpreters. If on the one hand, it considers the influence that a context can have on translators, on the other, it refers to the translator separately (Baker, 2007: 154). Some theoretical approaches tend to treat narrative as a "mode of communication" with other people, and there are different schools of thought that aim to define narrative from a literary or linguistic point of view. On the other hand, there are several studies, including Baker's, which tend to define narrative through a social perspective as "the principal and inescapable mode by which we experience the world." (Baker, 2006: 9). Hence, it is not a way of describing episodes or events, but rather the only way to unfold every type of story, report, concept or scientific research. It is clear from this distinction that the notion of narrative promoted by social and communication theories can lead to a useful perspective on the role of translation and interpreting.

Another characteristic of narrative theory is that it does not see narrative as representing reality, but as constructing it. Therefore, if the whole of reality consists of

narratives, the concept of an independent narrative that is isolated from the rest is impossible, since everything is part of the reality that people build (House, 2018: 165). In other words, to quote Baker, “every story is a narrative and every experience is a narrative experience” (2006: 17). This reflection might lead to the question as to whether everything is just constructed and fictional. However, when approaching this theory, it is important to come to terms with the fact that “the assumption of constructedness does not simply mean the rejection of a truth in relation to a given set of events or the assertion that no one has direct access to a reality. Rather, acknowledging the constructed nature of narratives means that we accept the potential existence and worth of multiple truths” (Baker, 2006: 18-19). In a society where most of the time people are tied to the idea that everything is either black or white, wrong or right, and that there only exists only one true way to see the world while the others are invalid, this concept is truly a powerful statement.

The first thing to do when presenting narrative theory is to offer a clear definition, which is identified by Harding as “the unit of analysis” in the narrative approach. (2012: 290). The best way to do so is through the explanation given by Baker, where she presents narratives as “the everyday stories we live by” (2006: 3). With this definition, Baker also clarifies that in her study the term “narrative” is used interchangeably with the term “story”. Specifically, by using the term “story” Baker refers to any types of stories that can be told and acknowledged, both public and personal, meaning that she even includes in this category “the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live” (2006: 19). What is also important to understand when trying to define narratives is not how they are structured or whether they follow a chronological or causal order, but the effect that they can have on people’s behaviours and decisions in real life. Perhaps, this is the crucial point that narrative theory reaches in its interpretation of narratives as a concrete tool that is used by everyone in everyday life, that “people’s behaviour is ultimately guided by the stories they come to believe about the events in which they are embedded, rather than by their gender, race, colour of skin, or any other attribute” (Baker, 2006: 3). Ultimately, what guides people’s actions are narratives, dynamic stories that each person interprets and incorporates differently, many of which also differ one from another; it is up to the individual to give a personal sense to this dense cluster of accumulated divergent stories. As the behaviours of individuals

change and new events happen every day, so do the narratives that are generated, and translation plays a huge role in this process. In summary, what needs to be clear is the idea that narratives are fluid and constantly reformulated, and since they have a strong influence on people's actions, they determine new and different ways of reacting to these stories, sometimes even by creating new narratives that go on to challenge the old ones, for instance.

Along with these observations comes the fact that narrative theory promotes the idea that people lack objectivity. Not in the sense that people cannot be rational, but that they cannot observe any narrative from a neutral point of view (House, 2018: 165). As has been already said, narratives do not interpret but construct reality, narratives are part of everyday life and people need them to make sense of their lives, their beliefs and their moral choices. Narratives are either accepted or rejected, but regardless of the approach that an individual can have towards a narrative, he or she is inevitably affected by other narratives that give him or her of a certain, personal perspective. Hence, not only do narratives guide people's actions, but also their points of view. Narratives can be accepted or rejected, and nobody is excluded. Therefore, a neutral perspective is not compatible with narrative theory. In her study, Baker effectively explains this concept in the sentence "what narrative theory alerts us to is that our own pieces of research are also narratives, mini narratives which are part of larger, master narratives of different types (some political, some social, some academic)" (2006: 129). As it is impossible to acknowledge a new narrative with an unbiased mindset, so no narrative can be told from a privileged position of absolute neutrality. The narrator cannot stand outside his or her narratives, and the rule also applies to translators and interpreters, who are charged with circulating new narratives that become part of their reality (House, 2018: 166). This observation goes back to the idea of deconstructing the concept of in-betweenness praised by translation studies. As mentioned above, the place of translators and interpreters is not external to their own culture nor between cultures (Baker, 2005: 12).

Another topic that needs to be mentioned should be the construction of new narratives and what this entails in real-life settings. First, narratives do not create themselves out of nowhere. To exist, stories need to be told, and therefore there is someone who creates them. When a narrative is based on an event, it is most likely that there exist different versions of the same narrative, which describe the causes and

circumstances of this event from different perspectives. To build a narrative or contribute to a different or opposing narrative means fostering different beliefs and behaviours, and even supporting conflictual environments, which perhaps emerge from a narrative of violence, legitimizing it. Narratives can normalize certain ideas while demonizing others, dehumanize people and cultures and even justify certain behaviours that are normally heavily condemned. After all, Baker reflects on the fact that “in our war-ridden contemporary societies, we must continually remind ourselves that all conflict starts and ends with constructing or deconstructing an enemy” (2006: 14). Besides, long used narratives can turn into norms, ordinary mindsets that perceive these narratives as incontestable. It is, for instance, the narrative that associates the generic term “terrorist” with people from Mid-Eastern territories that justifies the need to protect Western values through tortures and violations of human rights of war prisoners suspected of affiliation with Islamic terrorist groups (Baker, 2006). It is also true that this normalizing function of narrative can lead to a gradual positive change, for example in South Africa, where those who supported the Apartheid were replaced with those that demanded equality and justice for black people (Baker, 2006: 29, 34). Normalization is a powerful strength, which can lead to positive, as well as potentially destructive outcomes, and it is also important to remember that for every normalized narrative there is always a minority that counters it, and which can sometimes become the majority. When it is clear that certain narratives determine certain beliefs, and that certain beliefs lead to actions, cautious use of brand-new narratives is needed. Through narrative theory, the power that words can hold is presented in a clear and evident way.

This topic is also object of study among scholars of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which refers to the study of the link between texts and language and social power and how language can reinforce certain social structures of power (House, 2018: 178). The use of the term “critical” refers to the fact that this analysis aims to disclose hidden connections that are often overlooked, “such as the connections between language, power and ideology referred to above” (Fairclough, 1989: 5). This discipline has roots in the past century, where it started to gain validity in translation studies and, considering its emphasis on the relationship between language and society, it is clear how sociolinguistics was a huge source of influence (House, 2018: 43). For CDA, it is impossible to separate the text from its social context, because different texts inevitably

carry within them several traces of ideologies and power relations, and this is also true for translated texts (House, 2018: 44). If we agree with the concept that in every text there lies a trace of the society where it was written, texts can be used to detect social hegemonic structures and shared narratives that are embedded in a country or a cultural group. Translations can be analysed as well, in order to understand the narratives that guide the translator in his or her translating process, or the power relations that force him or her to follow certain rules (House, 2018: 53).

When facing the need to define what narrative is, it is also important to illustrate it from a structural or rather objective point of view. On a practical level, what is the minimum unit that makes a story a narrative? And how big can a narrative be? And what is the format of a narrative, does it need to be textual, a written form or an abstract construct? How many narratives exist? First of all, there is not a minimum or maximum length that determines what is and what is not a narrative, and it is also possible that a bigger narrative consists of smaller narratives that somehow overlap and follow a common pattern, while also being autonomous in their own way (Baker, 2006: 464). As has been said, narratives are what constitute reality through the stories that people tell, and it can be an overwhelming task to outline them in detail. Now I will briefly explain in which categories Baker locates narratives, but what it is fundamental is to understand their impact on people's everyday lives rather than scrutinize them bit by bit. Secondly, talking about the medium of narrative, it would be limiting to try to restrict the notion of narrative to the textual form: "the articulation of narratives is by no means restricted to textual material, but can also be realized through a range of other media" (Baker, 2006: 19). Lastly, when questioning the total sum of narratives, not only is it clear that the number of narratives is endless, with some smaller than others that contain smaller narratives within them, but also that there exist multiple versions of a narrative and each of them might survive for a long time. To quote Baker, "some of these versions may be completely at odds with each other; some may differ only in minor details or points of emphasis. Over time, different versions of a narrative may become more or less valued and may achieve more or less currency through various processes of reinforcement and contestation" (2006: 20). Hence, since every moment might lead to a new event and therefore a brand new narrative that interconnects with others before, not only are there

new narratives that emerge every day but all those that are already created do not disappear in a short time.

Talking about brand new and old narratives, Baker (2006) creates a connection between power and narrative, stating that certain long-established narratives can control the behaviours and perceptions of those who adhere to them. Another means to establish control over a large group of people's beliefs and behaviours is based on the repetition of past narratives, an effective practice, and it has been already mentioned how the link between language and culture is so strong that society can easily influence its members through communication and cultural narratives (House, 2018: 51). Moreover, we should remember Fairclough's theory on the link between language and power and the fact that language can be considered the "primary medium of social control and power" (Fairclough, 1989: 3). The retelling of long-established narratives "socializes individuals into an established social and political order and encourages them to interpret present events in terms of sanctioned narratives of the past. This restricts the scope of their present personal narratives, their sense of who they are, if these are to be considered legitimate" (Baker, 2006: 21). In other words, delivering to people a solid and fixed narrative over and over again leads them to use this narrative as a standardized outlook, not only for future circumstances but their social status as well. The things people believe in and the way they tell stories shape people's identity.

Not only do narratives constitute reality, but they also define a society (Fairclough, 1989: 54). The way people might talk about migration in the EU, the rise of the Nazi Party or the Vietnam War, for example, shapes the way these people see the world. Hence, what started as a matter of linguistics turns out to be a matter of policy, where it is not the facts that shape people's views, but the way they decide to talk about what happened, why and how. Moreover, those who pay close attention to this matter can profit from it: by focalizing on certain narratives, they draw the attention of their followers to a specific event and invest in narratives that can guarantee them audience and support. In short, what seems to be a convenient way to do politics and convey a certain political view is to endorse specific narratives through suitable stories to gain attention and support from the public opinion (De Fina, 2018: 239). The narrative is not only used within a country by their governments but also between countries. The way leaders narrate themselves and others, whether they are presented as allies or enemies, might lead to different scenarios.

When talking about foreign relations, it is already clear how translation and interpreting play a central role in this game of clashes of narratives: “every time a version of the narrative is retold or translated into another language, it is injected with elements from other, broader narratives circulating within the new setting or from the personal narratives of the retellers” (Baker, 2006: 21-22).

In conclusion, Baker makes it clear that no narratives are neutral, and some are held to maintain control while others are created to contrast this authority. Each person has personal opinions, but when these narratives are shared and lead to certain behaviours, meaning that a narrative is not only internalised but externally expressed through violence or the contrary, then the true power of narratives emerges. They can be used to control, to destroy, even to kill, justify crimes or promote positive acts of kindness. However, this observation does not exclude the possibility that people who were raised within certain ideologies and cultures end up challenging them, nor that the means that are used to ensure the existence of predominant narratives can also destroy them. According to House, for example, although translation does convey narratives, it can also be seen as “an ideal site for unmasking and resisting hegemonic structures” (House, 2018: 52-53). The only way to foster change, however, is to make sure that the knowledge of the power of narratives and, ultimately, the potential of language is widely shared. In the words of Fairclough:

Resistance and change are not only possible but continuously happening. But the effectiveness of resistance and the realization of change depend on people developing a critical consciousness of domination and its modalities, rather than just experiencing them (1989: 4).

1.3.3 Narrative typologies

In the effort to categorize narratives according to similar features, Baker offers four typologies of narratives: ontological, public, conceptual and meta-narratives. A simpler approach when differentiating different types of narratives is also offered by Harding (2012). Harding chooses to divide narratives into personal, shared narratives, “which encompass the remaining three types from the original model” (2012: 292) and the additional category of local narratives, which refers to a sort of basic material from which any type of narrative may emerge (a rough copy of a story, sort to say). Ontological narratives are stories narrated from a personal point of view, and they are related to the

individual experience. Individuals tend to elaborate personal (or ontological) narratives to give meaning to their personal experiences and, more generally, their lives. Since ontological narratives are intimately connected to the person who elaborates them in a specific language, it proves to be problematic or even impractical to retell them in another language. Translating and interpreting personal narratives is a challenging task, because “the interdependence between the personal and the collective means that the retelling is inevitably constrained by the shared linguistic and narrative resources available in the new setting” (Baker, 2006: 28-29). Another important aspect of the ontological narrative is not only their deep relationship with the individual who creates them but also the complex and dependent bond with shared narratives. Baker refers to shared narratives as “the stories that are told and retold by numerous members of a society over a long period of time” (Baker, 2006: 29), and these can be briefly described as the sum of many ontological narratives gathered together. If on one hand shared narratives are made up of ontological ones, on the other they also create the social environment where these personal narratives materialize. After all, being social creatures, people tend to observe and adapt to certain common social traits that are offered by these collective narratives.

While personal stories give a sense to the individual, shared stories give a direction. Shared narratives are needed to situate people within a specific environment, giving them enough stability to understand how to fit in that space. In short, they “shape and constrain our personal stories, determining both their meanings and their possible outcomes” (2006: 29). When a person is unable to find a suitable space and to adjust their narrative within those that permeate a specific culture or society, they may feel lost. Ideally and verbally isolated people are left alone within a narrative that is not theirs, as they have to be coherent enough with their narrative and keep it real, or else it will collapse under the pressure of a bigger, predominant one. However, here emerges the true power of ontological narratives, their capacity to disrupt the social structures promoted by collective narratives. Giving space to personal and perhaps often neglected narratives can even lead one “to elaborate an alternative narrative of the world” (Baker, 2006: 30). To be true to one’s narrative is both a matter of identity and a political act, since resisting an opposed narrative means being a subversive subject.

People can also choose to partially agree with determined shared narratives, developing an opinion regarding a subject, while not dissenting from the socially accepted

narrative. In any case, whether they articulate or contest shared narratives, translators and interpreters contribute to this process through their work of retelling narratives. When reflecting on different types of narration, a clarification appears to be necessary. In fact, since Baker's theory is not intended to be extensively analysed in this overview, but only used as a support for a better understanding of the importance of translation, I have preferred to use the "collective narrative" as an interchangeable term, rather than adopting the distinctions presented by Mona Baker. In her work, for instance, Baker makes a clear distinction between "shared" and "public" narratives. The scholar uses the term "public narratives" to refer to "stories elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual, such as the family, religious or educational institution, the media, and the nation" (2006: 170), focusing on those types of shared narratives that do not depend on the single narrative to endure in the long term. However, the distinction presented by Somers (1992, 1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994) through Baker's study is rather specific and unnecessary in this case; the aim is to make a clear distinction between personal and collective narratives, following Harding's approach (2012). Therefore, when Baker (2006) refers to the concept of dissenting from public narratives and the role of translators, the idea, in this case, is to apply the notion of dissenting on a more general scale, referring to the broad term of "shared narratives".

Finally, the last two types of narratives that Baker focuses on and that Harding (2012) gathers under the same group of "shared narratives" are conceptual and meta-(master-) narratives. Conceptual narratives are used in the field of academic disciplines to define theories, observations and explanations that scholars elaborate about a specific object of inquiry. Therefore, since every discipline "elaborates and thrives on its own set of conceptual narratives" (Baker, 2006: 39), it is accurate to identify both Baker's and Harding's theories on narratives conceptual narratives themselves. Meta- or master-narratives, on the other hand, refer to a specific type of narrative that has reached a wide audience both on a large geographical and historical scale and is therefore well established on a global level. However, as Baker herself makes clear, the lines between these typologies of stories are blurred, and the distinction between meta-narratives and public narratives, for example, is shifting (2006: 168-169).

1.3.4 Narrative features

Apart from their typologies, narratives are also characterized by their interdependent features, which give a better understanding of how they work. These features can help in creating hierarchies, justifying control over other cultures or maintaining certain societal structures. At the same time, the wise use of these features can validate subversive points of view. In Baker's research (2006), they are enumerated as follows: Temporality or Bruner's narrative diachronicity, Relationality or hermeneutic composability, Causal emplotment, Selective appropriation, Particularity, Genericness, Normativeness and Narrative accrual. While it would be of academic interest to focus on this subject, as has been stated already, the priority in this research is to show how significant narratives can be when discussing translation and the role of translators in transferring the meaning of the texts. How narratives work is not an imperative of this research, although it could help to better understand the features behind narratives. Therefore, I will briefly explain the definition of these features.

Temporality refers to the concept that any narratives, to exist and to be interpreted, need to be organized by following a "sequential context in a specific temporal and spatial configuration" (Baker, 2006: 51). Without a sequence, an order that gives meaning and structure to the whole, the story would collapse. Relationality is necessary to create connections within the narrative, to relate different and isolated situations through the same thread. With the words of Baker, "it is impossible for the human mind to make sense of isolated events or of a patchwork of events that are not constituted as a narrative" (2006: 61). Relationality can be also used to create new narratives starting from pre-existing narratives through a common element that gives meaning to the new story. Of course, when the task is to create a connection between different narratives or a wider narrative made up of divergent ones it might become impracticable, because of the incompatibility of the threads that give structure and sense to each narrative. Moreover, the issue is not only the inner connection that each narrative has but also the context around the narrative, the social and cultural settings where the narratives have been created that strongly influence relationality. For this reason, when it comes to translation and interpreting, narratives and their relationality features are inevitably altered (Baker, 2006: 62). Through its inherent causal emplotment, a narrative is not perceived as a simple sequence of events, but a story where certain events are more significant than

others, and the way these events are considered worthy or not depends on the context. Since causal emplotment “charges the events depicted with moral and ethical significance”, this means that people can agree on whether an event happened or not, but might strongly disagree on the reasons that lead to that episode, it all depends on the way people elaborate their narratives (Baker, 2006: 67). It is clear how this feature of narrativity is charged with political connotation, as well as selective appropriation.

Selective appropriation means that for a finite narrative to be constructed, it is necessary to remove some elements from it, perhaps events that are considered unnecessary or even contradictory. The criteria used to exclude or prioritize those elements depends again on the social and cultural context that surrounds the narrative, the theme on which the narrator focuses, the values promoted by society (Baker, 2006: 72). Sometimes, what has been excluded is even more important than what has been selected. Once again, narratives prove to be the true metre through which people’s values and beliefs can be evaluated. Many scholars have tried to give a precise definition of particularity, but the main concept of this feature can be summed up as follows: while each narrative is unique in its way, it also appears to contain recurrent motifs and a to follow on of the many skeletal storylines that can be found identical in other narratives. Of course, this feature does not restrict a story to a fixed structure, but it allows it to rearrange its elements in a unique way while keeping some traditional and recurrent characteristics (Baker, 2006: 78).

A more difficult case when it comes to assigning proper and clear definitions is that of genericness. Starting from the assumption that in narrative theory there are a large number of literary and non-literary genres, the feature of genericness allows people to make use of these “established frameworks” as models to interpret the narrative they are dealing with. Moreover, “generic identification endows a narrative experience with coherence, cohesiveness and a sense of boundedness” (2006: 86). A careful understanding of the type of narratives and which genre the narrative refers to is recommended for translators as well. Another interesting case to which translators could pay attention is normativeness. Normativeness together with canonicity and breach are treated as a single feature by Baker, who identifies them as inherent traits of narrativity. On one hand, normativeness focuses on the capacity of narrative to legitimize and justify certain ideas and behaviours that are inherently political, underlining “the central role that

narrative plays in policing cultural legitimacy” (2006: 98). On the other, canonicity and breach, as studied by Bruner, refer to the idea that stories usually reverse on a breach, a subversion of the canonical state. Both concepts are strictly intertwined and work together when constructing new narratives. Lastly, narrative accrual is an interesting feature of narrative that leads to the shaping of cultures and social frameworks through the “repeated exposure to a set of related narratives” (2006: 101). This feature is valid for all types of narratives: the only condition is the amount of narrative needed to lead to a concrete change in society, history or theories.

1.3.5 Fisher’s Paradigm

After this brief description of the features of narrativity, it is also worth mentioning Fisher’s paradigm (1984, 1985, 1987, 1997), which has been developed to understand the parameters used when assessing narratives. Unlike the common expectation which prioritizes the notion of rationality over any other aspect when comes to understanding whether a narrative is reliable or even testable in the first place, Fisher chooses a different view and challenges this “paradigm of rationality”. According to Fisher (1987), since people communicate through stories to create connections, what makes a good story is not its level of rationality, but a body made up of personal narratives, experiences and culture, which determine the so-called “good reasons” that people use as a filter to relate to others’ stories (Baker, 2006: 468). Hence, “No matter how strictly a case is argued – scientifically, philosophically, or legally – it will always be a story, an interpretation of some aspect of the world that is historically and culturally grounded and shaped by human personality” (Fisher, 1987, as cited in Baker, 2006: 142). No matter how well constructed and reasonable a story may be, if it is not able to meet an individual’s requirements for his or her good reasons, it is not a valid story. On the other hand, this paradigm is also useful when discussing people’s dependency on narratives. According to Baker, being dependent on narratives does not mean that people are unable to assess and choose the narratives that they subscribe to (2006: 467). Moreover, it is the capacity to assess “the values explicitly or implicitly promoted by a narrative” that determines our behaviours and how consistent we are with our principles (Baker, 2006: 470). Fisher’s paradigm will be further mentioned in the following chapter, specifically focusing on the role of translation within activism.

1.4 Translation and narrative theory: the notion of framing

Moving from the core of Baker's narrative theory towards the main focus of this chapter, the role of translation and translators in social circumstances, the next topic is the relationship between translators and interpreters and the narratives they have to deal with, in and outside work. In short, what is the role of translation in narrative theory? After the observations made with regard to the influence that narratives have on people's lives, the leading statement that should be remembered has been accurately formulated by Baker: "translators and interpreters, like all social actors, engage with the narrative world in which they are embedded in a variety of ways" (2006: 26). Thus, the approach for each narrative depends on the individual, who chooses to translate with a detached manner, or to work on the text with a critical approach. What is common, however, is the fact that for each approach comes a different way that translators must define themselves, and the responsibility for the narrative that has been promoted. No matter the choice made, the way an individual chooses to deal with an issue, in this case, the translation process, defines his or her point of view on several subjects. At the same time, different approaches lead to different outcomes, and regardless of the results, the translator inevitably should be accountable for them (Baker, 2006: 26).

As has already been mentioned, translators and interpreters are essential to convey every type of narrative. It would, however, be naive to say that translation itself does not endorse or undermines the narrative of the text that it is conveying, but rather that it is simply transferring a message, and that whether the aim of narrative conveyed is positive or negative depends only on the source text. The reality, on the other hand, is more complicated. It is impossible to 'think outside the box', even for those who have to work closely with texts and therefore narratives, such as translators and interpreters (Álvarez & Vidal, 2007: 6-7). It has been discussed whether translators and interpreters are able to position themselves "in-between" when dealing with different cultures. There are many scholars who do not support the concept that they can act as neutral subjects. If this theory is applied not only to society and culture but also to narratives, the concept is the same: translators and interpreters do not have a privileged position, because they are inevitably bound to certain narratives. Hence, concepts such as "objectivity" or "neutrality" have nothing to do with the translation process, even when translators claim to be as impartial as possible in their work (Baker, 2007: 154). Neither they are always passive agents that

accept any assignment without questioning it, especially when they can choose their translation projects without financial or contractual restrictions. To quote Baker, “like any other group in society, translators and interpreters are responsible for the texts and utterances they produce. Consciously or otherwise, they translate texts and utterances that participate in creating, negotiating and contesting social reality” (2006: 105). Moreover, the relationship between translators and the texts they have to work on is different compared with other jobs, as well as the involvement that translators have not only with the text itself but the narratives that they need to convey, which can be prolonged even after the delivery of the translated product. It might be possible that certain narratives that translators or interpreters enter into contact with affect them in some way. In any case, both categories are deeply engaged in the circulation of new narratives, since they can either expand a specific narrative on a larger scale or go against it through their work by creating an opposite one (Baker, 2006: 467). The practice of negotiating a text that contains a specific narrative can be handled in different ways, not always with the same purpose.

Going back to Baker’s theory for a moment and focusing specifically on the role of translators highlighted by this scholar, an interesting concept that is closely connected with the translation process, the translator’s agency and narrative’s power is the notion of framing. Discussed by Baker together with the central role of translation, framing is an important practice that needs to be taken into account with regard to the function of translation in narrative theory and the alleged neutrality of the translator. An object of study among scholars of various fields since 1972, framing can be easily described as “the definition that individuals attribute to a situation” (Sclafani, 2018: 402).

It can be seen as a strategy that individuals use to interpret and give meaning to the narratives and, more generally, any type of matter that they experience (House, 2018: 168). Framing can thus be described as a tendency, often involuntary, to interpret and assign importance to events, interpersonal negotiations, structures of power, etc. in a certain way (House, 2018: 180). Therefore, people often rely on the frames that they decide to assign when dealing with a new narrative, either intentionally or unintentionally. Once again, as for narrative theory, it is not the reality that forms certain frames, but the other way around. According to Sclafani, “frames play a central role in structuring interactions” (2018: 402), and that is because the way that people choose to frame and

event, a culture or an individual determine their behaviour and viewpoint. It is clear how this practice is considered when scholars analyse political discourses, since the majority of them rely on the way that politician effectively promotes their personal constructed narratives concerning certain issues or even political opponents. Not only do political figures need to fame themselves in a certain way to be credible for their supporters, but they also need to frame their opponents.

Although in her essay Sclafani focuses on the role of framing in political performances, the notion offered can easily be applied to any background, including the translation process or the literature of social movements. Usually identified as a passive act, according to narrative theory, framing can be identified in the case of translation and interpreting as an active process where people deliberately participate in the construction of new realities. As Baker states in her study, the term “frames” represent “structures of anticipation, strategic moves that are consciously initiated to present a narrative in a certain light” (2006: 167). Framing can be identified as one of the resources that translators have, apart from the explicit gesture of rejecting or choosing an assignment, to actively express their position with regard to the narratives conveyed in the target text. According to the situation, through translation they can highlight, modify or subvert the narratives they come across, both explicitly and implicitly. Framing is one of the strategies that language users can resort to “dissociate themselves from the narrative position of the author or speaker or to signal their empathy with it” (Baker, 2006: 105), also, by using the features of narrativity that have been mentioned. The mere existence of framing proves that translators do not lack agency. On the contrary, framing is further proof of the translator’s ability to alter narratives that they do not support and endorse those that they agree with. According to this viewpoint, translational choices that language users often face are not only “local linguistic challenges” but a way for translators and interpreters of “contributing directly to the narratives that shape our social world” (Baker, 2007: 156). Therefore, any translational choice has some implications in the real world, whether intentional or unintentional. Moreover, these implications are not exclusively related to cultural issues or matters that do not interfere with the social and political sphere. It has been stated that framing is widely used in the political and especially in the social context, and translation and interpreting are not exempt from this situation. Language learners can end up reframing aspects of political conflicts, and

“hence participate in the construction of social and political reality” (Baker, 2007: 151). In fact, according to House, framing may prove to be an extremely useful tool to question problematic narratives of conflict and discrimination that political and social activists condemn. Framing, being “part and parcel of activist agendas” can help these activists to grow their community (House, 2018: 168).

The translation itself can become a form of resistance against conflict, by constructing narratives of collaboration that challenge oppressive, although very common, public or even meta-narratives. Due to the social and political awareness that is taking place in the previous and current century, a growing number of professional and non-professional translators and interpreters have started to pay great attention to translation as a powerful tool for change (Tymoczko, 2006: 459; Bassnett, 2007: 13). In fact, translations can effectively prevent the circulation of destructive narratives to avoid situations of conflict that originate from them. Even so, translation can also be used the other way around to serve these negative narratives. A negative case that often occurs is the so-called “normalization issue”, meaning that certain narratives work in justifying certain episodes of violence and human rights abuses in the name of security, justice, or national interest. Under normalization, deaths turn into accidents and people’s suffering is “either justifiable or at best simply ‘regrettable” (Baker, 2006: 14). While the type and nature of the narrative determines how and in which direction the narrative is directed, either by nourishing activist stances and peace or promoting violence and abuses, it is up to those that choose to agree or disagree within these narratives and more importantly those who promote and share them, to act on them. Being as “neutral” as possible is also a choice, and responsibility in this cannot easily be avoided. To conclude, the answer to the question that was posed at the beginning of this chapter regarding the neutrality of translators is not that simple: translators do not only convey a narrative, but they inevitably produce a new one, one that either confirms or contrasts that in the source text. Even if translators choose to be as neutral as possible, they are creating a new text in a new language, which will never be identical to the original, and this automatically undermines the notion of neutrality. The complex and crucial role of translation in social matters, as well as the agency of translators, can be summarized in the words of Baker:

Translation is not a by-product, nor simply a consequence, of social and political developments, nor is it a by-product of the physical movement of texts and people. It is part and parcel of the very process that makes these developments and movements possible in the first place. Moreover,

narrative theory recognizes that undermining existing patterns of domination cannot be achieved by concrete forms of activism alone – demonstrations, sit-ins, civil disobedience – but must involve a direct challenge to the stories that sustain these patterns. As language mediators, translators and interpreters are uniquely placed to initiate this type of discursive intervention at a global level, as many of the examples discussed in the following chapters attest (Baker, 2006: 6).

Chapter Two: On translation and translators

This chapter starts with a sentence by Bassnett, which accurately illustrates the narrative that this research tries to confront: “Translation is, and always has been, a question of power relationships, and the translator has all too often been placed in a position of economic, aesthetic and intellectual inferiority” (1991: 101). The issue behind this statement has already been partly discussed in the previous chapter with the notion of the “absent-minded translator”, which was then followed by the observations on narrative theory in support of the thesis that neutrality in translation is nearly impossible. This discussion will proceed in this chapter, where I will challenge the idea that translators, subjected to author’s expectations, social requests and translation norms, “are expected to be purely objective, transparent, and invisible” (Xianbin, 2007: 25).

The study will take a further step into the field of translation studies, focusing on the potential of translation and translation activity itself, with references to the topics already covered in the previous chapter. The aim is to present the act of translating as a purposeful practice, rather than a neutral activity. Following the observations made on the notion of “betweennesses” and the alleged passivity of the translator, the first part of the chapter will focus on the status of the translator, who will be examined not as a passive but rather an active subject. Special attention will be paid to the notion of agency, which will help the study to demonstrate the true potential of the translator in the process of circulating narratives. Next, the analysis will move to the topic of the translation norms and codes of conduct that translators are expected to comply with. The existence of a set of rules, although predictable, might stand out against the idea that translators have total freedom to act on the target text, which brings us to wonder how far translators can exercise their agency. Moreover, if the translator is capable and should act according to his or her narrative and ethics, would this mean that it is acceptable to break the rules set in the practice of translation?

It is important, in this section, to examine the extent of both agency and norms with regards to the freedom of action of the translator. Related to the issue of norms and agency we also find Chesterman’s theory (2001) and his proposal of a Hieronymic Oath, a universal code of ethics for translators that should serve to help them to behave ethically. Moving on, speaking of the translator’s range of freedom and ethics, Venuti’s (1995) reflection on the idea of invisibility will be useful to question how visible the translator’s

presence should be in the translated text. Once the role and value of translators have been established, it is worth questioning how visible this role should be to be equally respectful to the author, translator, and reader. After discussing translators' rights and roles, which are often underestimated, it is also important to focus on the need to reflect on their responsibilities. The final part of this chapter will focus on the perception of translators from the inside with a self-reflexive approach. The notion of self-reflexivity, examined by scholars such as Tymoczko (2014) and Kadiu (2019) will be considered as a method that can help translators to reflect on their work, on how they see themselves and how conscious they are of their agency.

2.1 The translator's agency

Through narrative theory it has been stated that translation has a huge role in sharing narratives, and hence the translator should be considered when reflecting on the importance of sharing determined narratives and driving a political and social change. The first step that needs to be taken is to focus once again on the central actor of the translative process, the translator. This analysis aims to offer a realistic image of professionals and amateurs in this field, which not only debunks the stereotype of the passive translator but also designates to translators a certain amount of authority and therefore responsibility in sharing narratives. Through this idea of the translator as a bearer of agency, it is possible to move towards a renewed image of translation that does not simply imply a work of transference of a text from a language to another, but a form of political and social engagement performed by translators. Therefore, because the translator can potentially be considered an activist, the translation may also turn into an act of resistance against disruptive and harmful narratives.

To consider this hypothesis as the most accurate, first it was important to look upon some basic questions regarding the alleged neutrality and, on the other hand, the agency of the translator. What has been done is to deconstruct the idea of neutrality and moral immobility of the translator. Can a translator be neutral? The answer comes right from the first part of the previous chapter, which focused on questioning the stereotypical role of the translator as "bridge-builder" and the notion of "in-betweenness", and it is negative. The traditional concept of "bridge" and "betweenness", as simplistic and desirable it may be, can be quite naive when different studies on this subject are

considered. The claim is that all translators, being human with ideas and beliefs, inevitably hold narratives that lead them to act in a specific way. Moreover, this statement has been reinforced through narrative theory, which “does not allow for ‘spaces in-between’” (Baker, 2005: 12).

As Baker states in her study, since translators are not allowed to stand “outside or between narratives”, they are inevitably positioned right inside both the narratives that they rely on and those that they have to enter in contact with (2005: 12). Perhaps, of the most important considerations that comes out of Baker’s analysis on the concept of narrative and the value of translation is the fact that translators are essential to transfer narratives “across linguistic and cultural boundaries” (2005: 9). The reason why the first chapter revolves around narrative theory is to show how crucial the notion of narrative is when discussing alleged neutrality and the lack of agency of translators. The analysis shows that not only that every person holds several narratives, including those who work in translation and interpreting, but also that their means of dissemination deserves significant attention.

With this premise, both the work of translators and their responsibilities assumes a new value in this study. Once translators are perceived of as active agents, two perspectives drastically change, both inside and outside the translation area. First, if we consider translators as active agents, their work on the source text is not only a matter of bare imitation but recreation in which translators put something personal into, however subtle it can be. With the words of Maitland:

The translation is contingent on the translator’s interpretive response to the objects of translation – real and imagined – encountered and appropriated across a cognitive impasse. It becomes a transformed text, decontextualized from its original context of production and reception and reconfigured in the light of the translator’s interpretation of the needs of the text and its receivers (2019: 207).

Once the translator’s role is recognized, his or her work is seen differently, and the sole monopoly over the target text is no longer of the author alone. The second observation is the fact that if translators have power within the text, turning into something more than “merely passive receivers of assignments from others” and “detached, unaccountable professionals whose involvement begins and ends with the delivery of a linguistic product” (Baker, 2006: 115), they also have a great potential outside the text itself. Indeed, since they are not entirely impartial, they can move beyond the professional limits

that have been imposed and use their competence to challenge unequal social power systems (Palumbo, 2009: 33). To put this power into action and be involved in the social field, translators and interpreters need to be aware of their agency.

2.1.1 Defining agency

The modern perspective on translation that has evolved over time focuses on an empowered role of translators and interpreters, thanks to the greater attention given by several scholars to this subject. Indeed, thanks to new theories in translation studies, “an enlarged view of translation highlights the potential and power of translators” and therefore their agency, which “is essential for translators facing the ethical, ideological, and intellectual challenges of the contemporary world” because it allows them to become aware of their strengths and limits in their actions (Tymoczko, 2014: 189).

