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Translating Woody Allen into Italian: Creativity in Dubbing

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the peculiar status of the adapter and dubbing director in the Italian film industry. For reasons partly to do with the historical development of the dubbing film industry in Italy, adapters—who may or may not also be the actual translators of the films, but who are here considered as distinct professional figures—have always enjoyed a great deal of freedom and have been able to express their creative skills. This paper focuses on the translation process of Woody Allen's films into Italian, taken here as an extreme example of both manipulative and effectively creative practices in film translation.¹

KEYWORDS

Audiovisual translation, dubbing, creativity, culture-bound references, humour.

1. Adapters as authors

The dubbed version of an audiovisual programme can be considered the final stratum of a multilayered text in which, in the words of Pérez López de Heredia (2003: 478), various 'tenants,' inhabitants of the text, leave their authorial imprint. Key factors in this rewriting process are the role of the patronage and the attitude of translators and adapters, especially when the latter are also authors in their own right (i.e. playwrights, screenplay writers) who feel that they have the licence and the ability to 'improve' the original.

Analyses of dubbed text usually focus on losses, that is, suppression, deletions and mistakes. This is so even when the emphasis is on translation as a form of rewriting rather than as a 'simple' transfer of the source text; the focus will then be on the resulting new text which will henceforth lead an afterlife of its own in the target culture.² Although concentrating on losses is always tempting, my purpose in these pages is to show how some audiovisual programmes can enter into a fertile dialogue with the social and historical context in which they are born while their creators can gain the status of original authors. Looking at the dubbed text without bias and preconceptions, as a text which has something to say both *to* the target culture and *about* the target culture in a given period in time, we may come to realise the academic potential offered by dubbing thanks to its ability to conjure up a set of new images and dialogues. This potential is more evident when in the dubbed version the emphasis seems to be on addition rather than suppression and deletion, when the dubbing opens up new readings that convey something fundamentally different from what was conveyed by the actual source text. Arguably, these new versions can be considered examples of

extreme adaptations rather than 'mere' translations. In many of Woody Allen's films that have been translated into Italian, viewers can find extra jokes and new lines added gratuitously. I would like to contend that these transpositions relate ultimately to a tradition of carrying out adaptations for the stage in Italy. Although written, theatre plays are meant to be performed, to become events constantly renewed in the *hic et nunc*. As such, a certain freedom when adapting them into other languages or for the stage is not only allowed but even actively sought. As Bassnett (2000: 91) notes, the

discourse of loss dominates much discussion of the translation of poetry and prose, but curiously in theatre the idea of loss is usually reversed. What we have instead is the notion of the playtext that is somehow incomplete in itself until realised in performance.

In the case of dubbing translation in Italy, the hypothesis that the new text is seen by many in the industry as a text to be performed, hence allowing for a greater degree of latitude in the translation, is supported by the fact that many adapters, dubbing actors and directors of the older generations are men and women of the theatre, professionals with a standing tradition of acting for the stage. One of these actors was Oreste Lionello whose name is indissolubly linked to how Woody Allen is perceived in Italy.

It is not possible to dwell here on the history of film dubbing in Italy³ but it is my conviction that Italy's inclination to manipulation when dealing with the translation of audiovisual programmes finds its roots in the very origins of dubbing. Dubbing became technically viable in Italy by 1931 and immediately became one of the tools of the fascist government, exerting its censorship policies on the content by manipulating certain remarks, deleting unwanted comments, adding more agreeable references and thereby gaining control of the language and its 'purity.'

2. Allen in Italian

The dubbed versions of Woody Allen's films are a perfect example of translations that have become new texts relatively independent of their source texts; these now both fulfil the potentialities hidden in the original texts themselves and create a new network of references in the target culture.

The translation of Woody Allen's films, whether for dubbing or subtitling, has always been the work of a team and the individual role played by any of the professionals is generally difficult to ascertain. The fuzziness of the actual translation/adaptation/dubbing process has been well documented by Pavesi and Perego (2006) and, on many occasions, the researcher can only guess what the individual contributions may have been. Outside inner

professional circles and apart from occasional interviews, little is known about who the actual translators of the films are in Italy, how many there are and how the translation work is distributed among them.⁴ According to Pavesi and Perego (*ibid*: 12), Italian adapters often refuse to be considered translators and prefer to emphasise the artistic, creative and, to some extent, the most prestigious and glamorous aspects of their professional activity. This is generally an attitude taken by adapters who are not translators which happens to be the case most of the time.

Over the years, Woody Allen's films have been looked after by the adapters Oreste Lionello, Sergio Jaquier and Elettra Caporello. Lionello did not often direct the dubbing of Allen's films himself, nor did he adapt them officially after 1972 (films after that date were adapted by Jaquier and from 1993 by Caporello). But although he was not the official author of the Italian dialogues, Lionello was the person who always controlled the whole adaptation process.⁵ CVD, the company in charge of dubbing Allen's films, was founded by Lionello in 1972 and he later became its president in 1990. For anyone who knows his type of humour through his appearances on television—which did not always do justice to his wit and verve—it is not difficult to recognise his hand and touch in the additions to Woody Allen's dialogues. Dubbing lines are adjusted and altered during the recording process and very often this is done for the actors to facilitate their performance and by the actors if they are important enough to assert their views. On this front, Lionello was a translator and adapter of excellent reputation having created a masterpiece of a rhyming adaptation in his handling of the Italian version of the film *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau 1990).⁶

