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Postcolonialism and Self-translation: A Case Study on Shirin Ramzanali Fazel

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INTRODUCTION

This work comes at the end of a five-year study curriculum at Università degli Studi di Padova, during which I had the chance to broaden my knowledge on language, literature and Translation Studies, while also dealing with current issues linked to multiculturalism. As a matter of fact, it aims to place itself at the intersection of these themes, merging my interest for sociological matters, racist and sexist discrimination and Translation Studies. This comprehensive topic allowed me to employ some of the skills I have acquired in these five years, as well as giving me the chance to deepen my understanding on important current issues. My initial fascination for the sociology of discriminations and postcolonial matters sparked a few years ago, when I attended Professor Frisina's sociology lectures during both my bachelor and my master's degrees. During her classes, she would engage interesting debates on issues of representation, prejudice, feminism, xenophobia and islamophobia, and organized several conferences with eminent postcolonial scholars. More specifically, the idea of choosing these themes for my master's dissertation came to me during my Erasmus at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland, where I had the chance to meet Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, who had come to UCC to host some conferences. I had the luck to talk to her during a translation class in which we analysed some of her poems and their translations, giving me the opportunity to ask her directly about her views on self-translation and her reasoning behind it. After this intervention and after reading her memoir *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, I understood that Shirin's works could give me the opportunity to touch on the same issues that had interested me so much in previous years. Therefore, it was my pleasure to investigate Shirin's background and the reasons behind the writing of her books, from which I understood much about the Italian society and our postcolonial condition. Nevertheless, I must stress that I am fully aware that I could only graze the surface of these complicated subjects and that my understanding of them can be only limited to my young age and my privileged position. Hence, this work does not claim to be a comprehensive overview of the complexity of Somali Italian literature, let alone of Shirin Ramzanali Fazel's impact on the literary field. As someone who lives a privileged life in a privileged country and has never experienced diaspora or racist discriminations in her life, I must face my limitations in dealing with similar matters. Indeed, I can only try to understand the

struggles of Shirin Ramzanali Fazel and other postcolonial writers, and I must recognize that, with this work, I run the risk of reiterating and reinforcing the very structure of power that this literary genre attempts to challenge. As a person immersed in a reality where racist and sexist discourses are so ever-present and ingrained, I too cannot be immune. In order to avoid this as best as I can, I will employ several strategies during my investigation. Most importantly, I will base my statements on claims by experts in the field of postcolonialism, language and Translation Studies. I will also make sure to provide the reader with Shirin Ramzanali Fazel's personal thoughts. To do so, I will create a close dialogue with the author herself, in which she will be able to recount her experience with postcolonialism, translingual writing and discrimination. Before further explaining the reasoning and the contents of my work, I want to make clear that, from now on, I will talk about Shirin Ramzanali Fazel mostly by her first name only, as this is the way it is used in most of the sources I will be referring to for the writing of this dissertation.

Having said this, I will go on to give a general overview of the main topics of this work, summarising all three chapters. The first chapter will be a contextualizing one, in which I will give some information that will help readers to understand Shirin, her works, and postcolonial literature in general. Chapter 1 will be based on the proposition that the postcolonial condition of Italy is one of the determining factors that shapes contemporary culture and society in multiple ways. This means that colonial discourse, imagery and propaganda permeated Italian society in ways that are still relevant in our current reality. The little collective awareness of the role that the colonial discourse had in the creation of the Italian national identity makes it so that the nation's popular imaginary is infested with racist discourse to this day. Therefore, in the first part of Chapter 1, I will explain the importance of postcolonial studies, considering that, for many reasons, there has been a delay in the development of this field in comparison to other countries. Many scholars even coined the phrase 'collective amnesia' to give a sense of the lack of awareness around the importance of our past in the process of construction of a white, male and catholic Italianness. Therefore, this chapter analyses the ways in which Italy has historically underplayed its role as a colonial power, creating a narrative template that saw them as humane, good colonizers.

If ever commented upon, the Italian presence in Africa is often seen in our everyday imaginary as short-lived and limited to the fascist period. This could not be more inaccurate; therefore, I will trace some guidelines of Italy's historical presence in the Horn of Africa, focusing on Shirin's homeland of Somalia.

In the process of writing this thesis, I witnessed first hand the lack of awareness around this era of Italian history. As a matter of fact, I frequently had to explain to those who would ask me about my work what postcolonial studies are and why there are relevant to our country. A quick look at the Ministry of Education's institutional curricula for the teaching of history in schools is enough to realize that Italian students only get an overview on the matter. They are not made aware of the importance this era had in the creation of the national identity, which was developing in parallel with colonialism. Furthermore, I will highlight the importance of an intersectional approach to properly understand the discriminations that black women suffer in comparison to their white counterparts. Therefore, I will talk about the racial and sexist discriminations that happened in the colonies for the affirmation of the supremacy of the white race, along with the myths and imagery created around black women and men. Subsequently, I will address the importance of postcolonial literature as a means of spreading knowledge around (post)colonialism and as a way of challenging the fixed concept of white, male and catholic Italianness. In the light of the Italian 'collective amnesia', this literary genre proves to be crucial for the development of a postcolonial Italian public consciousness that is able to comprehend the nation's past. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the repercussions that colonialism had on both Italians and Africans, giving a voice to people who, for a long time, did not have one. Postcolonial literature is incredibly interesting and multifaceted, and to this day, it is a difficult genre to define, given that very diverse writers fall into this literary category.

Finally, the ending of Chapter 1 will be entirely devoted to Shirin, her life, her background, her works and her contributions to this literary genre. I will dedicate some pages to her six published works: her memoir *Lontano da Mogadiscio* and its translation into English *Far from Mogadishu*, her novel *Nuvole sull'Equatore* and its translation *Clouds over the Equator*, her collections of poems in English *Wings* and its Italian version *Ali spezzate*.

Lontano da Mogadiscio is a very personal book that tells the story of Shirin, her memories of Mogadishu, her departure under Siad Barre's dictatorship and her settling in Italy and in other parts of the world. This pioneer text, one of the first ever to be written without the help of an Italian co-author, is the unprecedented testimony of an immigrant's life in Italy, reporting real-life issues of discriminations, intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia experienced by the author. This memoir has been self-translated from Italian into English almost 20 years after the first publication, gaining international appeal. Shirin's second published work *Nuvole sull'Equatore* is, on the other hand, a novel that tells the story of Giulia, a mixed-race girl living in the Mogadishu of the AFIS period. This book, written in 2010 and self-translated into English years later, casts light on the discrimination faced by *mulatti* children, and their issues in integrating both within the Somali and the Italian communities. The third book I will analyse is her most recent, a collection of poems titled *Wings*. Unlike the two previous works, this last one was originally written in English and later translated into Italian. The poems included in this collection touch on a variety of different topics, giving poetic representation to the journey of immigrants. The poems take the reader on the emotional journey of immigrant people, following them from their childhood memories of home, towards a painful leaving and an often-difficult settling. The author explores the feeling of being caught in the middle and the impossibility of belonging.

Chapter 2 will be devoted to linguistic matters linked to postcolonial literature and hybridization of language. I will start from the idea that, as recounted in the previous chapter, colonial hegemony was maintained in many ways. One of these ways is the preserving of a cultural and linguistic supremacy of the colonial language and culture over native ones. This entails that the history of World domination and colonialism favoured the creation of a hierarchy in languages and cultures, establishing a distinction between major and minor, dominant and native languages. These power dynamics have been systematically maintained in our societies through specific attitudes towards postcolonial writing that identify it as separate branch of a main national literature, forever relegating it to lesser positions. Hence, this chapter will be devoted to the ways in which the speakers of minor languages historically perpetuated strategies to foreground of the native language and culture. This is evident in postcolonial literatures from all over the world, in which the oppressed writers shape the dominant language in ways that

enable them to free themselves from cultural and linguistic subjugation. Specifically, this second part of my dissertation will follow the contributions of eminent scholars such as Ashcroft, Bandia, and Tiffin. I will deal with the linguistic strategies of hybridization and deterritorialization of the dominant language that are used in postcolonial writing for the creation of a political statement that would emancipate and foreground a ‘minor’ heritage. Bearing in mind that the inputs given by these scholars were mainly focused on French and English dominated territories, I will create a list of some of the linguistic feature that hybridize a dominant language. In the second part of this chapter I will then proceed to discuss self-translation, that is, the practice of translating one’s own literary works into another language. This is specifically important to Shirin, as, throughout her life, she has translated much of her production into another language. In this section I will describe the challenges and the positive sides of translating one’s own work. I will then reference authors who have discussed that self-translation can be considered a painful process, as well as an incredible tool for the bridging of different identities. As a matter of fact, as the reader will understand from Chapter 2, the title of this work intends ‘self-translation’ in two ways. The first one can be summarized in the idea of ‘translation of the self’, one that is continuously carried out by postcolonial writers who, on a daily basis, have to translate themselves from a minor language to a major one. The second way in which I will use the term ‘self-translation’ throughout this work is, as intended in Translation Studies, to address the process of re-writing of a work from a language to another carried out by the same author. Therefore, the title of this work refers to this double process of ‘self-translation’ which, in Shirin’s case, happens on both levels. As for the first level, Shirin translates herself from Somali, the language of her family, into Italian, the language imposed on her and her country, which she learned in school. We will see that, like other postcolonial writers, she makes use of linguistic strategies of hybridization to mould Italian into a linguistic means that is capable of ‘carry the weight’ of the colonial experience (Achebe, 1975:62). Moving on to the second level, she translates herself from Italian into English, once again having to subject herself to the dominance of an international language that is much stronger than Italian in the literary market. Therefore, one could call this process of ‘double self-translation’ with the expression ‘living in translation’ which is quite fitting to summarize the life of a writer who, for a reason of another, must continuously translate him or herself. Bandia provided a useful path of

investigation for linguistic deterritorialization in postcolonial contexts, claiming that translation can serve as a metaphorical paradigm for the study of postcolonial writings.

Bandia (2008:3) argued that:

while interlingual translation usually involves importing foreign language elements into one's own culture, postcolonial intercultural writing as translation involves a movement in the opposite direction, an inverse movement of representation of the Self in the language of the Other.

Ashcroft also recognized that the writing of postcolonial authors places itself at the intersection between Translation Studies and Postcolonial Studies (2010:25).

Therefore, throughout this work, I will use the term 'translation' to talk about the traditional concept of translation linked to the linguistic movement from one language into another, as well as the act of translingual and transcultural writing.

Lastly, in the first part of Chapter 3 I will review the main linguistic features of Somali Italian literature and of Shirin's style, which both aim at the foregrounding of the Somali language in relation to Italian. I will analyse the hybridizations of the Italian language and the way authors decide to approach them in relation to their Italian audience. To do so, I will refer to Appiah's model of 'thick translation', Derrida's model of 'translating distance in proximity' and Nida's theory of 'communicative translation', arguing that Shirin, throughout the years, used approaches that refer to all three of these models. In the last part of this chapter, switching again to the second level of my linguistic analysis, I will study Shirin's self-translations, commenting on her translation choices in some passages of her books. I will investigate her choices following two approaches, according to the motives behind them. To the first category belong those adjustments that are made according to a change in audience, from an Italian one to an international one, and vice versa. On the other hand, the second category includes all the aesthetic choices the author made as part of the process of re-writing in self-translation. Authors who self-translate are prone to making bolder translation choices or even radical changes to their own 'originals', often creating a new version of their own texts. We will observe in which ways Shirin, driven by these two reasons, could change her works by adding, removing and altering small sections, paragraphs or pages. Subsequently, I will make my own assumptions as to why Shirin may have made certain translation choices. At the very end of my work, within the conclusive section, I will report an interview I had with Shirin, where I asked her about her relationship with Somali, Italian and English, her approach

to self-translation and her thoughts on the reception of her works and of postcolonial literature.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter, I will give a brief overview of Italy's colonial history as well as debating on its postcolonial status. My working hypothesis is that the postcolonial condition of Italy is one of the factors of everyday life that shapes contemporary culture and society. Consequently, this reality gives rise to a variety of discourses, social practices, and cultural productions that have a specifically postcolonial imprint. In the first section, I will mention some important historical events linked to the relationship between Italy and Africa, focusing especially on the colonial and postcolonial history of Somalia, Shirin Ramzanali Fazel's native land. I will argue that Italy's colonial history has been removed from the public conscience in many ways, causing a delay in the development of a postcolonial debate among scholars and a consequent postponement in the creation of postcolonial awareness. In the second section of Chapter 1, I will specifically talk about the importance that postcolonial literature has in the processes of decolonization of the mind, as a way of challenging the concept of Italianness. This literary genre proves to be crucial for the Italian public consciousness in order to understand and approach the topic of postcolonialism, comprehend the nation's past, as well as the repercussions that the historical events linked to Italy's colonial domination have had on lands and people. Among other things, the postcolonial literary production and its authors challenge the fixed, white and catholic idea of Italianness. They argue that the sense of belonging to a nation does not come from legal status or legal recognition, rather shifting it towards the sharing of everyday experiences and practices, as well as participating in a country's history and using its language in dynamic ways. The migrants in contemporary Italy are contributing to the process of altering the meaning of being Italian, intertwining it with the concept of blackness, in a land where true belonging is still apparently unachievable for black Italians on various degrees. As a matter of fact, national belonging is still very much linked to specific traits, both cultural and biological, that for many are still not achievable with a 'mere' fluency in Italian or an Italian way of life. Rather than being welcomed, recent migrants to Italy have often encountered indifference, intolerance, fear and hostility, continuing to be viewed as outcasts in Italian society. This is evident in the widespread use of the term *extracomunitario*, non-EU citizen, used indistinctively of provenience, but rather associated to superficial traits of skin colour and appearance. As

for Italian identity, Italy can be said to be a country of contradictions, where the approach Italians have toward the concept of national identity has historically seen two opposing tendencies. As argued by Romeo and Lombardi-Diop (2014:13) one is marked by the *ius sanguinis*, which contributes to the preservation of a fixed idea of Italianness even in the face of emigration from the country; the other is marked by the lack of citizenship rights to postcolonial subjects and second-generation immigrants of various origins and backgrounds.

1.1 Postcolonial Italy: a work in progress

In recent years, the topic of Italian colonialism has been studied and analysed directly and indirectly through different media, for example through cinema and literature. These studies hold a variety of different critical methodologies that intertwine postcolonial, cultural, racial and gender studies. The different ways of approaching this matter have highlighted how the cultural production of migrant and postcolonial people is altering the way Italians view their culture and heritage, challenging fixed concepts and propelling the building of a postcolonial conscience. However, despite being crucial, scholar's interest on the topic of the Italian postcolonial condition is quite recent. According to Romeo and Lombardi-Diop (2014:15-18) the diffusion of postcolonial studies in Italy only started in the mid-1990s and developed in the early 2000s in the departments of English and American studies, through the publishing the of pioneer works of Chambers-Curti, Albertazzi and Mellino. During these years, the Roman publishing house Meltemi gave a fundamental contribution to the development of this field of study, publishing the translated works of the main foreign postcolonial theorists, such as Said, Hall, Spivak and many others (ibid.). Consequently, the publishing of these translated works boosted the development of this field in Italy, introducing the concepts of postcolonial theory and literature to a broader audience. As for specifically Italian postcolonial matters, it is in the late 1990s that two volumes (Allen-Russo 1997; Matteo-Bellucci 1999) including a separate section on Italian postcolonialism and its political and cultural implications were published. Moreover, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo (2014:16) argued that the real turning point for Italian postcolonial studies is to be found in the publishing of two books (Ponzanesi 2004; Morosetti 2004), works that for the first time assumed a postcolonial

stance in the reading of various cultural productions of migrants and second-generation Italians. More recent contributions by Comberiati and Brioni will extensively be used as sources in my dissertation, especially for their vast analysis of Shirin's works and their emphasis on Somali studies.

As stated by the above mentioned Brioni (2015:1), the delay in the developing of an Italian postcolonial debate can be attributed to many factors. As a matter of fact, he argued that, up to very recent times, the Italian population has been kept sheltered and in oblivion of their colonial past with the help of the media and the ruling classes. As we mentioned earlier, one of the reasons for this delay can be attributed to the poor literature diffusion on the matter. As it happens, the first monographic works about Italian colonialism with a postcolonial and postfascist perspective only started appearing in the 1970s, and the translations of the milestone authors of postcolonial theory only started circulating at the end of the previous century. Moreover, only few literary works dating between the 1950s and 1980s focus directly on Italian colonialism and its legacy, failing to properly filter through Italian public consciousness (Romeo, Lombardi-Diop, 2014:15-18).

Moreover, contrary to what happened in countries like the UK, France and the Netherlands, after the end of the colonialist period, Italy did not receive huge flows of immigrants coming from the formerly colonized countries, a phenomenon that did not start before the 80s (Romeo, Lombardi-Diop, 2014:8). It is only then that Italy finally started creating a ground for debates on issues of social and political responsibility towards these countries, finally addressing direct colonial accountabilities. On the contrary, even though at first they were among the first people to immigrate to Italy, the demographic impact of Somalis decreased dramatically from the 1980s onwards, when the diaspora moved towards other countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, the US or Canada (Brioni, 2015:2). Likewise, after the fall of Siad Barre's regime and the start of the civil war, many Somali refugees fled to countries where their status would have been more easily recognized compared to Italy. Brioni (2015:2) claimed that after the outbreak of the civil war, Somalia no longer had diplomatic representation in Italy, and that the Italian government took little interest in relationships with the African country ever since. Therefore, one could argue the one of the reasons why the Italian population has little knowledge of Italy's colonial past can be partially linked to the small numbers of immigrants and refugees coming from the former Italian colonies.

Furthermore, the lack of brutal events in the process of decolonization of the African colonies, unlike those that happened in Portuguese or English colonies, made the Italian colonial past somehow low-key to the public opinion, causing Italians to never take full responsibility for their actions (Comberiati, 2010:161). Moreover, the lack of studies on this era of Italian history failed to provide a real conscience of the historical facts around the violence Italians perpetrated against Africans, regardless of the absence of one extreme violent event. The colonial historian Del Boca (1984:19) argued that, in the years that followed the decolonization, the omission and the concealing of violent acts perpetrated by the Italian army against the colonized was a deliberate attempt of the Italian government to restore the nation's reputation that had been harmed during the Second World War. From a literary standpoint, Fotheringham (2019:113) asserted that the lack of attention that was given in Italy to the literature emerging from the former colonies in the years following decolonization is quite arguably one of the main reasons for the delay in the development of this field, contributing significantly to the country's collective amnesia.

In conclusion, although Italy perpetrated attempts to conceal and negate its colonial past, the Italian occupation of lands left visible traces in the architecture, infrastructures, politics, economics, language, and culture of the Horn of Africa. Traces of its colonial past are also present in Italy, if one knows where to look for them. In order to find them, we must start putting the Italian colonial experience at the centre of Italian contemporary history as a key event that shaped identity, culture, and society, and we must start looking for colonial discourses in contemporary practices. This implies reanalysing colonial history in a postcolonial, postfascist perspective on both an Italian and an African standpoint. In the next paragraph I will explore how the overtime processes of underplaying and manipulation of the historical events completely changed popular perception of the Italian colonial past, creating the altered vision of *colonialismo straccione*, one that is deemed 'poor' and not so calculated and evil in comparison to others.

1.2 History of Italian colonialism

Throughout the years, various studies have been conducted on the topic of Italian domination that marked the history of Africa, however most of the knowledge on this topic has been largely influenced by the dominant colonial attitude and ideology (Fotheringham 2019:112). In this section of my work I will provide a general overview of Italy's colonial history, highlighting some meaningful historical events. Furthermore, I will argue that, even if the Italian occupation in Africa was consistent and long, this era of Italian history has been regarded as a marginal aspect of the Italian political history, and has been downplayed as just one among the many examples of the violence and the fascist oppression. The reiterated slogan of *Italiani brava gente*, that defined Italians as good people and good colonizers, and the collective image of an imperialism that was far from being strategic and aggressive, have contributed for almost a century to its forgetting and its distortion. Only the opening of the colonial archives welcomed the arrival of milestone historical works like Del Boca's, who extensively explained the motivations and the impact of the Italian presence in Africa from a strictly historical point of view. As a matter of fact, for the writing of this section I will mainly make use of sources by historians like the above-mentioned Del Boca and Ertola. This segment will give an overview of some of the main characteristics of Italian colonialism, especially focusing on Italy's relationship with Somalia, home of Shirin Ramzanali Fazel. Before anything else, it is crucial to focus on the timeline of Italian colonialism in order to understand just how central it was in the process of the formation of the Italian identity national. As a matter of fact, we must make clear that Italian unification happened in 1861, and Italy started engaging with Africa as soon as twenty years later, profoundly influencing the building of the identity of this newly-founded country (Romeo, 2018:51). In total, Italy's presence in Africa covered a period of about 70 years, from the occupation of the harbour of Assab in 1882, to the end of the Italian Trusteeship in Somalia (AFIS) in 1960.

Focusing on the relationship between Italy and Somalia, the two share a common history that is marked by the rule of Italy during the colonialist period and the later institution of the AFIS administration through the 1950s and 1960s. In the Italian common imaginary, the occupation of the Horn of Africa is usually connected and limited to the Fascist era. However, the Italian influence on Somalia, for instance, started decades before the rise of

Benito Mussolini. Contacts between the two countries began as early as the 1880s, when Italian explorers started contemplating the idea of an expansion into East Africa (Brioni, 2015:1). For instance, the harbours of Benadir, in South Somalia, were leased to Italian commercial companies from 1885 to 1905, when the Italian government brought the region off the British government. The Fascist influence in Somalia only began in 1923, and throughout the 1920s, the Fascists unified the colony, and from 1936 to 1941, Somalia was effectively part of the Italian Empire. Italy formally renounced to the colonies that were lost during World War II with the signing of a peace treaty the on February 10, 1947. The four winning powers of World War II, USA, URSS, France and Great Britain, tried to find a solution for the question of the former Italian colonies, however, failing to find a quick settlement, they handed the issue to the ONU in 1948 (Ertola 2017:13). After the loss of the colonies, the colonial issue became part of the agendas of many Italian political parties. Alcide De Gasperi was the first in 1946 to suggest the handing over of the former colonies to Italian administration, arguing that Italy had largely demonstrated to be capable of bringing civilization to those lands. Moreover, since the year 1946, the Italian government had started founding operations on various level of secrecy in the former Italian colonies through the institution of the MAI, the Ministry of Italian Africa (ibid.). Despite all the atrocities the Italian committed in the colonized territories, after the Second World War and the end of the British occupation of the region, the Fascists were never convicted. On the contrary, Italy received a mandate of trusteeship from the UN for its former colony, with the creation of the Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia (AFIS). The AFIS was a sort of colonialism with a time limit, as the very task of this trusteeship administration was to begin the democratization of Somalia, and to do so, many former Fascist administrators were employed as experts (Brioni, 2015:2). This administration lasted for 10 years, finally ending in 1960 with the independence of Somalia. According to Brioni (2015:2), the permanence of an Italian administration in Somalia after the Second World War had one main consequence in the mass spreading of the Italian language among Somalis. Before that, Italy never had a consistent schooling policy across the colonies, however this changed during the AFIS period, when the Italian government provided education for the Somali population, as well as scholarships for African students to attend Italian universities (Brioni, 2015:2). What resulted from this new education policy is that many Somalis who were brought up in the period of the

AFIS, like Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, were educated in Italian and consequently speak it fluently¹.

According to Ertola (2017:20-30), even before the beginning of the process of colonization, the idea of the empire was forming in the minds of the Italians. The idea of colonialism was to be formed initially in the homeland, where colonial fantasies were being awakened by the information and the ideas promulgated by the government, which truly manufactured an image of these foreign lands and of the people who inhabited them. Those images contributed to the formation in the Italian imaginary of the myth of the colony, seen as a possible way for upgrading in social status. Throughout the 20s and 30s, the Italian population was truly bombarded with propagandistic ideas around the colonies, through publications, cinema, public manifestations and literature. Ultimately, the government was constructing the idea of a great enterprise that would give Italy its old imperial splendour, insisting on fantasies of exoticism, adventure, conquest, and wellness. The most attractive idea for Italian people, especially the lower-middle classes, was the chance of starting a new life and bettering their family status. Undoubtedly, the enthusiasm created by the fascist propaganda had a key role in convincing Italians to move in an unfamiliar place, depicting the African lands as fertile, rich in mines and as places where any business could make a fortune (ibid.). Yet, the fabrication of ideas perpetrated by the government to promote and justify the colonial enterprise before the colonization of Africa did not stop once the lands had been occupied. Rather, this process continued throughout the colonial period with the continuous manipulation of information and the creation of a specific narrative for the Italian colonialist, this time with the intent of imposing the white, catholic, male Italian power on the African 'savage' population. In the fascist propaganda, the Italian violence was deemed reasonable by a claimed superiority, and it was even largely justified arguing that the advantages of the Italian civilization were gladly welcomed among the African population (Fotheringham, 2019:115). Overall, Italians portrayed themselves as inherently good and kind-hearted. They claimed to be the donors of modernity to the indigenous people of Africa, which they would allegedly happily embrace. Moreover, they would justify their endeavours in Africa with the excuse of a Christianising mission, something that would save these populations from the threatening influence of Islam.

¹ On top of that, we must remember that the Somali alphabet was only codified in 1972.

The myth of the good Italian is a common narrative template used to portray the Italian imperialist conduct in a favourable light in comparison to other European nations (Del Boca, 1984:77). Yet, historical research conducted on this era of Italian history shows that Italy exploited resources, lands and created internment and concentration camps. As reported by Fortheringham (2019:112-118), recent research shows that Italians were far from being good colonizers: between 1911 and 1932, a total of one hundred thousand in Libyans and Cyrenaicans was killed, many of which died in the razing of Tripoli or in the fascist concentration camps built at the command of Marshall Graziani. In Ethiopia more than three hundred thousand people died defending the country against Mussolini's aggression in the colonial war, during which Italy became the only power to ever use poison gas in a colonial conflict. Moreover, like any other colonial power, Italy did not refrain from producing a set of discourses to control, contain and conceptualize the subjected 'other', and these discourses mark the relationship between Italy and Africa to this day. According to Ertola (2017:23-30), the Italian administration held two contrasting behaviours in the colonies on the topic of integration and apartheid. Before the year 1936, the Italian authorities maintained assimilationist tendencies, allowing legal recognition and citizenship rights for the children Italians had with African women, and, from 1933, they also granting illegitimate mixed children citizenship rights. Yet, the wall between dominators and dominated was kept with an informal form of racism, which was based on discriminatory practices shared by the local Italian population. However, Ertola (ibid.) affirms that everything changed with the conquering of Ethiopia, when the Horn of Africa was stormed with a new and fast affluence of Italians. The unwritten rules of internal discriminations started not being enough to maintain the social hierarchy, so much so that Mussolini thought it was necessary to start adopting formal measures to safeguard the 'prestige of the white race'. In 1936, Italy started enforcing apartheid measures with the law 1019 of 1936, which deprived people of mixed race of their Italian citizenship, education, and formation to Italian culture. Likewise, law 880 of 1937 punished interracial unions with a sentence of up to five years of imprisonment, a directive that resulted in the massive discrimination and segregation of mixed-race children and of African women who could not claim family rights from Italian men (Ertola, 2017:25-40). These tendencies towards segregation in the Italian African colonies, where the numbers of Africans were far superior compared to the number of Italians, show that the protection

of the 'racial superiority' of the white population had to be maintained with various social, cultural, biological and anthropological strategies (Fortheringham, 2019:116). One way of maintaining the fixed hierarchy and enforcing white dominance was through the banning of miscegenation, that is the physical, social and cultural blending of races, discouraging intercourses with the black population for sanitary reasons. Additionally, it was said that contacts with black people would corrupt the white moral and culture, breaking the barrier between the superior colonizer and the inferior colonized, ultimately causing the biological degradation of the white race.

Moreover, Ertola (2017:25) argued that, in the 20th century, the colonies became the place where the traditional family found its maximum expression, encouraged by the authorities as a guarantee for the thriving and purity of whiteness. Italian women were encouraged to go to the colonized lands as they would keep the social order by taking care of the men's sexual impulses and becoming a bastion against interracial unions that would corrupt the white race. Ertola (2017:27) reports that as soon as Mussolini's army started the occupation of Ethiopia, the *duce* told Badoglio and Graziani that it was not allowed for Italian men in African lands to be unmarried for more than six months upon their arrival. Even the Pope spoke about the issue of mixed unions, suggesting sending families in the colonies rather than single individuals, and that they would need to be provided with a religious conscience. The government strongly discouraged any sexual contact between Africans and Italians with the intention to solve the problem of madams, African women who had intercourse with Italian men. Moreover, with the intention of promoting 'pure' unions, the government perpetuated a continuous and sometimes forced importation of white women and white prostitutes in Africa, and many Italian unmarried girls were offered jobs in the colonies. Furthermore, the propaganda of the dictatorship would also insist on the idea that African women were easy preys because they were said to be uncivilised, sexually overactive and promiscuous. These ideas were massively propagated in Italy with the circulation of pictures and images that portrayed naked African women, showing just to which extent concepts of masculinity played a key role in the psychology of the colonizers on multiple levels. As a matter of fact, the fascist stress on masculinity resulted in a constant sexual tension related to the appropriation of the feminine body, which went hand in hand with the appropriation of lands and resources, ultimately shaping the male Italian identity as a dominating one. The desire for

sexual intercourse with black women sometimes was so strong that it resulted in sexual assault and rape. Even when intercourse did not include physical violence, it is still understandably hard to discern which contact might have been consensual, especially if we consider the strong underlying power dynamics (Romeo, 2018:51-54).

In addition to the ban of miscegenation, another measure adopted by the empire to endorse segregation was the implementation of a racially divided urbanization. Bans for white people to enter the houses of the Africans and the indigenous areas of the cities were in place, as well as a ban for white people to enter any kind of shop or activity run by an African person, and the establishment a curfew. In other words, the superiority of white, catholic Italians was not only military imposed, but also reinforced socially and psychologically with segregation measures for the maintenance of racial prestige. This was carried out with the gradual but systematic isolation of the black population from the white urban public space as well as the punishing of any personal close contact between Italians and Africans (Ertola, 2017:25-40).

We may conclude that, even if there is still a long way to go for colonial and postcolonial Italian studies, in recent years many scholars have given great contributions for a deeper understanding of the subject and its social, cultural and political implications. A valid starting point would be to look at the actions of previous generations in a critical way, dismantling of the myth of the good colonizer and ultimately reevaluating the role Italy played in Africa. There is still a long way to go for a full reassessing of the repercussion that colonialism had on the oppressed people and lands, as well as on our own national identity, considering the circumstances in which it was formed. Moreover, one way of greatly boosting the development of postcolonial studies in Italy and give it new cues lays in the valorisation of postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literary works contribute to the rewriting of the collective memory and the creation of a counternarrative of colonialism from the perspective of single authors and entire populations, finally handing African people the chance of writing about themselves, telling their story from their own perspective and taking back control on their own narrative. In the next paragraph I will explain that postcolonial writing can aid the Italian population in the reconsidering of their national identity and historical memory, through a means that is not only consumed by scholars but can also be enjoyed by a wide audience of people.

1.3 Postcolonial Italian literature: issues of race and gender

According to Romeo (2018:1), one of the most distinguished scholars in this field, postcolonial Italian literature is one of the most relevant literary phenomena of the last few decades, from an historical, cultural and artistic point of view. Each literary work is a representation of the social changes that happened worldwide with the developing of global migration flows, which challenges fixed concepts of national identities. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the importance of postcolonial Italian literature, attempting to give a definition of the genre. Furthermore, I will deal with its gender and racial perspectives, along with explaining its importance in current society in relation to the Italian collective amnesia around colonialism and its consequences.

