

REWRI(GH)TING PRIDE & PREJUDICE

INTRODUCTION

The issue of adapting a novel set in the 18th Century, usually poses a various set of problems for film directors. These problems are not only connected to the right choice of locations and settings, faithfulness to costumes, hairstyle and so on. The primal aim of a director is to be faithful to the tone of the novel, to be able to translate its written code into the visual one. The task of intersemiotic translation becomes particularly demanding with stories set in the past, because it is obvious that the language, along with its use, have changed considerably. Moreover, directors can choose whether they want to keep dialogues other written modes as they are, or not.

In our analysis it is necessary to point out that, while adapting *Pride & Prejudice*, Joe Wright (the director of the Universal Picture version) and Simon Langton (the director of the BBC version) have gone for two different solutions. The reason for this is not only that anyone can decide to interpret and “translate” any piece of written text as he/she likes, but also that the time gap between two film interpretations, plays a vital role. The BBC mini-series was broadcast and produced in 1995, whereas Joe Wright produced its film ten years later. During these ten years, a huge amount of criticisms on Jane Austen and *Pride & Prejudice*, has been written; other adaptations of her novels have been produced with more or less success. All the publications which have circulated are impossible to ignore, and besides, they have spread so much in different means of communication, such as the internet or through “chick-lit”, or in other channels, that it is quite impossible even for the moviegoer not to take them into account. Thus, while seeing an Austen adaptation, the audience has created for itself a set of expectations in terms of how the novel will be rendered both linguistically and visually; the director may choose (or not) to fulfil these expectations.

The translation of Jane Austen novels into film, could be argue to be actually impossible, if we think of a translation in terms of a truly faithful adherence to the prototext, because even those directors who try primarily to “translate” her, inevitably diverge from her, every time they cut or they rearrange a scene. Some may aggressively appropriate her, other displace her and make of her something new. It then becomes a metaphor of the original. Issues such as clarification, condensation or expansion are a clear symptom of the difficulties encountered while adapting a piece of writing into the visual mode and it makes us understand that we must recur to strategies, in order to make these “metaphors” work. The success of the adaptation will also depend on the decisions he/she has made as to what may be sacrificed or not.

FAITHFULNESS TO DIALOGUES

I have already said that the BBC version was very accurate to the plot and to the dialogues: it is easy to follow any of the six episodes with the book in hands and any viewer could well read the dialogues

and watch the movie at the same time, because the version is extremely faithful. Here, thus, the problem of translation only relates more or less to the interpretation that each actor decides to give to his/her character. The tone of the voice, the emphasis on certain words, the intonation, the expression of the face and other paratactic features, are supposed to fill what gets omitted from dialogues and to work for descriptions of feelings and emotions, which are explained by the author.

The 2005 adaptation of the novel, on the other hand, distances itself a bit from the novel and from the BBC version. It does so in many different ways, but I will focus mainly of the linguistic changes, because they shift considerably the point of view of the audience, in relation to what is happening. Many dialogues have been manipulated, even if the text was very clear about a scene, and we must ask ourselves for which purpose a director may decide to change what is already given, into something else. In this latest adaptation, Jane Austen's language has been manipulated and rendered into silences, sharper irony and it has been considerably modernized. There are lots of expressions which Jane Austen would never have used, however they were chosen by the director, probably in order to make his movie more appealing for a modern audience.

Finally, as this version is also available in Italian, I will analyze how the translation from one language to the other differentiates the text, and I will try to show what is missing or what is lost in terms of cultural translation and references. We will also discuss briefly how the movie has been subtitled in Italian and why the result of the work is so poor.

