Texts and Visuals in the Online Aesthetics of Migration: Translation as (Re)narration in the Creative Industries

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1. INTRODUCTION

Developments in communication technology over the last two decades have favoured the proliferation of computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and translation of shared life experiences and cultural perspectives. The channels available for the spread of digital content have widened extensively, and the diffusion of networked systems of communication has become a threat to mainstream media transmission of political and social news and debates.

The very natures of Computer-Mediated Discourse (henceforth CMD) (Herring 1996; 2011) and Translation-Mediated Communication (henceforth TMD) (O'Hagan and Ashworth 2002) have stimulated the growth of alternative forms of online knowledge dissemination based on one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many participation structures, implying, on the one hand, activism from the perspective of consumers and, on the other, denying the effective control of providers on what consumers can see and hear. While strengthening the divide between new and old media, a more equal form of exchange has partially replaced traditional one-way

communication, where consumers are passive and providers are able to control what the audience is expected to see and hear. In short, the rapid diffusion of digital media has brought about profound changes in the nature and organization of communication, while contributing to marking the diversities between old and new media. Nevertheless, as pointed out in Susan C. Herring's seminal *excursus* on CMD, "the social life that teems on the Internet in the late 1990's" (Herring 2011: 620) does not bear the idealised vision of Computer-Mediated Communication (henceforth CMC) as a utopian context where everyone has the chance to participate "freely in open, democratic exchanges" (ibid.). Instead, the Internet appears to be a space able to provide a "rich source of data for the study of discourse and social practice" (ibid.).

In this regard, what emerges in computer-mediated environments is that language use is socially variable. Linguistic choices in CMC depend on social factors, such as "participant demographics and situational context" (ibid.: 621), though it is always very difficult to determine the "geographical location" (ibid.) of users due to "the dispersed nature of Internet groups" (ibid.). In comparison with face-to-face communication, "physical proximity is not a condition for shared membership in a computer-mediated speech community" (ibid.), "*social class, race* and *ethnicity*" (ibid.) may often be invisible on the Internet and, in this case, the racial identity of users is recognizable not from language use but from the nature of message content. The real identities of participants in web communication are generally understandable in terms of educational level, age and gender according to sophisticated or unsophisticated language uses, life experiences, interests emerging in what they write, and participants' names in asynchronous and synchronous discussion groups.

Within such a technologically advanced framework, Machine Translation (henceforth MT) has acquired a vital role in the transmission of news, information, opinions, documentaries and videos within digital platforms. Among the technological advancements occurring within the field of MT, automatic captions (also known as auto-caps) can provide free intralingual and interlingual subtitling services on YouTube platforms. This can take place thanks to the system of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) that is provided by Google technologies. Websites and blogs are also depositaries of YouTube links, which may contain extracts from documentaries, theatrical performances, interviews, films and TV programs, whose content can be visualized, if required, either through English auto-generated captions or thanks to the Auto Translate option, which is able to translate from English into any of the 100 languages supported by Google Translate. As one of the most popular content and video sharing platforms, YouTube offers its consumers the chance to become producers too. This implies that "prosumers" (Pérez-González 2014) effectively contribute to co-creating information and co-editing content by manually inserting subtitles as a procedure of open revision of translated texts. Further types of collaborative and interactional translation include fansubbing and fandubbing, which can be categorized within the field of amateur translation.

Recent research on CMD has also proved that many of the changes have regarded the growth of practices of collaboration and interaction that have strengthened the role of human action in new media. The notion of citizens'

participation has been elected as essential to the growing development of new media. Accessibility to content creation within online platforms has encouraged new forms of sharing and managing, consuming and spreading information sources in the new media ecosystem, while stimulating a flourishing participation of readers. In other words, the limited physical space of conventional media has been replaced by the Internet which, free from space limitation, can offer audiences active roles (users' collaborative participation) in the mechanism of news creation, selection and publishing, which has become of paramount importance in the transmission of first-hand stories.

The diffusion of participatory cultures is what depicts media convergence as the new notion that collides with older significances of passive spectatorship, and which contrasts the principle of participants' interaction in new media according to a specific set of rules (Jenkins 2006). Convergence culture, which involves a shift in the way people relate to the media and popular culture, has also transformed digital contexts into public spaces, where interactivity impacts on the formation of counter communities interested in the spread of online counter narratives within aesthetic discourse. Public attention to questions of migration, citizenship and borders has been transferred from traditional press and TV news to digital spaces as nonstandard territories, where migration has been constructed within the area of the creative cultural industries (Gruffydd Jones and Uribe-Jongbloed 2013).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the Internet as a useful cultural data source, where websites and blogs become cultural texts that have the potential to offer a different perspective on migration with respect to the one that old media transmit in a more institutionalized way. Internet groups, individuals and activist collectives have exploited the spheres of identities and communities in "cybersociety", to use Steven Jones's expression (Jones 1998), in order to narrativize the complex dynamics of migration through online aesthetic discourse. This has occurred in a variety of forms involving text-based CMC such as "emails, discussion groups, real-time chat, virtual reality role-playing games" (Herring 2011: 612), and within cultural websites supported by creative arts organizations and crowdsourcing activities.

2. THE RATIONALE

In this investigation, I argue that computer-mediated technologies have been acting as fast and productive channels that free migration issues from oversimplifying and objective descriptions, while endowing the topic with a sense of truthfulness given by the public narrativization of stories in the language of the Internet, while sharing a more human and subjective perspective. CMD is viewed as a voiced discursive space embracing websites and blogs that exploit the power of storytelling: "*Narrative* is salient in multiuser role-playing games, and people often produce fragments of narrative […] in online environments – fragments that may be expanded through interaction with other participants" (Herring and Androutsopoulos 2015, 129).