1.3.1 Definition of the genre

Over the years, this literary genre has been called with a variety of different names that include the words ‘italophone’, ‘migrant’, ‘postmigrant’, ‘multicultural’, ‘diasporic’, ‘intercultural’ and so on. Some of these terms have been considered problematic, as they merely state the coexistence of multiple languages or multiple cultures in a literary system, without analysing the historical power dynamics at the root of this copresence. Indeed, this literature is profoundly shaped by the difference of power between the nations and people that stems in the colonial context. According to Romeo (2018:2), the definition ‘postcolonial Italian literature’, which conventionally started circulating in the year 1990, proves to be the most comprehensive for this genre, even if still somewhat controversial. Yet, this definition proves to be crucial, as it focuses on the very specific power relationship created in colonial settings and on the way these dynamics are replicated in modern days through discrimination and racialization.

Choosing to refer to this genre by stressing its postcolonial nature, equates rereading and rewriting Italian history while listening to the point of view of new writing subjects. This highlights how the power dynamics of colonialism are reproduced in contemporary Italian society, questioning the social and cultural privilege of Italians and becoming conscious of the need to broaden the spectrum of Italian literature to reflect the social changes of the past decades. One of the many reasons as to why this literary genre is so

important to Italian society and culture lies in the fact that it reverses the process of collective forgetfulness that started after the Second World War and that went on up until recent times. What the writers of this genre are doing is casting light on consciously or unconsciously forgotten matters, challenging our history and theirs, rewriting it and contributing to the creation of new social and cultural scenarios for the future, giving their own perspective on the matter.

Stating the existence of a postcolonial literature and extending this term to the current Italian situation is crucial not only on a cultural and literary level, but also on a social and political point of view. Moreover, using a postcolonial perspective when viewing Italian history gives a sense of temporal and special continuity: it connects the present to the colonial past and intranational emigration and immigration streams, considering that Italians in different eras have taken on positions of power or subalternity (Romeo, 2018:26). Such an holistic perception is crucial in order to understand how the Italian identity developed on the basis of historical events and why in contemporary Italy there is cultural resistance (on a social and cultural level) against extending the right of 'Italianness' to the newcomers and their descendants (Romeo, 2018:3-5). Through their cultural production, postcolonial writers in contemporary Italy contribute to:

- clarifying the colonial heritage,
- exposing contemporary racist discourse as a legacy of colonialism,
- highlighting the processes of racialization at the basis of the creation of the Italian identity,
- denouncing the relationships of power between Italian women and first and second immigrant women, and
- stressing the resistance exercised by Italians in interweaving concepts of Italianness and blackness in a society that is historically white and catholic.

Side-lining this literary genre without including it in the spectrum of Italian literature, three decades after its starting point, can be considered a neo-colonial practice. In challenging the concept of national identity and contributing to its rewriting, postcolonial authors give a unique contribution to Italian literature. It will be interesting to see to which degree the forthcoming social and cultural changes will bridge the discrepancies between

the two literary genres, until the distinction between the two in the literary space will become obsolete and meaningless. This will all depend on how, over the years, the intellectual élite and the canon will relate to those works, either perpetrating the use of ghettoizing labels or behaving in a more inclusive way, treating this genre as a valuable and true form of Italian literature. Brioni agrees, arguing that it is important not to create a specific ethnic subgenre within Italian literature (2015:5). Alternatively, he proposes an approach that would mark fluidity of boundaries through which national literatures have usually defined themselves, enabling authors to not confine themselves in one national environment at a time.

According to Comberinati (2010:164), for a long time the works of writers coming from former Italian colonies were analysed without enough attention and proper critical and theoretical means. Even if the corpus of postcolonial works has increased in size over the past decade, it could still be argued that this literary genre lacks a core text that summarises its fundamental aspects and features and that is able to give a proper definition of the genre. The incredible diversity that characterizes this type of literature makes it difficult for scholars to agree on which authors have a background that fits into this genre, based on various criteria such as family history, familiarity with the Italian language, citizenship etc. For his part, Comberinati (ibid.:168) suggests that a lesser inclusive definition of this literary genre might run the risk of missing the real complexity of this phenomenon, suggesting instead a broad inclusion of different authors. As a matter of fact, he incorporates in this genre authors with incredibly different backgrounds, such as writers coming from Italian families living in the colonies, from mixed families, some born and raised in Africa, some born in Africa but raised in Italy, as well as those born in Italy by African parents etc. In Comberinati's broad definition of this literary phenomenon also fit second-generation immigrant authors, who again have a variety of different experiences and backgrounds, some of them coming from mixed families, some who spent some time in Africa, and others who never have. Comberinati (Ibid.:171) also advocates for a geographical broadening of the spectrum of postcolonial literature, including countries that have historically been influenced by Italy to various degrees, advising a reconsideration of the concept of 'colonial influence' that would include non-colonized places such as Albania or Tunisia.

Regardless of the indecision that sometimes pervades academics in the definition of this literary genre, including or excluding authors based on their backgrounds, Romeo (2018:11-30) attempted to investigate the tendencies of this literature. She divides its development into three main phases according to their characteristics, collocating the official beginning of postcolonial Italian literature in the year 1990. According to Romeo (ibid.), the first era between the years 1990 to 1994 can be called the period of ‘literature of migration’, which saw female and male immigrants create texts in cooperation, recounting tales of migration and pondering on the displacement caused by it. Among these texts, there are a number of cooperative autobiographies that reflect the desire of migrants to narrate their stories, as well as the desire of the Italian public to get to know the experiences of immigrants. The common themes of these works are:

- questions of hybridity and hybridization;
- war in many forms;
- the description of the colonial capital cities as places of contradiction;
- the theme of returning and the impossibility of returning to the motherland or the disappointment of returning;
- discrimination based on skin colour;
- islamophobia.

As we will see in later sections, these themes are to be found extensively in Shirin Ramzanali Fazel’s autobiographical book *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, which saw the light exactly in the year 1994. Similar autobiographical narrations prove to be important because the stories they tell are not merely relevant to those who narrate them. On the contrary, they have the privilege to represent the collective experience of a population, even though, any author is, in many ways, one of a kind. The importance of these stories lies in the fact that they are narrated for the first time *to* Italians and not *by* Italians. For the first time, Italians are passive listeners of personal stories that are told first-hand by their protagonists. Italy is portrayed now in the gaze of ‘the others’ and Italians can discover things about themselves through that very gaze.

Romeo (2018:14-19) collocates the second stage of postcolonial Italian literature between 1995 and 2001 and calls it a ‘transitional phase’. This category present similar themes but

partially a new cultural and social relevance, as this era sees the creation of many magazines and literary prizes catered to this genre. The works created in this stage are more diverse compared to the previous ones, preparing the ground for a third and more complex phase, which is also characterized by the experience of second-generation immigrants. These works are still based on the experience of migration from a social standpoint, but they manage to bring a new and more personal perspective based on the concept of identity. The characteristics of this phase are the publication of works in small publishing houses, the development of new unexplored literary genres like poetry and novels, and the experimentation with magazines and anthologies. Subsequently, the final and current stage, which started in 2001, is characterized by an extremely diverse literary production. It originated from the seeds that had already been planted by the protagonists of the previous periods. According to Romeo (2018:20-30), with the start of the new millennium, the themes have acquired a more postcolonial feel. Authors have started to discuss themes that are critical counter discourses against Italian colonialism. The most recurrent topics are the implications of colonialism and racism, the processes of racialization in the Italian society, citizenship rights for second-generation immigrants, and the way migration redefines the concepts of national identity. This stage has seen the coming of new authors and the affirmation of veterans that had contributed to the genre in previous years. Moreover, scholars call ‘direct postcolonial literature’ the production of authors who had a direct relationship with Italian colonialism, particularly in the Horn of Africa. These countries, despite their different histories, all share a close relationship with the Italian culture and language. The writers who belong to this category keep providing a crucial contribution for the decolonization of Italian memory, culture and society. On the other hand, the third phase defined by Romeo also sees the beginning of a second-generation postcolonial literature, written by *de iure* or *de facto* Italian citizens with foreign roots but no direct experience of colonialism. This new generation of writers symbolizes the merging of Italianness and alterity in the process of globalization linked to culture and literary production. They blend their knowledge of Italian language and culture with elements of hybridity, mixing Italian, dialects, African languages, slang and so on, to voice their everchanging conditions in contemporary Italy.

As for Somali Italian postcolonial literature, Brioni shows to which extent this genre is multidimensional and differentiated. In his work *The Somali Within* (2015:7), he includes

a very diverse group of works and authors: these writers have quite diverse backgrounds and belong to different generations, they came to Italy under different conditions, or in some cases, are Italian citizens who never experienced migration. On top of different family backgrounds, the authors may have different linguistic education. A small minority born after the codification of the Somali alphabet learned to write in Somali rather than in Italian, whereas most of them were educated in the language of the invaders. Regardless of the different life stories and experiences of its authors, Somali Italian literature can be said to share a number of common features, providing an insight on the life of people who have suffered discriminations based on their race, gender, class and religion (Brioni, 2015:7). Another aspect shared by many authors of Somali Italian literature is the lack of wide distribution by large publishing houses. Despite the relevance of the issues addressed in these literary works, diasporic writings have historically encountered initial difficulties in being published in Italy outside a small circle of alternative, smaller publishers, specialized magazines or voluntary organizations. For many years, only a handful of works have been printed by publishers with strong distribution networks, limiting most of the pieces to a restricted cultural market. Brioni (2015:8) argues that this not necessarily all negative: small publishing houses have provided these volumes with rather experimental formats and still allowed the public the privilege of listening to the voices of non-native speakers. The tardiness and caution in the publication of these works is perhaps linked to a perplexity towards the birth of a postcolonial Italian literature and the consequent establishment of an independent postcolonial field. Indeed, Italian postcolonial literature still can be said to have a minor role compared to other major colonial countries such as the UK or France. Many scholars argue that some Italians are still unaware or choose deliberately to avoid this topic, a tendency that can be summarized in the attempt to name a mausoleum in Affile, Rome, after the Fascist criminal Rodolfo Graziani as recently as 2012 (Brioni, 2015:11).

Even though many of those works are currently out of print and not easy to find on paper, the recent development and expansion of e-books gave some of these works a second life, partially eliminating the issue of lack of accessibility. The situation is now getting better, as some major publishing houses have recently increasingly accepted the work of postcolonial writers. Some of them are also starting to receive critical attention abroad and in Italy, probably due to the so-called 'postcolonial turn' and the development of

postcolonial studies in our nation over the past twenty years (Brioni, 2015:10). While the resistance to a transformation and creolization of the canon is still high, we have to ask ourselves how many generations will have to pass until this literary genre and these authors will be considered an integral and fundamental part of Italian literature. This will only happen when this genre will stop bearing the mark of ghettoizing labels that overshadow its great importance.

1.3.2 Gender perspectives in Postcolonial Italian literature

Studying this literary genre with a focus on issues of race and identity is indeed crucial, but it is equally as important to keep a gender-oriented perspective. As argued by Comberiati (2010:167), almost half of the published texts belonging to this literary genre have been written by female writers, which is quite the sizeable percentage if we consider that not even 10% of writers in contemporary Italian literature are women. When exploring these works, we must, therefore, take on what scholars called an ‘intersectional point of view’ (Romeo, 2018:47). Thus, we must consider that the authors who belong to this literary genre suffer a multidimensional discrimination. First, they are black, a feature that makes them stand out in a white society and in a white dominated literary field. Secondly, many of them are women in a male dominated society and literary field. An intersectional theoretical and methodological approach creates a convergence between categories of oppression instead of considering them separately. As a matter of fact, it provides a broad perspective on this literature, allowing us to think of the categories of oppression not as monolithic and separate concepts, rather putting the focus on the ways they may interweave with each other. If we looked at discrimination factors as isolated and independent units, we would end up making the mistake of focusing on the strongest group in a specific category — for instance white women in the gender category and black men in the race category. By doing so, we would overlook the intersection between blackness and womanhood, which is extremely relevant in this field and for authors like Shirin Ramzanali Fazel. According to Romeo (2018:48), the intersectional approach successfully highlights the heterogeneity that must be kept in mind when talking about women, and the fact that not all women have historically received the same treatment or shared the same oppression. In the following section I will look at how the representation

of black women was manipulated for propagandistic and utilitarian purposes with the goal of domination and supremacy. Moreover, I will argue that these discourses still live on and must be fought against by black women to this day.

The reputation and imaginary connected to black women in the colonial setting is very specific and relevant to the colonial mission. Concepts of barbarity and inferiority connected to blackness have historically been employed for the creation of several images and stereotypes used to endorse the colonial discourse. Similarly, images and stereotypes were created around black women for propagandistic purposes. As reported by Romeo (2018:51), the conquest of lands with the mission of civilization and the general penetration of foreign and mysterious lands are profoundly linked to the desire to conquest the black body, something just as foreign and mysterious. Therefore, the treatment of black women and the images built around them by the white colonizers are extremely important to properly understand the colonial discourse and the repercussions it may have had on our mentality. As we have previously mentioned, the colonial discourse created for domination and justification purposes is tightly connected to the process of building of a white Italian masculinity through the erotic and exotic fantasies pushed on black women. As a matter of fact, Romeo (ibid.) argues that construction of the Italian white, male, and catholic national identity coincides with the beginning of the colonial missions. Such identity was very much connected to the capability of white males to successfully tame, dominate and exploit both lands and populations.

Shirin herself, in her novel *Nuvole sull'Equatore*, while talking about Giulia's father Guido, highlights that (2017a:4):

era contento di partire per l'Africa. La propaganda dell'epoca alimentava la fantasia popolare facendo sognare i giovani della sua età e ingigantiva i miti del continente misterioso. Grande rilievo era stato posto nell'esaltare la gloriosa espansione coloniale in corso: portare a civiltà europea in quelle terre remote era diventato un dovere sacrosanto. Ciò che però stimolava maggiormente la fantasia del maschio italico erano le belle e voluttuose veneri nere, raffigurate nelle cartoline di promesse per l'uomo bianco.

In order for this exploitation to appear more justifiable, the colonial discourse was pervaded with stereotypes that depicted black women as hypersexualized beings, shifting the attention away from the violence perpetrated by the Italians, and even justifying it using the myth of black women's excessive sexual desire. These ideas were starkly in contrast with the elevation of white women, depicted as the bearers of the catholic family and bastions of racial purity. On the other hand, in the colonial setting the 'black Venus'

incarnated racial and gender ‘otherness’, triggered sexual fantasies in colonial men and allowed the fulfilment of prohibited and exciting sexual desires that were deemed incompatible with the accepted sexuality of the traditional Catholic Italian middle class family (Romeo, 2018: 52).

These stereotypes of race and gender are still very much present in the Italian imaginary, and it is still common for black women in the media to be racialized and reduced to pure sexuality. These ideas have been interiorised by the Italian consciousness and have become of common use in a culture that has not yet accepted and dealt with its experience as a colonial oppressor. According to Romeo (Ibid.:54), even in some of the more recent books set in former Italian colonies, as recent as Lucarelli’s *L’ottava vibrazione* (2008) and *Albergo Italia* (2014), the female characters are represented in a highly stereotyped way. This is drenched in sexism and exoticism, through which the Italian colonial past is depicted as an era of adventure and conquest of lands and women. Lucarelli depicts women according to the Italian colonial stereotypes, as creatures without words, or history, as hypersexual beings, instinctive and animal-like (Romeo, 2018:57). The same stereotypes are still largely used in Italian cinema, advertisement, or literature, both in contexts of recreation of colonial settings and in present postcolonial situations. Thus, the intersectional approach successfully highlights and gives importance to the differences in privilege between white women and black women, and to the dynamics that still to this day underline difference and inequality. For instance, black women are still often linked to housekeeping jobs, thanks to which their white counterparts affirm their family’s social status. Moreover, trends linked to contemporary migration make us reflect on how white women still maintain a neo-colonial relationship towards black immigrant women. The market laws that regulate migration flows make it easier for black women to be employed as domestic and sex workers, something that keeps them tied to a position of subalternity that still to this day has not disappeared (Romeo, 2018:72).

In conclusion, colonial gender representations are still very much present in our everyday society and in Italian people’s imaginary. As a response, an intersectional approach proves essential in order to debunk stereotypes, understand their origin and why they are an important aspect of postcolonial literature and its reception. As a matter of fact, the function of postcolonial literature is in many ways to demystify and explain colonial stereotypes. These images can only be subverted with counter narrations that have a

rebellious purpose against the colonial ideas perpetuated in the colonies and in neo-colonial settings. In these counter-narratives, black men and women need to be depicted and to depict themselves as complex characters, both in interactions among themselves and in society. In doing so they affirm their capacity for ‘agency’ inside and outside the domestic space, disproving the idea of the hypersexualized black Venus and of submissiveness and barbarity linked to blackness and womanhood (ibid.:76). Thus, postcolonial female writers must carry out their postcolonial resistance on different facets and fight battles on various fronts, not only in the field of race but also for what concerns gender issues and at the intertwining on these two grounds.

1.3.3 Racial perspectives in Postcolonial Italian Literature

As I have been arguing so far, postcolonial literature proves to be fundamental as a way of decolonizing the Italian collective consciousness and finally dealing with a painful past that has been purposefully forgotten or camouflaged. Literary works belonging to the postcolonial literary genre, along with the works of Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, most obviously propel debates on racial issues, casting light on matters of discrimination on racial and religious base. As contended by Brioni (2015:61):

the frequent evocation and reference to Italian colonial history and colonial stereotypes tracks the origins of the uneven relationship between Italy and the African ‘other’, creating a link to the present, showing that the exclusion of colonized subjects within Italian colonies is reduplicated in the current discrimination of immigrants, especially those of Muslim origins.

Therefore, postcolonial literature ties together colonialism with everyday issues of discrimination, giving discourses of contemporary racism a reason and a starting point. Starting from the idea that the lack of a collective acceptance of the nation’s past as a colonialist power has repercussions on many aspects of our contemporary society, we will be able to see that there has been a tendency in the media and in popular culture in depicting episodes of racism and intolerance as sporadic acts of violence. On the contrary, what we are witnessing are underlying racist tendencies that have very complex roots. Therefore, it is necessary to reinterpret these vicious acts as manifestation of racism that stems from a complex legacy, finally creating a link between Italy’s colonial past and its postcolonial present. Understanding how these dynamics influence our society is as easy as thinking about how crimes committed *against* immigrants, or how crimes committed

by immigrants are portrayed in the media. It is as easy as thinking about how common it is for football fans to use expressions and insults of racial derivation on a regular Sunday afternoon at the stadium, or as common as hearing someone say ‘go back to your country’ on public transportation.

According to Romeo (2018:108) several are the strategies that are used to underplay acts of racism and imperialism in the media. As a matter of fact, we encourage these patterns every time violent episodes are underplayed or labelled as acts of ignorance, exasperation or individual acts of insanity. Such racist behaviours are often turned into issues of immigration, citizenship, religion, clandestinely, and cultural differences, becoming the new incarnation of racism in postcolonial contemporary societies. As a matter of fact, racism of today does not preach some sort of biological superiority like it did in the past, rather it highlights the incompatibility of cultural differences and the unsuitability in the coexistence of different traditions, customs and religions. According to Romeo (*ibid.*: 83), this creates a shift from ‘regular racism’, which argues the existence of different races with different biological traits, to what Pierre-André Taguieff called ‘differential racism’ (1999). This concept affirms the incompatibility between different groups that have dissimilar traditions, cultures and religions.

Thus, literature helps us to focus the attention on everyday patterns and customs that may highlight discriminatory tendencies with colonial traces, and these may become evident in the experiences narrated by postcolonial authors. In the debate around the legacy and the Italian postcolonial memory, the study of these racist and imperial tendencies enables us to examine how the imperial and colonial imaginary keeps on influencing to various degrees contemporary Italian society, and how this inheritance displays itself in the collective memory through apparently harmless manifestations. One of these apparently innocent displays, as Ricatti (in Romeo, Lombardi-Diop 2014:122-134) reflects upon in multiple essays, is linked to the imperial fantasies associated to the fanbases of Italian football clubs such as AS Roma. What may look like a simple playful activity dictated by the passion for the sport or team, cloaks a system marked with imperialistic inclinations. When analysed from an historical and postcolonial point of view, it can be a good starting point in the debate on the relationship between history, memory and racism in Italy and in its capital city. Concerning this debate, Ricatti argues that it is particularly shocking that these behaviours are often overlooked and deemed as light-hearted, especially seeing

the impact and importance of football in Italy. The glorious celebration of Rome employs a language and a rhetoric that is typically colonial and imperial, proving just how much the collective memory of Italian colonialism and fascism are frail and approximative.

In the light of everything I have argued up to this point, in the third section of Chapter 1 I are going to take a look at Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, collocate her in the postcolonial Italian literary panorama and discuss how her works, *Lontano da Mogadiscio* and *Nuvole sull'Equatore*, and *Wings* say on matters of discriminations.

1.4 Shirin Ramzanali Fazel

In this dissertation, I will be mainly focusing on three works by Shirin Ramzanali Fazel titled *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, *Nuvole sull'Equatore* and *Wings*. Along with these books, I will be analysing her self-translations *Far from Mogadishu* and *Clouds over the Equator* and *Ali spezzate*. Throughout my study I will reference different editions of Shirin's works, in order to highlight the changes that the author made during the years in the process of self-translation.

In her life, Shirin has employed different literary genres to talk about colonialism, postcolonialism, migration and her experience as a Somali woman in Italy. For her first work, *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, she used an autobiographical style, later moving on to novels, short stories and, in later times, doubling in poetry. Throughout her career she has written in both Italian and English, translating her own works either in one language or another, according to necessity. As I extensively discussed in the previous sections, the Italian occupation of Somalia was lengthy. In her memoir, Shirin explains that she was born under peculiar political circumstances at the time of the AFIS, precisely in 1959, from a Somali mother and a Pakistani father. She learned Italian in this political environment, studying in middle schools and high schools run directly by the Italian Ministry of Education, following the same curriculum as any other kid going to school on the Italian peninsula (Fazel, 2017b:27). As we will see throughout this section, Shirin's experience of migration is quite unique in many ways. First of all, she fled Somalia for political reasons because, after the coup d'état of 1969, Siad Barre ordered all people who did not own a Somali passport to leave the country. This left Shirin, who did not own one because of her Pakistani origins, the only option of exile (Fazel, 2017b:163). Second of

all, when she arrived in Italy in 1971, she was already married to an Italian man, formally making her an Italian citizen (Ibid.). Even if Shirin's life cannot be considered typical or universal, it is still incredibly useful to understand the experience of migrant people moving to Italy, as her books reflect on common themes in the life of any migrant, like xenophobia, citizenship rights, hybridity, home and so on. Shirin never ended up settling in Italy, as she continued moving all around the world and all over Italy, in Novara, Vicenza, Rome and Milan, also living in foreign cities like Los Angeles, New York, Paris and London. She lived between Italy and Kenya from 1996 to 2004. For the past few years she has been living with her family in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Many postcolonial Italian literary works have a long and complicated publishing history, and Shirin's works are no exception. *Lontano da Mogadiscio* was published for the first time 25 years ago, in 1994, then later reprinted in 1997. A second edition was printed in 1999 as an explained bilingual version in Italian and English, republished then a second time in 2013. The current editions were published in 2017 and they separate the English text from the Italian. The 2013 edition of the book, which made it available for a much wider, anglophone audience, includes a long afterword written by Brioni about the importance of this work in the Italian postcolonial literary field. In 2010, Shirin published her first novel titled *Nuvole sull'Equatore - Gli italiani dimenticati. Una storia*, where the racialization of African people is dealt with from an interesting perspective. Through the narration of the life of Giulia, a mixed-race little girl, Shirin deals with the stigmas surrounding the children of mixed Italo-Somali couples. Shirin gives an important contribution on the topic of women and discrimination, underpinning once again the value of an intersectional approach, casting light on the role of women in colonial and postcolonial settings. In 2017, the international publishing house CreateSpace published a self-translated English version titled *Clouds over the Equator - The forgotten Italians*. In recent years, Shirin branched out in the literary genre of poetry, publishing *Wings* (2017c), a collection of poems written in English, self-translating them into Italian the following year with the printing of *Ali spezzate* (2018). Shirin is a prime example of an author of the Somali diaspora who presents her heritage in multiple languages, proliferating in both Italian and English. On this topic, we must remember that the Somali language acquired a codified written alphabet only in 1972, after Shirin had already migrated to Italy. Therefore, even if Somali is the language of her family and her home,

her fluency in written Italian is higher compared to her fluency in written Somali, as the former was the language of her studies.

In the next two sections I will discuss the main themes and topics linked to Shirin Ramzanali Fazel's memoir *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, her novel *Nuvole sull'Equatore* and her collection of poems *Wings*.

1.4.1 *Lontano da Mogadiscio* and *Far from Mogadishu*

Lontano da Mogadiscio is a crucial work in the contemporary postcolonial literary panorama for multiple reasons. In the following section I will give an overview of the main themes and highlight the importance of the book from a postcolonial perspective. Most obviously, this work is an interesting example of the narration of the experience of diaspora in a literary perspective. It shows the dynamic character of diasporic writing and its importance in becoming the means through which a writer can find a space to discuss the ways their multi-layered cultural identity is developed and formed. In this book, Shirin Ramzanali Fazel reflects upon her hybrid Italo-African identity, holding a double perspective and positioning herself in unique ways according to the situation, closer or further to Italy or Somalia. What she creates is a dynamic of double belonging – to the African native land and to the acquired home of Italy— and double non-belonging, where Somalia is seen as a distant memory and Italy as a place where the author can never fully blend in because of her skin colour, heritage and religion. (Fazel, 2017b:162)

As I have argued so far, works like *Lontano da Mogadiscio* play a crucial part in the process of decolonization of the Italian mentality, contributing in the process of coming to terms with the nation's painful history and the nature of a relationship established under colonial rule. As argued by Ahad and Gerrand (2004:13-24), the literature of the Somalia diaspora assists Italy in developing an insight into its colonial past and the role of colonialism and postcolonialism in contemporary culture. The writing of the Somali diaspora challenges the preconceived notions linked to Italian identity. Therefore, this literature has the potential of subverting prejudices, superficiality, indifference and ignorance, transporting people in someone else's shoes and looking at reality through their eyes. Deepening the collective awareness of Italy's colonial heritage in Somalia involves starting to value the cultural contributions of migrants in Italy and to finally rate

multiethnicity and multiculturalism as a cultural enrichment rather than a threat to Italianness.

As a matter of fact, one of the core themes of postcolonial texts is the denouncing of the oblivion around Italian colonial history and the uneven dialogue between the two lands, as much of Somalia is widely unknown in contemporary Italy. Shirin is one among many authors to condemn this phenomenon. She and her compatriots speak a language they learned during the AFIS period and in the first years of independence, and have grown up in the shadow of Italian culture, cinema, literature and music, whereas Italians ignore the fact that Somalia was ever a colony. Upon her arrival in Italy in the '70s, she quickly found out that the knowledge she had of the country was very unilateral, unlike what she expected, and that some Italians were oblivious even to where Somalia is. Moreover, Fazel noted that even if she was perfectly fluent in Italian, people would talk to her using the infinitive form of verbs and in a loud voice (2017b:31), probably due to the colour of her skin and the widespread idea that deemed blackness and Italianness as completely irreconcilable. On the topic of the Italian ignorance around Africa, notably, on page 32 of the 2017 edition, she points out that (2017b:32):

All'inizio me la prendevo, poi capii la grande ignoranza che c'era. Loro conoscevano solo l'africano dei documentari in bianco e nero, l'africano dei film di Tarzan che fa roteare gli occhi parlando all'infinito. Provai una gran rabbia dentro, ma non per loro! Io, come moltissimi somali, avevo studiato la lingua italiana e la storia d'Italia, mentre l'Italia non si era mai degnata di fare altrettanto con noi. Gli italiani ignoravano tutto di noi. I bambini, in Italia, sui libri di scuola hanno ancora la figura del negretto col gonnellino di paglia, l'anello al naso e l'osso tra i capelli, pensavo.

Lontano da Mogadiscio carries a testimony of Italy and Somalia. On one hand it reconstructs an image of Mogadishu from the memories of the writer, and on the other, it narrates the unique experience of a Somali person living in Italy. It is one of the first texts to ever present Italy from the point of view of the formerly colonized. This book constitutes a unique testament of an immigrant person's life living in northern Italy in the seventies and eighties, at a time that preceded later bigger migration flows and when the collective amnesia on colonial matters was in full force. The book recounts the daily discriminations immigrants had to face for racial, cultural and religious reasons. Most obviously, the theme of migration is central to Shirin's work and it enables Italians to understand the point of view of migrants who experienced continuous problems in the recognition of their rights and in social perception. Shirin highlights the discrimination

she experienced, comparing life as a migrant in Italy and in other countries she has lived in, such as the UK or America (2017b:105-130).

At the same time, this work bears the memory of a glorious Mogadishu, in all its colours and smells. However, this city exists only in her memory because she had to witness its destruction in civil conflicts and political crisis. Throughout the text, the use of sensual elements linked to sight and smell, the extensive use of evocative adjectives and the detailed descriptions recreate the real Somali atmosphere. By transporting the readers on a journey to Africa, Shirin gives an inside glimpse in the customs, traditions and lives of those forever deemed as 'foreigners' (2017b:5-13). This set of idyllic images is in complete contrast with another picture of Somalia that Shirin paints in the book, that is, the reality of a country in complete disarray, where cities are in ruins and children play with rifles rather than toys. The author grieves the fact that the places that formed her identity are turning into dust, feeling as if a part of her was dying with the destruction of her country. These wounds can never heal, not only for her, because her pain is shared by all the people of the Somali diaspora. Mogadishu only exists in the words of the people who know its glorious past, it can only survive in the stories of its population. On this matter, Brioni (Fazel 2017b:174) argues that this work can be credited for narrating the real Somalia to Western society, highlighting two different aspects of the city. On one hand, the story narrated by Shirin depicts a pre-war Mogadishu of diversity, where different cultures harmoniously coexisted creating a multicultural, hospitable environment. The memoir successfully draws attention to the unstable political situation of the country, narrating the atrocities of the civil war, without sensationalizing it, and breathing back humanity to those events in comparison to the cold rhetoric of Western media (Ibid.). *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, is one of the first novels to ever tell the story of migration in Italian, without the aid of an Italian co-author. Brioni (2017b:161) argued that this book was a pioneer text that started a trend in the process of revision of the Italian colonial past, and throughout the years many authors have credited Shirin as an inspiration in this literary field and as an author that paved the way for the exploration of the postcolonial Italian heritage. For instance, as reported by Brioni (ibid.), personalities like Scego have called her an example that inspired generations of migrant writers.

Shirin's narrations are direct and simple: she talks about herself and her life, recounting what she knows and experienced, as if she was telling her story both to herself and to the

world. The structure of *Lontano da Mogadiscio* is peculiar: the whole book is divided into small subsections with separate titles that recount autobiographical experiences, but the events are not always narrated in chronological order, rather the anecdotes she describes are linked together according to the main emotions they sparked in the author, the characters or the readers (Fazel, 2017b:173).

