



Translating and Retranslating Italian Cinema Across Time: Fellini in the UK and in the US

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When studying film translation from an historical perspective, it is essential to establish which films were watched by which audience with what kind of consequences (Bosma 2015: 40); to the debate, one should add 'where' and 'when', as the context obviously must be taken into account.

In addition to that, the context – both in terms of space and time – in which the translations of these films have been produced, consumed, and received also plays a key role, not only in determining viewer's habits and expectations, but also in trying to study from a different and possibly new perspective the traditional subtitling vs. dubbing debate.

With this in mind, the present paper specifically focuses on the Italian cinema exported to the UK and the US during the post-war period, showing that these countries have historically adopted subtitling and dubbing as needed. As a consequence, a straightforward duality between subtitling versus dubbing for art-house and popular cinema, respectively, is too simplistic.

When historically studying the translation of a given film within a given foreign market, it is also necessary to take into account its re-releases, and subsequent retranslations. While retranslation in the literary domain is "usually regarded as a



positive phenomenon" (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2009: 233), retranslation in the audiovisual field tends to be either negatively received or neglected (Zanotti 2015: 110).

As a consequence, the second aim of this contribution is to analyse how Italian films have been retranslated both in the UK and in the US over the years, mainly focusing on Federico Fellini.

The study will show that, while major improvements can be found at technical level, latest translations may also slightly depart from the original context of the film, with respect to the old versions.

1. THE GOLDEN AGE OF ITALIAN CINEMA

Films are "conceived, produced, distributed and consumed within specific economic and social contexts" (Kochberg 1999: 14), both in terms of space and time.

As for the production side, it is necessary to shed light on a given country's cinematographic production during a given period of time, taking into account the sociocultural, economic, political conditions that have influenced the emergence of certain film genres and directors, and thus conceiving films as historical objects.

As for Italy, the profound impact of the cultural crisis experienced by all the belligerent countries participating in the Second World War was evident and tangible in the cinema industry more than in any other art form, with consequent profound transformations: the immediate post-war period not only marks Italy's "rehabilitation" and "its rapid reintegration into the international community" (Brunetta 2009: 109) – starting the process of political and economic reorganization that re-built the nation that we know today – but also the rebirth and renewal of the Italian film industry.

Two specific cinematic genres became emblematic in the process of (re)construction and communication of the transforming nation, contributing to the success of Italian cinema both internally and externally: the birth and success of Italian Neorealism, starting from the immediate post-war period until the 1950s; and the *auteur* period of the years marked by the culmination of Italy's 'economic miracle'.

As will be discussed in the following section, these genres have been identified as "vital crises" (Sitney 2013: 1): 'crisis' for their capacity of marking a breaking point with respect to past traditions, and 'vital' for giving impulse to Italian cinema, contributing to vitalise it domestically and to successfully export it abroad.

2. NEOREALISM AND FEDERICO FELLINI

As stated by André Bazin (1992 [1958]: 85), Neorealism "indicates a certain tendency towards the faithful rendering of reality on film", and was considered the mirror of post-war Italy for the genuine world portrayed, the representation of true-to-life characters, as well as real location shooting. As a consequence, neorealist works were fully embedded in the Italian context, portraying the 'real' economic, moral, social, political, cultural conditions and changes of post-Second World War Italy, so much so



that Italian neorealist films “were stamped with their own historicity [...], inseparable from the social context in which they were made” (Bazin 1971, in Restivo 2002: 9), and were “part of the contemporary life and social landscape of Italy” (Bazin and Cardullo 2014: 36).

The decline of Neorealism generally dates back to 1952, when the disillusionment with the new Italian society in the post-war reconstruction led to the need of keeping pace with the emerging new country. With the release of Fellini’s *La Strada* in 1954, the Italian *auteur* period emerged, dominating the domestic and foreign cinema markets until the middle of the 1960s.

Federico Fellini is one of the main representatives and distinctive filmmakers of the 1950s, even if his formative roots were solidly grounded in the tradition of Neorealism, which clearly emerged not only in the director’s intimate involvement with writing the scripts of many of the most important neorealist classics, but also in his first works as director in which he looked at reality “with an honest eye” (Fellini 1976: 217).

Fellini made his debut as director with *Luci del varietà* (1951, *Variety Lights*), his first work in a series of titles dealing with provincial and social life, followed by *Lo Sceicco Bianco* (1952, *The White Sheik*), *I Vitelloni* (1953, *The Spivs*) and the so-called trilogy of salvation and grace: *La Strada* (1954), *Il Bidone* (*The Swindle*, 1955), and *Le Notti di Cabiria* (*Nights of Cabiria*, 1957).

Even if his characters were emotionally distraught by surreal circumstances, Fellini’s films were deeply rooted in the sociocultural and geographical Italian context of that period, not only in their themes but also in the images, elements and spaces evoked and represented: “His social commentary has a thrusting power which can arrest the most sluggish conscience to an awareness of mankind’s monumental frustration bordering on despair, though never totally devoid of hope” (Pemberton 1956: 424).