Websites and blogs are looked at as expressions of contemporary culture (Pauwels 2012), as symbols of living material and huge repositories "of potential data about contemporary ways of doing and thinking of large groups of people across ethnic and national boundaries" (ibid.). The samples that are used as cases in point put emphasis on the appropriateness and effectiveness of websites as repertoires that can potentially disseminate new versions of migration – where the visual component is complementary to the textual one (Pauwels 2015).

Moving from a brief survey of digital spaces, I shed light on a corpus of digital genres (three websites and one blog, although scrutiny is limited to one of the websites) that have contributed to spreading migration knowledge. In these digitalized spaces, producers and consumers are allowed to investigate migratory influxes, on the one hand, from the perspective of the visual arts (e.g. documentaries, paintings, sculptures, photos and reportage) and, on the other hand, from the viewpoint of social narratives (e.g. diaries and blogs on individuals or collective voices based on storytelling, interviews and newsgroups' social interaction).

The aesthetic digital genres taken into account map out spaces of translation as forms of protest and (re)narration (Baker 2014), arising from the experiences of the migrants, and the ideas of activists and artists that, in turn, encourage networks of public solidarity and collaboration: the "institutionalization of empathy and altruism" (Chouliaraki 2006, 189). The conceptual lens of ordinary citizens gives voice to discursive and non-discursive practices, textual and visual acts, based on computer-mediated reporting on everyday migrant stories over standard media reporting on migration as a cause for concern and preoccupation for European countries.

While attempting to explore these questions, I draw on a twofold approach as the basis for the understanding of the construction of migration on the Internet: on the one hand, the aesthetics of migration (Moslund, Ring Petersen, Schramm 2015) and, on the other, narrative theory in translation and interpreting studies (Baker 2006). I then proceed to provide a conceptualization of the two theoretical frameworks in order to give relevance to the effects of the dissemination of online personal and public narratives on the acquisition of new values and significances, as well as on the dismantling of stereotypes and manipulative devices adopted in institutionalized forms of communication. I subsequently share Baker's and Blaagaard's reconceptualization of citizen media, which is rooted in "the lived experiences of unaffiliated individuals and collectives as they claim public and digital spaces in the pursuit of non-institutionalized agendas" (2016, 1).

The corpus under scrutiny includes the three artistic websites under the titles of *Syria Trojan Women*, *Big Journeys–Untold Stories* and *Project#RefugeeCameras*, and the artistic political blog *Collettivo Askavusa. Porto M.* The corpus is scrutinized according to Michael's Systemic Functional Language (henceforth SFL) (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal approach 1996; 2001) in order to highlight the discursive and multimodal modalities by means of which migrant aesthetic discourse is gaining an active voice within digital platforms. Multimodality is also connected with photography and memory as places for recording images and stores to recall the past (Kross and Peck 2010). In so doing, on account of the application of Pauwels's

multimodal framework (2012) for the analysis of cultural websites, the survey sheds light on the cultural dimension of the websites and blog viewed as cultural texts. The rigid thematization of migrant human suffering as a "politics of pity" (Chouliaraki 2016: 193) in old media is replaced by linguistic and visual online aesthetic forms of migration that publicly intervene as acts of witnessing and deliberation in terms of resistance and release. As a result, online migrant constructions revolve around authentic life experiences that socially and culturally portray migrants not only from a humanitarian emergency perspective but, rather, through "regimes of pity" (ibid.) that reverse public opinion.

Of these online aesthetic constructions of migration, I will provide an in-depth analysis of the *Syria Trojan Women* website because of its interesting combination of diverse genres – each complementary to the other. The website, and not without reason, shows an interplay of diverse modes which range from the visual and performing arts to news items, personal narratives and broadcast.

Against this backdrop, translation, in its broad and narrow senses (Baker 2016), becomes a crucial element in self-mediated textualities. In defining two diverse senses of translation within contexts of conflict, Baker points out that the narrow sense of translation "involves rendering fully articulated stretches of textual material from one language into another, and encompasses various modalities such as written translation, subtitling and oral interpreting [...] from the written translation of statements and campaigns by groups [...] to the subtitling of videos by collectives" (ibid.: 6). Instead, the broad sense of translation – which characterizes the corpus under scrutiny –, "involves the mediation of diffuse symbols, experiences, narratives and linguistic signs of varying lengths across modalities (words into image, lived experience into words), levels and varieties of language (Standard Written Arabic and spoken Egyptian, for example), and cultural spaces" (ibid.: 7).

Both senses of translation permeate the personal experience of artists – writers, filmmakers, painters, street arts, web producers – and citizens, including migrant people, who are turned into individual/collective activists promoting political change through the arts.

3. DATA COLLECTION

Big Journeys, *Queens of Syria* (within the *Syria Trojan Women* project), *Project#Refugeecameras* and *Collettivo Askavusa. Porto M* function as charities and rely on systems of public donation and crowdsourcing. *Syria Trojan Women* (in association with Prospero World Charitable Trust Registered Charity Number 1125731) was produced by the international arts charity Developing Artists and Refuge Production; the archive site of *Big Journeys–Untold Stories* was supported in its pivotal phase by Counterpoints Arts and, subsequently, by funding from Creativeworks London; *Project#refugeecameras* was totally supported by crowdsourcing, whereas *Collettivo Askavusa. Porto M* is an active blog founded on the work of volunteers who accept donations from activists, collectives and associations sharing their political

thoughts.