My hypothesis that Lionello is the rightful author of most of the added jokes to Allen's productions could not be directly confirmed as Lionello passed away just before I could interview him. However, it was ratified by Caporello, the current adapter of Allen's films, who comments that Lionello dubbed as if "possessed by Allen's spirit" (personal communication October 2009). He dubbed alone in the studio, with no other actors present, and improvised along the way. The similarities with the jokes he authored for the theatre stage are striking: they are jokes with a popular vein, distinctly different to Allen's more sophisticated style, to which Caporello is much more faithful.⁷

Lionello felt he had the right to be creative because he saw himself, in a way, as Woody Allen. This is also supported by his attitude to Allen in other contexts. His familiarity with the man he dubbed made him for example distance himself from Allen's words during an interview where he was acting as Allen's interpreter (Bonolis 2006). During the interview, Allen declared that he was an atheist and Lionello, as if in a theatre aside, dropped at the end of the interview his role as dubbing interpreter and—while still pretending it was Allen talking—explained that he, Allen's 'voice,' did not agree with the real Allen. This episode, which was much

criticised, shows how some authors (of the original text and of the translation) can superimpose themselves in a way that is certainly questionable and sheds an interesting light on how these professionals regard themselves and their role. Incidentally, the first time Lionello met Allen—after years of refusing to do so because, he said, he had nothing to say to someone he knew so well—he asked Allen for forgiveness because “his vocal chords were sometimes so bold that they spoke autonomously,” thus acknowledging his creative attitude towards the translation of Allen’s films (Rombi 2009: 59).

Lionello’s dubbing work was highly appreciated by the American director himself to the extent that when the Italian passed away, Allen (2009: online) sent a video to the Italian ceremony of the Dubbing Awards on 6 June, stating that “with his voice he made me a better actor.” With his voice and his dialogues, he did seem to be able to capture all the neuroses and sarcastic tones in Allen’s speech. What remains to be seen is whether Allen knows or realises the extent to which some of his texts were rewritten by Lionello and, if so, whether his opinion of Lionello the author would be as flattering as his opinion of Lionello the dubbing actor.

3. Italian additions to Allen’s texts

The examples to be examined in these pages are full of cultural references in general and, in some cases, of those particular cultural references which fall into the category of allusions (Leppihalme 1997). Allusions are intertextual links with other texts (books, films and the like) that are quoted more or less explicitly. The creators of the allusions usually take for granted a certain degree of cultural knowledge, or at least of intellectual curiosity, in their audience or readership. The high number of instances falling into this category of cultural references might be one of the reasons that account for the greater success that the director’s films enjoy with the supposedly more sophisticated public of Europe than in the United States. Over the years the strategies used in Italy to deal with the transfer of these allusions have been diverse. As I am dealing mainly with Allen’s early career (films from the 1970s, with a few exceptions), the translation strategies follow the particularly manipulative trend of that period to deviate from the meaning of the original script.

In Italy, there have been other instances of radical recontextualisation of film texts that are deeply embedded in the original cultural context, with cases in which the distributors have encouraged the adapters to opt for a more sexually charged atmosphere. An extreme illustration of this approach is Pedro Almodóvar’s film *Entre tinieblas* (*Dark Habits*, 1983) which in Italy became the less cryptic *L’indiscreto fascino del peccato* [*The Indiscreet Charm of Sin*]. The translators added long dialogue exchanges and monologues to the original with the sole aim of accentuating its already risqué atmosphere (Accietto et al, 1996).⁸ These clear cases of

substantial manipulation do not seem to have any purpose other than that of boosting box office revenue. Nonetheless, I will try and show how even the most extreme of Allen's adaptations find their *raison d'être* in the interesting bonds they create with the new sociocultural context in which they are accommodated and in their attempt to improve their humorous impact.

Example 1 below is a clear illustration of the creative attempt to achieve all the humorous potentialities of the text, with an emphasis on the addition of information which is not present in the original dialogue. In addition, it shows the patronising tone adopted by the translator to deal with allusions supposedly aimed at an educated elite.

In *Annie Hall* (1977), Alvy, the protagonist, introduces one of the leitmotifs of most of Allen's films: a humorous but somewhat paranoid take on Jewishness.

1) *Annie Hall*

Original dialogue	
ALVY: Now, listen to this. I was in a record store. There's this big, tall, blond, crew-cutted guy looking at me in a funny way and smiling and he's saying: "We have a sale this week on Wagner." Wagner, Max. Wagner. I knew what he was really trying to tell me, very significantly. Wagner.	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
ALVY: Ieri ero in un negozio di dischi, senti un po' questa. Il commesso era un tipo alto, biondo, con la sfumatura alta. Mi guarda in un modo strano e con un sorriso maligno e dice: "Le interessa? C'è una vendita speciale di Wagner. Wagner, signore, Wagner," tutto Gerusalemme lemme. A parte l'antisemitismo implicito in Wagner, aggiunge "Ne resterà inebreato."	ALVY: Yesterday I was in a record store, now listen to this. There's this tall, blond, crew-cutted guy looking at me in a funny way and with an evil smile and he's saying: "Are you interested? There is a special sale on Wagner. Wagner, sir, Wagner," all Jeruslow. Apart from the anti-Semitism implicit in Wagner, he added "You'll enjew it."

From the very beginning, the Italian version is less cryptic than the original in its description of the salesman who is not only blond and crew-cutted, suggesting a German descent, but also has *un sorriso maligno*, an evil (not just 'funny') smile that reinforces in the viewer the evilness of a Nazi.