His best-known masterpiece *La Dolce Vita* (1959) coincided with a shift from the ‘Italian reconstruction’ to the ‘Italian economic boom’ of the late 1950s and 1960s, depicting the rise of its consumer society and celebrity culture. *La Dolce Vita* proved to be a picture of the times, representing the Italy of popular media, decadent intellectuals, and aristocrats:

La dolce vita [is] a contemporary world cut adrift from traditional values and symbols, especially those of Christianity, and bereft of any dominant cultural center [...] a world of public relations, press conferences, paparazzi, empty religious rites, meaningless love affairs. (Bondanella 2009: 291)

While Federico Fellini’s “brand of neorealism” (Gillett 1959: 28) is evident in his 1950s and 1960s films, it is almost totally absent from his 1970s production, and the interplay between fantasy and reality became stronger in conjunction with Fellini’s dissatisfaction with the cinema industry.

In *Satyricon* (1969), adapted from Petronius’s work, Fellini depicts a surreal and dreamlike Roman landscape and culture far from the real Italian temporal and spatial



context of the time. Even topics relating to Italian history and society started to be filtered through Fellini's subjectivity, far from being objective accounts. *Roma* (1972) is a subjective collection of episodes and images reflecting Fellini's opinions and memories, where the director provides a 'fabulous' and personal depiction of the Eternal City. Fellini's *Casanova* (1976), obviously far from representing Italy in the post-war period, is not based on Casanova's real-life memoirs; the main aim was to offer a personal interpretation and impression of the 18th Century adventurer.

Therefore, in these films, the Italian *maestro* was interested neither in historical accuracy nor in depicting real geographical spaces, as he did in his 1950s and 1960s films. Nonetheless, his works were all successfully distributed abroad and Fellini, who continued to produce cinema masterpieces until the end of the 1980s, was considered one of the greatest directors of all times.

The UK imported a great number of Fellini's films: eighteen titles from the 1950s to the 1980s. More generally, post-war UK found itself fully represented by Italian post-war productions, as shown in the following British film review on Italian cinema:

A country which has emerged bankrupt but determined to rebuild itself after a disastrous war. That endeavour is expressing itself in many fields. Take, for example, the cinema. The British public have already been astonished by the depth and brilliance of the Italian picture. (Patmore 1947: 9)

Therefore, the Italian art cinema in the years immediately after the end of the Second World War acted as a major attraction for British distributors and audiences, thus contributing to successfully exporting these films to the UK.

Moreover, in the late 1950s, a decline in Hollywood production led to a decrease in the number of American films available not only in the US, but also in the European markets. As a consequence, the British cinema industry needed to find new titles from other countries to meet the needs of its exhibitors.

Consequently, as shown in the following section, UK distributors started to import more films from the continent, and particularly from Italy: from 1947 to 1950, very few Italian titles arrived in the UK, but their number grew constantly during the 1950s and 1960s, peaking in the periods 1961-1967 with 321 titles, and with 213 pictures from 1971 to 1975 (Marcarini 2001: 8).

3. TRANSLATING ITALIAN CINEMA: THE POST-WAR PERIOD

The post-war period was undoubtedly the most significant for the Italian cinema industry not only from a quantitative, but also from an artistic point of view: with its neorealist and *auteur* works, Italy provided a valid alternative to Hollywood commercial films, and post-war UK found itself fully represented by Italian productions.

The stories narrated, despite being deeply rooted in the historical and sociocultural Italian reality after Second World War, were successfully received by



British audience and film critics. Referring to De Sica's *Roma Città Aperta*, Graham (1947: 13) wrote:

We in this country who know nothing of total warfare, who faced death many a time but never had to contend day in day out with cruelty, suspicion and insolence, who did not see our beloved taken from us to be tortured or see our children scavenging the streets, should be forced to see this film once a year, lest the mists of time bring us to forget what war really is.

One of the first British articles celebrating Italian cinema during the post-war period appeared in *Sight and Sounds* in 1955 and was titled "New Names: Italy". In the article, Italian films and their "social attention" (Anon 1955: 119) are praised for their ability to reach the UK market crossing "the barriers of language" (Anon 1955: 119); this is also the first British article on Italian cinema explicitly referring to the so-called language problem – which affected the production, exhibition and reception of films after the advent of sound. Among the directors listed in the article we find the most representative neorealist and *auteur* filmmakers of the 1940s and 1950s, such as Vittorio De Sica, Giuseppe De Santis, Michelangelo Antonioni and Federico Fellini, all of them providing a picture of "city life" in the Italy of the years following Second World War (Anon 1955: 119).

The first Italian titles to enter the UK were precisely some of the most prominent art films. British film critics emphasised Italian directors' ability to show a deep understanding of the essence of the Italian identity as well as of Italy's difficult social and economic situation.