When moving from a passive to an active perception of the translator, it is, however, important to clarify what this agency means and why it is so relevant in this analysis. According to Palumbo, the term agency, in its sociological definition, refers to “the capacity of individual subjects to act purposefully in a social context” (2009: 9). This notion can be easily applied in the case of translation if we consider the translator as the individual subject within his or her social context, the translating process. In this definition, terms like “capacity” and “act purposefully” imply both a different structure of power from the one that translators were traditionally subject to and a divergent viewpoint of the role of translators. Unsurprisingly, there are various definitions of agency, since its notion is crucial for various scholars when it comes to making theoretical approaches that pay attention to translators as agents rather than neutral performers. An interesting observation has been made by Khalifa in his paper on translators and agency, where he illustrates agency as “a perception-decision-action-loop”, based on several attempts made by Milton and Bandia (2009:15), Buzelin (2011:7), Kaptelin and Nardi’s (2006:33) and Kinnunen and Koskinen (2010b:6) to better explain what agency is. In all the examples offered by Khalifa, the key points that constitute the “perception-decision-action loop” are the capacity of translators to make decisions, their decision to do so and the fact that this power is put into effect in the end (2014: 14). Above all, what matters is the fact that these inquiries have led to a renewed viewpoint of translators and interpreters as social actors and making the theoretical approaches in translation studies “more ‘agent

aware” (Inghilleri, 2005: 142). What is under investigation, in this case, is no longer the translation process itself, but also who carries out this process.

Regarding this, it also helps to understand the definition of the term agent. Normally, those who are considered agents are the so-called “social-cultural mediators” in the translation process, which has become of primary interest in the socio-oriented area of translation studies (Khalifa, 2014: 14). Moreover, according to Khalifa, based on his research on several scholars, “the concept of agent intrinsically encompasses all actors (humans) and actants (nonhumans) involved in the process of translation: from production and distribution to consumption and critical metadiscourses” (2014: 11). This means that translators do not have exclusive control over the power relations in the translation process. On the other hand, however, being part of this group, they are “heavily involved in the dynamics of translation production and the power interplay arising at every stage throughout the translation process” (2014: 11).

When did the study of agency start to appear in the field of translation studies and scholars starts to pay special attention to translators? According to Tymoczko, since translators and interpreters played a crucial role in various operations during the Second World War, they gained visibility in translation studies and their agency became “an intermittent topic of discussion in virtually all branches of the field” (2014: 189). The theoretical change in translation studies after the Second World War that led to, for instance, postcolonial and postpositivist studies was also determined by greater attention towards ethical and ideological issues rather than technical ones, which automatically included power relations and the agency of translators and interpreters. One of the topics of discussion in postpositivist studies, for example, is “ethical, ideological, and political dimensions of translation and the empowerment of translators” (2014: 190). Along the same line are postcolonial translation studies, which give great attention to the issue of ethics and the ideology of translation. Specifically, in the case of postcolonial translation studies, these topics come into play when questioning the idea of the equal power between two cultures. Starting from the assumption that there is a difference in power and status between two cultures, and that translation can contribute to this power imbalance, the role of the translator is inevitably examined under this perspective. In fact, according to these theoretical stances, “a translator can exercise politicized and ethical agency” (Tymoczko,

2014: 192, 196) on several levels of the translation, either to reinforce this disparity or challenge it.

2.1.2 The need for agency

After giving some information on the notion of agency, the following section will focus on the main aspects that make the topic relevant in this study and more generally in several translation studies. First, as has been already stated, the notion of agency is correlated with the idea of power relations in translation, an issue that has been mentioned in the previous chapter. The very notion of a concept like agency implies the existence of a sort of power and willingness to act in the hands of translators and interpreters, which is not exclusive to these subjects since the agents involved in the translation process are more than those that translate. Therefore, according to Khalifa, “to address the idea of agency in translation is thus to highlight the interplay of power and ideology” (2014: 14), in which agency and agents have a crucial role. Tymoczko pays great attention to this topic when suggesting the need for a new and contemporary theory of power that valued the role of translation as an essential element in the equation. Her reflections can be summed up in this sentence: “translation plays a role in many of these aspects of power and as such, the agency of translators is a significant factor to be considered within a theory of power, just as power is a significant factor to be considered in theorizing the agency of translators” (2014: 209).

The second aspect to consider is the idea of translators being able to make choices. It is no secret that, while translating target texts, translators are urged to make choices to render the text in another language, and this “emphasis on the translator’s choices and decision making” helps to reinforce the notion of agency (Tymoczko, 2014: 211). This is because, according to Tymoczko, “a translator’s ideological empowerment begins with the necessity to make decisions and choices in translation” (2014: 174). This last observation is especially relevant when discussing what makes a translator an activist. Although “agency” is a notion that might be mistakenly used to define a specific branch of translation, namely those individuals that present themselves as political and social activists, it is an inherent trait of all translators (Tymoczko, 2014: 174).

In conclusion, the concept of agency gives a useful understanding of the role and full potential of translators beyond the common frames to both scholars and translators themselves. With the words of Tymoczko:

Liberated from constraints imposed by dominant Western views of their position, translators can, in turn, view themselves in new and empowered ways, thus potentially allowing themselves to undertake new types of projects, to risk using new translation strategies, to create new types of translated texts, and to engage in new fields of activism and ethical engagement (2014: 191).

2.2 A question of balance: agency and norms

Narrative theory, as well as the notion of agency, have shown that certain stereotypes of translators might be untrue as well as too simplistic. Scholars have worked to dismantle the belief that sees translators as mere technicians whose scope is limited to the linguistic sphere, as well as the idea that no translator is allowed to act or capable of acting on the text following personal ethical or ideological positions. This theory, however, should also be considered with caution. On one hand, there is the idea that translators are neutral and passive; on the other hand, there comes the risk of overestimating their role and hence giving them too much responsibility in what they can do. In fact, on the other side of agency and translators' freedom comes the notion of norms and social expectations on translation. According to Xianbin, "translation, as a social activity, is norms-governed" (2007: 24), while one of the definitions of translation offered by Palumbo is "a norm-governed behaviour in a specific social, cultural and historical situation" (2009: 80).

It is clear that, broadly speaking, to exist and be treated as a universal practice, the translation process needs to have a set of norms to ensure that translators convert a target text and its meaning into a source text without completely altering it according to their inclination. Only because translators have some sort of control over the text, this does not exempt them from paying respect to the author, acknowledging the target audience expectations, and following the norms of the target language to make the text readable. It is common in translation, for example, that "translators design their translations with a view of who the translated text is to reach, and what the intended readers expect of a particular translated text", therefore paying close attention to the possible needs of others rather than their own choices (House, 2018: 54). The existence of a set of social, cultural, and linguistic rules that constrains a translator in his or her work is undeniable, as well as

the divergence between agency and norms in translation that is described with the words of Xianbin as “paradoxical and complex” (2007: 24).

Interesting is also the consideration made by Xianbin regarding the co-existence between these two elements, the agency, which represents the translator’s individuality, and the norms, which are associated with the social environment. Hence, “translation is a combination of universal constraints on translators as a group and much agency of translators as individuals” (2007: 28). With this premise, the problem that revolves around this double nature of translation is to find a balance between agency and norms. Are translators allowed to breach norms or is it always seen as an unacceptable practice? Are norms a guide that helps translators to make better choices or a control system that counters translators’ political agency?

2.2.1. Norms in translation studies

When discussing the influence of norms on the translation process, the first thing that needs to be done is to give a broad definition of what norms are and how pervasive they can be in manipulating the translator in his or her work. Their notion was first coined by Toury in the 1970s, to describe “regularities of translation behaviour within specific sociocultural situations” (Baker, 2001: 163). According to Palumbo, a norm is “a social notion of correctness or appropriateness, one that states (or expects) what acceptable translations should look like, thus influencing the decisions taken by translators” (2009: 79). Norms are not applied only to a single phase of the translation process, but they have an influence on the whole, from the preliminary stages of choosing (if there is the possibility to do so) a specific text until the target text is done.

It has been mentioned that Xianbin defines translation as a “social activity” (2007: 24), and this reflection on the idea of social in translation had also been supported by Toury (1995), who contemplated the work of translator as one of “playing a social role” (Baker, 2001: 164) while translating, permitting transfer of information in the community between two languages. To do so in a proper manner, the translator needs to be aware that the norms that regulate a determined language and culture, to fulfil his or her role. In this social context, then, norms are not a form of coercion over translators that withhold their inclinations, ambitions and freedom of action in the translation process, but rather a necessary prerequisite for translators “for determining what is appropriate translational

behaviour in a given community” (Baker, 2001: 164). In fact, for Toury (1995), norms can help translators to perform better as such in a given community, rather than being a set of strict impositions. This view of norms as socio-cultural limitations that translators are expected to follow are not forced to is also backed by Palumbo, who writes that “norms are not permanent laws”, focusing both on their dependency on cultures and social groups and the volatile nature that makes them change and evolve according to the time and place (2009: 79-80). Moreover, there can be multiple and sometimes competing norms in a social group and culture. Due to this vast amount of rules that vary between the mainstream ones and the less known, especially during a period of “cultural transition” where different norms have the same value, the role of the translator in choosing which one to follow is very crucial (Xianbin, 2007: 25).

Related to this subject is also the topic of translators’ choices, which in the previous section was mentioned to validate the agency of translators. In this case, since translators must make choices when working on a source text, their decisions are often driven by norms rather than their preferences. In other words, “the notion of norms assumes that the translator is essentially engaged in a decision-making process” (Baker, 2001: 164). When working with two languages that carry two sets of norms and are significantly different under various aspects, translators need to carefully choose between these two sets of norms which one to follow at a certain point, staying “partly within and partly out of these two sets of norms” (Xianbin, 2007: 28).

It is also worth mentioning the tendency of society, specifically the Western one in the case of Tymoczko’s analysis, to control translator’s agency at all costs, which is described as “a translator’s most threatening social capacity” (2006: 218-219). If this agency can lead translators to focus on ideological and ethical issues in their work and eventually threaten the power structures of a certain culture, the urge to turn their attention away from these problems is an imperative, and professional rules can become a crucial tool for this. The pressure and control, both when learning and then in the professional context, that is put on translators and interpreters to pay attention to limited aspects of ethics in translation are extremely efficient. Trained to focus on selected issues related to their assignments through the narrative of professional ethics, translators are unable to acknowledge their potential and become detached from “larger ideological questions of

ethical engagement and geopolitical concerns that might mobilize the translators' independent agency in activist ways" (Tymoczko, 2006: 218-219).

Another scholar worth mentioning who focused on the issue of norms is Pym (1998), who in the essay "Okay, so how are translation norms negotiated? A question for Gideon Toury and Theo Hermans", discusses the negotiation of translation norms. The text revolves around a theoretical question that Pym asks Gideon Toury and Theo Hermans while highlighting the limits in their studies. Although I will not analyse the essay in its entirety since this would lead to an unnecessary focus on a matter that this research intended to examine briefly, I will mention some considerations made by Pym (1998). First, he recognizes both the omnipresence of norms in everyday life actions, translation included, and their capacity to change and be changed to adapt to new scenarios, and therefore their study is related to the context in which they exist (1998: 107). Secondly, he finds rather simplistic the idea of binarism, where norms are located on two opposite sides with the languages that the translator has to work with. Instead, he prefers to see norms "in the intersections or overlaps of cultures", hence a place of intercultural activity where he thinks translators tend to find themselves when translating a text (1998: 111).

Lastly, he warns about the difference between norms and observed regularities. While both can be labelled as "isolated variables", which can be quantified, norms are expected to need other variables to be treated as such. Going beyond the studies of the scholars quoted in his essay, Pym claims that observing and describing norms only allows one to state that norms exist. However, until other independent variables are taken into account, not much else can be said regarding the nature of these norms (Pym, 1998, 110-111). The next step that should be taken is to switch from focusing on the nature of norms themselves and rather examine the "social confrontations" where the norms are negotiated. According to Pym, "when trying to locate a norm of some kind, it is often enough to pick up traces of dissent or debate, or some degree of challenge to the norm" (1998: 112). In other words, norms act as a regulatory force in contexts of divergence where they need to be negotiated to comply with conflicting positions. Ultimately, Pym states that norms mostly appear not as systematic regularities of a language, culture or social groups, but rather as "the results of disagreements bridged by adaptation and

compromise” (1998: 112). Hence, what characterizes them most is not the frequency of their appearance in the text but the negotiation that determines them in the text.

2.2.2 The relationship between norms and agency

After having briefly addressed the concept of norms in translation studies, the following section will focus on the dilemma between following or breaching the rules that govern translators and interpreters during the process of translation and interpreting. I think that norms and agency are two elements that need to be examined together. On one hand, there is the idea of a series of guidelines that constraint the translators to be faithful to the original text in their work, while also granting them a certain amount of freedom. On the other, there is the view of the translator as an agent endowed with authority and creativity to change the source text to a certain extent, as long as the established boundaries allow it (Xianbin, 2007: 28-29). According to Xianbin, “translation, as a norms-governed creative work, requires the translator to follow his own inclinations, but within an acceptable range of norms” (2007: 28-29). There is, in fact, an intersection between these two aspects of translation, which lead them to influence each other without dismissing one another. Consequently, it is worth questioning the relationship between norms and agency. The question which arises is this: what is the proper relationship between agency and norms? First of all, it is well known that translators “normally obey the obligatory requirements” and respect the norms that have been imposed (Xianbin, 2007: 26). A common thing that happens when translators apply for a job and accept “the conditions of employment”, is that their agency is subordinated to external constrictions. In other words, whenever translators decide to follow any sort of externally established protocol, “a predetermined ideological agenda motivated by the interests, position, and power of those instituting the protocol”, they automatically leave their agency to be constricted by those rules that are part of this protocol (Tymoczko, 2014: 303).

However, translators may decide to go against this trend and follow their judgement by breaching those rules in translation. The motivations behind this act can vary, but often involve political motivation and the desire “to subvert the dominant norms” (Xianbin, 2007: 25). A fair question, since it has been discussed in the previous section, would be whether following norms means translators rejecting their agency and authority in the translation process, and consequently breaching norms is a way to reclaim

their individuality? The answer is complicated, but what matters is that agency is not at risk. There might be various reasons that push the translator towards the decision of following or breaking norms, but the fact is that, ultimately, it is a translator's choice. As Xianbin suggests, agency is required to grant the translator the capacity to freely choose to follow and breach these norms (2007: 28-29). Moreover, according to House, this choice to follow a personal disposition and revolutionise the translation will be then motivated by different factors, such as “[the translator's] own culturally, historically and experientially defined individual values, her conscience and her willingness and determination to live with the consequences of her choice” (2018: 162).

Of course, there are cases where breaching norms for a translator is practically impossible, for reasons beyond agency. One example is, for example, when altering the translation will lead to a complete change that perhaps might not be considered a translation any longer, but rather an adaptation. Another one is the risk of reshaping the grammar, syntax and lexicon, of the original text to the extent that would make the target text incomprehensible on a linguistic level. A final case would be the technical problem of income, since most of the time, translators as workers need to follow specific rules to earn an income. It is also essential to consider the working conditions of the translator in the real world, where concepts such as “personal integrity” and resistance clash with the reality, where translators “are inevitably not at all independent in their actions but rather subject to a commissioner's brief and the need to keep a job in order to survive” (House, 2018: 162).

In my opinion, when it comes to choosing the best approach to translating a text, whether by breaching or respecting the imposed norms, translators, as “the actual performers of the act of translating” (Xianbin, 2007: 25) have to be aware of their responsibility to be professional, on one hand, and not to betray their own narratives when possible. Ultimately, it is crucial to find a balance between these two fundamentals of translation, as this has been well expressed in Xianbin's essay:

Over-emphasis on social constraints and ignoring the translator's agency will result in the fall of the translator's status and responsibility as well as the quality of translations. And negligence of the social norms might lead to random translation (2007: 28-29).

On the same topic, Xianbin also points out that not adhering to norms might result in a positive outcome. His observations revolve around the idea that through the loss of old

norms, new ones are allowed to emerge, and their culture can develop. From this point of view, a breach of norms becomes “the source of cultural creativity” (2007: 26).

Another interesting example of a positive relationship between agency and norms concerns the recognition perspective, promoted by Ruano, which will be further examined in the next chapter. In her essay, “Developing Public Service Translation and Interpreting under the Paradigm of Recognition” (2017), Ruano suggests that this concept, which focuses on the idea that differences and as well as the participation of all the actors in the translating process must be recognized, can help to promote agency through norms. Once all parties involved in the translation are invited to take initiatives, they are finally perceived and see themselves as peers, regaining their agency. This “participatory parity” can be promoted through the use of norms that all parties are expected to follow. In the words of Ruano, “recognition theories help to approach norms not merely in a restrictive manner, but rather as a starting point for agency” (2017: 35).

2.2.3 Codes of ethics and professionalism

Another issue worth mentioning is part of the field of ethics in translation, the translator’s ethical responsibility and more specifically the concept of codes of conduct, which can be connected to some extent to the notion of agency and norms that is the centre of this section. The general focus on ethics in translation studies in the last century can be seen as a “very general social trend” that emerged due to technological and social innovations that brought, as well as new trends and global interconnection, a new series of problems, such as the power of globalized economies, new forms of national and collective governance, ethical dilemmas in the field of science and medicine, the use and abuse of the Internet, and so on (Pym, 2001: 129). According to Pym, although just a small number of these problems concern translation directly, “they all increasingly entail decision-making on a level above that of the individual culture or nation” (2001: 130), and hence translation serves to share and discuss these issues globally. Contrary to the early days, when no attention was given to this topic, today ethical issues have gained popularity (House, 2018: 160).

The aim of the question of ethics, according to House, is for translators to “gain a heightened transcultural consciousness”, to become aware of their work as translators and being part of the relationship between them, the authors and the texts (2018: 160).

Although not being part of the norms that translators have to bear in mind during the translations process, since they do not concern the textual level but rather the individual and ethical level of translation, ethical responsibility and issues of ethics are still interesting elements because they can be considered as a set of rules that might constrain the translator and his or her agency in some way. This notion of ethics could then be seen as a principle, or rather a set of principles, that translators are expected to follow, not for the sake of a good translation but rather a more ethical perspective towards their work. After all, translators often find themselves to face this issue when working on a source text with which they might find ideological contrast, and this is because they inevitably meddle in the close relationship between the author and its creation. While the author does not find him or herself morally torn when dealing with the source text, the situation for translators is rather different and can even lead to ethical concerns about translating the target text. That is where the “codes of ethics” or “codes of professional conduct” show up, promoted by governments and organizations as the tools that guarantee professionalization from translators.

To better understand the specific case that I intend to analyse in this section, it is helpful to rely on an article written by Pym (2001), where he explains the distinction between alterity and deontology elaborated by Chesterman (1997). According to Pym, Chesterman offered a division between the notion of ethics as “the general field of relations between Self and Other” (the so-called alterity) and ethics as a set of rules that are assigned to a specific profession called “codes of ethics” (Pym, 2001: 133). The second type of ethics, which is labelled by Chesterman as deontology, is the central focus of this section. A good description of the purpose of the customary codes of ethics is provided by House’s statement: “[codes of ethics] often emphasized the necessity of the translators’ fidelity to the message of the original and admonished translators to be impartial and refrain from letting their personal or political opinion affect their translation” (2018: 160). This sentence points out two important things. The first one is that the topic brings us back to the initial discussion on neutrality. The second is that in this case, ethics, rather than being seen as the translator following his/her conscience with “the courage to act on her convictions even in the face of adverse consequences” (House, 2018: 163), but a series of rules that should preserve the translator from following his or her moral inclination. The risk that these codes of conduct might have is that the translator

ends up being seen as a neutral mediator, an incorrect image that this study aims to debunk. In the words of House:

The limits of the traditional code of ethics for translators are reached whenever the expected neutrality and impartiality comes into serious conflict with an individual translator's conscience and his personal code of ethics, leading him to construct and defend his very own 'code of ethics' in order to preserve his personal integrity (2018: 161-162).

Moreover, the label of codes of ethics for an alleged need for correctness from translators and interpreters can cover “the expected conformity with the expectations of the powerful commissioner of the translation” (House, 2018: 161-162). Ultimately, this simplistic and rather limited idea of ethics of translation can be seen as a call for “professionalism in the practice of translation”, a strict separation between the translator as an individual, a human being with agency and a personal viewpoint of the world, and the translator as a professional worker (House, 2018: 164). While examining these concepts and elaborating a consideration with regard to ethics in translation and ethical codes, this study heavily relies on House's criticism on the topic that has been mentioned. While there can exist a series of codes of conduct for workers in this profession that can help them to better approach issues that go beyond the written text, it is the translator's responsibility “to decide on the right and responsible course for her translation” (House, 2018: 163).

An alternative opinion worth mentioning in this brief analysis of this topic is given by Rosario Martin Ruano, who focuses on the use of codes of conduct in the field of Public Service in Interpreting and Translation (PSIT). What Ruano discusses is how guidelines for translators, the codes of conduct, can serve for a positive purpose. First, she mentions the criticism from various scholars (Baker & Maier, 2011: 4; Koskinen, 2000: 82), who describe codes of conduct as ineffective norms that only serve to tackle “abstract values” and can be no use to solve real problems (2017: 31). Although these codes are negatively seen as forms of control over translators or even useless tools, Ruano sees the potential of these norms to help translators and interpreters gain more recognition for their work through “a more explanatory function” (2017: 31-32). By using these norms to show what translators and interpreters are expected to do during their work could provide them with more visibility and understanding of what is expected of them by society. Hence, “if given the opportunity to establish the principles guiding translator and

interpreter behaviour and decisions in a vast array of situations, the translation community may not merely claim recognition for what is already expected of them” (2017: 31-32).

The last topic that needs to be considered in the field of norms and duties for the translator is professionalism. It has been partly mentioned in the previous section concerning the need to separate the professional from the individual, to guarantee a level of uniformity in the practice of translation. This concept of professionalism can be observed from two different viewpoints. On one hand, professionalism is a way for translators to gain respect from their employer, as well as a tool to dignify the whole field of work that is translation and interpreting. On the other, to point at professionalism as the highest purpose in translation might encourage translators to be loyal to their employer, regardless of the potential ethical issues that their work might involve. There are different approaches that scholars have developed towards this issue of balance between professionalization and ethical awareness in the profession of translation and interpreting, and to find a general rule that can be applied in every possible context is a daunting and perhaps impossible task.

The following question is based on the idea, as has been discussed several times, that translators are not impartial actors per se, but they possess their agency to decide whether to be neutral in their job and to what extent. In other words, neutrality is not a predetermined state of being, but rather a choice that the translator makes, either of his or her own or, usually, according to the expectations of the employer. Starting from this assumption, is neutrality and detachment the most desirable behaviour from translators? Does this detachment somehow devalue the artistic and human side of the work of translation? Is aiming at professionalism a way to wither the translated text? In this case turns out to be enlightening the reflection made by Pym on the professional detachment of translators, which is both relevant when discussing neutrality and agency in the field of translation. According to Pym, “translators’ prime loyalty must be to their profession as an intercultural space, an intersubjective place in which criteria of translational quality can and should be determined” (2010: 174). In other words, while translators should, in fact, be loyal in their work, this sense of loyalty should not merely point towards their employer or their ideology, but rather their profession.

Moreover, Pym agrees that there can be questions that translators might face in the source text that “might concern the translator’s opinions and beliefs as an individual”,

but these issues should not concern “the translator’s profession as such” (Pym, 2010: 175). Pym recognizes that both the individual and the professional equally exists within the translator, but he also draws a line between these two elements: “Source texts and non-translational ideologies must thus lie beyond the space in which professional ethics can be developed. But this does not mean that the profession should then refuse any ideologically based alterations whatsoever” (Pym, 2010: 175). On this subject, in the chapter “Professional detachment is attachment to a profession” (2010), Pym elaborates an interesting parallel between the translator and the lawyer. The analogy between these two professions is that both are expected to be professionally detached from their employers while being loyal to something else. In the case of the lawyer, it is “the rules and procedures of the court, which has as its purpose the dispensing of justice”, while translators “should presumably be attached to the rules and procedures of their profession” (2010: 175 -176). From this perspective, as Pym suggests, professional detachment can even be seen as a form of ethical commitment to one’s profession (2010: 176).

However, this analogy only works to a certain extent, and there is a stark difference when it comes to examining the purpose that drives lawyers and translators in their work. Lawyers find themselves in a structure of symmetry between accusation and defence and the final decision is in the hand of an external actor (the judge), and they aim to serve the client. Translators, on the other hand, are the ones that have the responsibility and ability to assess their work, and it is not clear whether they respond to for their work, the editor, the future readers, or someone else. What remains unresolved, then, is who or what the translator intends to serve.

2.2.4 Chesterman’s Oath

When discussing the balance between the norms that govern translation and the agency that allows the translator to navigate among these norms, a topic that frequently emerges is the question of ethics. What is the primary ethical principle that should guide a translator? Some argue that the ethical approach in a translation is to be loyal to the author and the source text, while others agree on the idea that a translation aims to serve the target reader, or that a translator should guarantee the communication between two cultures, regardless the demands of the author or the audience. And what if the true ethical

purpose for a translator is to be loyal to their narrative if, for instance, they label themselves as activists? Among many scholars who have attempted to offer a solution to the issue of the role of ethics in the practice of translation is Chesterman (2001), who attempted to examine ethics by dividing it in various models (House, 2018: 162-163). Chesterman's theory starts from the premise that traditionally there are four different models of ethics in translation, and all of them are all partial and overlapping models, in the sense that "each cover covers only part of the general ethical field of translation, and each seems therefore inadequate on its own" (Chesterman, 2001: 144). These four models of ethics are representation, service, communication and norm-based.

Representation refers to the idea that a translator's "ethical imperative" is to represent in another language the source text and author's original intention "accurately, without adding, omitting or changing anything" (2001: 139). Fidelity and truth to the source of translation is the pillar of this model of ethics, which pays attention to the concept of "representing the Other". According to this model, if the Other (the source author, text and culture) is wrongly misrepresented by the translator, this leads to "unethical consequences for intercultural perceptions and relations" (2001: 140).

The ethics of service is based on the perception of translation as a service, which is then performed to satisfy a client's demand. The focus of this model, then, is the client, whose idea of the aim of translation must be respected or negotiated by the translator. Is the primary requisite for a translator to act ethically, in this case, to be loyal to the client? Who is the client? It could be not only the person who asked for the translation in the first place, but also everyone included in the translation process, including the target readers and the original writer (2001: 140).

Communication, as the name suggests, places emphasis "not on representing the Other but on communicating with others" (2001: 141). In this model, the translator is positioned in the intercultural space between two or more cultures, and his or her primary purpose is to guarantee cross-cultural communication and understanding. In this context the translator's loyalty is not directed towards a source or target culture or client, but their profession, the act of communicating itself.

Lastly, the model norm-based ethics focuses on the concept that translators must behave "in accordance with the norms" set by the target culture. Respecting the norms and the expectations of their clients is the only way for translators to behave ethically.

Moreover, if translators follow the norms without acting unpredictably, they can both earn the trust of their client and guarantee credibility for their profession. In fact, according to Chesterman, trust is “one of the central values underlying this model” (2001: 141-142).

Together with these four models, Chesterman elaborates the so-called “ethics of commitment”. Commitment, for Chesterman, is the tool that guides people to be loyal to a set of values of a definite practice, in this case, the practice of translation. Moreover, as a virtue, commitment is essential for translators to strive for excellence, to improve themselves. In other words, commitment is “the wanting to be a good translator” (2001: 147-148). The topic of commitment is also crucial to later understand the solution that Chesterman offers as an alternative to these models of ethics.

As Chesterman observes, each of the models that he presented focuses only on one specific part of the ethical action, and ultimately each of them is inadequate on its own. The responsibility to select the ethical model that is considered the most appropriate, according to House, “remains up to the individual translator and her conscience” (2018: 162-163), leaving the translator to choose his or her ethical purpose in the translation practice. To define what is the true ethical approach in this case, then, is quite relative. Chesterman’s models are crucial to understanding how translation studies attempted to define the issue of ethics. In fact, according to Pym, all of these partial models that overlap between one another can be seen as different attempts “to explain how and why translators should ‘do the right thing’ (or ‘avoid the wrong thing’)” (2001: 130).

After presenting the models, Chesterman focuses on their limitations. What are the problems that he focuses on? First of all, the main issue is “the lack of compatibility between available models”, since each model focuses on a specific ethical value. Representation relies on truth because the author must be represented as truthfully as possible, while loyalty is required to offer efficient service. And when understanding is the core value for communication, trust, as it has been explained, is essential in norm-based ethics (2001: 142). An example that explains how incompatible these models can be in practice is the issue of clarity. While the notion of clarity is present in these models, each of them has a different interpretation of what should be clear in a translation and to what extent (2001: 143). Another problem is that each model has its positive features and flaws. Since each model requires the translator to be loyal to something or someone,

leading to different scopes and limitations, they are applied according to the type of text that the translator has to deal with. But what if the translator ends up in a situation where different values clash and it is necessary to choose one? According to Chesterman, another flaw of these models is that none of them offers a clear solution to this problem (2001: 142). The last problem is the fact that “different models focus on different levels of ethics” (201: 143). For instance, while the norms-based model merely revolves around the relationship between the translator and the text, the other models focus on wider types of relationships, such as that between the translator and the Other in the case of representation, which leads to the unsolvable question posed by Chesterman: “How are we to decide where the ethical responsibility of the translator stops – or does it stop at all?” (201: 143).

The alternative to these models is the creation of a Hieronymic Oath, based on the models of the Hippocratic Oath and the Archimedean Oath. Before introducing the Hieronymic Oath, Chesterman advances some premises. First, focusing on the virtues that a translator must possess to make ethical decisions, Chesterman suggests that the primary virtue is striving for excellence. In other words, “the translator must want to be a good translator” (2001: 146). Secondly, he separates the translator as professional and practitioner from the translator as a politically engaged individual who does not take part in the practice of translation and therefore is no subject of professional ethical norms. Professional ethics only includes the practice of translation, and because of this, “govern a translator’s activities qua translator, not qua political activist or life-saver” (2001: 147). The separation between the individual and the professional or the practitioner is something that often occurs when discussing the extent of the translator’s role and translation’s ethical limits.

Lastly, what is crucial to be a good translator, and what lies at the heart of the codes of ethics proposed by Chesterman is the commitment to be one (House, 2018: 162-163). In Chesterman’s theory, this ethics of commitment is “embodied in an oath that might work as a code of professional ethics for translators” (Pym, 2001: 130). After all, as Chesterman points out, “When submitting a translation, a translator in effect makes a promise: I hereby promise that this text represents the original in some relevant way.” (2001: 149). Chesterman’s Hieronymic Oath consists of “nine commitments or ‘sub-oaths’” and relies on nine principles that the translator is expected to follow: commitment,

loyalty to the profession, understanding, truth, clarity, trustworthiness, truthfulness justice and striving for excellence. Although all of these values are relevant for the translator, according to Chesterman they are “subordinate to understanding”, which is identified as “the highest value for translators” and the limit of professional ethics in translation (2001: 152). Lastly, the principles that Chesterman points out in his Oath are not limited on the translator as a single agent, but “are meant to go beyond genuinely personal and subjective ethical positions and choices” (2018: 163).

Chesterman’s theory is an interesting attempt to indicate what translators should follow or at least pay attention to when translating. Moreover, the Hieronymic Oath would be also helpful to “formalize and thus strengthen the international accreditation of translators”, creating a distinction between those who respect the oath and those who do not, hence promoting professionalization (Chesterman, 2001: 153). However, the creation of the Hieronymic Oath does not solve the problem of what is ethical and what is not, regardless of the translator’s commitment to respect the principles proposed by Chesterman. To quote House, “given Chesterman’s ethical oath, are we now in a position to say of a given translation that it is ‘ethical’ or ‘unethical’? Who is to decide whether a translation is ‘unethical’, for whom and why?” (2018: 163).

2.3 The involved translator

After what has been said about the importance of the translator’s role and his or her right to give priority to their narrative, the following section focuses on the issue of involvement and visibility. How visible translators should be in the source text? Since translators are not passive agents, as has been stated before, should they claim a more central role? Do they deserve to be noticed in the result of the translation process, or is perhaps their capacity to be invisible in the source text the greatest talent in this profession? And regarding their work, “once a work of literature exists in a new language, is it a new creation or simply a secondhand version of the original?” (Bishop & Starkey, 2006: 189). This study does not aim to offer a definitive answer, but just an insight into a topic that involves the agency of the translators, their relationship with the authors and the delicate balance between the target and the source culture. The visibility and involvement of the translator in the text is an interesting topic in the study of translation, mainly because it examines to what extent a translator can take part in the process of

reshaping the text. Although the act of writing is traditionally and exclusively associated with the author, the original creator, the act of translating is a complex activity that cannot be easily defined and where sometimes the lines between translators and authors can be quite blurred. It is interesting in this regard to look at the definition used by Bassnett to describe the role of translators that is universally recognized today: “a role that is far from innocent, and is very visible indeed” (2007: 23). The use of the expression “far from innocent”, in my opinion, highlights the deep involvement that translators can have in rewriting the source text, which can even lead to cases of excessive visibility.

However, sometimes “being present” in the writing process to create the source text can be necessary, according to the context that translators have to face. Eco, for example, talks about the concept of negotiation as a crucial step in the translation process (2018: 172-177), with losses and compensations. In the context of negotiation, the statement “traducendo non si dice mai la stessa cosa” [you never say the same thing when you translate] (2018: 177) reflects on the fact that, because languages and their cultures are so different that is impossible to render the equivalent concept without changing the words and even syntax, a translator will always force the source text to a certain extent to convey a readable and fluent translation. Due to this linguistic difference, in translation, especially literary translation, it is also common to find several possibilities to translate a sentence that the translator is forced to decide which approach to use to create the best equivalent in the translation. There are different roads to take, and all of them are equally valid as long as the original purpose of the text is unaltered. In his book, Eco also mentions cases where translations have even improved the original text (2018: 216).

Regardless of these examples, it is important to distinguish between what is allowed and what is not in the translation process, and when the line should not be crossed for the sake of improvement. However, different boundaries exist according to different perspectives. Pym states that “from the translator’s point of view”, for example, “to translate is to improve” (2010: 172). On the other hand, this priority often clashes with the social perception of the practice of translation, which is often seen as a mere tool of transference between two or more languages. Hence, while translators are proud of the value that they add to the original text, for many others translation should not involve the translator’s individuality (Pym, 2010: 172). Even Eco himself, while admitting that there

are exceptions to the rule, states that he prefers that translators, on principle, should not aim to improve the text (2018: 224).

The topic of the involvement of the translator in the text is a very delicate one, especially in the relationship between the author and the translator, which can even lead to problems of imbalanced power relations between the translator's and the author's cultures (Bishop & Starkey, 2006: 188). For instance, a common issue that happens, in this case, is to improve and to enrich the source text to the extent that the translator ends up substituting the author (Eco, 2018: 204).