SILENCES

By analyzing closely the script, along with the novel, we can note that in many occasions, this version has decided to omit some relevant bits of dialogues, so the translation here is completely absent. This manipulation of the text has nothing to do with the omission of characters or any other omission. Generally, silences, make the interpretation of what is happening very difficult. For instance, in the novel, we begin to understand that Mr. Darcy likes Lizzie when, at a ball, he tells Miss Bingley that he's "been meditating on the pleasure, which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow".¹ He obviously refers to Lizzie's eyes, and from this moment on, the viewers/readers are aware of the fact that Lizzie is admired by him. And when, in other occasions, Miss Bingley will test him to see if his opinion has changed or not, he will always declare that he likes her. In another moment, when Elizabeth decides to visit her sister suffering from a cold, at Netherfield, the two Miss Bingleys will point out how "she really looked almost wild"² and the improper fact that, having walked at least three miles to get there, her petticoat was now "six inches deep in mud".³ Miss Bingley hopes that this "exhibition", as she calls it, will have affected Darcy's view of her fine eyes,

¹ J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Classics, London 2003, p. 27.

² *Ivi*, p. 36.

³ *Ibidem*.

but he, on the contrary, admits that “they were brightened by the exercise”.⁴ These statements are fundamental, because they make us understand that this affection is still going on, though Elizabeth is still unaware of it, the viewer/reader expects something from Mr. Darcy. The 2005 version is not so faithful in this point of view, because these statements of Mr. Darcy are left out. Miss Bingley tries to persuade him and thinks he does not like her, she points out to him her faults or bad habits, such as laughing too much, but Mr. Darcy does not reply. His silences give way to different implications. The viewer does not know exactly what Darcy thinks of her, he may share the same ideas of Miss Bingley, but he behaves very oddly towards Lizzie, because he stares at her most of the time. At the same time, there seems to be a turbulent relationship between the two, as Lizzie swore not to dance with him “for all Derbyshire”,⁵ but as soon as she is made an offer of dancing, she accepts. It is as if his love was just physically displayed but verbally unachieved, as every attempt to communicate, to “make their sentiments known”, desperately fails. It fails for Darcy because he would like to resist, and it fails for Lizzie, because she has been blinded by first impressions, and she still does not know that she loves him. The moment of the proposal is thus very emotionally charged: Lizzie is completely taken aback by his declaration, because she was still prejudiced by his famous comment at the ball, by the story she heard from Mr. Wickham and by the revelation made by Darcy’s cousin, Fitzwilliam. The viewers are taken aback all the same, as, up to that moment, they do not know what Darcy’s feelings are towards Lizzie, so they can share Lizzie’s feelings when she rejects Darcy and sympathize with her.

In the novel, this turbulent relationship is visible in many other occasions, such as in a dialogue between Darcy and Elizabeth, at Netherfield. Lizzie teases Mr. Darcy and tries to “find a fault” in him, they end up attacking each other, though keeping their countenance, but the scene is emotionally charged to a point that viewers begin to expect something.

But it is not only Darcy who is “silent”, also Elizabeth is less open to her sister Jane, and this loses ground in terms of the plot. In the novel, Lizzie tells her sister that Darcy has proposed to her, she also informs her of her feelings towards him as they change, so when they finally get together, Jane is not that surprised. In the 2005 version, Elizabeth decides to conceal the proposal from her sister, their relationship becomes a bit difficult, as they seem not to understand each other as they did at the beginning. Only when Mr. Bingley will propose to Jane, Lizzie will try to tell her sister how much she likes Mr. Darcy, but she finds it impossible.

ADDITIONS

Another linguistic feature of this movie is the manipulation of some sentences in different dialogues. This characteristic is not used to clarify something, to expand something that might seem

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Pride and Prejudice [2005] Screenplay, available from: http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/p/pride-and-prejudice-script-knightley.html, [Ultimo accesso: 7 marzo 2008].

difficult to understand for the audience, so it is clearly a questionable change. An addition or a manipulation of a dialogue, made not for any necessary need, may change completely the perspective of what we are going to say, or the point of view of a character, or its “essence”.