As discussed by Benchouiha (2004:35-46), questions of home are incredibly relevant in the world of migration and exile, and *Lontano da Mogadiscio* is no exception. Processes of migration are closely linked to the redefinition of the concepts of home and belonging. Shirin challenges issues of nationality and home in dominant discourse, not only in reference to Italy and Somalia, but also to a number of countries and cities where she lived or travelled. Although she never explicitly discusses this topic in the book, her experience arises many interpretations of the concept of home. For instance, the title of the work alone establishes Shirin in a position of distance from her city of birth Mogadishu. She describes her city in a dual fashion, depicting Somalia both as the land of white beaches, family and hospitality, an idyllic place of nostalgia, and as land at war. *Far from Mogadishu* describes the idea of home as a trans-local concept, because home can exist (and not exist) simultaneously in different locations. This stresses that the notion of home is a practice of negotiating, constructing and reconstructing affective attachments in and between places. Home travels with Shirin, not only as a personal and emotional totem, but rather as an entire, mobile habitus (Fazel, 2017b:72). In other words, according to Benchouiha (2004:43), home can be the site of national and familiar origins, but it can also be an everyday, chosen one. Italy becomes an acquired home for her, despite the issues of intolerance and racism she will find throughout her life. Shirin's link to Italy is strong and deep, even if there is always someone who reminds her that she is 'an intruder, an anomaly', despite being the place where her relationships and her friends are (Fazel, 2017b:93). As an Italian citizen, she experiences the problems and the sufferings that Italians share every day, she contributes to the life and evolution of the country and, since both of her parents are buried in Italy, she feels an even deeper connection to this land (ibid.). Due to her colonial heritage, she grew up sharing similar experiences to other Italian kids, and when she left Somalia she was conscious that she was not moving to a foreign land, rather to a 'paese che in fondo conoscevo già', a country that she already knew (Fazel, 2017b:27).

The fragmentation of Shirin's identity as Somalian and Italian is also reflected in the structure of the book. The different parts into which the text is divided, locate the narration separately in Italy, Somalia or other cities of the world, mimicking Shirin's split and complicated identity. She writes from a place that is 'in between' the two countries, but never fully 'here' or 'there'. As a matter of fact, migration can forge a sense of belonging in two countries simultaneously, but also a sense of belonging to 'neither' place (Benchouiha, 2004:38). Shirin does not recognize the altered, current state of her country, destroyed and so different from her childhood memories, but she struggles to feel completely Italian in a country that is incapable of welcoming her and accepting her completely.

Another central thematic in Shirin's autobiographical work is the reception of Islamic people in countries like Italy and the UK. Generally speaking, in the last two decades, the Western world has seen a dramatic increase in the phenomenon of Islamophobia consequently to the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. After the events, the press all around the world, including in Italy, was bombarding the public opinion with Islamophobic discourse, depicting Muslims as fanatics whose ideas are incompatible with modernity, and painting them as the enemy of Western civilization. Naturally, this resulted in issues of discrimination, in this specific case even in our country with the Somali minority, as reflected in Shirin's experience too. The Islamophobic and racist discourse is often linked to the derogatory description of Islam as a non-secularized religion that negates women rights, among other things. Shirin mentions, for instance, the episodes of discrimination she always encounters in airports or in every-day life situations, in the street or in shops, where she hears comments about her hijab, seen as an imposition and as an emblem of women's subalternity to men, as we can see from this passage (2017b:153):

Perché ci sono persone che devono dettare cosa è l'Islam? Ma cosa sta succedendo? Perché in Occidente ci sono politici che sono così intolleranti? Perché tutto questo allarmismo per un pezzo di stoffa? In tutti i quadri e gli affreschi nelle chiese di tutto il mondo la Vergine Maria è raffigurata con l'hijab. È anche Lei così pericolosa?

In works like *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, religion is inescapably linked to processes of alterity, as, once again, Islam and Italianness are seen as two incompatible concepts.

1.4.2 *Nuvole sull'Equatore and Clouds over the Equator*

Nuvole sull'Equatore is a *bildungsroman* that deals with the problems linked to the Italian presence in Somalia and the Horn of Africa and to the behaviour of Italians towards native people. In particular, the book deals with the problem of children of Italian men and Somali women, who were often abandoned by their father because of the racializing laws that victimized mixed children. In this novel, Shirin gives visibility to this problem and to these children. This novel tells the difficulties that these kids encountered in the land in finding a place in two cultures that never fully accept them.

The novel follows the story of three women of the same family: Amina, the mother, Giulia, the daughter, and Dada, the housekeeper who becomes like a grandmother figure. The narration is set in Mogadishu and covers a time of great social and political changes in Somalia, from the 1950s to the 1960s and the coup d'état of Siad Barre. The novel follows Giulia from her childhood, the separation of her parents and her moving to an institute run by nuns, and lastly, her reunion with her mum and dad. As we said, Giulia lives the experience of the 'collegio' or 'brefotrofia', that is the orphanage where most kids born from mixed unions were raised. The mix-raced kids were labelled as *ciuaal*, 'kids of the missions', creating an incredible stigma around them.

Metaphorically speaking, the three women of the novel, so different from each other, represent past, present and future of Somalia. Amina, born in a nomad family, moves to the city and her life will drastically change, transforming herself from a young and naïve girl, to a woman and an activist, part of the League of the Young Somali. Finally, Dada represents the tradition, the imperturbable rural world, she embodies security, solid roots, but also the painful memory of a person who lived on her skin the Italian colonial domination. Guido, Giulia's father, moved to Somalia after the Second World War. Shirin describes him with these words (2017a:7-8):

trascorrevano le notti in compagnia di ragazze raccolte nei bar o in qualche bordello...i rapporti con le donne italiane richiedevano impegno e formalismo ai quali non era incline. Quando incontrò Amina, riuscì finalmente a dare un significato alle sue lunghe notti equatoriali. La successiva nascita di una figliagli consentì di crearsi il legame di cui aveva bisogno.

What leaves the reader a sense of bitterness is the fact that, even if in the meantime in Italy there had been the *liberazione*, the referendum on monarchy or republic, the possibility of voting extended to women, Italians in the Horn of Africa were still behaving

in the same way they did during the colonization. Shirin points out that mixed-race couples could not behave like normal couples, as their union was frowned upon, a legacy of the fascist domination. The trace of the fascist discrimination towards mixed-race people and the ghettoizing behaviour towards Somalis in general is felt by Giulia too, as she notices a difference in her treatment in the institute compared to other kids. Her relationship with her school mates was influenced by the mark of her skin colour, even though, compared to other mixed children, Giulia can consider herself lucky, because, unlike other Italian men, Guido gave Giulia his Italian surname.

Amina, the powerful woman of the family, strongly believes in the emancipation of Somali women and she is capable of anything to protect her white daughter Giulia. The young girl shares many things with her mother, and she can be considered a mix of the three women of the novel. Thanks to her character, the reader will discover a new dimension of the effects of Italian colonialism on Somali people, also keeping in mind that this novel is set in a time that has almost been forgotten by the Italians, the AFIS period. The cover of both the 2017 Italian and English versions is a photograph that dates back to the end of the 1950s, and symbolically represents little Giulia, the protagonist of the novel.

1.4.3 *Wings and Ali spezzate*

Lastly, *Wings* (2017c) is Shirin's first collection of poems originally written in English. The original English version was published in 2017, and the following year the author produced a self-translation in Italian, changing the title into *Ali spezzate*. Except for a couple of the poems translated by Andrea Sirotti, the published translation was fully produced by Shirin. This collection is very interesting for the sake of my work not only in terms of themes, but also to see how Shirin dealt with the translation of her poems in comparison to prose. The collection includes a total of 26 poems divided into three sections. With her poetic imagery, Shirin explores the feelings that bring together all migrants. In the first section she presents her bond with Somalia, the memory of her life there, her friends, family, the national traditions and the familiar places of her childhood. She then proceeds to explore the feeling of 'being caught in the middle' of two traditions, two languages, two cultures, and the painful reality that sees migrants unable to belong

to neither. Finally, the last part delves into the painful feeling of leaving one's home. These poems constitute an emotional and universal testimony of the experience of migrants, a journey that is metaphorically exemplified in the image of broken wings. One of the main themes in this collection, especially in the first section, is the reminiscing of Mogadishu, as a place that triggers two opposite feelings in the author. On one hand the author pays continuous tribute to her childhood home, while on the other she feels pain and anxiety about the political instability of her country. Another important theme that is touched on in this collection is Shirin's connection to her native language, whose words and sounds take her back to her childhood, at a time where she lived a serene life. Another important theme of this collection is obviously migration. Shirin reflects on the contradiction of globalization in the buying and selling of goods, when on the other hand, men are kept separated by walls, barbed wires and borders of intolerance. Moreover, Shirin reflects on the weight of the discriminatory labelling immigrants receive on all media, and the all-around painful experience and displacement caused by migration. In Chapter 3, I will take a better look at these three books and their translated editions, discussing some excerpt of each.

CHAPTER 2

More than three-quarter of the people of the world can say to have been shaped by the experience of colonialism (Ashcroft et al., 2010:1). If on one hand it is quite easy to see the impact of colonialism on political and economic matters, it may be more difficult to evaluate the consequences that this phenomenon might have had on language and culture. What all postcolonial cultural productions across the board have in common is the fact that they emerged out of the experience of power inequity and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power emphasizing differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre (ibid.:2). As we discussed in the previous chapter, cultural hegemony of the dominant power has been systematically maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity and through specific attitudes towards postcolonial literature which identify them as separate branches of a main national literature, forever relegating them to lesser positions. However, we have also argued that, more recently, with an overall turn in postcolonial studies, the importance of postcolonial literature has become undeniable, and processes of revaluation have begun, holding a broader and less Eurocentric standpoint (ibid.:7).

Therefore, compared to the previous ones, the following pages will hold a more specifically linguistic perspective: this chapter will provide a more general look on postcolonial language and its characteristics, tapping into contribution of some of the major English postcolonial scholars such as Ashcroft, Talib and Bandia. It will be in the third and last chapter that we will look more specifically at linguistic traits of Somali Italian literature and, even more specifically, at Shirin's style in writing and translating. Therefore, this chapter will have two core parts: the first one will investigate linguistic tendencies in postcolonial literatures and the linguistic strategies that have been employed in different postcolonial works to mark multiculturalism and appropriation of language and writing, whereas the second part will focus on the issue of self-translation and its postcolonial developments.

African-European language writing, as well as other postcolonial literatures, characterise themselves by the deliberate use of multiple languages within the same discourse, or through the shaping of the dominant language to enhance the presence of the vernacular

tongue which acts as a form of resistance against the dominant colonial culture. As a matter of fact, as a result of the imposition of colonial languages where many other languages already coexist, the postcolonial context is intrinsically multilingual. Indeed, for authors for whom multilingualism is a fact of life, multilingual writing is nothing but a natural occurrence. Generally speaking, and for different reasons, there has always been a tendency in marginalizing multilingual speakers all over the world in favour of a forced use of a handful of dominant languages. As a direct consequence, these ostracized language speakers have historically engaged in all sorts of linguistic and aesthetic practices that reclaim their languages' rights and affirm their cultural autonomy (Bandia, 2008: 136-137). Although this can be applied to certain extents to all linguistic minorities, this phenomenon proves to be most relevant for writers from the periphery whose language is minoritized and who are forced to write in the dominant tongue because of bigger power dynamics. Yet, postcolonial literary practices still seek to highlight multilingualism within the patterns of the dominant language. In light of this tendency towards a dominant monolingual practice, polylingualism serves as both an aesthetic statement of resistance, and a means of manifesting alterity, thus, forcing the reader into 'an active engagement with the horizon of the culture in which these terms have meaning' (Ashcroft et al., 2010:65).

As a matter of fact, one of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language (Ibid.:7). Therefore, language becomes one of the mediums through which the colonial hierarchical structure is perpetuated, and such power is rejected only with the development of an effective postcolonial voice. In postcolonial writing, indigenous languages and hybrid forms insert themselves into the patterns of the colonial language, continuously presenting these 'minor' languages to monolingual readers who actively find themselves engaging with these unknown realities, to various degrees of understandability and readability. As we shall see in the following paragraphs, it is through different devices, including translations, paraphrases, glosses, among others, that the authors may explain those 'intrusions', when necessary to ensure readability. According to Bandia (2008:138), given that the author's multilingual experience is accompanied with an unfavourable linguistic hierarchy, postcolonial writers are condemned to rethink the power of language and make it an indispensable concept in their work, rather than a mere aesthetic choice: authors of minor languages must have an

intensified sensibility towards language which often results in an interesting tendency of deterritorialization or hybridization. Therefore, multilingual practices in postcolonial literature include the use of multiple languages at once, or the pairing of indigenous languages and locally derived hybrid forms with the dominant colonial language of writing. As we will see later in the sections, the subversive character of polylingual writing has been discussed by many critics who have evaluated its effectiveness in the creation of a counter-hegemonic discourse against the overbearing imperial language and culture.

Discussions around the processes by which language and its power have been snatched from the dominant culture are very much linked to concerns of place and displacement. As a corollary of colonization, the displacement and migration of people challenges the traditional notions of national language and homogenous culture, while propelling the idea of hybridity, a concept that disrupts the relationship between national language and culture and points to a culture of difference, displacement of signification and of translation. (Bandia, 2008:139)

The postcolonial recurrent themes of identity crisis, alienation and definition of self-image see the necessity of a development or recovery of an identifying relationship between self and place. Sense of place and belonging not only have been influenced by processes of dislocation, migration and colonization, but might have been effected by processes of cultural denigration, that is the conscious and unconscious oppression of indigenous identity and culture by a supposedly superior racial and cultural model (Ashcroft et al., 2010:8). For these writers, language is a source of discomfort, of doubt, a tension between complete integration within the metropolitan norm and the potentially exaggerated expression of exoticism (Bandia 2008:138). Immersed in multilingualism and translingual practices, postcolonial writers find themselves trapped into a triple impossibility: 'the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in the colonizer's language, and the impossibility of writing otherwise' (Ibid.:138). On this very matter, Indian writer Raja Rao (1938: vii) explains the struggles of conveying cultural specificity in a different language, in his case English:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language

to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up- like Sanskrit or Persian was before- but not of our emotional make-up. [...] We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians.

This arises the issue of ‘translating the self’ in a language that is not always felt as completely one’s own. As a matter of fact, Bandia (2008:3) highlights that:

while interlingual translation usually involves importing foreign language elements into one’s own culture, postcolonial intercultural writing as translation involves a movement in the opposite direction, an inverse movement of representation of the Self in the language of the Other.

This results in a shift from the traditional view of translation as the movement of text from a source language to a target language, to the concept of ‘inner translation’ or translation of the self, which occurs when a writer writes him or herself in a second language. Ashcroft et al. also recognize that the writing of postcolonial authors collocates itself at the intersection between Translation Studies and Postcolonial Studies (2010:25): as a matter of fact, they argue that, on a metaphoric level, both postcolonial writing and translation are interpretations of at least two cultures and present a specific point of view on each of them. Both translators and postcolonial writers hold distinct positions with respect to the two (or more) languages and cultures to which they belong. Like translators, translingual writers often expected to be passive inheritors of multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thus negating their role as interpreters. However, the unequal language coexistence that characterises their translingual condition makes them not at all neutral, as they must constantly engage in a creative adaptation and interpretation of their culture by putting into practice a continuous linguistic and a cultural operation of interpretation (Ibid.:36). The analysis of postcolonial writing through patterns of translation theory is somewhat recent and linked to the cultural turn in Translation Studies, which stems from the newly developed theories that see translations as process of rewriting resulting from a negotiation between cultures, rather than a sterile process of transaction between two languages or the restitution of a set of phrases (Bassnett et al., 1999:123).

As argued by Kaerney in his introduction to Ricoeur’s essays *On Translation* (2006:xiv-xv), the term translation can be used to talk about ‘the work of translating the meaning of one particular language into another’, but also, in a more generic sense, it can be used to talk about any everyday act of speaking as a way of translating oneself to oneself, but also translating oneself to others. Therefore, Evangelista (2013:178-179) contends that writing

in a second language is a mix of all three activities, as translation is referred not only to language but also the self. As Fitch explains (1988:158), the bilingual writer is not simply aware of the existence and the coexistence of a multiplicity of tongues but writes in the awareness of their continual presence. Therefore, translation processes occur every time a bilingual writer chooses to write in a second acquired language, thus forming an integral part of the creative writing process.

It is not uncommon for students of translation to hold the preconception that something will inevitably be lost in translation, and concepts of loss of self, loss of place and a consequent betrayal of the first language are typical patterns of Translation Studies. This approach has been widely investigated by scholars like Besemeres, however, other scholars have also interpreted translation as a process of gain. Besemeres' point of view stems from the idea that translating the self into another language is often the result of a traumatic experience, as well as being a threat to a real and true expression of one's identity (2002:18). As a matter of fact, Besemeres (ibid.) when pointing at the intercorrelation between language and self, states that a first language corresponds by right to reality at a level of superior referentiality, and that the second language inevitably disturbs the living connection that was formed through the first language between one's consciousness and the external world. Moreover, a person is shaped by shared values and assumptions embodied by the natural language. Therefore, we shall assume that in speaking different languages, thus projecting a different range of psychological attributes, there is a movement between different selves. In a sense, an individual inhabits a model of self that is 'implied by the given language' (Ibid.:19).

Thus, literary creativity that involves movement between languages and alternating between various 'selves' becomes an end in itself in the quest for authenticity and identity. Hence why, for many of these authors, the act of writing itself can create a tension between multiple identities, on one hand enhancing problems of authenticity, but on the other hand offering cohesion or a bridge among their fragmented selves.

As described by Ashcroft et al. (2010:10-11) this alienation is shared by all those whose fluency in a second language is indisputably 'native', yet who deeply feel estranged within its practice once its vocabulary, categories, and codes, which are felt to be unsuited to account to one's authentic identity and culture. This is not to say that the dominant (or major) language is inherently incapable of accounting for the postcolonial experience, but

rather that it needs to develop an 'appropriate' form to do so. In doing so, the major language has to become a unique 'contaminated' version in order for it to successfully subvert the imperial cultural formations. Thus, the need to transform an acquired, superimposed language and use it in different ways according to context is what Achebe (1975:62) called 'carrying the weight' of the colonial experience.

Thus, the crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that postcolonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place (Ashcroft et al., 2010:37). This process is carried out through the appropriation and reconstruction of the language of the centre, and through processes of capturing and remoulding the language to new usage, marking a separation from colonial privilege. According to Ashcroft et al. (2010:38) this is carried out in two complementary ways: through abrogation and appropriation. The first vital stage in the decolonizing of the language is abrogation, which is (2010:38):

the refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusionary standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumptions of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words.

The second step which should happen simultaneously is appropriation, which is (Ibid.):

the process by which language is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience. [...] Language is adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely different cultural experiences. These differences may exist in cultures which appear to be quite similar. For in one sense all postcolonial literatures are cross-cultural because they negotiate a gap between 'worlds', a gap in which the simultaneous process of abrogation and appropriation continually strive to define and determine their practice.

To sum up, postcolonial literature is always a product of the tension between the abrogation of the received language which speaks from the centre, and the act of appropriation which brings the language under the influence of the vernacular tongue. As we will see in the following sections, scholars' opinions are split on whether the hybridization of language may be considered as mere exotic enhancement or when it effectively jeopardizes the supremacy of the colonial language (Bandia,2008:140).

2.1 Linguistic strategies in postcolonial writing

It is more in the practice of postcolonial writing itself, rather than in the development of sterile linguistic theories, that processes of abrogation and appropriation take place,

transporting vernacular culture into the centre language. The language devices that I will analyse in the following sections have the power to do exactly that, transferring the writer's identity and the presence of the culture they signify into the dominant tongue. The uses of language we are going to describe have an important function in inscribing difference, and in this sense, they are directly metonymic of that cultural difference which is imputed by the linguistic variation. In the words of Ashcroft et al., this demonstrates that the dynamics of language change insert themselves as a political discourse, and that the use of language variations captures that 'metonymic relationship between the cultures which affirm themselves on the one hand as indigenous or national, and on the other as imperialist or metropolitan' (2010:50-51). According to Bandia (2008:99), the peculiar and stylized language used in this genre is both shaped by the aesthetics of oral cultures and the linguistic systems of the vernacular languages, which have turned the obligation to write in what was felt like an alien code, into the chance of forging a language capable of expressing their identity and culture. In order to do so, postcolonial writers have resorted to various forms of linguistic formal, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic experimentation that seek to challenge dominant standards of language, introducing new formal resources and paradigms into the dominant receptor language culture. In the following subparagraphs I will look at some of the linguistic strategies individuated by Ashcroft et al., Talib and Bandia for what concerns the hybridization of the centre tongue in postcolonial texts, using different colonial realities as examples.

2.1.1. Glossing and in-text translation and contextualization

According to Ashcroft et al. (2010:63), the sense of cultural distinctiveness is commonly expressed through the linguistic strategy of selected lexical fidelity which leaves some vernacular words in the text. This mostly happens when postcolonial writers acknowledge the ultimate untranslatability of certain cultural-bound concepts and terms that they want to incorporate into their works of literature, thus deciding to insert them directly. Such a linguistic device not only marks the difference between cultures, but also illustrates the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts. The use of vernacular words is not only an explicit sign that the language that informs the text is actually another language, continuously drawing attention to the cultural differences between the people

involved, but it also forces the reader to get an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these words find their meaning (Ibid.:63-64).

Authors may use a number of strategies that successfully maintain the hybridity of the language but at the same time ensure readability for a reader who is unfamiliar with the vernacular language, ranging from footnotes, glosses, glossaries or in-text translations. Bandia (2008:110) reports Zabrus' concept of 'contextualization by inference' which is a comprising term for all devices or strategies that fall under two categories: *in-text translation* of vernacular language items, when there is a fairly direct translation of the vernacular word or expression, or *in-text contextualization* which includes paraphrases, comments, explanatory phrases or statements paired with the indigenous word or expression. Overall, the use of in-text translation and contextualization has become more frequent compared to footnotes and glossaries located outside the main text, which momentarily interrupt the reading experience.

Ashcroft et al. (2010:60-63) devote a whole paragraph on glossing, and use the term glossing to address both in-text translations and in-text conceptualizations, defining glossing as an all-encompassing term that includes footnotes, in-texts translation, glossaries, authorial explanations, among others. To gloss in this case is meant as the act of providing an explanation for a word or a phrase, which can appear in various forms, such as marginal or interlinear annotations in a text or a document. It can be in the same language of the text or in a different language, making it a parenthetical translation of an individual word.

Ashcroft et al. (Ibid.:60) find that the most straight-forward authorial intrusions are in-text translations, for which they provide the example 'he took him into his *obi* (hut)'. On one hand, they argue that 'glosses' highlight the continual reality of cultural distance, however, the simple matching of *obi* and *hut* reveals the general inadequacy of such an exercise, as the association of the two words suggests that the meaning of one finds its referent in the other, when clearly the two terms cannot substitute one another thoroughly in meaning and cultural implications (Ibid.). Glossing as simple and superficial referencing does not work, nor for plain objects and even less for more abstract terms and concepts. Ashcroft et al. argue that glossing is becoming less and less common, but it remains useful to see 'how simple referential bridges establish themselves as the most primitive form of metonymy' (2010:60-61). On the matter of referentiality, they argue:

the implicit gap between obi [] (hut) in fact disputes the putative referentiality of the words and establishes obi as a cultural sign. The retention of the Igbo word perpetuates the metonymic function of the cross-cultural text by allowing the word to stand for the latent presence of the foreign culture. The requisite sense of difference is implicitly recorded in the gap [] between the word and its referent, a 'referent' which (ironically) accords the english² word the status of the 'real'. This absence, or gap, is not negative but positive in its effect. It presents the difference through which an identity, created or recovered, can be expressed. (Ashcroft et al., 2010:61)

The use of glossing can lead to misinterpretations as glosses are, more often than not, simplified, and obviously do not have the same exact meaning of the foreign word depending on the way they are used in the foreign culture. Moreover, paratextual 'glossing' in cross-cultural texts can lead to a considerably unnatural movement of plot, as the story is forced to have continuous explanatory pauses that may influence the smooth flowing of the text, as virtually any word could be ethnographic.

As asserted by Talib (2002:126-129), sometimes the use of foreign lexical items can be understood from their context within the text and will be left untranslated, although usually to a lesser extent than their full-fledged use. If the context does not facilitate the understating of the word, explanations can be given within the text itself, and sometimes glossaries may be created at the end of the text. When the lexical items or incidents referred to in a work are not purely linguistic, but rather refer to social or historical events that the reader might be unaware of writers are encouraged to add explanatory notes along the way or at the end. In the instance of no explanations or glossaries, the comprehension of some words or instances may be sacrificed. According to Bandia (2008:112), even if the use of explanations, translations or glosses may seem like a repetition of what has already been expressed in the indigenous language, they is very important for the overall effect, creating a unique aesthetic distinctive outcome of postcolonial writing. As a matter of fact, the vernacular interpolations not only add local colour to the text, but they might also be motivated by a lack of terminological equivalence, and ultimately denote the necessity to preserve a culture, a language and its meanings.

On the other hand, when the vernacular words placed in the text are left unglossed, the reader slowly gets an idea of the meaning of these untranslated terms from the subsequent descriptions or interactions; however their further understanding would require the reader's own further investigation. This usage may seem to be not too different from the

² english with low-case E is commonly used by scholars to address the linguistic code which has been transformed into several distinct varieties in the world, marking a difference between the language of the imperial centre (English) and the varieties in which the language has been employed by different communities.

use of obscure recondite words that need to be more deeply examined by the reader, however, in postcolonial discourse, the use of untranslated words is a specific expression of cultural difference. The postcolonial text, with the use of untranslated words that inserts cultural difference and develops specific ways of both constituting cultural distance and at the same time bridging it, indicating that it is the gap rather than the experience (or at least the concept of gap between the experience) that is created by language (Ashcroft et al.,2010:64). The absence of explanation or glossing is therefore, first a sign of distinctiveness, making explicit that alterity that was only implicit in the gloss, and second it is an endorsement of the faculty of the discourse situation, a recognition that the message event, the ‘scene of the word’, has full authority in the process of cultural and linguistic intersection. According to Ashcroft et al. (2010:65):

the gradual discarding of glossing in the post-colonial text has, more than anything, released language from the myth of cultural authenticity, and demonstrated the fundamental importance of the situating context in according to meaning. While the untranslated word remains metonymic and emphasizes the (posited) experiential gap which lies at the heart of any cross-cultural text, it also demonstrates quite clearly that the use of the word [...] confers the meaning rather than any culturally hermetic referentiality. Ultimately, the choice of leaving words untranslated in postcolonial texts is a political act, because while translation is not inadmissible in itself, glossing gives the translated word, and thus the ‘receptor’ culture, the higher status.

As reported by Talib (2002: 126-129) scholars claim the existence of two phenomena: *overt cushioning*, when the explanation of the lexical term is provided in the text, and *covert cushioning*, which involves the careful moulding of the immediate co-text into a context of explanation. According to Bandia (2008:112) the untranslated vernacular word calls attention to itself, making the text occasionally inaccessible and forcing the reader to engage in a more active interpretation process that recognizes and effectively carries the intended goal of language use in postcolonial literature. Most obviously, the interpolation of non-glossed or uncushioned vernacular items in postcolonial literature can sometimes constitute an obstacle to successful communication with an international readership that might be unfamiliar with the author’s indigenous language and culture. However, as contended by Bandia (Ibid.:113), apart from the occasional search for the meaning, the use of untranslated indigenous words and expressions is, for the most part, not particularly intrusive for readers, also because the vernacular words are usually inserted into the language of writing without creating major violations of its grammatical structures, making the vernacular words fit in its syntactic and grammatical patterns.

2.1.2. Allusion

Ashcroft et al. include allusion into the linguistic strategies that foreground hybridity. The use of an allusion can perform the same function of registering cultural distance in the postcolonial text just like other more explicit devices, and according to the extent to which the text itself provides the necessary context, the allusion will be more or less effective. Processes of allusion around culturally bound things collocate linguistic and cultural distance itself as the subject of the text. The maintenance of this gap in the cross-cultural text is of importance to its ethnographic function, as the strategies that such writing employs to maintain distance and create otherness are a continuous demonstration of the dynamic possibilities available in writing within the tension centre-margin (2010:56-57).

2.1.3. The politics of silence

Similarly, the use of language may also be avoided with the intention of conveying a message: silence, in contrast to what has been said, may be a powerful tool for communication, at times even more powerful than words. Talib (2002:121) reports the words of the major postcolonial theorist Stuart Hall (1991:51):

if signification depends upon the endless repositioning of its different terms, meaning in any specific instance depends on the contingent and the arbitrary stop, the necessary break', and means that 'to say anything, I have got to shut up'.

There are many examples that we could take from postcolonial literature of characters that, for a reason or another, do not speak, and their communicative power can be said to be just as potent, if not more effective than the one of words. With reference to theatre, Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:190) contend that there are at least three 'silences' that are employed in postcolonial plays: inaudibility, muteness and refusal to speak. Inaudibility occurs when body language of the proxemic signifiers are more expressive than his/her utterances, for instance when a character cannot be heard by other people on stage but can be heard by the audience. Muteness is more of a symbolic choice, as the characters do not speak but have other ways of expressing themselves, refusal to speak can be a rebellious act against colonial injustices.

2.1.4. Interlanguage

With the term interlanguage Ashcroft et al. (2010:65-67) refer to the fusion of linguistic structures of multiple languages, subsequently creating a middle intercultural ground. The term was originally coined by Nemser (1971) to characterize the genuine linguistic system created by learners of a second language. The concept of the interlanguage suggests that the deviant utterances of second-language learners are not forms of mistakes, rather that they are part of a separate genuine linguistic system called interlanguage, which is cohesive and distinct both from the source and the target language. It is, by definition, transitory and gradually restructured through advanced learning.

But Ashcroft et al. argue that if arrested at any stage, such an interlanguage may become the focus of an evocative and culturally interesting idiom (2010:66). Some scholars have found proof of interlanguage in the phenomenon of fossilization, which consists in phonological, morphological, syntactical forms in the speech of second-language learners which do not conform to target language norms even after years of studying (Ibid.). Thus, it is important not to discard such fossilizations as mistakes, because they operate on a different linguistic logic. Bearing no real relations with both target and source language norms, interlanguages are a powerful medium in cross-cultural writing.

As an example of this phenomenon, Ashcroft et al. (2010:65-66) quote Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola as a primitive example of interlanguage since his first novel in 1952. Since its publication, Tutuola's work was at the centre of a hash controversy regarding the style and language it was written in: if on one hand his prose was praised by English as post-Joycean and inspiring, African critics saw it as an awkward plagiarization of traditional oral tales. However, Tutuola's may not be a mere linguistic aberration as it was sometimes dismissed as, rather an important and early diglossic formation in postcolonial literature. Talib calls this kind of linguistic device 'interference', and it occurs when one language shows an influence on another or intrudes in its grammar (2002:143). Broadly speaking, code-switching, as we will see further sections, can also be regarded as a case of interference, but one of a relatively more predictable kind. In code-switching, the knowledge and the languages or dialects involved is shared more broadly by the members

of a particular community of speakers, whereas this is not necessarily the case with interference or interlanguage. Interference might be a factor in learning a language, when patterns are brought over from another language even in case of proficiency, meaning that, compared to code switching, interference is less consciously carried out.

2.1.5. Syntactic innovation

Works like Tutuola's expose the widespread opinion that cross-cultural world views may be more easily understood if the multiple linguistic structures were mixed on different levels, for instance with the marrying of the syntax or the lexicon of multiple languages. Indeed, syntactic innovation can also occur when the syntaxes of two different languages are blended, mixing verbal forms, locutions, conjunctions typical of one language into the other (Ashcroft et al., 2010:67-68)

The scholars provide a series of example that may be more or less relevant according to the language pairs. Those examples include the borrowing of locutions, the use of nouns as verbs, the metonymic use of adjectives, borrowing of conjunctions, the use double comparatives, the plural form as statements of communal involvement etc.