2.3.1 Visible or invisible? On Venuti's ethical question

Both visibility and involvement of the translator are connected to the problem of agency and freedom of the translator in the target text. However, visibility, in my opinion, differs from involvement mainly because the latter refers to an ethical, rather than a technical, question. According to readers, for example, visibility is something that should be avoided for the sake of transparency, "the single most important aspect of a 'good' translation", while for translators and scholars the view regarding this issue "is less unanimous" (Landers, 2001: 49). Visibility has been discussed and analysed from different perspectives, and several and often contrasting opinions have been elaborated. This research will focus on the main scholar who wrote about the concept of visibility, Lawrence Venuti, who also studied the concept of foreignization. Although his studies primarily focus on British and American translations, he made it clear that his notions can be applied to the translation process "in any language and culture" (2008: 19). His research does not only tackle the visibility and therefore the role of the translator in the text, but also the balance between cultures and the subtle relations of power that one culture might exercise towards another. For this reason, Venuti is one of the main scholars that is included in the field postcolonialism. An example can be given from a passage of his most famous book, "The Translator's Invisibility", where he uses traditional Western translation as an example to show how American and British cultures relate to other cultures:

The translator's invisibility is symptomatic of a complacency in British and American relations with cultural others, a complacency that can be described – without too much exaggeration – as imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home (2008: 13).

Due to this view, Venuti positions himself in contrast with what he identifies as the “dominant Western literary and commercial practices” that support and encourage translators to be invisible (Tymoczko, 2006: 452). Moreover, he claims that what determines this need of invisibility is “the individualistic conception of authorship that continues to prevail in British and American cultures ” (Venuti, 2008: 6).

When questioning this invisibility of the translation, Venuti refers to it as “the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent” (Venuti, 2008: 1). In other words, the translation is not seen as such, but as the original text. Thanks to this “illusion of transparency”, any sort of element that would not make the translation fluent is removed, and the readability of the text is guaranteed. In short, the foreigner becomes local. To maintain this illusory effect, according to Venuti, readers are also included in this process, since they tend and expect to read translations as if they were originally written in their language (2008: 1). What has been elaborated by Venuti is very interesting, because he tried to dismantle a common expectation that the public and many translators have when thinking about the “good translation”. In my opinion, this viewpoint is also deeply embedded in Italian culture as well, and I would not be surprised to find it in most other Western cultures.

The observations made by Venuti highlights three important issues related to the general preference of invisibility in the practice of translation. The first one is that invisibility demands a strict distinction between the author and the translator. On one hand, the authors create the text and hand it over to be converted into another language. Translators, on the other, should not appear in the text, use their agency to improve it or choose to keep some features of the foreign culture to force their readers to exit their comfort zones. The role of the translator is simply to serve the receiving culture and offer a proper translation where there is no trace of a foreign culture. The second problem is that the same audience might indirectly suffer from this preference towards invisibility. According to Venuti, those cultures that aim for an illusion of fluency in the translated texts tend to reject “foreign texts and English-language translation strategies that are more resistant to easy readability” (2008: 12). This means that to appease the demands of audience and editors, many texts written in foreign languages will be ignored because too difficult to translate without traces of their source culture. After all, if a translation is an interpretation of a text made by a translator, this interpretation will inevitably depend on

the expectations of a specific audience and culture “ where the translated text is intended to circulate and function” (Venuti, 2008: 14), and if the culture demands transparency and fluency, some texts will never be translated. This would mean, in my opinion, a cultural loss for those countries where the circulation of foreign text is limited according to their translatability and fluency.

The final and perhaps most problematic aspect is the fact that authors and target cultures will also pay a heavy price for this approach of uniformity. The principle for transparency demands that a translated text should be readable and as fluent as possible in the receiving language while being as similar as possible to the original. However, since fluency is the major goal to reach in the translation (Kadiu, 2019: 22), elements of the foreign culture that make the text sound unfamiliar to the target audience will inevitably be removed. Hence, although the translation will convey the meaning of the original, all those features that were part of the author’s culture will be lost. In other words, “translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the translating-language reader” (Venuti, 2008: 14). In some cases, especially when there is a disparity between the source and target culture, the author’s wishes to maintain some cultural elements might even be ignored for the sake of the reader’s comfort.

This approach of adapting the source text to the norms receiving of audience and culture can be identified as domestication (House, 2018: 181). In his work, Venuti denounces this notion of homogeneity and domestication, which he identifies as a form of violence against the foreign author and his or her culture, which is carried through the elimination of “aspects of the signifying chain that constitutes the foreign text” and the disarrange of this chain “in accordance with the structural differences between languages (2008: 14). From this perspective, translation itself can become a form of violence, since it has the power to reduce “the cultural other as the recognisable, the familiar or even the same”, especially when the translator follow the goal of domesticating the text (Venuti, 2008:14; Mialet, 2010: 166-167). While Venuti admits that this violence in translation is partly inevitable, the extent of this violence depends on many variables, such as the culture, the historical context, and the economic system where this translation is carried out. For instance, one of the reasons why fluent domestication has been so prevalent in the American and English cultures can be found in the economic value that it carries: the

more readable a text can be, the more consumable it is for the market (2008: 12,15). Moreover, the translator plays a huge role in this phenomenon as well, since he or she “exercises a choice concerning the degree and direction of the violence at work in any translating” (2008: 15).

In contrast with these tendencies, Venuti’s alternative relies on the crucial concept of foreignization, which “establishes a direct link between visibility and ethics” (Kadiu, 2019: 22). The term foreignization does not define a set of translation strategies that can be used to reach the opposite result of a domesticated text, but rather “the ethical effect of translated texts” (Kadiu, 2019: 35). According to Kadiu, the focus for Venuti in this approach is not on the techniques to achieve this foreignization but the effect that foreignization creates on the target audience, and the reader’s perception of the translated text lays at the core of this theory (2019: 35). What Venuti aims to do with the foreignizing practice is to break this illusion of fluency promoted by domestication, to make the reader aware that the text that he or she is reading is not the original, but merely a translation of a foreign text in a target culture (Kadiu, 2019: 23). A foreignizing translation in the English language, for Venuti, could even be seen as “a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations”, drawing the attention on the violence that translation perpetrates (2008: 16).

Another term frequently used with foreignizing translation is “resistant translation”. It refers to the resistance to fluency and transparency that are deeply embedded in the English-language translations and, most importantly, to the challenge against a receiving culture when “it enacts its ethnocentric violence on the foreign text” (Venuti, 2008: 18). Any elements in translation that “betray the ‘otherness’ of the text’s origin”, according to the resistant approach, should be avoided by translators (Landers, 2001: 52). With this term once again Venuti focuses on translation not only from a technical but mostly from an ethical point of view. After all, as Tymoczko suggests, resistance “is a word with very wide political and ideological associations” (2000: 34), and it would not make sense to reduce Venuti’s theory as a mere translation theory without discussing ethical issues such as power relations between cultures. As Kadiu states: “the main contribution of the foreignizing approach to translation studies lies precisely in this promise to generate and secure an ethical translation practice” (2019:

22). This term will also be mentioned in the following chapter concerning the topic of activism.

Lastly, the translator's role that Venuti suggests is one of a visible translator that works against dominant values of the receiving culture, free from restrictions. The notion of resistance, in this case, will not only be valuable for the source culture that seeks for more visibility but the translator's role as well. Through a resistance approach, according to House, "translators would also cease to be 'invisible', and they would be in a position to play a more important role in their day-to-day business of translating" (2018: 161). An example of the visible translator promoted by Venuti, according to Tymoczko, can be found in the postcolonial translators, who are described as "often leading cultural figures, highly visible and publicly engaged in the creation and assertion of cultural resistance to oppression" (2014: 199).

2.3.2 "I resist resistance"⁴: criticism of Venuti's theory

Venuti's theory has been both praised and also criticised over the years by many scholars such as Poezzi (2001), Bassnett (2005), Jean Boase-Beier (2010), Pym (1996, 2010) and Kadiu (2019), for example. According to Kadiu, Venuti's book "The Translator's Invisibility" and specifically his concept of "foreignizing translation" has sparked "much controversy in translation studies" (2019: 23). The warnings against this type of translation refers, for example to the risk to create "an overly exotic Other", hence making the source text something overly stereotyped (Polezzi, 2001: 70) and excessively distancing the reader from the text (Bassnett, 2005: 127). Tymoczko, on the other hand, focusing on the general theory criticizes Venuti for not having carefully defined the terms that he used to engage with issues such as power and ideology (2000: 35). Moreover, she highlights the problem of creating binary terms such as "fluent/resistant" and "domesticating/foreignizing" that she claims Venuti is unable to keep consistently stable as polar opposites, a strategy that "does not work very well in translation studies" (2000: 36). Lastly, Tymoczko points out the fact that foreignization risks to be seen as "an elitist strategy, more appropriate a highly educated target audience" than an ethical practice targeting a broad audience (2014: 211-212). Kadiu also discusses the idea of foreignization from a practical point of view, questioning what is the probability that this

⁴ (Landers, 2001: 54)

strategy will raise the audience awareness on the translated text and what and how many features are necessary to turn a translation into a foreignizing one (2019: 25). In his book, Landers does not directly mention Venuti's theory, but he openly criticises the notion of resistance in the practice of literary translation. His scepticism towards resistance is motivated by the idea that a resistance that aims to render the translated text unfamiliar could be counterproductive for the author. The fluent and readable translation of a foreign author leads to its diffusion on a large scale, allowing the author to be read in multiple languages, while a foreignizing translation risk to be "chalked up as a shortcoming of the author poor work by the translator or both" (Landers, 2001: 53). According to Landers, the issue of resistance is that it only focuses on academics considerations to the extent that it completely ignores the demands of the target reader or the "literary and aesthetic concerns" of a translation (2001: 53).

In conclusion, as has been already stated at the beginning of this section, this study does not aim to offer an answer to the questions that have been proposed or to elaborate a general approach to deal with the source text. Visibility is, without doubt, an interesting topic to examine together with foreignization and resistance, concerning the issue of agency and translator's role in the practice of translation. Many scholars have discussed it from different contrasting positions over the years. In my view, a positive outcome that emerged this discussion is the fact that the role of the translator, when discussing whether he or she should be more or less invisible in the text, has perhaps become more visible than ever in the discipline of translation studies.

2.4 On self-reflexivity

In his book, "Key Terms in Translation Studies" (2009), Palumbo mentions the notion of "habitus", which he describes, following the definition elaborated by Bordieu, as "a set of dispositions that characterize an individual (an 'agency') acting in a 'field'" (2009: 56). In other words, in the case of translation, how do translators usually behave? What is the mindset that they tend to follow? According to Simeoni (1998:23), the typical translator habitus can be depicted as "one of 'voluntary servitude'". Although this is defined as the typical habitus or mindset in the practice of translation, Palumbo mentions that this self-image of the translator can actually "be changed little by little" once translators become aware of this tendency and create new ways to perform their agency

(2009: 56). The proper way to develop this awareness is to through a process of self-reflectivity, which is, according to Tymoczko, “almost a prerequisite for ideological, political, and ethical agency” because it allows the translator to be empowered and conscious of the limits in translation as well as the choices that he or she can make (2014: 219-220).

This tendency towards an interrogation of the practice of translation itself rather than only the text and language can be traced back to the last century, specifically the years where the so-called “generation of 1968” was born. Many students who embraced the radical stances of the politics of those years developed a different perspective to translation studies, turning “a self-reflexive eye on what constitutes knowledge, the knowing subject, and the knowing institution” (Tymoczko, 2014: 23). Thanks also to the growing phenomena of globalization, these views promoted investigations based on ideology and self-reflexivity, which lead towards “inclusionary approaches, transforming the canons of literature and admitting alternative histories” (Tymoczko, 2014: 23). Issues such as inequalities, patriarchy, colonialism and others became visible in translation studies as well. Since a developed self-understanding can help the translator to become a “committed, engaged and responsible figure”, in the Western dominant culture this critical approach of self-investigation has often been undermined to preserve the submissive status of the translator (Tymoczko, 2014: 8).

What Tymoczko recommends, when translating or conducting research in the field of translation studies, is “to adopt a habit of mind in which there is continual interrogation of the data and self-reflexive scrutiny of one’s own interventions, suppositions, interpretations, and theoretical commitments” (2014: 163). It is important, then, to ask ourselves not only what we are examining, but also and perhaps most importantly how we do examine a certain element. Self-awareness becomes necessary to better interrogate ourselves, but without a mirror that can show us our viewpoint, it might be hard to have a clear image of the self. One of the ways to reach self-awareness is then to learn about the self through the Other. Engaging with the Other, whether it is different ideologies or cultures can help us to better examine our own perspective with a distant and critical approach. This general idea is also valid in the practice of translation, and translation itself can become a good tool for self-reflection. According to Maitland, constant interaction, and interpretation of the other, something that is external to the

individual, helps translators to better interpret themselves. Therefore, “the more we engage ourselves in the explanation of alien meanings [...] the better placed we are to understand our own inner meaning (2017: 146). Finally, according to Tymoczko, consistency, and especially narrative consistency is essential in order to guide a translator to have a better understanding of his or her role. Questions such as

“What “story” does a translator tell about the self in the world? Is this story consistent with the translator’s assignments, the impact of the translator’s work on the receiving audience, the actions of the employer in the world, and so forth?” (2014: 318-319)

help the translators to become mindful about their work and empower themselves.

Similar to self-reflexivity is the topic of reflexivity, which in the context of translation has been examined by Kadiu in her book, “Reflexive Translation Studies” (2019), where she shows how different translation scholars developed their theory of reflexivity. The two chapters that I focused on examine Berman and Bassnett’s perspectives. While the approach of self-reflexivity has its focus on the self, the reflexive method can be described more generally as “an instrument of critical and self-critical investigation” (2019: 150). Berman primarily focuses on critical reflexivity, which is defined as “the pre-condition for the actualisation of an ethical approach to translation” (Kadiu, 2019: 131). Not only is reflexivity in the field of translation, according to Berman, a necessary prerequisite now to practice translation, but it consists in a critical “operation of reflection and self-reflection” (Kadiu, 2019: 97). What also emerges from Kadiu’s analysis on Berman is that critical reflexivity, contrary to what he claims, rather than focusing on translation as a tool to discover the Other “reinforces a sense of selfhood” (2019: 130). To quote Kadiu, “I argue that in Berman’s theory, a reflexive, analytical approach to translation is considered ethical not because it establishes a relation to the Other but because it reveals one’s own positioning in relation to this Other” (2019: 131). Lastly, what emerges from the analysis is not only the direction of this method, which is towards the Self but also its limits since when the translator examines his or her own self, it is impossible to do so from a neutral or external standpoint. Therefore, self-awareness of the Self can only be partial and imperfect, and therefore “an impossible task” (Kadiu, 2019: 136). Baker’s narrative theory, which has been presented in the previous chapter, is useful to understand this concept.

The second scholar, Bassnett, focuses on the idea that translation is a mirror for the translators to position themselves in relation to it and better understand their own idea of translation. Translation is then seen from a metatextual point of view because it is not only presented as a target text as such but also as the interpretation of the translator (Kadiu, 2019: 67). Similar to what Kadiu has said with regards of Berman's theory, in the case of Bassnett, reflexivity is seen first as a self-discovery, and translation serves as a tool for self-exploration (Kadiu, 2019, p. 45). In fact, according to Bassnett, "each translation is also a translation of the self", hence translation becomes a "self-expressive response" that allows the translator to develop his or her own perception of the self (Kadiu, 2019: 63-64). Moreover, since Bassnett support the view of translation as a creative practice, it is easy to focus on the creativity of the self that the translator convey in the text (Kadiu, 2019: 47)

What emerges from the analysis of the reflexive system proposed by these scholars is the fact that the main focus of reflexivity is not the Other but rather the Self, leading to a circular process towards "self-reference, self-discovery, self-reflection or self-knowledge". Ultimately, according to Kadiu, "reflexivity is inseparable from self-reflexivity, even though it is not recognised or theorised as such" and reflexivity inevitably shows the limits of self-reflexivity. In the end, "instead of asserting that reflexivity can make up for the lack of neutrality in translation, my reflexive method shows that no amount of highlighting, pointing or self-awareness can secure an ethical practice of translation" (2019: 146).

Chapter Three: Translation as a purposeful activity

After analysing the role of the translator as an active agent in the translation process and his or her limits and duties, this chapter will focus on translation for social and political change. Translation will not be examined from a linguistic point of view as a mere process of transference, but rather as a tool in the hands of translators, which can be used to support or challenge fixed narratives. Therefore, the analysis will consider the practice of translation in relation to cultural and social contexts, instead of focusing on theoretical aspects of the discipline itself. The main topic of the chapter will be the relationship between translation and activism.

The first part of the chapter will focus on the discipline of translation studies, to be precise, the main innovations in the past century that have led the studies of the discipline to an openness towards cross-cutting aspects of the translation process, such as cultural and social considerations. This section will be helpful to understand when and how scholars of translation started to focus on translation not as an abstract or isolated practice but including a cultural and social element in the equation. The main theories that, in my opinion, helped to widen and improve the discipline of translation studies will be briefly presented in chronological order. This short historical excursus is meant to describe, albeit concisely, how the topics of ethics, ideology, and the translator as an active agent, have been discussed and investigated in translation studies.

The second part will be devoted to translation on a more practical level, focusing on translation as a practice that has an important outcome in social and political scenarios. In this analysis, translation is examined as a proactive tool for a purpose that goes beyond the idea of simply “mechanically swapping words from one language to another” (Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017: 31). This section will focus on translation connected to activism. This examination aims to show that translation should not be perceived simply as an intellectual practice whose study is limited to its technical features, notions and norms, but rather a powerful force that can affect real-life scenarios. If the translation is extracted from the academic field and its role, and the role and potential of translators in political and social contexts are taken into account, it is easier to consider it a useful tool for activism. It has already been clarified that narratives shape our realities and have consequences on our behaviours, as well as the fact that translation serves to either share or challenge narratives. If we agree on these two points and consequently on the premise

that translation undoubtedly has a crucial role in social and political relations, I believe that translation then can and should be used for a positive purpose. The idea of translation “as a form of political and ideological activism” (Tymoczko, 2014: 213) is, therefore, the best use we can make of this practice, in my opinion.

The section will focus the field of activism between the 20th and 21st century, and how translation as an “engagement of a very active sort” (Tymoczko, 2014: 213) was able to take part in these social movements and evolved together with them. It will be examined how in the context of activism the practice of translation commonly seen as an individual effort turned into a collective experience, as well as the effect of globalization and digitalization of the new century broke new ground for translator activists. At the core of this analysis lies the question that emerges from my statement regarding the best use that we can make of translation practice: can a translation be considered an alternative space for activism? Most importantly, is it possible for an individuals who identify themselves both as activists and translators to balance these two roles equally? To what extent can translation serve in social and political movements to fight inequalities and injustice without losing its purpose as a linguistic practice? In the last section, I will briefly discuss this issue, which some proponents of non-engagement and neutrality of translation point out when it comes to the involvement of translators in activist movements, the potential lack of professionalism and the risk of manipulating the translated text for the benefit of their social or political cause. The balance of a translator’s loyalty between moral and professionalism is a challenging problem.

3.1 Beyond the text: the evolution of Translation Studies

In the previous chapter, one of the main aspects of translation that has been examined was the limits and potentials that translators find themselves facing in their work. In this regard, ethics and ideology are surely an example of when the boundaries between the professional side and the moral side of the translator’s work become blurred, to the extent that translators might even end up breaching the old limits imposed on translations for the sake of ethics and justice. In this chapter, on the other hand, I intend to focus on what translators can and should do, from an ethical rather than a professional point of view, to become socially and politically engaged agents.

When it comes to concepts such as engagement, volunteering, and activism within the field of translation, ethics is inevitably involved. The ethical question is a topic that has been already discussed in the previous chapter, specifically concerning the issue of codes of ethics or codes of conduct. However, the field of ethics in Translation Studies is a vast territory that has been examined by many scholars through different approaches and in numerous ways, building a very dense archive of contributions within translation studies. The steps that have been taken in this discipline are worth mentioning in this chapter, which focuses on the topic of activism, because it is also thanks to these studies that the crucial role of translation in challenging real-life issues is now taken into account, especially in the field of activism. The timeline that I intend to use focuses on those movements and currents that meant that the study of translation was no longer limited to technical features or norms within the target and source texts, but started to include external factors, such as the role of translators, cultures and society, and “adopting frames of reference from other areas of intellectual inquiry and other academic disciplines” (Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 2014: 137).

In 1972, the study of translation as a practice became a distinctive discipline, taking the name of Translation Studies coined by Holmes (Palumbo, 2009: 3, 133). Yet it was only later that the discipline started to shift its focus from the texts towards translators, the influence of different ideologies and cultures behind translation and their implications. Although historically being “always embedded in cultural and political systems” the ideological issues of translation had often been ignored or the practice itself was seen as a mere linguistic or aesthetic act (Bassnett, 1999: 6). However, while at the beginning of translation studies topics such as ethical issues were rarely given attention, “they are now increasingly popular in scholarly reflection on translator actions”, and are especially relevant for translators (House, 2018: 160).

The evolution, expansion, and even self-reflexivity and discussion of translation studies is also justified by the rise of the metatheory post-positivism, in contrast with its forerunner, positivism. According to this metatheoretical stance, “perspective is recognized as an irreducible aspect of any intellectual work and of action in general”, and therefore framing plays a huge role on how we think and behave (Tymoczko, 2014: 204). Its influence on Translation Studies became clear after the Second World War, as the idea

of translation as an “objective activity, independent of interpretation” was no longer accepted (Tymoczko, 2014: 204).

The first movement I do intend to analyse is the Cultural Turn, which developed first in the 1970s in disciplines of humanities and social sciences, and later emerged in the field of translation studies at the end of the 1980s, promoted by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere in 1990. This cultural turn focused on culture as the primary object of study, and “reflects the development of cultural studies during the last two decades of the twentieth century” (Tymoczko, 2014: 43). Together with the wave of feminism and protests in the West, it facilitated the rise of gender studies in translation, which focused on the intersection between gender and translation (Palumbo, 2009: 59).

The next case worth attention is that of the postcolonial studies, which in this context will be examined in relation to the field of translation. As a consequence of the cultural turn and the postcolonial studies in the humanities, postcolonial translation studies became well-known in the 1990s, and led many scholars to examine how translation is deeply connected to seemingly unrelated concepts such as discrimination, power imbalance and so on (House, 2018: 15; Tymoczko, 2014: 45). In the same years, researches in Translation Studies focused on examining the relationship between translation and ideology and began to focus on the translator’s role and its ethical implications, a topic that would later be examined also by Venuti (1992). Researching from an ideological perspective, this approach aims to highlight how the translator’s ideology can have an influence over his or her work and even manipulate the target text (Palumbo, 2009: 58). This, in my opinion, is the main period where translation studies move towards the translation as a crucial agent, examining it both outside and on the inside, such as in the case of ideology. The 1990s were years of intense changes in many theories, and a wave of interdisciplinary studies led translation studies to open up towards issue that connects the practice of translation with contexts such as the social, the cultural, and the political.

The next important step in the history of translation studies is the focus on the sociology of translation in the last decade of the 20th century. This was the final step that established the switch from a theoretical perspective, from the study of translation towards the study of translators, mainly thanks to numerous scholars that worked on this topic, such as, Simeoni, Toury and sociologist Bourdieu (Inghilleri, 2005; Tymoczko,

2014: 207). Lastly, with Baker's studies (2006), the new century has seen the emergence of narrative theory, which led to new interesting observations regarding the influence of narratives and, most importantly for my study, the role of translation in sharing them (House, 2018: 165).

3.1.1 The Cultural Turn

The term cultural turn was used by Bassnett and Lefevere in a collection of essays to define a major shift in translation studies during the 1990s (Khalifa, 2014: 9), from "text- and linguistically-oriented approaches" to "socially and culturally oriented" approaches (House, 2016: 7). This focus on the influence of cultures and cultural formations was not only limited in the discipline of translation, but it had a huge influence on this field due to the constant interaction between two or more cultures (Cáceres-Würsig, 2017: 3). This "major expansion of the discipline" was relevant not only from a linguistic or cultural but also from a sociological point of view, turning translation studies into an "interdisciplinary field" (Mialet, 2010: 155).

The core idea of this "turn" was that translation was no longer seen as a balanced linguistic transaction, but a more complex and often imbalanced process of negotiation between two or more cultures, where power had a crucial role in the negotiation. Rather than focusing on the training of the translator, which paid attention to "textual concerns" such as equivalence, norms and faithfulness, the new approach of cultural studies moved towards "wider cultural concerns and the study of how translations function in their cultures of destination" (Mialet, 2010: 155).

To quote House, "the so-called 'cultural turn in interpreting studies' is epitomized in statements such as 'One does not translate languages but cultures'" (2016: 7). As a consequence of this new approach, which shed some light on the effect of external factors in the target text, the discipline also started to investigate extralinguistic issues such as cultural manipulation and the "the analysis of the relationship between ideology and/or power and translation activity" (Cáceres-Würsig, 2017: 3).

Another important aspect to mention is the role of postpositivism in the rise of cultural expansion of translation studies. In this regard, it is interesting the consideration made by Tymoczko in her book "Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators" (2014) about the evolution of translation studies and the influence of the metatheories of

positivism and later post-positivism. During the peak of the imperialism of the European powers, positivism became “the dominant Western epistemological posture”, and it assessed the cultural control of these powers over their colonies (2014: 190-191). At the core of this theory lies the idea that “there is one correct and “objective” way to look at things”, due to its stress on “facts”, rationality and the existence of dominant assumptions on various perspectives (race, class, gender, etc.) which helped Western countries to justify their oppression over other cultures (Tymoczko, 2014: 190-191). Totally in contrast to this view, postpositivism emerged “during the breakdown and rejection of imperialism”, aiming to interrogate and decenter the dominant assumptions on race, power and cultures that were taken for granted and perceived as unquestionable (Tymoczko, 2014: 190-191). Once that fixed and predominant views of an oppressive culture lose their primacy and are no longer seen as the only true way of thinking, new perspectives from once subordinate cultures emerge, leading to the highlight of once hidden structures of power and manipulation. The Cultural Turn is a perfect example of how the postpositivist approach has been applied to translation studies.

Another interesting observation regarding the Cultural Turn is the fact that it generated a series of new theories, such as the skopos theory or postcolonialist theory, which relies on functionalist approaches. The term refers to those approaches that “see translation as an act of communication and a form of action involving not only linguistic but also social and cultural factors”, which brings us back to the theoretical core of the cultural turn. The context and the function of the target text affect the translating process and the final result, and therefore these approaches take into account “real-life scenarios of professional translation” (Palumbo, 2009: 75).

Lastly, the Cultural Turn also led to the rise of gender studies in translation and the attention on how socio-cultural norms indirectly affect the practice of translation. As the name suggests, gender studies pay attention to “the ways in which maleness, femaleness and other gendered identities are constructed through attributes and attitudes that are culturally and historically determined”, examining and eventually dismantling them. Language, and therefore translation, in this view, can become a tool for manipulation and establishment of fixed constructed roles, and these studies aim to point out this socio-cultural influence over translation (Palumbo, 2009: 52).

The main issue of the Cultural Turn that Mialet points out in her essay is the risk of reinforcing “the text versus context dichotomy”, and thus promoting rigid structures that could separate the context and the text into two distinct fields of study. This system would ultimately fail to recognize the deep interconnections that make translation such a multi-faceted and complicate practice. According to Mialet, this problem is solved through the sociological approach applied on translation studies, which aims to focus on “social structures and their effects on agents’ actions”, thus rejecting this notion of dichotomy. It is only through the contexts where the source and target texts are elaborated that the texts acquire their meaning (2010: 169).

3.1.2 Postcolonial Translation Studies

Apart from the “Cultural Turn”, another important theory developed in the field is Postcolonial Translation Studies. In general, postcolonialism can be described as follows: “a multifaceted approach seeking to understand and rectify the literary and cultural consequences of colonialism in both colonizing and colonized countries, now and in the past” (Bermann, 2005: 3). It is a general theory that aims to criticize forms of domination that were common during the hegemony of the Western countries, such as nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism, and “validating the non-Western other” and its alternative narratives (Staten, 2005: 112). This tendency became common during the post-colonial period and the fall of European empires, when former colonies started to challenge the norms imposed by these empires, including “norms about what translation is and what it signifies” (Bassnett, 1999: 4). However, as Tymoczko points out, in many fields it is not yet clear whether the term postcolonialism refers to “specific and restricted historical conditions and circumstances” or rather an “existential or ontological conditions”, not limited to the specific context of colonization (2014: 201).

At the core of the theory is the idea that those groups in power maintain control over subordinate groups not only physically through violence and military repression, or financially, but also by spreading values, identities, cultures, and paradigms that endorse fixed social and cultural structures of power. This idea is crucial for two reasons. First, it implies that power is not isolated from culture, including language and all those elements that are objects of study in the field of humanities, but it is reinforced through all these elements, meaning that the idea that a hegemonic country exercises its power only

through direct violence is incorrect and does not take into account the role of narratives and the influence of culture. Secondly, as a consequence, it becomes clear that cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions have a decisive compelling role when it comes to gaining power and maintaining control.

Postcolonial studies are part of those theories founded on the positivist approach. They tend to question those fixed views that were commonly seen as the only valid ones during the colonialist era, examining them from a different perspective than the imperialist one, “the viewpoint of colonized subjects” (Tymoczko, 2014: 192). This need for alternative perspectives that challenge a dominant one is needed both in translation studies and postcolonial studies, which led to an intersection between these two movements. A common issue that is discussed in both of them and therefore one of the main objects of study in postcolonial translation studies is the role and agency of the translator, which need to be examined by taking into consideration new and innovative perspectives (Tymoczko, 2014: 192-193).

Like postcolonial studies, postcolonial translation aims to disclose the tools that help to establish and preserve hegemonic structures. To be precise, taking translation as one of these tools, they focus on “the ways in which translation is affected when it takes place between a dominant and a dominated culture” (Palumbo, 2009: 85). The idea is then to challenge the once-dominant view of translation as a practice that does not involve issues such as ethics, ideology and activism and firmly reject the idea of a translator as a politically empowered agent (Tymoczko, 2014: 196). Postcolonial studies reject the notion of translation as a neutral exchange that takes place “between two equal cultures” and based on equal communication (Tymoczko: 455). On the contrary, translation practices were used as “vehicles of colonial influence” (Viswanatha & Simon, 1999: 162) to facilitate colonization, and to do so it was necessary a certain amount of imbalance to ensure one of the two sides of the negotiation power over the other. Moreover, European powers had control over literary production through norms that allowed them to translate “only certain kinds of text, those that will not prove alien to the receiving culture” (Bassnett, 1999: 5). It is also interesting to consider the metaphor of “the colony as a translation, a copy of an original located elsewhere on the map” mentioned by Bassnett, which illustrates both the lesser position of the colony at the time of colonization and the perception of translation as a mere copy compared to the original (199: 4-5).

In Postcolonial Translation Studies, topics such as “the centrality of ideology and ethics, activism and resistance” gained a central role as objects of study (Tymoczko, 2006: 454). Another crucial aspect of this field of study is the idea the translators can play a powerful role “in ideologically charged situations”, whether the intention is supporting or dismantling dominant structures of power (Tymoczko, 2014: 190). The translator’s role and agency is a crucial concept that has been since promoted in translation studies as one of the main objects of study in translation. In this regard, the studies conducted by Venuti (1995) on the translator’s visibility are a clear example of the trend in postcolonial translation studies.

Following the postpositivist approach, scholars of postcolonialism reject the idea of uniformity and consistency and challenge the view of a translation practice that adheres to “binary cognitive structures” used to describe translations. According to Tymoczko, postcolonial translations are “complex, fragmentary, and even at times self-contradictory”, because the postcolonial approach takes into account the fact that translators operate within political and historical contexts and therefore rely on certain narratives (2014: 198). The result of the translation practice, the target text, is very relevant, but so is the function of the translation itself. Therefore, postcolonial translation does not identify translation as the text itself, but rather as an act (Tymoczko, 2006: 455).

After illustrating the role of translation during the period of colonization, is it valid to label it as a damaging practice against the colonized cultures? Translation, as has been said, was a tool used by colonizers to reinforce their control, “to establish and perpetuate the superiority of some cultures over others” (Bassnett, 1999: 16), and this has been extensively proven. On the other hand, the massive influence that Western countries had over the colonized ones led these countries and their cultures to create new and innovative forms of expression that often ended up challenging the hegemonic structure (Viswanatha & Simon, 1999: 163). In the hands of colonized writers and translators, translations became a means of resistance.

Even if today there are new theories that can effectively answer the questions of the contemporary world, the postcolonial approach is still worthy of consideration even in the 21st century. Postcolonialism undoubtedly contributed to “a reconceptualization of translation both theoretically and practically”, giving new perspectives that are still taken into account (Tymoczko, 2014: 204). Postcolonial translation studies emphasized the

need to investigate topics such as agency, power, ideology, and activism. They helped to expand the field of translations studies, giving way to new theories and approaches to examine critically translation practices and the contexts where they are put in place (Tymoczko, 2006: 457). Although in current times the term of post-colonial translation is, according to Bassnett a “little short of a tautology” due to a globalized world and the century of migrations, it is still crucial to pay attention to the “the asymmetrical power relationship” that still exists between those languages that control the world’s order and those that do not (1999: 12-13). Perhaps postcolonial studies have still something to teach us. With the words of Viswanatha & Simon:

The post-colonial frame allows us to better understand the outcomes of translation by taking into account the asymmetry of languages and cultures within the evolving global context and by insisting on historically informed criticism (1999: 176)

Although postcolonialism is undoubtedly a valuable step in the field of translation studies, it is necessary to define its limits to avoid using it in the discourse of activism as a model to define all types of oppression. In fact, due to its allure as a revolutionary theory, Tymoczko points out the inclination to “use postcoloniality as a generalized signifier to indicate all oppression” regardless of its boundaries (2014: 202). In the current context of globalization, the translator’s agency and scope are rather different from those of the periods of post-colonization, and the same applies to the issues that postcolonialism used to tackle. Today, the concept of colonies that used to be so common in the nineteenth century does not exist anymore. On the other hand, new issues such as diasporas, oppression of women in third-world countries and economic crisis cannot be examined using the postcolonial approach (Tymoczko, 2006: 456-457). According to Tymoczko, if we do not take into account the disparities between colonization and globalization, we may “turn the useful tool of postcolonial theory into a universalizing and totalizing narrative” (2014: 206). Instead of relying on postcolonial theory to solve the issues that the current century faces, it is important to search for new and comprehensive theories of power and resistance that can keep track of all the new elements involved in the social equation (2014: 206-208).

3.1.3 Sociology of translation and the new approaches in the 21st century

The last phenomenon that will be analysed is the Social Turn, which owes its expansion in the discipline of translation studies to the Cultural Turn (Mialet, 2010: 155). Like the Cultural Turn, the Social Turn directed the attention of scholars and translators to issues that were not commonly associated with translation practices, such as race, ideology, ethics, minority status and class inequalities, giving them “a central place in analyses of translational phenomena” (House, 2016: 7). The sociology of translation is a relatively new field that started to develop in the discipline of translation studies just at the end of the 20th century (Mialet, 2010: 155), and the area that has been examined the most through the sociological approach is literary translation (Mialet, 2010: 157).

The main distinction between sociological and culturalist perspectives, according to Inghilleri, is the fact that, despite examining translation and its extra-textual elements, the culturalist paradigm “has maintained the literary text as its primary focus”, while the sociological or “social” one turned its attention on translators and social structures (2005: 142). It perceives translation and interpreting “as socially situated practices”, which have a role in constructing and maintaining the social order, from both a local and global level (Inghilleri, 2005: 126).