In different occasions, the dialogues of some characters, such as the ones of Lizzie and of Charlotte's, change considerably in meaning and point of view, because sentences have been added or because they have been manipulated. In the first case I refer especially to the scene of the ball at the Assembly, where Lizzie and Darcy meet for the first time. Mr. Bingley tries to convince Mr. Darcy to dance with her, but he will not be easily persuaded. In fact, he replies that he is “dancing with the only handsome girl in the room” and that Lizzie “is barely tolerable”.⁶ Lizzie has overheard this comment and she takes advantage of the first occasion she has, in order to “reply” to him. In fact, later that evening, while she was talking about poetry with her mother, her sister Jane, Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy, she has the chance to reply. The dialogue is as follows:

Lizzie: I wonder who discovered the power of poetry in driving away love.

Mr. Darcy: I thought poetry was the food of love.

Lizzie: Of a fine, stout love, it may. But if it is only a vague inclination, I am afraid one poor sonnet will kill it stone dead.

Mr. Darcy: So, what do you recommend to encourage affection?

Lizzie: Dancing. Even if one's partner is barely tolerable.⁷

By saying these words, Mr. Darcy has understood that Lizzie overheard what he has just said to his friend. Though the last two lines are not in the novel, the director has decided to include them in the novel, so as to represent again the turbulent relationship between Mr. Darcy and Lizzie. They might well fancy each other, but the first attempt to communicate fails, because of Lizzie's prejudice and of Darcy's pride.

There are other examples of addition/manipulation of dialogue in this filmic adaptation of the novel. A manipulation which seems very striking occurs when Charlotte tells Lizzie that she is engaged to Mr. Collins. This scene is also different in terms of locations, because in the novel it happens indoors, whereas in the film we are outdoors and Lizzie is barefoot in the back of their house, on a swing. In the novel Charlotte says:

“I am not a romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state”.⁸

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ J. Austen, *P&P*, p. 123.

She seems very sure of her choice, as if she had thought it over and over and rationally concluded that it was for the best. The dialogue in the movie is different and changes the perspective slightly, causing problems to our interpretation of what Charlotte says.

Charlotte: My dear Lizzie. I've come here to tell you the news. Mr Collins and I are... engaged.

Lizzie: Engaged?

Charlotte: Yes.

Lizzie: To be married?

Charlotte: Yes, what other kind of engaged is there? For heaven's sake, Lizzie, don't look at me like that. I should be as happy with him as any other.

Lizzie: But he's ridiculous.

Charlotte: Oh, hush! Not all of us can afford to be romantic. I've been offered a comfortable home and protection. There's a lot to be thankful for. I'm 27 years old. I've no money and no prospects. I'm already a burden to my parents. And I'm frightened. So don't judge me, Lizzie. Don't you dare judge me!⁹

Apart from the fact that language has undergone a sort of modernization which allows Charlotte to say "hush!" to Lizzie, without her being worried that it might seem too improper or unsuitable, the perspective changes considerably, according to the words of Charlotte. Instead of saying "I am not a romantic [...] I never was", thus identifying herself with the one who is more rational than sentimental; the sentence has been turned into "Not all of us can afford to be romantic". In this case, if the viewer has not already read the novel, it is difficult to understand whether she is talking of herself or of Mr. Collins, because every personal pronoun referring to her, is left out. Along with it, the viewer is given a very clear explanation of why Charlotte has accepted him. She is really a burden to her parents, so she cannot marry for love, she must marry for money (or, at least, for protection). Then she adds that she is frightened, a feeling which doesn't appear neither in the novel, nor in the BBC version. Charlotte is a character who always seems to be rational and much focused on her objective, but in this version, by using a different structure in her dialogues, it is emphasized how she really feels, the spectators can sympathize with her condition and also become involved in her set of values.