Big Journey–Untold Stories is a website that includes narratives as translations of experiences that transit from each boy's mother tongue into English as a second language. This implies mechanisms of "relexification" (Zabus 1995), where storytelling is accomplished through a balanced synchronisation between the boys' words, heard and read, and their images, both still and moving. In the section "The Archive", the drop-down menu presents the cases of "Arrival Stories" in the UK. The visual and auditory spheres produced by Vimeo, and integrated by short synthetic summaries provided by British filmmaker Sue Clayton, testify to a different method of dissemination of migration knowledge via the Internet, and within narrative networks of visual communication. All texts are supported by videos (most of them have English auto-generated captions) and images. The same occurs in *Project#refugeecameras*, where each photo is displayed next to explanatory texts produced in the local languages of migrants and in English.

In *Big Journey–Untold Stories*, the image of "Asmat" is complementary to the written words that introduce the protagonist of the story:

> My name is Asmat and I'm from Afghanistan. I've been in England for almost five years now. When I came to England I couldn't speak English very well and I decided to improve my English first because if my English is good so everybody can understand me so I can tell my stories, talk about my culture traditions, journeys etc. […] I have so many stories […] I think this site will be a good place where people can share their stories so everyone can know what happened to us. […] I was lucky, when I was eighteen the Home Office understood my case and they gave me five years to stay here. I don't know what I will do when the next two years are up. I am just finding out who I am, who I can be.

The structure of the websites includes text boxes through which web pages can be visited. The main information interacts with links, news, pictures, videos and the archives, providing the audience with a narrative effect that creates a "sense of translation" of migration. By introducing a different truth from that which is commonly approved, aesthetic discourse portrays human suffering, exile and war but, at the same time, reconstructs identities, stories and lives. Attitudes of sharing and participation are strengthened by the roles of migrants as protagonists, and of artists as activists who act out the deconstruction of stereotypes and prejudices that have grown around the migration crisis. The websites are united in a coherent network of groups who collaborate to modify public opinion through specific discursive practices, what Moscovici refers to as "minority influence" (1976; 1980). Links to wikis, international newspapers, history and politics websites can be viewed as important connections that reinforce the complexity of the current migration crisis and tend to produce private acceptance of the views and images expressed and shown by minority groups.

4. Mapping the territory: CMD, language and translation

Among the numerous aspects that define CMD, what makes its space a location of interaction and openness, creativity and fluidity, mostly depends on its "unique environment, free from competing influences from other channels of communication and from physical context" (Herring 2011: 612). This environment is mainly text-based, centred on verbal and socio-cultural interaction, and on free language use. For these reasons among others, this has rendered CMD a resourceful and suitable territory for the formation of digital counter communities interested in the production and distribution of counter narratives that would encourage communication processes between producers and consumers as active participants in the dialogic mechanism.

This idea is reinforced in Herring's studies, where she maintains that CMD permits multiple participants to be simultaneously in communication, which is almost impossible to achieve in other media (Herring 1999). In addition, the dissemination of computer-mediated messages involves, on the one hand, content distribution to unseen and unknown audiences and, on the other hand, the spread of direct and somehow personal messages.

From a linguistic perspective, participants who experience CMD blend together writing and speaking abilities and feel free to express themselves. Linguistically and culturally speaking, the production of migrant counter narratives appears to be an enriching activity in light of the fact that participants are often speakers of English as a second language or English as Lingua Franca or of varieties of English. Furthermore, the high level of creativity in the linguistic structure of CMC (Herring 2011) encourages the production of texts, whose use of language, while being less complex and correct than standard written English, favours phenomena of codeswitching, linguistic variation and language contact. As shown in the blog section of *Syria Trojan Women*, the post "Suad's Story" (12/8/2013) contains 310 comments that provide cases of codeswitching, among which "thanks infonya, semoga sukses" (in Indonesian, "Semoga sukset" meaning "Good luck") and "keren banget i like it" (in Indonesian, "keren banget" meaning "very cool").

In computer-mediated messages, the multilingual framework does not involve linguistic incorrectness as a result of non-standard uses of English. Indeed, as remarked by Herring, it is essential to understand the nature of computer-mediated language and its different linguistic properties "depending on the kind of messaging system used and the social and cultural context embedding particular instances of use" (Herring 2011, 612). Interactive networking is thus central to the development of computer-mediated language which, although it contains non-standard features, sometimes lacking in expressivity, nevertheless "only a relatively small percentage of such features appears to be errors caused by inattention or lack of knowledge of the standard language forms" (ibid.: 617). In fact, the principle of linguistic economy is crucial to "deliberate choices made by users to economize on typing effort, mimic spoken language features, or express themselves creatively" (ibid.).

In the same blog, the post "Amman to Geneva" contains 446 comments, where the use of English is often incorrect, while style is chiefly colloquial and informal:

Figure 1. Reply to the post "Amman to Geneva" (10/18/2014)

In two more replies, participants affirm: "many thank for information good job" and "after reading this article I am becoming increasingly knowledge, thank you …". Nevertheless, considering the nature of computer-mediated language, grammatical and lexical irregularities are accepted and do not compromise textual and reading comprehension. Within the field of MT, linguistic errors and formal inaccuracy are also very popular, above all in audiovisual translation. This can be more problematic when translation from original utterances in English is required into any other language selected by the audience, which highlights the limits of MT in comparison with human translators. However, grammatical and lexical unconventionality and inappropriateness in auto-translated captions do not make the general meaning totally obscure, especially when the public is familiar with English.