In this context, subtitles were seen as the best option to preserve the authentic realism of these films so that "people can enjoy these kinds of films provided they are safely foreign" (Marcarini 2001: 111), thus appreciating their "contemporary setting", their "tremendous actuality", and the ability to trap in the camera lens "the atmosphere as well as a picture of those hideous times" (Graham 1947: 13).

On the contrary, as commented in various film reviews appeared in British magazines and journals, when an Italian art film had a more commercial vein, it was exclusively distributed with English dubbing. This was the case, among others, of Dino Risi's *Poveri Ma Belli (Girl in a Bikini)*, 1956, a title which had "little to do with the original preoccupations of the neo-realists" (MFB Critic 1958: 7), as well as of De Sica's *L'oro di Napoli* (1954):

[...] After taking into account the fatuities of much of the English dubbing (into a sort of stage Cockney), it is clear that a considerable act of butchery has been committed. This may not be one of De Sica's major works, but it obviously deserves greater respect than has been accorded to it in this version. (J.W. 1956: 87)

Moreover, when a title had more commercial characteristics, thus revealing a greater potential than that of the narrow British art-house circuit, it was distributed at the same time within two different cinema circuits, with two different translation



modalities: subtitling for art houses, and dubbing for mass-market halls. This was the case of Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1946) and Giuseppe De Santis' *Riso Amaro* (*Bitter Rice*, 1949), among others: after the success of their first run with English subtitles in art cinemas, these films were re-released in a dubbed English version after two years, and screened in big-market halls.

While subtitling was considered the best option to enable the audience to appreciate the realism and foreign authenticity of Italian art works, British film critics did not appreciate these dubbed versions. Dubbing was judged "irritating" (MFB Critic 1949: 12), "inadequate" (MFB Critic 1955: 7), and even "stilted" (MFB Critic 1960: 142), among others. Moreover, it was accused of blurring and destroying "the realism" (MFB Critic 1955: 173) of these films, as well as "the delicate background of local life against which the action takes place" (MFB Critic 1963: 52).

Despite film critics' aversion to dubbing, the number of Italian art films distributed in the UK in their English-language version increased during the Sixties and Seventies. Due to heavy structural transformations which occurred in the British film industry, a given title had to show its success more quickly than in the previous decades, thus being distributed within the mass-market circuit instead of a niche and selected market.

As a consequence, big circuits started to control most of the market in terms of production, distribution and exhibition of films, with the resulting closure of local and independent cinemas. This obviously influenced the way Italian art films were distributed in the UK, as shown in a *Sight and Sound* article published in the 1970s, in which the journalist foresees a substantial reduction of subtitled films in the British market:

How much can anyone afford to introduce foreign language films of quality into Britain? Any independent distributor considering bringing in a subtitled colour feature today would [...] lose more than £500. [...] Rising costs and falling audiences suggest that within two years, maybe only one, there could be virtually no more subtitled films imported in Britain. (Hill 1977: 220)

In addition to that, from the early Sixties, American companies started to have a direct economic interest in Italian films, buying both large quantities of titles for their home market and their distribution for the UK.

American distributors preferred to have an increasing number of Italian films dubbed into English in order to satisfy the internal demand and be suitable for American audiences in big cinema halls; as a consequence, since British companies bought films from the US, Italian titles were firstly dubbed in American-English and then distributed in the UK with dubbing.

British film critics did not appreciate this choice, especially when referring to Italian art films. As pointed out in an article on Luigi Comencini's *La ragazza di Bube* (*Bebo's Girl*, 1963): "the dubbed voices are, as usual, an American idea of what Italian should sound like in English" (MFB Critic 1965: 185).



As will be shown in the following sections, the above-mentioned restructuring of the British film market during the 1960s and 1970s and the resulting choices in terms of audiovisual translation modalities also affected the masterpieces of one of the greatest Italian art directors of all times: Federico Fellini.

4. TRANSLATING FELLINI: FROM 1950S TO 1970S

As for the British market, Fellini's drama *La Strada* (1954) was his first film to be imported in the UK and reviewed by the British press as the one which inaugurated his success in this country. The film opened at the Curzon in Mayfair (London) with English subtitles, running from January 1955 to February 1956, and later appearing regularly in a number of different art-house cinemas always in the subtitled version.

The decision to distribute this film in its original version with English subtitles seems to be in line with Fellini's neorealist canons, and this clearly emerges from the words of British film critics. The first film review appeared in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* described *La Strada* as "a most accomplished example of Italian neo-realism", where "camerawork, locations, decor and characterisation all contribute to a compelling atmosphere of hard-bitten reality" (J.W. 1956: 5). In *The Spectator*, Graham (1955: 20) also highlights Federico Fellini's neorealist roots with "a fine, heart-breaking film, which returns to the harsh realism of Italy's first post-war achievements", as well as the director's ability to depict an Italian picture of "cheap fairs, derelict sites, and street corners".

