

Subtitling Multilingual Films. The case of Lives of the Saints, an Italian-Canadian TV Screenplay

Baldo, Michela

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Baldo, M 2009, Subtitling Multilingual Films. The case of Lives of the Saints, an Italian-Canadian TV Screenplay. in F Federici (ed.), *Translating Regionalised Voices in Audiovisuals*. Aracne Editrice, Rome, pp. 117-135.
<<http://aracneeditrice.com/pdf/9788854828858.pdf>>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Chapter 5

Subtitling Multilingual Films. The case of *Lives of the Saints*, an Italian–Canadian TV screenplay

Michela Baldo
University of Manchester, UK

2 Introduction

Over the last ten years, international co-production has become an increasingly frequent way of making television programmes and feature films, and it has been encouraged by many governments through international treaties (Orr 1992: 1). Canada has co-production treaties with many European nations including Italy (although this country is generally not a major partner)¹. The TV film *Lives of the Saints* is a Canadian–Italian co-production involving the Toronto based Capri Films and the Italy-based RTI (Reti Televisive Italiane) in association with CTV (Canadian Television). It was shown on Italian TV (Canale 5) in 2004 under the title *La terra del ritorno*, and it was telecast in Canada in January 2005 on the CTV Network. The film was based on the award-winning trilogy by the Italian–Canadian author, Nino Ricci² and starred Italian actresses Sofia Loren and Sabrina Ferilli.

For Canada the main advantage of co-production is a budget that enables competition with US products in the international market (Hoskins et al. 1997: 130), but in the case of *Lives of the Saints* the reasons for this choice seem to have been different. The director Jerry Ciccoritti and the producer Gabriella Martinelli, both Canadians, decided to collaborate on the four-hour mini-series because it dealt with an experience which was personally familiar to them, that of emigrating to Canada as children with their Italian parents. One of their chief aims in the film was to distinguish the Italian Canadian immigrant experience from the Italian American one. The two are often confused, because of the dominance of American films in the cinema and TV (<http://www.ninoricci.com>). The choice of making a TV mini-series might therefore have been deter-

mined by the intention to more effectively oppose misperceptions and stereotypes circulating about Italian-Canadians.

Given these premises, the aim of this paper is to investigate the ways in which *Lives of the Saints* portrays the specificity of Italian-Canadian immigrant experience. Like much Italian-Canadian writing in general³, Ricci's trilogy (on which the film is based), explores the duality experienced by second-generation Italian immigrants. This duality arises from a split of the self into opposing loyalties: one faithful to Canadian values conveyed through formal education in English (self promotion and individualism for instance), and the other to Italian values (patriarchal roles, attachment to family) taught at home through dialect or Italian (Pivato 1994: 121; Tuzi 1997: 14). Writing in this context therefore represents an attempt to translate the Italian language of emotion into the Canadian-English sphere of consciousness in order to resolve and negotiate a linguistic and cultural conflict (Pivato 1994: 121-122). Translation consequently becomes a tool which enables the act of writing; it becomes a metaphorical tool of representation (Verdicchio 1997: 110), an instrument of self-awareness as argued by Pivato (1994: 127): 'the most important task for Italian-Canadian writers has been the uncovering and translation of their immigrant experience as an act of self-discovery'.

In *Lives of the Saints*, as in Ricci's trilogy of novels, the concept of translation is inscribed in the English-Canadian version of the film, and not only in the film's translation into Italian (co-production involves translation because films are intended for audiences in at least two separate countries). Translation is best represented in the film through multilingualism or language interplay. In *Lives of the Saints* there are at least three languages: Canadian-English, the main language (one of the two official languages of Canada), standard Italian, and Italian dialects. This poses a problem for the average Canadian spectator, who might not be competent in more than one language, and for the screen translator, who has to deal with a mixture of languages. One of the solutions adopted in the English version of the film, in order to circumvent the language limitations of the implied Anglophone spectator, is the use of subtitles. Although an integral part of the filmmaking, subtitles were not used for the screening of the film in Italy. The Italian film industry always uses dubbing, and the film was dubbed into Italian with no signalling of the Canadian-English language presence in the source text, but with the retention of the Southern Italian dialects.