One of the main scholars to have worked on the development of sociological theories in the field of translation studies is Pierre Bourdieu (Mialet, 2010: 156). According to Inghilleri, who wrote an essay on his work, “Bourdieu’s theoretical insights contribute a distinctive perspective in relation to the increasingly influential culturalist and globalist research paradigms within translation studies” (2005: 125). Through the concepts of habitus, field, capital and illusion, he examined translation from a sociological perspective and offered a starting point for studies in this area (Inghilleri, 2005: 143). He also paid extreme attention to the role of translators and interpreters as “social and cultural agents”, challenged the idea of a strict separation between “the individual and the external world” and pointed out the limits of a theoretical knowledge that does not relies on the empirical investigation (Inghilleri, 2005: 125, 127).

Although the sociological approaches to the field of translation studies are still “at the development stage” (Inghilleri, 2005: 126), the influence of sociology on translation has led to positive outcomes. First, a sociological perspective, according to Mialet, “reveals a completely new dimension of translation that only becomes visible at the global

level” (2010: 168). This change of focus can help translation scholars to examine the role of translation in the current ever-changing world, and to gain “a renewed understanding of the discipline” also concerning other current fields, such as the study of globalization research (Mialet, 2010: 155). Second, a sociological perspective helps to examine the translated text in relation to the social structure and that determines it. In other words, sociology examines translation practices not as isolated acts, but considering “the situation or context within which the text acquires its meaning” (Mialet, 2010: 169).

This sociological perspective, together with the influence of postcolonial theories and cultural studies, has contributed to a surge of interest in translation studies on the concept of ethics and all those issues associated to it, such as codes of ethics and ethical stances of translators and ethical outcomes of translations. This can also be seen in growing attention to the role of translator, both socially and politically (House, 2018: 169-170), and ideology, specifically the issue of “ideology of power relations” (Baker, 2001: 106). One of the recent theories that have been developed in the current century, Baker’s narrative theory (2006), which has already been extensively examined in the first chapter, can be taken as another example of the direction that scholars in translation studies took in the last century. All these concerns about issues that go beyond the literary text and pay attention to the role of translation and translators in the globalised world are a clear sign of the emergence of a “committed approach” to translation studies. According to House, this approach reflects the tendency of translators and translation studies to pay more attention to social issues and human rights (House, 2018: 169-170).

3.2. Translation as activism

In the first section of the chapter, I have focused on the new approaches and theories that have been developed during the last decades of the previous century, to demonstrate the tendency in translation studies, but also in the general field of humanities and social studies, to expand their areas of research towards sociocultural issues. While the main focus there was to examine how the role of translation was considered from a theoretical point of view, in this section I will analyse how translation was and is currently used, on a practical level, to deal with those issues that do not concern questions closely related to translation. What I intend to do is to show how translation has been used as a tool for

activism, how the field of translation adopted for activism has developed and what are its main features today.

First, I will consider activism from a broader perspective, examining what it is and the role of activists and social movements in shaping and improving the conditions of societies that they are part of. In this section, attention will be paid to the role of narratives in gathering and assembling communities of activists. The analysis will be based on the work of Baker (“Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community”, 2006). The information on narratives collected in the first chapter will be helpful to better understand how activist communities rely on the power of narratives.

The focus will then move towards the relationship between activism and translation. When did translation and activism enter into contact? What are the main features of activist translation? How can translation help activists to promote their ideas and to work in a world where it is easy to find sources of communication but also hard to find your voice? Contrary to the old belief of the inherent neutrality of translators and interpreters, there are various cases, according to Baker, that show how many translators “hold strong beliefs about the rights and wrongs of (political) events in which they find themselves involved professionally” and therefore actively engage in various forms of resistance by putting their skills into practice (2013: 23). An engaged translation aims to inform, promote cooperation, work together with authors and intellectuals, who are socially and politically engaged, disclose events and facts that global or national mainstream media might filter out, to raise awareness.

The next step will be to analyse how activist translation is currently dealing with the fast changes of the new century and how activists have adapted to the new features and potentials that society is offering us, such as technologies, social media, growing globalization and so on. The two main issues that will be examined in relation to the evolution of activist translation are the switch from translation as a solitary practice to translation as a collective practice and the emergence of new tools that help translators to work more efficiently and to create a net of collaboration that trespasses geographical boundaries. Lastly, I will briefly reflect on the issue that has already been examined in the previous chapter regarding the clash between the ethics of the individual and professional loyalty. In this case, the challenge is to balance activism and professionalism, between the desire to do some good for society and the need to be loyal to our profession.

3.2.1. On activism

In this section, I intend to focus on activism from a general point of view, before examining its relationship with translation. The potential of activism, and the main reason that social activism is an object of study, is the fact that it plays “an important role in democratic discourse” (Atkinson, 2017: 5). What is fascinating about this activity is the power it has in changing public beliefs through mobilization and counter-narratives. According to Atkinson, “social movements and activism do not so much influence politics in a direct manner, but constitute much of the discourse that constitutes and shapes a society” (2017: 5).

The main three topics at the core of the studies on activism are “democracy and social discourse, the formation of political identity, and the political economy of communication and media power” (2017: 5). The first topic refers to the fact that social activism has an active role “in the democratic process and social discourse about problematic issues” (Atkinson, 2017: 6), and that the existence of an activist movement helps society to become more vibrant and politically engaged, towards democracy. The more disparate information citizens receive, both from the mainstream media and the sources of the activist organization, the higher the possibility for a community to be engaged in the democratic discourse (Atkinson, 2017: 6).

The second topic that is often examined is the use of the power of media that is commonly centralized to share competing narratives and give additional information on the social discourse that is perhaps intentionally avoided by those mainstream media that support predominant narratives (Atkinson, 2017: 6). Therefore activists often employ “a whole range of forums and media” to elaborate and share their narratives, not necessarily relying on channels that are used to support dominant structures (Baker, 2006: 102). Moreover, the emergence of the internet and new forms of interactive media has been extremely helpful for activists to create a parallel network of cooperation and information that was not under the control of mainstream powers, where people do not receive one-directional narratives but produces controversial and challenging new ones. To quote Atkinson, “interactivity empowers activists like never before” (2017: 9). Lastly, the role of the internet has indeed been crucial to promote interaction among different and perhaps distant activist organizations around the world, regardless of their actual size (Atkinson, 2017: 23). Thanks to technology, both large and small autonomous groups can engage

and take part “in debates about social justice and globalization” (Atkinson, 2017: 24). The use of media is very crucial in general because it often relies on the service of translation to broadcast and share information across borders.

Apart from providing useful information so as to raise awareness in society, communities of activists are also important in shaping political identity. By giving an alternative viewpoint to see the issues that burden society, activist positions can alter the common interpretive frameworks (Atkinson, 2017: 8). Through a different and perhaps less biased perspective through the new channels of communications such as social media and websites, as well as the old ones such as protests and pamphlets, activist practices promote interaction between the activists and the communities, leading society to lean forward more participatory and civic engagement (Atkinson, 2017: 8)

According to Atkinson, to better understand activism it is necessary to pay attention to the context in which activist initiatives usually take place, social movements (2017: 12). It is not necessary to delve deep into studies on activism from a social point of view, but I think it is important to define its context in order to have a better understanding of this phenomenon in the field of translation studies. Social movements can be defined and have been examined by scholars, as participatory networks where activist communities create and develop their ideas of resistance against oppressive structures of power. As a form of collective behaviour, social movements emerge as a response to “a common concern for issues that was deemed to be problematic for those people and their communities” (Atkinson, 2017: 12-14). The concern for a specific issue leads people to gather and act together to understand the issue that they need to solve. This often prompts these groups of social activists to develop an alternative point of view of the problem, a provoking narrative, and use this narrative to challenge the oppressive structure of power and their narratives (Atkinson, 2017: 13, 18).

In the area of activism, the importance of empathy as a necessary skill is also often stressed (Todorova, 2020: 156), especially in encounters with other cultures and languages, where the need for effective and understandable communication is imperative. Being a skill that facilitates our ability to interact with other people, empathy is helpful “to work with people and situations different from yourself” and build trust among people (Todorova, 2020: 167). In recent years, a new perspective of activist movements depicts social movements as networks that connects different groups, or nodes. This concept aims

at, according to Juris, “the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organizations, collectives, and networks converge around a few common hallmarks, while preserving their autonomy and identity-based specificity” hence promoting both individual identities and collaboration among them (2004: 349-351). This renewed viewpoint embraces the idea that social movements are indeed influenced by collective identity and that the activist phenomena are extremely crucial to make social movements more visible and push for a structural shift in society (Polletta & Jasper, 2001: 288-289). The idea of collective identity used by sociology scholars is useful to understand why people from different classes and backgrounds decide to be involved with activist strategies (Polletta & Jasper, 2001: 298).

Atkinson also considers the potential negative sides of activism. She warns that forms of protests against destructive narratives or sharing a common viewpoint to engage people actually “make little significant contribution to social issues or political discourse” (2017: 5). Moreover, despite the fact that being involved in an activist project can have a cost in terms of time or money, for example, and therefore many activists are highly motivated and devoted to their ideal, it is important to keep in mind that many activists participate in these project for personal interests, such as self-esteem and guilt. On the other hand, even if the influence of activists through alternative media and forms of protest might not be that effective and the motivations that push may people to join social movements can be perceived as selfish rather than altruistic, it would be wrong to overlook the role that social activism had in shaping political identities and promote civic participation, as well as its power in “effectively challenge media power structures” (Atkinson, 2017: 11).

3.2.2 The relationship between activism and translation

In the field of translation studies, activism has been conceptualized with two different terms, resistance and engagement, which have been effectively analysed by Tymoczko (2014: 209). First, the metaphor of resistance implies “the existence of a specific powerful opponent that exerts force in particular ways or in particular directions” that the activists must oppose. In this view, activism is seen as a reactive act, a form of defence against a bigger and hegemonic power (Tymoczko, 2014: 210-211). This metaphor, although very powerful, can become problematic when focusing on activism in the field of translation,

because the translator is seen as a passive agent that must resist something that is not quite defined. To quote Tymoczko, “resistance seems to be an open-ended enterprise without predefined or well-defined targets that either translators or critics delineate” (2014: 210-211). Engagement, on the other hand, is seen as a proactive act. It suggests that activists can take initiatives and initiate something rather than having limited space for action and that their actions are “based on commitment to (specific) principles” (Tymoczko, 2014: 212)

The relationship between translation and activism is not a recent phenomenon, although the overall “spectrum of translational activity” has often remained unexamined by scholars of translation studies and social movement studies and activists (Baker, 2016: 10). Some scholars have started to examine the development of activist and political translation movements only “from the nineteenth century to the present”. According to Tymoczko, the existence of this involvement depends on the raising empowerment of translators that became aware of their agency, “the expansion of the concept of translation itself” in the field of translation studies, and consequently the tendency of translators and scholars to pay attention to translation from an ideological and political point of view (2014: 217). This relationship and involvement of translators in the field of activism are constantly evolving and adapting to the innovations, hence there will be a difference if we make a comparison between the features and nature of the political translation movements from the past century and the present one. The main difference that emerges is the fact that, due the constant globalisation, current empowered translation movements tend to switch from a national sphere to an international one and activists focuses on causes “that transcend the boundaries of single societies” (Tymoczko, 2014: 217). Moving from a theoretical to a practical level, the presence of translators in the activist movement is evident and concrete. To quote Baker:

Translators and interpreters come together in these groups willingly to volunteer their time, to invest emotionally and intellectually in projects designed to undermine dominant discourses, and to elaborate more equitable and peaceful narratives of the future (2006: 475).

3.2.2.1 Narrative theory and activism

Narrative theory gives a good starting point to examine stories as powerful means that can change the world, giving us an interesting perspective that takes into account the

power of stories. Thanks to narrative theory, the view of translation changes as well. In her essay, “Translation as an Alternative Space for Political Action” (2013), Baker sees translation as a tool of construction and deconstruction of narratives rather than “an innocent act of disinterested mediation” (24). In this section, the narrative theory is once again useful to understand the influence of narratives in the formation of activist movements. I will mainly rely on Baker’s essay, “Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community”, to explain why narrative theory and consequently practices of multilingual communication (translation and interpreting) have a huge role in the formation, development and continuity of activist communities.

The first important issue to point out is the fact that narratives can be very persuasive, and they can influence individuals into becoming more committed and involved with social issues. Due to this feature of promoting engagement, narratives can help forms of activism to gain support and attract new members (Baker, 2013: 24). Narratives “provides a basis for shared language and values” and can mobilize translators of different backgrounds to focus on “specific political, humanitarian, or social issues” and to share these narratives, challenging dominant structures of power represented by social institutions (Baker, 2006: 462).

These groups of politically and socially engaged translators do not have a strict pattern or a definite agenda, nor there is always a definite line that divides the professional from the non-professional translators. Moreover, beyond those translators that actively work for a humanitarian or political cause and those that are committed to respecting their professional duties, “there is a vast range of different types of groupings and associations, including some with less clearly defined agendas” (Baker, 2006: 463). There is not, in other words, an equal model for all translators. What Baker focuses on is the idea that what brings together different individual to gather around a group is “a sense of identification with a “story” or set of “stories”” that this group represents, subscribing to a set of narratives (Baker, 2006: 463). Once again, narratives are a crucial element to understand how people, and in this specific case activists, behave in a social context. Moreover, being capable of assessing narratives allows us to find or create communities that gather around and support certain ideas (Baker, 2006: 470)

In Baker’s research, an important role is also assigned to Fisher’s paradigm. As we have seen in the first chapter, Fisher’s paradigm does not rely on rationality but rather

on the “good reasons” of people. Due to its capacity to prioritize moral values over rational observation, it can be used to explain “why activist communities can form across boundaries nation, colour, gender, profession, and almost any other division one can think of” (2006: 470). The paradigm serves not only to understand why and how people choose to serve a specific narrative but also explains why communities of activists tend to go beyond the simple act of “choosing” a dominant narrative that can satisfy their “good reasons” and actually create new better ones that better fit their beliefs. (Baker, 2006: 470). This tendency of looking for an improvement of the dominant narratives and, at the same time, being extremely critical towards their own narratives, allows activist communities to constantly evolve.

Lastly, although forms of activism that rely on concrete action such as demonstrations and protests are important to undermine dominant structures of power, it is also crucial to directly challenge the stories that endorse these structures. Activists should fight the unjust system, as well as the narratives that sustain this system. In the discourse of intervening and dismantling detrimental ideas, the role of translators and interpreters becomes evident (Baker, 2006: 471). Narrative theory is useful to consider activist communities from an alternative perspective, looking at the stories that they create and the ways that they share their ideas, therefore also giving credit to the role of translation communities (Baker, 2006: 475-477).

3.2.3 Activism and the 21st century

Although the relationship between translation and activism deserves to be examined from a historical point of view by focusing on how these two fields evolved and influenced one another along the centuries, I decided to limit my study to the current century. The starting point of this section is the question that concerns translation activism and its context: what are the main traits of the 21st century that have influenced translation practices and forms of activism? The first main elements that need to be considered as a starting point for other (factors) are globalization and the technological revolution.

Globalization can be defined as “a process that makes national borders more transparent or even eliminates them completely” (House, 2018: 129). As a consequence of this phenomenon, different nations and cultures that did not interact with each other before have become highly interconnected and dependent on one another, creating an

enmeshed network of connections. The influence that this network has on once-isolated nations with limited or no contact with foreign countries deeply alter these societies in terms of the economy, political relations, culture and even languages. For this reason, translation and interpreting have become essential tools that provide multilingual mediation across the globe. Globalization, according to House, “has led to a veritable explosion of demand for translation” (2018: 129). While it is true that the main effect of globalization is a tendency towards general uniformity through the creation of a global society, a counter-reaction to this phenomenon is a form of resistance to uniformity in defence of diversity. In this dichotomy, translation works for both dynamics, ultimately fostering cultural change (Viswanatha & Simon, 1999: 163). The other element that is at the heart of the new century's innovations is technological advance, which has facilitated globalization through new and incredibly fast forms of information and communication technology. Perhaps the greatest advance in the field of technology is the use of the internet, which has also become essential for translators, who now rely on computer-mediated communication.

These two phenomena led to social changes that in turn affect societies, activists and translators. First, the circulation of multilingual news in a globalized society is a huge factor that characterizes the 21st century. Not only is it important because of the number of different narratives produced every day that are shared worldwide, but also because international networks heavily rely on translation in disseminating these narratives. According to House, “translation plays a crucial and ever-growing role in multilingual news writing” (2016: 4). Despite the linguistic boundaries that still exist, modern journalism was created for a global scope (Mialet, 2010: 163). Second, “the central importance of English in the field of news” (Mialet, 2010: 165) is an example of the role of English as global lingua franca in the 21st century. The global dominance of English is not limited to the news, but it affects a wide range of areas, from social media to institutions, from international organizations to official documents (House, 2018: 133). We might even say that English is the official language of globalization.

In this wide network of connections that enables individuals from every part of the world to find their space and participate in the globalized society, the old structures of power have evolved and changed. Although these patterns still heavily rely on an imbalance of power, the last years of the past century and the current one have seen the

rise of political participation on the part of individuals who have become more aware of their agency. Today, public opinion, through social media platforms has the influence and the power to challenge and reshape circulating narratives (De Fina, 2018: 242). This power of social media to amplify the opinion of the masses, on the other hand, has also been exploited by figures of power to reinforce their narratives through manipulation and misinformation. In the current century, this media has turned into a powerful form of information to share narratives and stories, and it is one of the main bases frequently used by grassroots organizations and social movements. Although this platform is “an important space of protest that is permeated by various forms of translation”, as Baker makes clear in her book on the Egyptian revolution (“Beyond the spectacle: translation and solidarity in contemporary protest movements”), its role should be taken into account but not exaggerated (2016: 12).

From these observations, two issues are quite clear. The first is the fact that in the current century the circulation of a narrative is more crucial than ever, considering both the rate of transmission that has become extremely fast and the number of narratives that are generated per minute. The second concerns the idea that, due to the importance of narratives in current society, information has turned into the most powerful tool that activist collectives can use to achieve social change (Baker, 2013: 35). According to Baker, “collective action must therefore focus on changing public discourse and consciousness rather than effecting change by material force” (2013: 35).

This concept of a “symbolic challenge to power” (Baker, 2016: 4) can be seen as one of the main features of the movements of the 21st century, the idea that to promote change, the concrete actions need to be backed up and supported by symbolic actions that dismantle power from its conceptual level. Instead of directly attacking forms of sovereignty, the attention has shifted towards the power of public opinion, and activists found an alternative form of protesting in sharing stories through the media to gain people’s support, give space and visibility to minority groups, create an audience and dismantle the system through the change of narratives (De Fina, 2018: 242). To quote Baker:

Today the worldwide web has become a symbolic space in which peace activists and marginalized groups who wish to challenge dominant discourses can elaborate and practice a moral order in tune with their own narratives of the world (2006: 481).

In this scenario, translation and interpreting are essential in activist movements, and therefore translators need to be conceptualized “as full participants within non-hierarchical, solidary activist communities” (Baker, 2016: 12).

3.2.3.1 Translation activism

The discourse of activism in translation practices is nothing new. According to Tymoczko, “calls for translators to become activist agents of social change” (2006: 451) already existed in the 1990s, and even before this trend became a topic of translation studies, many translators were already working among the ranks of activists. The main difference with the past centuries is the fact that nowadays there is a greater general attention of scholars and translators to social and political issues.

In the current polarized society, it is virtually impossible to avoid embracing narratives and to examine our own professional and private lives without considering the ethical implications of every single choice that we make. Reaching total neutrality is a very difficult task, especially in a profession that consists mainly of sharing stories and information among different languages and cultures. Moreover, in a time of human history where the communication between people and countries has reached an international scale and fast and efficient connections lie at the core of globalized society, the work of translators and interpreters has considerably increased (Drugan & Tipton, 2017: 121). If we also consider the amount of information that people can access today and the general growing awareness and responsibility at a global level towards various issues (for instance, destruction of biodiversity, poverty, gender inequality), it is not unusual for many translators to start to subscribe to non-conforming narratives, “becoming increasingly involved in articulating public narratives of groups located outside their own domestic setting altogether” (Baker, 2006: 37).

The idea of translation that should be analysed when considering its role in activism, according to Tymoczko, is translation as speech act, “translation that rouses, inspires, witnesses, mobilizes, incites to rebellion, and so forth” (2000: 26). This type of analysis focuses on the concrete effects of translation in the world, the practical results of translation practice in the pursuit for social and political change rather than its internal features that are limited to the text. In this research, apart from case studies to examine for comparison and the “theoretical concepts and practical methods” to understand what

makes an engaged translation effective, to study the relationship between translation and activism and political engagement, Tymoczko states that it is essential to possess a knowledge of power from a theoretical point of view (2000: 31-34). This requirement is understandable since the ultimate objective of activism and therefore activist translation is to challenge the current system of dynamics of power. To achieve this goal, good cooperation between translators and non-translators is also crucial. According to Baker, an effective interaction can foster networks of solidarity between translators and non-translators that “reflect the values of horizontality, non-hierarchy and pluralism to which most activists subscribe” (2016: 11).

Even though symbolic activism and indirect acts of resistance, which involve text-based resources and address narratives on power rather than people in power, are an essential element of activist movements in the current century, there are some critical observations to make. First of all, regardless of its potential, indirect action is believed to be less efficient and less effective than direct action because, according to Tymoczko’s personal experience in the field of activism and textual production, “textualized means so often have a tendency to become hermetic and displaced, not to mention uncertain in their results” (2000: 41). Moreover, while direct resistance can also be eradicated with force and strict political reforms, literary movements and other diverted forms of engagement that can be swept aside even more easily.

Another issue that Tymoczko addresses, especially related to activist translation, is the uncertainty of the outcomes. In other words, once the translated text has been created, “even when translation is effective as a means of political engagement”, nobody knows what effect it will have in the society and how its message will evolve over the years (2000: 42). On one hand, this can be seen as a problem, for instance, if the translated text ends up being exploited to reinforce a counter-narrative. On the other hand, due to the endless need of being renewed according to the new century, translation has the potential “to change and change again the representations it creates” (2000: 43).

3.2.3.2 Current features of translation activism

After presenting the defining aspects of the 21st century, this section will focus on the main characteristics of activist translation in current times. The first feature that I wish to talk about is the phenomenon of group formations and collaborative translations. In this

century, thanks to the new technologies and the rising collective awareness that started to appear during the period of the civil rights movements, the idea of translation as an isolated practice has changed. It has been noticed that more and more translators are working in groups instead of on their own, due to various factors including the aforementioned process of globalization and the circulation of new technologies and forms of communication (Palumbo, 2009: 9-10).

In this scenario of collective action, technology has played and is still currently playing a huge role in helping translators and activist from various parts of the world to communicate in a fast and efficient way. Through internet technologies and the new media, the idea to “to mobilise effectively in the virtual environment” has often become the norm (Baker, 2013: 25). To quote Pym:

Since the late 1990s, web-based electronic communications have taken relations between translators several steps further. We have seen electronic networks established between translators who work together on a non-professional basis, for the love of what they are translating, and for the social pleasures of working together (2014: 19).

Activist translators and interpreters, like the activists mentioned in the section on activism and narrative theory, are often motivated to join these groups “by a sense of identification with a ‘story’ or set of ‘stories’ that provide a focal point for their political activity”, stories that often aim at social and global justice rather than narratives that advocate for conservative and nationalist beliefs (Baker, 2013: 24). The formation and growth of activist translation communities also influenced the interests of these activists, moving “away from national, ethnic, or cultural concerns to an international locus of action” (Tymoczko, 2014: 218). It is obvious that many of these groups have different opinions on the role of translators, the concept of professionalism and even the objectives that have been set, and these divergences lead to a plethora of groups and collectives with various projects and ambitions. For instance, in her essay (2013), Baker divided activist translation groups into two types, the groups that are focused on anti-war stances and have a more restricted agenda, and the groups that have a broad agenda that aims at “radical political change” (2013: 26).

While this phenomenon can be seen as a positive signal that individuals are keener to collaborate and work together to reach a goal, thus promoting the idea of cooperation, there are some downsides. According to Palumbo, this shift of translation from an isolated

project to a collective one risks to undermining the idea of the translator's agency, since "translation choices are less easily traced back to individual decisions" (2009: 9-10).

The second element that needs to be mentioned is the use of new technologies as tools to improve the process of translation and the new forms of translation. Thanks to the new technological advances that "made the fast spread and mediation of audiovisual material across the world possible" and the work of translating collectively through cyber-communities rather than individually, the trend of audiovisual translation has grown in recent times (House, 2018: 170, 175). The phenomenon of digitalization of forms of communication has provided activists and translators to rely on different and alternative media and distrust the mainstream ones, believed to be manipulated "by political and economic powers" (House, 2018: 169). The advent of technological development has been beneficial not only for activists and protestors but also for the elites that saw in these technologies new tools to reinforce their power through media corporations. However, a positive aspect of these developments is the fact that through different channels of information people are becoming more aware of the issues that affect society and are starting to reject the idea of being passive spectators at the service of media. To quote House:

Digital communication and information technologies are empowering ordinary citizens to become actively involved in the production and distribution of media content to a hitherto unheard-of degree (2018: 174).

3.2.4 The balance between activism and professionalism

The analysis of the new developments in the current century, in the field of activism and specifically in the context of translation activism, has shown how translators have become more conscious of the importance of the translated text, their "potentially activist role" in a globalised society and the accountability that their work inevitably entails (Tymoczko, 2014: 197-198). It is fair then, with this premise in mind, to discuss the relationship between the responsibility of translators from a moral and a professional point of view. Can a translator be an activist and respect his or her ethical values without betraying the professional code?

This tendency to participate actively and be engaged in social and political movements has led many professional and amateur translators to take part and offer their

knowledge to serve the community as volunteers. This choice has been often justified using the idea of responsibility that translators and interpreters have in sharing valuable and important narratives, and this has led to a discussion as to whether translators should give priority to their occupation rather than their moral values.

There are different opinions regarding the duty of translators in this context, and while many translator activists advocate putting into practice their professional and linguistic skills for a greater cause, other professionals that promote “neutrality and non-engagement as pre-requisites for facilitating communication across cultures” criticize this idea (Baker, 2013: 45). Does political engagement lead to a translator’s lack of loyalty to their profession? For some translators “whose primary orientation is to the integrity of texts themselves”, the idea of subordinating one’s profession to an ideology is unacceptable (Tymoczko, 2014: 216). They fear that this social and political commitment might cause a “direct textual manipulation” and therefore a transgression of the limits of a translator’s work. However, according to Baker, this is relatively impossible, since the prospect of being accused of manipulation and untrustworthiness and therefore the repercussions on the credibility of the narrative forces many translators to be carefully accurate in the translation process (2006: 476-477). What emerges from this discussion are two important observations. The first one is the fact that the concept of responsibility is never “ideologically neutral” and can be very different according to the position of the individual. In other words, “what constitutes socially responsible action for one person may be considered irresponsible by another” (Drugan & Tipton, 2017: 122).

The other reflection concerns the very nature of translation and explains why it can never be defined as a truly neutral practice. In her essay on translation and political engagement (2000), Tymoczko reflects on the fact that the practice of translation is inherently partisan because it requires translators to make choices by accentuating or compressing some parts of the text, to produce an acceptable and fluent target text. This partiality is what gives translators the agency and power to decide what is the best option in the process of translating, and regardless of the choice that they make, it will always represent their perspective and idea of what is appropriate or not to emphasize or eliminate. Ultimately, even when professional translators advocate for a neutral process of translation that is less socially and politically driven as possible, what they choose and

how they choose to translate will inevitably be partisan. According to Tymoczko, “the partial nature of translations is what makes them also political” (2000: 24).

Chapter Four: Migration and the Syrian Crisis

In the previous chapter, I decided to examine the relationship between activism and translation, questioning whether translation can and should be used to help social and political activists to spread their narratives and have a purpose that goes beyond the simple transfer of textual material from one culture to another. I examined activism from a general point of view as a form of resistance against social injustice and narratives of oppression, as well as an example of social engagement of a community of people to face old and new problems that societies constantly tend to face, such as gender discrimination, poverty, racism and so on.

In this chapter, I will focus on the topic of mass migration and the human rights of refugees and migrants, an issue close to societies and the world of activism. First, because migration is and will remain a central issue of the current century. Due to the existence and potential expansion of dangerous conflict zones, the growing economic disparity between countries and the climate changes that will make some parts of the world uninhabitable, people will be forced to migrate, either for economic reasons or simply looking for a safe place to live their life. This movement will not cease soon, and it will eventually lead to an increase of intolerance and discrimination, already an ongoing problem of the 21st century, often endorsed by far-right and anti-migrant movements (Tazzioli & Walters, 2019: 177).

The second reason is that the topic is directly connected with the second part of the chapter, where I will touch on the Syrian Civil War and the refugee crisis, the context in which the short stories that I have translated are set. In my opinion, this topic is not only crucial to understand Ghaith Alhallak's background and where his story comes from, but also because I consider it to be a relevant issue to know in the field of international matters. Nowadays, according to a report wrote in 2016, "the conflict in Syria has led to the largest displacement crisis since the end of World War II". With more than 5.6 million civilians living outside the country, more than 11 million people inside the country in desperate need of humanitarian aid in 2016, and holding the sad record of largest asylum-seeking population, the Syrians' one it is the most dramatic humanitarian disaster of our time (Singh, et al., 2019: 35).

The first part of the chapter aims at examining the topic of migration from a socio-political point of view, specifically the case of migrants and refugees in the area of

Western Europe. The analysis will focus on differentiating the terms that are frequently used in this field, such as “refugees” and “asylum seekers”. A brief overview of the content of migration in the 21st century is necessary to understand how the role of translators and interpreters is crucial in this context. I also intend to discuss the presence of racism and intolerance that often affect the receiving countries and the crucial role of mass and social media in the public discourse on migration through their representation of the Other. As Heinderyckx states, by analysing how migrants and refugees are portrayed in society it is possible to untangle “the nexus of perceptions and attitudes toward ‘the other’ and alterity in general” (2019: 200). In this regard, I wanted to explore the issue of representation by focusing on an interesting essay by Federici (2020) on the Italian expression “emergenza migranti” (literally, “migrant emergency”) that is often used by media and politicians.

Then, migration will be examined concerning the idea of translation, showing how many things in common these two contexts can have. In my research I intend to move away from the idea of translation as a tool for institutions and to move towards an image of translation as a form of activism that aims to create direct collaboration between translators and people in need, such as migrants, giving them voice and visibility. In this section, the main question revolves around the role of translators and interpreters to encourage inclusion. What do translation and interpretation have to do with regards to migration? How translation can be used with a positive purpose in the context of migration issues to raise awareness in the hosting countries and promote interactions between locals and migrants or refugees? I will briefly talk about the concept of recognition, promoted by Rosario Martín Ruano (2017), concerning the relationship and the encounter between the self and the Other, and how translation turns out to be beneficial for both sides.

The next step is to present an example of collaborative translation between migrants or refugees and translators, focusing on a specific case where translation becomes a tool to help migrants to share their experiences with others, storytelling. Not only can the genre of storytelling be used to heal from the trauma that these experiences left on people in distress, but it is also one way to describe the phenomenon of translation and migration that differs from the common forms of narration on migrations, such as newspaper articles, reports and propaganda texts. Storytelling is an alternative way to

narrate about migration from the perspective of migrants and those who experienced this event on their skin, it gives them the agency to process their own experiences and create a voice of their own, rather than letting others talk on their behalf. A personal story, rather than a report or an article, can also invite people from the receiving countries to become aware of the tragedy of migrating from a human rather than a detached point of view. In this context, translation becomes essential to share these stories, and at the same time, it is crucial to observe the relationship between author and translator, to avoid an imbalanced relationship that deprives the migrant of his or her dignity. I would like to stress this part, to make sure that, although I focused on the identity and agency of translators in the previous chapter, in this case, the translator does not rewrite the text on behalf of the author, but it rather works with him or her to convert the text.

The choice of storytelling was made for two reasons. First, the first story that Ghaith wrote and I translated is based on his own experience and can be defined as a form of personal narration of the events. Secondly, because I consider migrant and refugee storytelling an interesting, and perhaps less impersonal, way of narrating the phenomenon of migration that characterizes our century.

In the second part of the chapter, the study focuses on the background of these four stories and the common background where they are set: the Syrian Civil War. In this section, without focusing too much on the details since my study is not intended to be socio-political research, I will offer a brief timeline of the Syrian war, writing on what led to the revolts against Bashar Al Assad, the consequences of the war and how this conflict became famous on a global scale. While the stories themselves do not directly narrate the war and the conflict but rather the aftermath and the consequences of it (the asylum seekers, the destroyed cities and refugee camps). The chapter ends with a mention of a humane alternative to the reception systems that are commonly used in the European Union, the humanitarian corridors, which have well been described in the article of Rolando and Naso (2018) I think it is essential to have a clear view of what happened and what is currently happening in Syria to better understand the stories themselves. I do not expect the Italian reader to know every detail of the Syrian conflict, but without awareness of the thread that ties together these stories, it would be difficult to truly read them.

Before concluding this introduction and going on with the analysis, I would like to make a clarification. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers often find themselves

facing injustice and mistreatment, and as well as other categories of people, such as homeless and financially struggling individuals, people with mental and physical disabilities, women, members of the LGBTQ+ community; they are placed in second place in our society. I wish to make it clear that the need to focus on the topic of cooperation between translators, activists and a specific fraction of this population, migrants and refugees, is due primarily to the space limits that this thesis has and the fact that the texts that I translated are related to this topic. I think that it is important, when discussing collaboration and caring about others, to have an intersectional perspective of these topics. I hope to be able in the future to examine again the role of translation in the narrative of collaboration, extending the analysis to other social minorities.

4.1 Translation, migration, collaboration

In this section, I intend to present the phenomenon of migration and the role of translation in this context. Moreover, I wish to show how translation can foster cooperation and inclusion by presenting refugees as individuals with agency and the potential of self-realization, not as a depersonalized mass that is often presented to us by the media, but rather human beings, bearers of rich cultures and past experiences that they can decide whether or not to share with others.

When I talk about sharing narratives of inclusion and partnership, I do not refer to a utopian idea of globalization and cultural homogenization, nor to a concept of paternalistic humanitarianism, which Tazzioli and Walters distinguish from solidarity due to the fact that the former relies on “the asymmetrical, hierarchical power relations that humanitarian interventions entail and foster” (2019: 181), but a simpler concept of solidarity, which aims to overcome inequalities through cooperation on a horizontal level. In this discourse of the proper narratives to promote, it is also interesting to make a distinction between the terms inclusion and integration, and the problematic meaning behind the latter one. According to Dalziel and Piazzoli, since the term integration implies the obligation for the migrant “to adapt to his/her host country”, hence supporting the idea that society has nothing to earn from a different culture, this terms should be substituted with “inclusion”, which in the other hand sees the migrant as a source of diversity and enrichment towards which society should lean (2019: 9).