While in the UK the film was only screened with English subtitles, in the US, after the great success of its subtitled version at the Fifty-second Street Trans-Lux, *La Strada* was also released in a dubbed version in 1956. According to American film reviews, this choice seems to be due to marketing reasons: "In its original form, equipped with subtitles, the imports will never escape the art circuit straight ticket. Dubbed, however, and properly exploited, foreign films are at the point where they can tackle the American competitor on equal terms" (Hift 1958: 25). As will be further discussed in the following section, the major American home video distributor *The Criterion Collection* also re-released Fellini's *La Strada* in the 2000s with optional English dubbing.

After his first success, other works by Fellini were released in London the following year: *Il bidone* (*The Swindlers*, 1955) at the Astoria, and *I Vitelloni* (*Spivs*, 1953) at the Cinephone. Considering their deep roots in the Italian post-war context, according to British film reviews, it is not surprising that they were both distributed in their original versions with English subtitles. In his first review of *Il bidone*, Gillett (1956: 149) emphasised the "recognisable social comment" identifiable in the film, which can be detected also in *I Vitelloni*, according to film critic Isabel Quigly (1956: 59): "This is one of the profoundest social commentaries I have met in the cinema – the portrait, piercingly accurate, of a generation and a country's dilemma". Quigly (1958: 57) also emphasised Fellini's "power of observation" in *Le Notti di Cabiria* (*Cabiria*, 1957), released at the Cameo-Polytechnic in 1958: its subtitled version was able to preserve the "essential ingredient of Italian happiness, very much an Italian characteristic".



Fellini's greatest success in the British market was undoubtedly achieved in the 1960s with *La Dolce Vita* (1959), which was screened at the Curzon at the beginning of December, 1960. Despite being distributed by the American company Columbia, the film was screened in the UK only with English subtitles. The reasons for this choice may be due to the characteristics of Fellini's film, also according to British film reviews: the director was able to offer a current and critical picture of the Italian country like "an observer of cramped but rich corners of Italian life" who created "a social document, a political manifesto, a sock in the eye to Church, State, high society, café society, the gutter press, the modern age, Italy, the West, etc." (Quigly 1960: 18).

As happened with neorealist titles imported into the UK in the 1950s, as discussed in the previous section, film critics once again saw the subtitled-Italian art cinema as an opportunity for the British audience to live, understand, and appreciate something real, authentic, and foreign. One of the most representative articles is undoubtedly "Room at the Top", appeared in *The Spectator* in 1960, where Bailey (1960: 5) described Italy's economic, political and social situation using Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* as reference point:

Meanwhile, though the northern half of Italy grows richer, the south gets poorer; and there are other symptoms that all is not well. These have been brought out into the open in the controversy over Federico Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*. This film, which portrays the dissolute parties of the Via Veneto set and gets in some hard blows at the Church and popular press, is having a tremendous box-office success.

In the US, as it happened with *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita* was first released in a subtitled version by Astor Pictures and then re-released in a dubbed version by American International in 1966 for more commercial theatres. The English-language version was promoted as "Now for all to see. [...] For those exhibitors who know a money show!" (Hannan 2016: 166), thus both attracting the American mass audience and highlighting the 'commercial appeal' of dubbing. According to the American reviews of the film, Fellini had no control over the English audio track, which was re-edited at Titra Sound Studios in New York (Van Order 2009: 62).

If in *La Dolce Vita* Fellini depicted Italy after the economic boom of the 1960s, in his 1970s works the Italian director mainly relied on fantasy, offering a completely different narrative where he has "only two subjects: himself and the cinema" (Forres 1981: 173).

Interestingly, while Fellini's 1950s works have been distributed in the UK with English subtitles, as previously discussed, the three major works of this new phase imported into the British market, *Satyricon* (1970), *Roma* (1972) and *Casanova* (1976), were all premiered only in a dubbed version, at the Prince Charles (London). This choice may be due to two main reasons. The first one is strictly linked with the characteristics of these films – especially if brought into comparison with Fellini's 1950s and 1960s titles – and the resulting marketing needs. British film critics often compared the strong realism of the director's first films with the surrealism of Fellini's



second phase, and the representation of a completely fictional world: “Fellini parades before us the larger-than-life characters which his imagination has fondly created out of the tawdry truth” (Hudson 1973: 17) so that “the whole becomes a sort of dream progression through which one dimly perceives points of reference” (Malcolm 1970: 12). Moreover, considering the restructuring of the British film market occurring in the 1970s, distributors decided to exploit the explicit sexual contents of these titles more than their ‘artistic’ value, which would have been difficult to grasp by the average viewer: “Even more difficult for the average audience to take is the resolute rejection of any illusion of realism in the film” (Greer 1977: 26).

Therefore, taking into account their characteristics and the need to be properly marketed, these films were released in cinemas specialised in *risqué* titles instead of sophisticated art houses, and dubbing was seen as the best choice to quickly achieve commercial success.