The adapter also opts for expansion in order to make explicit what in the original is implicit and decides to fully explain that we are on the subject of anti-Semitism in case the reference to Wagner and the allusion to his racist views on Jews were too enigmatic for the Italian audience to grasp. The final dialogue adds the clause *a parte l'antisemitismo implicito in Wagner* [apart from the anti-Semitism implicit in Wagner] in a very rapid way so that the utterance is fully synchronised with the actor on screen. The allusion that had been considered comprehensible for the original audience is not deemed easy to get for Italians who supposedly need some spoon-feeding with the extra commentary. Nonetheless, it can be argued that this is one of the few cases in which this kind of operation is carried out neatly, avoiding excessive didacticism.

We also find the gratuitous addition of two funny jokes based on wordplay. The first one is the subtle insertion of the reference to *Gerusalemme* [Jerusalem] which not only serves to expand on the theme of Jewishness merely by mentioning this location of great importance in Judaism and Israeli history but also offers the perfect opportunity for yet another wordplay: *lemme lemme* in Italian is a curious expression meaning 'very slow' (the word *lemme* has no meaning in itself unless it is repeated twice) and has been slipped in just for the sake of enhancing the humorous impact. The second joke, *ne resterà inebreato*, is a play on two similar words *ebbro* [drunk] and *ebreo* [Jew]. As *ebbro* can be metaphorically used for any ecstatic form of enjoyment, the salesman is telling Alvy that he will enjoy Wagner's records enormously, although what Alvy really hears is yet another veiled reference to Jews. Lionello's 'vocal chords,' helped by the technical dimension, seem to have had free rein on this occasion as the above lines are spoken by Allen in an extreme long shot with no chance for the audience to see his lip movements.

The following excerpt from *Play it Again, Sam* (1972) is another example that exploits the Jewish dimension. In the English original, Allen's character gives a plausible reason for leaving the party whilst in the Italian version it becomes a rather incongruous comment:

2) *Play it Again, Sam*

Original dialogue	
ALLAN: I'd love to stay but I gotta be up early tomorrow. Going to temple, it's my people's Sabbath.	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
SAM: Mi piacerebbe restare ma devo alzarmi presto domattina. Devo andare al tempio, abbiamo un sacrificio umano.	SAM: I'd love to stay but I gotta be up early tomorrow. I must go to the temple, we have a human sacrifice.

The cultural reference to Allan's Jewishness is sacrificed in favour of a more bizarre remark which has the advantage of being, in principle, funnier than the original because it is more easily comprehensible by the Catholic Italian audience than the reference to the Sabbath.

The examples above illustrate the intricate approach of Allen's adapters when transferring the original English dialogue into Italian. On the one hand, their work reveals a conscious effort to improve somewhat on Allen's jokes by explicitating certain references or by adding extra information and wordplay that was not in the original in the first instance. On the other hand, from a translational perspective, it shows a clear manipulative treatment of cultural references and allusions with the ulterior motive of making viewers laugh. Faithfulness to the original seems to run second to the more pressing objective of creating humour.

The following examples also show the adapter's flair for adding extra jokes. In the same film, Alvy is talking to a friend of his girlfriend Annie, and showing his contempt for drug use and for a whole style of living to which Annie seems attracted:

3) *Annie Hall*

Original dialogue	
<p>MAN: Listen, while you're in California, could you possibly score some coke for me?</p> <p>ALVY: Oh sure, sure. I'd be glad to. I'll just put it in a hollow heel that I have on my boot. How much is this stuff, incidentally?</p> <p>MAN: It's about \$2000 an ounce.</p> <p>ALVY: Really? And what is the kick of it? Cos I never...</p>	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
<p>UOMO: Alvy, senti, mentre sei lì in California non mi potresti comprare un po' di cocaina?</p> <p>ALVY: Certo, certo, volentieri. Io, io la metto nel doppiofondo segreto delle mie lenti. Quanto costa al grammo?</p> <p>UOMO: Costa circa 2000 dollari all'oncia.</p> <p>ALVY: Davvero? E non ricordo mai quanto viene in anni di galera.</p>	<p>MAN: Alvy, listen, while you're there in California, couldn't you buy some cocaine for me?</p> <p>ALVY: Sure, sure. I'd be glad to. I, I'll just put it in a secret hollow space in my lenses. How much does a gram cost?</p> <p>MAN: It's about \$2000 an ounce.</p> <p>ALVY: Really? And I can never remember how much it is in prison years.</p>

In this example, we find an alteration that somehow succeeds in making the line on the hiding place of the drugs funnier by making it more surreal and less plausible. As Alvy cannot see why drugs are all that fun for some people, the extra joke at the end, not present in the original, turns what

was only an expression of contempt into a moralistic reminder of their dangerous effects and the personal consequences of being sent to prison.

The adapter's knack for adding punch lines to the Italian dialogue exchanges is also evident in one of Woody Allen's classics, *Manhattan* (1979). In this scene Isaac, the protagonist played by Allen, barges into the classroom of his friend Yale in a bout of jealous fury:

4) *Manhattan*

Original dialogue	
YALE: How'd you get past the security? ISAAC: I walked right past.	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
YALE: Ma come hai superato i bidelli? ISAAC: Che domande. Sul piano culturale.	YALE: How did you (sur)pass the porters? ISAAC: What a question. On a cultural level.

Example 4 is a particularly shrewd and funny added joke, albeit purely gratuitous, playing on the double meaning of the Italian verb *superare* which can mean 'to walk past' but also 'to surpass' in terms of intelligence and culture. The joke succeeds in reinforcing Allen's cultural snobbism which is particularly marked in his Isaac alter ego, one of Allen's most intellectual characters.