Today, with the waves of people moving to Europe from poor countries and warzones, episodes of racism, discrimination, fear, hatred, and even indifference or even what I call “selective empathy” (accepting a specific category of refugees or migrants according to specific conditions) have increased. The risks, in my opinion, are the following ones. First, a lack of empathy for the suffering of people with different ethnic and cultural traits that are treated as outcasts within Western societies, leading to episodes of double standards and narratives based on racist stereotyping. Second, the endorsement of the view of asylum seekers as burdens of society. An interesting example can be found in the observation made by Tazzioli and Walter on the meaning of solidarity used the European Union in the context of migration, where solidarity among European countries is defined as burden-sharing, the willingness to equally share the “burden” of the refugees, thus directing this notion towards “state-based logic and not directly towards migrants” (2019: 176). Third, this notion of the burden indirectly promotes the narrative of the refugee as someone in need of help that lacks the means of self-determination, as well as someone who does not have the capacity to contribute to and enrich the society in which he or she is welcomed, as has effectively mentioned by Dalziel and Piazzoli in their essay on the acquisition of agency by asylum seekers (2019: 8-9). Lastly, a problem that Tazzioli and Walters have examined extensively and carefully in their essay (2019) is the “the increasing criminalisation by states and the EU of citizen networks that have mobilised across Europe for supporting migrants in transit”, movements that have highlighted the stark contrast between the support of the notion of genuine solidarity among citizens, and the refusal of this ideal by EU official institutions (2019: 175). With this study, I intend to consider the use of translation as a form of collaboration between translators and migrants and refugees that aims to build a more inclusive and fair society.

4.1.1 Migration

The phenomenon of migration has always been present in the history of humankind, and the current century, “immigration defines our time” (Heinderyckx, 2019: 199). Due to globalization, international trade and the treaties that allow for travel between countries (for instance, the Schengen Agreement), moving from one country to another is so common for people from developed countries that we often tend to use the term “globalized society”. According to Berman, migration has turned what we usually

identify as nation-state into “global sites with multiplicities of languages and cultures” (2005: 1). However, in recent decades the topic of migration has turned into a central matter of debate among many people who look at the flow of people from dangerous and war-torn countries across the globe. Some of them travel to seek economic opportunities, while others flee from war and famine. There are two main problems that emerge as a consequences of the phenomenon of large-scale displacement. The first one is a practical one, meaning the management of the reception of migrants within a country, which often depends on the efficiency of a country prior to the rise of migration numbers. In this context there also emerge “questions about language support policy in societies directly involved in receiving displaced persons, whether on a temporary or long-term basis” (Valero-Garcés & Tipton, 2017: xv). Another problem is the reaction of society towards migration.

Specifically, in Western Europe, the movement of large numbers of people from the war zones of the Middle East, such as Syria or Iraq, or other troubled and dangerous areas from the African continent, have helped to “create a confused impression of demographic and cultural pressure on autochthonous populations” (Heinderyckx, 2019: 199). The mistrust towards the foreigner, mixed with a fear of the future in a time of deep economic uncertainty, has led many people from the receiving countries to throw themselves into the arms of those leaders that promise to close the borders. On the other hand, many activists for human rights and politicians in favour of reception keep pushing for a more inclusive and multicultural society (Heinderyckx, 2019: 199). As always, the role of translators in drafting international treaties between countries, interpreting during the process of migrants’ reception and helping them integrate into their host country is crucial.

The topic of migration is a very critical one, and due to its relevance in the current times, it is important to examine it closely. The first thing is to do is to start from the basis and use the correct terminology, to understand the difference between refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. According to Heywood, in his book on global politics the term “refugee” is used to define “a person compelled to leave his or her country because their life, security or freedom have been threatened” (Heywood, 2014: 173). They can be threatened for various reasons, such as religion, religion, nationality, social class or political opinions, and they are forced to leave to avoid tortures, imprisonment or death

(Amnesty International, 2019). To obtain the status of refugee, according to the Geneva Convention in 1951, people need to prove to be in a life-threatening situation, “to have been subject to, or risked being personally subject to, a specific form of persecution within their country of origin” (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 132). In her essay, Todorova mentions that according to the UNHCR, in the current year of 2020 the number of refugees throughout the world is “over 25 million” (2020: 157). Internally displaced people are similar to refugee, in the sense that they are forced, due to phenomenon of violence such as armed conflicts or a disaster (natural or manmade), to leave their residence (Heywood, 2014: 173). However, unlike refugees, they still live in their own country.

The term migrant, on the other hand, is used in a rather different case. Both emigration and immigration generally refer to the process of leaving the native country to move into another one, although in the detail they are two different terms. While emigration simply refers to the act of travelling between two countries, immigration imply the intention of the individual to settle in the country where he or she is moving in (Heywood, 2014: 173). Unlike refugees, migrants do not flee persecution and the threat of death, but they often travel for economic reasons (hence the often-used term “economic migrant”) such as poverty and lack of employment or education. The reasons that push migrants to leave their country and seek for a better future are various, and they can also include risk of persecution, for example in the case of members of the LGBTQ+ community or political dissidents, of a natural disaster such as drought and famine. The main two distinctive factors between a migrant and a refugee are the choice that migrants have to either stay in their native country or leave it to improve their lives and the different treatment that migrants and refugees receive in the countries of destination. Countries, as stated on the UNHCR website, “deal with migrants under their own immigration laws and processes”, while the norms that the country follows to deal with refugees depends both on national and international laws (Edwards, 2016). For this reason, from a bureaucratic point of view, it is crucial to understand the difference between migrants and refugees, for the sake of both groups and especially for the safety of refugees. Oftentimes, these differences and the “overlapping grey areas in the categorization of migrants” makes difficult for many UE countries and policymakers to handle the reception of foreigners (d’Haenens & Joris, 2019: 8)

Although there is a legal difference between a migrant and a refugee on which depends the reception or rejection of the host country, from a purely human point of view they are both individuals that deserve empathy and respect. The technical dichotomy between these terms sometimes leads to a highly different treatment between the two statuses, leading to a hostile behaviour of towards migrants, based on the idea that they migrate by choice for economic reasons. It is important to dismantle this assumption, because oftentimes what motivates these people to leave their countries are factors that they cannot directly control, such as poverty or drought. To quote Doloughan, “it is useful to remember that the contexts motivating movement of people are diverse and that while for some migration is a choice, for others it is a condition forced upon them” (2016: 107).

Another term that is often used in the context of mass movements and human rights is “asylum seeker”. In the Amnesty International website, the description for asylum seekers is as follows:

An asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker (Amnesty International, 2019).

Hence the term is used to describe a specific time frame, rather than a social status that lasts longer and might not be entirely separated from that individual.

4.1.1.1 Migration in the European landscape

Historically, the European continent has always been a site of constant migration. However, in the 2010s the European Union has witnessed a surge of this phenomenon, and since 2015-2016 the numbers of refugees and migrants have remained high (d’Haenens & Joris, 2019: 7), leading many countries of the EU to face a crisis in their border controls reception systems (Georgi, 2019: 103). With the influx of migrations gaining momentum, casualties have also increased, due to the hazardous journeys that many people risk making. On 3 October 2013, a boat full of migrants from Africa sank off the island of Lampedusa, the death toll was over 360 victims. On 19 April 2015, another shipwreck took place near to Lampedusa. About 800 people drowned during the disaster, and the tragic event shook the public opinion of the EU (Georgi, 2019: 98). That same year, 71 people were travelling towards Germany through the Balkan route

suffocated in a truck. Their bodies were found on 28 August in Austria (Georgi, 2019: 98). After finding his body washed up on the Turkish shores on 3 September, “images of the three-year-old Syrian refugee Aylan Kurdi were broadcast around the world” (Georgi, 2019: 98). These are just some of the casualties that happened and are still taking place around and within the European continent. According to the UNHCR's Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal, between 2014 and 2019 the number of people that died or went missing in the central Mediterranean route (by land and sea) peaked 19.140 cases (Mediterranean Situation, s.d.).

At first, during the year 2015, confronted with the high number of deaths, Europe went through a period “of almost euphoric solidarity with refugees” by opening its borders and focusing on reception and integration policies. However, this period of commitment on the part of the EU countries often called “the Long Summer of Migration”, did not last long (Georgi, 2019: 98-99). According to Georgi, it ended in mid-November of the same year with the Paris terrorist attacks, which gave way to leaders and right-wing parties “to associate refugees with ‘Islamic terrorism’” and push for more strict immigration laws (Georgi, 2019: 99). Due to the enforcement of the country's immigration laws and border control systems, the journey to reach Europe has become more and more difficult if not impossible. The most dangerous and deadly way to access to the EU is through the Mediterranean Sea, which in the last decade has been often described by the international press as “the graveyard of Europe”.

Regardless of this dramatic situation, both the free movement of European citizens across the countries and the rise of numbers of migrants and asylum seekers crossing the borders of the so-called “European fortress” “had fuelled an anti-migrant narrative”, leading many countries to be reluctant to welcome and provide safety or even permanent residence to foreign refugees and migrants (Federici, 2020: 235). Some countries rely on the reception system of refugee camps, territories isolated from the rest of the society where migrants and refugees are held “as long as it takes to resolve their status” (Doloughan, 2016: 117). Although in theory refugees’ stay in these no man’s lands should be temporal, many of these camps within Europe turn into the final destination of many people’s journey, where the standard of living is appalling.

Although in this section I refer to the European Union as a whole, it is important to clarify, as Heinderyckx did, that across Europe diverse social, political, cultural and

economic contexts lead to different attitudes towards migrants and refugees, and that “no one-size-fits-all analysis can possibly grasp such a complex issue at the level of the continent” (2019: 200). Migration itself is such a complex issue that involves different actors and different perceptions that cannot easily be rationalized, making it impossible to solve with simple solutions (d’Haenens & Joris, 2019: 8). What is important, however, is to push for more humane protocols and “a policy of stabilization of human rights”, to deal with the phenomenon on migration in a more compassionate way (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 67).

4.1.1.2 Racism and intolerance in the hosting countries

When we decide to examine a problematic and multifaceted topic such as migration, it is difficult to not consider the influence of racism in managing and dealing with the issue of migration. According to Georgi, the rising numbers of migrants in Europe in the 2010s has fostered a “more open, militant and aggressive” type of racism, as well as the phenomenon of “stark political polarisation” (2019: 96). The visible results of these xenophobic rebounds can be seen in the election of right-wing leaders, who gained success by pointing fingers migrants and refugees, especially those from the Muslim community, and exploiting the peak moment of the migration crisis of 2015 to aim at the general approval of repressive refugee policies and a narratives that view migration as a “threat” (Ferreira, 2018: 65-67). To quote Tazzioli and Walters on the criminalization of solidarity practices, “from 2016 onwards, solidarity towards migrants was de facto expelled from the EU discourse and practices” (2019, 177).

Apart from the so-called “migration crisis”, another event that shook the European community and consolidated a climate of intolerance and racism was the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and its aftermath on several countries (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2015: 4). After facing the effects of the crisis, such as unemployment, poverty and precariousness, many people feared for their financial security and gradually felt overwhelmed by the rising numbers of migrants that they saw as a threat to the national economic system. In moments of uncertainty and instability, racist and nationalist mechanisms easily spread through society (Ferreira, 2018: 67-68).

Financial insecurity aside, another crucial factor that often generates intolerance is the cultural differences that are seen as threats to the culture of the receiving country and therefore targeted by racism. The primary example of this can be found in those that

constitute majority of asylum seekers, hence people of colour and Muslims (Georgi, 2019: 103). In his essay on the role of racism in Europe (2019), Georgi proposes some steps to take to confront the current situation that is taking hold in the European states. First, by directly challenging the narrative of racism through “a critical self-reflection of white Europeans on their racist knowledge and privileges” alongside and anti-fascist practice (2019: 111). Secondly, by discussing the debatable notion of nationalism and national communities, to examine its role in the construction of subtly racist societies “where one owes more solidarity to one’s compatriots than to foreigners” (2019: 111). Lastly, Georgi adopts a Marxist perspective and points out the importance of overcoming racism by changing the social and economic structures that makes possible this phenomenon, such as capitalism and neoliberalism (2019: 112). All these measures can be useful to take a critic stance towards our social system and see its deep flaws, but, as Georgi states, there is no guarantee that racism would disappear altogether (2019: 112).

4.1.1.3 Media and migration

Just like migration is connected to racism, so is the media. The relationship between migrants and refugees and the national media of the receiving country has become closer and closer in the last two decades. With regards to the refugees, according to d’Haenens & Joris, they “have taken a prominent place in news production, political discussions, policy formation, and public concern around the world in recent years” (2019: 11). In the case of migrants, the relationship with the national press is more critical. Oftentimes, the media has taken a radical stance in representing the migrant as an “indistinct Other, dehumanized, with no history, gender, or age group” as Bonini Baldini states in her essay (2019: 132-133).

Not only do the media have the power to spread specific narrative or message with regards to migrants, but they can create a specific representation of the migrant that deeply influences our perception and shapes the relationship between us and this foreigner Other (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 133). In other words, media can “act in a performative manner” (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 133), and since many people learn of migration and enter in contact with it only through the media, “they affect the way in which the local population will act and react” (Mistiaen, 2019: 57).

In the case of migrants, the image of the refugee as a “threat” or a “problem” has been amplified both by mass media and social media, influencing the public opinion and leading many citizens to demand more strict border policies (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 132). Other figures of speech that have often been used to discuss the phenomenon of migration are “invasion”, “emergency” and “crisis”, used to describe the large migratory flows that take place since the beginning of the 2010s (Federici, 2020: 234; Georgi, 2019: 97).

An example of both the negative portrayal of the migrant or the refugee through the concept of “crisis” and the power of media (in this case, the national press) in shaping the perception of the society is the use of the sensationalist expression “*emergenza migranti*” (migrant emergency). This concept has become very critical, not only due to its “biased, conditioning and aggressive metaphor” that has a strong effect on the receiver but also for its use in the political discourse (Federici, 2020: 233). According to Federici, through the continued use of this expression by the Italian national press, “the metaphor has become a political tool to justify incomplete policies of migration” (2020: 233).

It is interesting in this context to examine the effect that different terms can have on our perception of the migration process. By choosing to define the phenomenon as an emergency, people tend to see it as something immediate, unexpected and impossible to mitigate or solve without strong policies. This approach implies that the causes of the emergency, the displacement of people, are unknown or difficult to fix (Federici, 2020: 236). When we face an emergency, there is no time to consider how to solve the problem at its core, but we often tend to focus on what can be done immediately in the short term. By promoting the emergency framing, the Italian governments managed to avoid planning a long-term solution and instead opted for a “last-minute, ad hoc approach to highly predictable events” (Federici, 2020: 236). What happens if, instead of migrant emergency, we use the expression “migrant crisis”, which is often used by EU institutions to refer to the issue of rising numbers of migrants and refugees? According to Federici, the use of this expression considerably alters the context, giving us the impression that the problem we face can and should be solved with “concerted, rationalized and pondered solutions for the long-term” (2020: 241). Even in this case, however, the use of the expressions “refugees crisis” or “migration crisis” can have some downsides. In his study, Georgi points out that by referring to the phenomenon of migration as a crisis, the media

and institutions consider the problem to be the refugees and migrants, rather than focusing on the causes that forced these people to leave their country (2019: 97).

What are the consequences of a negative practice adopted by the media, such as promoting a nationalist and racist narrative or spreading alarming and exaggerated news on migrants and refugees? First, a “change to humanitarian integration” and a different perception of migrants and refugees, who are seen as a burden for society (Federici, 2020: 252-254). Secondly, a distinction between people according to their background and the reasons that forced them to migrate in the first place, thus focusing only on the war refugees and asylum seekers while neglecting the economic migrant (Federici, 2020: 253). Third, the tendency to oversimplify the discourse on migration in the globalized 21st-century world, rather than analysing it through an intersectional perspective (Federici, 2020: 242).

The solution to the general issue of negative narratives prompted by the media is to promote alternative narratives to challenge the widespread notion of emergency or crisis advocated by the national press and politician parties and institutions. In other words, the aim is to reach a more humane model of narrating the migration processes (Baker, 2020: 2).

4.1.2 The relationship between translation and migration

Before examining translation in the context of migration from a practical point of view, I would like to focus on the perception of translation and the role of migration in the field of translation studies. In her essay on the concepts of translation, travel and migration (2006), Polezzi reflects on the idea that translation studies should consider the notion of migration in the current century to question and change the old assumption of translation based on a model that advocates “the movement of a stable, monolingual original from the source to the target language” (2006: 181). This image of translation as a linear process controlled only by intellectuals and professional interpreters and translators can be dangerous, because it suggests that translation, rather than being a tool for cooperation and understating, becomes “an instrument of containment, helping to reify difference while ostensibly erasing it” (Polezzi, 2012: 354). It also risks to limiting the agency of the migrant, placed in a lower position with regard to the translator in a rigid structure of power. In the words of Polezzi, “Agency is a crucial issue in the encounter between

translation and migration” (2012: 348). This fixed relationship risks to consolidating the commonly used figure of the migrant as a passive individual that needs support through translation or interpreting (Polezzi, 2012: 349). To challenge this view, the concept of migration offers a different, and perhaps more humane-centered, perspective of translation. Both translation and migration can be described as two “increasingly polysemic” words that can include various meanings and representations. If we create a parallel between translation and migration as a movement, a displacement from location or text A to location or texts B, we become aware that the text is not the only thing that migrates, but people as well (Polezzi, 2012: 347). From this perspective, translation is not seen as a horizontal and linear process, but rather an encounter between two worlds, a flexible process that can be carried out through a wide range of different practices, for example, self-translation and community interpreting (Polezzi, 2006: 181).

The traditional image of the migrant can change as well, shifting from “objects of translation to active subjects, to agents in the process”, thus inevitably changing the power relationships established that locate the migrant in a lower position, dependent on the translator or interpreter (Polezzi, 2012: 348). An example of the reappropriation of agency at the hands of the migrant is through self-translation, a creative representation and self-reflection of the migration process that the individual had to complete (Polezzi, 2012: 350). It is however important that, although being extremely meaningful for some individuals to be able to examine their existence with an outside perspective, self-translation should not be considered “a solution to the political and ethical questions posed by migration”, because it is extremely hard for migrants to create a space of encounter and gain visibility only through practices of self-translation (Polezzi, 2012: 352).

Another interesting aspect to consider when focusing on the parallelism between translation and migration is the concept of invisible borders. In the context of migration, what can be considered a border is not only the physical edge or line that separate two territories, where transit is allowed only through immigration checkpoints, but also the mental and linguistic one. The difference between two languages can be seen as a boundary that is difficult, if not impossible to trespass without aid. And so is the mental border, the line that separate two individuals with a diverse background, culture and history. This border does not only exist between the migrant and the foreign country in

which he or she is entering, but also between the migrant and the translator (Maitland, 2019: 206).

4.1.2.1 The role of translators

In the discourse of migration, translation takes on different forms and processes. The most crucial phase when translation practices take place is when the migrant enters into contact with the receiving country and two different worlds, made up of different languages, cultures and habits face each other. To quote Todorova, with the rising numbers of refugees worldwide, “the need for trained interpreters who would work alongside humanitarian personnel is significant” (2020: 153). In this context, translators and interpreters play the most important role in creating the first connection between two cultures, but the attitude toward the practice must be examined with care. In her essay, Rosario Martín Ruano focused on the central role of translators and interpreters in the field of PSIT (public service interpreting and translation). She points out a negative aspect of translation, meaning the fact that translation practices often promote a notion of equality that “overshadows the existence of cultural differences that need to be bridged or negotiated, therefore ignoring the cultural differences that are present when they interact with a migrant or a refugee. The risk in the PSIT is to avoid recognizing differences among two different cultures in the name of “unobtrusiveness”, but doing so it inadvertently serving domesticating agendas and might cause difficulties to reach the common ground (2017: 29).

However, with the development of a multilingual perspective, this negative viewpoint might become more inclusive and self-critical. In the current century, the rise of multicultural and multilingual societies also leads to a higher demand for translators and interpreters. They play an important role, in “shaping the relation between majority and minority groups in society”, assisting migrants to find the empowerment and the autonomy in a foreign environment (House, Translation: The Basics, 2018: 157). Oftentimes, translators are not only communicators between mediators and migrants or refugees, but they can also become active partners of the humanitarian personnel “in the process of advocacy for people who are in a vulnerable position”, especially in critical situations such as the border or the refugee camps where the encounter is more immediate and perhaps more distressing. In contexts of vulnerability, the interpreter can become “a

strong advocate” for migrants and refugees, helping them to get through the mediation process with confidence (Todorova, 2020: 153-154). To do so, translators and interpreters need to be able to empathize, especially in situations of emergency, because empathy allows them to interact with people in distress and gain their trust, as well as understanding how they feel. In her essay, Todorova heavily stresses the importance that empathy has as a tool for interpreters (2020: 158), and in my opinion for translators as well.

In the context of reception and multicultural interaction, specifically, when migrants and asylum seekers move from the emergency areas to an EU country, a pivotal function is also played by cultural mediators (Taviano, 2020: 23). Cultural mediation is a complex job because is not only limited to linguistic proficiency but requires a deep knowledge of the two cultures that enter in contact. Through mediation practices that help migrants to narrate themselves, mediators and migrants can collaborate in “putting forward cross-border notions of citizenship” (Taviano, 2020: 25).

Very often, policymakers and authorities that deal with the issue of migration do not take into account how deeply language and cultural differences permeate the existence of migrants and refugees the moment they cross the border and are welcomed in the new country (Taviano, 2020: 28), an experience that is common for asylum seekers but not so frequent, for instance, for European citizens. To adopt a perspective focused on translation helps to understand how crucial language and culture can be for the migrant on a psychological level, considering their traumatic transition from a different country, culture and language (Taviano, 2020: 34).

4.1.3 Translation as recognition

What is the position of translators and interpreters when working for minorities such as migrants and refugees? To answer this question, I would like to mention a statement made by Gjurčinova on her essay on migration literature to explain the duty of translators and translation practices. According to Gjurčinova, translation serves “to secure and deepen the awareness that other people, people different from us, really do exist” (2013: 8). In this delicate situation, translators carry the difficult task of giving the voice to the voiceless without taking the credit or stepping in front of the narrator. This reflection also reminds us of the ethical dilemma of Venuti’s invisibility or visibility of the translator.

Instead of limiting the study on the notion of visibility, which in this chapter refers to the visibility of the narrator instead of the translator, I decided to focus on a similar but more complex concept when examining the role and utility of translation, the idea of recognition. Recognition is an interesting concept that has gained interest in recent decades in the field of political theory, and as the name suggests, it refers to the idea of becoming aware of the cultural diversity and disadvantages among different social and cultural groups in our society, rather than hiding behind a principle of egalitarianism (Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017: 22). Bonini Baldini, in her essay on storytelling (“Narrative Capability: Self-Recognition and Mutual Recognition in Refugees' Storytelling”, 2019), stresses the importance that recognition can have concerning the narration of migrants and refugees. When focusing on a topic such as migration, where the subject is often overseen and treated without dignity, recognition encourages the audience to look at migrants and to think about them as individuals, as people. In other words, the public is encouraged to recognize them (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 134).

It is important to distinguish the concept of recognition from the concept of equality. While recognition highlights “the particularities and legitimate differences of the parties involved in the translation situation”, equality is based on the idea that all people should be treated equally. While it may be ethically admirable to claim that everyone should have the same opportunity to succeed in life, no matter their background or their disadvantages, it is wrong to assume that giving the same treatment and social position to everyone will erase the differences that existed before (Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017: 21-22). In the words of Rosario Martín Ruano, this noble ideal of equality risks to be a “double-edged sword for the purpose of justice” (2017: 21).

Another important difference is the one between the paradigm of recognition and the paradigm of redistribution, identified as the idea of ensuring the same rights and opportunities for all human beings, which is often put in opposition or as a complement to recognition. According to Rosario Martín Ruano, the criticism against redistribution is the fact that this concept neutralises idiosyncrasies and differences, which tend to be de-emphasised, overlooked or even neglected (2017: 22). The reason why recognition exceeds as a valid and crucial idea is the fact that its models do not aim at fixing the system, but changing it completely, giving space to the voices that have been kept silent (Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017: 23-24). Its absence, on the other hand, can be very harmful.

According to Maitland, a lack of recognition means lack of reciprocity, thus creating a form of subordination where certain actors are considered inferior to others in contexts of social interaction (2019: 209). Alongside recognition, the idea of being understood by others, another crucial concept that needs to be stressed is the need of self-recognition, defined as “an external and internal process by which individuals or groups discover new self-definition” (Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017: 34). This paradigm should be adopted by translators and interpreters, who need to constantly reassess their relationship with the text and the person that they are translating or interpreting. It is important to remember that the way we narrate something, whether a topic or an even, for instance, two important things emerge from it: the subject itself, and how we place ourselves in relation to it, and therefore “the type of development of the society where that representation takes form (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 145).

The mindset of translation can be helpful to help to achieve recognition because it implies the openness to a different language and culture, and therefore the awareness of the differences between these two realities, to reach peaceful coexistence between various identities (Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017, 24). Having adopted the paradigm of status recognition, the role of the author, which in this context can be considered a migrant or a refugee writing or narrating his or her story, changes as well. According to Maitland, through status recognition the author is no longer an object of the “meaning-making process”, but rather a co-operator or co-subject of the process itself (2019, p. 209-210). The concept of recognition can be seen as a valid alternative to the idea of border separation, which puts the translator and the author at two opposite sides, instead of promoting reciprocity between the two actors that collaborate “in the production of a translation on a more egalitarian level” (Maitland, 2019: 216).

4.1.4 The power of a story

Once the migrant has crossed the border and has been accepted (temporary or permanently) into the host country, whether it is a camp or other accommodation, the journey to a new life has just started. While many refugees and migrants choose to forget the past and move on, closing a chapter of their story, others rely on the power of writing or narrating their experiences, as a sort of cathartic action. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the research conducted by Gjurčinova on immigration writing, which can be

defined as “writing in a new country other than one's homeland, and in a new language other than one's mother tongue” (2013: 3). The expression is usually used to refer to those texts written by migrants from war zones of the Middle East or other troubled countries around the world coming to Western Europe, seeking a better future. They can either be long time writers or they decided to start writing once they reached the host country, and they usually write in the adopted language, thus creating a linguistically and culturally hybrid text, a “métissage of the old and the new stories, the old and the new language, the old and the new culture” (Gjurčinova, 2013: 3). It is not uncommon for migrant writers to translate their stories as well, finding themselves stuck in-between their old and new language, finding it hard to choose which one to use to tell their stories (Gjurčinova, 2013: 7).

The process of narrating personal experiences has undoubtedly some benefits, for instance, the fact that taking the initiative to narrate your experiences is a sign of agency (De Fina, 2018: 241). With the idea of taking experiences and turning them into stories there has also emerged the habit of sharing these stories with others. Despite its far-reaching roots in oral history projects, this trend is relatively recent, making it a novelty that attracts many different groups of participants and observers (Lénárt-Cheng & Walker, 2011: 151). The potential of this practice should not only be considered from an individual point of view, but also a social point as well. The act of sharing lifestories has a transformative effect on society because it implies a minimum level of interaction and participation from individuals (Lénárt-Cheng & Walker, 2011: 141-142). With the advent of new technologies, it has become easier for people to meet and create networks of activism around these shared experiences. With the words of Lénárt-Cheng & Walker:

Whether we see in today's life story sharing trends the continuation of old desires and traditions or a radical shift in paradigms, one thing is certain: technology today brings people together who otherwise could not be sitting around the same fire, and this intensified experience of sharing lifestories leads to new forms of activism (2011: 142-143).

With a unique form of involvement such as narration, storytelling and sharing stories can help to build participatory democracy in different ways, such as encouraging inclusivity towards diversity and greater representation (Lénárt-Cheng & Walker, 2011: 143, 145). Moreover, while this belief is valid from a general point of view, it certainly is effective in the case of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. Unlike storytelling in the context of an asylum request, where the refugee is asked to answer a series of

questions about his or her past life in a rather hostile and unfriendly environment to be assigned to a category, this type of storytelling helps to create interconnections and make people awake, and it is seen as “a point of contact between different cultures that intend to come together and have a discussion” (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 141).

Another positive effect of lifestories is the fact that sharing them offers an educational tool to become more responsible for their participation, “for both those who share their stories and for the audience” (Lénárt-Cheng & Walker, 2011: 145-146). From the perspective of the one who is telling the story, being able to narrate personal stories implies that the narrators must have developed the capacity to consider themselves “active subjects”, which for many individuals such as migrants and refugees means a lot (Bonini Baldini, 2019: 139). For the audience, the learning progress resides in the act of actively listening, which is seen as “as a symbol of reciprocity”, essential in the field of activism (Lénárt-Cheng & Walker, 2011: 146). According to Bonini Baldini, the act of listening should not only be limited to understanding what is told but to understand and empathise with the other (2019: 144). Ultimately, the crucial element is not the story shared itself, but the commitment of people to share personal experiences with the community (Lénárt-Cheng & Walker, 2011: 152-153).

4.2 The Syrian Civil War

After focusing on the topic of migration, this section aims to approach and examine one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of the last decades and the current century, the Syrian Civil War. Often called the Syrian crisis, the war broke out in 2011 after many protests that sparked in the country against the Bashar al-Assad’s regime were heavily repressed with violence, leading many dissidents to take up arms and fight back. The causes of the war and the consequent displacement of the population are not external but depend on “deep-seated political and economic factors endemic to the region and specific actions taken by the Bashar al-Assad regime and various insurgent groups” (Ferris & Kirişci, 2016: 109). However, although Syria has been at the centre of world attention since 2011, the indifference of international powers and the global community toward the atrocities that are still taking place inside and around the country is very objectionable (Alhallak, 2018: 16). In their essay dated 2016, Ferris and Kirişci wrote that “Syria is the

most complex and massive humanitarian emergency facing the world today” (2016: 124). To this day, things have not changed.

Before going any further, I would like to make a disclaimer regarding the sources that I used for this part of the chapter on Syria: since the majority of texts that I used as a resource are dated 2019 or before, I will not focus on the last developments of the current year (2020).

4.2.1 The rise of the Ba’ath Party

For centuries, Syria has been a country of culture at the heart of the Arab project, an emblematic example of “the Arab movement’s cultural achievements” (Reilly, 2019: 213). According to Reilly, although it was often a dominated and contested land controlled by other states, Syria was a country rich in history that could boast a millenary culture several natural beauties in its territory (2019: 213). However, from a political point of view, the unity of Syria was very fragile, and under the government of the Assads, it was a matter of time before this unity crumbled down.

After the end of colonialism, the modern Syrian state created by the French started its slow descent toward crisis. Internally divided, often helped by external interventions of regional or international superpowers in handling internal affairs and incapable to develop a national identity, Syria was “practically designed to fail” (Reilly, 2019: 212). The country was internally divided by different identities and loyalties, all of them manipulated and under control of the fear-inducing authoritarian government of Hafez al-Assad that gave the impression, from the outside, that Syria was a unitary state (Reilly, 2019: 212). Hafez al-Assad was a member of the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party, the famous party that slowly rose through the ranks of the hierarchies and got rid of all its opponents (Alhallak, 2018: 17). With other officials of the party, Hafez created the military committee of the Ba’ath party and slowly gained power through military coups, by taking part in the clashes with neighbour countries, betraying his former comrades and taking advantage from the circumstances that he found.

In the hands of Hafez, the Ba’ath party gained complete control over the country and destroyed any form of political opposition, destroying the dream of political pluralism and a democratic Syria that was developing after the independence from the French mandate (Alhallak, 2018: 18-19). Since the popular referendum and the election of Hafez

as President of the Syrian Republic in 1971, no other free election was held in Syria, and the same applied for any change in power (Alhallak, 2018: 19-20). Hafez ruled Syria for 30 years and became the embodiment of the Syrian country and the regime that controlled. After he died in 2000, the power directly passed into the hands of his son Bashar, the only candidate for the presidency, for obvious reasons. (Alhallak, 2018: 17). Some people from the political opposition hoped that the change of presidency with Bashar would have brought new reforms toward a perhaps more open and progressive government, but that did not happen.

After the election of Bashar al-Assad, political opponents and intellectuals demanded democratic changes in the government. In September 2000 99 Syrian intellectuals and activists wrote the "Manifesto of the 99". Among them was Riad al-Turk, one of the most famous figures in the political opposition and secretary-general of the Syrian Communist Party (Alhallak, 2018: 24-25). The text inaugurated the start of the famous "Damascus Spring", a period when intense political and social debates on democracy in the Syrian state took place/flourished. Like the "Prague Spring" of 1968 from which the intellectuals took inspiration, the "Damascus Spring" met the same tragic end, with a smear campaign against the activists carried by Al-Assad that led to numerous arrests and jail sentences in 2001. Riad Al-Turk was arrested and sentenced to three years of imprisonment for his role in the intellectual movements (Alhallak, 2018: 26-27). Once he was freed, in 2005 his party changed its name to "Syrian Democratic People's Party", taking distances from the official communist party and becoming one of the forms of opposition that are banned by the Syrian government (Alhallak, 2018: 30).

And thus the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad started, with the repression of any form of political dissent and the same type of government that he inherited from his father. The state spread fear with the help of patronage networks and secret services, both in the metropolitan as well as the rural areas, and efficiently "discouraging mass political action" (Reilly, 2019: 192). Intellectuals and dissidents were active, but their attempts to directly protest against the president were scarce and often repressed with censorship, violence, corruption of the dissidents or even norms that limited the possibility to share printed documents that were suspected to criticize the regime and were, therefore, illegal (Alhallak, 2018: 35). However, thanks to the internet and media that allowed for wider

dissemination of information, the “cloak of silence” that covered the country for years started to fall apart (Reilly, 2019: 192; Alhallak, 2018: 30).

4.2.2 When the war broke out

Before the protests started, a phenomenon that gave impetus to feelings of dissent was a series of uprisings in other Arabian countries against their government during what has become famous as the “Arab Spring”. The slogans and the videos of dramatic riots from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen were broadcasted worldwide, becoming one of the accounts that prompted Syrian people to demonstrate. To quote Reilly, “the wall of fear in Syria had already started to crack” (2019: 192).

Another important aspect that is important to consider when examining the causes of the turmoil was the separation between the peripheries and the city. After years of control over the smaller towns of the countryside, the regime’s attention shifted toward the great cities and the “alliance with state-linked businessmen”, and its power over the countryside eroded. This neglect caused poverty and migration from rural to urban areas, as well as a growing feeling of dissatisfaction among people living in peripheries that fuelled the uprisings (Reilly, 2019: 192-193).

However, what is considered the real anti-government protests only broke out in March 2011. The spark that ignited the uprising was the terrible event that took place in the city of Deraa, where 15 schoolboys wrote anti-regime graffiti on their school walls. They were arrested and tortured by the authorities, which also killed one of them, and were only freed two weeks later. The families of the children, together with other outraged people, “began demonstrating demanding the release of the children and the dismissal of the local government”, but the security men repressed the protests by shooting the unarmed crowds. With its images of the aggressions shared through social media, his event prompted a large scale of demonstrations around the country, to demand an end to regime’s brutality (Reilly, 2019: 193; Alhallak, 2018: 35). Although formally acknowledging the need for reforms, Assad never tried to enter in contact with protesters and accepted the accusations of accountability for what happened in Deraa. However, he was unable to predict what the events of March 2011 would have led to. The “wall of fear” that the regime built for years started to crumble, facing the people’s hope and determination to speak up, in any way possible, against Assad and his reign of terror. In

the words of Reilly: “People’s creativity – long in evidence, often suppressed, frequently fully expressed only in lands of exile or emigration – burst out in a myriad of ways. These expressions of solidarity and creativity were accompanied by critiques of the status quo that drew on Syria’s battered yet resilient traditions of liberal and progressive thought to imagine the birth of a new society” (2019: 194). The graffiti that the children in Deraa wrote on those walls marked a turning point in the history of Syria, giving space to “a new phase of courage” where people learned that untouched regimes could be destroyed (Alhallak, 2018: 36).