Interlinguistic differentiation and film translation, either in the form of subtitling or dubbing, thus represent an interesting area of research for cultural studies (Heiss 2004: 208). In order to understand how Ital-

ian-Canadian identity is constructed in *Lives of the Saints* we need to investigate specifically the role of multilingualism, and its particular relation to subtitling. Subtitles should be analysed in order to determine why they appear in certain scenes and not in others and why they are phrased as they are. My approach treats subtitling as an integral part of the original film, a tool used in devising scenes and not a subsequent addition to an already finished product.

I shall begin with a brief review of the theoretical concepts utilised in the present paper, involving the notion of code-switching (or language variation) and the art of subtitling.

2. Codeswitching, Focalisation and Translation

The film *Lives of the Saints*, like Ricci's trilogy of novels, is characterised by the use of code-switching, which is defined in linguistics as 'the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation' (Milroy and Muysken 1995a: 7).

Code-switching in the film is precisely the shift from Italian and Southern Italian dialect into Canadian-English and vice versa. However, along with standard Italian and Southern Italian dialects and regiolects⁴ (Heiss and Leporati 2000: 44) mainly from Molise Region, we have the use of a further code, an Italian/English-Canadian ethnolect (Salmon Kovarski 2000: 68). This is the English language spoken by Italians who emigrated to Canada in the 50s and the 60s and is characterised by prosody, intonation and phraseology which differ from other varieties of English spoken in the country⁵.

In the novels and in the film, linguistic code-switching represents the switch between two contrasting cultural worlds: Italy and Canada. This device is neither arbitrary, nor simply a mimetic device used to give the reader or the spectator a flavour of the author's heritage language, but has a more symbolic function. It signals a character's perspective, in terms of emotions and feelings, and is therefore an aspect of focalisation (Määttä 2004: 319). Focalisation has been thoroughly analysed in literature (Genette 1980; Rimmon-Kenan 1983; Bal 1985); it refers to the lens through which we see characters and events in narrative and shapes the way we think and feel as we read. The concept was borrowed from film studies⁶ where it describes both the position from which a scene is perceived and the emphasis given to particular visual elements of the screen image (such as adjusting the camera and projector to create maximum clarity). Focalisation is also connected to the narratological concept of

plot, to the way elements of the story are selected and placed in an order that suggests causation (Somers and Gibson 1994: 59–60). By focussing on certain elements of the plot the literary author or the filmmaker points the reader or the spectator towards important aspects of the story or the characters. Multilingualism, therefore, is a function of focalisation, since it reflects the constant changes in perspective, contributing to the polyphonic structure of novels and films and to their ideology.

Multilingualism is also related to the concept of translation. Indeed it requires it, since the Anglophone reader, or spectator, may find it difficult to understand Standard Italian or Southern Italian dialects. In the film, therefore, as in the written texts, there are various translating strategies to allow the Anglophone viewer to follow the story. The principal techniques used in this film are as follows:

a) *Untranslated dialect or Italian*. Usually the meaning of untranslated dialogue is conveyed through devices such as *cushioning and embedded translation*⁷, borrowing the terminology of Camarca (2005: 233–234), or *contextual translation*, borrowing the terminology of Rudin (1996: 141). According to these techniques a form of translation is achieved, for instance, by inserting code-switching in an answer to a question so that it appears clear from the answer what the question was and vice versa. Translation is also helped by screen images, a device which can't obviously be used in written texts.

b) *Translation of sentences*, performed by characters who interpret for others who can't speak or understand English or Italian.

c) *Subtitling*, a technique which can be compared to the translations into English which follow stretches of discourse in Italian or Southern Italian dialect in the written trilogy.

In this paper I will focus on subtitling, referring only briefly to the other strategies.