The Italian translation of this part of dialogue was able to keep the ambiguity, in fact the sentence was dubbed into "Non tutti possiamo permetterci di essere romantici". In this case we do not know whether Charlotte refers to herself, to Mr. Collins or to Elizabeth. However, the Italian subtitles for this sentence, goes more in depth and translates it into "Non tutte possiamo permetterci di fare le romantiche". It is clear that by translating in this way, the focus is more on Lizzie and Charlotte, as if the latest was ironically pointing at Lizzie as "the romantic one" and criticizing her behaviour. In this case, however, the translation is more faithful to the tone of the novel, than to the movie itself. We will see later that the translation of the subtitles in Italian will use expressions which are in the Italian translation of the novel and which have been rendered with different words or expressions in the movie.

⁹ Pride and Prejudice [2005] Screenplay.

ELIZABETH'S MUCH BRISKER TONES

In the novel, Jane Austen describes Elizabeth as very witty and intelligent, in fact she is always singled out to the rest of her family, which clearly lacks propriety and wit. In the novel she manages to be very ironic and sharp with all her affirmations; still, she always manages to keep her countenance, she is always civil and she would never scream or shout. Also the interpretation given by Jennifer Ehle in the BBC version, shows Elizabeth as very witty, generous, intelligent and never exaggerated or caricatured. The version proposed by Keira Knightley is slightly different. Though the actress is very good in her part, focused with every movement and expression; in terms of language, she uses much brisker tones and she gives much more emphasis into the dialogues, so that the viewer can certainly share the same feelings that she has, and sympathize with her situation.

Examples of her exaggerated sharpness can be found very often. For instance, as I have already pointed out, when they are all gathered at the Assembly for the ball, she replies to Mr. Darcy and makes him understand that she has overheard his comment on her because she uses the same words with him. Again, when she declines Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage, the tone of her voice, her expressions and the pace with which she speaks, denote a certain anger and she is certainly not civil towards him. At the same time, there are other two scenes which show very clearly this different behaviour of Elizabeth. One is Mr. Darcy's first proposal and the other is the meeting with Lady Catherine at Longbourn.

Mr. Darcy's proposal is also one of the most stunning changes, not just the tone of the dialogues between the two characters, but also in the setting. For what concerns the dialogues, even if they keep the general meaning and more or less the same words which are in the book, they are rendered in a very different way. In the novel, Mr. Darcy was later surprised by the countenance that Elizabeth was able to keep. In the BBC version, as well, Lizzie is taken aback but she does not lose her temper. On the other hand, in the 2005 version, Elizabeth's tone really expresses how much she is angry at him, because she has just learnt from his cousin, that he "separated a young couple" (her sister and Mr. Bingley) and he tries to apologize for and to explain his reasons, until she brings up Mr. Wickham and this fit of jealousy makes him advance in front of her and it brings them together. She expresses her anger and disappointment also with her facial expressions. He is also angry and hurt because he has just been rejected, but instead of placing his anger on her, he directs it at Mr. Wickham, because he likes her too much. The pace of their dialogues, the tone, the position of their bodies shows how much they are "run away" with feelings and how much they like each other. They are very far from Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle, who manage to keep their countenance, by sitting still on a chair. Colin Firth/Mr. Darcy even bows before leaving the room, according to the conventions of the time, whereas Matthew MacFadyen/Mr. Darcy is so hurt and ashamed of his feelings, that he just turns his back and leaves. We mentioned that the location is different, here the proposal takes place outdoors, under a little Apollo's temple, whereas in the novel and in the BBC version it takes place inside the parsonage

at Rosings. The fact that the characters are all drenched with rain, can be indirectly connected with the attention of the director for the body. We can also create a parallelism between the two Darceys: Colin Firth after his swim in the pond and Matthew MacFadyen under the rain. It is well known that the BBC version ended up creating a sex symbol out of Colin Firth/Mr. Darcy diving in the lake.