Intralingual transcriptions in English auto-generated captions are not always respectful of oral utterances. The YouTube interview "Queens of Syria 2016–Project Film" in *Syria Trojan Women* testifies to MT restrictions occurring when some of the words pronounced by the Syrian "Trojan" woman and actress are altered and often misinterpreted in English auto-generated captions. This also happens when the Auto Translate device makes the effort to produce Italian subtitles. The table below shows the dissimilarities between Auto Translate procedures (from English into Italian) and English auto-generated captions in the interview taken as a case in point.

English auto-generated captions	Auto Translate in Italian	My English transcription
because it's not enough that you just see the things through the television the radio the social media	perché non è sufficiente che vedi le cose solo attraverso la televisione la radio il sociale i media	because it's not enough that you just see the things through the television, the radio, the social media
in it just to be to meet these people speak with them understand them then you can decide what's their own right	in esso solo per essere di incontrare questi le persone parlano con loro capiscono loro allora puoi decidere cosa è loro giusto	you need just to be to meet these people or speak with them understand them then you can decide what's the wrong what's the right

Table 1. Auto-generated captions and Auto Translate in *Syria Trojan Women*

The Arab woman speaks in English with an Arabic accent. The auto-generated English captions and Italian auto-translated captions from English are often incorrect in terms of formal and semantic equivalence.

Auto Translate makes it possible to spread content in diverse languages and over a short period of time. Both "spreadability" (Jenkins, Ford, Green 2013: 3) and voluntarist participation favour the grouping of web users constructed not as a "collection of passive individuals" (ibid.: 7), but as "active members who can transit from "peripheral awareness to active awareness" (ibid.). If we reconsider the post "Suad's story", it is possible to observe how web users are very positive towards the concept of spreadability, and supportive of voluntarist participation. Among the replies: "It's an awesome piece of unity in support of all the web users; they will obtain advantage from it I am sure"; "We are a bunch of volunteers and opening a new scheme in our community. Your website offered us with helpful info to work on. You've done a formidable activity and our whole community can be thankful to you". Citizens, communities and groupings of activists are engaged in the active construction of online genres by means of which voiceless identities can potentially have a direct channel of international circulation. Cyberspaces have become platforms that offer their users and consumers new forms of public space, where artistic and creative patterns are allowed to contrast the sensationalist and spectacular representations of migration written and screened within old media.

This tendency has grown within the increasing production of digital cultures as responsible for the proliferation of self-mediation as a technological process "re-presenting ordinary voices through […] configurations of semiotic systems, from language to image (still or moving) to sound" (Chouliaraki 2010: 229). The participation of ordinary people in public culture has therefore stimulated the assembling and distribution of self-mediation practices, which also include amateur audiovisual translation, primarily motivated by processes of collective reconstitution (Deuze 2006, 66). In this respect, artistic interventions and narrative constructions of individual and collective stories in digital spaces are contributing to giving voice to the multitude of migrant people who have crossed the globe. The Internet has transformed the nature of community and identity, while affecting the "cohesiveness of subversive organizations" (Zickmund 1997: 185). In some cases, subversion has become functional to "the discursive articulation of a community […], its historical consciousness and cultural identification" (ibid.).

So far, very little research has been done on digital domains along the cultural lines and dimensions of Web 2.0 spaces. *Syria Trojan Women*, *Collettivo Askavusa*, *Big Journeys* and *Project#RefugeeCameras* represent socially- and "aesthetically-driven" digital spaces (Arora 2012: 599), collaborative sites of resistance that act against the dynamics of the media marketplace surrounding migration. These artistic spaces have placed emphasis on "the so-called "mobility turn", an emergent paradigm within the social sciences" (Mathur 2011: viii), focusing on "the relationship of the visual arts to the forms of subjectivities produced by migration and displacement in the modern era" (ibid.).

5. DIGITAL SPACES: PUBLIC SPACES

The digital revolution has increasingly transformed the landscape of discourses and translations encouraging new spaces and domains of research. Faceless newsgroups and bloggers, and website creators aiming at spreading knowledge, have altered the traditional means of production and proliferation of discourses. New modes of human translation (i.e. fansubbing, fandubbing), seen as "abusive translation" according to Nornes (2007), and virtual forms of translation, are challenging the traditional structure of the translation market, while increasing the Internet engagement in public political, social and cultural causes.

Digital spaces have become public spaces that function within the concepts of collaboration and social interaction, online translation practices and discourse constructions. The websites and blog on migration taken into account are all embedded in a component of collaboration, text-based and visual form, and incorporates some of the features in CMC, among which interpersonal communication, online and offline interactions, meaning-making and shared belief systems, intercultural differences, and technological interlocutions. Particular emphasis is given to meaning-making procedures, where interpersonal communication, intercultural differences and the reinforcement of shared-belief systems are strategically necessary to create a cohesive understanding of migration in the arts in oppositional terms to media discourse.

The corpus contains witnessing and first-hand documenting events, practices, videos and images on migrant issues transmitted either textually and visually or audio-visually. It is especially via Twitter hashtags (to capture followers @....) and Facebook that these websites have increased citizens' awareness of issues on migration, and also encouraged political debates and forms of "participatory journalism", which involves "(t)he act of a citizen, or a group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information" (Bowman and Willis 2003, 9). In Rodríguez's (2011) terms, citizens' media is a concept that implies

> first that a collectivity is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these communication practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformations and changes are possible (15).