In a more recent example taken from *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, a 1993 film which marked Allen's comeback to lighter comedies, Carol is trying to convince her husband, played by Allen, that she just saw on a passing bus a neighbour whom they knew was actually dead:

5) *Manhattan Murder Mystery*

Original dialogue	
CAROL: I'm telling you I saw Mrs House. LARRY: Yes I know, on the dead persons' bus. No car fare.	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
CAROL: Io ti dico che ho visto la signora House. LARRY: Sì, lo so, su un mezzo mortorizzato. L'ultima corsa gratis.	CAROL: I'm telling you that I have seen Mrs House. LARRY: Yes, I know, on a mortised vehicle. Last ride for free.

In Example 5, an extra joke has been added by the adapter for no apparent reason other than to be clever for the sake of it, though it could be argued that the solution contributes to a more holistic strategy of

compensation across the film and reinforcement of wittiness. The word *mortorizzato* is a play on the Italian word for 'dead' (*morto*) and on the proper word *motorizzato*, said of a vehicle with an engine/motor. Once again, the pun is an addition made to enhance the humorous effect of Larry's remark and to emphasise the jocular personality of this character who eventually seems to come across more forcefully in the dubbed version than in the original.

There is yet another aspect of the strategies applied by Lionello—or to be more precise by the team controlled by him⁹—on which it is worth commenting: their policy of dealing with highbrow references which, almost systematically, were turned into lowbrow ones. This is particularly the case when dealing with allusions which explicitly quote or subtly allude to other texts. As I have already mentioned, these intertextual elements imply the expectation of a certain degree of cultural knowledge or awareness on the part of the original audience that may, or may not, be expected of the target audience.

In Example 6 below, again taken from *Manhattan*, Mary, a woman in her late 30s, is talking to the 17-year old Tracy, Isaac's new girlfriend:

6) *Manhattan*

Original dialogue	
MARY: What do you do Tracy? TRACY: I go to high school. MARY: Oh, really. Really. Somewhere Nabokov is smiling , if you know what I mean.	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
MARY: Tu che fai, Tracy? TRACY: Io faccio il liceo. MARY: Ma senti, senti, il liceo. Sembra talmente lontano il liceo.	MARY: What do you do, Tracy? TRACY: I go to high school. MARY: But listen, listen, high school. It seems so far away the high school.

The implicit reference in the original to Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, the scandalous story of a middle-aged man who is both seducer of and seduced by a teenager, is transformed in this instance in a banal line. The Italian solution only conveys Mary's ironic contempt, more by the tone of her voice than by her words, and ignores her sophisticated, intellectual repartee. If the reference to Nabokov was considered obscure, the adapters could have easily played on *Lolita*, as this name, thanks to the success of the 1955 novel, has entered popular culture and has been absorbed by many languages, including Italian, as a stereotyped allusion. Indeed, in many cultures a 'Lolita' means a sexually precocious teenager who is usually attractive, and aware of being so, and who likes to tease older men. The fame of the novel *Lolita* has not waned over the years and

although the book may not be widely read nowadays, Stanley Kubrick's 1962 film and Adrian Lyne's less successful, but more faithful 1997 version, have both contributed to reinforce and perpetuate its iconic status.

In Example 7, from *Annie Hall*, Alvy boasts to Annie of his literary knowledge by resorting to a rather caustic comment on the reception of Sylvia Plath's poems by the general readership:

7) *Annie Hall*

Original dialogue	
<p>ALVY: Sylvia Plath. Interesting poetess whose tragic suicide was misinterpreted as romantic by the college girl mentality. ANNIE: I don't know. Some of her poems seem neat. ALVY: Neat? I hate to tell you it's 1975. Neat went out, I would say, at the turn of the century.</p>	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
<p>ALVY: Sylvia Plot. Interessante poetessa il cui suicidio fu erroneamente giudicato romantico dalla rassegna di pesca e caccia. ANNIE: E' vero, lo so, però trovo belli certi suoi versi. ALVY: Belli? Ti ricordo che siamo nel 1975, sai? Il bello è sparito direi al giro del secolo.</p>	<p>ALVY: Sylvia Plot. Interesting poetess whose suicide was erroneously interpreted as romantic by the fishing and hunting festival. ANNIE: It's true, I know, but I find some of her poems beautiful. ALVY: Beautiful? I remind you that it's 1975, you know. Beauty went out, I would say, at the turn of the century.</p>

The transformation of Plath's surname into an invented one, 'Plot', shows how the goal of the adapter was to avoid any highbrow literary references which might disturb the viewers' enjoyment of an amusing film. The combination of 'Sylvia'—which, spelt differently as Silvia, sounds like an Italian name—and 'Plot' has a funny ring to an Italian ear as the latter is a word with no meaning in Italian but which reminds the viewer of the onomatopoeic sound 'plop.' The rather absurd reference to a fishing and hunting festival contributes to underpinning Alvy's character as someone eccentric and witty, albeit bordering on slapstick. It also impoverishes the serious cultural observation of the original by lending excessive credibility to a literary judgment (*erroneamente giudicato romantico*) that has been put forward by a magazine associated with activities based on physical dexterity and completely removed from cultural circles.

Equally interesting is the remark on 'neat' as it highlights the difficulty of translating very concrete, linguistic nuances into another language. Annie's use of 'neat,' in the sense of 'excellent, cool,' is a colloquial use of

the term that is clearly out of fashion in English by the time the story is set. The Italian solution, however, is not as banal as it might at first sound. In spite of the use of the standard word *belli* [beautiful] for 'neat', the last line manages to make up for some of the intellectuality lost by making a comment on the aesthetic concept of 'beauty,' not on 'beautiful,' and its loss of universal value.