The meeting between Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Lizzie at Longbourn is another example of how characters are unable to keep their countenance and to behave civilly, because they are too much emotionally charged. In the BBC version, even if Lizzie is shocked and agitated because of the news she is receiving, she remains polite and she does not lose her temper. In the 2005 version, the scene is very different, first of all it happens at night and this helps adding shades to the general tone of the scene. Moreover, both Lady Catherine and Lizzie are agitated for the situation and both lose their countenance. Lady Catherine slams the door, shouting that she has “never been thus treated in her entire life”,¹⁰ Lizzie is so angry at her that she asks her to leave immediately, contrary to the polite conventions of the time. She is middle-class and she is telling a Lady to leave her house, because she has insulted her. It is true that Lady Catherine as used very strong words against her, this happens also in the novel, but in the written text, it is Lady Catherine who decides freely to go home and who has the last word. In this version, it is Lizzie who asks her to leave, very impolitely. Moreover, when her parents ask her what is going on, she replies, shouting “For once in your life, leave me alone!”,¹¹ as if she was really tired of always having to explain everything to everyone, without having a bit of privacy for her personal matters.

ITALIAN TRANSLATION OF THE DIALOGUES

While translating the dialogues of the characters in the Italian language, we must not forget the problem which poses the English language with personal pronouns, and I refer to the “you”, which can mean both “tu” and “voi”. In this case it is more problematic, because, in order to be faithful to an Austen text, we must remember that at the time people would have addressed themselves with a courtesy form, which in Italian is rightly translated with the “voi”. Thus, the characters use almost always the “voi” between husband and wife, between male friends (Bingley and Darcy), between cousins (the Bennet sisters and Mr. Collins), between men and women in general (Bingley and Jane; Darcy and Lizzie). They also use the “voi” between parents and children, between older people and younger ones, and finally between people of different rank (Lady Catherine and the Bennets). The “tu” is only left between sisters and friends, so Lizzie will always address Charlotte or Jane with the “tu”. Lady Catherine, being part of the aristocracy, is addressed with expressions such as “madama” and “vossignoria”, both courtesy forms which could substitute “lady”.

¹⁰ *Ibidem.*

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

Austen language is also highly characterized, both geographically and temporally, this means that an Italian translator of her texts should bear in mind the implications of certain uses of the language. Her texts are full of expression, which are now out of fashion. This temporal dialect must be rendered with expressions which are also out of date in Italian. I take some examples such as “Come si può essere così uggiosi signor Bennet?” or “Spero che per stasera abbiate ordinato un buon desinare”, which translate respectively the English “How can you be so tiresome, Mr. Bennet”, and “I hope you ordered a good dinner today”. In this case, being sentences addressed from wife to husband and vice versa, it is interesting to see that the Italian has kept the courtesy form of the “voi”, and that old expressions such as “desinare”, instead of the modern “pranzo/cena”, or “uggioso” instead of “fastidioso/noioso” have been used.

Apart from these positive aspects in the rendering of the English into the Italian, I shall argue that the translation of the dialogues has very poor results. As a matter of fact, there are a few contradictions to the original. To start with, one could mention the titles used by Lizzie and her sisters towards her parents, “mama” and “papa”, which have been simply translated into the Italian sometimes as “mamma” and “papa”, sometimes as “madre” and “padre”. The English clearly uses two old-fashioned forms, whereas the Italian uses also the standard and everyday forms of addressing one’s parents, so a closer and unique translation would have been “madre” and “padre”. The incongruence is visible in some points where the title stands near a verb, used in the courtesy form. Thus Lizzie tells her father: “Papà, restate”, which is not very correct. In this case, she should have said: “Padre, restate”.

There are also some other obsolete or very sad expressions in Italians, such as Lizzie’s addressing of Darcy with “povero cuore”, which should stand for the English “poor soul”. The expression finds no real correspondent in Italian, but the translator might have chosen something like “poveretto/poverino” or “povero caro”. Also Miss Bingley’s expression “Giusto cielo!”, which should stand for “Good Lord”, might have been translated with “Santo cielo!/Santi numi!”, which are more comprehensible and less odd than the translation proposed.

