

Ethics and Affect in the Translation of Testimonies From Searchers in Contexts of Enforced Disappearance in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the ethical and affective dimensions of translating testimonies from people searching for their disappeared relatives in Mexico from Spanish into English. Focusing on transitivity and agentivity in the verb *desaparecer* (to disappear), it uses translation as a method for investigating this violence. It argues that translation choices must attend to the grammatical and affective structures through which searchers articulate disappearance and its impact, framing such choices as an ethical approach to testimonial translation.

Keywords: translation, testimony, Latin America, Mexico, enforced disappearance.

Este artículo explora las dimensiones ética y afectiva en la traducción del español al inglés de testimonios de quienes buscan a sus familiares desaparecidos en México. Centrándose en patrones de transitividad y agentividad del verbo *desaparecer*, se utiliza la traducción como método de investigación de esta forma de violencia, argumentando que las decisiones traductológicas deben tomar en cuenta las estructuras gramaticales y afectivas con que las buscadoras conceptualizan la desaparición y sus impactos, situando dichas decisiones como un planteamiento ético de traducción testimonial.

Palabras clave: traducción, testimonio, América Latina, México, desaparición forzada.

On Testimony in Translation and Disappearance

Across Latin America, relatives of the disappeared have formed search collectives (*colectivos de búsqueda*) to find their loved ones — victims of enforced disappearance. In this article, I take disappearance as the conceptual and ethical challenge at the centre of my analysis. Approaching disappearance as a lived reality and a category that unsettles conventional narrative and linguistic patterns, I draw on the translation of testimonies emerging from these searches to explore how translation engages with violence and the ethical and affective tensions that arise from it.

During these searches, relatives document their experiences, producing situated knowledge (Haraway 1988) grounded in the embodied, lived experiences of resistant subjectivities (Lugones 2010, 746), which encompasses experiential insight with technical expertise. My research focuses primarily on this experiential dimension, examining the testimonies compiled in *Nadie detiene al amor* (Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020), which gathers lived stories of people searching for their disappeared relatives in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico. Approaching translation both as a practice and as a method of inquiry, I analyse my own translation of these narratives, developing through this process a methodology that embodies an ethical approach to translation.

This study sits at the intersection of two bodies of scholarship that have frequently developed in dialogue with one another: research on *testimonio* as a literary and political genre, and work on the translation of testimony within Translation Studies. Acknowledging that theorisations of *testimonio* emerge across diverse intellectual traditions, including Latin American contexts central to their development, the present discussion engages primarily with debates as they have developed within Anglophone scholarship¹ since the 1980s. As Laura Webb (2019) argues, attempts to consolidate *testimonio* as an institutionally recognised genre have often centred debates on questions of authenticity, authority, form, and subalternity. While such discussions have contributed to the critical visibility of testimonial narratives, they have also “judg[ed] [their importance and significance] in terms of [their] interest to the academic, intellectual community” (Webb 2019, 7). For Webb, this emphasis risks “undermin[ing] the very foundations of testimonial works which are concerned with social response and impact” (2019, 21). Webb instead advocates an interdisciplinary approach to

¹ The focus on Anglophone scholarship reflects the situated nature of this project, which examines the translation of Mexican testimonies into English and is conducted within an English-speaking academic context. This emphasis is not intended to suggest that theories of *testimonio* originate exclusively from, or are limited to, Anglophone traditions, particularly given their deep roots in the Latin American context. For a more nuanced discussion of the institutionalisation and critiques surrounding the emergence of the genre, see Picornell (2011).

testimonio that moves beyond the genre and geographical constraints often imposed upon it, enabling a contemporary understanding of *testimonio* “as a new kind of literature requiring broader critical analysis from a variety of disciplines” (2019, 10). In this study, this critical understanding of *testimonio* is approached as central to the ethical and interpretive challenges that emerge when translating testimonial narratives across languages and contexts.