In Example 8, where Alvy is imparting his condescending wisdom to Annie, the translator resorts yet again to the widely used strategy of substituting an erudite cultural reference with another one which is more easily recognisable by Italian audiences:

8) *Annie Hall*

Original dialogue	
ALVY: Just don't take any course where they make you read Beowulf .	
Italian adaptation	Back translation
ALVY: Escludi i corsi dove fanno leggere la Bibbia .	ALVY: Leave out the courses where they make you read the Bible .

Although *Beowulf* and the Bible may be said to share some characteristics—they are both 'classics' of literature, both ancient and both considered an educational must—the Italian solution can be considered less cultivated. While the original uses a title which is a classic for students of English literature, being one of the first recorded texts in Anglo-Saxon, the Italian version prefers to refer to a book of universal status, one with which almost everyone from any culture is familiar. This approach illustrates what Pedersen (2005: 10-11) coins as a transcultural solution in translation, i.e. the substitution of a cultural reference which is bound to the source culture, with one which "should be retrievable from common encyclopedic knowledge" of both the source and the target cultures. Leaving the reference to *Beowulf* in Italian would have risked being understood by only a very small section of the target audience.

The passages examined so far show, to various degrees, how the adapter aims to recreate and emphasise the humorous potential of Allen's jokes by resorting to the addition and substitution of certain cultural references. These solutions clearly show a creative attitude on the part of the translator/adapter and in some cases can arguably be considered an enhancement of the humorous effect of the jokes.

Lionello's attitude partly derives from the tradition of popular theatre in which he was born and educated. He was accustomed to dealing with cabaret audiences and the impact this has had on the translations is evident. The result is that although still intellectual, in Italy, especially in his early films, Woody Allen was a little less so than in English and a little more of a cabaret artiste and of a stand up comic. This can be considered

a funny turn of affairs as he becomes in Italy what he was at the very beginning of his career in the USA.

The translational operations carried out in the excerpts that follow are somehow more complex to categorise and their goal seems to be embedded in the original references and in the new target context in a much more thorough and sibylline way.

4. The adapter's stance

In my opinion, the most extraordinary of Allen's Italian versions is certainly that of *Sleeper* (*Il dormiglione*, 1972). *Il dormiglione* is a vivid illustration of how rewritings, when handled creatively, have the potential to establish a dialectic relationship with the historical and social context in which they are inserted. From this perspective, they make sense mainly in that particular context and can be seen as a valuable testimony of a given historical and cultural climate.

In Example 9 below, we can note an alteration of the source cultural references in a way which shows how Lionello, the official adapter of this film, worked with the aim of drawing attention to the international socio-cultural reality of the early 1970s. He actively sought to engage the target audience by stimulating their interest in the contemporary issues which were vivid in the viewers' mind at that time. In this excerpt, Miles, who becomes Mike in Italian for no apparent reason other than being more easily pronounceable by dubbers, has just been revived from hibernation. Suddenly, from the year 1973 when he was living, he finds himself in 2173. He is shown by a doctor a series of photographs of public figures from his time and has to explain who they were. His comments mix and match jokes on realistic traits of the people he is shown with surreal associations which can be justified by his confused state of mind after the time travel:

9) *Sleeper*

Original dialogue

MILES: This is Joseph Stalin. He was a Communist. I was not too crazy about him. He had a bad moustache, **a lot of bad habits**. This is **Bela Lugosi**. He was the mayor of New York City for a while. You can see what it did to him there. This is... This is... Charles de Gaulle. He was a very famous French chef. Had his own television show. **Showed you how to make soufflés and omelettes**. This is, this is **Scott Fitzgerald** over here. A very romantic writer. Big with English majors, college girls, you know, nymphomaniacs. Very well... This is Chang Kai-shek, who I was not too crazy about either. This is Billy Graham. He was very big in the religion business, you know. He knew God personally. Got him his complete wardrobe. Used to go out on double dates together. It was a very big thing. **They were romantically linked for a while**. This is

some girls burning a brassiere. You notice it's a very small fire. This, I don't know what that is. That's a photograph of **Norman Mailer**, who was a very great writer. He donated his ego to the Harvard Medical School for study.

Italian adaptation

MIKE: E' Giuseppe Stalin, comunista iscritto. Non è che ne andassi pazzo, aveva dei brutti baffi, **era un padre esemplare**. Questo è **Fiorello La Guardia**. A un sindaco di New York può capitare di tutto, ne fecero un aeroporto, chiaro. E Charles de Gaulle. Era un notissimo chef francese con un suo show televisivo per la pubblicità **della salsa gloire, grandeur**, sì. Questo, questo è **Henry Kissinger**, segretario di stato americano, famoso per sistemare crisi mondiali, guerre, guai, guai, se glie ne fossero mancati. Questo è Chiang Kai-shek, neanche per lui stravedevo. E questo è Billy Graham, un big del business della fede, conosceva Dio personalmente, anzi, si servivano dello stesso sarto, andavano agli appuntamenti insieme. **Billy trovava Dio semplicemente divino**. Ecco, queste sono femministe che bruciano reggiseno, noterà che è un fuoco piccolissimo. Questo non so cosa sia. Questo era **re Fahd**, re dell'Arabia, che vendeva il petrolio caro per pagarsi costose cure di bellezza inutili.

Back translation

MIKE: This is Joseph Stalin, a party Communist. I was not too crazy about him. He had a bad moustache, **he was an exemplary father**. This is **Fiorello LaGuardia**. To a mayor of New York City anything can happen, they made him an airport, of course. And Charles de Gaulle. He was a very famous French chef with his own television show to promote **the gloire, grandeur sauce**, yes. This, this is **Henry Kissinger**, American Secretary of State, famous as a settler of world crises, wars, troubles, troubles, as if he lacked them...This is Chiang Kai-shek, who I was not too crazy about either. And this is Billy Graham, very big in the religion business, knew God personally. So, they had the same tailor, used to go out on double dates together. **Billy found God simply divine**. Here, these are some feminists burning a brassiere. You notice it's a very small fire. This, I don't know what this is. That was **King Fahd**, king of (Saudi) Arabia, who sold oil at a high price to treat himself to expensive but useless beauty treatments.