As for collocational innovation or shifts, Bandia (2008:100-101) talks about the use of indigenous words and expressions into the centre language structure, the assigning of new meaning to centre language words, or the combining of indigenous words with centre ones without regard for combinatory or collocational rules. It is not uncommon for postcolonial writers to resort to collocational innovation, sometimes disrupting fixed forms, ultimately violating a language's selection restrictions, co-occurrence and lexical concatenation patterns.

2.1.6. Code-switching

Perhaps one the most used linguistic strategy of polylingual postcolonial writing is the deliberate alternating of languages used in the text through the sociolinguistic practices of code-switching and code-mixing (Bandia, 2008:142-143). According to Bandia, this practice distinguishes itself from other linguistic strategies as is very much rooted in

multilingualism. Essentially, code-switching is only possible in situations of unequal power relations between languages, which means that it is never a neutral act.

Code-switching is not merely 'filling a lexical gap' with the incorporation of lexical terms from one language to the other, rather it involves the integration of aspects of the other language's grammar as well. Moreover, according to Talib (2002:145) opinion is divided on code-switching, if to use it or avoid it altogether. For instance, use of code-switching in a literary work may also be linked to the author's need to reflect the accuracy of the language use by the characters, as a speaker may switch to another language according to the nature of the situation, the participants, the purpose of the interaction or the topic of the conversation. It is not uncommon for authors to use one language in more formal situation and to use another among family or at home. Then again, dodging this switch altogether may cause the interaction to seem unnatural and fabricated. Talib (Ibid.:146) points out that the accuracy or appropriateness of the switches is dependent on the judgment of native speakers: native speakers are the best judges to determine where the switches should be found in terms of accurate linguistic representation. Like in the case of untranslated words, with code-switching understability might be compromised if the reader is unfamiliar with one of the languages. The effectiveness of all these strategies has been discussed by different scholars, and Bandia himself (2008:142-144) speculates on the nature of code-switching and its possibilities of effectively challenging the imperial language, providing two polar perspectives. Although some scholars contend that code-switching may have potential in educating the readers on the interventionist writing of postcolonial authors in their attempt at creating a counter-hegemonic discourse against metropolitan idioms, for others this strategy is not more than a mere juxtaposing of languages in a text. For those who believe in the latter option, deterritorialization is a more effective mean in tackling the structure of the dominant language when carried out from within, whereas the juxtaposing of different codes may have the opposite result and ultimately reinforce boundaries and hierarchies between languages.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Bandia (Ibid.:143) reports the opinion of scholar Zabus (1991:182) who claims that, unlike other multilingual manifestations, the side-by-side display of indigenous languages is a powerful symptom of the untransferability of the native culture and language in a dominant language that cannot wholly account for the indigenous sociocultural reality.

2.1.7. Hybrid formations and other lexical innovations

This paragraph will focus on the hybrid word formations, lexical and collocational innovations acknowledged by Bandia in the genre of postcolonial African writing (2008:114-116). According to Bandia, for some postcolonial writers translating oneself as a writing strategy also means creating hybrid lexical items that place themselves somewhere in the continuum between the vernacular and the colonial language. This is carried out through compounding, pairing and combining, repetition and reduplication.

- **Compounding**

This first lexical strategy commonly occurs when a vernacular word or expression does not have an equivalent in the centre language. Therefore, the author decides to create a compound word following the basic pattern of word formation in the centre language, creating a compound that does not sound native to the language of writing. These compound words or expressions are sometimes literal translations of words taken from the vernacular language or its oral narrative. Otherwise, they are renditions or summaries of much longer indigenous expressions that are made to conform to the word formation rules of the colonial language (Ibid.:114).

- **Pairing and combining**

In this lexical innovation strategy, centre language words are paired or combined in order to account for concepts and realities that centre languages fail to represent. Bandia (2008:114) mentions as an example the paired word ‘snake-lizard’ from Achebe’s *Things fall apart* (1958:59), which is probably an animal that is not lexicalized in the dominant language. Moreover, it is not uncommon for these combined words to undergo collocational shifts as they do not always follow the dominant language’s morpho-syntactic, lexical and semantic rules of co-occurrence and word-formation. The very violation of these colonial language rules emphasizes the ‘alterity’ of the combined words, creating the desired effect of indigenizing and shaping the language to carry the burden of the colonial experience. (Bandia, 2008:114).

- **Repetition and reduplication**

Repetition and reduplication play an important role in postcolonial literature and give it a distinct character that finds its origin in indigenous oral narrative practices. These strategies reveal the power of the oral tradition on indigenous languages and highlights the extension of its models to centre language writing. Repetition may highlight moments of excitement or intensity, express strong feelings like disgust, anger and surprise, and occurs when authors choose to repeat adjectives and adverbs as an augmentation strategy instead of using ‘very’ and its synonyms (Bandia, 2008:114-115).

Overall, the repetition and reduplication of whole sentences, phrases and images is deeply rooted in the African folktale, where these devices are used for dramatic effect, rhythm and musicality. On the other hand, reduplication usually occurs in the form of repetition of two or more words with related meanings (Ibid.:115), as he reports in the following example from Achebe’s *Arrow of God* (1964:72):

If I have spoken it with my mouth or seen it with my eyes, or if I have heard it with my ears or stepped on it with my foot or if it has come through my children or my friends or kinsfolk let it follow these leaves.

The paired words ‘spoken’, ‘mouth’, ‘seen’, ‘eyes’, ‘heard’, ‘ears’, ‘stepped’, ‘foot’ are clearly related to each other and reiterate the same image, creating a repetition that may seem redundant for someone who does not realise that this is a borrowed feature of orality.

2.1.8. Sematic Shifts

A semantic shift occurs when a centre language word is assigned a new meaning that can only be understood within the native context in which it is used, seeking to express a native world view in the centre language (Bandia, 2008:101). This is generally restricted to sub-sentence levels, for example lexical items, set phrases, lexical idioms and individual words. In Chishimba (1984:217), semantic shift is defined as:

the assignment of features of meaning in the source language of the speaker/hearer to known lexical items in the second language such that the derived meaning is more relevant to the new user and is no longer native to the native speaker.

To summarize, in this section I looked at some of the recognized ways in which postcolonial polylingual authors carry out a deliberate attempt to resist the hegemony of translation through their use of language by opposing assimilation to the dominant language. The postcolonial subjects discard the totalizing effect of the dominant language by refusing to translate themselves totally, by refusing to disappear or to exist only as a translated being in the shadow of the dominant culture and language. (Bandia, 2008:149). Translation and resistance to translation can thus be conceived as an agent of linguistic diversity and offers coexistence rather than assimilation of subaltern cultures, thus becoming a means for asserting plurality. Moreover, code-switching and language hybridization practises in postcolonial literature are proof of the need to expand translation theory to include such instances of linguistic and cultural transfer which, in a context of power inequalities, transcend aesthetics, but rather involve deliberate manifestations of subjectivity and identity (ibid.)

2.2. Self-translation and matters of identity

In this second part of the Chapter 2 of my dissertation I will add another layer to the idea of translation of self, one that is specifically relevant to Shirin Ramzanali Fazel's career as a writer. Therefore, I will give some theoretical guidelines on the topic of self-translation as intended in Translation Studies, mainly building my statements on the textbook *The Bilingual Text* (2007), the collection of essays *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture* (2013) and Besemere's *Translating One's Self* (2002).

Hokenson and Munson (2007:3) define a self-translation as a bilingual text, authored by a writer who can compose in different languages and who translates his or her texts from one language into another. Historically, self-translation has been a neglected topic in translation theory, with only a handful of books touching on this matter. Nevertheless, the practice and tradition of bilingual writers creating a text in two languages, spanning from one language to another and catering different audiences, is a rich and important one and it arises many issues and questions.

The practice of self-translation has a very long history, originating in Greco-Roman times and flourishing in the European Middle Ages and Renaissance. As a matter of fact, self-

translation was quite a widespread practice in early modern Europe, where bilingualism was the norm, and writers would increasingly translate Latin texts into other vernacular languages (Hokenson and Munson., 2007:10). Across the centuries, the practice of self-translation thrived for a variety of different reasons and in multiple contexts: just to name one, we could think about the experience of explorers and colonizers in Asia and the Americas who would translate their European texts for indigenous people or their travel journals for readers in Europe (Ibid.:11). In more recent times as well, wars and deportations pushed writers towards new languages, driving them towards self-translation. Even more recently, many postcolonial writers have challenged the dichotomy of native and colonial languages by writing and translating in both. Seeing that so many important authors (just to name a few, Samuel Beckett, John Donne, Charles d'Orléans, Carlo Goldoni, Guiseppe Ungaretti) doubled in self-translation and how ever-present this tradition has been throughout history, scholars have recently started questioning why this practice has been so widely neglected in translation theory.

According to Hokenson and Munson (2007:15), two are the main reasons for this lack of interest in the subject: first and most obviously, the keepers of the canon have always had the tendency to focus on the linguistic purity of the foundational writers, rather than their translations. Secondly, the neglect of this topic in translation theory may be attributed to the fact that the conceptual problems around it are quite challenging: self-translations co-exist simultaneously in two language systems and two cultures, meaning that monolingual categories of author and original can apply only to a certain extent, since the text is twinned.

According to Cordingley (2013:1-10), both the fields of translation studies and comparative literature lack a complete understanding and account of the peculiarities of the practice of self-translation. As a matter of fact, he argues that the multiplicity of forms that this practice can assume makes it so that there is no fixed model or theory: the history of the subject looks more like a monographic study of single writers or eras, general trends and exceptions, and little room has been made for the development of a specific theory. Moreover, the heterogeneity that characterizes this practice makes every encounter extremely specific, depending on personal, political, linguistic and historical factors linked to the different authors. Rather than offering a definitive theory of self-translation, one can only attempt to give a general idea of its heterogeneity. The self-translator is a

peculiar kind of cross-cultural interlocutor as he or she writes at the intersection of two languages, two reading publics, two cultures, facilitating communication between two different linguistic or cultural parties. The self-translator is the intermediary of and for an 'original' text and, in some ways, for the author's own self (ibid.:1).

As I previously mentioned, self-translation is a very peculiar branch of Translation Studies, as it deconstructs the full range of traditional theoretical concepts, such as the dichotomy of author and translator, the one of original and target text, the concept of equivalence, source and target reader etc. As a matter of fact, self-translation plays with both conventional literary practices and translational norms, and what once was grounded in the movement between single languages and cultural spaces becomes increasingly dynamic. Bassnett (2013:15) argues that the term self-translation is problematic in itself, as it compels us to consider the issue of the existence of an original. The very definition of a translation in traditional theory presupposes the existence of an original and of a second text that is its translation. It is clearly problematic to apply this definition to the concept of self-translation as many authors consider themselves bilingual and shift freely between languages, making the binary notion of original-translation simplistic and useless. Instead, it would be more appropriate to state that in self-translation there are no originals and no translations, but rather two versions of a piece of writing in two languages, each with its own set of significations.

Bassnett (2013:17) stresses the importance of the differences between different language audiences in self-translation. Obviously, any work is written with a specific audience in mind, and when it is translated, a new group of readers is acknowledged, adding another layer on top of matters related to the individual writer's own creativity. As a matter of fact, she argues that changes introduced in the work are mainly to be attributed to these two aspects: change in readership, and the authors' desire to rewrite their own original. In order to have a better understanding of this first motive, Bassnett (2013:16) suggests we look at the world of advertising and localisation: a self-translation is not so much the translation of a single original, but rather a target-focussed version of a template intended to market a particular product in different places and to different audiences. She states that this is not too dissimilar from the translation of instructions for a same product in different languages: those texts show more or less subtle differences in the presentation of that product for different audiences, suggesting that rather than there having been a

single source text from which translations have been made, there is a product template which is then modified and adapted in accordance to the expectations and conventions of the target audience.

According to Klimkiewicz (2013:190-191), literary self-translation, with the presence of at least two languages in a process of re-writing, generates a dynamic of 'displacement' which can be studied from at least four perspectives:

- The text-oriented perspective shows us that the self-translated text can be analysed as the production of bilingual, parallel texts. The texts can be created following different working approaches: the first one being the synchronous approach, where the self-translating process is carried out simultaneously with the writing, blurring the boundaries between original and self-translated text; and the second one being the asynchronous approach, where the self-translation is consecutive to an existing original.
- The author-oriented perspective considers the author's identity and their experience linked to language according to contexts such as colonization, diaspora, exile, relocation etc. Many are the different emotions that an author may experience in these language scenarios, and those emotions are very much linked to identity and language.
- The reader-oriented perspective focuses on the addressee of the self-translated text. The reception of the bilingual text is no longer located in one single literary tradition or language, but rather in multiple contexts, rising issues such as hierarchies and perceptions of language (minor and/or vs major) as a form of prejudice that affects the reception of the text.
- The process-oriented point of view focuses on issues of multilingual self and self-dialogue, as well as issues in constitution of the subjective space dominated by linguistic and spatial fragmentation.

By now it has become clear for scholars that self-translation and its analysis requires new categories and theoretical models. In the most practical sense, bilingual self-translators produce two texts, often publishing them with the same title, and they usually consider them comparable versions. According to Hokenson and Munson (2007:4), the analysis of bilingual texts should begin at a more basic level than the current binary theoretical models of 'gaps' between texts, languages, and cultures, and instead focus on the

intersection and overlap of the two versions. Particularly, self-translators constitute the emblem of this linguistic and cultural overlap, in a person and in literature. More practically, self-translations challenge regular dichotomic notions of author and translator and of source text and target text, questioning the applicability of some Translation Studies paradigms like the idea of the invisibility of the translator that suppresses his or her originality. It follows that the special status assumed by the translator who is also the author of the original means that the self-translator is a unique person in the sense that he or she allows him or herself freedoms that external translators could never allow themselves, ultimately producing another version or a new 'original'. What is being negotiated is therefore not only an original text and the self who wrote it, but also the troublesome notion of originality itself (Cordingley, 2013:2).

In a figurative sense, Santoyo (2013:28-36) uses the metaphor of mirrors to describe the process of translation and self-translation. Traditionally, the metaphor of reflection and specular images has been widely used in Translation Studies to conceptualize the process of rendering a text into another language. Such images usually presuppose the existence of two different and separate texts, one derived from the other and one being the reflection of the other. However, in the case of self-translation, both the original and the translated texts are created by the same mind, and because of that, the specular image can become as deformed as the author desires, as he or she is the mirror through which the original looks at itself. Because of this, the self-translated text has been widely considered by scholars as a second original, creating a very peculiar dynamic relationship between the two texts. With this metaphorical theory, Santoyo (2013.:30) argues that in the translation process, the author and only the author has the right to change, alter, deform and distort the image of the original in the mirror. Consequentially, said author cannot be accused for any mistakes or inaccuracies in the self-translation, as the mirror in which the text is reflected is not something foreign to him or her, rather it is the author him or herself. Therefore, self-translation is a process of rewriting, and rewritings do not just bounce back onto their originals. Self-translations can potentially be very distant to their originals, as in the creative act, the author might end up producing something new and different, taking self-translation as an opportunity of recasting and retouching their work. Therefore, this practice involves more than the mere rendering a source text into another language, rather it involves its rewriting across and between languages, with a notion of

originality that is fluid rather than fixed. Admittedly, the process involved is one of creative reworking for a new readership.

According to Grutman (2013.:63-76), in the last decades there has been a shift toward a sociological perspective in Translation Studies, and scholars are starting to use translation as an object of social enquiry. Approaching the construction of a social theory of translation means stepping away from a text-based approach and acknowledging the individuals involved in the process, recognising translators as agents, at the expense of linguistic analysis. In the words of Gustave Lanson (1904:225): ‘every literary work is a social phenomenon [...] as its essential, fundamental character is to be a communication between an individual and a public’, and literature is not only a matter of an individual writer, rather a matter of society.

Hence, with the intent of better understanding the sociological developments of self-translation, Hokenson (2013:40-56) traces the history of the practice of self-translation, attempting to find common features and trends in its historical occurrences. As with any other literary phenomenon, it is interesting to evaluate that self-translated texts are dually shaped by macro and micro forces on a variety of different aspects. After years of studying the history of this phenomenon looking for the social and political patterns and drives that characterize it, Hokenson was able to observe that self-translations arise from recurrent socioeconomic conditions, but they also stem from private and unique artistic and literary ambitions. As for the widespread socioeconomic and historical conditions that propel the practice of self-translation, Hokenson (2013:42-43) points out the most common patterns such as the founding of new political states, religious reasons and modern publishers’ conditions, among others. Moreover, as I will elaborate further in the chapter, exile is a very widespread leitmotif in translation history: people struck by wars and persecutions put their foreign language skills to work in translating their national texts into their new literary and commercial contexts, sometimes even for sheer survival, and inject them with new ideas and patterns. Those who manage to return to their homes in the next political generation often do the same in reverse, enriching their native culture and languages with newly acquired ideas and words. The study of the texts they choose to translate and how they adapted them to the circumstances of exile is arguably one of the most fascinating branches of translation history today.

As I just mentioned, self-translators may share similar sets of motives and may have participated in comparable historical endeavours throughout the centuries, however, self-translations may also originate from more personal and immediate reasons. In order to analyse these instances, we need to consider the self-translator as a singular figure in the historical interchanges between languages, and between social settings, looking not only at the what and how, but also at why the self-translator has decided to undertake this task in the first place. Therefore, macro-level forces, such as government policies and requirements, religion, education etc. can be used to explain people's behaviour, but only if combined with the individual motives and micro-level forces that shape their activities (Ibid.43). Therefore, as it is virtually impossible to imagine a human that is cut off from the social sphere, the analysis of these authors must be twofold: on one hand it has to focus on the political and social situation in which their works were written and the motives behind them, one the external influences on their production, the influence of other authors, and power language dynamics; and on the other hand it has to focus on the individual motives linked to the biography of the author, getting to know him or her as a 'literary individuality'.

A starting point for this could be to distinguish between writers who willingly choose to translate themselves for literary experimentation purposes, and those who are, to different extents, forced to do it. There needs to be a distinction between those who decide out of their free will to write in a 'step-mother language', those who have to adjust to another language and culture in painful and disheartening situations, or those whose mother tongue is spoken by so few people that they find themselves forced to extend their audience. Similarly to what we have seen in the previous section of this chapter, the greatest risk for writers translating themselves into a second language is the threat to lose one's identity, an identity formed in the first language and that relies on this first language for its true expression. Besemeres (2002:26) argues that bilinguals live inside conflicting visions of selves and that, when juggling languages, a choice must be made between these two selves. She sees the second language as the 'the upstart' with a desire to take over the first, whereas the native language is the true home of the self, and, consequently, one that needs to be protected from external influences. Similarly, Kaplan (1993:63) agrees that the emotional consequence of language change is principally loss, testifying that language is 'a home, as surely as a roof over one's head is a home' and that 'to be without language

or between languages is as miserable [...] as to be without bread' (1993:208). Translation is seen as a dangerous threat to identity and self and, as the previous quote implies, it can sometimes equal starvation of the self and its consequent death, or, at least, death of one's true self.

However, one should not treat all writers who played with more than one language on the same level. As a matter of fact, Grutman (2013:70-72) highlights the importance of power dynamics in translation, distinguishing two types of bilingualism: exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous bilingualism happens when the target language is necessary to communicate with the outside world, but it is not widespread or required in the author's home country. On the other hand, endogenous bilingualism occurs when writers are propelled into bilingualism and self-translation by internal forces, because of the diglossic speech community in which they grew up or were educated. As we have been discussing throughout this chapter, multilingualism may entail a context of inequality, making the use of a language over the other or the act of translation, a political question on a symbolic level. According to Grutman, these two types of bilingualism underline a further difference: on one side, there are the writers he calls 'aristocrats of bilingualism', that is those who can afford the luxury of using some of the world's most powerful and well-established languages in a symmetrical way. For most of these authors, self-translation is not more than an individual venture, perhaps marked by family history, but hardly ever troubled with difficulties resulting from a socially rooted power discrepancy. Most self-translators belong, however, to the second category, the one made up of writers whose bilingualism reflects a social discrepancy and a dominance configuration that puts pressure on them and that can lead them to painful choices. This tendency creates a link for writers whose native language is much less widespread and dominated, yet emotionally so important. These authors are aware that they have unequally recognized tools at their disposal and accept the consequences of the symbolic and politically charged differential between a 'centralist' and a 'localist' position. This first stance encourages them to reinvent themselves for the French, British, Spanish, American, Italian literary systems, in the hope of being adopted by it, a strategy that, as we have seen, could create conflicts of self and identity. On the other hand, when they embrace a 'localist' strategy, what they gain in authenticity is lost in readership and recognition. According to Grutman

(2013:70-72), the same cannot be said for those ‘aristocrats of bilingualism’ who juggle languages with a lighter social baggage, finding completely different challenges.

Additionally to the specific sociolinguistic configuration of the endogenously bilingual community, the asymmetry underlying many instances of self-translation stems from the much broader question of unequal weight that languages carry in the global language system, for instance in terms of their exchange value on the linguistic market (ibid.:73). As a matter of fact, speakers of different languages occupy different hierarchical positions in the global society: many people are forced to learn one or more than one foreign language, whereas other people can remain happily monolingual. The relative weight of a language can be calculated by looking at the number of native and non-native speakers who use it, either by choice or by necessity. The global raise of the English language after the Second World War is not only linked to the 300 million native speakers, but also to the 700 million non-natives who employ the language on a regular basis (ibid.:74). Casanova has stressed the key role that translation carries in this global system of power relations, where writers from different nationalities compete for a spot in the literary panorama:

far from being the horizontal exchange and peaceful transfer, translation is an important factor in the struggle of legitimacy [...] and one of the principal means of consecration for authors and texts (2009:86).

Clearly, this does not apply to writers who juggle major languages. Authors who write in a minor language but are also proficient in major languages such as English, Spanish or French are undoubtedly pressured by publishers and readers to produce translations of their works, setting those authors apart from cosmopolitan self-translators who mainly self-translate out of their own free will. Therefore, translation is never an innocent intervention; it is rather an unequal exchange that is defined by asymmetry (Grutman, 2013:75). For instance, as much as translated works can give visibility to an author, they can also disguise the fact that the text was originally created in a minor language, therefore reinforcing the position of power of the major languages. The more powerful the major language is, the greater the risk for the minor language original of being overlooked (Ibid.). On the other hand, some rebellious writers may choose the opposite direction, translating their works into minority languages and making a political statement that defends the status of a minority language and culture, by challenging the role of

major, global languages. The eradication of this boundary is in some cases life-changing and solves identity crises connected to language, culture and politics, creating works free of the hegemony and oppression of foreign cultures.

Overall, questions of identity, loss, betrayal and fragmentation always arise when dealing with self-translation and choosing to write in a language that is not one's own. Self-translation as a writing strategy highlights difficulties of locating and articulating the self, since two languages collide but refuse to surrender to each other, consequently creating in the author a divided consciousness (Todorov, 1985:20). According to Klimkiewicz (2013:190-191), self-translation can be seen as a 'two-directional circulation' from inner to external speech, from the self to the other and from the self to the self. Compared to external speech, the articulation of inner speech appears problematic, disconnected and incomplete, as reported by Klimkiewicz (Ibid.:192):

[...] the transition from inner to external speech is not a simple translation from one language into another. It cannot be achieved merely vocalising silent speech. It is a complex, dynamic process involving the transformation of the predicative idiomatic structure of inner speech into syntactically articulated speech intelligible to others.

Therefore, self-translation as a process of bilingual 'co-enunciation' makes the vocalization of silent speech even more difficult, as it is the result of the 'twin work' produced in two different languages (Harel 1998:153). According to Klimkiewicz (2013:192), this very mental activity is located in a specific metaphorical space where links with the mother tongue are released and broken, especially when this condition lays in geographical and cultural displacement. Therefore, she argues that bilingual writers can achieve artistic originality by changing their medium of expression, providing them with a new and expanded signifier.

The different evaluation that scholars have made of the different degrees of gain and loss that translating oneself entails is arguably one of the most interesting issues when authors move from their original language towards a new one. On this matter, Besemeres, as quoted by Evangelista (2013:178), argues that writers who relocate into a second language and culture and develop a bicultural self may suffer from what she calls 'subtractive bilingualism' (2002:162), therefore highlighting issues of loss in the process. However, only five years later the same author finds the opposite, saying that the experience of bilingualism is more additive than subtractive, as hybrids have a wider range of experiences compared to monolinguals. We could say that overtime, academics

have verged towards the two opposites: on one hand, either the loss of the maternal language undermines identity and creativity, or, on the other, it entails enrichment in bilingualism. Hokenson argues that in more recent times there has been a gradual shift towards the latter option, partially thanks to discoveries in neurolinguistic and cultural studies about hybrid production, as well as changes in attitude of bilinguals toward their languages (2013:51). For instance, Ricoeur (2006:14) sees the translation of self as the only way for authors to find their true selves only ‘after it has traversed the field of foreignness and returned to itself again, this time altered and enlarged, othered’. However, he is not the only scholar to have compared translation to a journey of discovery of the self, as Klosty Beaujour noted (1989:36):

[...] self-translation is frequently the rite of passage, the traditional, heroic, psychic journey into the depths of the self [...] that is a necessary prelude to true self-knowledge and its accompanying powers. Only when (and if) they have negotiated the hell of self-translation can bilingual writers proceed through the purgatory of the first years of writing in a second language and fully realize their bilingual potential.

The journey of the self-translator ends in an ‘extraordinary reconciliation’ when the self-translator has completed the full trajectory and a ‘kind of constantly shifting balance or flexible synthesis is achieved’ (Ibid.:53) This process is not immediate and easy and it is common for authors to feel a sense of distress, discomfort and struggle in self-translation. This stems from emotional interference as well as ‘linguistic interference’, which may originate from the fear of linguistic infidelity. In an ideal situation, this is nothing but a phase that is overcome when the subject matures into a healthy and conscious bilingualism. This point of view is shared by bilingual Canadian author Nancy Huston, who in a 2003 interview reported by Bassnett (2013:16-19) explained that, at first, self-translation is a painful process that exposes gaps and discrepancies between two languages and cultures, highlighting an author’s divided mind and divided world. Moreover, an author may never fully connect with a second language, experiencing a continuous feeling of betrayal towards their first. However, she argues that eventually, when the translation is completed, these gaps are closed, and the painful process becomes healing, and the self-translator is no longer caught between two languages and worlds, but rather is able to fully exist in both. Hence, as much as cultural differences and structural differences between languages can potentially make the self-translation complex and daunting, one must take into account the double perspective that is gained

from having access to multiple languages (ibid.:183). Elin-Maria Evangelista (2013:183) discusses the perks of a bilingual perspective stating that a second language perspective might create the necessary distance to allow a writer to speak about what is too difficult or impossible to express in his or her native language, making the new language a medium to explore the past and give it a new voice. Moreover, she argues that the detachment that an author feels towards his or her second language legitimizes the thriving of a new freedom to experiment, creating flexibility and boldness. Ultimately, employing a new language in writing does not necessarily damage one's sense of identity, instead it can make it coexist with new aspects of self developed and found in the new language. The new language does not need to replace the old, rather it can contribute to it creatively, allowing the self to express a new identity with new nuances. This is perhaps what Kaplan (1993:140) meant when she talked about 'the privilege of living in translation' as the honour of confronting different aspects of self and expressing different sides of one's creativity within constraints. This highlights how, paradoxically, difficulties and limitations might act as propellers for creativity and inventiveness.

Ultimately, the problems of geographical and linguistic exile, fragmentation of self and discontinuity are crucial in understanding how language loss and trauma play a role in the process of narration. This has the aim of repositioning the self in a new language and in a different time and space. On the topic of exile, Klimkiewicz (2013:193-194) argues that self-translation proves to be an effective way of inscribing the self successfully in a new language and a new environment:

the fragmentation of the spatial, temporal and linguistic unity fuels the imagination and not only makes possible the recuperation of the pieces of memory from the past in order to preserve a form of unity and coherence between then and now, but also provides new strategies with which to inscribe the self in a new setting.

Self-translation is not seen by Klimkiewicz as a victory or a celebration of becoming nomad, rather as a powerful way of telling the painful tale of becoming 'the other' as a fully resistant process (2013:193). This ongoing and never-ending process allows otherness of self to come to the surface and enables the different parts of the self to manifest and coexist. Klimkiewicz (Ibid:194) claims that self-translation finally works as an anchor that grounds the self in the middle of instability, as the work of self-translation is the creation of a new self out of a broken unity of language, identity, imagination and

memory, constituting a strategy that helps authors in overcoming loss, trauma and nostalgia.

In conclusion, the importance of self-translation as a literary practice and as a symbol of hybridity in our society is not to be underestimated for many reasons. As argued by Klimkiewicz (2013.:198-199), self-translation must be analysed as a form of self-dialogue rather than a sterile literary production, and ultimately a strategy for overcoming fragmentation and bridging multiple selves. Moreover, the study of self-translation is crucial in the sense that it increases the visibility of the process and challenges the binary logic of translation by introducing hybridity and new heterogeneous categories into the field of Translation Studies, questioning traditional concepts and paradigms. Self-translation promotes new hermeneutics and models as it challenges the ideas, interpretation strategies and patterns that most readers are familiar with, creating new worlds and concepts for a new, more culturally conscious public. The practice of self-translation enables a shift of attention that goes beyond the literary level and beyond the movement of texts from one language to another, promoting a discussion on the movement of cultural products, ideas, bodies and selves between linguistic communities and cultures. A deeper understanding of self-translation would contribute in the developing of a collective, richer and broader understanding of our globalized world, where everyday thousands of individuals have to translate themselves into different cultures and languages for various reasons. Ultimately, bilingual writers engage in narratives shaped by the different perspectives and language-worlds they inhabit, meaning that having access to more than one language can affect the way a writer approaches language creatively, allowing for a sense of freedom and experiment. This provides the writer not only with a unique approach to language, but also to the subject matter, even when something may be too difficult or forbidden to express in one language. Ultimately, self-translators create texts in which we can discern two different social systems and canons in a unique inter-echoing relationship, creating texts that are able to live freely in either languages and canons, finding an incredible equilibrium between the domestic and the foreign.

CHAPTER 3

In the previous chapter we looked at the main general linguistic features of postcolonial literature, referring to some very important scholars of postcolonial studies such as Bandia and Ashcroft, among others. In this first section of this last chapter, I am going to describe the specific linguistic traits of Somali-Italian literature, mainly referencing Brioni's 2015 work *The Somali Within*. In the latter portion of this chapter I will provide some examples of Shirin's choices in her work of translation of her books *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, *Nuvole sull'Equatore* e *Wings*.

3.1. Linguistic features of Somali-Italian literature

According to Brioni (2015:18), the most distinctive linguistic feature of Somali Italian literature is the lexical insertion of Somali words, which is a clear example of hybridization of language as we have seen it so far. Deleuze and Guattari (1986:16) called it *deterritorialization* of language, meaning the 'deliberate operation through which a dominant language is deprived of its sense of national belonging'. This is implemented not only with the insertion of foreign terms in the dominant discourse, but through various other linguistic strategies too, some of which we have seen described by Ashcroft, Bandia and Tiffin in the previous chapter. I must underline, however, that some of the devices that have been used in postcolonial English or French literature do not entirely fit within the patterns of postcolonial Italian literature, and even more specifically within those of Somali Italian literature.