This seems to be confirmed by the fact that another film by Fellini was imported into the UK in the 1970s: *Amarcord* (1973). Despite being distributed by the American company Columbia, and despite “recreating a fantasy vision of his home town during the fascist period” (Rosenbaum 1974a: 2), this title was described as close to the neorealist tradition of Fellini’s first films, so much so that “the director largely made it [the film] for as well as about the inhabitants of his home town” (Rosenbaum 1974b: 195). Interestingly, with respect to Fellini’s films of the same decade, *Amarcord* was premiered in its original version with English subtitles, simultaneously at the Curzon and at the Warner West End, as it happened to Fellini’s 1950s and 1960s titles.

The second reason is strictly linked with the previous one, since Fellini himself slowly became aware of the potential of dubbing to make his films achieve commercial success.

During the immediate post-war period, Fellini extensively declared his firm opposition against dubbing in favour of subtitling, especially for preserving the authentic realism and typical ‘Italianness’ of his titles: “Fellini was aware of the cultural problems inherent in dubbing. He knew that the subtleties of a script about growing up in a small Italian town were going to be lost and all but an Italian audience” (Goldfield 2009)¹.

Fellini also signed a manifesto presented in February 1967, in Amalfi (Italy), at a conference on film language and the sound film promoted by the Italian magazine *Filmcritica*. This manifesto was also published in 1968 by the British magazine *Sights and Sounds*, and accompanied by an article which discussed, among other issues, the relationship between dubbing and Italian art films; once again, dubbing was seen as a limitation to the original and authentic foreignness hereby represented (Nowell-Smith 1968: 146).

However, in the 1970s, it seems that Fellini understood the potential of dubbing for his surreal and *risqué* films, and the British press underlined Fellini’s involvement with the English-language version of *Casanova*. While he had no control over the American versions of *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita* and the British version of *Satyricon*, which

¹<<https://paulgoldfield.wordpress.com/2011/01/10/dubbing-fellini/>> (15 October 2016).



was distributed with a “sort of banal, mid-Atlantic dialogue which so irritated English audiences” (Greer 1977: 26), Fellini personally directed the English-language dubbing of *Casanova*: “In mid-February, Federico Fellini arrives in London for the dubbing of the English language version of his new film, *Casanova*” (Greer 1977: 26).

The traditional dichotomy between dubbed/popular versus subtitled/art films is then less clear when it comes to dealing with Fellini’s films exported to both the UK and the US, and the picture becomes even more complex if we consider their re-releases over the years and subsequent new translations.

As is well known, one of the problems with audiovisual material is copyright. Consequently, when re-releasing old films, it is often easier and even cheaper to commission a new translation instead of purchasing an existing one.

Another important factor which is strictly linked with commercial reasons, is technical. With the passage from analogue to digital technology and the expansion of the DVD market, new editions often offer reprinted credits, restoration of frames, higher video and audio quality, among others. Consequently, the translations of old audiovisual products also require technical improvement.

Moreover, when referring to those old films which are inseparable from the historical context in which they were made, the existing translations of the original dialogues may need linguistic updating.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, which will be further discussed in the following section, existing translations may be ‘improved’ by taking advantage of the new tools now available to audiovisual translators.

5. RETRANSLATING FELLINI: FROM 1970S TO 2000S

When referring to audiovisual texts, the term retranslation identifies a second or subsequent translation of the same source text in the same target language which may imply both a retranslation of the same AVT modality and a change in the translation modality initially selected (Zanotti 2015: 110).

As for the UK, the three films dating back to the 1970s (Fellini’s *Satyricon*, *Roma* and *Casanova*) have been all re-released in DVD format with English subtitles, with no option to be dubbed in English, thus changing the translation modality initially selected by British distributors during the 1970s.

As for Fellini’s 1950s-films, they have been all re-released exclusively with English subtitles; this means that the original choice made by British distributors for their first release in the British market has been respected. Despite that, some interesting differences can be detected and Fellini’s *La Strada*, his first film to enter the UK, offers interesting examples.

Working at the British Film Institute’s National Archive in London, I collected a 35mm version with English subtitles of *La Strada*, which had formally entered into the BFI’s inventory in 1972 (Target Text 1). According to the BFI Officers, this version is then the oldest currently available distributed in the British market, considering the release year of the film in the UK (1955). Moreover, I also collected the latest available version



of the film distributed in the UK with English subtitles, at the time the materials were collected, and dating back to 2009 (Target Text 2); the time span between this two versions is 37 years.

From a technical point of view, it is true that the DVD subtitles have been improved by using a sans serif font, which is clearer and more legible with respect to the serif font used in the 1970s version and which harks back to intertitles during cinema’s silent era. Moreover, in the case of DVD subtitles, characters are shadowed in order to be more visible against very light backgrounds (*La Strada* is a black and white film).

The number of subtitles is almost the same in the two versions, with 802 subtitles in the 35mm-version and 797 in the DVD. Interestingly, the detected maximum number of characters per line is also the same: 37 in both versions.