Individuals, collectives, entire communities, groupings operating in the specific sector of migration have transformed the digital space into a space that hosts narratives, events and facts on migration, as well as emotions, material and immaterial objects. Public intervention has taken place in "documentary films, blogs, paintings and arts installation – any format that can be viewed in terms of transmission of alternative forms of "power" (Baker 2016: 15), while emphasizing the idea of a group

"morally superior and able to draw on 'people's power" (Baker 2006, 86). Although websites and blogs on migration are structured according to an English language-based system that exploits English, or English as a Lingua Franca, for the global diffusion of minority issues, however, each website or blog possesses specific cultural filters and rhetorical patterns that characterize them.

6. FROM THEORY TO SFL AND MULTIMODAL SURVEYS

Scholarly views on CMC have paid attention to the correlation between human communication and computer technology. Herring has depicted CMC as that process of "communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computer" (1996, 1). This definition reinforces the principle according to which online communication is dynamic, transactional, multifunctional and multimodal. While drawing attention on the composition of websites, Pym has claimed that verbal components are fundamental to the semiotic system, together with the visual one. Indeed, "the design of the webpage is at least as important as its linguistic content. A webpage cannot be designed or written in the same way as a printed page. It should be built for use, not just for reading" (Pym 2011: 417).

6.1. *Photography*

The visual component is essential to the construction of websites and blogs. In this regard, the language of photography and its symbolic meaning have had a significant impact on the ways the audience perceives and reads subjects, objects, and landscapes recorded. While the language of photography encapsulates memory, migration is embedded in past and present events. According to recent perspectives on the relationship between memory and photography, Kross and Peck have shed light on their role as instruments for recording images (2010), while conceiving memory itself as an archive. The spread of photos and images within digital platforms on migration has given voice to experiences of transition, while keeping past memories alive: photography is thus memory that recalls the past.

On the Internet, photographic images and archives do take material and physical form, while feeding memory that, in turn, becomes a form of mediation of past and present (ibid.). Memory is shaped by the practice of the present, whereas digital spaces provide the structure for remembrance to occur in. Besides, digital spaces have reinforced the nexus of photography, memory and archive as depositaries of migrant cultures (ibid.). The web, therefore, facilitates an indiscriminate store of images, while encouraging the double action of photography. Indeed, if, on the one hand, it "promises to create the conditions for social consciousness and remembrance […], on the other hand, photography filters and mediates what is preserved" (ibid.: 127). Digital spaces are overflowing with images taken, edited, and posted by users, whereas photography has lost its unique artistic sense and is now taking advantage of

the virtually free exhibit that is the Internet.

6.2 *The aesthetics of migration*

Perspectives and studies on the aesthetics of migration (Moslund, Ring Petersen, Schramm 2015; Demos 2013; Papastergiadis 2000) have stressed the function of migration as a process involving not only a movement of people and a circulation of cultures, but also of "information and resources in the shape of goods, media products, art, and so on" (Moslund, Ring Petersen, Schramm 2015: 1). Twenty-first-century societies have developed an increasingly aesthetic sense that has involved generations of artists and intellectuals, citizens and ordinary people, especially on the web (i.e. Facebook, websites, blog). Online artistic discourse on migration is built on the existence of generations of nomadic artists, whose sense of art mobility as everyday life and practice is dependent on the very condition of movement that the web favours. Their artistic interventions have given a voice to underdeveloped, oppressed and persecuted populations not as dislocated human beings threatening humanity but as normal people (Duester 2013).

The websites and blog in the corpus highlight the artistic dimension of migration as a process based on life experiences in a permanent state of movement (i.e. the Syrian actresses fleeing from Syria to Jordan, and from Jordan to the UK in *Syria Trojan Women*; migrant people taking pictures of themselves while risking their lives in *Project#refugeecameras*; activists travelling around the island of Lampedusa (sea and land) for the collection of objects employed for the exhibition in *Porto M*; stories of deportation as narratives of endless conditions of movement from the UK to native countries in *Big Journeys–Untold Stories*). As a dynamic and alternative discourse against standardized forms of media narratives, online aesthetic discourse has its own culture-specific lexis which signals the normality of the participants' lives in the narratives – as human beings who had regular existences, jobs and families (i.e. Syrian women compare their lives with Hecuba's life in Euripides's tragedy, or the deported Afghan boys tell how beautiful their life was before their deportation from the UK).

6.3 *Translation and narratives*

Narrations of personal experiences as forms of translation regulate the functioning of the websites and blog taken into account. These are accounted for by Baker's approach to narrative theory, in which the practice and ethics of translation and interpreting (Baker 2006; 2014) become significantly important in contexts of conflict and crisis. The relationship between narration and translation in the context of migration relies on the fact that the telling of individual or collective narratives (written, spoken, painted, drawn etc.) is viewed as an act of self-mediation. By means of relexification, narrative texts outside their native linguistic and socio-cultural codes are (re)narrated in a manner that migrant stories can be heard in different contexts

and environments.

(Re)narration as a mode of translation may or may not involve a second speaker/writer. The second speaker/writer can be a documentary or a video, where the transfer of the experience does not involve the passage from one language to another, but from one channel or genre to another. It goes without saying that the act of (re)narration generates "currency and legitimacy in a different environment" (Baker 2008, 15), whose multimodal nature includes a variety of expressive systems, such as the textual level, typographical and design features, the layout, performed texts and plays, music, etc., offering each website effective communication. These stories are a "specifically, temporally configured set of happenings or 'events' with a beginning, middle and (projected) end" (ibid.: 21).

The type of story that is told and described is not a chronological record of "events, dates and participants" (ibid.). Rather, the stories narrated in the websites are situated in time and place and "populated by participants, real or imagined, animate or inanimate" (ibid.), having "a pattern of causal emplotment that allows us to make moral sense of the events and understand (or construct) the pattern of relationships among the participants" (ibid.). The (re)narration of facts as forms of translation involves the construction of narratives out of them, which, according to Baker, implies the creation of "narratives that have implications in the real world" (ibid.).