Along with it, in some cases, the English has been very badly translated, so that the Italian gives a different version, I refer for instance at the expression “Mrs. Nichols is ordering a haunch of pork”, translated into the Italian as “La signora Nichols ha ordinato un maialino intero”. The mistake is not so serious, in the sense that it does not affect the plot or the story, but it is certainly distressing. The same mistake occurs in another case, and in this occasion it changes the meaning of the sentence, thus leading us astray and modifying the plot slightly. During Mr. Darcy’s first proposal, Lizzie accuses him of having separated his sister and Mr. Bingley. Darcy tries to explain the reasons why he did that by saying firstly:

Mr. Darcy: I believed your sister indifferent to him.

Lizzie: Indifferent?

Mr. Darcy: I watched them most carefully and I realized his attachment was deeper than hers.¹²

The Italian translation is as follows:

Mr. Darcy: Credo che lui sia indifferente a vostra sorella.

Lizzie: Indifferente?

Mr. Darcy: Li ho osservati e ho capito che l'attaccamento di lui era più profondo.

It seems clear enough that this is a very big mistake, because the Italian translation does not make sense at all. The second sentence is in contradiction with the first. The right translation should have been “Credevo che vostra sorella gli fosse indifferente”. Obviously the translators of the dialogues have not paid enough attention to these problems, and by misinterpreting a sentence, they have shifted slightly the meaning of the dialogue onto another plan and caused a problem of interpretation for the Italian audience.

MODERNIZING JANE AUSTEN'S LANGUAGE

The movie is set in 1797, the year of Austen's first draft of the novel (the novel was published in 1813 anonymously, after having been revised at Chawton). I already had the occasion to point out the fact that this version depicts a more realist England and it tries to be more appealing the modern audience.

It is undoubted that also the language has undergone considerable changes, since it has been manipulated and filled with more modern expressions. For example, we find Lizzie defining Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley “two painted peacocks”; Charlotte tells Lizzie she should “count her blessings” and she thinks that Jane should “move fast and snap him [Bingley] up”. Bingley himself starts proposing to Jane by saying he has been “the most unmitigated and comprehensive ass”, I wonder whether Jane Austen would have used these words or expressions, which are now part of the spoken modern English and which probably were not that common two centuries ago.

DRAMATISING THE LETTERS

As every Austen texts, *Pride & Prejudice* is full of letters, which were a tool used by the author to describe long events happening away from the protagonist and which help building up the plot as the story goes on. In P&P there are a lot of letters: written by Mr. Collins to the Bennet family, from Jane to Lizzie, from the Bingley Sisters to Jane, from Mr. Darcy to Lizzie and from Lizzie to Jane, to Charlotte and to the Gardiners. In this version of the movie letters were considerably cut: only those which were helpful to the denouement of the plot were kept. It is important to note that in order to

¹² *Ibidem.*

render in a movie, the director must recur to different strategies, as letters are different from dialogues: they are conceived and written to be “spoken”, whereas letters are simply written to be read. This difference in terms of language is easily perceivable, as the expressions used in the letters are clearly more formal than spoken one, sentence constructions are longer and heavier.

For this reason, they are not very cinematographic and not easy to represent. In this version the translation of the letters has been rendered in different ways: in some case they are read aloud, in others they are simply summarised in few words, in other occasions some characters “speak” the content of the letter in voice over. It is the case of Darcy’s letter to Lizzie: he delivers the letter and he starts speaking its content before Lizzie opens it. As she goes on in the reading, it is always Mr. Darcy’s voice which accompanies the letter’s content, in this way, it is as if it was truly him reading the letter, and the viewer can more easily understand his point of view. In the BBC version this letter is also “spoken” in voice over by Mr. Darcy, still Lizzie gives her impressions aloud, she expresses her anger and disappointment. In the new version, Elizabeth does not express her feelings, she just keeps them for herself and the viewers are lead to sympathize with Mr. Darcy.