Although the first demonstrations were pacific and did not aim at a total revolution but rather a change of political attitude through reforms, the reaction of the government’s military forces was ruthless and hideous, in the same way that it had dealt with political oppositions along the years. The authorities responded to the protests with violence, by intimidating, torturing and even killing demonstrators and any dissident that tried to defy Assad’s regime (Reilly, 2019: 193-194).

4.2.3 Fight or flight: the response of the Syrian people

Before the conflict turned into the terrible proxy war that became known worldwide, the two main opponents were the Assad’s military and the dissidents. There were no external actors, nor the infamous Islamic State between the ranks of the two fronts, but the conflict was nonetheless gruesome. Before the involvement of terrorist groups, the worst act of terrorism in 2011 were committed by the ruthless Assad regime (Alhallak, 2018: 42). The regime showed no mercy when it massacred 108 people in the city of Houla, near Homs, in the month of May, and thus “the last, faint hopes that Syria could avoid fullscale civil war” disappeared during the summer of the same year (Reilly, 2019: 195). Faced with the repressive methods of the regime, people had to choose between “surrender or self-defence and counter-militarization” (Reilly, 2019: 194). The pacific protests then turned into violent clashes against Assad’s militias, the rebels had no choice but use violence against the military forces (Alhallak, 2018: 51). Constant bombing against the population left no space for civil activists and the moderate political opposition to work towards political reforms, while the silence from the international community pushed many exasperated Syrians towards religious extremism out of frustration (Alhallak, 2018: 62). Assad knew that dealing with a pacific revolution was far more dangerous than repressing

a violent one, and then used in his favour the intervention of Islamic fundamentalists among the ranks of rebels, while at the same time eliminating all pacific activists that could have been a problem to justify the violence that the government wanted to use (Alhallak, 2018: 51-54). Since, according to Reilly, “a prolonged insurgency would likely take on an Islamist flavour”, it was just a matter of time for the Assad regime to have a valid excuse to bomb and kill civilians in the name of a fight against religious fanatics (Reilly, 2019: 194-195). Slowly, military defectors started to join the ranks of the oppositionists, as well as militiamen from Islamic groups. Although no one was aware of the scale that the conflict would have reached in the following years, many rebels already realized that there was no turning back to the Syrian state before (Reilly, 2019: 195-196).

Due to its central position, Syria quickly became the centre of attention, and “the conflict quickly drew in a variety of regional and international powers” who indirectly assisted both the Assad regime and the rebels. Turkey, for instance, after a breakdown between Ankara and Damascus, offered assistance and shelter to the oppositionists (Reilly, 2019: 197-198). However, no major power directly took robust action “to halt the violence in Syria” due to lack of international consensus on how to intervene (Ferris & Kirişci, 2016: 110). The most considerable intervention was the assistance of Syrian refugees once their numbers began to increase in the host countries, as well as in Europe. However, since the Paris attacks in November 2015, many countries started to associate the Syrian rebels with the ISIS organization, leading to a sense of suspicion and xenophobic rhetoric against the opponents of the Assad regime, who did not constitute a unified group (Ferris & Kirişci, 2016: 112).

During the repression and the start of the civil war, Assad used in his favour two crucial factors: religious differences and sectarianism. Syria was a country with different religious faiths, and the main target of government violence were Sunnis, who constitute the majority of the opposition from rural areas. When the war started, the Islamic language became “the vocabulary of sustained mass mobilization” (Reilly, 2019: 197). However, as the conflict escalated, different positions on the religious identity emerged from the rebel front, and the most moderate and progressive voices, those that Assad feared most, were slowly isolated (Reilly, 2019: 198). The advent of ISIS silenced the liberal rebels that wanted to avoid further violence. When approaching the role of ISIS would be also necessary, like Alhallak suggests, to examine the topic of Islamic

fundamentalism and its presence in the Syrian country and neighbouring territories before and after the start of the civil war (2018: 54). However, I will only briefly describe this organization concerning its influence in the country during the war.

The first fundamentalist fighters sent from al Qaeda arrived in Syria from Iraq in 2012 and established the well-known Nusra Front, now the Syrian Conquest Front. Among them were also former Syrian prisoners previously sent by Assad to fight the US in Iraq. After the creation of the Nusra Front, in 2013 the Iraqi al Qaeda became known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Reilly, 2019: 203). ISIS was brutal against anyone who dared to challenge the dream of a caliphate, whether they were Muslim or not. Through brutal public executions, slavery, rape and “wanton destruction of historical artifacts”, they spread terror in the occupied territories, as well as becoming one of the most feared terrorist organization worldwide. After their expansion in Syria and the terrorist attacks in Europe, they earned the attention of the global audience and Western governments (Reilly, 2019: 204). It attracted numerous militants and fanatics worldwide that saw in this extremist organization an ideal to fight for (Reilly, 2019: 204). The involvement of ISIS fighters in the fight against the Syrian regime indirectly helped Assad’s propaganda against the rebels and his opponents. By claiming “to be standing up against religious fanaticism and ‘terror’”, it became easy for Assad to justify his brutal repression through the military against innocent citizens. Moreover, for US and European forces, Assad’s regime became less important compared the threat of the ISIS, and their trust in the rebel militias drastically changed once ISIS took part in the fight (Reilly, 2019: 204-206). Although the ISIS forces have lost influence in Syria and are retreating, the organisation is still having the financial resources to be considered an international threat (Singh, et al., 2019: 18).

The other important element that should be considered is the issue of sectarianism. Sectarianism, a term often used in relation to the Middle East countries, can be described as a form of discrimination motivated by religious and social beliefs against minorities or different communities. During 2011, since the regime always claimed to defend minorities such as the Ismaili people, it tended to use different treatments toward the demonstrators according to the ethnicity of the city, thus relying on sectarianism. An example can be found in the book of Alhallak where he describes how the government sent armed men to shoot in cities like Hama and tried at first a different approach in the

city of Salamiya, where the majority of people were Ismaili, a religious (Alhallak, 2018: 37). These ethnic and religious difference in the country, as well as discrimination and deeply-rooted cultural beliefs, did not help the rebel front to gain support from many communities, especially those people from the urban areas. To quote Reilly, facing the insurgence of religious extremism, “faced with what appeared to be a binary choice, the country’s various minorities either supported the regime or gave it resigned assent” (2019: 199).

The regime proved itself to have no mercy against their people, instilling fear and terror and making impossible for civilians to live in rebel-held areas, under constant attack of artillery and air powers (Reilly, 2019: 201). The ruthless attacks on civilians and buildings such as hospitals through regular and chemical weapons perpetrated by the regime were premeditated, as well as psychological violence such as rape and torture, or even the occupation of the abandoned buildings (Singh, et al., 2019: 25, 34). In 2016, the brutal methods adopted by Assad to crush the spirits of the rebellion were labelled as “crimes against humanity” by an independent UN commission (Singh, et al., 2019: 34).

The main responsibility for the political and humanitarian disaster lies on the shoulders of Bashar al-Assad. However, “the popular movement that began with so much hope and enthusiasm in the spring of 2011” (Reilly, 2019: 211) was unable to carry on the fight without expanding and consequently dividing itself into various factions which were unable to give an alternative to the war that we all know today and keep the civilians safe from the regime and the Islamic fundamentalist forces (Alhallak, 2018: 66-67). The international coalition that aimed to overthrow the dictatorship of Assad failed in its intent and was already starting to fall apart in 2017 (Reilly, 2019: 208). In 2019, when the report was written, Idlib was the last territory held by the anti-Assad terrorist groups, resulting into a humanitarian threat against the people of Idlib (Singh, et al., 2019: 27). Up to 2019, no progress has been made to find a resolution to the conflict and no agreement has been reached between the regime, the opposition and civil society (Singh, et al., 2019: 28).

4.2.4 The aftermath and refugees

Since the war started in 2011, many things have happened, and many things have changed in a country torn by a civil and then proxy war. The end of Syria as a unitary state arrived in spring 2018, and since that year the country has been divided into zones, some in the

hands of the government, others controlled by terrorists, and other occupied by Kurdish PYD or anti-Assad militants (Reilly, 2019: 209). The number of deaths among civilians, soldiers and rebels is still rising, and the material and human costs of the war are extremely high, and the worst consequences of this conflict can be seen in Syria's people. According to Reilly, "nearly half of the country's population are displaced", both inside or outside the country, especially in the neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, that suffered for the massive overflow of refugees in their territories (Reilly, 2019: 209). Lebanon, for instance, holds the global record for the country with most refugees per capita, which lead to tensions between Lebanese people, who suffer a serious economic crisis, and the Syrians. None of these host countries has developed a long-term plan to handle the issue of overpopulated camps and the constant flow of asylum seekers (Singh, et al., 2019: 36). For many refugees, it is impossible to return to their country, due to the fear of being arrested, tortured, killed or being left without a home. According to the report from the Us institute of Peace ("Assessment of the current situation in Syria"), until its publication in 2019 "fewer than 200,000 Syrian refugees have returned to Syria (Singh, et al., 2019: 36).

Around 2015 the refugee crisis extended to the European countries, with millions of people adding to the high numbers of migrants that travel to Europe by any means, even risking their lives crossing the Mediterranean (Reilly, 2019: 206). Like the host countries around Syria, the European states were unprepared and poorly equipped to face the problem of reception and integration of asylum seekers, and many of them relied on the so-called the "beggar thy neighbor" approach instead of developing a long-term unified plan that considered the hypothesis that those people seeking for a better future did not want to or could not ever return to Syria (Ferris & Kirişci, 2016: 112). In the view of Ferris & Kirişci, the mismanagement of the European Union as a political organization, as well as its highly questionable immigration and border policies, shows that without a long-term project and a valid resettlement program, "it will be difficult to strengthen the principle of burden-sharing" (2016: 114). However, even if the structure of humanitarian aid could work, the humanitarian crisis would not be solved, and even once the war is over, many people will not be able to return home. For this reason, alternative solutions such as local integration and resettlement are imperative for the European Union to develop in any case (Ferris & Kirişci, 2016: 116).

4.2.4.1 The humanitarian corridors

The last topic that I want to mention is the project of the humanitarian corridors, which have saved numerous lives and allowed Syrian people to have a second chance in Europe, all by legal means. After the rising numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean since 2011, people became involved in humanitarian projects mobilized to find “legal instrument immediately available to create legal ways to enter Italy”, and they developed what is called the humanitarian corridor. The three historical organizations that started the project and created the reception ent for refugees are the Waldensian Church, the Federation of Protestant Churches and the Catholic Community of Sant’Egidio (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 65).

The process consists of a meticulous selection of vulnerable people that do not have the means to survive in refugee camps or are risking their lives due to discrimination, health reasons or famine, to quote some cases. After this step, the people in charge of the corridor requires the issuance of humanitarian visas to the Italian authorities for the family and organize the journey to Italy, which is paid for by the volunteers and the organization. Once in Rome, the volunteers take the family and take them to the community. In this way, many refugees are not forced to depend on human traffickers and risk their lives by crossing the Mediterranean on a boat (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 66-67)

Unlike the systems that depend on the creation of reception centres, the humanitarian corridor program focuses on the integration of families into “the community of a neighbourhood or a small city”, leading to two positive results. First, it avoids overcrowding and collocation of high numbers into a single building. Secondly, it relies on the participation of volunteers within the community in the integration process of the family (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 65). This type of reception allows both refugees and the community to create a connection based on friendship and trust, as well as creating awareness and spreading information on the difficult situation that any refugees are experiencing outside Europe (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 67). The other main difference from other European projects is the fact that humanitarian corridors are self-financed, both by the organizations that created them and the communities that take part in the reception net. Due to this economic independence and the rational system that has been adopted to deal with a current issue, the program has been welcomed even by “conservative constituents in both Italy and Europe” (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 67).

Since its development in 2016, the system of humanitarian corridors has also been adopted in France, Belgium and Andorra. According to the dossier published in The Community of Sant'Egidio website, between February 2016 and December 2019, the procedure allowed 3060 refugees to legally and safely reach Italy and the other countries that adopted this system (I corridoi umanitari in cifre, 2019). Although this system is extremely efficient and legally safer both for the refugees and the hosting country, intolerance and fear in Europe risk calling for a stop to any form of immigration, including the legal ones such as the humanitarian corridors (Rolando & Naso, 2018: 67).

L'impegno in un Progetto democratico e di giustizia per tutti i siriani resta un dovere e continueremo a batterci anche se probabilmente non avremo l'opportunità di vederlo realizzato. Forse, tra decenni, si parlerà della Siria come un paese che dopo la distruzione è riuscito a risorgere dalle proprie ceneri (Alhallak, 2018: 75)

Chapter Five: Translation proposals

5.1 “Ghaith” (“Ghaith”)

<p>My name is Ghaith. I'm from a country called Syria. I'm sure you all heard about Syria. But I'm also sure that most of you don't know much about what's going on there. On this day, seven years ago, I was in a coma for two days. What's the reason?</p> <p>The reason is a head injury. 19 shrapnel entered my head, six of them are still in it.</p>	<p>Il mio nome è Ghaith⁵. Vengo da un paese chiamato Siria. Sono certo che tutti abbiate sentito parlare della Siria, ma sicuramente la maggior parte di voi non sa molto di quello che sta succedendo là. In questo stesso giorno, sette anni fa, mi trovavo in coma da due giorni. Il motivo?</p> <p>⁶Trauma cranico: diciannove schegge di proiettile mi si erano conficcate in</p>
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⁵ Although usually this sentence would be translated as “Mi chiamo...”, in this case is translated literally. It is not grammatically wrong, and this version can be used interchangeably with the most common one. However, the decision of following the original structure points out an interesting feature that appears in the translated texts, while being absent in non-translated texts: the use of “untypical collocations”. Unusual collocational patterns create target texts that somehow differs from other products written in the target language (Palumbo, 2009: 143). The main reason for this translational choice is due to the theatrical performance. I thought that, since the text will be used in a play, further attention should be paid when translating the text, considering that some parts should be emphasized for a successful performance on stage. Indeed, a general rule that applies to drama translations is that the translator “has to bear the potential spectator in mind” for a good outcome (Newmark, 1988: 172).

⁶ I preferred to not translate twice “the reason”, to make the paragraph more fluent and less redundant. Moreover, I wanted to avoid the repetition of “head” in two close sentences, hence I translated “head injury” as “trauma cranico”. I also think that, in Italian, although more technical, this term is more harsh and severe than “ferita alla testa”, and it is more suitable in this text in order to convey a heavier tone of this short story (Landers, 2001: 209). Avoiding redundancy is one of the main features that usually appears in the target text, called universals of translation. The term “universals of translation” is used to define certain linguistic characteristics that emerge, regardless of the languages used in the process, “as a consequence of the translation process” (Palumbo, 2009: 141). One of these features, in fact, is the practice of “reducing and omitting the repetitions which occur in the source text” and is itself part of a general tendency towards stylistic simplification (Baker, 2001: 288-289). As I was working on this texts and the other three that follows, I noticed that, except for specific cases where the repetition is intentional and used for performative reasons, I avoided using the same term in a sentence or close sentences.

<p>But how? And why?</p> <p>In 2010, it was necessary to join the ranks of the Syrian army to do compulsory service like all young people in Syria.</p>	<p>testa. ⁷Sei di queste sono ancora qui dentro⁸.</p> <p>Ma come? E perché?</p> <p>Nel 2010 la legge imponeva a tutti i giovani siriani di arruolarsi nell'⁹esercito per fare il servizio militare obbligatorio.</p>
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⁷ This is not the only case that I decided to separate a long sentence into two parts, bearing in mind the theatricality of the story. Going back to the topic of the various universals of translation, “the tendency to break up long sequences and sentences” is another frequent procedure that translators tend to carry on in the target text, following the idea of simplification (Baker, 2001: 288-289). In this case, apart from the intention to make the text as readable as possible, therefore avoiding redundancy and aiming to a simpler syntax, the theatrical rendering was another main reason that influenced the whole translation process. Considering that the purpose of the text is to be a theatrical monologue, I wanted to pay attention to the pauses and the rhythm, stressing its tension through short sentences that effectively get the audience's attention. Rather than a smooth, long paragraph, I opted for a short, striking and immediate sentences, each one with its own break, giving the narrator (and the public) the time to catch a breath and to elaborate what have just been said. When discussing about translating for the stage, Landers claims that translators, for the sake of a better “speakability” of the text itself, should put aside elements such as fidelity to the source text, meaning or style, because “the ‘illusion of the first time’ can be fatally undermined if the dialogue strikes the audience as somehow off-register or odd” (Landers, 2001: 104).

⁸ For the theatrical monologue, it would be interesting to insert a gesture in brackets into the final script: when talking about the remaining shrapnel, the reader could tap his temple or head to emphasize the concept. Although this is a personal reflection made during the translation process, it brings up a problem that sometimes translators face when working with drama scripts, meaning the responsibility to imagine in advance the performative dimension. According to Bassnett, when facing a source text, translators should not be responsible for the section related to the future body movements or gestures (the gestic text), because they cannot be expected to imagine the performance of the text a priori solely by reading the text (1991: 100). On the other hand, it is inevitable the fact the theatre does combine language with spectacle, these are two elements that are intertwined, and the translator has to choose whether to see his or her work as “literature or as an integral part of a theatrical production” (Baker, 2001: 71). In this case, since the texts were written not as theatre scripts but to become theatrical performances, I followed Bassnett’s advice whenever possible and worked on these texts primarily as prose texts that will eventually be converted into theatrical texts (Bassnett, 1991: 111). However, whenever I found language or syntactic issues, I justified several translation choices not only for stylistic reasons or fluency, but also the idea that these texts are supposed to be read aloud in a play.

⁹ Every time I find a repetition of the same word in the same (or between close) sentence, I keep in mind the fundamental role of the context and decide whether it’s better to translate it or remove it from the target text (Newmark, 1988: 80). Whether sometimes repetition can be useful to empathise something or to improve the reader’s performance, sometimes it can also sound rather unnatural from the perspective of the target reader and therefore needs to be removed. In this case, we know which army the author is talking about, and putting the word “Siriano” would be unnecessary.

<p>When I went to my military unit, I thought to myself that I was going to serve and defend my country, and I did not expect that I would serve a man and a regime. A brutal regime that has no mercy, does not care for a child, woman, old or young, trees or stones.</p> <p>A few months later, protests began in Syria, and the people revolted against the regime that had ruled the country for more than 40 years.</p> <p>The dictator regime that oppressed the people and prevented them from expressing their opinion.</p>	<p>Quando sono stato assegnato alla mia unità militare¹⁰, pensavo che avrei servito e difeso il mio paese. ¹¹Non mi aspettavo di dover invece combattere per un uomo e il suo regime. Un regime che non ha pietà per nessuno, e non ha a cuore il destino di donne, bambini, giovani, vecchi, e neppure di alberi e sassi.</p> <p>Pochi mesi dopo cominciarono le prime proteste in Siria. La gente si ribellava contro quel regime dittatoriale che controllava¹² il paese da più di quarant'anni, opprimendo il popolo e privando la gente della possibilità di esprimere la propria opinione.</p>
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¹⁰ During the first meeting with the author, I asked him to give me a definition for “military unit” and whether does it include only the group of soldiers or a physical structure as well, like a headquarter. My main problem was that in the following paragraphs the term is used frequently, but it is not clarified whether it is used to simply define a group made of a certain number of soldiers or it also refers to the building where they were allocated. For example, in the military language, a unit refers only to “ogni raggruppamento di soldati sotto il comando di un capo” (tr. “any group of soldiers under the command of a leader”) (Gabrielli, n.d.). In this case, Ghaith clarified that by “military unit” he meant the whole group of soldiers (around 800) and the area (physical space) that they were ordered to protect. This explanation helped me to understand the whole text and to translate the following paragraphs.

¹¹ Again, I cut the sentence for the reader to pause and highlight every single part of this paragraph during the performance. Once again, Bassnett’s “performativity”, supposedly existent concealed gestic text within the written, was used to justify stylistic changes in the target text (Bassnett, 1991: 102).

¹² When translating this verb (“to rule”), I had other two options: “governava” and “regnava”. It is not incorrect to use these terms from a linguistic point of view, but when considering the context, one needs to reflect on the meaning that these terms carry. This is a clear example of connotation and the issue that arises when facing common terms that may turn to be less innocent than expected. What is questioned in this case is not the basic meaning of the term, which of course cannot change, but “the different associations and emotions which expressions may evoke in language users”, the connotative meaning of words (Baker, 2001: 9-10). In this case, both verbs focus on the act of having control over someone or something, but they do not implicitly question (or justify) the reliability of this given power, which is something that, on the other hand, is implied in the verb “controllare”. I wanted to underline the fact that, for the author, the regime’s authority is illegal, and to give space to his point of view.

<p>Many of my colleagues were unaware of what was going to happen, and I was one of them. Later, it became clear that this war would last. Many did not care, and many felt scared. For me, I was experiencing an internal conflict. I was in a different situation because I was serving in an army that protect a regime that itself has arrested my brothers for demonstrating. My brothers were in prison while I was serving their jailer. I wasn't able to do anything. I felt deficit. This feeling that the Syrians are living to this day.</p>	<p>Molti dei miei colleghi erano ignari di quello che stava per succedere, e lo stesso valeva per me. Solo più tardi divenne chiaro che questa guerra sarebbe durata a lungo. A molti non importava nulla, mentre altri avevano paura. Nel mio caso, stavo vivendo un conflitto interiore. Mi trovavo in una situazione difficile perché stavo prestando servizio nell'esercito e, in questo modo, difendevo il regime; e quello stesso regime aveva fatto arrestare i miei fratelli solo per aver partecipato alle proteste. E mentre i miei fratelli erano in prigione, io ero al servizio del loro carceriere. Non potevo farci nulla, e mi sentivo impotente¹³: è una sensazione che i siriani stanno provando ancora oggi!</p>
<p>My mandatory service was supposed to end in 2011, but because of the war, I was not released with my colleagues. What comforted me was that my service was in a correspondence office and not in a place of clashes and battles. I didn't take up a weapon until that day in 2012, when I was sent with a group of my colleagues to protect a military unit close to Damascus.</p>	<p>Il mio servizio obbligatorio sarebbe dovuto terminare nel 2011, ma a causa della guerra io e i miei colleghi non fummo congedati. Quello che mi dava conforto era il fatto che il mio lavoro non si svolgeva in una zona di conflitto, bensì in un ufficio postale. Non avevo mai preso in mano un'arma prima di quel giorno del 2012, quando fui</p>

¹³I asked the author the meaning of the sentence “I felt deficit”, to give it a proper translation, because I found no specific reference in English dictionaries and I assumed it was a tailor-made sentence to efficiently describe feeling. According to Newmark, “it is good advice to a translator if he can establish the sense in which a misused word is meant from its context, and translate it accordingly” (1988: 220). By deficit, Ghaith meant that he was feeling incapable to do anything to fight back the situation.

<p>When I got into a tank, my friend asked me, "Are we going to survive?" I did not find the answer. Later, I survived, but he didn't.</p> <p>February 2013. The rebels are besieging the military unit I was in. In two weeks, the water and food ran out. The situation was bad and the shelling towards us was daily and there was no help from outside. We started eating leaves and grass to stay strong, while the generals in charge of our mission were eating their food and supplies in their safe shelters. My daily mission was a shift in front of the main unit gate for eight hours to prevent the rebels from occupying the place. We were steadfast and strong in fear for our lives and not for our belief in the regime we are fighting in its ranks. I was between two fires, fear of the unknown outside and fear of what may happen inside.</p>	<p>mandato con un gruppo di colleghi a difendere un'unità militare vicino a Damasco.</p> <p>Mentre entravo nel carro armato, un amico mi chiese: 'Ce la faremo a sopravvivere?' Non avevo una risposta a quella domanda. Alla fine¹⁴, io ce l'ho fatta. Lui no.</p> <p>Febbraio 2013. I ribelli stavano assediando l'unità militare nella quale ero in servizio. In due settimane, cibo e acqua erano già terminati. La situazione era molto critica: ogni giorno c'era un bombardamento, mentre dall'esterno non arrivava nessun aiuto. Cominciammo a mangiare foglie ed erba per mantenerci in forze, mentre i generali al comando della missione, al riparo nei loro rifugi, consumavano tutte¹⁵ le scorte di cibo. La mia missione giornaliera era un turno di otto ore davanti al cancello principale della mia unità per impedire ai ribelli di occupare la zona. Eravamo risoluti e determinati, ma di certo non per lealtà nei confronti di quel regime per il quale stavamo</p>
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¹⁴ I decided to translate "later" as "alla fine" ("in the end"), trying not to focus on a later and vague period of time, but rather on a specific moment, which is the conclusion of the siege. I think that this translation is the best option for the target text.

¹⁵ This was another difficult line to translate ("eating their food and supplies"), because the risk to make it sound redundant in the Italian version was high. In the end I decided to gather in the same term "rifornimenti" ("supplies") both the terms "food" and "supplies", carrying out the simplification process again (Palumbo, 2009: 106-107).

<p>Those on the outside consider me an enemy because I fight in the ranks of the regime while those inside order me to go to the front to die while they are in hiding.</p> <p>February 14, 2013. It was the first Valentine's Day I couldn't talk to my ex-girlfriend. However, I received a Valentine's Day gift. It was red as I expected, it was full of blood.</p> <p>I was inside the tank when a rocket hit my tank. The shrapnel entered my head. My colleague died and I was miraculously taken to a field hospital inside the unit. The nurse man removed 10 shrapnel out of my head. Two days later, I woke up. It was an</p>	<p>combattendo.¹⁶ Avevamo solo paura di perdere la vita. Mi trovavo in mezzo a due fuochi: da una parte avevo paura di quello che c'era là fuori, dall'altra temevo ciò che sarebbe potuto succedere dentro la nostra unità.</p> <p>Quelli che si trovavano fuori mi consideravano un nemico perché combattevo tra le file del regime; da questa parte, invece, quelli che erano nascosti e al sicuro mi ordinavano di andare al fronte a morire per loro.</p> <p>Il 14 febbraio 2013. Fu il primo San Valentino nel quale non riuscii a parlare con quella che allora era la mia ragazza¹⁷...ma un regalo quel giorno arrivò comunque¹⁸. Era rosso, come mi aspettavo, e pieno di sangue.</p> <p>Ero all'interno del carro armato quando venne colpito dal missile. Le schegge mi entrarono in testa. Il mio collega era morto, ma io fui miracolosamente trasportato in un ospedale da campo all'interno dell'unità. L'infermiere</p>
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¹⁶ Again, the structure was altered for a more readable and perhaps a better result in the future performance. A statement that was used as a reference during the translating process in order to keep in mind the performativity of the text and its readability was Landers's advice on translating drama: "by and large, the translator's duty is to produce a version that honors the latter without shortchanging the former" (Landers, 2001: 104). In order to keep the original meaning without applying huge changes, I did not remove any part of the sentence and also avoided any type of compensation (Palumbo, 2009: 21), although the latter is not a negative technique per se (Eco, 2018: 200).

¹⁷ This is another case where the procedure of explicitation was carried on (Palumbo, 2009: 47). Instead of translating "ex girlfriend" as "ex ragazza", I decided to clarify that they were in a relationship during the time when the story took place. This choice was made mainly to avoid any type of misunderstanding for the Italian reader.

¹⁸ Again, the fidelity of the original structure is put aside (Landers, 2001: 104). I used the ellipsis (hence, a pause) both to raise the tension during the reading and for a better performability.

<p>unforgettable moment. The medical room was like hell, full of wounded and some bodies.</p> <p>That room became my home for a month and a half.</p> <p>On 1 April 2013, the siege was broken by support forces. I was taken with a number of wounded to the military hospital. The doctors pulled out three more shrapnel from my head and told me it was impossible to remove the six that remained because it would be dangerous for my life. I was given two weeks to go home and recover.</p>	<p>riuscì a rimuovere dieci schegge dalla mia testa, e due giorni dopo mi risvegliai in quella stanza d'ospedale piena di feriti e ¹⁹cadaveri... ²⁰.Fu un momento difficile da dimenticare. Mi sembrava di essere all'inferno.</p> <p>Quella stanza divenne la mia casa per un mese e mezzo.</p> <p>Il primo aprile 2013, le nostre forze di supporto misero fine all'assedio. Fui trasportato assieme ad altri feriti nell'ospedale militare, dove i medici riuscirono ad estrarre altre tre schegge. Mi dissero che era impossibile rimuovere i sei frammenti che erano rimasti nella mia testa, perché sarebbe stato troppo rischioso per la mia vita.</p>
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¹⁹In this paragraph, I had two options, either follow the structure of the sentence, trying to make it sound more natural as possible in the Italian translation, or take the liberty to change the structure while keeping both the original meaning of the paragraph and the words. I opted for the second.

²⁰ This is another example where connotation of a term becomes more important than its denotation. When translating "bodies", I took for granted that the author refers to dead soldiers. The choice here was between keeping the original term in the target text or translate it into a term that in the Italian translation might sound more dramatic, such as "cadaveri" ("corpses"). While personally I read "bodies" as an impersonal term free of the emotional element, I think that "corpses" gives the texts a rather gruesome and more horrific shade. However, as Landers states, "translators must be constantly on the alert to avoid unintended connotations of their word-choices" (Landers, 2001: 206). Hence, I should be careful when choosing terms that might diverge in their meaning from the source text.

<p>I was supposed to go back to my unit again after that. But seeing my parents after nine months and the tears in their eyes made me realize that the army was not my place. Why would I fight? And for whom? All for a group of people who refused to give up their throne even if it cost them the lives of a whole people. I made the decision quickly. I will leave the country.</p> <p>With the help of some friends, I fled to Lebanon. I lived there for three years. The situation was difficult. The word “refugee” has always been ringing in my ears. It was more like an insult. Asylum was not my choice, but I was forced.</p>	<p>Mi vennero date due settimane di congedo per tornare a casa e riprendermi dall’operazione; poi sarei dovuto tornare alla mia unità. Ma quando mi trovai davanti ai miei genitori, che non vedevo da nove mesi, le loro lacrime mi fecero capire che non sarei potuto tornare nell’esercito. Per quale motivo avrei dovuto continuare a combattere? E, soprattutto²¹, per chi? Per un gruppo di persone che, pur di non rinunciare al loro potere politico²², erano disposte a sacrificare un intero popolo. Non ci volle molto prima che io prendessi la mia decisione. Avrei lasciato il paese.</p> <p>Con l’aiuto di alcuni amici, fuggii in Libano e lì rimasi per tre anni. La situazione era molto difficile. La parola “rifugiato” risuonava costantemente nelle mie orecchie, troppo simile ad un insulto. Dopotutto, non avevo scelto io l’esilio, ero stato costretto ad andarmene.</p>
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²¹ I wanted to add “soprattutto” (“moreover”) to emphasize the second question, also because the following sentence is the answer to this question. However, I shall pay attention to not add too much elements that might improve the target text and take the place of the author, even for small details such as in this case (Eco, 2018: 224).

²² In my opinion, in the target text the word “throne” is not as effective as other terms to define the political power that the regime is willing to keep at all costs, at least not in the target text. Instead, rather than relying on the social force of analogy throne/power, I choose to use a different a rather technical term to transfer the connotative meaning that Ghaith wanted to express with “throne” (Newmark, 1988: 179)

<p>However, the word “refugee” was better than the word “murderer.” If I had stayed in the army, I would probably have had to kill an innocent person or a baby. I left everything behind and became a refugee. I was not convinced of that war. Soldiers were dying for one person and one regime, not for a homeland. Many of my friends and relatives died, others were arrested, and the others escaped. I lost a lot, but my loss is nothing comparing to the loss of many Syrians.</p>	<p>In ogni caso, meglio essere chiamato “rifugiato” che “assassino”²³. Se fossi rimasto nell’esercito, sarei stato costretto²⁴ ad uccidere qualche innocente, o un bambino. Invece, avevo voltato le spalle a tutto questo, ed ero diventato un rifugiato. Non credevo in quella guerra, perché i soldati morivano in nome di una persona e di un regime, non in nome della loro patria. Molti dei miei amici e dei miei parenti sono morti, altri sono stati arrestati, altri ancora sono riusciti a fuggire. Ho dovuto dire addio a tutto quello che avevo, ma il mio sacrificio non è nulla in confronto a quello di molti altri siriani.</p>
<p>There are twenty million Ghaith today, not only me. All of them have a story and a loss. Many have lost their lives, their studies, their jobs, their families and their future. I was lucky to be here. But we must not forget the millions today who live without any future waiting for them. They live in tents under shelling and face death every single day and every single moment.</p>	<p>Ad oggi, ci sono venti milioni di Ghaith al mondo. Non sono l’unico. E ognuno di loro ha una storia e una perdita alle sue spalle²⁵. Molti hanno perso le loro vite di prima, i loro studi, il loro lavoro, le loro famiglie e il loro futuro. Io sono fortunato ad essere qui. Ma non dobbiamo dimenticarci di quei milioni di persone che non hanno un futuro.</p>

²³ I decided to focus on the fact that the protagonist “is called” with specific words, rather than the words themselves and the meaning they carry, mostly because what bothers the protagonist is to be identified by others through certain terms. I also thought that this translation would sound more natural in the Italian version.

²⁴ I wanted to emphasize the fact that the action of killing another person would have been an obligation for the protagonist, something that he did not want to do but he was forced to due to military orders. For this reason, I opted to translate it with “costretto” (“forced”).

²⁵ I kept the translation as similar as possible as the original sentence, but I added “sulle spalle” for a better result in the target text.

<p>Children under the rubble and the whole world watching. This silence is the major crime.</p> <p>I am sure there will be a day when we will see our country free, secure and without injustice. The Syrians don't want anything from you. They just want your voice. Your voice is capable of making a difference for them.</p> <p>Do not keep silent.</p>	<p>Vivono in tende sotto i bombardamenti, rischiando la vita ogni giorno e in ogni momento.</p> <p>Ci sono bambini seppelliti tra le macerie, ma il mondo resta a guardare. È questo, questo silenzio, il crimine peggiore.</p> <p>Sono certo che arriverà il giorno in cui il nostro paese sarà di nuovo sicuro e libero dalle ingiustizie. I siriani non vogliono niente da voi, soltanto la vostra voce. La vostra voce è in grado di fare la differenza per loro.</p> <p>Non restate in silenzio.</p>
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5.2. “Nahla” (“Nahla”)

<p>This story is about my little friend. A phone friend. She is seven years old and was born, lived and grew up in a country where death has become a daily routine. Seven years, she has spent them in a tent with her parents and her younger sister in that remote area of Northern Syria since her family fled from their home in central Syria escaping from of death to the North.</p> <p>Nahla was not like her peers who are living in the camp. Her life was not the same as that of their life.</p>	<p>Questa storia parla di una mia ²⁶giovane amica, ²⁷un’amica che ho conosciuto per telefono. Ha sette anni. È nata e cresciuta²⁸ in un paese dove la morte è ormai all’ordine del giorno. In questi sette anni, da quando la sua famiglia ha abbandonato la casa nella Siria centrale per scappare dalla morte, ha sempre vissuto in una tenda coi suoi genitori e sua sorella minore, in una remota area nel nord del paese.</p> <p>Nahla non è come i suoi coetanei che vivono nel campo profughi²⁹, e la sua vita è molto diversa da quella degli altri bambini.</p>
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²⁶ In the Italian version, I preferred to translate the adjective with “young” rather than “little”. This choice was taken for two reasons. First, the term “piccolo” (“little”) in Italian is usually used to define the size or height of something/someone, rather than the age, and second, it sounded rather unnatural used in this translation. I choose then the term “giovane” to focus on the age difference between the narrator and the child, whose exact age is mentioned in the following sentences. Again, the issue is related to the (unfamiliar) connotation that some words can have on a cultural or personal level (Newmark, 1988: 182).