An aspect that concerns me in this article is the implications of such understandings of testimony for translation. Peter Davies (2014) argues that if testimony is understood not primarily in terms of formal textual features but through the social role and cultural status it acquires in specific contexts, this opens space to examine how “translators and editors of translations negotiate between potentially differing conceptions of testimony in source and target context” (2014, 172). This provides a useful point of departure for my engagement with Translation Studies, directing attention towards the ethical and affective dimensions of translating testimony. Moreover, scholarship on testimonial translation and translation of trauma-informed narratives has increasingly foregrounded the role of translators as active participants in the process of mediation (Baker 2006; Davies 2014, 2018; Gould & Tahmasebian 2020). Davies’ (2018) work on Holocaust survivor testimonies, for instance, demonstrates how translators and interpreters participate in the networks of linguistic and institutional mediation that make acts of witnessing possible, shifting analytical focus from the witness alone to the broader processes through which testimony is transmitted and received. Drawing on these conceptualisations, I approach translation as a mediating practice through which narratives of disappearance circulate differently across sociocultural contexts. This framing underpins my examination of how such testimonies are interpreted and made meaningful for new audiences through their ethical, political, and affective dimensions.

In the context of Latin American *testimonio*, Amanda Hopkinson and Hazel Marsh (2020) extend interlingual understandings of translation by attending to mediation across different modalities, namely song and speech. In doing so, they draw attention to the significance of orality in collective forms of witnessing, arguing that these traces of orality constitute a crucial dimension with which “the translator-activist must engage” (2020, 258). Furthermore, Hopkinson and Marsh’s (2020) discussion of the English translation of *Nunca Más* (1984), the report produced by Argentina’s National Commission on Disappeared People (NCDP), reflects on the importance of making these testimonies accessible in other contexts. They highlight the role of translation in raising international awareness and addressing issues of human rights through the transnational circulation of testimonial narratives. In this context, these authors suggest that interviewers, writers, and translators share a comparable responsibility:

The interviewers/writers and translators share a common and equivalent responsibility to their readership: if the translation is not accessible in the way originally intended, neither audience nor author will be well served (Hopkinson & Marsh 2020, 259).

While my understanding of responsibility differs somewhat from the equivalence proposed across these forms of mediation, Hopkinson and Marsh's formulation is productive insofar as it highlights the ethical stakes of translational decisions and their consequences for reception. Rather, I am interested in how such responsibility emerges through the translator's relationship to testimony itself and to those who bear witness. This raises a question that remains central to this research: what kind of responsibility does translation entail when working with testimonies of violence, and more specifically of enforced disappearance? Within this study, this responsibility is oriented towards the testimony bearer, while also extending to the readership. This ethical orientation resonates with scholarship on the translation of gender-based violence (GBV) narratives, particularly the work by Charlotte Bosseaux in *A Voice of Their Own* (2025), which foregrounds care as a practice enacted in and through translation², and highlights how survivors' voices — often shaped by asymmetries of gender and intersectional violence — are represented and may be reconfigured through translational choices.

Building on the concerns raised above, this paper develops a methodology that enacts translation as research practice. By attending closely to the work of translation itself, this methodology enables an examination of how translational decisions actively (re)configure testimonial narratives as they circulate, as translation operates across affective, relational, and political layers, (re)articulating emotional expressions within new linguistic and cultural horizons while remaining accountable to the situated experiences from which they emerge.

This methodology draws on feminist and discourse-oriented approaches that understand translation as a situated practice involved in knowledge production and shaping meaning. Taking feminist translation as an "intersectional and heterogeneous model of cross-meaning-making" (Castro & Ergun 2017, 2), I read these testimonies as knowledge grounded in specific material and affective conditions and see their translation as a means of entering the ethical and intersectional grounds of disappearance and the ongoing search. My approach also engages with Kaisa Koskinen's (2020) work on affect in translation, concretely her call for greater attention to the affective dimensions of translation. Building on