This excerpt is full of alterations aimed at binding the new dubbed version to the target culture by way of using transcultural references which were more familiar to the Italian audience at the time when the film was distributed in 1973. Given that not all of the photographs shown to Miles/Mike can be seen by the audience, the operation of exchanging the referents can be carried out in a reasonably smooth manner.

The first reference to the well known communist figure of Joseph Stalin is left unaltered although the original mention of his 'bad habits' is

substituted with the more ironic, and arguably funnier, comment on his being an exemplary father.

The name of the renowned actor Bela Lugosi is not so well known in Italy although most people would be familiar with his Dracula persona. Taking advantage of the fact that his photo is not shown to the audience, the translator decides to replace it with the name of Fiorello La Guardia, a New York mayor from 1933 to 1945 who was probably familiar to target viewers because of his Italian descent and the fact that he gave his name to New York's second airport. The piece of news that the original dialogue conveyed was considered too exotic for the Italian public to appreciate: Bela Lugosi was in fact nominated honorary mayor of Oakland in 1936 but such a minute and detailed fact would be unknown even to the most educated elite of the source culture audience of the 1970s. I would argue that this reference falls into a category in-between what Pedersen (2005: 11) defines as monocultural references and microcultural ones. The former are references known only to the source culture audience whilst the latter are far too specialised and hence only known to a limited section of that audience. The Italian version simplistically but coherently picked another, more famous mayor of the same period as Lugosi's and added the creative licence of referring to the airport.

Charles de Gaulle is sufficiently well known to make most people get the joke of his being taken for a French chef, but Lionello managed to make the reference more 'cultured' in this case by slipping in an improbable *gloire, grandeur* [glory, grandiosity] sauce, words which, as we learn from history books, are closely associated with General de Gaulle's chauvinist view of France.

The use of Henry Kissinger in place of Scott Fitzgerald is especially remarkable. Again, it is a case of an original highbrow reference becoming lowbrow in the dubbed version as Kissinger was a politician present on everybody's TV set in 1972, while Fitzgerald would be known only to cultured people with a penchant for North American literature. A change of this calibre brings with it the necessary alteration of the whole set of associations, hence the reference to Fitzgerald's sexual bouts transforms itself into allusions to Kissinger's omnipresence in political affairs. This way, sex and sexuality completely disappear in the dubbed dialogue, making the Italian version much more political and far less risqué. The next political reference to Chiang Kai-shek is in fact kept as he was the President of China (exiled in Taiwan) till the early 1970s, thus current news at the time the film was shown on the silver screen.

Billy Graham, on the other hand, was an American preacher completely unknown to the Italian audience but the reference to him had to be kept because his photograph can clearly be seen on screen. This creates the opportunity for a very funny joke on God that is different and amusing in both the original English and the Italian dubbed version. If in the source

text Graham and God had a romantic relationship, again the Italian version finds material for a pun and plays on the meaning of 'divine' that can be a purely religious adjective but also a hyperbolic version of 'fantastic' in Italian as well as in English.

The monologue concludes with yet another substitution in Italian. The name of the American writer Norman Mailer would be known only to avid readers, so again, the adapter has opted for resorting to a well known name featuring in the news at that time, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. The adoption of this strategy of radical recontextualisation, although carried out by carefully choosing international names, may arguably contribute to making the text more dated as some of the names mentioned in the Italian version would sound obscure to today's audience as they are no longer topical.

It is obvious that the nature of this monologue has been completely changed in translation. Although the overall humorous effect can be said to be similar in the two versions, the Italian one loses some of its sarcasm and chooses to create more straightforward bonds with the reality of the time. The replacement of literary figures with heads of state and the like makes the whole monologue much more political in its target version. However, it has to be stressed that the adapter's motive was mainly to make the message easier for all members of the general public to understand, not just the more sophisticated echelons who would be familiar with the different writers mentioned in English.

To conclude, Example 10, again from *Sleeper*, shows one of the most meaningful examples of Lionello's rewritings. Just before the passage reported below takes place, Miles is hypnotised and sits at a table for an imaginary lunch with the other two characters, Luna and Erno. In this scene, the Italian dubbing actors replace the American-Jewish accent of the source text with a very strong Sicilian accent. All the Jewish cultural references (Passover, matzos, etc) are changed accordingly into Sicilian references. At this point, Miles starts believing that he is Blanche Dubois and launches into a monologue from Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the original version. Allen quotes from the play with a southern USA accent while the character of Luna, played by Diane Keaton, imitates Marlon Brando playing the role of Kowalski. In the Italian version, due to the change of references, the protagonist starts to speak instead with a French accent using some French words, while the Italian Luna intersperses her Brando impression with American words. This is Allen's monologue in English and as it was completely rewritten by Lionello:

10) *Sleeper*

Original dialogue

MILES (with southern accent): Oh, no. No, please, don't let in the light. Oh, cover those lights, please. Please, don't get up. I was just passing

through.

LUNA: Oh Erno! Oh Erno, what's happening?

ERNO: Something's gone wrong with the treatment. His brain is locked somewhere else. He believes he's another person.

MILES: No, no. I need...

LUNA: Miles. Miles. Who are you, Miles?

MILES: **I'm Blanche. Blanche Dubois.** It means 'white woods'.

ERNO: He's like a sleepwalker. We can't upset him or it could be fatal.