6.4. *SFL, multimodality and Luc Pauwels's framework in the corpus*

Complementary to textual narratives, visual narratives create natural intersections made of gestures, sounds and images within networked platforms. Drawing on Halliday's SFL analysis and the works of Kress and van Leeuwen on the meanings of images and illustrative designs on the pages, online aesthetic constructions of migration originate from the work of artists who, like the writers of texts, have chosen options out of the systems of representation (ideational function), modality (interpersonal function) and composition (textual metafunction). This functional semiotic model aims to create a visual code which the website explorer/viewer shares with the artist.

Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal framework is built on Halliday's SFL approach to texts as interactions in cultural and situational contexts, which is to say, as texts that vary according to three factors: 1. Who is communicating (tenor); 2. About what (field); 3. By what means (mode). This occurs within a linguistic system that is organized by the related metafunctions of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual). Multimodality, therefore, in its usage of combined semiotic modes within a socio-cultural domain resulting in a semiotic product or event, is suitable for the interpretation and understanding of websites on the aesthetics of migration.

The ideational metafunction of language representing the websites and blog involves the representation of things and facts in the world – participants, processes, relationships, etc. The lexicogrammatical system of transitivity ruling this metafunction sheds light on those language choices that are descriptive of "who" is doing "what" to

"whom". The transitivity system reveals the predominance of material processes, and of a moderate presence of mental, verbal and existential processes. The multimodal experience changes from a material viewing to hearing.

The explorers of the websites in the corpus move from viewing and listening to migrant narratives to hearing performances and documentaries on mythological forms of migration (i.e. the Syrian women in the project speak and perform, but are also active participants in the asynchronous comments; the protagonists in *Project#refugeecameras* write texts and position them next to their photos as a tool for explanation or complementation; in *Collettivo Askavusa. Porto M*, the display of objects is supported by explanatory videos or a deeper focus on the images; in *Big Journeys*, narratives are complementary to what the videos show in relation to characters' everyday lives).

People on screen or the display of objects are models of narratives that produce transactional processes (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). The actions are those described in the videos, or displayed in the photos or exhibitions. However, whereas in the audio-text, the actions take place over a span of time, the image or/and spoken text, portray people and action in specific circumstances. In the SFL analysis, the interpersonal metafunction of language consists of mechanisms of non-negotiation rather than of negotiation of meanings – where what is said has declarative tones – which do not imply changes of any sort. In multimodality, the interpersonal metafunction, or what O'Toole defines as the engagement function (1994; 1999), depends on the way pictures, photos and videos capture the viewers' attention and their involvement with the depicted or screened subjects or objects. The direct gaze of the participants, the migrants' portraits as family groups and the parts of the body functioning as vectors are all essential objects, engaging the viewer/explorer and creating affinity by their immediacy (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 129). In the websites, the viewer/explorer looks at the videos and images from a frontal viewpoint that gives the audience the feeling of belonging to the world of migrants, in contrast to the vertical angle that expresses a position of power rather than of equality (ibid.: 146). As the people in the videos and images are generally viewed neither from above nor below, there is no power difference construed between audiences and participants in the visual frames. This brings the audience socially closer but does not reach the point of intimacy. In contrast to written or spoken texts, which do not encourage much interaction, the interpersonal survey of the visual level shows that the video maker or filmmaker, whose artistic products are contained in the websites, has made choices that intensify complicity and engagement with the viewer.

Finally, in the SFL analysis, the textual metafunction of language relates to how texts are constructed and organized. Unmarked themes usually reveal the intention of making the visuals next to the narratives (in this case, written stories) a starting point for structuring the verbal text (i.e. this is very common in *Project#refugeecameras*). From a multimodal perspective, the textual structure is given by the unity that is expressed within the frames in which people are enclosed. It produces a sense of harmony and balance in relation to the rest of the website in which people appear or, conversely, a sense of irregularity.

The corpus analysis is based on a survey of narratives and images – how texts and words are employed, and how images are spread in combination with online textual elements. The revelation of new cultural views on migration can act as a form of witnessing and deliberation, both of which stimulate the production of counter narratives, while dismantling the politics of pity around migrant communities and shouting out social legitimization.

Figure 2 reproduces Pauwels's "Multimodal Framework for Analyzing Websites", which is composed of six stages. The *Syria Trojan Women* website is viewed with reference to the first three stages of the framework.

A MULTIMODAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING WEBSITES

1. Preservation of First Impressions and Reactions
- Categorization of 'look and feel' at a glance
- Recording of affective reactions

2. Inventory of Salient Features and Topics
- Inventory of present website features and attributes
- Inventory of main content categories and topics
- Categorize and quantify features and topics
- Perform 'negative' analysis: significantly absent topics and features

3. In-depth Analysis of Content and Formal Choices

3.1 Intra-Modal Analysis (fixed/static and moving/dynamic elements)
- Verbal/written signifiers
- Typographic signifiers
- Visual representational signifiers
- Sonic signifiers
- Lay out & design signifiers

3.2 Analysis of Cross-Modal Interplay
- Image / written text relations and typography-written text relations
- Sound / image-relations
- Overall design / linguistic, visual and auditory interplay

3.3 In-depth 'negative' analysis

4. Embedded Point(s) of View or 'Voice' and Implied Audience(s) and Purposes
- Analysis of POV's and constructed personae
- Analysis of intended/implied primary and secondary audience(s)
- Analysis of embedded goals and purposes