Despite these similarities, the older version has a very low percentage of subtitles distributed over two lines: 15% against 33.6% in the DVD. In addition to that, in the 35mm version dialogue subtitles are totally absent, while in the DVD they account for 44.4% of all two-line subtitles.

As for the absence of dialogue subtitles in the 1970s version, which is reflected in the higher number of one-liners (84.7% against 66.3% in the DVD), this may be due to the fact that dashes had not been used to indicate dialogue subtitles yet – due to the absence of shared subtitling practice codes. This seems to be confirmed by the subtitler of the 1972 film version of *La Strada*, John Minchinton, who did not even consider the option to write two speakers’ dialogue in the same subtitle: “If a few words are spoken rapidly, followed immediately by a few words spoken by another character, and so on, the subtitles are, perforce, of short duration – sometimes only one second” (Minchinton 1993, in Morgan 2001: 161).

While it is possible to clearly detect an improvement across time from a technical point of view, also considering subtitling conventions introduced over the years, the picture becomes less clear when we focus on translation choices.

In both versions proper names, when not omitted, are kept unchanged in the subtitles, thus simply transferring them into the target language as it normally happens. However, this choice could not be taken for granted since, in the optional English audio track of the Criterion *Amarcord* re-release, some of the protagonists’ names have been changed in the new translation: *Gradisca* became *Si-Vous-Plaît*, *Volpina* became *Venus*, and *Biscein* became *Pinwheel*.

Going back to *La Strada*, it is interesting to focus on the following difference between the two English-subtitled versions:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1	TARGET TEXT 2
ZAMPANÒ: Buongiorno, signorina Gelsomina.	Good morning, Signorina Gelsomina.	Good morning, Miss Gelsomina.
GELSOMINA: Zampanò!	Zampanò !	Zampanò!

Table 1. *La Strada*: Signorina and Miss.



Here Zampanò and Gelsomina are acting a short comic farce, which represents a degraded form of the *commedia dell'arte*, where the two actors clearly belong to two different cultural standings and the character played by Gelsomina frequently corrects the rude man. The epithet *signorina* is used in the original dialogue to strengthen the Italian origins of the clown act, as well as to talk politely to a young, literate and unmarried girl.

While in the oldest target text the Italian word is simply transferred in the subtitles, the new version translates *signorina* as 'miss': the meaning is the same but, by losing the foreign term in the subtitles, the latest translation did not emphasise the 'Italianness' of the film.

Interestingly, some 1950s-reviews of *La Strada* appeared in the British press used the same Italian word to refer to the actress playing Gelsomina, Giulietta Masina: "The little tramp, played by *Signorina* Masina, is the eternally hopeful type, not surprised by cruel turns of misfortune but forever prepared for the best" (Crowther 1957, my emphasis)².

It is possible to find the same situation in *La Dolce Vita*, and its two English-subtitled versions dating back to different periods: the first one dating back to 1980s (Target Text 1) and maintaining the Italian word, and the second one dating back to 2013 (Target Text 2) and translating *signorina* as 'miss':

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1	TARGET TEXT 2
MADDALENA: È arrivato?	Has he come?	Has he come?
BARMAN: Non ancora, signorina.	Not yet, Signorina.	Not yet, Miss.

Table 2. *La Dolce Vita*: *Signorina* and Miss.

As shown in Table 2. above, a person in a low social position (a barman) addresses a young woman belonging to a higher social class (Maddalena, a wealthy heiress). Both solutions (*signorina* and miss) stress the young age as well as the higher social and cultural standing of the woman, with respect to her interlocutor; despite that, the new translation loses the 'foreign gusto' of the term.

Going back to *La Strada*, geographical names are again simply transferred in their original forms in the English subtitles of both versions. As happened with personal names, this is again not surprising since Fellini's trip across Central Italy plays a key role in the narrative of the film. Despite this general tendency, an interesting difference can be detected between the two English-subtitled versions, as shown in Table 3. below:

²<<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9C0CE6DD1138E133A2575AC2A9669D946692D6CF&pagewanted=print>> (15 October 2016).



<i>SOURCE TEXT</i>	<i>TARGET TEXT 1</i>	<i>TARGET TEXT 2</i>
ZAMPANÒ: Viene giù un temporale! Qual è il paese più vicino?	602 Where is the nearest village? There's going to be a storm.	575 A storm's brewing. Is it far to the nearest village?
NUN: C'è Magliana, diciotto chilometri. Ma bisogna passare attraverso le montagne.	603 Magliano, 18 kilometres away. 604 But you must cross the mountains.	576 Not so far, but the road's through the mountains.

Table 3. *La Strada*: Magliana.