LUNA: What are we going to do?

ERNO: Well, you've read **Streetcar Named Desire**. Just play along with him. He needs another injection.

MILES: Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart, and I have all those things, aren't taken away but... but grow, increase with the years. Strange that I should be called a destitute woman... when I have all these riches locked in my heart.

LUNA (as Marlon Brando): I been onto you from the start. I seen how you try to sprinkle this place up... with them powders and those fancy French colognes. Well, I say, ha! You hear me? Ha! Ha! I... I... I think... I... yeah.

MILES: Why... why, you're not the gentleman that I was expecting. What's going on? **Whoever you are, I've always depended on the kindness of strangers.**

Italian adaptation

MIKE (with French accent): Oh no, ti prego, il topo non lo voglio. Il topo no, non lo posso vedere. *Je t'en prie*, metti via il topo. Togli il topo se mi ami.

LUNA: Erno, Erno, cosa gli prende?

ERNO: Qualcosa non ha funzionato.

MIKE: E' così.

ERNO: Il suo cervello è bloccato altrove, si crede un'altra persona.

MIKE: Oh no, mi fa schifo.

LUNA: Mike, chi sei ora, Mike?

MIKE: **Marie, Marie Schneider.** Tango, voglio un tango.

ERNO: E' come un sonnambulo, risvegliarlo può essere fatale.

LUNA: Allora come si fa?

ERNO: Hai visto **L'ultimo tango a Parigi** al Sex Cine Club? Vedi di assecondarlo.

MIKE: Sono la romantica degli anni '70. Amo le vecchie cose di Parigi. Vecchi appartamenti, privi di letti e di poltrone, e dormire sulla

Back translation

MIKE: Oh, no, please, I don't want the rat. Not the rat, I can't look at it. *Je t'en prie*, take the rat away. Take the rat away if you love me.

LUNA: Erno. Erno, what's happening?

ERNO: Something's gone wrong.

MIKE: That's the way.

ERNO: His brain is locked somewhere else. He believes he's another person.

MIKE: Oh no, it's disgusting.

LUNA: Mike, who are you now, Mike?

MIKE: **Marie, Marie Schneider.** Tango, I want a tango.

ERNO: He's like a sleepwalker. Waking him up could be fatal.

LUNA: Then, how is it done?

ERNO: Have you seen **The Last Tango in Paris** at the Sex Cine Club? Just play along with him.

MIKE: I am the romantic of the 1970s. I love Paris's old things. Old

<p>moquette, con uno sconosciuto per coperta. Un estraneo violento ma grassoccio. Un tesoro di stronzo. Io amo le cose vecchie, e amo le cose nuove. Quei blue jeans con la lampo di dietro, li adoro. Marlone.</p> <p>LUNA (imita Marlon Brando): Io t'ho azzeccato fin dal principio. <i>Les girls comme toi, you know</i>, lo sai come me le faccio le donne come te? Al burro. E se mi vuoi tagliati le unghie, stronza, se no, io ti dico: ah. Chiaro, merda? Ah, ah. <i>Yeah, I think, yeah.</i></p> <p>MIKE: Ah, tu non sei il gentiluomo che avevo immaginato. Oh no, il topo no. <i>Je vous en prie. Sai che odio i topi, mi fanno senso più della censura.</i></p>	<p>flats, without beds or armchairs, and sleeping on the carpet, with a stranger for a blanket. A violent but chubby stranger. A lovable son of a bitch. I love old things, and I love new things. Those blue jeans with a zip behind, I love them. Big Marlon.</p> <p>LUNA (as Marlon Brando): I've been onto you from the start. <i>Les girls comme toi, you know, you know</i> how I eat the girls like you? With butter. And if you want me, have your nails cut, fucker, otherwise I'll say: ha. Clear, shit? Ha, ha. Yeah, I think, yeah.</p> <p>MIKE: Ah, you're not the gentleman that I had imagined. Oh no, not the rat. <i>Je vous en prie. You know I hate rats, they make me sick, more than censorship.</i></p>
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In this example, Lionello shows that he is strictly giving an account of the history, the culture, and the social situation of his contemporary Italy. The film he uses to 'localise' this scene is Bernardo Bertolucci's *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (*Last Tango in Paris*, 1972), the story of the casual encounter of an American man (played by Brando) and a French woman (played by Schneider) in an empty apartment in Paris. Their relationship is mainly sexual and the film was famously banned in Italy, its copies sentenced to be burned. This course of action provoked a public debate and the general outcry from various intellectuals that is echoed in the very last sentence uttered by Mike.

The operation of rewriting was obviously facilitated by the fact that both Kazan's and Bertolucci's films were played by the same actor. Marlon Brando was both the young Kowalski and the mature Paul. The transformation of this somewhat surreal scene is thus made smoother by the fact that the character played by Diane Keaton can imitate the same actor with his famous mannerisms in both versions without compromising the kinetic information transmitted visually. At the end of the dialogue, Luna imitates Brando with the words of Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and with the words of Paul in *Ultimo tango a Parigi* in the Italian version. In both cases the dialogue sums up the plot and the gist of the respective stories using keywords and images from the texts they quote. For *Streetcar*, there is Blanche who does not want to be seen in the light, Kowalski and his low American accent, various lines that have been taken literally from the play, and especially the famous last sentence: "Whoever you are, I've always depended on the kindness of strangers." As for

Ultimo tango, the main intertextual references are the two characters' sexual fantasies and actions, especially the scandalous evocation of the butter scene. Up to the very last phrase, the Italian version is certainly raunchier than the original and, again, as in the examples above, its main purpose would apparently be that of appealing to a more general audience, substituting literary allusions with references to an erotic film which was widely talked about at precisely the same time as *Sleeper* was being distributed in cinemas across the country.