5. Analysis of Information Organization and Spatial Priming Strategies
- Structural and navigational options and constraints (dynamic organization)
- Analysis of priming strategies and gate keeping tools
- Analysis of outer directed and/or interactive features
- Analysis of external hyperlinks

6. Contextual Analysis, Provenance and Inference
- Identification of sender(s) and sources
- Technological platforms and their constraints/implications
- Attribution of cultural hybridity

Figure 2. Pauwels's "Multimodal Framework"

7. THE *SYRIA TROJAN WOMEN* WEBSITE

One of the principal Internet directories of the artistic project *Queens of Syria* is "syriantrojanwomen.org" (www.syriantrojanwomen.org>about-us), which is a sub-website that has been created to publicize *Queens of Syria* in its version as a documentary (Fedda 2014) and as theatrical pieces (Abu Saada 2013; Lafferty 2016). The *Syria Trojan Women* general website introduces, describes and discloses the realization of an artistic project that originally took place in Jordan following the Arab spring conflicts. The project, which was produced by Syrian and British artists, and performed by Syrian actresses, was inspired by the Greek tragedy of Euripides, *The Trojan Women*, also known as *Troades* (415 BC).

The website investigates migration from different perspectives. It considers the social, historical and political components of the Syrian migratory influxes by clearly marking them on the chart "Facts & Figures" (Figure 3 below), which is located in the central part of the website ("About Us").

Figure 3. Facts and Figures

The chart describes Syrian migration from historical and statistical perspectives. It offers concrete data collected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that indicate the nations where Syrian refugees went to find a shelter and the exact number of refugees in each region (from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan to Egypt and Iraq). The visual diagram is strengthened by a text that scrolls on the left side of the graphics and which is complementary to the visual part. The text increases the amount of information about the consequences of Syrian migration.

Pauwels's six stages "correspond to a certain logic of discovery: from looking at rather immediately manifest features and performing straightforward measurements […] to more in-depth interpretations of the constituting elements and their intricate relations" (Pauwels 2012: 252). The first stage, "Preservations of the first impressions and reactions" (ibid.: 253), retains the first general impressions of the website and produces "look and feel" attitudes, which involve "the conscious reception of a

website as a "meeting of cultures" between producers, intended audiences and researchers" (ibid.). This stage is essential to the discovery of the *Syria Trojan Women* website, since it is in this stage that the audience may be captured or may remain indifferent. If the first stage, which defines the level of attraction of the public in terms of discovery, is positive, the next step will be to transit to the second stage, "Inventory of salient features and topics" (ibid.). Here the consumer can concentrate on data collection, while discovering a series of features and attributes (i.e. the use of graphs and tables, and logos in Arabic and Italian) and a specific inventory containing interviews, filmmakers' declarations, trailers, photos, radio drama projects, and feedback areas. The first two stages provide the public with significant elements that involve an initial cultural interpretation of the website, such as the omission or presence of certain cultural taboos, values, and norms concerning Muslim worlds.

The aesthetic dimension is present from the opening of the homepage. The adjective "Syrian", indicating inhabitants from Syria, is matched to the adjective "Trojan" – referring to the ancient population living in Troy and about whom the myth narrates stories of war, conflict, sacrifice, and religion. The linguistic nominal group "Syrian Trojan Women" encapsulates the tragic fact of Syrian migration within mythological Trojan worlds, thus, giving dignity to Syrian women and unchaining the population from general sentiments of pity.

The shift from sentiments of pity to acts of witnessing and deliberation takes place in the third stage, "In-depth analysis of content and stylistic features". This stage contains two sub-stages: an "intra-modal analysis" and a "cross-modal analysis". The intra-modal analysis, based on fixed and static, moving and dynamic elements, distinguishes the following elements: "verbal/written signifier", "typographical signifiers", "visual representational types and signifiers", "sonic types and signifiers", "layout and design signifiers" (ibid.). The cross-modal analysis relates to the interplay of linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial and time-based elements. Mechanisms of interplay are central to *Syria Trojan Women*, which consists of relations between written parts (captions and titles), visuals (videos, trailers, interviews, photos, etc.) and music (songs).

From historical descriptions (e.g. the chart), the audience moves to the aesthetic dimension. A photo where a Syrian Muslim woman is acting on the stage in London (Figure 4) is representative of the artistic commitment of Syrian women in Europe.

Figure 4. Syrian perfomances on the stage

Complementary to the visual representation (i.e. the photo of the Syrian woman on the stage, where cultural norms and values belonging to Muslim cultures are maintained), the paratactic declarative construction, "I have a scream, I want the world to hear", puts emphasis on the purpose of the artistic project and its social and cultural values. The sentence implicitly arises in opposition to standard media information (the public can associate the act of performing with the *English* utterance, "I have a scream, I want the world to hear"). The homepage articulates photos from *Queens of Syria* on the stage and screen to pictures taken from everyday life in Jordan or during the UK tour. The visuals (Figures 5 and 6) are always complementary to texts and statements such as the following examples:

> These are not the voices of political commentators or journalists, but of ordinary women whose lives have been turned upside down by the turmoil of the Syrian conflict. The stories of these women need to be heard […] British audiences will hear first hand the harsh realities of life as a refugee.