Magliana is an area located in the South-West periphery of Rome and the DVD version omits the geographical element, thus losing the explicit reference to Italy. On the contrary, the oldest version tries to be faithful to the original context of the film, but it wrongly renders Magliana with 'Magliano' (with the vowel 'o'). This is due to the fact that the subtitler worked without the film script, as stated by the translator himself: "The film you are working on is from one of the worst periods of Italian cinema professionalism because they did not have written dialogue lists or translations; we translated from the soundtrack" (J. Minchinton, personal communication, February 13, 2015).

It is also interesting to see how elements related to the Italian cuisine detected in the film have been translated differently in the two versions:

<i>SOURCE TEXT</i>	<i>TARGET TEXT 1</i>	<i>TARGET TEXT 2</i>
THE FOOL: Anna... t'aspetto in trattoria, eh?	291 Anna. I'll wait in the restaurant.	277 Anna, I'll wait at the inn.
ZAMPANÒ: Per me pastasciutta e abbacchio.	126 For me spaghetti and lamb.	132 Pasta and mutton for me.

Table 4. *La Strada*: Food.

As for the first example, a restaurant is nowadays generally more elegant and expensive than a *trattoria* but, in the years following the Second World War, eating at a *trattoria* was often considered a privilege for the upper-class (Battisti and Alessio 1957: 57); this could then justify the solution found in the oldest subtitles ('restaurant'). If we take De Sica's film *Ladri di Biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*, 1948), the higher social status of an Italian *trattoria* during the post-war period with respect to modern times is even more evident: Antonio and his son Bruno would like to eat a pizza but they wrongly entered a *trattoria*, thus being forced to choose from an expensive menu.

The inns were historically small rural buildings providing lodging for travelers as well as for their horses; today, the term refers to a small and simple hotel generally located in the outskirts of the city, where there are few other accommodations. Since a *trattoria* is now seen as a very simple and cheap restaurant, my hypothesis is that the



DVD subtitler opted for 'inn' in order to emphasise the unsophistication of the place. This solution departs from the original context of the film, when a *trattoria* was considered an expensive place to eat.

As for the second example, the term *abbacchio* identifies a popular dish made of milk-fed or suckling' lamb (generally sheep between the ages of 4 and 12 months), which is usually roasted in the oven. On the contrary, sheep older than 12 months is no longer considered lamb but either 'hoggett' or 'mutton', both of which have a stronger flavour. As a consequence, the oldest subtitles seem to more closely render the Italian dish with respect to the modern version, which slightly departs from the original context of the restaurant scene.

It is also interesting to note that the 1970s version, instead of literally translating the term *pastasciutta* as 'pasta', as in the case of the DVD version, specified the meaning of the dish, using the word *spaghetti*, which is an icon of the Italian cuisine. Since *spaghetti* became available in Britain at the end of the Second World War, the 'foreign' gusto of the word could be fully appreciated by the British audience in the 1970s, also thanks to an entire film genre named after this famous pasta – the Spaghetti Western.

As previously anticipated, while British distributors only released English-subtitled versions of *La Strada*, the major American home video distributor The Criterion Collection (or simply Criterion) re-released Fellini's *La Strada* with English subtitles and optional English dubbing, featuring the voices of Anthony Quinn and Richard Basehart.

Interestingly, this solution was advertised by the American distributor as "the way foreign films should be presented to the English-speaking public" (Saltzman 1989)³; despite that, film reviews appeared in the Criterion online forum do not always agree with the American company. Generally, it seems that the English dubbing was judged as a shorter version of both the original Italian text and the English subtitles; since subtitles cannot be turned off, the American audience could easily compare the two different translation modalities.

The English audio track is sometimes shorter with respect both to the original one and to the English subtitles, thus eliminating some lines to synchronise dialogues with movements of the mouth (Van Order 2009: 63). This is apparently not surprising, since this kind of adaptation is frequent in dubbing, but Fellini followed a singular procedure regarding dialogue during filming, a technique called the 'number system' or 'numerological diction': "Instead of lines, the actor has to count off numbers in their normal order" (Betti 1976: 185). Then, since shooting was done without sound, dialogue was added later together with music and sound effects; as a consequence, even if both Anthony Quinn and Richard Basehart were English-speaking actors, they were not saying the actual dialogue lines. Table 5. below provides an interesting example, among others:

³ <http://articles.latimes.com/1989-12-08/entertainment/ca-289_1_la-strada> (15 October 2016).



<i>SOURCE TEXT</i>	<i>BACK TRANSLATION</i>	<i>ENGLISH SUBTITLES</i>	<i>ENGLISH DUBBING</i>
ZAMPANÒ: Fa freddo. Siediti lì, prendi un po' di sole.	ZAMPANÒ: It's cold. Sit down there, get a little sun.	691 It's cold. 692 Sit down there in the sun.	ZAMPANÒ: Yeah, sit down.

Table 5. *La Strada* (Criterion Collection): English dubbing.

Since Quinn clearly does not pronounce anything close to the literal translation both in terms of number of syllables and mouth movements, the solution provided in the English dubbing is very short with respect to both the Italian audio track and the English subtitles.