² In the present analysis, I do not develop concerns around translator's care in detail; however, this emphasis on care reflects a central ethical dimension of my broader research, recognising that translators and other language professionals working with emotionally demanding material may themselves be affected by vicarious trauma and burnout (Hubscher-Davidson 2018; Bosseaux 2025), as well as the translator's embodied and situated engagement with traumatic testimony.

her understanding that translators are both affecting and affected subjects (Koskinen 2020, XI), I view translation as an embodied practice mediated by my engagement with the testimonies, the searchers who bear witness through them, and their intended audiences. This perspective enables me to acknowledge the affective dimensions of both disappearance and translation and informs the reflexive and ethical stance that guides my translation practice. As discussed later, I complement this approach with Sara Ahmed's (2006; 2014) theorisation of emotions to further examine how meaning, relations, and affective engagements are shaped through translation. At the same time, engaging with a view of translation as an interpretive act embedded in a communicative and social context (Hatim & Mason 1997), I attend to how grammatical and lexical choices, particularly those tied to transitivity and agency, (re)shape the narration of disappearance and redistribute responsibility across actors.

These approaches form the basis of my understanding of *research through translating*: a practice in which drafting, revising and reflecting on translation become analytical processes that make visible the discursive, ethical and political complexities of the testimonies. By approaching translation decisions and the translation as meaningful sites of engagement with the search, this methodology foregrounds the ethical responsibility that emerges between the translator and the testimony bearer. These frameworks position the translator as an active participant in meaning-making and conceptualise translation itself as an act of engagement with the search. Stemming from my doctoral research, this article focuses specifically on the ethical and emotional aspects of translating these accounts, arguing that attending to their embodied and context-specific affective dimensions allows translation to function as a critical practice that renders visible the intersecting violences underlying this human right crisis.

Translating *desaparecer* in the Mexican case: Transitivity Patterns and Agentivity.

Buscar es un verbo que ha sido trastocado. Como desaparecer.

— Daniela Rea, *Desaparecido es un lugar*, 3.

Enforced disappearances have been systemically employed across Latin America as a strategy of silencing and counterinsurgency, notably by authoritarian governments during the 1970s and 1980s in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti, Colombia, and Mexico (Amnesty International 2013). The Latin American experience with enforced disappearance has been instrumental in shaping international frameworks for conceptualising and addressing this crime (Dulitzky 2019), a

practice that has also occurred in other regions, often with distinct contextual features (Pervou 2025).

In Mexico, the crisis of enforced disappearances has taken on its own characteristics while remaining connected to the broader regional history. Here, the expansion of disappearance is not only temporal; it also reflects an *excess* in its forms, legal frameworks, and the shared imaginaries surrounding it (Gatti & Irazuzta 2019, 2-3). For instance, a notable difference is that disappearances here may be perpetrated not only by state agents but also by individual actors often connected to criminal groups (Mata Lugo 2017).

As of October 2025, more than 125, 000 people have been reported disappeared in the country since approximately 1960 (IMDHD 2025; Verduzco 2025; San Juan Flores & Guillén 2025), with nearly ninety percent of cases occurring after 2006, when national security policy — also linked to a binational security agenda between Mexico and the United States (Zavala 2022) — shifted toward militarised strategies against organised crime (Gatti & Irazuzta 2019). While initial disappearances responded to state-led repression during the so-called *Guerra Sucia*, this practice later expanded to include violence perpetrated by criminal organisations (Vicente Ovalle 2019). This continuity reflects that enforced disappearance in Mexico is not merely a historical phenomenon but an ongoing reality (Délano Alonso & Nienass 2021; Hernández Castillo 2025).

The landscape of enforced disappearance in Mexico is inseparable from the structural and gender-based violence (GBV) that precedes and sustains it (Hernández Castillo 2025; Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020). This is evident in the testimonies compiled by researchers Aída Hernández Castillo and Carolina Robledo Silvestre, who emphasize that individual lives are deeply intertwined with social life (2020, XIV). For instance, through the women searchers' (*buscadoras*) accounts, the authors underline that, it is possible to observe:

hunger, physical and sexual aggressions, forced displacement, systemic lack of opportunities, harassment, and fear emerge as common elements [...], interweaving with enforced disappearance in a complex way (Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020, XV; my trans).