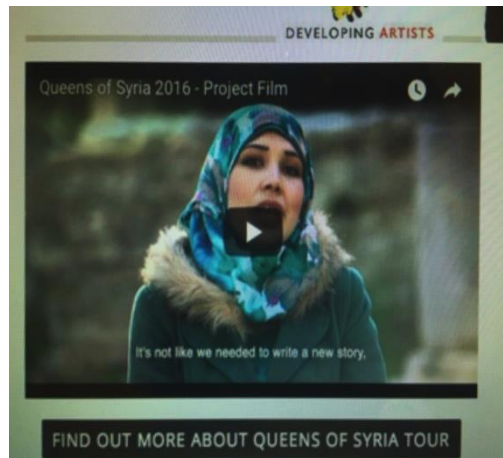Figure 5. Exiled Syrian women in Jordan

Figure 6. Interview with a Syrian actress

The mythological dimension of the Syrian women's lives satisfies the aesthetic function: "Euripides' play *The Trojan Women* is set at the fall of Troy. It is about the fate of the defeated and exiled". There are sentences that give a sense of reality: "Weapons may change but war is eternal and there are enormous parallels between the fate of refugees from Syria today and that of the women of Troy". There are other sentences or long paragraphs that strengthen the cultural role of the website by providing the reader with a sense of history:

> The women of Syria have seen their homes destroyed and their families wounded and killed, raped and brutalized, and have been forced to flee into exile. […] *The Trojan Women* was written by Euripides in 415 BC as a reaction to the abhorrent behaviour of his own democratically elected government in Athens when it took the island of Melos – the men were killed and the women and children sold into slavery.

The blog, for example, contains asynchronous comments (i.e. via Facebook and Twitter) as replies to posts relating to everyday life in Syria or exiled experiences in Jordan. "Suad's story", for example, is made public in the blog section through a narrative that combines aesthetic pleasure and the tragedy of Syrian war:

> It meant a lot. Even before I knew anything about the play I wanted to do it. I had always dreamed of being interviewed on TV to tell people about what has been happening to us in Damascus. We lived in Saida Zainab, an area being destroyed by the fighting, but nobody knew abut it – it was being ignored by journalists and the news. At last here was some sort of platform to speak, especially when they said they would be weaving our stories into the next. […] My husband was a soldier in the Syrian army. Neither of us supported the Revolution – we believed the regime when they told us it was all being dome by terrorists and foreigners. Then he was asked to kill his fellow countrymen, and do things he thought wrong. So he deserted.

The story turns to the artistic interest in the *Queens of Syria* project, where the most striking elements are the parallels that can be drawn between the lives of Trojan and Syrian women:

> When Hecuba turns to have a last look at Troy she makes a speech about never seeing her country ever again, and I cry when I read it, because when we were at the border about to cross into Jordan, my husband told me to look back at Syria for one last time, because we might never see it again. That for me is the most wrenching part of the play.

This reinforces the intertextual level which is also frequent in CMD, as Herring remarks: "*Intertexuality* is manifested through implicit cultural references" or through the creation of meanings by "paraphrasing, quoting, retweeting, or linking to other texts elsewhere on the Web" (Herring and Adroutsopoulus 2015, 136). Among the 310 asynchronous comments in reaction to Suad's story, one can read: "Useful information.I am actual blessed to read this article.thanks for giving us this advantageous information.I acknowledge this post.and I would like bookmark this post.Thanks" (7/26/2015, 06:05:47 pm). Two more replies to Suad's post claim: "I have been searching for quite some time for information on this topic and no doubt your website saved my time and I got my desired information. Your post has been very useful. Thanks" (5/09/2014; 03:19:05 am); and, "Good way of explaining, and pleasant paragraph to obtain facts on the topic of my presentation focus, which I am going to convey in school" (5/18/2014; 08:17:09 am).

The cultural, aesthetic and historical levels are blended in the *Syria Trojan Women* project, and are also representative of the first three stages of Pauwels's framework. The fourth stage, referred to as "Embedded point(s) of view or "voice" and implied audience(s) and purposes", and the last two stages, "Analysis of dynamic information organization and spatial priming strategies," and "Contextual analysis, provenance and inference" (Pauwels 2012: 258), are implicitly present in the description of the first three stages (e.g. menus and navigation tools, blogs, wikis, and chat rooms). Furthermore, other aspects such as the multi-authored nature of the website, social interaction through Facebook, Twitter, and a private mailing system, can be identified within the last three stages in Pauwels's multimodal framework.

8. CONCLUSION

The websites and blog have been used to examine the rapid proliferation of online discourses on the aesthetics of migration. It has emerged that artistic websites are disseminating visual and textual discourses, where a plurality of voices has gained visibility through strategies of linguistic and iconographic rebellion against anti-refugee discourse. The Internet is thus contributing to the reframing of migrant realities, while encouraging intercultural exchanges. While accelerating the spread of

political participatory and activist movements in the areas of subtitling and amateur translation, MT and translation as (re)narration (Rizzo 2015), the creative cultural industries are reframing the migration crisis against the "spectacularization" of migration in the media landscape (ibid.: 5).

According to Mitra and Watts (2002), the voice of migrants on the Internet corresponds to the speaker or the speakers, which implies a sense of authority and agency. The voice "provides an alternative theoretical lens to consider how cybercommunities can and do operate within the discursive space of the Internet" (Mitra and Watts 2002, 480). In so doing, cyberspace becomes one of the most favourable locations for the spread of migrant discourses, since the Internet breaks down traditional discourse's hierarchies and the voice becomes one of the primary elements that the reader/listener will evaluate.

As cultural spaces that translate narratives of migration within mechanisms of transmedia storytelling, the websites and blog under scrutiny have encouraged massive numbers of online consumers to explore the surface of general information on migration, and to investigate what mainstream media often oversimplify or omit from public knowledge, while stimulating the public to discover meanings from different perspectives.

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