As a matter of fact, Somali Italian literature characterizes itself mostly using foreign lexicon introduced in the text, rather than the modification of standard Italian. Therefore, in order to understand how foreign words are collocated in the Italian language, Brioni (2015:20) identifies three different models according to the way foreign terms position the translingual writer and the reader in relation to the cultures and languages they master. To do so, Brioni takes inspiration from Venuti's translation theory found in *The Translation Studies Reader* (2000), in which he distinguishes the concepts of *thick translation*, *foreignizing translation* and *domesticating translation*. The first model, 'thick translation', borrowed from British-Ghanaian scholar Appiah, highlights linguistic

distance between Somali and Italian through the use of paratextual remarks. The second model will be analysed through Derrida's theory of foreignization translation. Lastly, the works that domesticate Somali language into Italian limiting the incidence of heterogeneous linguistic elements will be analysed referencing Nida's model of communicative translation. The analysis of these three approaches will show that, chronologically speaking, we can observe a shift away from strategies that highlight distance towards a more 'foreignizing' and 'communicative' model that bridges the distance between Italian and Somali (Bandia, 2015:20). Before starting the examination of the three models, it is important to make a last observation. These three models should not be considered as entirely separate and independent, as they may intertwine with one another and used in combination. Brioni (2015:20), through the study of these three different tendencies in Somali Italian literature, will ultimately demonstrate that:

the insertion of foreign expressions enacts a process of dislocation which questions the supposed unity of the dominant Italian language and has the power to take readers away from the coded message of language, by detaching them from the language they regard as their own.

Throughout the chapter I will observe in which ways these three models have been used by Shirin in her works, investigating the reasons behind her decisions and tracing a map of her development in the field of Somali Italian literature.

3.1.1. Translating the distance and 'thick translation': footnotes and glossaries

Earlier texts by Somali authors in Italian often included paratextual remarks such as footnotes, facing-text translations and glossaries to explain the presence of foreign terms in the Italian text. That was an early approach that Brioni traces back to the fact that the authors who used them, as well as their postcolonial works, were new on the Italian literary scene. Therefore, at the time, their editors and writers might have felt necessary to ease the Italian public into the diversity of this new genre, gradually accustoming the Italian readership to the insertion of the Somali culture and language in the text (2015:21). This is evident, for instance, in the first edition of *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, a pioneer text of Somali Italian literature, and one of the very first to have been written without the help of an Italian co-author. The work includes Somali terms whose meaning is provided in footnotes at the bottom of the page, an approach that suggests the necessity for additional

explanations with the goal of enabling the reader to correctly approach a culture without knowing its linguistic background.

Here are some examples taken from the 1994 edition:

C'erano gatti, galline, *dik-dik*¹ e scimmie a far da animali domestici. (1994:13)

¹ piccole antilopi

Arrivavano vestite con abiti lunghi dai colori vivaci e la testa coperta da *garbasar*² di seta trasparenti e leggeri. (1994:16)

² velo usato dalle donne per coprire testa e spalle

Masticano il *qhat*¹ in continuazione per essere sempre all'erta. (1994:45)

¹ piantina le cui foglie hanno proprietà eccitanti

Ero ancora bambina quando con mio padre ci fermavamo agli angoli delle strade di Mombasa ed io guardavo quelle robuste braccia che con il *panga*² scoperchiavano la grossa noce di cocco. (1994:40)

² machete

According to Brioni (2015:21), *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, as well as other works published throughout the 1990s, were written in a standard form of Italian for one particular reason. As we find in the book, upon her arrival in Italy, Shirin found herself victim of a preconception which targeted immigrants as people who are generally unable to speak correct Italian. As she reports in her memoir (2013:108), she initially thought Italian people were deaf, as they were always speaking to her in a loud voice and with verbs in the infinitive form, as if immigrants were not able to understand a more complex use of language. Determined to debunk this preconception, Shirin wrote this memoir in a standard form of Italian, footnoting the few italicized Somali words.

On the other hand, glosses are used in Shirin's second novel *Nuvole sull'Equatore* in which the author places a glossary at the end of the book. This glossary comprises over 110 terms, listed in alphabetical order. The following table reports some examples (2017a:217-223):

Billaawe	Pugnale
Bio	Acqua
Bio Zamzam	La tradizione vuole che questa sorgente di acqua Zamzam venne fatta sgorgare dall'Angelo Jibril (Gabriele) per aiutare Agar e il suo piccolo figlio Ismaele; e che Abramo, ritornato dopo tanti anni in

	quel luogo desertico, fece costruire la Ka'bah intorno alla Pietra Nera nello stesso punto in cui si ergeva la casa di Adamo, distrutta dal diluvio universale. Così nacque la città di Makkah.
Gember	Donna divorziata
Istunka	Festa delle bastonate. Questa ricorrenza è una tradizione annuale caratteristica dei coltivatori stanziati lungo il fiume Uebi Scebeli. È una lotta simbolica tra abitanti di villaggi diversi. Originariamente veniva fatta anche come esercitazione in caso di scontri tra tribù.
Shifta	Termine per indicare coloro che si oppongono alle istituzioni ufficiali sulla base di motivazioni politiche. Il termine <i>shifta</i> può essere inteso e usato con connotazioni sia positive che negative a seconda del contesto.

Table 1. The table shows some examples taken from the glossary at the end of *Nuvole sull'Equatore* (2017a).

As we can observe from the above-mentioned examples, the author provided not only a straight-forwards translation of terms, but occasionally gave interesting explanations of cultural-bound words and concepts linked to tradition. This enriches the reading experience and enables a more thorough understanding of the events narrated in the novel according to their contextualization in the Somali environment. It is also interesting to note that, for some terms, she acknowledges uses and connotations. Overall, even if some of the inserted Somali words in *Nuvole sull'Equatore* can be understood from the context without the need of a glossary, it is handy to have a compact guide that provides additional information on the use of the words and backstory of the cultural terms.

One of the main differences between authors like Scego and Shirin is the insertion of multiple languages beside Somali in the Italian discourse. In *Nuvole sull'Equatore*, Giulia occasionally uses some English words, like in the following example:

In un primo pomeriggio Giulia era tornata tutta eccitata dalla gita scolastica: “Hooyo ho visto, zebras, giraffe, elephants”. Si ferma un attimo e poi aggiunge. “Hoyoo, ho visto anche snakes”. (2017a:37)

On the other hand, Scego's characters often use a multiplicity of languages as many of them are at least trilingual. Therefore, the linguistic analysis of some postcolonial Italian works cannot be limited to Italian and Somali and the interaction of the two, but must also take into account the complex multilingual scenarios created by authors who use multiple languages. Specifically to Shirin's case, in her works we do find a few instances of use of English words, however this is very limited compared to other authors. For instance, works of other postcolonial authors like Scego, present a more systematic use of terms in other languages, and polyglot characters may use all the languages they know to interact with each other.

Moreover, Shirin Ramzanali Fazel collocates differently compared to other Somali Italian authors also in another way, with the use of Italian dialects alongside Italian and Somali (Brioni, 2015:35-38). If, on one hand, Shirin makes the conscious choice of using standard Italian to show to all sceptical Italians that she is perfectly able to master the language, other authors, decide to incorporate non-standard uses of Italian. For example, in Scego's *Oltre Babilonia*, the Roman dialect is frequently used. Behind this decision there may be similar motives to those behind Shirin's decision. As a matter of fact, some may argue that understanding and representing in a literary work the linguistic heterogeneity of a country legitimates a speaker to be automatically identified as 'more Italian' compared to a standard speaker. This is because dialect is closer to everyday language and may be seen as evidence of a writer's integration into a native Italian linguistic community.

Going back to the above-mentioned theoretical models, the use of paratextual elements that justify the presence of Somali words in the Italian text applies to what Appiah called 'thick translation'. As noted by Brioni (2015:28), Appiah's model was not originally formulated to comment on translingual writing, rather it aimed at providing a template for translating from minor cultures into English. Nevertheless, it provides an interesting theoretical background in which we can investigate strategies of intercultural contamination as annotations, footnotes, glosses etc, which locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context. According to Appiah (1993:817) the fact that languages are for the most part able to convey meaning through translation from a language to another does not necessarily indicate that they can translate or render other cultures, making heavy paratextual intrusions useful in foregrounding the distance between one

language and the other, one culture and the other. The presence of these direct paratextual explanations is justified by the lack of terminological equivalence and point out the very untranslatable nature of some culture-bound concepts, ultimately emphasising the complexity of the minor culture. Moreover, this accounts for unequal relationships of power between languages, becoming a linguistic tool to resist cultural assimilation.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Bandia (2008:160-165) harshly criticized an extensive use of thick translation in literary texts, as he claims that this model draws the attention away from the plot, interrupting the smooth flow of the reading experience. He claims that paratextual elements shift the attention on anthropological and historical details that interfere with the aesthetic quality of the narrative. As a more valid alternative he suggested the use of interlinear or in-text translations, which are located, as their name suggests, inside the main text, and ultimately save the reader the hassle of having to refer to a parallel outside sub-text in the search for cultural information and contextualization. Keeping in mind Bandia's criticism on Appiah's theory, Brioni makes a qualitative distinction between different foregrounding strategies. He argues that footnotes highlight the separation between the Somali signifier and the Italian signified, as the first is presented as a 'coexisting but non assimilable presence which should always be legitimized by an Italian translation' (2015:28). Ultimately, footnotes allow Somali terms to enter the Italian text as foreign, intrusive elements. In the words of Ashcroft et al. (2010:60-61), the Somali words, which are metonymic to the Somali culture, abdicate their function of carrying meaning when footnoted, as footnotes highlight the gap between the word and its referent, granting to the Italian translation the status of 'real' and 'significant', creating therefore the opposite effect of what the Somali author would hope. Brioni (Ibid.), on the other hand, suggest that, unlike footnotes, glossaries enable a partial emancipation of the Somali signifier, since the translation of the foreign terms are found at the end of the book, in a separate section, making the reading of the glossary a choice of the reader. Therefore, the value of glossaries is twofold: first, it allows for Somali words to be present in the text as foreign interventions, incorporating them within the text, and secondly it contributes to the hybridization of Italian. Ultimately, the presence of paratextual elements underlines the distance between Italian and Somali culture and languages.

3.1.2. 'Translating distance in proximity': in-text translation and contextualization

It is common for Somali Italian literary works to present native or multilingual interventions that are translated or contextualized in the text. The choice of avoiding the glossing of some words operates the very act of highlighting the plurality of cultures while resisting assimilation. In-text contextualization of Somali terms is frequent, and the reader is in this case required to build up the meaning of the word or expression from its context and the general information provided by the novel. Once a native word or expression has been contextualized or translated into Italian, it needs no further explanations. Characters cooperate in the building of the definition of a word by interacting and collaborating with each other, and readers are required to remember the meaning of these Somali interventions to ensure a sufficient comprehension of further uses (Brioni, 2015:29). The construction of meaning, however, does not always reference to a clear correspondent in Italian, and, more often than not, it might indicate the semantic field to which the term belongs (*ibid.*). The reader, in the process of negotiating the meaning of the Somali interventions has the option of creating a mental dictionary, or else will have to accept that he or she will not understand some words of the text.

Some authors even place untranslated Somali words in the Italian text, making a specific act that aims to safeguard the plurality of cultures as well as making a statement of resistance to assimilation. Linguistic diversity is thus maintained and emphasized through the purposeful refusal to transfer a term into the domain of another language (Bandia, 2008:149). This phenomenon of integration of foreign signifiers in the dominant discourse is what Ashcroft et al. (2010:41) called the 'refusal of being subsidiary', contending that leaving some words unglossed in the text serves many purposes, such as acting as a signifier for the difference between cultures, showing that the novel is informed by another language, and illustrating the importance of context in interpreting cultural concepts, as well as the importance of adequately explicative co-texts. According to Ashcroft et al. (*Ibid.*:65) the gradual abandonment of glossing and footnoting in postcolonial literature in favour of in-text contextualization has 'released language from the myth of cultural authenticity', and proved the central role of the situating context in the task of providing meaning. Consequently, in-text contextualization has gradually been

preferred to ‘thick translation’ for multiple reasons. The choice of leaving words unglossed in postcolonial texts is a political act that, unlike glossing and footnoting which did the exact opposite, elevates the status of the minor language. Secondly, the interruption of the flow of colonial language with Somali words requires the reader to embrace a more active role, requiring a personal effort in the exploration of the culture in which these terms have meaning.

Shirin is a great example of the progression and the tendency that has seen Somali-Italian literature shift from an early use of footnotes, to glosses, to in-text contextualizations: the first edition of her memoir *Lontano da Mogadiscio* follows the first model of thick translation, as it includes paratextual footnotes. After about 15 years, her 2010 novel *Nuvole sull’Equatore* presents a glossary at the end, which, as we argued, is to some extent a better choice in terms of political impact on language.

However, the real turn happens with the republishing of her first work in a bilingual version in 2013, this time without footnotes. The definitions of Somali words are instead provided within both the Italian and the English texts, constituting a remarkable example of the general shift towards in-text contextualization. Ultimately, Shirin’s writing shows a shift from the strategy of thick translation to the model of ‘translating distance in proximity’.

Let’s have a look at the changes incorporated in the 2013 edition of *Lontano da Mogadiscio* and observe how Shirin managed to change the footnotes into in-text explanations and contextualization. Let’s make a side-by-side comparison with the 1994 edition.

Masticano il <i>qhat</i> ¹ in continuazione per essere sempre all’erta. (1994:45) ¹ piantina le cui foglie hanno proprietà eccitanti	Per essere sempre all’erta, masticano in continuazione il <i>khat</i> , una piantina le cui foglie hanno proprietà eccitanti, tolgono la fame e tengono svegli. (2013:76)
Ero ancora bambina quando con mio padre ci fermavamo agli angoli delle strade di Mombasa ed io guardavo quelle robuste braccia che con il <i>panga</i> ² scoperchiavano la grossa noce di cocco. (1994:40) ² machete	Ha in mano un affilatissimo <i>panga</i> , un machete, e lo usa per scoperchiare con pochi colpi la punta di un grosso cocco verde. (2013:70)
Arrivavano vestite con abiti lunghi dai colori vivaci e la testa coperta da <i>garbasar</i> ² di seta trasparenti e leggeri. (1994:16) ² velo usato dalle donne per coprire testa e spalle	Arrivavano vestite con abiti lunghi dai colori vivaci o avvolte in un <i>guuntino</i> tessuto a mano e con la testa coperta dal <i>garbasaar</i> , un velo, di seta trasparente e leggera. (2013:17)

Ed infine, a Zanzibar, dove non ha cambiato nome e tutti la chiamano ancora Madafu ³ . (1994:41) ³ noce di cocco	Allora non sapevo che il cocco fosse un frutto esotico. Quando sono arrivata in Europa e non ho visto <i>madafu</i> ai mercati negli afosi giorni estivi, mi è mancata. (2013:70)
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Table 2. The table shows the changes between the 1994 and the 2013 of *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, highlighting that Shirin changed her footnotes into in-text contextualizations or in-text translations.

Foreignizing approaches show the limitations that dominant languages like Italian have in describing alterity and, at the same time, they reflect the distance between the two languages and ‘privilege the signifier over the signified by refusing the equal probability of ordinary communication’ (Brioni, 2015:36). Moreover, Bandia notices that contextualization by inference (or in-text contextualization) is a more effective way in favouring the reader’s participation in the construction of meaning compared to paraphrasing and direct translation (2008: 110).

Brioni uses Derrida’s approach to translation to better explain what it means to ‘translate distance in proximity’ (2015:36). According to Derrida, the syntactical, semantic, lexical and lexicographical correspondences between languages are imprecise (1998: 66). Therefore, Brioni applies the philosopher’s theories to postcolonial language hybridity, arguing that, instead of evading the peculiarity of a language through a semantic reduction that flattens differences and assimilates the foreign text with the standard form of the target language, the translator should prefer ‘the restitution of the connotations and semantic over-determinations over the mere meaning and denotations of a text in a foreign language’ (Brioni, 2015:36). Therefore, the translator, or multilingual writer, has the impossible and necessary responsibility of reconciling languages and keep each of them alive. The task of the translator is therefore to create a universal language which performs the role of ‘adjoining, coupling, marrying two languages like two parts of a greater whole’ (Derrida 2002: 130-131). Contamination and crossing between tongues creates a beautiful growth of languages. (ibid.). Brioni, applying Derrida’s theories to what we have been discussing in this chapter, draws a parallel between what Derrida calls ‘laisser tomber le corps’ [abandoning the body] and translating distance in proximity, arguing that translation should not merely testify that it is impossible to translate or transport a verbal body into another language, but it should also show that a translation should restore the body of the original text (1967: 312), as it is done in the strategy of translating distance in proximity. In Somali Italian literature, the integration of untranslated Somali terms in

Italian texts evokes the power of Somali signifiers and subverts the common usage and the probabilistic order of Italian (Brioni, 2015:37). Therefore, unglossed Somali terms invite the readers to ‘go with the flow’ of the signifiers, hence the foreignizing strategy succeeds in re-establishing foreignness and in making readers aware of cultural specificity. Ultimately, foreignizing translation requires the readership to negotiate linguistic identity and knowledge by accepting that one cannot understand everything written in another language. When Somali Italian texts transform Italian into an unusual language for Italian readers, they have to adopt an inferential, pragmatic, and contextual approach rather than a literal conception of meaning. The insertion of foreign lexical terms goes beyond their literal meaning, and these texts envision language as a medium *through* which the process of communication takes place. Meaning is seen, therefore, as an act of cooperation in which participants intend to reach common understanding through an interpretative process rather than through the application of a fixed set of linguistic rules (Habermas 1984-87:11).

3.1.3. Translating in Proximity: Modifying Italian and Foregrounding Somali

The last and most recent tendency Brioni recognizes in Somali-Italian transcultural writing is one that is more focused on communication with the Italian audience rather than emphasising distance between cultures and languages. Works that follow this approach include very few foreign words, but still debate on the challenges of translation and intercultural communication. Once again, this makes translation theory essential for the full understanding of such a multilingual interaction (Brioni, 2015:38).

Rather than adopting language hybridity as a practice for intercultural translation, these works are more interested in experimenting with the possibilities that Italian has in reaching the Italian audience (Brioni:2015:39). This is carried out on a lexical level with the breaking of conventions of the standard language and combining slang and swearwords with aulic words, dialects, neologisms etc.

Brioni mentions the title of Scego’s novel *dismatria* as an interesting neologism (2015:42):

Il nostro incubo si chiamava dismatria. Qualcuno a volte ci correggeva [...] ‘In italiano si dice espatriare, espatrio, voi quindi siete degli espatriati’. Scuotevamo la testa [...] Eravamo dei dismatriati, qualcuno — forse per sempre — aveva tagliato il cordone ombelicale che ci legava alla nostra patria, alla Somalia. (Scego 2005: 11)

The word is formed by the privative prefix *dis-* and *matria*, the female version of ‘patria’. This neologism has been analysed by many different scholars in the light of Scego’s personal experience and that of the people of the Somali diaspora. ‘Dismatria’ refers to the nostalgic absence of Somalia in the life of the people of the diaspora, its destruction during the civil war and the difficulty in the building of a motherland in Italy, a country that cannot fully feel homely (Brioni, 2015:42).

The literature that belongs to this third category frequently evokes Somali culture but makes it explicit through language only occasionally. Rather, it focuses on the Italian language, attempting to deconstruct it with wordplay, neologism and use of non-standard forms. According to Brioni (2015:44), this third translatorial strategy can be linked to Eugene Nida’s theory of communicative translation. In a few words, the communicative method aims at relocating the meaning of the source text in the target language and reach the highest level of communicability, simultaneously seeking to create understandability while limiting the power of the signifiers and highlighting the importance of producing an equivalent response from the receivers of the translated message (Ibid.). Hence, Brioni contends that rather than showing the distance between the reader and his or her linguistic and cultural background, ‘the translator should communicate to his or her audience from an internal standpoint, by domesticating the source text for the receiving culture’ (Brioni, 2015:44).

Writers like Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, Farah, Aden and Scego occasionally embrace this communicative model in their writing, fully asserting their internal position in Italian society. Therefore, they strategically domesticate their linguistic competence in another language in order to reach the maximum level of communicability with the audience, with the ultimate political goal of challenging the hegemonic role of the dominant culture and language.

In the light of these three models and their theoretical backgrounds by Appiah, Derrida and Nida, Brioni (2015:45) reflects on the overall tendencies of Somali-Italian literature. He claims that the analysis of Somali-Italian literature as intercultural translation has highlighted a shift from the emphasizing of the distance between the two cultures to the

gradual embracing of models that put stress on their proximity. The tension between proximity and distance through the choice of different translation strategies is not to be blamed on the single author and their background, rather on the result of processes of mediation between multiple stakeholders, among which are the writer, the readers and the cultural industry (Ibid.). Tracing an excursus on past, present and future tendencies in this literary genre, Brioni notices that early Somali-Italian literature, as we have seen with *Lontano da Mogadiscio* and other similar works, was mostly written in a standard form of Italian which presented some native interventions that had to be ‘legitimized’ through paratextual remarks such as footnotes and glosses.

More recently, the tendency has shifted towards a communicative approach, which respects the specificity of the signifier, while including colloquial registers and dialects. This happens without the constraints of attesting one’s proficiency in the standard form, and it aims at the appropriation of an identity that was not legitimized. The younger generation of Somali-Italian writers who started implementing the use of colloquialisms and non-standard expressions ultimately demonstrated not only their proficiency, but also their activeness in society.

This turn towards a gradual discarding of the rules of standard language with the insertion of foreign words and the use of colloquial forms can be seen as a way of writing above the unwritten rules of hypercorrection that the immigrant feels obliged to follow (Brioni, 2015:45). Nevertheless, the choice to write in Italian is, regardless of its form, a way of rebelling against a society that wants the immigrant to be silent, reserved and uninvolved in political matters. The vast use of paratextual remarks in earlier works of Somali-Italian writers, Shirin included, reflected the fact that those works were addressed to a small élite of readers interested in literature written by immigrants. The audience of the time presumably did not know much about Somalia, as we have observed in Chapter 1. Therefore, the fact that writers and editors progressively started to not feel the need to include paratextual remarks shows that Italian society is increasingly opening towards postcolonial literature.

To summarize this section, early Somali-Italian works regarded the two languages as two separate entities, while more recent works partially emancipate the Somali signifier from the sole function of carrying a meaning that is delivered elsewhere through contextualization. Even more recent works use Italian in creative ways with wordplay and

neologism to make a political statement. Moreover, it is important to stress that the chronological changes that we have pointed out are most likely due to the ongoing increasing familiarity that Italians have towards postcolonial literature, as well as its gradual integration into the Italian literary panorama. These observations, however, do not mean to pass a judgement over the quality of these works, nor they rank the strategies they might include, as each model is, in its own way, an act of rebellion towards a fixed concept of *italianità*.

3.1.4. Calques and the importance of proper names

Brioni, in his work *The Somali Within* (2015:48-52) makes some further observations and analyses the systematic insertion of Somali calques of Italian words in Somali-Italian literature, as well as addressing the importance of proper names in processes of re-appropriation. Without a doubt, calques are the most obvious language evidence of the indelible legacy of the Italian yoke on the Somali population, as well as being the proof of the continuous creative manipulation of the Italian tongue carried out in postcolonial literature. As noted by Brioni, in *Il latte è buono* Garane writes that Somali children played ‘kalcio’ with a ‘ballooni’, two very similar words to the Italian’s ‘calcio’ and ‘pallone’ (Garane 2005:43). Calques in Somali-Italian literature are often connected to food, as we can see in *Nuvole sull’Equatore*, where Dada prepares dishes such as ‘Cutuleti, bulbeti, bolo arosto, macaroni, bistecchi, insalado, batati frito, musscolo alla rumana, sugo e sbesatini’ (2017a:27). Remaining on the topic of food, in Shirin’s *Lontano da Mogadiscio* we find examples of calques such as *bombelmo* (2013:9) and *gellado* (Ibid.). Further in this chapter I will look at how Shirin dealt with calques of Italian when translating her work into English.

Another interesting linguistic intervention made by Somalis and highlighted by Brioni is the forging of the word *boyeeso*, used in many works as it is or Italianized as ‘boyessa’, a form employed even by Shirin herself in many instances. This term, as explained by Shirin in the glossary for *Nuvole sull’Equatore*, is derived from the English ‘boy’, a term that was originally used to call male household help in British colonies, altered to the feminine form to address Somali women household helpers in Italian colonies.

Brioni (2015:49) also points out the use of the Somali word ‘stascinka’ as the phonetic variation of the Italian *stazione* used to address Roma Termini station, a place that is recurrent in Somali-Italian literature and in Shirin’s works (2010:201; 2013:183). This was of the main meeting points for the Somali community in Italy from the 1950s, before mainstream shops took over that space.

Another feature used across the board in Somali-Italian literature has to do with proper names: the use of Italian names that refer to Somali landmarks is a consequence of the fact that many places in Somalia were given Italian names during the colonial era, making the act of ‘re-naming’ metaphorically crucial for the liberation of the Somali population from the colonial oppression. A similar phenomenon happened with Somali people’s names, and it is common for writers to talk about the mark that Italians put on something so personal and sacred like people’s own names. In official documents, their Somali names have been mixed up, omitted and merged, when for many people they are the only thing left of Somalia.

Shirin, especially in *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, focuses on the toponymy of the capital city and that, everywhere she looks, she is reminded of the Italian domination with places like:

Bar Impero, Bar Nazionale, La Croce del Sud, La Mediterranea, La Pergola, El Trocadero. Tre Fontane, Cappuccetto Nero, Via Roma, Corso Italia, Caserma Podgora, Cinema Centrale, Supercinema, Scuola Regina Elena, Ospedale De Martino, Chiesa del Sacro Cuore (2013:24)

This is the clear evidence of the appropriation and domestication of space during colonialism. Clearly, this works both ways, and the re-appropriation of Somali names as well as the use of Somali calques of Italian words are loaded with a clear metaphoric power. In the case of calques, they interestingly bring back to life the language of the colonial environment in which they were created, reevoking a history of domination. As claimed by Venuti, these strategies stress that

translation has been compulsory, imposed first by the introduction of colonial languages among regional vernaculars, and later, after decolonization, by the need to traffic in the hegemonic lingua franca to preserve political autonomy and promote economic growth (1998:137).

Additionally, the presence of untranslated local names is again a sign of resistance to linguistic assimilation, as well as the re-appropriation of one’s identity.

3.2. *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, changes over the years

In this section I am going to analyse the evolution of *Lontano da Mogadiscio* through the years, looking at different editions of this book. First of all, I am going to be referring to the first edition of 1994, then the 2013 bilingual version on e-book, kindly provided by the author, and finally the most recent 2017 edition.

3.2.1. The 1994 edition

The 1994 edition starts with a preface by journalist Alessandra Atti di Sarro, titled *Una letteratura dell'ospitalità*. In this introduction Atti di Sarro dedicates the book to Ilaria Alpi, the TG3 correspondent in Somalia who was killed with her cameraman Miran Hrovatin the same year of the book's publication. The themes touched by Atti di Sarro in this preface are the importance of literature as the recollection of human history and the importance of a multicultural dialogue.

After the introduction, we find the quote 'Costruiamo muri per difenderci e alla fine ci rendiamo conto che sono delle prigioni che soffocano i nostril sentimenti', and, turning the page, we find an early poem by the author, titled *Arcobaleno*. The first half of the poem talks about the beautiful enrichment brought about by immigration and multiculturalism, with new colours, new sounds, new tastes, new languages. The second half addresses that this diversity is often seen as threat. In return for their beautiful gifts, they receive hostile looks, as if they had come to pollute the cities with their toxic presence.

The memoir itself is made up of six parts, each divided into small subsections each telling a different story or elaborating on a different theme. The 1994 edition ends with the chapter *Pianto*. Shirin decide to end the memoir on a sad note, with a cry for Somalia, a land destroyed by conflicts and wars. 'Io piango perché non ho un futuro, io piango perché l'odore della morte mi fa paura, io piango perché non voglio che la mia speranza muoia' (1994:65). Finally, in the back of this edition we find a short description of the content of the book, as well as a contextualization that locates this work in the genre of 'immigrant literature', an important novelty in the Italian literary panorama. Below that we find a few biographical notes about Shirin.

3.2.2. The 2013 edition

After almost twenty years from its first publication, in 2013 a new revisited and broadened version of *Lontano da Mogadiscio* sees the light. This is a bilingual edition in Italian and English, published on e-book with the title *Lontano da Mogadiscio/Far from Mogadishu*. The 2013 edition, published by Laurana Reloaded, includes a revisited version of *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, as well as its first self-translation. This is not, however, the first translation of the book, as a first partial translation was included in *Mediterranean Crossroads* by Graziella Parati. This early translation titled *Far Away from Mogadishu* by Natalie Hester dated back to the year 1999. It included only selected sections off the fourth and the sixth part of the memoir.

Differently from the 1994 version, this one is dedicated to Shirin's husband, for whom she writes a few lines in Italian and English. In the following pages we find the same poem *Arcobaleno*. From the summary of contents, we can notice some differences compared to the previous edition. First of all, we can see that the introduction by Alessandra Atti di Sarro has been replaced by an essay by Simone Brioni, this time placed at the end of the memoir. The actual body of the text was significantly extended, as the parts are now eight, compared to the previous six.

The summary of contents helps me to get an idea of which sections were omitted or added by the author. In the first part, for instance, the section *Una giornata come le altre* was cut out altogether, and the section *Gli ultimi aedi* was shifted from the beginning to the middle of this first part. The section *Bondere* appears for the first time in this edition. Also, the author decided to alter the title *Le scampagnate di Afgoi* in *Le scampagnate di Afgooye*, using the Somali name instead of the Italiaized one. This is clear example of the re-appropriation of Somali place names as seen in the previous sections of this work.

The second part sees the addition of three new sections, *Stasera mi butto*, *Ramadan* and *Il pozzo*, as well as the removal of *Ricordi di terre lontane*. The third, the fourth and the fifth parts remain essentially untouched, except for the addition of the section *Il borsellino*. The seventh and the eighth parts add another 60 pages to the memoir. The ending of the 2013 edition is a reflexion of the author with the title *Lontano da Mogadiscio, vent'anni dopo*, which reports and comments on the closing section of the 1994 edition, *Pianto*, with a retrospective point of view. After that, the 2013 edition

includes another poem, *Il sorgere di una nuova alba*, and closes with the same essay by Simone Brioni, which was extensively used in the writing of this work.

Since the first publication of *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, much has changed in the postcolonial studies panorama, and this work has been recognized as an incredible contribution to the genre and its unprecedented effort in the decolonization of the Italian consciousness and its long and short term consequences.

3.2.3. The 2017 edition

The 2017 edition is essentially a republication of the 2013 Italian edition contained in the bilingual edition, with the sole paratextual addition of acknowledgements and bibliographical notes on the author.

3.2.4. The 2013 and the 2017 self-translations: *Far from Mogadishu*

The 2013 English self-translation presents only a few differences in structure compared to the Italian original. Both versions have the same initial paratext. However, as we can see from the summary of contents, in the first part, the very first section *Il paese del balocchi* has been left out of the 2013 self-translation. All the other sections are included, with no cuts or additions.

The 2017 edition of the self-translation *Far from Mogadishu* (2017d) reappears *Il paese dei balocchi* as *The Fairytale country*, and there are no other significant modifications to the previous version. The ending paratextual elements still include the same essay by Brioni with references and bibliography, as well as a final section for the author's acknowledgments and her thanks.

3.3. Comment on the self-translations

For this section of the third chapter, I will look at the most interesting translation choices and modifications that Shirin decided to include in the process of self-translation of *Lontano da Mogadiscio*. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, scholars agree in saying that, in this process, authors may decide to apply significant changes to their 'original' work.