In other cases the content of a letter has been translated into dialogues, so the language has undergone purification from the heavy construction of the written mode. For example while Darcy proposes to Lizzie, he explains why he separated Jane and Bingley, which was originally in the letter. In the novel the sentences are as follows:

“My objections to the marriage were not merely those [...] But there were other causes of repugnance These causes must be stated, though briefly. The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father. Pardon me. It pains me to offend you. But amidst your concern for the defects of your nearest relations, and your displeasure at this representation of them, let it give you consolation to consider that, to have conducted yourselves so as to avoid any share of the like censure, is praise no less generally bestowed on you and your elder sister, than it is honourable to the sense and disposition of both”.¹³

In the movie, this long piece which of writing has been translated into a simpler version, more adherent to the spoken language.

Mr. Darcy: It was clear an advantageous marriage...

Lizzie: Did my sister give that impression?

Mr. Darcy: No! No. There was, however, your family...

Lizzie: Our want of connection?

Mr. Darcy: No, it was more than that.

Lizzie: How, sir?

Mr. Darcy: The lack of propriety shown by your mother, your three younger sisters and even by your father. Forgive me. You and your sister I must exclude from that.¹⁴

¹³ J. Austen, *P&P*, pp. 192-3.

¹⁴ *Pride and Prejudice* [2005] Screenplay.

SUBTITLING PRIDE & PREJUDICE

Subtitling is a complex form of translation, because it involves the rendering of the oral language (originated from the written) into the written one. Subtitles can also be a form of written translation of a dialogue into a foreign language, or a written rendering of the dialog into the same language—with or without added information intended to help viewers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to follow the dialogue.

Those who are hard of hearing, while having the capacity to see the gestures of the actor/actress, to understand his/her expressions and his/her movements, are not able to perceive the way in which the actor/actress interprets the lines in terms of sounds, thus the subtitles should deliver, apart from a translation of the text, also an intersemiotic translation of what is not written in the prototext. In this case the message has to be squeezed into few words, in order to deliver a message which otherwise would be lost. The shortened text loses on quality and form, but gains in meaning.

Moreover, the subtitler may or may not have access to a written transcript of the dialogue. Especially in commercial subtitles, the subtitler often interprets what is meant, rather than translating how it is said, thus giving more importance to the meaning instead of the form. The audience does not always appreciate this, and it can be frustrating for those who know the spoken language, due to the fact that spoken language may contain culturally implied meanings. If not properly adapted in the written subtitles, those references might be lost or sound confusing. In addition to that, the subtitler is forced to keep the length of the subtitles to a minimum in order to achieve an acceptable reading speed. In this case the purpose of the translation is far more important than form.

All these strategies used by subtitlers, often lose in terms of form and can also be an inaccurate translation. In the case of this movie, where subtitles are available both in English and in Italian, it is clear how these strategies have failed, or have been misused. After a close comparison between the dialogues in English and in Italian, and the subtitles in English and Italian, we can note that the translation has worked this way: the Italian subtitles were basically based on the English subtitles and translated by the subtitlers, whereas the Italian dialogues were translated by someone else and based on the dialogues. Thus, this has given two different “target texts”. The translation of the subtitles is looser; in contrast the translation of the dialogues tries to be more accurate, even if we can find various mistakes. If a viewer starts watching the movie in Italian with Italian subtitles he/she will notice that they differ a lot.

I will give an example in order to clarify what I have just said. The sentence “Mrs. Nichols is ordering a haunch of pork”¹⁵ has been subtitled in Italian as “La signora Nichols ha ordinato una coscia di maiale”. When it was dubbed in Italian it was rendered as “Il signor Nichols ha ordinato un maialino intero”. Apart from mistaking Mrs. Nichols for a Mr., the translator here has also changed slightly the meaning of the sentence. Other examples occur in the scene when Mr. Bingley visits