In addition to that, the voices chosen by Fellini in the original version of the film not only express characters' personalities, but also play a symbolic function (Van order 2009: 64): Zampanò's voice is associated with drums, representing animal instincts; The Fool is identified with the violin, and represents the intellect; Gelsomina is associated with the pathos of her trumpet's song, and represents innocence and purity.

Consequently, in the English-language version of the film the original symbolic nature of the protagonists is undermined, especially in the case of Gelsomina: the voice chosen for the English dubbing is "childishly high, squeaky, and insecure" (Van order 2009: 65), thus losing the lyrical depth of the character.

6. FINAL REMARKS

Since films are "conceived, produced, distributed and consumed within specific economic and social contexts" (Kochberg 1999: 14), this paper has first demonstrated that any decision regarding the translation modality chosen for a given film does not happen in a vacuum, and that it is not possible to establish fixed categories. As a consequence, the straightforward duality between subtitling versus dubbing for art-house and popular cinema respectively, is too simplistic.

The UK and the US, for example, have historically adopted subtitling and dubbing as needed. In fact, even art-house cinema is still commercial cinema, depending on profits rather than the more intangible rewards of status and prestige (Cardullo 2009: 77) and art films – after having proved a greater commercial potential than that of the narrow British art-house circuit – were also or exclusively released as dubbed copies, generally being criticised by the British press.

Against this background, it is also necessary to take into account the restructuring of the British cinema market occurred in the 1970s. The international film industry started to be controlled by the Americans, and with the decrease in the number of titles produced in Hollywood, US companies tried to compensate for this



loss by taking control of foreign film distribution. The result was that Italian films – also those that the British audience was accustomed to watch with subtitles – were firstly dubbed in American English, and then distributed in the UK.

As for Fellini's works, it seems that those titles which had a more realistic vein were distributed with English subtitles in art-house cinemas; on the contrary, those which strongly departed from the tradition of Neorealism were screened in big cinemas hall with English dubbing. In addition to that, Fellini himself slowly became aware of the potential of dubbing to make his films achieve commercial success, especially those which could attract a less sophisticated audience also for their daring and *risqué* contents.

When dealing with re-releases and subsequent retranslations of Fellini's films over the years, the picture becomes even more complex. British and American distributors, for example, made different choices in terms of preferred audiovisual translation modality: as for the former, subtitling with no dubbing option; as for the latter, subtitling and optional English dubbing. The reason may rely on the fact that US audiences are traditionally not comfortable with subtitles, especially for home releases; according to Samuel Goldwyn Films' Peter Goldwyn, subtitled films are successful in theatres but only earn a small amount of revenue outside cinemas: "That's always been the case. And I think it is just about the subtitles" (Goldwyn, in Kaufman 2014)⁴.

New editions often call for a retranslation of old materials, and these new translations are frequently advertised by distributors as 'improved' versions. Following the study conducted in the present paper and mainly focused on subtitling, the passage from analogue to digital technology as well as the new tools available to the cinema industry have undoubtedly led to significant improvements in terms of legibility, mainly thanks to the use of new fonts and shadowed characters for black and white films.

Subtitling conventions have also contributed to the appearance of dialogue subtitles, which were absent from the 1970s version; according to the translator of the old subtitles, this led to the production of flashing subtitles on screen, with the risk of not allowing viewers to have enough time to read the content.

In addition to that, the high percentage of one-liners in the older version, if compared to the 2000s version and considering the original dialogue, also means that the 1970s subtitles had to condense the original information dramatically with respect to the DVD.

Besides technological developments, linguistic updating is often considered as a further reason for retranslating old audiovisual materials. However, the present study has shown that new translations of old films can sometimes lead to a departure from their original context, as well as a loss in terms of 'foreign authenticity', which had

⁴ <<http://www.indiewire.com/2014/05/the-lonely-subtitle-heres-why-u-s-audiences-are-abandoning-foreign-language-films-27051/>> (15 October 2016).



been so widely appreciated in the post-war period. Is this an actual improvement, as advertised by distributors of new releases and new film translations?

When analysing film translation from an historical perspective, it is fundamental to take into account the original context of both the titles under scrutiny and their first translations, thus including the study of the original context of production, distribution, and reception of a given translated film. Historical analyses should also include the study of re-releases and subsequent retranslations, thus considering the new context of production, distribution, and reception of the translated film. As for the latter, viewers' opinions on and experience of the new translations may offer an interesting starting point on which to further develop the present study, and in order to try to answer the above-mentioned question.

Broadcasters, audiovisual translation companies, distributors, and the academic field have been looking into the ways in which the quality of audiovisual translations can be improved, especially from a technical point of view (number of characters, use of different colours, reading speed, etc.). As a consequence, studies focusing on retranslations may offer the opportunity to further deepen our understanding of viewers' experiences as well as to focus on audiovisual translation quality from a broader perspective.

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