These changes happen for two main reasons: the first one is linked to the change in audience, the second one is linked to the dissatisfaction of the authors towards a choice of words they used in the original, which they feel need to be adjusted in the new version. In this paragraph we will see how this theory applies to Shirin and her literary production.

3.3.1. Self-translation of Shirin’s prose: *Lontano da Mogadiscio* and *Far from Mogadishu, Nuvole sull’Equatore* and *Clouds over the Equator*

3.3.1.1. Variations due to change in readership

In the following section I will provide some examples taken from Shirin’s memoir and her novel and their respective self-translations, specifically focusing on instances of re-writing and modifications that can be attributed to the change in readership, from an Italian audience to a more international one.

<p>Per farmi coraggio mi convincevo che andavo in un paese che in fondo conoscevo già. L’Italia l’avevo studiata sui libri sin dai tempi delle elementari. Ho avuto amici e compagni di scuola Italiani. Molto di loro avevano il padre italiano e la mamma somala. Era come se fossi vissuta all’ombra dell’Italia per anni. Ho appreso la storia studiando i moti carbonari, Garibaldi e Mazzini. Il cinema mi ha fatto conoscere la sensibilità di Pietro Germi e la comicità di Totò e Sordi. Ho gustato le specialità delle varie cucine regionali. Le canzoni di Modugno, Mina e Gianni Morandi hanno allietato la mia adolescenza. La lettura della Divina Commedia, di Pavese e di Pirandello mi aveva avvicinato alla letteratura italiana. Ora si trattava di verificare se quello che avevo immaginato corrispondeva alla realtà. (2013:33)</p>	<p>I was focusing on my destination, a country I knew: Italy. I had many Italian friends and schoolmates. Most of them had a Somali mother and an Italian father. It was like I had lived in the shadow of Italy for ages. I have studied history, Garibaldi, Mazzini and their struggle for Italian unification. At the cinema, Totò and Sordi were my favourite actors and I appreciated the sensitivity of the film director Pietro Germi. Pasta a forno, bignè and cappuccino were not exotic foods, but something I used to eat very often. The songs of Modugno, Mina, Gianni Morandi accompanied my adolescence. Dante, Pirandello, Pavese’s writing a pillar to my studies. Now I was ready to walk the soil of a country that had shrouded my world since I was born. (2013:223)</p>
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This first comparison is a good example of the adjustments that Shirin had to make in order to tweak her words to the new target audience. The excerpt on the left mentions that she studied ‘i moti carbonari, Garibaldi e Mazzini’, however, in the English, only the two

men are mentioned, and ‘moti carbonari’ become a less culture-specific ‘struggles for Italian unification’. I blame this change on the shift in audience: we cannot expect a worldwide readership to be overly familiar with the history of Italian unification in the same way the addressees of *Lontano da Mogadiscio* are expected to be. Further in the excerpts, the same audience-based adjustment was made with the mentioning of Totò and Sordi. If in the Italian version of the book, their names can be used without having to explain who they are, in the English version, they are clarified to be actors. Again, the same happens when she mentions Italian famous writers and masterpieces, citing the *Divina Commedia* in the Italian version but opting for the name of the author instead in the English version. Lastly, ‘Ho gustato le specialità delle varie cucine regionali’ is a sentence that for an Italian audience is evocative of our culinary tradition and provides a very distinct image of the tastes and smells of the Italian cuisine. On the other hand, the broader, multicultural readership of the English version may need a little help in picturing the Italian traditional dishes, hence why Shirin decided to explicitly mention a few.

Appena arrivata in Italia, mi sembrava che gli italiani fossero tutti sordi. Quando mi capitava di chiedere in perfetto italiano a un passante: «Per cortesia, mi può indicare via Monte Nero?». La persona interpellata mi guardava e iniziava a gesticolare freneticamente scandendomi le parole ad alta voce e coniugando i verbi all’infinito. [...] Man mano poi che allargavo il giro delle conoscenze mi sentivo rivolgere le domande più strane, del tipo: «Vivete nelle capanne? Al vostro paese ci sono strade e automobili? Avete le mucche? Indossate il gonnellino di paglia? Ci sono i cannibali in Africa?» [...] All’inizio me la prendevo, poi capii la grande ignoranza che c’era. Loro conoscevano solo l’africano dei documentari in bianco e nero; l’africano dei film di Tarzan che fa roteare gli occhi parlando all’infinito. Provai una gran rabbia dentro, ma non per loro! Io, come moltissimi somali, avevo studiato la lingua italiana e la storia d’Italia, mentre l’Italia non s’era mai degnata di fare altrettanto con noi. Gli italiani ignoravano tutto di noi. I bambini, in Italia, sui libri di scuola

When I first came to Novara it seemed to me that all the Italians were deaf. I would stop and ask a passer-by: “*Per cortesia, mi può indicare via?*”, will you please direct me to via Monte Nero? And the person would look at me and start to articulate words clearly, using verbs in the infinitive tense in a loud voice [...] As time passed by and I met more people, I was asked weird questions like, “Did you live in a hut? Did you have roads and cars where you come from? Do you have cows? Did you wear a grass skirt? There are cannibals in Africa?” [...] I was upset, and only then I understood the big ignorance around me. They knew the Africans of the documentary films in black and white, the Africans of Tarzan and Gone with the Wind, the ones who would roll their big eyes and talk with a lousy accent. I was angry, not with the ordinary people, but with the politicians. In Somalia, we have studied the Italian curriculum; we knew the name of the rivers, mountains, poets, heroes, history, grammar, but Italians knew nothing about us. Children in Italy had the figure of the Negro with the grass skirt on their

hanno ancora la figura del negretto col gonnellino di paglia, l'anello al naso e l'osso tra i capelli, pensavo. (2013:39)	schoolbooks. He would have a big ring hanging from his nose and a bone between his coarse hair. (2013:229)
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This is, again, a very explicative example of audience-related adjustments. First of all, we notice that in the English version Shirin decided to leave in italics the quote “*Per cortesia, mi può indicare via?*”, perhaps for similar reasons as to why she would leave some words in the Somali language, that is, to mark that the story she is telling is originally conceived in another language and inscribed in that tradition and culture. She decided to leave traces of the Somali and the Italian languages in the English version too, in this case without forgetting to provide an adequate explanation in the following line.

Moreover, Shirin decided to add *Gone with the Wind* as an example of a popular film containing stereotyped African characters. This is, again, a choice dictated by the change in audience, as *Gone with the Wind* is an American classic that is infamous in the English-speaking world for its stereotypical black characters —e.g. the character of the Mammy which portrayed a stereotypical image of black women that was extensively used for years in cinema, books etc. In the US, many studies have been conducted around representation of blackness as well as these stereotypical characters, hence using this movie as an example in this very passage is very indicative for an English-speaking audience.

Moreover, black people in the Italian version of *Lontano da Mogadiscio* are stereotypically said to talk ‘all’infinito’, whereas in the English version they are said to talk in ‘lousy accents’. This is because it would not have made sense to imply that some people talk with the infinitive form in English, whereas the Italian infinitive form could potentially be used to simplify speech.

Towards the end of the quoted English extract we read ‘In Somalia, we have studied the Italian curriculum; we knew the name of the rivers, mountains, poets, heroes, history, grammar, but Italians knew nothing about us.’, an extended, more specific version compared to the general mention of history and language that is made in the Italian excerpt. Again, this amplification is added for an international language that may not know that Somali people studied the Italian curriculum at school. Lastly, I want to mention the approach in the translation of ‘Provai una gran rabbia dentro, ma non per loro!’. In the English, Shirin’s anger is clarified to be targeted towards politicians rather than towards ordinary people, a concept that was perhaps not clear in the Italian version.

<p>La mia mamma è qui di fronte a me. Ci siamo abbracciate. Sembra così fragile con quel lungo e pesante vestito di lana grezza color verde scuro addosso. Non ho idea dove avesse scovato quella stoffa, a Mogadiscio. Solo il suo <i>shaash</i> dal colore rosso legato in testa svela il suo carattere forte. (2013:42)</p>	<p>She was here, my mum in front of my eyes. We hugged. She looked so vulnerable, so fragile in that large, thick, coarse woollen, long, dark green dress. I had no idea where she could have picked a material like that in Mogadishu. Only her colourful red <i>shaash</i>, scarf, tied on her head disclosed her strong character. (2013:232)</p>
<p>C'è la magia nell'aria, l'eccitazione di chi avrebbe localizzato per primo la sottile falce argentea della luna nascente. L'avvistamento è seguito da un coro di benedizioni: «<i>Ramadan Karim!</i>» (2013:46)</p>	<p>Magic in the air, and excitement in guessing who will be the first one to spot the silver crescent. Then a chorus of blessing, "Welcome Ramadan!" (2013:236)</p>

This double comparison is aimed at showing how Shirin dealt with the use of Somali words in the change of target audience. In the first example, the Somali word *shaash* is translated but still left in the English version, whereas the second example '*Ramadan Karim!*' is substituted by the translation. My theory is that, for the author is perhaps more important to leave her Somali imprint in the Italian compared to the English, as the intrusions of Somali into Italian create a political statement of hybridization of the dominant tongue linked to colonization. It is true, however, that Shirin still uses many Somali expressions in her English translations, sometimes even using the strategy of compensation, leaving out some of them and adding other ones later in the text.

<p>Ovunque mi giro vedo volti somali. Donne belle, giovani e meno giovani, in sandali o tacchi a spillo, con chiome dai tagli moderni, vestite in jeans, gonne, pantaloni, maglietta o con il tradizionale <i>dirac</i>; coperte da coloratissimi <i>garbasaar</i>, o modesti <i>hijabs</i>. Sempre in gruppo, come per esorcizzare la solitudine. Occhi perennemente in cerca di un volto amico di cui non si ha notizia da lungo tempo. Labbra sempre pronte a sorridere al semplice saluto: «<i>Sideed tahay? Wax cusub ma jiraan?</i>» Come stai? Hai notizie fresche? (2013:60)</p>	<p>Everywhere I turn, I spot Somali faces: pretty, young and mature women dressed in jeans, skirts, trousers, T-shirts, long gowns, <i>dirac</i>, a traditional Somali women's dress, sandals and high heels, with the latest haircuts; heads covered in colourful <i>garbasaar</i> or modest <i>hijabs</i>. Always in groups, to exorcise the solitude. Eyes perpetually searching for a familiar face, which has not been seen for a long time. Lips ready to smile at the first greeting, "<i>Sideed tahay? Wax cusub ma jiraan?</i>", How are you? Is there any news? (2013:250)</p>
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As shown in the previous comparisons, this is another example of how Shirin dealt with the use of native expressions in the English translation. As we can see, compared to Italian, Shirin provides a more detailed explanation of the traditional attire, explicitly mentioning what a *dirac* is and indirectly explaining that *garbasaar* and *hijabs* are head scarves. Possibly these words had already been explained or contextualized at some other point in the Italian version. In both versions ‘*Sideed tahay? Wax cusub ma jiraan?*’ is translated.

<p>Una voce rauca e possente echeggia nel quartiere: «Banane, angurie, limoni, cipolle, aglio, pomodori, mango, peperoncino e bombelmo». (2013:9)</p>	<p>A loud hoarse voice is piercing the neighbourhood: “Bananas, watermelons, limoni, onions, garlic, tomatoes, mango, chilli and bombelmo, grapefruit”. (2013:200)</p>
<p>Un ragazzino sta tamburellando con una forchetta su un vassoio di alluminio, vende caramelle gommosse fatte in casa, segue quello dei ghiaccioli alla menta che grida: «Gellado». (2013:9)</p>	<p>A young boy is drumming with a fork on an aluminium tray, selling gummy homemade sweets, followed by the vendor of green mint syrup ice lollies, yelling: “Gellado”, ice cream. (2013:200)</p>

In these passages we can spot some interesting linguistic choices linked to the use of calques of Italian, a matter I have addressed in the previous section of this work.

If in the Italian version the calque *bombelmo* is untranslated as its meaning is pretty obvious to an Italian reader, the same effect is transported into the English with the word *limoni*, which is left untranslated, as very similar to the English ‘lemons’. On the other hand, the word *bombelmo*, far from its English equivalent grapefruit, needs to be translated for an international readership.

Once again in the following example, the Somali word for ice-cream is a calque of the Italian and can be left untranslated in the text, whereas in the English passage a translation is needed to ensure understandability.

<p>«Il Belpaese sta veramente cambiando; sta adottando nuove tradizioni», mi sono detta. In serata poi, suona il campanello della porta e odo voci</p>	<p>“Italy is changing”, I think. “It is adopting new traditions”. In the evening, a doorbell rings and little</p>
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infantili che gridano: «Dolcetto o scherzetto?» (2013:152)	voices scream, “ <i>Dolcetto o scherzetto?</i> ” Trick or treat? (2013:339)
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In the English passage, the nickname used for Italy ‘Belpaese’ is left out, as it would not be understandable for an international audience. Moreover, ‘dolcetto o scherzetto’ is left in Italian and Shirin added the English translation thereafter.

<p>Con l’indipendenza, ho visto cambiare lentamente il mondo intorno a me. Radio Mogadiscio trasmetteva ancora i programmi dell’Italia, il notiziario e le canzoni in voga. Il quotidiano nazionale —Il Corriere della Somalia era scritto in lingua italiana. Milan, Inter e Juventus avevano i loro tifosi e l’italiano continuava a essere la lingua ufficiale, ma l’oasi creata dall’Italia imperiale si restringeva a vista d’occhio. La Casa d’Italia, l’ultimo baluardo, era gremita di nostalgici perennemente occupati a criticare tutto e tutti, ma con una scusa sempre pronta pur di non lasciare l’Africa. (2013:25)</p>	<p>Independence brought little change. Radio Mogadishu still broadcast news, songs, daily programmes from Italy. The national newspaper, —Il Corriere della Somalia, was printed in Italian, as Italian was the country’s official language. Milan, Inter and Juventus football teams had their fans, but the oasis created by the Italian empire shrank visibly. La Casa d’Italia remained its last fortress, packed with people nostalgic for the fascist era, always ready to criticise everything and everyone, but always with an excuse not to leave the country. (2013:215)</p>
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The adjustments Shirin decided to make according to the two different readerships are mainly two: the first one is the addition of the explication of what Milan, Inter and Juventus are, which is obvious for any Italian reader, but might be less evident for international people. The second adjustment was made in regards to the term ‘nostalgici’, a word that for Italians carries a specific cultural and political meaning and is used for people who feel nostalgia towards the fascist dictatorship, its pillars and its personalities. Clearly, using the literal translation ‘nostalgic’, or ‘nostalgic people’ would have not been enough to capture the political nuances that this word has when applied to Italian society, hence the addition of ‘for the fascist era’.

<p>Guido Giardino era nato da un’agiata famiglia fiorentina. Il suo temperamento ribelle lo aveva spinto ad abbandonare precocemente gli studi universitari. Presto il giovane Guido era stato chiamato sotto le armi, nell’esercito e successivamente</p>	<p>Guido Giardino grew up in an environment where fascism was at its height. Young children and teenagers wore black shirts, blue handkerchiefs tied around their necks, grey-green shorts and fezes- the uniform of the Balilla. They were the future of the</p>
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mandato in Eritrea. Era contento di partire per l’Africa. La propaganda dell’epoca alimentava la fantasia popolare facendo sognare i giovani della sua età e ingigantiva i miti del continente misterioso. Grande rilievo era stato posto nell’esaltare la grande espansione coloniale in corso: portare la civiltà europea in quelle terre remote era diventato un dovere sacrosanto. Ciò che però stimolava maggiormente la fantasia del maschio italico erano le belle e voluttuose veneri nere, raffigurate nelle cartoline e nei manifesti di allora. I loro occhi languidi erano carichi di promesse per l’uomo bianco. (2017:4)

nation, to be turned into patriots-military, heroic, manly and authoritarian. From an early age they practiced defending the homeland with wooden rifles. Guido felt privileged to belong to the Roman civilization. He was athletic, a good swimmer, proud of his race. His family owned farmland. His father wanted him to continue his studies, but he was bored by books. He loved action, and when he left school got his army call-up papers, he saw it as the right opportunity to fulfil his aspirations to serve his country. That year they had the worst winter ever. There was a chill wind that was blowing down trees. Roofs collapsed under the snow. The agricultural sector was in crisis. Many were unemployed. Families were emigrating as settlers to bring work, progress and civilization to Africa. In the newspapers appeared caricatures of little pitch-back men, completely bold, with big eyes rimmed in white, their tick lips painted in red, with silver rings hanging from their noses [...] His desire to explore was stimulated by these images, but most of all the postcards he kept hidden in his wallet showed a naked black woman. [...] (2017:3-4)

This is a very important example of re-writing justified by the change in audience. Even with a superficial glance, we can see that the English has been extended quite significantly compared to the Italian. Upon reading the two passages, the reader may notice that their contents are quite different: even if the meaning is ultimately similar, the way Shirin explains what she wants to say in the two languages is quite different. The Italian is more concise and leaves many things unsaid and only implied. This is because the description of the environment in which Guido grew up does not need to be described to an Italian reader who is familiar with the atmosphere of the fascist era. The same goes for the description of Guido as a typical Italian youngster of the time, a character that does not need much explanation for an Italian audience. On the other hand, the English version provides the foreign reader with a closer look at the authoritarian atmosphere of fascism, a description of the *Balilla*, as well as a contextualization of the motives that lead people to move to Africa at the time, something that can be quickly skimmed over in the Italian.

<p>A casa c'era Dada ad accoglierli con un sorriso che mostrava il suo <i>fanax</i>. Indossava il <i>guntiino</i> e nascondeva le braccia nude con un <i>cambuur-garbod</i> coloratissimo. Giulia parlava in fretta, non vedeva l'ora di raccontare la sua giornata a Dada. La donna, che ci teneva a sapere se la bambina aveva mangiato, la interruppe chiedendole:</p> <p>«Maha 'unti?»</p> <p>«Soor, hilib iyo ano ghel».</p> <p>«Hai mangiato con gli altri bambini?», si informò Dada</p> <p>«Haa»</p> <p>«Wa-ka-boben, mahino?»</p> <p>«No, io sono stata più veloce». E ridendo Dada le disse: «Benlei!»</p> <p>Poi l'anziana governante portò la bambina in bagno, la spogliò e la mise nella vasca, incominciando a insaponarla vigorosamente. La polvere rossa portata via dall'acqua sparì in un vortice nello scarico. (2017a:16)</p>	<p>At home Dada is waiting for them with a smile showing her <i>fanax</i>- the gap in her front teeth. Wearing her traditional <i>guntiino</i>, and a colourful <i>cambuur-garbod</i> covering her shoulders, she welcomes them. Giulia is talking fast. She wants Dada to know how she spent her day. Dada is worried and asks her</p> <p>“What did you eat?”</p> <p>“Soor, caano geel and meat.”</p> <p>“Did you eat with other children?”</p> <p>“Haa.”</p> <p>“They cleaned up their plate before you, didn't they?”</p> <p>“No. I was quicker.”</p> <p>Dada laughing, said: “Benlei!” You liar! The devoted nanny takes the girl to the bathroom, undresses her and puts her in a bathtub. She soaps her vigorously, red powder is washed away, swirling down the drain. (2017e:17)</p>
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This is an example, this time taken from *Nuvole sull'Equatore*, of how Shirin dealt with the use of Somali phrases in the movement from Italian to English. In order to understand her approach, we have to remember that the Italian version of this novel had a glossary with the explanation and translation of Somali terms and phrases, a feature that did not appear in the translated version of the novel. This is clearly reflected in Shirin's approach. As we can see, some words like *fanax* and *benlei* are immediately translated or explained. We can then notice that in the dialogue, the Italian contains more Somali phrases compared to the English, as the glossary will allow their understandability. The English, which does not have a glossary, is naturally equipped with more in-text translations and contextualizations: the question “Maha 'unti?” is replaced altogether by its English translation, and the same happens with “Wa-ka-boben, mahino?”.

3.3.1.2. Aesthetic changes due to the process of re-writing

In the following passages I will show that Shirin, as a self-translator, allowed herself the freedom to change her work for pure aesthetical purposes, carrying out a true process of re-writing. These changes applied to the ‘original’ are not justified by a change in readership, rather they are dictated by the writer’s will of re-writing their own works in a new way and in a new language.

<p>Le donne si prestavano i monili d’oro da sfoggiare nei matrimoni. Insieme preparavano i biscotti fatti in casa. Si decoravano le mani con l’<i>hènna</i> e se lo mettevano sui capelli a vicenda. Quando nasceva un bimbo era un grande evento. Le mamme lasciavano tranquillamente i bambini nel cortile, tanto sapevano che sarebbero stati seguiti dallo sguardo vigile di qualche nonna o vecchia zia. (2013:12)</p>	<p>Women invited to marriages would borrow from each other gold bracelets, earrings, sandals. They would prepare homemade biscuits, tattoo their hands with henna, dye their hair, give feet and back massages to each other. When a new baby was born, it was a big event. Mothers could leave their young ones, knowing that at home, there was always an aunt, an <i>ayeeyo</i>, grandmother, who would keep an eye on them. (2013:203)</p>
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These two passages show some interesting translation choices by Shirin. First of all, in the first line, the Italian quotes ‘monili’, which in the English is not translated with the collective noun jewellery, rather using more specific terms. In the following part, the English appears to have been extended, with the addition of the full sentence ‘give feet and back massages to each other’. Then, Shirin applies more changes in her translation, setting the scene of the kids playing at home, instead of outside in the ‘cortile’, and adding to the English a Somali word that is not found in the Italian version. This is probably a strategy of compensation, meaning that the author decided to add an extra Somali word into the English in order to compensate for the removal of other ones in the other passages.

<p>Vivendo in Italia non avevo mai sentito nessuno parlare apertamente di morte. Le mie orecchie captavano questo motivo ricorrente: «Non è più con noi». Non capivo, dove era andato? Mi ci è voluto del tempo per capire che avevano paura di dire: «È morto». Noi sin da bambini veniamo messi di fronte</p>	<p>Living in Italy I have never heard people talking about death. They would say, “He is missing, or she is missing”. I could not understand, missing, where did they go? It took me time to understand that they were afraid to say, “He died”. Death is taboo talk in Western societies where people</p>
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<p>a questo evento come l'ultima tappa della vita di tutti. Quindi per noi la morte non è quel tabù che gli occidentali cercano di esorcizzare relegando quest'ultimo appuntamento della vita in una grigia stanza d'ospedale oppure in una squallida casa di riposo per anziani, quasi nell'inconscio tentativo di allontanare la morte dalle loro case. (2013:15)</p>	<p>exorcize this last appointment of life confining it to a hospital, or to a nursing home, in the unwitting attempt to keep death away from their homes. (2013:206)</p>
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These examples show that, sometimes, unlike what we have seen up to this point, Shirin chooses to be more concise in the English compared to the Italian, as we can see in the translations of phrases such as: 'Le mie orecchie captavano questo motivo ricorrente' or 'Quindi per noi la morte non è quel tabù che gli occidentali cercano di esorcizzare relegando quest'ultimo appuntamento della vita in una grigia stanza d'ospedale oppure in una squallida casa di riposo per anziani' in a less descriptive form. Moreover, a sentence is completely omitted. As a language, English is intrinsically more straight-forward than Italian, hence the writer decided to leave out some less essential elements and favoured a more direct style.

<p>I sarti a Mogadiscio erano la categoria più coccolata dalle donne. I più bravi si sceglievano la clientela. Delle volte ti ritrovavi col vestito tagliato non sul modello da te scelto, bensì secondo il loro estro. Naturalmente significava litigare, ma alla fine riuscivano sempre a convincerti della validità della loro scelta. (2013:28)</p>	<p>The tailors of my city, Mogadishu, were the most loved. The few professional ones would choose their clientele, and women would kill to have a dress made by one of them. Sometimes they would cut the model according to their own taste and convince the client that it was the best one for her figure. (2013:218)</p>
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I chose this passage as I felt it was quite useful in showing ways in which a self-translator can alter, re-adjust and re-write their own work, purely because its theirs and they can modify anything they feel needs modifying. Ultimately the content of the two passages is the same, but the way the story is told is quite different: 'coccolata' becomes 'loved'; 'women would kill to have a dress made by one of them' is added, and the meaning of 'Naturalmente significava litigare, ma alla fine riuscivano sempre a convincerti della validità della loro scelta' is slightly altered in the English, adding that they would convince clients by saying the dress was the best for their figures.

<p>L'aria fredda dell'alba prima che il sole scaldasse la giornata e le pungenti serate nelle quali bisognava accendere il caminetto. Il nostro giardino, dove crescevano le nespole, le more, i mirtili con cui le bambine si sporcavano le mani e il musetto per poi arrampicarsi sugli alberi come piccoli scoiattoli. L'enorme albero carico di manghi profumava l'aria e quando gli avocado maturi cadevano dagli alberi, i nostri gatti se li gustavano leccandosi i baffi. (2013:59)</p>	<p>Playing in our extensive garden they picked up blackberries, bilberries and guavas, staining their dresses and faces, climbing up trees like squirrels, discovered grass snakes, scaring me. Green corn fields, where they would hunt for ladybirds. The clear, cold mornings, the breath-taking sunsets and the chilly evenings, when we would sit around the fireplace. Mango trees filled the air with their pungent scent, and we prepared mango juice in big pots. Ripe avocados would fall, and our cats would lick the fruit greedily. (2013:249)</p>
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This is another example of Shirin's process of re-writing. The main differences in these two passages is the position of the first sentence, that is placed further down in the English excerpt. The Italian makes no mention of green corn fields, ladybirds, grass snakes and mango juice in big pots. The English version may have been extended and contain more information, however, overall, the message and the atmosphere of nostalgia created by Shirin's words is equal in both versions.

<p>In questa Mogadiscio della mia infanzia il bianco era il colore predominante: le sahariane, i pantaloni, i nostri cappellini e i grembiolini della scuola, le tonache delle suore. (2013:24)</p>	<p>In the Mogadishu of my childhood, white is the predominant colour: safari bush jackets, trousers, our school uniforms, hats and the nun's long dresses. (2013:214)</p>
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We can see in this passage that Shirin decided to change the verb tenses. This is something that happens a lot in both the memoir and the novel, and it is probably a decision dictated by what sounds more appropriate to the author at the moment, therefore I would classify it as an 'aesthetic' choice.

<p>Un giorno, al confine con la Somalia, era stato assalito dagli Shifta, derubato del camion e lasciato in fin di vita. Raccolto e curato dai padri missionari, aveva avuto modo di riflettere. Non era più un ragazzino, e la vita dura si</p>	<p>A severe pain prevented him from breathing. He opened his eyelids slowly. The room was blurred. His temples were pounding. He was sweating and feverish. It was hard to move. The fear came, he could not</p>
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faceva sentire con i dolori alla schiena. Avventurarsi per l’Africa, come aveva fatto lui negli ultimi quindici anni, diventava ogni giorno più pericoloso. In Somalia era nel frattempo iniziato il periodo dell’A.F.I.S., Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia, e Guido pensava che per altri dieci anni avrebbe potuto lavorare in un territorio che manteneva una forte influenza italiana. (2017:6)

breathe. Immediately he remembered the ambush. He had braked sharply to avoid the large rock placed in front of him. He couldn’t manoeuvre on because there was dense vegetation on both sides of the dirt road. He and his second driver had just got off the truck. Suddenly they found themselves surrounded by a group of armed thugs. He remembered trying to draw his revolver when he was struck violently in the ribs several times with a rifle butt. Then- a vacuum, a big black hole in his memory. Acute and guttural sounds seemed to carry him down into the bowels of the earth. He could not move his shoulder. A bandage covered his arm. A priest leaned over him.

“The worst is over. You’re lucky the bullet only grazed you.”

“How is Atenio, my driver?” Silence scrouded the room. The man shook his head. “Try to rest.” “Where am I?”

“You are safe in a Catholic Mission”. We are about three hours’ drive from Kismayo. A passing car gave you first aid and brought you here. Try to remember what happened. A police officer is coming to investigate.’ Guido was sucked into nightmares [...] It took six weeks for him to recover fully. He was thinking about settling down. Increasing lower-back pain, caused by many years, driving over kilometres of rough terrain, made him reflect. It was also dangerous crossing borders. Revolts against colonialism were changing the continent. The demand for freedom had led to the rise of groups known in the horn of Africa as Shifta. They were politically minded outlaws struggling for social order and political change. However, common criminals who robbed civilians and raided villages were also labelled Shiftas. The Italians made no distinction between a bandit and a revolutionary. In Somalia, the Italian trusteeship of the UN’s ten-year mandate period began. (2017:7-8)

This passage is an amazing example of the process of re-writing carried out by Shirin with the translation of her books. The Italian version briefly mentions that Guido was assaulted by *Shiftas*, whereas the English version creates a complex story behind it, giving additional information and adding pathos to the scene. The memories of the attack and the feeling that Guido goes through during his recovery create depth in the scene, and we discover details along with him. Perhaps, when translating this passage, the author felt like the Italian was too rushed in telling this event in Guido's life, so she decided to explore this anecdote in more depth in the later English version. Moreover, once again, the explanation of who *Shiftas* are, is left to the glossary at the end for the Italian readers, whereas, the English provides an in-text explanation of the term.

<p>Durante il volo di ritorno, Amina cercò di padroneggiare le proprie paure. Si era definitivamente separata da Guido e ora doveva affrontare il futuro senza poter contare sull'aiuto di nessuno. In fondo, era stata la sua decisione e se ne assumeva la responsabilità. Per farsi coraggio continuò a ripetere a sé stessa che non era la prima donna a crescere dei figli da sola. L'angoscia rimaneva: una figlia meticcina avrebbe accresciuto le difficoltà. Non sarebbe stata in grado di darle un'educazione italiana. A malincuore maturò la decisione di iscrivere provvisoriamente la figlia nel collegio cattolico. Ne aveva parlato al vescovo ed egli aveva dato il benestare. L'angoscia che sentiva dentro di sé era un fuoco che la consumava lentamente: come spiegare a Giulia il futuro che l'aspettava? Le difficoltà economiche le facevano meno paura. Guido le era venuto incontro con una modesta somma di denaro; pensava di comprarsi un taxi usato. Amina aveva la valigia stipata di biancheria intima di lusso. Erano articoli che andavano a ruba e pensò che avrebbe potuto rivenderle alle ricche signore della nascente nuova borghesia somala. Prima della partenza aveva acquistato all'ingrosso del tè che aveva spedito via terra. Rifornire i piccoli negozi nei villaggi le era sembrata una buona idea. Questi erano soltanto piccoli progetti, dettate dalle necessità incombenti. Il suo vero grande sogno di avviare un negozio</p>	<p>Amina and Guido are separated. It is her decision to leave. Now alone, she is in control of her future. She has to reshape her daughter's life. She is not worried about money. Guido has given her enough to buy a second-hand car to run a taxi business. She has a suitcase full of lingerie, goods she can sell easily to the wealthy ladies of the new middle class. She purchases, wholesale, good Kenyan tea, which is loaded onto little trucks to be sold to little shops in the villages along the main roads. These are small projects dictated by necessity. Her ambition is to open a shop for women in the heart of town. Her big anguish: has she made the right decision for her daughter? She tells herself 'I am not the first woman to bring up a child alone. I can make it.' When she thinks rationally, and honestly, she is not sure she if it is the right choice. "My daughter is meticcina; she will be discriminated against, now that Guido is not here to protect her. I'm not able to give her an Italian education." Before leaving for Nairobi, Amina spoke to the Bishop; she wanted Giulia to attend a Catholic boarding school, where most of the meticcini children go. How will she tell Giulia that she is going to leave her with strangers? (2017e:43)</p>
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doveva, per il momento, essere chiuso in un cassetto. (2017a:45)	
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I chose to make this last comparison as it is interesting to see that Shirin, in this case, almost left the content unvaried, giving the same information in both versions, but telling this information in different ways and following a new order. Both versions contain information about her separation, her travel, the money Guido gave her to start a taxi business, her preoccupations about Giulia and her upbringing, the lingerie and the tea she bought, her dream to open a shop and her decision to enrol Giulia in a Catholic school. What is explored in more depth in the English version is the worry of a mother, also linked to the fact that Giulia is mixed-race and will encounter discrimination in her life, especially now that Guido is not there for her. Compared to the Italian, Amina's anxiety is explored in the English with an account of her exact thoughts, that gives the reader an insight of what she is really feeling.