²⁷ I had troubles translating the term “phone friend”, mainly because there was no exact translation in Italian, or even a specific definition in English, either. According to Baker, “in order to make sense of any piece of information presented in a text, the reader/hearer has to be able to integrate it into some model of the world, whether real or fictional” (1992: 244). Therefore, I needed to find a similar expression existing in the target language. In this case, imagine that the relationship between the author and the child was built through phone call, in a very similar way like the traditional “pen pal” (“amico di penna”, in Italian) system, where kids used to exchange letters. My first thought was to translate “phone friend” like “pen pal”, so the result would have been “amico di telefono”, but my concern was that the target audience may have some difficulties to actually understand what does it mean or finding the similarity with “amico di penna”. I realized that “phone friend” can be considered a word by itself coined using two terms that created a new meaning, which can be quite difficult to deal with when translating (Newmark, 1988: 142). In the end, I changed a bit the sentence, making sure to keep the original meaning of the term “phone friend” in a more explicative sentence.

²⁸ In the original text, the author wrote three verbs, “born”, “lived” and “grew up”. I decided to keep two of the in the translation to make sure to avoid redundancy and make the target text sound more natural as possible with the expression “nata e cresciuta” (“born and raised”).

²⁹ I decided to be more specific and I added the word “profughi” to make sure that the audience understands what type of setting the narrator is talking about. Explication, an universal of translation that has received a lot of attention by scholars, can be described as “the phenomenon whereby a translated text is seen to convey information in a more explicit form than in the original text” and can either be intentional or unintentional (Palumbo, 2009: 47). This is another element that frequently appears in these texts.

<p>Children close to her age go to school every day for a few hours and then play after classes simple games in the campgrounds. But Nahla could not live that feeling. She cried a lot when her father told her she couldn't go to school. Her eyes were filled with tears. Her eyes, which she had only used to cry. Her eyes that had 95% impaired vision.</p>	<p>I ragazzi della sua età vanno a scuola ogni giorno per un paio d'ore, e dopo le lezioni passano il tempo giocando³⁰ nell'accampamento. Lo stesso non vale per Nahla. Ha pianto molto quando suo padre le ha detto che non sarebbe potuta andare a scuola. I suoi occhi³¹ erano gonfi e pieni di lacrime. I suoi occhi, che può usare solo per piangere. I suoi occhi, coi quali non può vedere nulla, perché Nahla è ipovedente al 95%³².</p>
<p>Nahla never saw her parents and did not know what they look like. She only distinguishes their voices. When her father spoke to me over the phone a few months ago, he was crying. He told me with great sorrow: "Imagine that my daughters do not know my face and cannot see me."</p>	<p>Nahla non ha mai visto i suoi genitori, non ha idea di che aspetto abbiano³³. Riesce solo a distinguere le loro voci. Qualche mese fa, mentre parlavo con suo padre al telefono, lo sentivo piangere. Mi diceva con rammarico: 'Pensa che le mie figlie non possono vedermi e non sanno nemmeno che faccia ho!'</p>
<p>Yes, the problem was the same with Nahla's younger sister. Since that day,</p>	<p>Ebbene sì, anche la sorella minore di Nahla è affetta dallo stesso problema. Da</p>

³⁰ In this part I removed "simple games" to leave the sentence shorter and keeping it simple, without specifying which types of games the kids are playing. Moreover, the Italian translation would have not sounded as natural as the English one and this can be seen as a mistake, since "most translators judge the success of a translation largely in the degree to which it 'doesn't read like a translation'" (Landers, 2001, p. 49).

³¹ Contrary to the previous examples where redundancy of a term was avoided in the target language, in this case the repetition of the word "eyes" was intentional and needed to underline the fact that Nahla is not able to actually use her eyes.

³² This sentence was clear and readable in the English version, and there were not difficulties in understanding what the narrator meant. However, to render the sentence in a way that was clear and not exaggeratedly long for the audience, I had to simplify it. It is known that translators work under certain constraints, especially when bearing in mind that the text is expected to become a play, their texts should be "dramatic, with emphasis on verbs, rather than descriptive and explanatory" (Newmark, 1988: 172). Again, the core meaning of the sentence (the fact that Nahla cannot see) is what needs to be translated, even if this means to lose or change some terms from the target text (Eco, 2018: 156).

³³ It was difficult to find a proper translation for the second part of this sentence, mostly because what sounds good in English does not sound as good in the target language. This translation is the closest to the original and most natural at the same time.

<p>after that talk, I was asking myself: “what destiny is this? What is the fault of that girl?” If she was born in a safe country, she would have at least the chance to be treated. Her only fault was that she was born in a country raped by all tyrants in this world. A country where the whole world is fighting today to control, and the cost is its people life and the future of its children.</p> <p>‘What are you dreaming about Nahla?’ I asked her over the phone.</p> <p>‘I hope to get glasses’ she answered.</p> <p>‘Why??’</p> <p>‘Whoever accidentally bumps into him says angrily to me, "What's wrong with you? Why don't you wear glasses as long as you don't see well"?’</p>	<p>quel giorno, dopo quella telefonata, ho continuato a chiedermi “Che razza di destino è questo? Che colpa ha quella bambina?”. Se fosse nata in un paese sicuro, avrebbe almeno avuto la possibilità di essere curata. La sua unica colpa era quella di essere nata in un paese abusato³⁴ da tutti i tiranni³⁵ di questo mondo. Un paese dove il mondo intero sta combattendo per ottenerne il controllo, e il prezzo da pagare è la vita del ³⁶popolo siriano e il futuro dei suoi figli.</p> <p>‘Qual è il tuo sogno, Nahla?’ le chiedo al telefono.</p> <p>‘Vorrei avere degli occhiali’ mi risponde lei.</p> <p>‘Come mai?’</p> <p>‘Ogni volta che finisco addosso a qualcuno, la gente si arrabbia. Mi chiedono sempre “Cos’hai che non va?’</p>
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³⁴ It has been challenging to translate the term “raped”. When facing this sentence, I had two options: either translate it literally and risk that the target audience might find the term too harsh (which is usually used to refer to a crime perpetrated against an individual) or to change it into a less strong term that might not be able to convey the whole concept that “rape” carries with it, that is, not only it refers to the physical abuse, but also the dehumanization of the victim through the violence. Contrary to non-literary texts, it is common in literary texts “to give precedence to its connotations, since, if it is any good, it is an allegory, a comment on society, at the time and now, as well as on its strict setting” (Newmark, 1988: 16-17). In the end, I opted for a different term in the Italian version that could partially carry the original meaning. On a side note, while the denotative meaning has its own significance, it is acknowledged that, overall, “literary texts are distinguished from the rest in being more important in their mental and imaginative connotations than their factual denotations” (Newmark, 1988: 44). Therefore, it is not surprising that such issues related with the connotative meaning of various words are extremely important and should be examined carefully.

³⁵ I imagine that the narrator does refer to the number of politicians from all over the world that saw an opportunity in exploiting the Syrian conflict. Considering the fact that the text is not written with an objective but rather a personal point of view (not being a news article or a international report), I opted to keep the original term, “tyrants”, in the Italian version as well, because the connotative meaning is universally shared.

³⁶ Instead of the literal translation of “its people”, I opted to translate it with “the Syrian people”, also because the name of the country is not explicitly mentioned in the whole paragraph. I personally think that in this story the fact that Nahla and her family are Syrian is not an irrelevant information (it was mentioned in the beginning), so I opted for an explicitation in the target text.

<p>What a tragedy, a girl who had to live her life almost blindly because of the war.</p> <p>‘What else do you want, Nahla?’</p> <p>‘I want a peacock.’</p> <p>‘Peacock?’</p> <p>‘Yes. I heard my friends talk about its beauty when they were coloring him in the drawing lesson in school. I’m so excited to get one like it.’</p> <p>I could not add any letter, and Nahla did not say anything more. All I heard after that was the cries of her parents who were next to her listening to her words.</p> <p>She does not know the meaning of life outside the camp. She grew up and lived in this place. Normal life for her is this camp. She doesn’t know anything about her old house or city.</p> <p>This camp is one of dozens of camps in northern Syria where tens of thousands of children live in inhumane conditions.</p>	<p>Che problemi hai? Se non ci vedi bene perché non porti gli occhiali?”</p> <p>Che tragedia, una bambina costretta a vivere nella cecità per colpa della guerra.</p> <p>‘E cos’altro vorresti, Nahla?’</p> <p>‘Voglio³⁷ un pavone.’</p> <p>‘Un pavone?’</p> <p>‘Sì. Ho sentito i miei amici che parlavano di quanto sono belli. Ne hanno colorato uno durante la lezione di disegno a scuola. Non vedo l’ora di averne uno così anch’io.’</p> <p>Mi mancano le parole³⁸ e Nahla non aggiunge altro. L’unica cosa che sento in questo momento è il pianto dei suoi genitori vicino a lei, che hanno ascoltato le sue parole.</p> <p>Nahla non sa cosa significhi vivere fuori dal campo profughi. È nata e cresciuta lì. Per lei, la vita normale è quel campo. Non sa nulla della sua vecchia casa o della sua città.</p> <p>Quello dove si trova è uno delle dozzine di campi situati nel nord della Siria, dove</p>
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³⁷ Considering that the subject that is speaking is a child, I tried to translate her sentences keeping in mind the she is expected to talk like a child, with simpler sentences and (eventually) grammar errors. In this specific case, for example, she does not use the traditional and polite structure “I would like to...”, but the more direct and more childlike verb “want”, that I kept in the translated text. This is one of the linguistic problems that a translator often has when engaging with a literary text, to find a solution for “differences in register involving age, gender, social position, etc., deictic units, consistency in monologues and many more” (Bassnett, 1991: 111).

³⁸ Since both the subjects of this sentence performed the same action, I had to use two different verbs to not repeat the same verb, “dire” (“say”) in Italian. The more literal translation of the first part of the sentence would have been “non riuscii a dire una parola” or “non riuscii a dire più nulla”, but I decided to use the verb “parlare” to avoid the repetition.

<p>‘Are you going to visit me?’ she asks me. I don't have an answer. A minute of silence, then I say: ‘I hope so.’ ‘When?’ Another difficult question. ‘Soon’ after another silence. ‘What will you bring me with you? Will you bring me a peacock?’ ‘Sure’ ‘Is Italy a beautiful country?’ ‘Yes’ ‘Will you allow me to go with you?’ ‘Of course’ ‘But before that. Buy me glasses. I want to see Italy.’</p> <p>All I could have done at that moment was to disconnect, and cry. At that moment, after this answer, I felt that Nahla was the only one who can see in this world, and that we were all blind and could not see her tragedy, her torment, her lost childhood, and her sorrow.</p>	<p>decine di migliaia di bambini vivono in condizioni inumane. ‘Verrai a trovarmi?’ mi chiede. Non ho una risposta a questa domanda. ‘Spero di sì’ le dico, dopo qualche minuto di silenzio. ‘Quando?’ Altra domanda difficile. Rimango nuovamente in silenzio. ‘Presto’ le rispondo. ‘Cosa mi porterai?’³⁹ ‘Un pavone?’ ‘Certo.’ ‘È bella l’Italia?’⁴⁰ ‘Lo è.’ ‘Mi ci porterai?’⁴¹ ‘Ma certo.’ ‘Prima però dovrai comprarmi degli occhiali. Voglio vederla, l’Italia.’</p> <p>A questo punto, l’unica cosa che posso fare è riattaccare. E piangere. In quel momento, dopo quella risposta, ebbi la sensazione che Nahla fosse l’unica in grado di vedere questo mondo, mentre noi eravamo ciechi e incapaci di vedere la sua</p>
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³⁹ Cut the second “will you bring me” to avoid redundancy.

⁴⁰ A literal translation of this sentence would have been grammatically correct, but in the target language it would have sound rather unnatural. It needed to be changed and shortened, bringing to simplification in the target text. An interesting aspect that emerges as feature of the tendency to simplify target texts is, among others, “a lower average sentence length” (Palumbo, 2009: 106-107).

⁴¹ I intended that the girl is asking the narrator if she can go to Italy with him, but considering the aim to make the target text as smooth and as natural as possible, I changed the sentence while keeping the original meaning.

Normalization (or conventionalization) is another universal that can be found in translated texts, to make the text more readable or familiar to the target reader (Baker, 2001: 290). The result is, hence, a more standardized translation that convey the same meaning of the original but with an overall structure that refers to the target language and grammar (Palumbo, 2009: 78).

Yes, we are all blind.	tragedia, il suo tormento, la sua infanzia perduta, la sua sofferenza. Si, siamo tutti ciechi.
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5.3. “Ultimo messaggio di scuse” (“Last apology message”)

<p>I'm sorry, Mom, because the ship sank and I couldn't get there (Europe), and I couldn't send the money I had to borrow for the trip.</p>	<p>Mi dispiace, mamma, perché la barca è affondata e non sono riuscito ad arrivare là, in Europa, e non ho potuto spedirti i soldi che avevo preso in prestito per il viaggio.</p>
<p>Do not be sad, Mom, if they do not find my body. That would be better for you as you cannot pay the costs of transport, shipping, burial and consolation.</p>	<p>Non essere triste, mamma, se non trovano il mio corpo. Sarebbe la cosa migliore, visto che non puoi permetterti i costi per farti restituire la mia salma, seppellirmi e celebrare la mia veglia funebre⁴².</p>
<p>I am sorry, Mom, I couldn't stand the war, and I had to travel like other people, knowing that my dreams were not as big like others. As you know: all my dreams were providing some medicine for your heart, and the cost of repairing your teeth.</p>	<p>Mi dispiace, mamma, non riesco a sopportare la guerra, e ho dovuto viaggiare con altre persone, anche se non sognavo in grande come loro. Lo sai anche tu, il mio unico sogno era quello di procurarti le medicine per il cuore e far sistemare i tuoi denti.</p>
<p>By the way, the color of my teeth is now green because of the algae lingering in it, yet they are prettier than the dictator's.</p>	<p>A proposito di denti, i miei ora sono di colore verde per colpa delle alghe che ormai ci sono cresciute sopra⁴³. In ogni</p>

⁴² I asked Ghaith what he meant with the term “consolation”, wondering if it was appropriate to translate it with “funerale”. Also, I found no useful reference in the two English/Italian online dictionaries that I used as resources. He explained to me that according to his tradition the body of the deceased one is left in the house, where everyone is invited to go to pay their respects to the family, which is expected to offer food at guests, and this can be quite expensive for some families. Therefore, the term “funeral” would be too simplistic to explain this tradition. I opted for another general, but perhaps more suitable term for this occasion. I am well aware that it would have been impossible to explain the cultural term that Ghaith refers to without losing the rhythm of the story, or worse, adding footnote in the target text, but sometimes is necessary to lose something in the translation to save the whole sentence (Eco, 2018: 156).

⁴³ Translating “lingering in it” has been an interesting task, because it was difficult to find a suitable version in the Italian text, mainly because the literal translation would not have sounded quite good. I opted for an alternative version, with “che ci sono cresciute sopra” (“that has grown on them”) to convey the original meaning, that the algae have spread on the narrator’s teeth.

<p>I'm sorry, my darling, because I built you a house of illusion, a beautiful wooden hut as we saw it in the movies, a poor hut away from explosive barrels and away from sectarianism, ethnicity, and neighbors' rumors about us.</p> <p>I am sorry, brother, I will not be able to send the 50 euros that I promised to send you every month to entertain yourself before graduation.</p> <p>I am sorry, my sister, because I will not send you a modern phone that contains "Wi-Fi", the one you always dreamed about like your rich girlfriend.</p>	<p>caso, sono comunque più belli di quelli del dittatore⁴⁴.</p> <p>Mi dispiace, amore mio, per aver costruito una casa fatta di illusioni⁴⁵, una bellissima capanna di legno come quelle che vedevamo nei film, una misera capanna al sicuro dai barili esplosivi, lontana dalle discriminazioni⁴⁶ e i pettegolezzi dei vicini su di noi.</p> <p>Mi dispiace, fratello, perché non riuscirò a mandarti i cinquanta euro che avevo promesso di spedirti ogni mese per andare a divertirti prima del diploma.</p> <p>Mi dispiace, sorella, perché non potrò regalarti un telefono col "Wi-Fi" che hai sempre sognato, uno come quelli che hanno le tue amiche più ricche.</p>
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⁴⁴ The term "dictator" was interesting to deal with, mainly because it is not explicitly said which dictator the story is talking about, although the context as well as the origin of the narrator, might help. But perhaps this is not what matter in this sentence, it is not necessary to know which dictator the anonymous drowning man is insulting, but rather the fact that the dictatorship in his country made the protagonist flee abroad. According to Eco, the risk in translation is to tell the reader "more" than needed, and if this sometimes might lead to an improvement of the target text, it is not automatically a better translation (2018: 209).

⁴⁵ This sentence has been quite difficult to translate, mostly because in the Italian there is the expression "fare castelli in aria" (literally, "to build castles in the sky"), which means to have high expectations and dreams that are either impossible or with little chances of achieving them (Gabrielli, Castello, n.d.). However, in the following sentence, the author describes this "house of illusions" as a "wooden hut", hence it was impossible for me to translate "house of illusions" with "castle in the sky". Therefore, I had to translate the paragraph following the original terms, even if by doing this the sense of the sentence would be partially lost (Eco, 2018: 146). This is a case where I as a translator had to negotiate between keeping the meaning and altering the while sentence or keep the terms and lose the effect that the original narrator wanted to convey, and this is not uncommon in the literary translation (Eco, 2018: 166).

⁴⁶ After consulting the author, we decided to use a broad and general term in the target text that would include both "sectarianism" (which refers to discrimination in relation to social and work classes) and "ethnicity" (which refers to discrimination in relation to race and ethnic traits), to avoid redundancy. This is another case of negotiation, where to keep the rhythm and save as much as possible of the original meaning of the sentence, the translator had to simplify and condense two terms into one, but losing something in the process (Eco, 2018: 188-200). After all, according to Eco, "tradurre significa sempre "limare via" alcune delle conseguenze che il termine originale implicava" (tr. "translating always means to "clean out" some of the connotations that the original term implied") (2018: 177).

I'm sorry, my beautiful house, because I won't hang my coat behind the door again.	Mi dispiace, mia bella casa, perché non appenderò più il mio cappotto dietro la porta.
I am sorry, divers, I do not know the name of the sea I drowned in.	Mi dispiace, sommozzatori, perché non conosco il nome del mare dove ho perso la vita ⁴⁷ .
I'm sorry Europe, I will not see you as I wished, but maybe you will be happy because I will not be a heavy guest on your land.	Mi dispiace, Europa, non riuscirò a vederti come speravo. Ma forse questo ti renderà felice, dopotutto non diventerò un ospite sgradito ⁴⁸ .
And you, the sea, thank you so much because you received us without a visa or a passport.	E a te, mare, grazie mille per averci accolti senza bisogno di un visto o un passaporto.
Thank you, to the fish that will share my meat, and will not ask me about my religion or my political affiliation.	Grazie ai pesci che mangeranno le mie carni, senza prima chiedermi quale sia la mia religione o la mia appartenenza politica.
Thanks to the news channels that will report the news of our death for five minutes every hour for two days.	Grazie ai notiziari, che parleranno della nostra morte per cinque minuti ogni ora per un paio di giorni.
Thank you for being sad when you hear the news.	Grazie a voi, per esservi rattristati mentre ascoltavate le notizie.
I'm sorry, I am really sorry because I sank.	Mi dispiace, mi dispiace davvero per essere finito in fondo al mare ⁴⁹ .

⁴⁷ Both in this sentence and the final one, the narrator refers to the act of drowning. However, instead of a literal translation of the verb, I opted for two alternatives that implicitly refers to the verb “to drown”. While it is clear from the monologue that the protagonist has died while crossing the sea, I thought that keeping it implicit in the text would have been better for a theatrical performance. However, considering that I justified my choice of words according to the texts’ performability, this decision might be seen as an excuse “to exercise greater liberties with the text than convention allowed” (Bassnett, 1991: 104) and perhaps even take the place of the author, which is not recommended. For this reason, I consulted with Ghaith about this passage, asking him if he would agree with my idea.

⁴⁸ The ironic tone in this sentence is evident, and I wanted to make sure to make it clear in the translated text as well. By tone, we refer to the feeling that the author wants to convey through a sentence or a passage, and it usually “can comprise humor, irony, sincerity, earnestness, naiveté, or virtually any sentiment” (Landers, 2001: 68, 209).

⁴⁹ see point 3.

5.4. “Come ho fatto a diventare una chiocciola⁵⁰?” (“How did I become a snail?”)

I set out for a visit to Homs. The bus drove past the strips of sun filled with pictures and memories. The first thing that came to my mind was my grandmother, who died 10 years ago. How I miss her and long for her days, when I was learning to sweep the room and play with the objects stuck between the rug and the sun in an uninterrupted thread!	Mi ero messa in viaggio per visitare Homs. L’autobus avanzava sotto il sole e quella luce abbagliante, che entrava dal finestrino, mi riportava indietro nel tempo ⁵¹ . La prima cosa che mi venne in mente era l’immagine ⁵² di mia nonna che era morta dieci anni prima. Quanto ancora mi mancava ⁵³ ! Sentivo nostalgia per quei giorni, in cui imparavo a spazzare il pavimento ⁵⁴ della stanza e mi perdevo a giocare con le cose che trovavo incastrate
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⁵⁰ A common mistake is translating the term “snail” in Italian is to use the word “lumaca” instead of “chiocciola” (source: Sansoni English/Italian dictionary). It happens that these terms are used interchangeably, but in this case it is important to use the correct one, since the shell of the snail is used to symbolize few possessions that a refugee can carry while fleeing war and destruction. If the reader does not understand that the snail does in fact carry a shell, the image loses its meaning.

⁵¹ “The bus drove past the strips of sun filled with pictures and memories” has been a difficult sentence to translate, and I had to ask Ghaith to clarify what the original author meant with this expression. It is a poetic image, hence really difficult to translate properly. To convey the original meaning while making sure that the sentence is understandable in Italian, I made it longer.

⁵² The original sentence “the first thing that came to my mind” has an equivalent in Italian, but I added the term “immagine” (image), which is not present in the original text.

⁵³ While in the English text the narrator uses one sentence to tell us how she misses both her grandmother and her childhood, I chose to divide the sentence in two parts (Baker, 2001: 288-289). This choice was made both for a better theatrical performance and because, without dividing it, the translated sentence would have been too long.

⁵⁴ Another small change in the Italian version. I wanted to specify that the narrator used to sweep the floor, so I added the word “pavimento” in the translation, leading to another example of explicitation.

<p>We started to see scenes of destruction, and the bus walked slowly between them as though it was remembering them carefully. My memory was distorted by the horror of the scene, the destroyed houses seemed to say: "We did not want to kill them...They demolished us over their heads." A sight of a clothesline holding on some clothes, shocked me! It seemed to tell me in tears: "My friends left me suddenly, and as for the clothes, each</p>	<p>nel tappeto, una vicina all'altra,⁵⁵ e visibili solo alla luce del sole⁵⁶!</p> <p>Cominciammo a vedere scene di distruzione. Il bus procedeva lentamente tra quelle macerie⁵⁷, come se stesse cercando di memorizzarle con cura. La mia mente era rimasta sconvolta di fronte all'orrore di ciò che aveva visto; quelle case distrutte sembravano dire: 'Non volevamo ucciderli...ci hanno demolite sopra le loro teste!'. La vista di un filo per il bucato con alcuni vestiti ancora appesi⁵⁸ mi lasciò senza parole! Sembrava volesse</p>
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⁵⁵ At first, I did not entirely understand the expression "an uninterrupted thread", nor I found any reference in the English language. I assumed it was an expression used in Arabic that was difficult to render other in English or Italian. I consulted with Ghaith, and he explained to me that "uninterrupted thread" meant to describe the fact the items found that the narrator used to find in the rug, once was picked, others would follow, one by one attached like an endless thread. I did not want to translate the sentence as it was, because I thought that it would not sound clear in Italian. Instead, I changed the sentence, but I wanted to keep its original meaning, the idea that the objects stuck in the carpet were not randomly spread around, but rather so close to one another that they looked like they were a thread. I am not entirely satisfied with the translation, because I am afraid, I wandered off too much from the original point trying to make the sentence readable. However, as Eco claims, sometimes to convey the same effect of the original and to create the same response, one should leave aside the often-exaggerated linguistic fidelity (Eco, 2018: 149).

⁵⁶ Another difficult sentence section that appears in the original text is "[...] play with the objects stuck between the rug and the sun [...]". I wanted to understand what these "things stuck on the rug" were, and I consulted with Ghaith about it. According to him, a common tradition in the Middle East is to clean rugs by putting them close to the window and using the sunlight to see the dust pieces hidden. The narrator, recalling her childhood, is describing a typical childish behavior of playing with these objects instead of cleaning the rug. I wanted to insert this information in the sentence in order to "fill in a cultural gap" (Baker, 289) as Baker mentioned as an example of explicitation, but I was aware that this was almost impossible in this case. To render the meaning of this sentence, I slightly changed it in the Italian version. This paragraph made me realize how hard sometimes can be to translate without the assistance of the author or someone that knows the source language and original culture.

⁵⁷ Instead of literally translate "them" I decided to use the term "macerie" with reference to "scenes of destruction".

⁵⁸ "a clothesline holding on some clothes" literally translates to "un filo del bucato aggrappato ad alcuni vestiti" but it did not sound right in the Italian version. Again, the aim is to convey the same meaning and to recreate the atmosphere that the author built in her story, the sense of desolation and destruction that permeated Homs. To do this, it is necessary to alter some expressions or sentences, because this story relies on several poetical images that might make it difficult for the translation to follow the original structure. Therefore, the translation avoided to apply the process of "discourse transfer", meaning the tendency "to produce a translated utterance not by retrieving the target language via their own linguistic knowledge, but directly from the source utterance itself" (Toury, 1986a; 1995, quoted in Baker, 2001: 290-291).

<p>of them tore itself to fit the body of his owner and was waiting."</p>	<p>dirmi, in lacrime: 'I miei amici mi hanno lasciato solo, così all'improvviso! E riguardo i vestiti...si sono ridotti a brandelli, in attesa poter essere indossati nuovamente dai loro proprietari⁵⁹.'</p>
<p>The bus continued its way and I continued watching the gaps. After a long stare, I was stunned by an idea and laughed at my naivety, how did I believe the scene!</p>	<p>L'autobus proseguì la sua corsa, mentre io continuavo a osservare quegli spazi vuoti che si erano formati tra le case ancora in piedi⁶⁰. Dopo essere rimasta a lungo con lo sguardo fisso nel vuoto, un pensiero mi prese alla sprovvista⁶¹, e mi trovai a ridere della mia stessa ingenuità, di come avevo</p>

⁵⁹ In this sentence the author effectively creates a grim scene where a clothesline addresses the narrator, telling her that the clothes are torn into pieces to fit their owners. The first issue with this line is the active verb "to fit" related to clothes (trad. "andare bene a, essere della giusta misura per, calzare a" from Sansoni English/Italian dictionary) in the Italian translation. The difference between the two languages slightly alters the rhythm of the sentence, while the focus of the action switches from the clothes to the owners. The second issue is the meaning behind the sentence itself, "each of them tore itself to fit the body of his owner and was waiting". It is clear that the sentence indirectly refers to the idea that, if the clothes needs to tear themselves to fit somebody, the owners' bodies should also be torn to pieces and therefore dead. Although the narrator does not clearly make this clear through a gory description, the term "body" can help us to see how dramatic the scene is, since "body" can either refer to an alive person or a corpse, such in this case. The question is, how gruesome the translation of this reference to the idea of death should be? It has been already claimed the fact that generally literary texts pay greater attention than non-literary texts to "their mental and imaginative connotations than their factual denotations", and this should not be underestimated (Newmark, 1988: 44). I already faced this issue with the term "body" in the first story, but I chose a different approach in this case: after pondering on the feeling that the author wanted to transmit with her story, I opted for a less violent option. I reflected that the whole story plays on images and expressions that create an alternative reality where concepts such as war, death and destruction are presented in an alternative and rather imaginative way. In short, it almost looked like the author wanted to explain to a child what escaping destruction and become a refugee feels like. War becomes a horrible monster that "turns houses upside down", people packing their belongings and leaving their homes becomes snails, and if you die in the sea trying to escape war is not because you drown, but because, clearly, salt water kills snails. On the other hand, although the author chose to use these creative images, the story is still filled with misery and a sense of reality, the tragedy is still there. The most faithful translation would have been to translate the term "bodies" as "corpi" or, to sound even more gruesome, "cadaveri", but I chose not to. I decided to make the Italian version similar to the English one in terms of how implicit the text should be. It is clear that the clothes' owners have to be dead in order to wear them, but it is not explicitly written that in the sentence. Therefore, I fully removed the term "body" and went for a more ambiguous version, avoiding explicitation.

⁶⁰ When discussing with Ghaith about this passage, he confirmed that the expression "gaps" meant the gap that formed when a building collapses, leaving an empty space between two houses.

⁶¹ The term "stunned" has been translated to "prendere alla sprovvista" turning the narrator into the passive agent.

<p>In fact, I was more afraid for my house to be destroyed before I return, so I rushed back from my journey, and when I arrived I wore the house immediately so that no one could put it upside down.</p>	<p>finito per credere a quella scena! Davvero uno scherzo di cattivo gusto⁶²!</p> <p>⁶³ In effetti, l'idea che la mia casa venisse distrutta prima del mio ritorno cominciò a preoccuparmi sempre di più, e quindi mi affrettai a tornarci di corsa. Appena arrivata a casa, me la misi subito sulle</p>
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⁶² “[...] how did I believe the scene! It is really a heavy joke!” has been by far the most difficult part of the text to translate. At first, the meaning itself of the two sentences was difficult to grasp, what was exactly the “heavy joke” about. I assumed that, reading the following sentence, that the narrator was feeling ashamed or upset by the irony in being more worried about her own house to be destroyed than feeling sorry for what she is seeing. However, according to Ghaith, in this sentence the author wanted to convince herself that what she thought about is not real, that she did not want to believe what she saw in Homs, the destruction and the tragedy. The second issue was how to properly translate the sentence in order to render the original meaning. The risk was that, by altering the original text through simplification and explicitation, I would have created a completely different paragraph with a new meaning that would not correspond to the original one. I support the idea of moving away from the original text for the sake of fluency and faithfulness to author’s intention. However, I am also aware that excessive freedom might lead to an upheaval of the original text, which is not recommended. In the end, I opted to translate the target sentences as the source ones, avoiding the risk to create something entirely different from the starting point. The downside of this choice is that, as the English version is not explicit on what the author truly means in this clause, the Italian version is not clear as well.

⁶³ After our second meeting, Ghaith sent me the original text written in Arabic, and I read it (through a preliminary translation) in order to have a secondary source, and I noticed that two sentences were missing in this paragraph, but were quite difficult to understand. However, Ghaith assured me that the missing lines were not important for the text, and told me that he avoided translating them. This is not an unusual case in the field of translation, and author often allows translators to skip and not work on certain sentences that may be too difficult to translate or their result in the target text is inadequate or incomprehensible (Eco, 2018: 188).

<p>People started laughing at me because I looked like a snail, and they kept on laughing until I woke up one morning to find ten houses in the city that had been destroyed. They were afraid and started wearing their houses together, each</p>	<p>spalle⁶⁴. Pensai che così almeno nessuno avrebbe potuto distruggerla⁶⁵. La gente cominciò a ridere di me, perché somigliavo a una chiocciola, e continuarono a farlo finché un giorno non mi svegliai e scoprii che dieci case della città erano state distrutte. Allora anche gli altri si spaventarono e cominciarono</p>
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⁶⁴ Among other issue the translator has to face when working on a culturally and linguistically different text, the translation of metaphors is a difficult task, regardless of which type of metaphors. Metaphors have generally two purpose, the cognitive one and the aesthetic one. While the first one “is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language” the other aims “to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise” (Newmark, 1988: 104). The following one is an example where the need to keep a balance between these two purposes is challenging. This note is crucial to illustrate my position as a translator regarding the notion of “wearing a house”. In fact, instead of translating “wearing” with “indossare”, meaning that the house is perceived as something that you put on like clothes, I preferred the verb “mettere sulle spalle”. This expression, apart from being more readable in Italian, is closer to the image of the snail’s shell, something that it carries on top of its body. Writing that the houses were located on people’s shoulders is different than what the author originally wrote, but nonetheless preserves the meaning. This idea of overly paying attention on the notion of “fidelity” can turn the target text into an odd-sounding and quite different version form the source text. According to Landers, “among the most common mistakes of inexperienced translators is that of trying to squeeze every last kernel of meaning from the SL text” (2001: 55). On the other hand, analysing the text from a wider perspective, this choice might also be quite fallacious. In fact, I noticed that it is possible to notice a hidden theme in the story. Not only the houses are perceived as something that people wear, but in the previous paragraph the narrator mentions the clothesline and its reflection on the destroyed clothes. Perhaps I went too far with this observation, but I saw an analogy between the clothes and the houses that resonates in the story. If I decide to adhere to this alleged analogy, then choosing to translate “wear” as I did in my translation might disrupt this correlation. On the other hand, the aim of this translation is also to offer the future audience a fluent and comprehensible story in Italian that could sound as natural as possible. In the end I decided to sacrifice this alleged analogy that I glimpsed in the text for the sake of performability, using the common expression “mettere/caricare sulle spalle”, and the result was a valid alternative to the original.

⁶⁵ The first time I read the text, the last part of this sentence was “so that no one could change it”. However, during our meeting Ghaith has corrected his translation and changed the sentence to “so that no one could put it upside down”. “To be put upside down” is an expression that the author uses together with the term “house” at least three times in the text. I find this phrase quite interesting, and I do not know whether it is a cultural expression in Arabic, or the author created it following her narrating style that I mentioned before. In any case, I preferred to be less poetic in the translation, in order to avoid an additional obstacle in the translating process. After all, it is not uncommon that in the translation for performances the notion of “fidelity” can be sometimes overlooked for the sake of a good and understandable play (Bassnett, 1991: 106). “Essere messa sottosopra”, although being quite intuitive (the house is destroyed), might sound way too strange in Italian. I thus opted for “essere distrutta”, which completely lost the imaginative tone of the original text. An interesting observation that rose from examining this line is the fact that I as translator avoided to literally translate such a unique sentence to the target language, which can be associated to the “unique items hypothesis”, one of the most recent universals of translation. According to this hypothesis, those untranslatable features, such as terms and lexical structures that occur in the source text “tend to be proportionally underrepresented in translations as compared to non-translated texts” because of a lack of a valid (Palumbo, 2009: 140).