It is also worth noting that the work of searching for the disappeared has been largely undertaken by women, who step into the gap left by an inadequate state response (Iliná 2020; Lastra & Mejía Arregui 2021; Hernández Castillo 2025; Palacios & Maroño 2021). At the core of the expectation that women should respond to the violence that also affects them — the gender dimension of the search — lies a “patriarchal rhetoric,” as conceptualised by Segato (Segato & Ramsey McGlazer 2018, 210): a discourse “centered on the value of goods and

commodified life,” which renders certain bodies — those of *minoritised* groups³ — particularly vulnerable to disappearance and simultaneously assigns to women the affective labour of carrying out the search. Against this backdrop, the testimonies of women searchers stand as acts of knowledge-making, unveiling the continuity between domestic, economic, criminal, and state violence.

My approach engages with Forcinito’s development of *testimonio* (2013), particularly her exploration of testimonial forms that extend beyond legal settings. In the Mexican context, where families’ accounts often circulate outside institutional or court channels and operate at the edges of what can be spoken, Forcinito’s dynamic understanding of *testimonio* offers a useful critical lens. By situating *testimonio* at a liminal space — at the *threshold* — between truth and fiction, lived experience, personal pain, and collective witnessing, her framework illuminates the tensions involved between individual narratives and collective representation. It also foregrounds the ethical stance required of listeners — including translators and the readership of the target texts (TT) — who must suspend monolithic expectations of truth in order to attend to what these testimonial narratives make visible. This emphasis on the audience as constitutive of the testimony resonates with my translation approach, where meaning is co-produced through acts of listening: first by the translator, through close reading and attentive listening, and then through the act of rendering.

For translation, searchers’ testimonies pose profound ethical and emotional challenges. While translation can create a space for understanding, it also involves tensions. Translating these narratives from Spanish into English requires negotiating asymmetrical flows of knowledge: reflecting on what is communicated, what is lost, and what resists transfer. Recognising these asymmetries is central to the ethical dimension of translation, since such recognition involves “the acknowledgement of the role of translation as a key agent in the production of social meaning and social action” (Carbonell i Cortés & Monzó-Nebot 2021, 1).

Building on Ahmed’s (2014) understanding that emotions are “a matter of how we come into contact with objects and others” (2014, 208), orienting us toward or away from objects: bodies, spaces, histories (2006; 2014), I situate my translation practice as oriented toward the searchers. This orientation is both affective and ethical, shaping how I engage with their testimonies. In this translation project,

³ As noted by Hernández Castillo and Robledo Silvestre (2020; Robledo Silvestre, 2019), while demographic patterns vary across Mexico, national data consistently shows that enforced disappearance disproportionately targets young men. The testimonies these authors compiled from the Sinaloa state reflect this wider trend: victims come from marginalised rural and urban communities; including Yoreme people, farm workers, students, police officers, people linked to formal and informal economies. In this context, young men are most frequently disappeared, while women often become the primary agents mobilising in the search.

translation is understood as a mediation practice through which the potential for resistance can be articulated; in other words, I see translation as a mean to sustain the emotional and political resonance of women searchers' voices within transnational dialogues around violence. Viewing translation in this way also opens the space to acknowledge the epistemic value of emotion, highlighting how affect is integral to the ways these narratives convey — and generate — knowledge and act upon the world, considerations that guide my translatorial decisions.