The last line, "rats make me sick, even more than censorship," sees the adapter follow a very different train of thought and reveals a firm positioning of the supposedly *qualunquista*¹⁰ Lionello on the subject of film censorship. He felt that he had a right to rewrite and to comment about the world he lived in, namely about the sensitive issue of film censorship dramatically highlighted here with the continuous reference to Bertolucci's masterpiece. Something altogether different from what Allen himself had to say in the original version.

The interplay between all the cultural elements in *Sleeper* provides us with a fascinating portrait of a historical period in a given time and in a given place. At the same time, the great number of departures from the original dialogue gives us a precise picture of the extensive freedom that dubbing adapters can enjoy even when faced with the supposedly constraining lip-sync limitations. Long shots, off dialogues, voiceovers and the thespian skills of the dubbing actors are all used by Allen's adapters to the same end: their authorial freedom.

This kind of operation would be hard to implement in today's dubbing industry in Italy: Woody Allen now has the status of canonised director rather than that of newcomer which he had in the 1970s. Linguistic departures from his original scripts are extremely rare nowadays. The result is that Italians have a slightly different perception of Allen as he was in his early career—lighter and funnier—and as he 'became' in the course of the eighties, more of a sophisticated intellectual. It is my contention that the 'real' Allen has always been more or less the same, a sublime mixture of highbrow and lowbrow, a blend of irony and sarcasm, of humour and tragedy, and that his Italian adapters ingeniously managed for some time to shift the balance to the lighter side of his creativity.

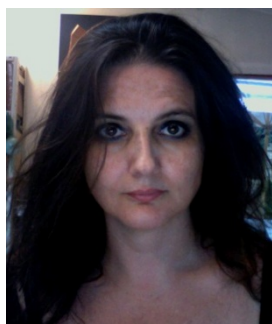
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Biography

Irene Ranzato has worked in the field of translation for the cinema for many years. She teaches Audiovisual Translation and themes related to intersemiotic translation (focusing on adaptations for the screen of English novels and plays) at Sapienza University, Rome. She also teaches Master courses in Specialised Translation at the same university. She has written several articles on translation and a book on Tom Stoppard in which she analyses the work of the great playwright as a screenplay writer, translator and adapter. She has also translated several films into Italian and her translations of books and essays have been published by some of the leading Italian publishers and journals. A book on audiovisual translation is due to be published in Italy. She is currently completing research for a PhD in Translation Studies at Imperial College, London, under the supervision of Dr Jorge Díaz Cintas. Her research focuses on forms of manipulation and censorship of audiovisual programmes in the translation of dubbing from English into Italian concentrating in particular on TV series such as *Friends*, *Six Feet Under* and *Life on Mars*.



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¹ The present article benefits from the testimony and advice of some of the leading adapters and dubbing directors in Italy, to whom I am indebted: Tonino Accolla, Elisabetta Bucciarelli, Elettra Caporello, Sergio Jacquier and Filippo Ottoni.

² More than of Benjamin's (1968/2000) concept of 'afterlife' of a text which sees the translated text as realising the potentialities of the source text, I am thinking here of Lefevere's (1992: 5) concept of rewriters (including translators) creating "images of a writer, a work, a period, a genre, even a whole literature [...] These images existed side by side with the realities they competed with, but the images always tended to reach more people than the corresponding realities did, and they most certainly do so now".

³ For works dealing with the history of cinema and dubbing translation in Italy, see Brunetta (1975), Gili (1981), Ricci (2008), and Talbot (2007). For a more specific take on the use of Italian language on film, see Ruffin & D'Agostino (1997), Raffaelli (1991, 1996) and Rossi (2008: 89-98).

⁴ Much more is known about dubbing actors (Castellano 2000). Some of them are recognised for the great number of actors they have dubbed, as was the case with Lionello, a successful theatre comedian and TV personality, who lent his voice to many foreign actors including Peter Sellers and Jerry Lewis but who was especially identified with Woody Allen.

⁵ I am indebted to Elettra Caporello and Sergio Jacquier for having shared this information with me.

⁶ For his interesting comments on this work see Lionello (1994).

⁷ In this sense, it is worth mentioning Caporello's 'trick', as she calls it, to be as faithful to Allen's characters as possible: she translates their Jewish New York accent into *romanesco*, the Roman accent, and then works on the result until she achieves an acceptable translation in standard Italian. She feels that the spirit of her co-citizens is very close to that of the Jewish New Yorkers, "imbued as it is with cynicism and apparent cruelty" (Caporello 2008: 1, my translation).

⁸ The Italian title itself deserves a comment as it sheds light on distribution strategies. *The Indiscreet Charm of Sin* is a play on Luis Buñuel's famous film *El discreto encanto de la burguesía* [*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, 1972]. Almodóvar, still practically unknown at the time in Italy, needed to be associated with a famous name who shared the same nationality in order to arouse the interest of the audience. During a press conference years later, when he had become a household name, he would comment with bitterness on this title change. The fact that he seemed to be worried only about the title indicates that he was not aware of the extent to which the film had actually been changed — yet another piece of evidence of how original authors lose sight of their texts once these become 'facts of the target culture'.

⁹ Sergio Jacquier, for instance, who was responsible for the Italian dialogue of *Manhattan*, is also a very creative author. He is known for his legendary solutions in dubbing adaptations such as the one he did for the Marx brothers' film *Horse Feathers* (1932).

¹⁰ Rather than to the historical second post-war populist political movement, this Italian word refers today to people who have an unclear, ambiguous political stance.