<p>dressed in a room or two, and then we all started crawling towards safe groves escaping from the monster "demolisher of houses".</p> <p>Unfortunately, we did not have experience. This is the first time that we are snails, and the monster followed us leaving behind death and dust and spreading among us a terror that we also experience for the first time.</p> <p>After a long and unstable walk, we reached the sea, and without hesitation we rode away. But after a while our faces began to turn yellow and we started exchanging terror looks. Yes! We were all at the same moment memorizing of how</p>	<p>insieme a caricarsi sulle spalle le proprie case, ciascuno prendendo con sé una o due stanze. E poi, tutti insieme, cominciamo a strisciare al sicuro, cercando riparo nella boscaglia⁶⁶, lontani da quel mostro capace di ridurre le case in brandelli⁶⁷.</p> <p>Sfortunatamente eravamo inesperti, perché non eravamo mai stati delle chioccioline prima di allora. Il mostro ci inseguì, lasciando dietro di sé una scia di⁶⁸ polvere e morte e riempiendoci di un terrore che non avevamo mai provato prima.</p> <p>Dopo un lungo e difficoltoso cammino riuscimmo a raggiungere il mare e, senza un momento di esitazione, andammo avanti nell'acqua⁶⁹. Ma dopo un po' alcuni iniziarono a sentirsi male, i nostri visi</p>
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⁶⁶ In English "groves" is a challenging term which holds multiple meanings. In Arabic the term is written بستان (bustan), and it can be translated as "grove", "orchard", "garden" (بستان, n.d.). Ghaith tried to explain this term to me using the word "farm", but I was not entirely satisfied with this term in this specific context. Ultimately, the sense of this passage means that people are running towards safer places, away from the destruction of war, and hiding. In Italian the term that I choose from the online dictionary would be "boschetti" (Picchi, Groves, n.d.).

⁶⁷ "Monster demolisher of houses" was the English translation of a made-up word created by the author, which can be somehow translated as "upside-downer", and in this case an unusual translation could have been "the monster that make houses upside down". This is the second time the expression "houses put upside down" has been used to represent the destruction of buildings. Aside from this digression, I decided to change "monster demolisher of houses" in the Italian translation through simplification. In fact, I opted for a more linear and perhaps not so poetic sentence, but I kept the term "monster", so the imaginative atmosphere is not entirely lost.

⁶⁸ I decided to add "lasciando una scia di" ("leaving a trail of") to make the sentence sound more dramatic and more fluent in Italian, which led to another example of explication by inserting additional words in the target text (Baker, 2001: 289).

⁶⁹ A side note on the verb "went ahead": it is interesting the fact that while reading the text, I took for granted that the people were using a boat to run into the sea, because this is the common image that comes into my mind when thinking about refugees that flee from war in the Mediterranean. However, talking with Ghaith, he pointed out that it is not specified if they used a boat or simply swam until they died.

<p>sprinkling salt on a snail killed it, and that the sea was salty. We are not sea snails!!</p> <p>The memory did not help, so many died, and the poor children did not know anything about the snail, nor that the sea was salty, so they died of their innocence. As for those who survived like me, they learnt how to be a good snail, and those who stayed at home wake up every morning to see more than ten houses upside down on their wrong face.</p>	<p>avevano assunto un colorito giallastro⁷⁰, e cominciammo a scambiarci sguardi terrorizzati. Ebbene sì, nello stesso istante ci eravamo resi conto del fatto che il metodo più efficace per uccidere una chiocciola era spargerci sopra del sale, e nel mare ce n'era fin troppo! Non eravamo chiocciole di mare!</p> <p>La memoria ci era venuta in aiuto troppo tardi⁷¹, e per questo molti morirono. La stessa sorte toccò anche i bambini, perché nella loro ingenuità⁷² non sapevano nulla di chiocciole o del fatto che il mare fosse salato. Quelli che riuscirono a sopravvivere, come me, impararono a comportarsi da brave chiocciole, mentre quelli che erano rimasti laggiù avrebbero continuato a svegliarsi per vedere ogni giorno altre dieci nuove case ridotte in macerie⁷³.</p>
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⁷⁰ In the Arabic culture, yellow is associated with sickness, so when someone's skin "turns yellow", it usually means that the person is sick or is dying. When I first read this paragraph, I wondered if the expression "face turning yellow" was associated with the fact that people were scared, rather than sick. In fact, I thought about the Italian sentence "impallidire" ("turn pale"), that normally is used to describe when people are scared or afraid of something and their faces turn white. I asked Ghaith if this was the same in Arabic, and perhaps in this case the color associated with fear was yellow, but I was wrong.

⁷¹ I changed the phrase "The memory did not help" to make it sound more natural in Italian. This is another case where I think the law of standardization has been applied, because the textual structure of the target text has been altered and modified for a more conventional structure for the source language (Baker, 2001: 290).

⁷² I slightly changed the structure of the sentence, but the original meaning is preserved. Instead of translating "innocence" with "innocenza", which was too ambiguous in Italian, I opted for the term "naivety" ("ingenuità", "candore", "inesperienza" (Picchi, n.d.).

⁷³ The third case where the phrase "upside down on their wrong face" appears in the story. Again, I chose to remove the poetical expression. Although the original expression might be intuitive, I thought that the Italian version does not render the same as in English or Arabic. I let aside the need to follow the story's atmosphere and be clearer and more explicit.

Conclusion

During the writing of the thesis and at the conclusion of it, I elaborated the following conclusions on my work and the premises that I presented at the beginning of this study. First, narratives are crucial in shaping and giving meaning to reality, and they should be taken into account not only by translators or scholars of humanities but everyone. In the words of Baker, “narratives in this view are public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behaviour” (Baker, 2005: 5). In their everyday lives, people should pay more attention to what they say, how they say it, and even what they remove from their story. Moreover, once they become aware of the frames that they use to give an acceptable meaning to their experiences, they may eventually see their viewpoints rather differently. However, although we can observe and reflect on the narratives that we rely on, Baker warns that “there is no assumption here that we can suppress our subjectivity or stand outside those narratives” (Baker, 2007: 154). Second, translators should not see themselves as invisible servants (Xianbin, 2007: 24), but rather as professionals as well as individuals, and if the circumstances allow them to practice without constrictions and limits, they should use their ability to promote the narratives in which they believe (Khalifa, 2014: 11). To do so, translators should be aware of their capability and crucial role in supporting or contrasting narratives. Due to their free agency, translators can be activists and their professional codes, as well as the stereotype of the invisible and efficient translator, should not limit them from working in this field due to the idea that being an activist means to abandon the norms of translation (House, 2018: 161).

Another important observation is the fact that migration is the main social topic of the current age of globalization, and potentially of the whole 21st century, due to the fast changes that our planet is facing and the fact that the numbers of migrants worldwide are giving no signs of decreasing (Nail, 2018: 19). To guarantee communication and inclusion in this international context, the relationship between migrants, translators, interpreters, mediators and the host countries is very important. In the context of migration, translators are not agents themselves that experienced displacement like migrants or refugees did, but rather individuals that can put their profession to the service of others, to amplify their voices and promote the flourishing of narratives of cooperation. According to Polezzi, when dealing with the issue of migration, translators and self-translators become political actors and witnesses of the dramatic situation (2012: 354).

Through the translation as a process of witnessing, they can work together with migrants, asylum seekers and political activists to denounce the “dehumanizing nature of contemporary power and its attempts at containment (of voices, of bodies, of movement, and of “civilized conversation”)” (Polezzi, 2012: 354).

Since part of my work has been the translation of Ghaith Alhallak’s short stories, I had the chance to reflect on my role as a translator and how working with the actor helped me to convert the source text into a translation that is faithful as possible to the original. The short story is a difficult literary form to work on, and it often becomes longer in its translated version, due to the explanation of cultural glosses of foreign expressions that represent the source language and author’s culture (Newmark, 1988: 170-171). Thankfully, I had the opportunity to meet “in a one-to-one setting” (Landers, 2001: 86) with the author and translator of these texts and discuss with him certain parts that were problematic for me to translate. Just as Hersant claims that direct collaboration and rich exchange between the author and the translator positively affects the final result of the translation process (Hersant, 2017: 93-94), I had the chance to experience how beneficial this exchange between Alhallak and me has been especially for the translation outcome. Direct contact with the author and being able to ask about his life and past experiences also allowed me, just as Landers suggests, to see “a glimpse into character and behaviour” of Alhallak, which allowed me to view his stories with a different and perhaps more personal perspective (Landers, 2001: 87).

Among the theories that I have examined in my study, the one that affected me the most was the inspiring theory of narrativity presented by Mona Baker, which I tried to present exhaustively and which gave me a bright insight on social and intellectual interactions, not only on an academic but also a personal level. It has been claimed more than once in this thesis that narratives are crucial and often travel through texts, that translation can help or go against these narratives, and that even the translation choices made that the translator can be interpreted as the translators’ narratives that guide them, the perspectives that they have on reality. By working close with Alhallak, I became aware of my position as a translator and, in some way, I tried to practice a form of self-reflection on myself and the beliefs that guided me in this translation process. On one hand, I sought the freedom to interact with the author and offer ideas and suggest translation alternatives, although this meant risking taking up space in the text with my

presence, and therefore becoming less and less invisible to make the translation as fluent as possible in the target language. On the other hand, I wanted to remind myself that I had no control over the text and that my role was not to substitute the author but collaborate with him. I reflected on what agency meant for me as a translator and what things I could change and simplify in the text to approach the future audience. By trying to embody the image of the translator as an activist that I had examined during my study, I read those stories both as a translator that needs to convey the original meaning and style of the source text to a target audience, but also as a socially engaged person. I saw the work on the stories that Alhallak wrote not only seen as an assignment but also as a social act. I truly believe in the power of stories, in the change that they can bring and the potential that they have to raise awareness on issues that people often perceive distant or irrelevant to them, as well as the role that translators have to promote communication and cooperation among people of different cultures and languages. I hope that by delivering a text that depicts, in a literary and personal way, the events that are taking place outside and inside Europe, this translation might spark interest and consciousness of these issues and perhaps even a renewed sense of social commitment.

I am well aware that in my life, as well as the lives of other translators that choose this career as a full-time job, I will find myself in situations where my freedom of choice as a translator will be so limited that I will not have the luxury to choose my areas of translation, let alone the assignments that I will be expected to work on. However, I wanted to show that being a translator does not automatically mean that my beliefs and my ideology should be silenced as if the concept of translation precludes the possibility of activism and solidarity.

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Abstract in Italian

Questo elaborato è stato suddiviso in due parti, una teorica e una pratica. Dal punto di vista teorico, lo scopo di questa tesi è far capire che la traduzione (il processo e il risultato finale) può anche essere intesa come una forma di attivismo. L'idea nasce dal desiderio di dare un senso più profondo al mio lavoro di traduttrice, di andare cioè oltre il semplice aspetto tecnico e considerare le motivazioni che mi spingono a tradurre. Durante gli anni dell'università, mi sono spesso interrogata sul contributo concreto che potevo dare alla comunità con il mio lavoro. In altre parole, in che modo, con la mia attività, il mio tradurre un testo, posso essere effettivamente utile per contribuire a rendere migliore la società che mi circonda? Ho deciso dunque di studiare in che modo la traduzione può avere un effetto positivo da un punto di vista concreto, come può il traduttore aiutare il prossimo attraverso il suo operato.

Stabilito dunque l'obiettivo della mia tesi, l'idea cioè che l'attività di tradurre può essere un'azione concreta al servizio degli altri, ho scelto dei testi che potessero avere un impatto significativo sulla società dei nostri giorni, con lo scopo di aumentare la consapevolezza in merito a una tematica sociale e umanitaria. A tal fine, mi è stato suggerito dalla relatrice di contattare Ghaiith Alhallak, un ragazzo siriano residente in Italia dal 2018, autore e traduttore (dall'arabo all'inglese) di una serie di racconti brevi che sarebbero dovuti successivamente diventare un copione per uno spettacolo teatrale sul tema della Siria e dei rifugiati. Ho subito accettato la proposta con entusiasmo, per vari motivi, anche personali. Quello del conflitto in Siria e della drammatica situazione dei rifugiati è infatti un tema che mi sta profondamente a cuore, essendo in contatto con un'associazione che si occupa di accogliere in Italia famiglie siriane dai campi profughi in Libano. Inoltre, avrei avuto la possibilità di contattare direttamente l'autore di questi racconti e confrontarmi con lui in merito alle sue scelte narrative. Dal punto di vista pratico, dunque, ho tradotto queste quattro storie dall'inglese all'italiano, mantenendo stretti contatti con l'autore e lavorando al fine di rendere questi testi il più possibile chiari e scorrevoli per un pubblico italiano. Infine, sono profondamente convinta del potere che hanno le storie, soprattutto quelle personali, di spingere persone apparentemente indifferenti ad affrontare tematiche come la migrazione e la cooperazione, e a riflettere ed agire per rendere il mondo un posto migliore.

Introduzione

Nell'introduzione ho presentato l'elaborato attraverso tre punti fondamentali. Prima di tutto, ho cercato di spiegare le motivazioni che mi hanno portata ad esaminare il tema della traduzione come una forma di attivismo dal punto di vista sociale. Poi ho presentato la struttura della tesi e i temi principali di ogni capitolo, ho inserito una breve introduzione di Ghaith Alhallak e ho scritto un breve riassunto per ognuna delle quattro storie che ho tradotto. Infine, ho elencato gli obiettivi della tesi, ovvero le argomentazioni che avevo intenzione di sostenere attraverso la mia ricerca:

- il concetto che la traduzione non sia una pratica neutrale, in quanto prevede l'intervento di un traduttore dotato di una propria volontà e libero arbitrio;
- l'idea che il funzionamento della società risponde alle cosiddette narrazioni o narrative, che dovrebbero pertanto essere considerate con attenzione da un punto di vista sociale;
- il fatto che, considerata la traduzione il mezzo che garantisce la circolazione di queste narrazioni al di fuori dei confini di una determinata lingua, sia necessario considerare il ruolo del traduttore essenziale nella formazione della realtà come la conosciamo;
- l'idea che i traduttori, dal momento che possiedono un ruolo così cruciale, hanno la responsabilità di riflettere, per quanto sia possibile, sulle conseguenze della loro attività e in che modo il loro lavoro possa avere un'influenza positiva o negativa sulla società.

Capitolo 1

La finalità del primo capitolo è quella di smentire la metafora del "ponte", usata frequentemente per descrivere la natura della traduzione e l'idea che il traduttore sia per principio un interprete totalmente neutro. Attraverso vari studi che sostengono l'impossibilità di una completa neutralità da parte del traduttore, ho contestato il concetto di "in-betweenness", ovvero di una presunta centralità linguistica e culturale, associato spesso alla traduzione. Una conseguenza importante di tale concetto è l'assenza di una qualsiasi forma di responsabilità da parte del traduttore. In altre parole, se nella mia attività viene considerata semplicemente la conversione di un testo dalla lingua di partenza (SL) alla lingua di arrivo (TL), non ho nessun tipo di responsabilità in quanto

traduttore per le eventuali conseguenze sul piano sociale che un determinato testo comporta. Nel momento in cui la figura del traduttore è considerata totalmente neutrale, viene di conseguenza esclusa a priori qualsiasi forma di intervento da parte di quest'ultimo nel testo. Quello della responsabilità morale del traduttore è sicuramente un argomento interessante che ho voluto esaminare con attenzione, così come il rapporto tra traduzione, ideologie e strutture di potere. Secondo studiosi come Fairclough (1989), infatti, molto spesso si tende a ignorare il contributo della traduzione nel creare e mantenere forme di dominio da parte di una cultura nei confronti di altre, spesso giustificate dall'esistenza di rapporti di controllo e sottomissione da un punto di vista sociale. L'esempio più comune per rappresentare queste strutture si può trovare, ad esempio, nel fenomeno del colonialismo o dell'attuale egemonia della lingua inglese e della cultura occidentale nel panorama internazionale. In conclusione, esaminare il ruolo del traduttore solamente da un punto di vista prettamente linguistico può risultare estremamente rischioso, perché vengono completamente ignorati tutti quelli aspetti esterni al testo (contesto sociale, cultura, posizioni politiche) che il lavoro del traduttore influenza indirettamente.

Per sostenere la mia tesi ho fatto riferimento alla "narrative theory" (teoria della narrazione) promossa da Mona Baker nel suo libro, "Translation and Conflict. A Narrative Account" (2006), dove esamina la relazione tra narrative e traduzione. Secondo la Treccani, la narrativa o narrazione viene intesa come "forma di comunicazione argomentata tesa a conquistare consensi attraverso un'esposizione che valorizzi ed enfatizzi la qualità dei valori di cui si è portatori" (2017). Come mai la teoria della narrazione è così importante? Partendo dal presupposto che le narrazioni costituiscono la realtà e il fatto che nella società possono esistere diversi punti di vista dai quali esaminare un qualsiasi evento, la teoria della narrazione proposta da Baker mette in luce la non-neutralità della persona, e quindi anche del traduttore. In altre parole, la teoria delle narrazioni esclude a priori una qualsiasi forma di obiettività da parte dell'individuo. Questa teoria è essenziale per poter capire come funziona la società e, soprattutto, come ragionano le persone. Inoltre, poiché le narrazioni, per poter essere condivise con un pubblico più vasto possibile, devono per forza superare le barriere linguistiche, il ruolo del traduttore risulta essenziale. Ovviamente, dal momento che, come è stato spiegato, il traduttore è dotato della capacità di riflettere sul testo che sta traducendo, può decidere di

contribuire alla diffusione di determinate narrazioni o di boicottarle, promuovendone altre. In questa sezione del capitolo ho inoltre descritto brevemente le varie tipologie di narrazioni elencate da Baker, che si differenziano in ontologiche, pubbliche, concettuali e meta-narrazioni. Altro argomento importante in merito alle narrazioni sono le loro caratteristiche interdipendenti, che possono determinare gli effetti delle narrazioni sulla realtà, come ad esempio giustificare determinate strutture di potere e gerarchie sociali. Sempre legato alle narrazioni è il paradigma di Fisher (1987), usato per spiegare come mai le persone tendono a giudicare valide oppure no determinate narrazioni, basandosi non tanto sul “paradigma della razionalità”, quanto sulle motivazioni personali della singola persona determinate ad esempio da convinzioni, esperienze o credenze religiose. Queste motivazioni che usiamo quotidianamente per giudicare il modo in cui la realtà che ci circonda viene raccontata, sono chiamate “buoni motivi” (“good reasons”), e sono completamente differenti dal concetto di razionalità.

Concludo infine il capitolo descrivendo il concetto di “frame” e “framing”, letteralmente, inquadrature. Si tratta del processo mentale che le persone tendono a mettere in atto per dare un senso alla realtà che le circonda, attraverso il quale si focalizzano su determinati elementi, escludendone altri. In altre parole, si riferisce alla prospettiva o alle prospettive che usiamo quando elaboriamo la realtà.

Capitolo 2

Il tema principale del secondo capitolo è il libero arbitrio del traduttore come attore principale nel processo di traduzione. Una volta esclusa l’ipotesi che il traduttore sia un agente neutro, bisogna capire quanta libertà d’azione viene concessa nel processo di traduzione, e da chi o cosa è determinata questa libertà. Vengono dunque messi a confronto due elementi, l’agire o libero arbitrio (“agency”) e le norme (“norms”), apparentemente incompatibili, ma egualmente essenziali per garantire al traduttore una guida su come operare al meglio nel processo di traduzione.

Il concetto dell’agire è fondamentale per ribadire la non-neutralità del traduttore, così come il suo diritto di operare liberamente, sempre nei limiti della sua professione, sul testo da tradurre. Secondo Palumbo (2009: 9), il concetto di “agency” si riferisce alla capacità e all’intenzione di un determinato soggetto di agire in totale libertà all’interno di un contesto sociale. Questo concetto può essere facilmente applicato anche al caso della

traduzione, dove il traduttore, non più soggetto neutrale e privo di potere decisionale, diventa agente. La possibilità di prendere decisioni è, di conseguenza, fondamentale nel lavoro del traduttore.

Una volta riconosciuta l'esistenza della libertà di agire da parte del traduttore, bisogna considerare l'equilibrio tra questa libertà e le norme che il traduttore, in quanto professionista, è tenuto a seguire. Nella traduzione, considerata da Xianbin un'"attività sociale" (2007: 24), la presenza di regole da rispettare è cruciale. Verrà dunque introdotto il concetto di norme di traduzione, del loro funzionamento e della loro presenza necessaria per garantire che il processo di traduzione venga svolto in maniera corretta. La domanda essenziale che emerge da queste osservazioni è: qual è il rapporto ottimale tra norme e libertà d'azione? Dopo aver analizzato diverse opinioni in merito a questo discorso, la conclusione a cui sono arrivata è la necessità del traduttore di essere consapevole di questi due elementi, nonché della sua responsabilità di rispettare il più possibile sia le regole imposte dalla sua professione, sia la propria individualità e narrazioni personali.

Rimanendo sul tema delle norme, ho brevemente esaminato il concetto di codici di condotta nel lavoro di traduzione e il concetto di professionalità. In questo contesto, ho deciso inoltre di presentare il cosiddetto "Chesterman's Oath" (il Giuramento di Chesterman), basato su una proposta elaborata dallo studioso Andrew Chesterman (2001) in merito al dilemma dei codici etici. Il problema principale considerato da Chesterman è la molteplicità dei modelli etici che un traduttore può seguire, benchè si sovrappongano l'uno con l'altro. Mentre un modello, ad esempio, considera necessario che il traduttore rispetti le esigenze del suo cliente, un altro pone l'accento sulla fedeltà del traduttore alla chiarezza del testo. La soluzione offerta da Chesterman è un giuramento del traduttore, simile a quello di Ippocrate per i medici, focalizzato sulle varie virtù verso le quali un traduttore dovrebbe tendere.

Nella seconda parte del capitolo, mi sono concentrata sull'idea del traduttore come individuo impegnato attivamente nel processo di traduzione. Una volta dato per scontato che il traduttore non è neutrale e ha la capacità di agire nel testo nel rispetto delle norme imposte, la questione successiva è capire quanta libertà possa prendersi all'interno del testo da tradurre. Di fondamentale importanza in questo caso è la teoria di Venuti (1995) sulla visibilità o invisibilità del traduttore. Secondo Venuti, in contrasto con quella che viene tradizionalmente considerata una regola essenziale, cioè l'idea che un traduttore

debba essere meno visibile possibile in un testo tradotto, il traduttore ha l'obbligo di intervenire attivamente sul testo per metterne in luce l'estraneità rispetto alla cultura e alla lingua di arrivo. Secondo Venuti, infatti, rendere una traduzione più scorrevole possibile, togliendo o modificando tutti quegli elementi culturali anomali per i futuri lettori, non è altro che una forma di addomesticamento e subordinazione del testo, della cultura e dello stesso autore alla cultura di arrivo. La sua alternativa è di rendere il traduttore una figura visibile, e dunque sovversiva e contraria a qualsiasi forma di subordinazione. Per "par condicio", ho ritenuto necessario, oltre alla teoria della visibilità del traduttore, inserire alcune osservazioni che contrastano la teoria di Venuti.

In ultimo, dopo aver considerato il traduttore rispetto alle norme e al testo, ho ritenuto opportuno prendere in considerazione il traduttore anche rispetto a sé stesso. Ho dunque presentato il concetto di "self-reflexivity" (auto-riflessione), un processo mentale attraverso il quale il traduttore si dedica ad esaminare non tanto il testo da tradurre o il metodo scelto per mettere in atto la traduzione, quanto la propria posizione rispetto all'Altro, il cosiddetto "Other", inteso come qualsiasi cosa esterna all'individuo, in questo caso l'autore e la cultura con i quali il traduttore deve confrontarsi.

Capitolo 3

Nel terzo capitolo sono passata al tema dell'attivismo e della traduzione come attività sociale nei confronti della collettività. La prima parte del capitolo punta ad esaminare come e quando i Translation Studies hanno iniziato a considerare aspetti esterni alla dimensione linguistica della traduzione, come ad esempio la cultura, il contesto sociopolitico nel quale autore e traduttore lavorano, il ruolo del traduttore, e così via. Le principali correnti che ho preso in esame sono il "Cultural Turn" ("Svolta Culturale"), ovvero il momento in cui si è cominciato a riservare particolare attenzione al ruolo della cultura nella traduzione; i "Postcolonial Translation Studies" ("Studi postcoloniali sulla traduzione"), la corrente di pensiero post colonialista applicata al mondo della traduzione; e infine l'introduzione di approcci sociologici al campo della traduttologia, concentrandosi sul traduttore come individuo. Ho inoltre menzionato brevemente la "narrative theory" di Baker (2006), una delle ultime teorie sulla traduzione sviluppate nel XXI secolo.

Nella seconda parte del capitolo ho esaminato il tema della traduzione legata all'attivismo, analizzando prima di tutto il fenomeno dell'attivismo in generale (cos'è esattamente, quali sono le sue caratteristiche e che effetti può avere sulla società) e nello specifico il concetto delle reti ("networks"), per spiegare l'interconnessione tra vari gruppi di attivisti, uniti e al contempo dotati di una propria individualità. Altrettanto utile è inoltre la teoria delle "identity politics" (politiche di identità), per spiegare come mai persone che non hanno nessun tipo di rapporto con minoranze sociali decidono di impegnarsi attivamente per migliorare la situazione di questi gruppi spesso svantaggiati, oppure di attivarsi per cause sociali che non le riguardano direttamente o che vengono spesso ignorate. Un altro tema è il contributo degli attivisti nell'ambito di movimenti intenzionati a spingere per ottenere delle riforme sociali. Nell'esaminare il rapporto tra attivismo e traduzione, ho ripreso la "narrative theory" nel contesto dell'attivismo, per spiegare come persone apparentemente diverse si uniscono intorno ad un ideale comune, ad una specifica narrazione.

Ho successivamente analizzato come l'attivismo si è evoluto e adattato nel XXI secolo, con particolare attenzione ai principali fenomeni nati nel secolo scorso, che in breve tempo hanno caratterizzato il nostro periodo storico: la globalizzazione e il progresso tecnologico. Si tratta di due eventi che hanno avuto una profonda influenza anche sull'attività di traduzione, così come sull'attivismo. Se da una parte la traduzione, tramite la globalizzazione è diventata sempre più essenziale nella vita di tutti i giorni e al contempo accessibile grazie alle nuove tecnologie, così i gruppi di attivisti si sono allargati oltre le barriere nazionali, creando delle connessioni internazionali, facilitate dai più moderni mezzi di comunicazione. Questi fenomeni hanno inoltre favorito una maggiore e più rapida circolazione di innumerevoli narrazioni, rendendo l'informazione uno degli strumenti più potenti della società moderna in mano agli attivisti. In una società dove scorrono continuamente diverse informazioni e narrazioni, la neutralità dei traduttori è ovviamente messa a dura prova.

Il lavoro e la natura dei traduttori attivisti non è una novità del nostro secolo, dal momento che, già negli ultimi anni del secolo scorso, era stata data loro molta attenzione, in quanto portatori di cambiamento sociale (Tymoczko; 2006: 451). Il tema dell'attivismo è stato analizzato molto bene da Tymoczko (2006), che ha sottolineato il contributo dei traduttori al servizio di iniziative sociali. Dopo questa breve introduzione, ho esaminato

le caratteristiche principali delle organizzazioni di traduttori attivisti del XXI secolo. In primis, il processo di traduzione è cambiato radicalmente, passando dall'essere un progetto individuale a un lavoro collettivo. Il secondo cambiamento importante è dato dalla tecnologia, che ha garantito strumenti per tradurre meglio e più velocemente, così come la possibilità di comunicare con altre organizzazioni a prescindere dalla distanza geografica.

L'ultima parte del capitolo è dedicata all'equilibrio tra l'impegno attivista e la professionalità. Pur essendo attivisti, si tratta pur sempre di traduttori, molto spesso professionisti, che si impegnano per rispettare le norme di traduzione. Se da una parte vi è l'impegno dei traduttori di offrire un servizio per la loro comunità o per una determinata causa, dall'altra è fondamentale saper rispettare il più possibile le regole imposte a questa professione, onde evitare il rischio di mancare di credibilità.

Capitolo 4

Il quarto capitolo è diviso al suo interno in due parti. Nella prima parte ho affrontato il tema della migrazione e il suo rapporto con l'attività di traduzione, cercando di capire come e in che modo i traduttori possono promuovere narrazioni di cooperazione e inclusione. Nella seconda parte ho descritto il contesto nel quale si collocano le storie che ho tradotto nel quinto capitolo.

A proposito delle migrazioni, ho delineato a grandi linee questo fenomeno, che sta caratterizzando profondamente il nostro periodo storico, e ho sottolineato le differenze tra i vari termini utilizzati per descrivere le persone in fuga da territori insospitati o in guerra: migrante, rifugiato e richiedente asilo. Benché questi termini possano risultare molto simili e di poca importanza nel discorso pubblico, sono estremamente importanti nell'ambito burocratico, e possono molto spesso determinare la possibilità o meno di entrare legalmente nel paese di accoglienza. Successivamente, mi sono concentrata sul fenomeno delle migrazioni nell'area del Mediterraneo, dove ogni anno migliaia di persone dall'Africa e dai vari territori del Medioriente cercano di raggiungere le coste europee. Particolare attenzione è stata riservata anche alla presenza di atteggiamenti di intolleranza e discriminazione nei vari stati dell'UE nei confronti di questo fenomeno, atteggiamenti che molto spesso sono stati alimentati da narrazioni ostili. Considerando la velocità e la facilità con la quale molte di queste narrazioni sono state diffuse, ho deciso

di concentrarmi anche sul ruolo dei mezzi di comunicazione nel trattare di questo fenomeno.

Passando successivamente ad esaminare il rapporto tra traduzione e migrazione, mi sono focalizzata prima di tutto sul concetto di migrazione per aiutarci a cambiare la nostra prospettiva sull'idea di traduzione, spesso vista come uno svolgimento lineare e binario. L'immagine del migrante, figura che si sposta non solo idealmente ma anche fisicamente da una lingua a una o più lingue, ci dà un'idea più realistica di come spesso si realizza il processo di traduzione. Il secondo tema esaminato è il ruolo fondamentale dei traduttori nell'aiutare i migranti nella fase di accoglienza e inclusione nel paese di arrivo. Così come i mediatori culturali, figure altrettanto importanti nelle prime fasi di contatto, i traduttori devono essere competenti e offrire a migranti o rifugiati una figura di supporto a cui affidarsi. È inoltre essenziale la capacità di riconoscere le differenze culturali e linguistiche che intercorrono tra l'operatore (mediatore culturale e traduttore) e l'individuo che riceve accoglienza, per poter evitare incomprensioni o mancanza di punti di contatto. Nel discutere il ruolo del traduttore in rapporto al migrante o al rifugiato, è interessante considerare l'idea della traduzione come forma di riconoscimento ("recognition"). Il concetto di riconoscimento è estremamente interessante ed importante secondo alcuni studiosi, tra cui Rosario Martín Ruano (2017) e Bonini Baldini (2019). A differenza del concetto di uguaglianza, il riconoscimento punta a vedere il migrante nella sua interezza, considerando le disuguaglianze che esistono tra lui/lei e la società di accoglienza. Se non si tenesse conto delle diverse mancanze e svantaggi che possiedono queste persone, focalizzarsi sull'idea di riservare a tutti lo stesso trattamento a discapito delle loro differenze, potrebbe risultare un problema.

Per concludere questa parte, ho infine analizzato il tema dello "storytelling" e dello "story sharing", ovvero la narrazione e diffusione di storie, in questo caso esaminando la possibilità per i migranti e i rifugiati di condividere le loro storie all'interno di una comunità di ascolto. Si tratta di un processo che può avere esiti molto positivi, sia per il narratore che per l'ascoltatore. Per i migranti e rifugiati che decidono in libertà di raccontare esperienze personali della loro vita, emerge la consapevolezza della propria dignità come persona e della possibilità di esprimersi liberamente. Dall'altra parte, vi è la possibilità per la comunità che riceve queste storie di diventare ascoltatori attivi e dare

più attenzione a tematiche altrimenti ignorate o trattate dai mezzi di comunicazione in maniera impersonale.

Nella seconda parte del capitolo, ho presentato il fenomeno della guerra siriana, iniziata nel 2011 dopo alcune manifestazioni di protesta pacifiche da parte dei siriani nei confronti del governo di Bashar al-Assad, represses con la violenza da parte delle forze militari. In questa sezione, mi è stato di estremo aiuto il libro di Abdullah Alhallak (“Un vulcano chiamato Siria”, 2018), fratello di Ghaith Alhallak, che mette in luce l’ascesa di Assad al governo del paese e la sua repressione delle proteste civili. Prima di tutto, esaminando la storia del paese, ho descritto l’ascesa degli Assad e del partito del Ba’ath in Siria, prima con Hafez al-Assad e poi Bashar al-Assad, suo figlio, che ha mantenuto il controllo sul territorio attraverso l’uso di varie forme di repressione tra cui la censura e gli arresti da parte della polizia segreta, rendendo pressoché impossibile qualsiasi forma di dissenso politico, almeno fino alla svolta nel 2011.

Lo scoppio delle proteste avvenne in seguito all’episodio di Deera nel marzo del 2011, quando quindici ragazzi sono stati arrestati e torturati per aver disegnato graffiti contro il regime. Dopo un primo periodo di proteste pacifiche per tutto il paese, alimentate anche dal fenomeno delle primavere arabe scoppiate in vari territori del Medioriente negli stessi anni, la natura delle proteste è cambiata radicalmente, assumendo toni violenti e costringendo molti civili ad abbandonare il paese in seguito all’intensificarsi di azioni militari. Dopo una breve presentazione del conflitto, delle sue cause e dei vari attori che vi hanno partecipato, tra cui gli integralisti islamici tra le file di alcuni gruppi di ribelli e varie potenze internazionali, mi sono concentrata sul fenomeno dei rifugiati, una delle peggiori crisi umanitarie ad oggi ancora in corso. Ultimo tema del capitolo è quello dei corridoi umanitari, che hanno dato la possibilità a numerose persone di sfuggire alla guerra e alla desolazione dei campi profughi e trovare accoglienza in Europa.

Capitolo 5

Nel quinto capitolo ho presentato le traduzioni fatte, con allegate note in merito alle scelte fatte durante il lavoro di traduzione. La prima storia è scritta in prima persona, e racconta l’esperienza personale di Ghaith Alhallak prima come soldato nell’esercito siriano, poi, dopo essere stato ferito gravemente in un attacco ribelle, come disertore e rifugiato. Nella seconda storia, Alhallak racconta del suo rapporto di amicizia con una bambina siriana di

nome Nahla, che vive con i suoi genitori in un campo profughi nel nord della Siria, e comunica con l'autore tramite chiamate al telefono. La terza storia è una poesia che Alhallak ha tradotto dall'arabo all'inglese. Si tratta di una poesia molto famosa, apparentemente trovata sul corpo di un uomo siriano annegato nel Mediterraneo, anche se non ci sono prove della sua autenticità. L'ultima storia è un racconto scritto da un'amica di Alhallak, che narra, tramite l'uso della metafora della chiocciola, l'esperienza dei migranti che, una volta rimasti senza casa, decidono di caricarsi sulle spalle quel poco che resta della loro vita per sfuggire alla guerra.

Conclusion

In conclusione, posso affermare che attraverso questo mio lavoro ho raggiunto i seguenti risultati. Ho riconosciuto l'importanza delle narrazioni e delle inquadrature, sia da un punto di vista generale che nel contesto dell'attività di traduzione. Ho preso in considerazione il concetto di libertà di azione del traduttore nel suo lavoro, così come la necessità di cercare un equilibrio tra il rispetto delle norme professionali, codici di condotta e narrazioni personali. Ho analizzato con attenzione anche il tema della traduzione usata al servizio di una causa sociale e la figura del traduttore come attivista, che ho deciso di prendere come modello di riferimento per il mio lavoro di traduttrice. Infine, ho raggiunto una maggior consapevolezza sia sul tema della migrazione che sulla questione del conflitto siriano, grazie soprattutto alla lettura e alla traduzione delle storie di Ghaith Alhallak. Sono convinta, grazie al lavoro fatto in questi mesi, di essere riuscita a guardare con occhi diversi il mio lavoro di traduttrice.

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