I approach emotion as a critical epistemic tool, arguing that a translation attentive to the searchers' affective language helps to make visible how structural violences intersect in the context of enforced disappearance, as well as the practices of resistance and care embodied by those searching. In praxis, this requires careful attention to how Spanish verbs, for instance *desaparecer*, carry temporality, connotations of absence and waiting, and specific relations of agentivity, which may differ in its English translation. Such characteristics (verb tense, transitivity patterns) reflect not only how searchers experience violence, but also how we, as readers and translators, interpret and engage with their stories. At this point, I also engage with the question of affective correspondence in translation, seeking to achieve in English an affective orientation that resonates with the one interpreted in the source text (ST). By affective meaning, I refer to the emotions expressed by the narrator, while also encompassing how the narrator positions themselves in relation to the disappeared person and other social actors within the narrative, as well as to the potential affective orientation invited from readers. With this in mind, I understand translation as mediating affect through choices concerning agency, temporality, and lexical framing, affecting how testimonies are understood and how readers may be oriented towards the experiences and relationships they narrate. By preserving the affective charge of testimony, I aim to create a space where these narratives invite transnational dialogue around gender-based violence, disappearance, and testimonial narrative translation practices. The ethical dimension of this work lies in recognising the potential of translation to (re)orient affects and publics towards the realities these stories convey.

One of the translation challenges I have encountered in my research on this topic concerns the agentivity of *disappearing*. As De Cock and Michaud Maturana (2014) identified in their cognitive linguistics analysis of the paradigmatic report on human rights violations during the military dictatorship in Chile, the Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (the Rettig Report 1991), "the agentivity of disappearing is determined by the context" (2014, 129). Their analysis underscores that in settings where enforced disappearance is uncommon, saying someone "disappeared" can suggest a voluntary act; by contrast, in contexts where enforced disappearance is systemic — as under Chile's

dictatorship — the verb acquires an external, agentive force. Even when no perpetrator is grammatically specified, either the narrative context or a transitive construction indicates the participation of an agent behind the act of disappearing.

The challenge surrounding the translation of *desaparecer* is not exclusive to the Mexican nor the Chilean contexts. Similar observations have been made regarding the circulation of the term in relation to the disappearances in Argentina's dictatorship. As Marguerite Feitlowitz has argued, the use of *desaparecido* within the Argentine context was not merely descriptive; rather, it responded to the State's mechanisms of terror, in which linguistic indeterminacy functioned as one of the means through which agency was displaced and responsibility negated, thereby contributing to further denial and erasure (1998, 38-39). Significantly, discussing the reception of *Nunca Más* (1984) and Sabato's notes on it, Hopkinson and Marsh report how the term *desaparecidos* was frequently left untranslated in international media coverage (2020, 260). They further observe that, as the term gained wider circulation across Latin America, its semantic and grammatical flexibility also travelled across languages. In some English-language contexts, particularly in reporting on Central America, *disappear* came to reproduce aspects of the transitive and intransitive uses associated with *desaparecer* in Spanish, as illustrated by examples discussed by Hopkinson and Marsh (2020).

These studies demonstrate that the meanings and grammatical behaviour of *disappearance* are historically contingent and travel unevenly across linguistic and political contexts. However, less attention has been paid to what is at stake when translators address these transitivity patterns in practice. Building on this scholarship, I propose a methodological examination of the ethical implications of translatorial decisions concerning agency and disappearance. As I suggest later in this article, analysing these patterns offers a way of examining how translation participates in mediating understandings of disappearance across linguistic and sociopolitical settings. While my discussion here focuses on Spanish and English, the questions raised here invite further consideration of how disappearance is translated and conceptualised in other contexts.

Given this dynamic, addressing agency requires a discussion of transitivity. In this regard, Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997; Hatim 2014) identify transitivity as a key linguistic device where texts encode agency and responsibility. Transitivity determines how participants are positioned in relation to an action: who initiates it, who is affected by it, and how events and participants are causally linked (Hatim 2014, 247). Because these patterns distribute responsibility within a narrative, they become especially significant in contexts of violence, where grammatical choices can either expose or obscure the agent behind an act. In narratives of enforced disappearance, then, the configuration of the verb shapes

how the event is narrated and understood, and decisions involving transitivity in translation carry ideological weight, shaping how responsibility is framed and how victims' experiences are rendered legible.