3.4. Comment on the self-translation of *Wings* and *Ali spezzate*

Lastly, I am going to look at Shirin's collection of poems *Wings*, written originally in English and then translated/re-written by the author in Italian only a year after its publication. In the published version, almost all the poems are self-translated into Italian, except for *Eroe* and *Mare Nostrum*, translated by Andrea Sirotti. The two versions present a similar cover, portraying some shoes found on the shores of Lampedusa in a picture taken by Mario Badagliaccia in 2013. As for the paratext, the two versions are quite dissimilar: the English version goes straight to the poems almost immediately, as before them we only find the summary of contents. At the end, we find a small section with information about the author. The Italian version, on the other hand, presents an introduction by Luca Paci, professor at the University of Swansea, Wales, as well as the summary of contents and some information on the author. Both the English and the Italian versions present, on page 2, a picture of the author's *hooyo*, her mother.

The first and most striking difference is probably in the title of the two versions: the English, *Wings*, becomes *Ali spezzate* in the Italian, for reasons that we will later discuss with the author at the end of this work. The book is split into three sections, *Diaspora*, *Caught in the Middle* and *Migrants*, dividing the poems according to the themes and the

feelings they capture. The first section is a collage of memories from the author's childhood, her friends and family, Somalia, its colours and its traditions, and it pays homage to her background and her roots. The second section captures the feeling of belonging and non-belonging migrants feel towards their home and their acquired home, because, as the title suggests, they are 'caught in the middle'. Metaphorically, Shirin collocates this section purposefully between the memories of home of the first section and the third one, which captures the heart-breaking feelings of migration.

In the following pages we will analyse three of Shirin's poems and comment on how she decided to translate them. We should bear in mind that, especially with poems, it is difficult to give an accurate explanation of the edits and the translation choices made by the author, as a reader may never be fully sure of the meanings the author wanted to convey through her imagery. Therefore, the reader should bear in mind that this is my own personal interpretations of the poems.

HERITAGE	HERITAGE- RETAGGIO
People lost the memory of how it all began	La gente ha perso la memoria di come tutto è iniziato
They just kept passing it on for generations.	Hanno continuato a trasmetterlo di generazione in generazione
Others say it all began at the time	Alcuni dicono che tutto iniziò
When Pharaoh ruled the land of the Thebes	Quando il Faraone governava Tebe
Tradition travelled on the shoulders of the river Nile	La tradizione viaggiò sulle spalle del fiume Nilo
It slithers silent, calm, sometimes angry	Strisciando con silenziosa calma a volte con rabbia
Coursing through different lands	Percorrendo terre diverse
Whispering to peasants and nobles.	Sussurrando a nobili e contadini
Darkness sneaks into the heart of men	Il male si intrufolò nel cuore degli uomini

<p>The screams, the pain, the sadness never spared</p> <p>Your loving grandmother, your mother,</p> <p>Your sister, your aunt.</p> <p>My body aches at the sight of the sharp knife</p> <p>Knowing no mother would stay still</p> <p>And allow bitter tears</p> <p>If only she could choose-</p> <p>She is crushed under</p> <p>Layers and layers of blindness</p> <p>While her little girl, Knees apart, is CUT, CUT, CUT.</p> <p>Now you know</p> <p>It does not have to do with Islam</p> <p>It is when people get confused, mixed up.</p> <p>Thank you, mother,</p> <p>For breaking the silence:</p> <p>Now I can dance with the wind</p> <p>Like papyrus on the banks</p> <p>Of the river Nile. (2017c:8)</p>	<p>Le urla il dolore e la tristezza non risparmiarono</p> <p>La tua amata nonna, la tua mamma, Tua sorella, tua zia</p> <p>Il mio corpo prova dolore alla vista dell'affilato coltello</p> <p>Nessuna mamma rimarrebbe ferma</p> <p>A mandare giù lacrime amare</p> <p>Se solo potesse scegliere</p> <p>È oppressa sotto</p> <p>Strati e strati di cecità</p> <p>Mentre la sua bambina</p> <p>Gambe divaricate viene TAGLIATA, TAGLIATA, TAGLIATA</p> <p>Ora tu lo sai</p> <p>Non ha nulla a che vedere con l'Islam</p> <p>È perché la gente è confusa</p> <p>Grazie mamma</p> <p>Per avere rotto il silenzio</p> <p>Ora posso ballare con il vento</p> <p>Come un papiro sulle sponde</p> <p>Del fiume Nilo. (2018:8)</p>
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Interestingly, unlike any other poem collected in these books, Shirin decided to keep a bilingual English-Italian title, calling the Italian poem Heritage-Retaggio. This first poem

touches on various themes that are recurrent in postcolonial literature. In the first lines, the author talks about the heritage and the traditions of Somalia, which have been gradually lost and forgotten, and she traces one of the possible stories of the genesis of her land, a story that has spread among nobles and peasants. This retracing of Somali history and heritage is abruptly interrupted by a line that perhaps summarizes the advent of internal conflicts and wars in Somalia, symbolised by evil entering people's hearts. Some interesting variations are applied in the shift from English to Italian, for instance, darkness is translated as 'il male' instead of 'l'oscurità'. It is fascinating to notice that in the English she uses the present tense 'sneaks', whereas in the Italian she changes the tense to a passato remoto. In these first verses the personification of the tradition is maintained in the Italian translation. In line 6, I can find an interesting figure of sound, with the alliteration of the 's' in 'It slithers silent, calm, sometimes', which is to a certain extent maintained in Italian, and amplifies the power of these words through figures of sound.

After the line 'the darkness sneaks into the heart of men', the whole tone of the poem changes completely. The reminiscing and the personification of the Somali heritage and tradition that embraces the elements of nature becomes a scenery of pain, conflict, and chaos, that does not spare anyone, nor mothers, nor aunts nor sisters. The author expresses pain at the sight of a knife and empathizes with other mothers thinking about the helplessness they feel in seeing their daughters get hurt. Language wise, Shirin changed 'allow bitter tears' to 'mandare giù lacrime amare', an expression that is commonly used in Italian spoken speech. The poem later describes the mutilation of a little girl's genitalia, a practice that is extensively talked about in postcolonial literature, and that, as Shirin points out, has nothing to do with Islam, only with the evilness of men. Shirin writes 'It is when people get confused, mixed up.', which becomes a more concise 'È perché la gente è confusa' in Italian.

This poem is an interesting example of repetition and reiteration, and the flow of the poem makes it seem like it is made to be recited out loud. For instance, this is visible from the lists, the repetition of words, as well as the alliterations and the sound effects in the poem. I think this effect is powerful in the original but not that potent in Italian: for instance in English we find the more rhythmic and violent-sounding repetition of 'CUT, CUT ,

CUT’, which loses its effect when translated to a longer and less rhythmic ‘TAGLIATA, TAGLIATA, TAGLIATA’.

At the end of the poem, Shirin thanks her mother, and ultimately, she manages to become one with nature, the same nature that carries the Somali tradition. The end image depicts her as she becomes a papyrus moved by the wind on the shores of the river Nile, the same that carries her heritage. Perhaps she is saying that through her literature, she is the bearer of the Somali tradition.

<p>CHILDREN OF THE WORLD</p> <p>“Migrant” “extracomunitario”</p> <p>Words echo across the media</p> <p>Words not like the sound</p> <p>Of birds’ wings</p> <p>But like a bitter brand burnt into people’s skin</p> <p>The infinite blue sky</p> <p>No borders no guns no documents</p> <p>Birds are free to fly</p> <p>“Migrant” “extracomunitario”</p> <p>A heavy necklace to carry when you enter</p> <p>The European Union</p> <p>A stamp that sticks</p> <p>To your children and their children to come</p> <p>My childhood was safe</p> <p>Never met a “migrant” “extracomunitario”</p>	<p>BAMBINI DEL MONDO</p> <p>“Immigrato” “Extracomunitario”</p> <p>Parole che echeggiando da tutti i media</p> <p>Parole che non suonano come battiti d’ali di uccelli</p> <p>Ma parole che marchiano con il ferro rovente</p> <p>Le pelli degli uomini</p> <p>Il cielo infinito blu</p> <p>Senza frontiere armi e documenti</p> <p>Gli uccelli sono liberi di volare</p> <p>“Immigrato” “Extracomunitario”</p> <p>Una pesante collana da portare quando entri</p> <p>Nell’Unione Europea</p> <p>Un marchio che si incolla su di te</p> <p>E sui tuoi futuri figli</p> <p>La mia infanzia mi dava sicurezza</p> <p>Non ho mai incontrato un “immigrato” “extracomunitario”</p> <p>Solo persone</p>
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Only people	Che parlavano lingue diverse
Who spoke different languages	Una festa di colori
A festival of colours	Una sagra di sapori
A festival of food	Un festival di musica
A festival of music	Tenendoci per mano tutti insieme
Ring a Ring-o' Rosie Giro-Giro-Tondo	Cantavamo a squarciagola
Holding hands and singing all together. (2017c:47)	Giro-Giro Tondo
	Casca il mondo
	Casca la terra
	Tutti giù per terra. (2018:47)

These poems are very interesting in terms of translation, as the author decided to make some changes accordingly to the target audience. For instance, the choice alone of using 'immigrato' instead of 'migrante', the direct equivalent of 'migrant' is a powerful one, because 'immigrato' is a common way Italian people ignorantly use to address any person with darker skin. Similarly, the term 'extracomunitari' is one that is widely used in Italy indistinctively, and labels them as outsiders.

In the following lines, the author creates a chain of metaphors: the feeling of flying as free as a bird is the freedom of moving from country to country without encountering discrimination, an idea that is a mere dream from immigrants who have to bear the metaphoric necklace of discrimination, and the metaphoric stamps of hatred. These metaphors are maintained in the translation, however, some of the language figures change: the repetition of 'To your children and their children to come' is replaced with a less repetitive expression, and the alliteration present in 'a bitter brand burnt' is completely left out. The second to last verse in English is very interesting, as it contains various repetitions that creates a very distinctive rhythm that sound like a children's nursery rhyme, a rhythm that is not maintained into the Italian, but that is compensated with the quoting of the kids' song *Giro-Giro-Tondo*. We can see that the 'original' quotes the English children song *Ring a Ring-o' Rosie*, whereas, obviously, the Italian version

replaces it with *Giro-Giro-Tondo*, showing the author's conscious decision of catering the poem to a different audience.

<p>ALIEN</p> <p>Where is home?</p> <p>The land I left behind?</p> <p>The tears that flooded my chest</p> <p>And tore at my mother's guts?</p> <p>It's the shadows I left behind</p> <p>Shrouded in a smoke of guilt</p> <p>Scorching my limbs</p> <p>It's the faceless child</p> <p>Haunting my nights</p> <p>Where is home now?</p> <p>It's the blistering desert wind enraging my thirst</p> <p>Was it the biting numbing sea</p> <p>That butchered my thoughts?</p> <p>Where is home?</p> <p>My thoughts hang on a string</p> <p>Blown by a howling storm</p> <p>Where is home?</p>	<p>STRANIERO</p> <p>Dov'è la mia casa?</p> <p>La terra che ho lasciato?</p> <p>Le mie lacrime che mi hanno inondato il petto</p> <p>E lacerato le viscere di mia madre?</p> <p>Sono le ombre che mi seguono</p> <p>Avvolte in un sudario di fumo e di rimorsi</p> <p>Esse bruciano le mie membra</p> <p>È il bambino senza volto</p> <p>Che tormenta le mie notti</p> <p>Dov'è la mia casa ora?</p> <p>È il vento rovente del deserto che infuria la mia sete</p> <p>O era il freddo pungente del mare che intorpidisce</p> <p>Che ha scannato i miei pensieri?</p> <p>Dov'è la mia casa?</p> <p>I miei pensieri appesi ad un filo</p> <p>Spazzati da un violento temporale</p> <p>Dove è la mia casa?</p>
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An unfamiliar country	Una terra sconosciuta
Covered in hail	Coperta di grandine
I grieve like	Sono addolorato
A defeated boxer	Come un pugile sconfitto
Alien words punch	Vocaboli alieni prendono a pugni
My ugly face	Il mio brutto volto
Silently I bleed	Silenziosamente io sanguino
I weep	Piango
I wail	Gemo
Like a rhino-	Come un ippopotamo
Trapped. (2017c:21)	Caduto in trappola. (2018:21)

This poem reflects on questions of identity and belonging, issues commonly experienced by people of the diaspora. At a first glance, the first striking difference between the two poems is in the title. The English title, *Alien* has a stronger connotation compared to *Straniero*, perhaps as ‘foreign’, or ‘foreigner’ did not seem strong enough terms for Shirin. *Straniero*, on the other hand, may be intended with a negative connotation, as it is a word that in the Italian context is used to label non-Italian people in a derogatory way, therefore having a strong a connotation as *Alien*. The poem opens with a powerful and violent image: the author asks herself where her home is, a land she left behind that is now but a distant memory. What she remembers vividly, however, are the tears that flooded her chest when she had to leave, as well as the pain her mother felt seeing her go. The translation of these first four lines into Italian is quite straight-forward. The same cannot be said for the second verse: these three following lines capture the shadows the author has left behind, and the feeling of guilt about leaving her loved ones and her Somali life. If in the English she claims she ‘left behind’ these shadows, in the Italian they are still following her, and they are represented in both languages as shrouded in a veil of

smoke and regret which burns her body. The next couplet is quite enigmatic, but my interpretation of the image of the faceless child is linked to the infamous 2015 picture of the 3-year-old Syrian kid brushed up on the seashore, lifeless, with his face in the sand. This picture has become the symbol of the suffering of the migrants who bravely embark on a journey across the sea, with hopes to reach a land where there is no war and they can live a better life, without persecutions. Perhaps Shirin here is referring to that picture and to the loss of identity for immigrants, who become 'faceless', a thought that haunts her at night. In the next four lines, Shirin presents two violent images: again, she does not know where her home is anymore, the idea of the desert makes her unbearably thirsty, and the sea is awfully cold. There may be a dual reference here: the sea could refer to the shores of Mogadishu as well as the Mediterranean Sea, where many migrants die each year. Perhaps the author does not even recognize her own home Mogadishu at a time of conflicts and wars, and this is shown in the violent images of the desert and the sea. Her thoughts and her home in the next two verses are swept by a storm and covered in hail, . Once again, she is probably referring to her two homes, Italy and Somalia. The violent rain and hail is the war that struck her African hometown, and perhaps the reference to the rain and hail also refers to her Italian home, an image that takes the reader back to *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, in which she complained about the greyness of the sky and the coldness of the weather in Northern Italy.

The next verse contains a metaphor, the speaking voice grieves like a defeated boxer, punched by alien words, depicting the feeling of how immigrants are mistreated, called names and insulted in an unfamiliar language. The English in this case is stronger than the Italian, as the boxer grieves, it is not just 'addolorato'. I think the next verse is more effective in English: the author chose words that have a certain rhythm, like 'bleed' and 'weep', a musicality that is not replicated by their Italian direct translation. There is also an alliteration that is not maintained.

The last two lines are quite interesting in terms of their translation: the English version portrays a rhino, whereas the Italian version mentions a hippo. Moreover, the translation of the last line is a bit ambiguous: in the English the animal is trapped, it is a passive subject that is trapped by something or someone, whereas in the Italian, the animal makes the active action of falling into a trap. Perhaps a closer translation to the English would have been 'intrapplato', however, it depends on what the author wanted to say.

Nevertheless, the metaphor of the African animal as the African spirit in a person that has been trapped is present in both versions. One final thing that we can notice from the English and Italian versions is the fact that in Italian we can spot something different compared to the English, which is to be attributed to the different the morphological construction of the two languages: the narrative voice of the English version is a genderless *I*, whereas, the Italian narrative voice seems to be a man, as we can guess by the use of ‘addolorato’ in the masculine form. This is interesting, as the English reader might assume that Shirin is reporting her experience in this poem, whereas, in the Italian it seems like she is reporting someone else’s experience. This gives to the Italian poem a more universal feel.

To summarize, in this last chapter I have described the main feature of Somali-Italian literature, and the ways in which authors make efforts for the re-appropriation of their language and culture in dominant language writing. In the second half of this chapter I have looked at some excerpt taken from Shirin’s books and commented on her translation choices, highlighting that her decisions are dictated by two factors, the change in audience and the desire of the author to change her own work.

CONCLUSIONS

In this work I explored the importance of postcolonial literature in relation to the Italian ‘collective amnesia’ towards the country’s painful colonial history in the Horn of Africa, touching on some of the reasons why this literary genre is so important for the creation of a postcolonial conscience. I started from the idea that the colonial experience, and the racist and sexist discourses that went hand-in-hand with it, permeated Italian society in countless ways, greatly marking our way of living and thinking with repercussions that linger in our society to this day. Moreover, I have talked about the multifaceted importance of postcolonial literature in dealing with the impacts of colonialism for both the colonizers and the colonized, touching on themes of discrimination, xenophobia, prejudice and islamophobia. On the other hand, I have also recognized the power of language itself in this literature, in the light of the uneven power dynamics that exist between a ‘dominant’ and a ‘native’ language. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari (1986:16), a minor language is ‘that which a minority constructs within a major language’. Thus, we have seen that when a language is economically and politically more powerful and overwhelms another, the minor language writers create a different version of the dominant language, aiming at an inversion of power. Therefore, we have looked at how this process is carried out in postcolonial literature in languages such as French and English, whose respective countries have a long history of colonization that triggered the production of much of the postcolonial literature of the world. Finally, I studied the features of postcolonial Somali Italian literature and specifically of some of Shirin’s works, arguing that the insertion of Somali vocabulary in Italian texts has the political function of reconsidering power dynamics, the idea of national space and the creation of a translingual space that goes beyond it (Brioni, 2015:54). Hence, I have designed a multi-layered analysis of Shirin’s use of language in the attempt of ‘translating herself’ and her experiences, first with the contamination of Italian with Somali, and second with the addition of the English language in the process of self-translation. I decided, therefore, to call this multi-layered and continuous process of ‘self-translation’ that Shirin lives everyday with the expression ‘living in translation’.

In addition to the political reasons behind this process of hybridization of the dominant language, Brioni has furtherly noted that the insertion of Somali words does not only hold

a symbolic value, but that these words are accurately chosen for ‘their strong poetic potential and untranslatable meaning, which could create the same rhythm and syntactic construction of Somali in Italian’ (Ibid.). These interventions that foreignize the dominant Italian language and the way the authors decide to deal with them in relation to their audience have been analysed through three theories, Appiah’s model of ‘thick translation’, Derrida’s model of ‘translating distance in proximity’ and Nida’s theory of communicative translation. Ultimately, I have argued that deterritorialization of language might be considered an act of cultural resistance, and creates a ‘foreignized’ version of Italian that transforms it into a valid means for expressing hybridity and the experience of these authors. On this note, Bandia (2008:137) argued that ‘given the tendency towards a dominant monolingual practice, polylingualism becomes an aesthetic means of resistance and contestation, a means of projecting alterity’. We could argue that transcultural and translingual writing creates a compromise between Italian and Somali, therefore being a valid means for accounting for the transnational and intercultural processes of the postcolonial world. As a matter of fact, we cannot reduce linguistic modification and hybridity to a mere linguistic event to be studied with a linguistic point of view, but we must consider that this process entails a broad cultural and social transformation. This transformation involves the challenging of the idea of glossocentrism of dominant languages, as well as the idea of ethnocentric determinism that links a culture to a language, and a language to the concept of nation (Brioni, 2015:55). Therefore, the language of Italian literature exceeds the concept of canonical Italian, broadening the spectrum of the ways in which language can be used for representing the multicultural and multidimensional Italian reality, proposing a new and multifaceted concept of Italianness. To further explain the linguistic political potential of Somali Italian literature, Brioni (2015:55) quotes Derrida’s criticism of the natural ownership of language, on which concepts like national belonging and identity are based (1998:14). Thus, he argues that language is a ‘system whose unity is always reconstituted’ and is open ‘to deformations, transformations, expropriation, [...] and de-regulation’ (1998:65). Every language is plural, divided and already multilingual in itself, and ‘we never speak only one language’ (Derrida, 1998:10). There is always something that precedes and exceeds the speaker and it is ‘a site always referring elsewhere, to something other, to another language, to the other in general’ (Ibid.:29). With these claims, Derrida philosophically

deconstructs the concept of ownership of language, focusing on the idea of fluidity of language, a language that welcomes modifications and ‘hybridizations’ that reflect the everchanging reality of our globalized world.

According to Brioni (2015:56) immigration to Italy has had some noticeable effects on the level of language. Most of all, local and national linguistic identities have been reaffirmed by some ministers of recent governments, who claimed that the Italian language and the local dialects have been threatened by foreign invasions, with propositions that included the compulsory study of dialects in school as recently as 2009. Around the same time, ministers suggested the creation of segregated classes for migrant students in the public-school system, as well as suggesting the introduction of a maximum percentage of immigrants per class, in order to facilitate the learning of Italian. As a matter of fact, the inscription of the ‘other’ in Italian society has initiated debates on multiple themes such as education, employment and health, often resulting in a dichotomy that saw the right of a majority against that of a minority, as well as the superiority of a native culture compared to incoming ones (Ibid.). Another linguistic trend that has emerged in Italy throughout the years is the introduction of ghettoizing and disrespectful labels that deem immigrants as outsiders or that have a tendency in the homogenization of nationalities. For instance, immigrants are often called *extracomunitari*, a term literally applied to any non-European citizens but basically a euphemism for blacks, who are in this way labelled as ‘outsiders’. Another derogatory expression that has been used in the past is *vu cumprà*, nothing but a pejorative term that indicates that all immigrants are salesmen. Scholars also highlight a disrespectful and derogatory tendency in homogenising nationalities. Independently of their juridical status, refugees, asylum seekers, seasonal migrant workers or naturalized citizens are frequently indiscriminately referred to as *immigrati*. Therefore, I urge people to change the way they address these people, avoiding disrespectful, offensive and antagonizing labels that put a stress on diversity and create real obstacles to inclusion. We need to become more aware that discrimination is found in ordinary behaviours, and that the way you address people tells a lot about how they are seen in society. As I have said, the new incarnation of racism in postcolonial contemporary societies does not preach some sort of biological superiority like it did in the past, rather it highlights the incompatibility of cultural differences, the unsuitability in the coexistence of different traditions, customs and religions, marking

others as ‘outsiders’, who would not fit in Italian society. Significantly, this type of cultural racism is represented in *Oltre Babilonia* as the fear of cultural miscegenation: ‘La gente non ti diceva più che eri di una razza inferiore, le razze si era scoperto che non esistevano, la gente ora ti diceva “la tua cultura è troppo diversa dalla mia. Siamo incompatibili” (Scego 2008: 394). At a time where debates on nationality and protection of our country against foreign invasions are all the rage among politician and common people, we have to think of the concept of nationality and Italianness as fluid and everchanging. This encourages the idea that our country can only be enriched by all the various cultures, traditions and languages that need to be welcomed rather than rejected. I think that there is no better way to proceed than to read what the author herself had to say on the various topics that have been mentioned in this thesis. In the following and final pages I will report an interview that I did with Shirin on the 15th of February 2020, where I had the chance to ask her about her relationship with Somali, Italian and English, her approach to self-translation, among other things, hopefully touching on all the macro themes we have dealt with in this thesis. In bold I will present my questions, followed by Shirin’s answers. Here is what she had to say:

- **R 1 - Nel secondo capitolo della mia tesi ho affrontato il tema dell’ibridazione del linguaggio e parlato di come, in letteratura postcoloniale, la contaminazione del linguaggio dominante (in questo caso l’italiano) con elementi ‘nativi’ (contaminazioni derivanti dal somalo) sia una parte fondamentale per affermare un’identità che è stata oppressa da una storia di colonizzazione, dando alla lingua un incredibile potere politico e sociale. Nella tua esperienza personale di autrice, che importanza ha la lingua somala? Che ruolo ha la lingua somala in relazione e in unione all’italiano e all’inglese? Che valore politico, sociale e culturale attribuisce l’inclusione di termini somali nei tuoi scritti?**
- Sh. – La lingua somala ha per me una grande importanza affettiva, culturale e identitaria, posso dire è la mia coperta di Linus che mi porto sempre appresso. In famiglia i miei genitori comunicavano in italiano. Lui di origine pakistana nato a Zanzibar proveniva dalla scuola inglese essendo l’isola stata una colonia britannica. Inoltre, parlava bene il swahili, l’urdu e sapeva scrivere in hindi. Conservo ancora le

lettere che mio padre scriveva a mio nonno. Quando è arrivato a Mogadiscio ha dovuto imparare l'italiano per poter comunicare con la gente. L'italiano è la lingua dell'amore che ha unito i miei genitori. Per me usare queste due lingue che amo è una cosa naturale, esse fanno parte di me, non c'è nulla di politico. Nei miei scritti io cerco di trasmettere quella che sono.

- **R 2 - Perché hai deciso di impiegare elementi di lingua somala nella tua scrittura sia in italiano che in inglese? In che modo è cambiato il tuo approccio all'ibridazione della lingua nel passaggio dall'italiano all'inglese, e viceversa?**
- Sh. – Le parole che uso in somalo sono in un certo qual modo dei rafforzativi. Fanno capire la dualità che c'è nei miei racconti di culture che si intrecciano. Per esempio, traducendo *Nuvole sull'Equatore* in inglese *Clouds over the Equator* ho voluto mantenere anche delle parole in italiano. Forse è il mio modo inconscio per ridare vita, per far rivivere un'epoca di Mogadiscio che purtroppo non tornerà più.
- **R 3 - Pensi che l'inclusione di elementi di lingua somala sia più importante per un pubblico italiano da un punto di vista politico e sociale, o ugualmente importante per quello internazionale che legge le tue traduzioni?**
- Sh. – Certamente. Infatti, se osserviamo di quanto oggi giorno la lingua italiana sia infarcita da termini anglosassoni e francesi, non vedo quale ostacolo ci sia ad introdurre dei termini in lingua somala nei miei scritti. Oltretutto, da un punto di vista storico, volente o nolente la Somalia (come anche la Libia, l'Eritrea e l'Etiopia) sono parte integrante della storia d'Italia. In quest'ottica, io penso che sia molto importante far capire ai miei lettori che la lingua somala non è una lingua secondaria, o aliena, ma una lingua con dignità pari di tutte le altre.
- **R 4 - Per quale motivo hai deciso di auto tradurre i tuoi libri invece di affidarti a un traduttore esterno? Che libertà e vantaggi hai trovato nel poter tradurre i tuoi libri?**

- Sh. – Nel 2010 ci siamo trasferiti a Birmingham, pur continuando a mantenere il mio stretto rapporto con l'Italia dove torno tutti gli anni nella mia casa. Immediatamente ho realizzato che se avessi voluto continuare il mio percorso di scrittura avrei dovuto produrre in inglese. Così mi sono immersa a vivere la lingua inglese (che già parlavo sin da bambina) creandomi amici di madrelingua in quella città che offre molte opportunità di incontri con altri scrittori. Sin dal nostro arrivo in Inghilterra, in cuor mio desideravo far tradurre *Lontano da Mogadiscio* in inglese. Ho chiesto in giro, però i costi erano veramente esorbitanti. Mio marito che mi è sempre vicino mi ha molto incoraggiato dicendomi: “Perché non te lo traduci da sola? Sei brava, la lingua la conosci, e anche se dovessi fare solo una pagina al giorno, che fretta c'è?” Mi suonano ancora nell'orecchio quelle sue parole di incoraggiamento. Debbo riconoscere che è stata una decisione che ha cambiato in meglio la mia vita di scrittrice. Le sfide e i cambiamenti fanno parte del mio carattere. Inoltre, traducendo il mio testo ho il vantaggio che posso svilupparlo, riscriverlo. Non devo entrare nella mente dello scrittore. Io stimo il lavoro dei traduttori. Non mi metterei mai a tradurre il lavoro di altri. Così ho cominciato a collaborare con le università di Warwick e Cardiff. Ho condotto una serie di workshop di scrittura creativa, “*I Write With More Than One Voice*” e “*Writing Across Languages and Cultures*” Con il tempo c'è stata questa trasformazione e cioè quella di scrivere brani direttamente in inglese. Infatti, nella riscrittura, i nuovi brani aggiunti a *Far from Mogadishu* sono in inglese, che poi ho dovuto tradurre in italiano in *Lontano da Mogadiscio*. Inoltre, c'è anche da considerare che da un punto di vista “pratico”, un traduttore esterno, per quanto bravo egli/ella potesse essere, sarebbe stato difficile per me trasferire ad una terza persona le mie emozioni e sensazioni vissute, gli odori, i suoni, la cultura, ed i colori di un mondo così lontano e diverso dai canoni occidentali. Con la versione in inglese disponibile, ho avuto la possibilità di partecipare a molti eventi e letture. Sono stata invitata al *Somali Week Festival* di Londra nel 2017 *Un-Belonging and In-Between*. I giovani della diaspora somala hanno scoperto, attraverso le pagine del mio libro, una Mogadiscio che non conoscevano. Il libro ha ispirato la giornalista somalo-canadese Asha Siad; ne è nato il cortometraggio “*Memories of Mogadishu*” con intervista letture e di brani. E nel maggio del 2019 sono stata invitata per la conferenza di presentazione che si è tenuta ad Ottawa. Ho partecipato al Exeter

Translation Festival 2019. È indubbio che per un libro che può essere letto nell'ambito internazionale, i vantaggi sono infiniti.

- **R 5 - Quali sono le sfide e i problemi principali di tradurre un libro che hai scritto tu? Riesci a mantenere un punto di vista distaccato, o talvolta la volontà di intervenire e riscrivere prende il sopravvento?**
- Sh. – Siccome erano passati degli anni, prima di essere tradotti, nel frattempo la mia scrittura e le mie esperienze di vita si sono arricchite, la voglia di stravolgere tutto viene. Ma mi sono trattenuta. Tradurre una lingua è tradurre anche una cultura. In *Nuvole sull'Equatore* cercavo di mettermi nei panni di un lettore anglofono che non conosce la storia coloniale della Somalia, e mi sono chiesta se avrebbe capito certi termini come Balilla. Ho scritto le liriche delle canzoni italiane. Ho inserito parole in italiano. La versione inglese “*Clouds over the Equator*” mi piace.
- **R 6 - Nella seconda sezione del secondo capitolo affermo che i motivi che spingono un autore ad effettuare cambi e riscritture durante il processo di autotraduzione sono principalmente due: il primo dipende dal cambio nel destinatario dello scritto, mentre il secondo è un cambio estetico a pura discrezione dell'autore. Sei d'accordo con questa distinzione, o i cambi che hai apposto ai tuoi scritti derivano anche da altri motivi?**
- Sh. – Penso di aver risposto con la domanda precedente.
- **R 7 - Ci puoi descrivere il processo di autotraduzione dei tuoi libri? Per esempio, tendenzialmente decidi di autotradurre in maniera consecutiva alla scrittura o di tradurre quando la stesura è terminata? è un processo solitario o collaborativo?**
- Sh. Quando ho iniziato a tradurre i miei libri erano già stati pubblicati in italiano. La traduzione è un processo solitario. Una volta svolto l'ho fatto leggere ad un mio amico di madrelingua inglese che non conosce l'italiano.