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*

Longbourn and Mrs. Bennet gets very agitated. This part is full of mistakes and misinterpretations. Mrs. Bennet says: “I shall have a seizure, I’m sure I shall”¹⁶. The Italian subtitle proposes a correct translation with “Avrò una crisi, ne sono sicura”, whereas what she actually says is “Devo intrappolarlo, sono sicura che ci riuscirò”. This difference is probably given by the double meaning of “seizure”, which could both refer to “attacco/presa/cattura” and “colpo/crisi”. Again in this scene, the translation of the dialogues into Italian seems very odd, for instance Mrs. Bennets uses the expression “quando avrete sterminato tutti i vostri uccelli”, referring to the English “when you have killed all your birds”¹⁷, but the translation is out of place, because in terms of collocation, we would not use “sterminare”, a verb with a highly negative connotation, with “birds”. Another expression which sounds strange is Mr. Bingley’s reply to Mrs. Bennet’s question about Jane. She asks him if he finds her beautiful and he replies “Non c’è che dire”, which is a weak translation of the English version: “She does indeed”¹⁸. In this case, the subtitlers translated it more correctly with “Sì, senza dubbio”. The expression “Non c’è che dire” is not very adequate in this situation, because Mr. Bingley is totally taken away by Jane’s beauty and he cannot talk properly due to his embarrassment, thus this comment seems out of place, it does not deliver completely the original meaning.

There are many other mistakes of this sort and in some places, the dubbing has been modulated on the novel, in fact it uses sometimes expressions which are found in the written text. I will cite only two examples of this borrowing. The first refers to one of the first sentences of the movie, that is “Mr. Bennet, how can you be so tiresome?”. The Italian subtitle here is “Come potete fingere di non capire?”, whereas the Italian dialogue is “Come si può essere così uggiosi?”. The subtitler has manipulated the sentence in terms of register but it still conveys the general meaning, Mr. Bennet is being tiresome and fastidious because he pretends he does not understand. The dialogue in Italian uses instead the word “uggioso”, which is now out of fashion and probably a could be a good choice in terms of obsolete language, but it is important to note that it is the same word which is used in the Italian translation of the novel¹⁹. As a matter of fact, the sentence reads: “Quanto sei uggioso”²⁰.

In another scene, when Lady Catherine goes to Longbourn to speak to Lizzie, she will exclaim: “Heaven and Earth! Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?”. The Italian translation of the subtitles reads: “Santo Cielo! E i recessi di Pemberley dovrebbero essere così inquinati?”, whereas the Italian dubbing is “Santi Numi! Le ombre di Pemberley possono essere profanate così?”. Also in this case, the subtitler has translated the sentence quite loosely, whereas the translators have used more or less the same words which appear in the novel: “Santi Numi! [...] Si profanano così le ombre di Pemberley?”²¹. Both the verb “profanare” and the exclamation “Santi

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Faccio riferimento alla traduzione italiana di Giulio Caprin, edita da Arnoldo Mondadori.

²⁰ J. Austen, *Orgoglio e pregiudizio*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano 1983, p. 4.

²¹ J. Austen, *Orgoglio e pregiudizio*, p. 369.

Numi” was kept. This resemblance is so striking that it seems obvious that the translators have used the Italian version of the novel as a support, in order to choose an appropriate register.

CONCLUSIONS

In this work I tried to outline the main problems which a translation of a novel into a visual mode causes. I also tried to tackle the issues that must be taken into account when translating from one language into another. The intersemiotic translation of a novel into a movie is completely affected by the decisions of the director and his/her crew: the changes which they apply can be questionable or not, but they are, most of the time, motivated.

The translation of subtitles or of dialogues into another language is often affected by restraints of time, and translators are not always professional and literary ones, but groups which may have a limited knowledge of the topic they are to translate, they often work together and may even translate only some parts of the script, losing the general meaning of the story. Moreover, as they have to recur to strategies to be able to fit the language into the screen, their product often loses in quality and in adherence to the original work. They tend to favour the meaning instead of the form. It should be advisable for translators which approach a film based on a novel, to take a previous translation as a point of reference, because it could be helpful to see how others have dealt with the same text.

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