This social phenomenon — observed in Mexico and across Latin America and, in some cases, beyond the region — has been coined in international law as enforced disappearance (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006). However, the *excess* of disappearances in Mexico, in both scale and form (Gatti & Irazuzta 2019), has produced a normalisation enacted through language: the term *disappearance* is now habitually used without the adjective *enforced*; they are simply called *disappearances*. This simplification mirrors the broader normalisation of this violence. Likewise, those subjected to it are referred to as *disappeared* (*desaparecidos*), “just like that, with no noun, as we shamefully tend to call them in Mexico, since we have normalised disappearances” (Turati 2023, 19, my trans).

This nominal use of *disappeared* appears frequently in the testimonies included in *Nadie detiene al amor* (Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020). In the “Story of Felicitas & Juan Carlos,” a testimony by a searching mother looking for her (forcibly) disappeared son, she recalls: “It was just the two of us because the other *disappeared* young man’s family was paralysed because of the fear and pain [...]” (Felicitas in Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020, 9, my trans.; emphasis added)⁴. And in the “Story of Berthila and Alejandra”, mother and daughter respectively, the narrator describes the moment she encountered the search collective that would later support her, noting: “I used to stand there, staring at the pictures of *the disappeared* displayed in their windows: young men and women, like my daughter, being searched for by desperate mothers like me” (Berthila in Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020, 31).

Across both testimonies, even without the explicit phrase *forcibly disappeared*, the surrounding narratives make the transitivity pattern legible. The *disappeared* do not author their disappearance; it is inflicted on them, and the nominal form carries the ethical and grammatical trace of that imposed violence.

Additionally, the long-standing prevalence of enforced disappearance across Latin America since the latter half of the twentieth century has contributed to the widespread transitive use of *desaparecer* throughout the region. It is common, for instance, to say of a person that “*lo/la desaparecieron*,” a construction that signals an agent acting upon someone, thereby enforcing the disappearance. This shift complicates the process of translation, since referring to enforced disappearances and to the testimonies surrounding them requires careful attention to the ethical and political weight that their apparent linguistic simplicity conceals. This has

⁴ All translations from the source text are my own unless otherwise indicated and were produced specifically for this analysis.

required me to remain attentive to how language reflects structural violence and to reflect on my translation decisions, aiming to render visible what has been normalised in the source culture context and to convey or add, this layer of meaning in the TT.

To illustrate how agentivity and transitivity function in the testimonies gathered in *Nadie detiene al amor* (Hernández Castillo & Robledo Silvestre 2020), which forms the basis of my translation project, it is useful to consider several recurrent constructions. These expressions exemplify the transitive use of *desaparecer*, where the verb grammatically encodes the presence of an external agent. The testimonies show this pattern in constructions such as (emphasis added):

1)“A una hermana de mi iglesia *le desaparecieron a un hijo*” (To a sister of my church, they disappeared a son of hers) (70).

2)“La fosa no estaba muy lejos de la colonia donde *desaparecieron a Candelario*” (The grave was not very far from the neighbourhood where they disappeared Candelario) (132).

3)“Creo que fue por esto que *me lo desaparecieron [...]*” (I believe that it was because of this that they disappeared him from me) (192).

4)“A mi hijo Roberto *lo desaparecieron [...]*” (To my son Roberto, they disappeared him) (200).

5)“Apenas hace quince días *desaparecieron a tres muchachitos [...]*” (Just fifteen days ago, they disappeared three young boys) (216).

6)“[...] y *lo desaparecieron nueve meses después*” (and they disappeared him nine months later) (251).

Taken together, these constructions show how, in contexts of systemic disappearance, Spanish speakers mobilise grammatical resources to express agentivity and relational loss: indirect object marking (e.g. “A una hermana...”), clitic doubling (e.g. “le”, “me”), and direct transitivity (e.g. “desaparecieron a Candelario”). These patterns operate in two intertwined ways. First, when *desaparecer* takes a direct object, it assigns agentive responsibility to an implicit perpetrator, making it clear that the disappearance is something done to someone. Second, the use of indirect objects and clitic doubling foregrounds the speaker’s relation to the victim (e.g. “me lo desaparecieron”), highlighting how disappearance affects not only the disappeared person but also those around them. Within psychosocial and psycho-legal scholarship it has been widely recognised that in contexts of enforced disappearance the category of victims extends beyond

the disappeared person to encompass all those who continue to live with its ongoing effects (Gómez Dupuis, 2009; Rivera-Holguín et al., 2019), an expansion of the experiential and affective scope of disappearance that it is observed also in these linguistic forms. The cumulative effect is an affective grammatical configuration in which agency and emotional implication become inseparable.