- **R 8 - Contrariamente a *Lontano da Mogadiscio* e *Nuvole sull'Equatore*, *Wings* è stato scritto in inglese e successivamente tradotto in italiano. Perché questa decisione? Che differenze hai constatato nel rapportarti con l'inglese e con l'italiano nell'autotraduzione?**
- Sh. – Essendo una scrittrice che si muove tra diverse lingue e culture in *Wings* ho dato libertà ai miei pensieri e faccio decidere a loro come vogliono esprimersi. Anche qui ci sono parole in somalo e in italiano, io penso che per me alcune parole sono intraducibili perché contengono un significato profondo di ricordi che è difficile trasmetterlo in un altro idioma. Tradurre dall'italiano all'inglese nei miei due libri chiaramente era molto più faticoso.
- **R 9 - Per quanto riguarda il tuo approccio, quali sono le differenze che hai riscontrato nell'autotraduzione di prosa e poesia?**
- Sh. – Nella prosa hai molte possibilità di riscrivere cambiare, mentre nella poesia devi cercare di mantenere anche un ritmo, una musicalità.
- **R 10 - Quali motivi ti hanno spunto a cambiare il titolo di *Wings* in *Ali spezzate*?**
- Sh. - Questa è la domanda che molti mi pongono. Sinceramente non è stata una scelta pensata ma istintiva. Se noti nella copertina c'è la foto di un sandalo e una scarpa da ginnastica. Sono spaiate, rovinate, consumate sono scarpe che sono state raccolte sulla spiaggia di Lampedusa. I piedi sono le nostre ali per camminare, per volare, la libertà. Purtroppo, le persone alle quali quelle scarpe appartenevano non ci sono, sono morti annegati. Quelle ali si sono spezzate. Quindi mettere un titolo solo con Ali, non mi diceva nulla. Per me il suono della lingua italiana esprime emozioni, e quel spezzate esprime di dolore e la sofferenza di quelle migliaia di persone che non ce l'hanno fatta.

- R. 11 - In questa tesi tratto di cosa voglia dire “living in traslation”, cioè il dover continuamente “tradurre” sé stessi, la propria cultura e la propria storia da una lingua a un'altra. Ho spiegato come per te, come per altri autori postcoloniali, questo processo avvenga su due livelli: per prima cosa tu “traduci te stessa” dal somalo all'italiano, per poi tradurti nuovamente dall'italiano all'inglese, aggiungendo un secondo livello in questo processo. Ho parlato di come per alcuni autori questo possa essere un processo doloroso, parlando di come questi continui cambi e passaggi creino una frattura nell'identità dello scrittore, una identità che non riesce mai ad essere “completa” in nessuna delle lingue usate. Altri scrittori, invece, trovano questo processo oltremodo consolatorio, e un modo per creare un ponte tra le diverse sfaccettature di una loro complessa identità. Tu come percepisci questo processo di “living in traslation”? Pensi che sia un modo positivo per creare collegamenti tra le tue diverse “identità” o crea piuttosto una frattura tra di esse? Per te è un processo doloroso o positivo? Pensi di riuscire a “vivere” completamente in tutte e tre le lingue o nella tua mente queste si trovano su piani diversi? È doloroso per te scegliere una lingua piuttosto di un'altra?**
- Sh. - Questo “living in translation” come viene definito, io l'ho sempre vissuto come una normalità. I linguaggi si mescolano sempre di più in questo mondo globalizzato. Milioni di adulti e bambini si spostano e vivono in “translation”. Io vivo nel Veneto e molti parlano il dialetto, lo miscelano tranquillamente con l'italiano, e questo succede in ogni regione italiana. Personalmente, io vivo questo dualismo linguistico con serenità. E questo succede anche con le altre lingue come l'arabo quando sono in vacanza in Tunisia oppure lo swahili nel periodo nel quale ho vissuto in Kenya, Sicuramente ho un rapporto diverso con ogni lingua. L'italiano fa parte della mia quotidianità. Il somalo lo parlo con i miei amici, mio marito, e cerco di insegnarlo ai miei nipoti, l'arabo è anche la lingua delle mie preghiere. Se cammino per strada in Italia parlando in somalo, la gente automaticamente mi etichetta subito come “la straniera” o “l'immigrata” che non sa l'italiano. Invece durante i miei spostamenti internazionali è l'italiano che si trova ad assumere il ruolo di lingua straniera. Devo

usare l'inglese per comunicare con le persone. Io ho un buon rapporto con le lingue, mi incuriosiscono, perché esprimono il carattere di un popolo. I dialetti gli accenti, penso che siano un patrimonio da conservare e bisogna valorizzarli. Oggi purtroppo ci sono le lingue di serie A e quelle di serie B. Un semplice esempio: se un bambino che sa leggere e scrivere in somalo viene ammesso ad una scuola in Europa, inevitabilmente egli viene considerato come un analfabeta. Questo è terribile!

I want to end this work by reporting Shirin's thoughts on the reception of her works as well as her views on Italy's degree of acceptance towards anything that is considered *straniero*, foreign. In the following intervention we can read what Shirin had to say about this, especially considering what I argued in the Chapter 1 about Italy's Postcolonial turn, which saw an opening towards the topic of postcolonialism.

- **R 12 - Dai tuoi esordi a oggi, come è cambiata la ricezione dei tuoi libri? Pensi che nel 2020 l'Italia sia diventata più ricettiva ai messaggi e ai temi della scrittura postcoloniale? Quali sono le differenze sostanziali che hai trovato nella ricezione del tuo messaggio da parte del pubblico italiano e di quello internazionale?**
- Sh. – Bisogna tenere presente che nel 1994, quando fu pubblicato *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, la scrittura postcoloniale muoveva i suoi primi passi. Non bisogna dimenticare che allora era in corso in Somalia una vasta operazione militare internazionale che vedeva direttamente coinvolti i militari italiani ed infine l'opinione pubblica italiana era stata profondamente scossa dalla barbara uccisione della giornalista Ilaria Ali. Le conoscenze storiche dell' "uomo della strada" italiano sul proprio passato coloniale erano purtroppo scarse e fuorvianti. Infatti, dalla fine della Seconda Guerra mondiale la classe politica italiana ha profuso un grande impegno nel creare l'immagine [errata] del colonizzatore italiano "buono" e "diverso" dagli altri colonizzatori europei. Quindi dal punto di vista storico il mio libro rappresentò, a suo tempo, una voce fuori dal coro. Fui allora molto attiva a parlare nelle scuole, dai bambini alle elementari ai giovani nelle università. Un elemento molto importante di quegli anni era stato l'arrivo massiccio in Italia nell'agosto del 1991 della prima massiccia ondata dei profughi albanesi che poi si è protratta anche negli anni successivi. Quindi dal punto di vista sociale si poneva il problema di come

minimizzare gli strappi che già incominciavano a mostrarsi evidenti nel tessuto connettivo della società italiana. Ma venendo alla tua domanda, a livello personale io ho l'impressione che allora c'era una maggiore disponibilità (e curiosità) ad ascoltare argomenti inerenti alla diversità e all'accoglienza; quest'ultima anche vista come una reciprocità storica. In altre parole, una maggiore disponibilità mentale ed una più tangibile empatia umana. Purtroppo le varie crisi economiche generate dalla globalizzazione selvaggia e senza regole, un susseguirsi di governi inefficienti, una classe politica corrotta e asservita agli interessi economici dei nuovi e vecchi potentati sia legali che illegali legati alla criminalità organizzata, la quasi scomparsa del ceto medio, una gestione incompetente dei fenomeni migratori ... e tantissimi altri fattori, hanno consentito e favorito la crescita di atteggiamenti di completa chiusura e antagonismo verso il "diverso", si moltiplicano i sintomi di vergognosi estremismi. Il clima di tutti contro tutti che si è creato è molto pericoloso; è una situazione che va al più presto disinnescata. In un clima simile dove le migliaia di morti nel Mediterraneo non suscitano la minima emozione come si può parlare di sentimenti, amore, di fratellanza, di solidarietà, di uguaglianza, di giustizia e di pace universale? Nei paesi ex-colonizzatori nei quali è già avvenuto un processo di revisione storica – sia pure articolata in livelli diversi – la mia scrittura riesce a suscitare un sincero interesse soprattutto tra i giovani. Sono convinta che le istituzioni italiane ed europee dovrebbero fare di più per costruire, senza ipocrisie, le premesse che porterebbero all'eliminazione di ignobili stereotipi, presunte "superiorità" ed avviarsi con decisione alla creazione di una società multi-etnica e multiculturale più realmente giusta ed integrata.

Nel mio libro "Scrivere di Islam, Raccontare la Diaspora" di prossima uscita quest'anno per le Edizioni Cà Foscari, narro le mie esperienze e le mie riflessioni di una cittadina italiana musulmana che vive in Italia e nel Regno Unito. Nel testo, sono incluse anche le esperienze di altre donne musulmane che giornalmente subiscono discriminazioni di matrice religiosa; inoltre cercherò di sensibilizzare i miei lettori su come i musulmani vengono generalmente rappresentati nei media occidentali. Sono convinta che molti stereotipi che affliggono la società moderna siano il frutto - casuale o voluto – di una "narrazione" errata e di parte. Perché allora non parlarne? Spero di cuore che i miei scritti possano stimolare un dialogo costruttivo, tra i miei concittadini

e i nuovi cittadini che hanno scelto l'Europa, e l'Italia in particolare, come dimora dove vivere e far crescere i propri figli nel rispetto reciproco. Con dialogo costruttivo, intendo la sincera volontà di riconoscere "l'altro" innanzitutto come un essere umano a cui è dovuto lo stesso rispetto che noi esigiamo dagli altri verso noi stessi.

In the light of these words, we must recognize that we still have a long way to go on an Italian, European, global and an individual level. At a time where migration has become part of the global political agenda, sparking daily debates on reception policies in Italy and in the European Union, and, at a time where so many people are suffering the consequences for conflicts, wars and political instability, I can only finish this work with a message of hope for change. I encourage Italy to become more conscious of the progress that still has to be made on a micro level with the gaining of awareness on discriminatory behaviours that are the vicious representation of an intolerance that finds its roots in certain discourses that antagonize people and create an obstacle to inclusion. Moreover, on a macro level, we must encourage the creation of legislations that punish discriminatory behaviours as well as ensuring equality and rights that aim at inclusion rather than impeding integration.

I would also encourage the media, music, TV programmes, cinema or books, to represent all the multiple ways of being Italian. Shirin's works and postcolonial literature in general help us greatly in this sense, spreading a message of inclusion and change representing a side of the story that is often overlooked, giving a voice to those who for a long time did not have one. In these ways, this genre breathes back humanity into a representation of migrants that is often dehumanizing. As a matter of fact, it seems like these days immigrants are seen and treated as numbers rather than as people, and that Italians got immune to the tragedies of deaths in the Mediterranean sea or to hate crimes towards immigrants. These events have sadly become a weekly or monthly occurrence that gets so easily forgotten, making the representation of the voices of migrants in the media and in literature ever so crucial. For instance, it is crucial to support postcolonial writers in the sales of their works that will ultimately encourage bigger publishing houses to promote them to an even bigger audience, creating a virtuous cycle that would boost the spreading of these stories. Moreover, welcoming this literary genre as a part of Italian literature would be a symbolic step for inclusion as well as the representation of our

multicultural society in a literary canon that unfortunately, to this day, still mirrors a country deeply marked by racial discriminations and sexism.

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RIASSUNTO IN LINGUA ITALIANA

Questo lavoro si colloca alla fine di un percorso quinquennale all'Università degli Studi di Padova dove ho avuto la possibilità, sia durante gli studi triennali che quelli magistrali, di approfondire le mie conoscenze linguistiche, letterarie e traduttologiche, ma anche di confrontarmi con tematiche attuali quali il multiculturalismo. Questo lavoro si propone di essere il punto d'incontro tra queste tematiche, conciliando il mio interesse per la sociologia delle discriminazioni, il razzismo, e il sessismo, con la letteratura e la traduzione, con l'obiettivo di accendere un dibattito molto attuale. La mia passione per la sociologia delle discriminazioni e gli studi postcoloniali è nata qualche anno fa, frequentando i corsi di Sociologia tenuti per gli studenti di lingue dalla Professoressa Annalisa Frisina. Durante le sue lezioni ci è stata data la possibilità di creare dibattiti su argomenti estremamente attuali quali l'islamofobia, l'antiziganismo, i problemi di rappresentazione e il postcolonialismo, anche attingendo al mondo del cinema, della musica e a varie risorse online. Durante il semestre, siamo stati invitati a innumerevoli conferenze e incontri sulle tematiche trattate, e ci sono stati consigliati diversi testi di autori postcoloniali quali Scego e Fazel. Nello specifico, l'idea per questa tesi è nata durante il mio Erasmus alla University College Cork, Irlanda, quando ho avuto il piacere di incontrare Shirin Ramzanali Fazel. L'autrice, recatasi a Cork per un ciclo di conferenze, ha tenuto una lezione per il corso di traduzione specializzata, dove abbiamo avuto la possibilità di analizzare con lei alcuni suoi scritti. In quel frangente, abbiamo avuto modo di porle domande dirette sulle sue scelte traduttologiche e sul suo approccio all'auto-traduzione. Leggendo il suo memoir *Lontano da Mogadiscio* nelle settimane successive all'incontro, ho capito che un'analisi della sua produzione letteraria avrebbe conciliato diversi miei interessi. Grazie alla professoressa Chiara Giuliani della University College Cork sono riuscita a contattare Shirin, la quale si è dimostrata estremamente disponibile nel rispondere ad eventuali quesiti e a concordare un'intervista finale in cui potessi porle domande sulla ricezione della sua letteratura, il suo rapporto con la traduzione e le tre lingue che caratterizzano la sua produzione.

Il primo capitolo di questo lavoro, che si propone di spiegare il contesto in cui opera Shirin, contiene un excursus sulla storia coloniale italiana e sulla letteratura postcoloniale. Ho spiegato i motivi per i quali, secondo molti accademici, il passato coloniale italiano

sia poco conosciuto nel nostro Paese, e come, di conseguenza, non gli venga data l'importanza necessaria. Esso, infatti, influenza tutt'oggi la nostra politica, la nostra società e la nostra cultura, condizionando la nostra visione di noi stessi e degli "altri". Lo studio della storia coloniale italiana e della letteratura che ne è originata è ancora un campo in certi sensi inesplorato. In Italia, solamente dagli anni '90 del secolo scorso è iniziata un'apertura in relazione agli studi postcoloniali, grazie alla quale gli accademici hanno iniziato a capire l'importanza di un approccio postcoloniale nell'interpretazione della nostra società. Infatti, come altri paesi colonizzatori, l'Italia non è esente dall'aver creato delle retoriche discriminatorie, razziste e sessiste per il mantenimento dell'egemonia coloniale e per giustificare l'impresa e i crimini commessi. Per analizzare questo tema, ho puntualizzato come sia necessario mantenere un approccio intersezionale che possa intersecare le categorie di discriminazione. Come ho affermato pocanzi, il passato coloniale italiano è stato in vari modi e per diverso tempo celato, portando gli studiosi a parlare di un fenomeno di 'amnesia collettiva'. Nell'immaginario comune, l'avventura coloniale del nostro paese è limitata al periodo fascista, benché l'influenza italiana sul Corno d'Africa si estenda per molto più tempo, nel caso della Somalia, fino al 1960. Per molti anni si è perpetuato un discorso che definiva il colonizzatore italiano come magnanimo, e il colonialismo italiano come 'straccione', costituendo uno dei fattori che hanno causato un ritardo nella creazione di una coscienza collettiva postcoloniale. Ho dunque parlato dell'importanza che ha la letteratura postcoloniale nel portare l'attenzione del pubblico italiano sul nostro doloroso passato e come questo abbia fortemente influenzato la creazione di un'italianità bianca, maschile e cattolica. La letteratura postcoloniale ha il potere di ridare voce a persone che per molto tempo non ne hanno avuta una, esplorando tematiche quali le discriminazioni, l'islamofobia, la xenofobia e il sessismo nei confronti degli stranieri, permettendoci di guardare la società italiana con occhi di qualcun altro. Nonostante la letteratura postcoloniale sia enormemente importante per capire l'identità italiana, ancora non le viene data l'importanza necessaria. Infatti, gli scritti di questi autori sono pubblicati quasi esclusivamente da case editrici minori o indipendenti, relegandoli quindi a un pubblico ristretto. Nella speranza di raggiungere un numero di lettori più ampio, molti autori come Shirin si sono visti costretti a tradurre i propri libri in inglese, dimostrando ancora una volta quanto ci sia da fare per lo sviluppo di una piena coscienza postcoloniale nazionale.

La letteratura postcoloniale italiana è un genere letterario incredibilmente vario, e gli studiosi non sono ancora arrivati a darne una vera e propria definizione, poiché esso comprende autori con le più diverse storie ed origini. Generalmente, gli studiosi propendono per una definizione variegata del genere, di modo che questa possa testimoniare la ricchezza. Talvolta, essi propongono persino l'inclusione di autori che non provengono dalle ex colonie, ma anche da paesi che, in generale, hanno storicamente subito l'influenza del Belpaese.

La parte finale del capitolo 1 è interamente dedicata a Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, alla sua vita e alla sua carriera. Shirin, nacque nel 1953 da madre somala e padre pakistano. Passò la sua infanzia a Mogadiscio in un periodo politico peculiare, quello dell'AFIS, durante il quale i retaggi del giogo coloniale italiano ancora si facevano sentire. Shirin imparò l'italiano sui libri di scuola, studiando gli stessi programmi ministeriali dei coetanei italiani. Nel 1969, con il colpo di stato di Siad Barre, Shirin e la sua famiglia si trovarono costretti a lasciare l'amata patria alla volta dell'Italia, in quanto il dittatore aveva ordinato a tutti coloro che non avessero il passaporto somalo di lasciare il paese. Negli anni '70 del Novecento si stabilì temporaneamente nel Nord-Est italiano, ma durante tutta la sua vita, Shirin non si è mai fermata, vivendo in diverse città italiane e straniere. Al momento vive con la sua famiglia a Birmingham. I temi affrontati nella letteratura di Shirin sono molteplici, e nella parte finale del primo capitolo ho parlato delle macro-tematiche di tre dei suoi scritti e le rispettive traduzioni: *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, *Far from Mogadishu*, *Nuvole sull'Equatore*, *Clouds over the Equator*, *Wings* e *Ali spezzate*. La sua produzione è così interessante per la varietà dei temi, raccontati attraverso diversi generi come il racconto autobiografico, le novelle, i romanzi e la poesia, e per l'uso che l'autrice fa del somalo, dell'italiano e dell'inglese.

In questo lavoro, così come nel titolo, il termine "self-translation", auto-traduzione, è inteso sia in senso ampio che in senso stretto. La prima connotazione che viene data a questo termine è la 'traduzione di sé stessi', un processo che gli scrittori postcoloniali, come descritto nel secondo capitolo, mettono in atto continuamente. La seconda connotazione è invece più tecnica ed è legata al concetto di auto-traduzione negli studi traduttologici. Per Shirin, questo processo di 'self-translation' si sviluppa su due livelli: da una parte, Shirin traduce continuamente sé stessa, la sua storia e la sua cultura, dal somalo, la lingua della due famiglie, all'italiano, la lingua che le è stata "imposta",

dall'altra, la scrittrice si auto-traduce nuovamente (questa volta nel senso stretto del termine) dall'italiano all'inglese. Allo stesso modo, in questo lavoro ho utilizzato il termine 'traduzione' per definire la scrittura translinguistica, in quanto si tratta di una vera e propria traduzione di sé.

Il secondo capitolo è dedicato al primo livello di questa traduzione di sé, cioè a come nella letteratura postcoloniale questo processo avvenga nel passaggio da una lingua "nativa" o "minore" a una "dominante". Infatti, nella letteratura postcoloniale si rileva una tendenza alla deterritorializzazione o ibridazione della lingua "dominante", la quale viene modificata con intrusioni della lingua "nativa" al fine di "farle portare il fardello della esperienza coloniale" (Achebe, 1975:62), rendendola un mezzo adeguato a questo tipo di narrazione. Naturalmente, questi processi di ibridazione della lingua hanno una forte connotazione politica e mostrano la volontà di una cultura che è stata assoggettata di liberarsi da queste costrizioni che la relegano a posizioni di subalternità. Questa egemonia delle lingue "dominanti" è mantenuta anche al giorno d'oggi attraverso specifici atteggiamenti verso le letterature in lingue minori che le costringono ad occupare posizioni marginali nel panorama letterario globale. Per esplorare i modi in cui i processi di ibridazione del linguaggio vengono effettivamente portati avanti nella letteratura postcoloniale globale, mi sono riferita ad Ashcroft, Bandia e ad altri accademici. Ho scelto dunque di descriverne otto. Dato che queste teorie linguistiche si basano principalmente sulle letterature postcoloniali inglesi o francesi, esse non sono pienamente applicabili alla letteratura postcoloniale italo-somala, ragion per cui, nel capitolo successivo mi sono dedicata al caso italo-somalo. Nel terzo capitolo ho dunque individuato come questi processi di ibridazione della lingua si concretizzino nella relazione tra italiano e somalo e, in particolare, negli scritti di Shirin. Ho identificato che lo strumento linguistico più adoperato per la deterritorializzazione sia l'inserzione di parole ed espressioni somale nella lingua italiana, rispetto alla modifica dell'italiano standard. Come suggerito da Brioni (2015), l'inserzione di termini ed espressioni somale nell'italiano si può studiare attraverso tre modelli che si riconducono rispettivamente, al concetto di "thick translation" di Appiah, al "translating distance in proximity" di Derrida, e alla teoria di "communicative translation" di Nida. Il primo modello fornisce gli strumenti per capire come la distanza tra italiano e somalo venga sottolineata con l'uso di riferimenti paratestuali, come le note a piè pagina e i glossari. Questo approccio è ad oggi

considerato in un certo senso superato, ma, nel contempo necessario. Infatti, il pubblico italiano, ancora poco familiarizzato con la letteratura postcoloniale, doveva essere gradualmente abituato alle contaminazioni linguistiche. Ciò è evidente se si pensa che l'utilizzo di elementi paratestuali riguarda soprattutto i testi pionieri del genere, tra cui si annovera *Lontano da Mogadiscio*. La versione del 1994 del memoir presenta varie note a piè pagina che traducono o spiegano le parole somale introdotte. Analogamente, in *Nuvole sull'Equatore* troviamo un glossario che comprende più di 110 termini, nel quale la scrittrice traduce o spiega alcuni dei concetti più oscuri per un pubblico italiano. In linea di massima, si è notato come l'italiano utilizzato da Shirin in questi lavori sia di forma standard, e ciò segue motivazioni ben precise. Autori veterani del genere come Shirin hanno iniziato a scrivere in un momento storico in cui si sono sentiti in dovere di scrivere in italiano, dimostrando di averne diritto e documentando la loro padronanza della lingua a un popolo che li trattava come analfabeti. Inoltre, la forma di italiano standard utilizzata da Shirin è quasi totalmente incontaminata dall'intrusione di altre lingue oltre il somalo e l'italiano, salvo alcuni casi specifici.

Tornando al modello di “thick translation”, Appiah (1993:817) sostiene che, nonostante la maggior parte delle lingue sia in grado di esprimere i significati nelle altre attraverso la traduzione, questo non vuol dire che queste lingue possano traslare adeguatamente un'altra cultura. Questo giustificerebbe dunque l'utilizzo di elementi paratestuali, che evidenzerebbero l'inefficienza della lingua “dominante” nello spiegare concetti legati alla cultura della lingua “nativa”, costituendo così un modo per resistere all'assimilazione. Ciononostante, Bandia (2008:160-165) ha criticato aspramente l'uso estensivo delle note a piè pagina e dei glossari nei testi letterari, poiché questi interrompono il fluire della lettura del testo, intaccandone le qualità estetiche. Inoltre, Ashcroft (2002:60-61) suggerisce che le note a piè pagina, invece di sovvertire la gerarchia linguistica e mettere in primo piano la lingua minoritaria, facciano proprio il contrario, dando alla traduzione italiana uno status superiore. In questo senso Brioni (2015:28) valuta i glossari come una valida alternativa, poiché costringono il lettore a fare uno sforzo di comprensione.

Il secondo modello, “translating distance in proximity”, si riferisce all'uso di traduzioni intertestuali e contestualizzazioni. Quando un termine o un'espressione “nativa” viene contestualizzata o tradotta, non servono altre spiegazioni. L'utilizzo di questi espedienti

linguistici è molto frequente nella letteratura italo-somala, e il lettore, il quale conosce solo la lingua dominante, si trova costretto a crearsi un glossario mentale, pena la non totale comprensione del testo. Inoltre, alcuni autori di letteratura postcoloniale italo-somala inseriscono talvolta parole native senza glossarle, tradurle o contestualizzarle in nessun modo, creando un manifesto per la differenza culturale. Questo dimostra chiaramente che il testo è pensato originariamente nel linguaggio “nativo”, e mostra l’importanza della valorizzazione di concetti culturali. In linea generale si può riscontrare la tendenza di un graduale abbandono dei glossari e delle note a piè pagina in favore di traduzioni e contestualizzazioni interne al testo. Anche Shirin ne è l’esempio: se nella versione del 1994 di *Lontano da Mogadiscio*, l’autrice aveva fatto uso di note a piè pagina, in quella del 2013, invece, ha deciso di rimpiazzarle con traduzioni e contestualizzazioni intertestuali. Questo andamento rispecchia senza dubbio l’aumento di familiarità che, negli anni, il pubblico italiano stava acquisendo nei confronti di questo genere letterario. Gli studiosi citati credono che questo secondo approccio sia oltremodo più efficace nel ribaltare la gerarchia linguistica, creando una maggior consapevolezza nel lettore riguardo alla specificità della cultura nativa. Il terzo ed ultimo approccio analizzato segue la teoria di “communicative translation” di Nida, in cui si predilige la comprensione del messaggio rispetto alla contaminazione della lingua. Anche questo ultimo approccio è stato utilizzato da Shirin in tempi recenti, dimostrando come questi tre modelli non siano indipendenti e separati. Questo ultimo metodo è anche il più moderno, ma non per questo si deve considerare più valido. Questo modello, più che adottare un approccio che punta all’ibridazione del linguaggio, si basa sulla sperimentazione delle possibilità che l’italiano può avere nel raggiungere un pubblico italiano, rompendo le convenzioni della forma standard e aggiungendo neologismi, espressioni volgari e dialettali. Come secondo la teoria della ‘communicative translation’ di Nida, questo metodo ha l’obiettivo di raggiungere il maggior livello di comprensione possibile, domesticando il testo ‘di partenza’ per la cultura ‘di arrivo’, giocando con l’italiano. I lavori più recenti di Shirin, che non ho avuto modo di analizzare in questo lavoro, hanno elementi che si rifanno a questo approccio.

Successivamente, continuando l’esplorazione delle peculiarità linguistiche della letteratura postcoloniale italiana, ho studiato l’importanza dei calchi e dei nomi propri nella produzione italo-somala. I primi, di cui ho menzionato esempi presi dai libri di

Shirin e di altri autori, sono forse la più palese traccia del giogo italiano in Somalia. Infine, ho mostrato l'importanza della riappropriazione dei nomi di persona e di luoghi Somali al fine di una graduale simbolica decolonizzazione. A prescindere da come questa viene portata avanti, l'ibridazione della lingua dominante ha importantissime connotazioni politiche che, in vari modi e su diversi livelli, promuovono l'emancipazione della lingua "minore", sottolineandone l'importanza e sovvertendo la gerarchia linguistica.

La parte finale del terzo capitolo è dedicata a una vera e propria analisi delle auto-traduzioni di Shirin, arrivando così al secondo livello dell'analisi della "self-translation". Mettendo a confronto la versione "originale" con quella tradotta dall'autrice, ho stilato una serie di commenti di alcuni estratti, evidenziando le scelte traduttologiche di Shirin. In questa fase ho evidenziato come le sue decisioni fossero, a mio parere, dettate da due fattori. In primo luogo, il cambio di pubblico a cui è destinato il libro nel processo di traduzione giustifica modifiche anche significative. La differenza tra un pubblico italiano e uno internazionale sta nelle conoscenze pregresse che ci si può aspettare dai lettori. Chiaramente, si potrà supporre che un lettore italiano abbia una maggiore consapevolezza dell'atmosfera del fascismo, la società italiana di quegli anni, gli eventi storici e le personalità di spicco legate a quel periodo. La medesima aspettativa ci sarà nei confronti di tutti quegli elementi prettamente italiani che appartengono alla nostra tradizione e cultura. Contrariamente non ci si potrà attendere lo stesso da un variegato pubblico internazionale che avrà bisogno di varie spiegazioni, contestualizzazioni e riformulazioni. Il secondo fattore che ha influenzato i cambi e le decisioni traduttologiche di Shirin è strettamente correlato al processo di riscrittura che viene messo in atto nell'auto-traduzione, il quale incentiva l'autore ad effettuare dei cambi (anche drastici) che considera legittimi, ma che hanno alla base motivazioni prettamente estetiche.

Dopo aver dato delle interpretazioni così personali sulle sue scelte traduttologiche, ho considerato che il modo più competente per concludere fosse quello di lasciare l'opportunità alla scrittrice di esprimere il suo personale punto di vista, di valore incommensurabile. Nell'intervista, presentata nella sezione conclusiva di questo lavoro, Shirin si è espressa sull'importanza della lingua somala nella sua letteratura, del suo rapporto con l'italiano e l'inglese, sull'auto-traduzione e della sua esperienza in questo continuo 'auto-tradursi', dal somalo all'italiano e dall'italiano all'inglese.

Alla fine dell'intervista, Shirin ha amaramente rilevato come, negli ultimi anni, abbia riscontrato una chiusura verso la letteratura postcoloniale e verso le voci dei migranti. Ciò mi ha dato modo di presentare alcune riflessioni finali, che evidenziano quanto ancora si debba fare a livello individuale, italiano, europeo e mondiale. In un momento storico in cui il tema dell'immigrazione è all'ordine del giorno di qualsiasi stato europeo, e in un momento particolarmente delicato per alcuni paesi che soffrono crisi politiche e conflitti interni, riflettere sulla nostra società diventa ancora più importante. È necessario intervenire sul micro e sul macro-livello, nei comportamenti che ogni giorno creano un clima sfavorevole per l'integrazione di diverse culture all'interno del tessuto sociale, e a livello di politiche nazionali. Inoltre, i media devono rappresentare tutti i diversi 'modi' di essere italiani, dando visibilità alle diverse storie e mostrando un Paese che può far convivere diverse lingue, culture, tradizioni e religioni. La letteratura postcoloniale ci aiuta enormemente in questo, dunque dovremmo aspirare ad aumentarne la diffusione e la reperibilità. Dobbiamo, infatti, darle spazio nel canone della letteratura italiana, come parte integrante della nostra storia e della nostra cultura. Solo allora si potrà pensare di raggiungere una piena consapevolezza del nostro passato e di come questo abbia definito la nostra società e il nostro modo di pensare a noi stessi e a coloro che ancora ci ostiniamo a chiamare "altri".

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