The examples below, all from my own translations, show how my choices seek to convey the intertwined dynamics of agency and relational loss embedded in the ST:

- 1b) A woman in my church had a son who was disappeared.
- 2b) The grave was not very far from the neighbourhood where Candelario was disappeared.
- 3b) I think it was because of this that they disappeared my son [...].
- 4b) My son Roberto was disappeared [...]
- 5b) Just two weeks ago three young boys were disappeared [...]
- 6b) [...] and nine months later he was disappeared.

To render the dynamics of agency and the affective dimension of relational loss, I employed different translation strategies. Affect operates then on multiple levels: it concerns how the narrator's feelings, such as pride, closeness, or vulnerability, are linguistically encoded; how relationships are depicted through lexical and stylistic choices; and how these choices shape the reader's perception of the people represented in the testimony. In some cases, I retained the marked passive construction (*was/were disappeared*), as in examples 1b, 2b, 4b, and 5b, to foreground the victims' experience. In other instances, I introduced an explicit agentive frame (*they disappeared him*), as in example 3b, to make the implied actor in the ST visible in the English rendition. I also employed a thematic change to place emphasis on the victim, as in example 6b; and incorporated relational markers to preserve affective nuances, as in example 3b, where I added "my son" to compensate for the clitic doubling in the ST (*me lo desaparecieron*). These strategies aim to convey the ethical stakes and affective dimensions of the ST, ensuring that the TT remains attuned to them.

Although the collocation "someone was disappeared" remains marked in English and is still relatively uncommon outside academic or human rights discourse, using it is a politically situated choice with ethical implications: it overtly signals that the violence is perpetrated by an agent and that the disappearance is not voluntary on the part of the victim. Maintaining a transitive construction in English therefore highlights the specificity of the crime,

distinguishing enforced disappearance from murder, torture, or detention, even when these acts overlap or co-occur. Preserving the transitivity of the source language is, in this sense, an ethical choice, one that aims to represent victims' experiences more accurately.

This approach builds on the view of transitivity as an ideological mechanism, where strategic choices shape how agency and responsibility are distributed, and consequently how events of enforced disappearance may be represented and understood in translation. In continuity with my earlier discussion of testimony in translation, where I emphasised its ethical and affective dimensions, I approach these linguistic mechanisms as part of the broader challenge of rendering testimonies in translation in a way that does not displace or obscure the relations and responsibilities that shape their meaning within the source culture. Working from this perspective, I treat the use of transitive constructions as a deliberate attempt to reflect the linguistic and social reality of enforced disappearances, making explicit the systemic nature of the violence.

Here, transitivity becomes more than a grammatical choice: in my translation, it is an ethical intervention that foregrounds the relational dynamics at play within testimonies of enforced disappearance, acknowledges the victim's experience, and renders the perpetrator's responsibility visible. Spivak's reminder that "if you want to make the translated text accessible, try doing it for the person who wrote it," along with her follow-up question, "What is it that you are making accessible?" (Spivak 2000, 408), reinforces this orientation by calling attention to the conditions under which the source text emerges and the situated voices it conveys. Within this framework, marked transitivity patterns embody an ethical necessity, making visible the asymmetries of power and structures of responsibility surrounding disappearance that more conventional grammatical choices might obscure. Accordingly, opting for marked or less conventional transitivity patterns in the English target text becomes my attempt at translating ethically, drawing on a strategy that expands the expressive capacity of the target language so it can meet the cultural and political demands of the source context.

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