3. Subtitling Multilingual Films for TV

Subtitling can be defined as the conversion of the spoken (or written) source text of an audiovisual product into a written text, which is added onto the images of the original product, generally at the bottom of the screen (Gottlieb 1998: 247). Subtitling can be both 'intra-lingual' – when the target language is the same as the source language – and interlingual (the case of our film), i.e. when the target language is different from the

source language. The conversion of spoken into written text is a process that involves the rhythm of the dialogue and the meaning of the words. Other written texts, such as subtitles, are derived from the original dialogue, but they are subject to various constraints, such as time and legal constraints, and they may receive the same amount of attention (Gottlieb 2003: 145–146). Subtitling is a technique employed in many films, while

In the film *Saints*, we see the subtitling of the dialogue. This will be a specific reference to the subtitling of the dialogue in the film. The subtitling will be compared to the translations into English which follow stretches of discourse in Italian or Southern Italian dialect in the written trilogy.

In the film *Saints*, we see the subtitling of the dialogue. This will be a specific reference to the subtitling of the dialogue in the film. The subtitling will be compared to the translations into English which follow stretches of discourse in Italian or Southern Italian dialect in the written trilogy.

source language (Gottlieb 1998: 247). Since subtitling implies a conversion of spoken into written language, much of the meaning conveyed by the rhythm and timbre of speech is inevitably lost. In subtitling 'the dialogue has to be reduced to meet the technical conditions of the medium and the reading capacities of the viewers' (De Linde & Key 1999: 48). In other words, it is subject to technical constraints such as spatial restrictions (subtitling takes up a maximum of two lines) and temporal ones, derived from the need for synchronicity and the reading speed of viewers. This reduction does not simply involve omitting elements of dialogue, but also a reconstitution of information through paraphrasing (De Linde & Key 1999). Such condensing is not simply the result of technical constraints, but of ideological and cultural factors; the moral, political and legal bias of the translator and/or the translation commissioner, the amount of work the translator expects the audience to do in order to receive the work, or the dominant attitude to film translation (Fawcett 2003: 145-146). Some scholars like Remael (2003: 225) go even further, claiming that subtitles 'tend to enhance the underlying ideology of the films, while censoring a few critical voices in the process'.

In order to understand the kind of ideology underlying *Lives of the Saints*, we need to examine the linguistic strategies observable in the subtitling of this film. For the purpose of our analysis only a few of them will be considered: these are expansion, a technique used in culture specific references to make explicit the meaning for the reader; transfer, applied when the pace of delivery is slow and the spoken material is very short; paraphrasing, reformulation of the phraseology of the original when it can't be reconstructed in the same syntactic way in the target language; condensation and omission (or deletion) of certain expressions, employed when the speech is fast or translation almost impossible.

In *Lives of the Saints*, the use of these techniques is due to various factors. Condensation is dependent on technical constraints (space and time) and on the tendency to reduce, in writing, repetitions which are typical of oral conversation, although features of orality such as emphasis and tone of voice can be preserved and transcribed, using, for example, italics question marks and dots (Ivarsson 1992). The use of expansion, on the other hand, is related to the problems surrounding the cultural implications of the source language. When a source language is a dialect, as in some parts of *Lives of the Saints*, an effective strategy of translation is to compensate, in the target text, for the textual effects of the dialect in the source texts (Hervey & Higgins 1992: 24-25). This can be achieved by making more explicit in the target text the implication in the source text, or by reproducing the rhetorical effects of dialect with a change in register.

In *Lives of the Saints*, the techniques used to support the subtitles must be analysed along with the position of the subtitles throughout the film. Such a position is crucial to an understanding of the film's ideology and also of the role played by code-switching in its construction.

4. *Lives of the Saints* and a Methodology of Analysis

Since the 1930s, cinema has made use of fictional literature, adapting best sellers or resurrecting unknown works from obscurity (Orr 1992: 1), a strikingly successful process (Orr 1992: 5). There is therefore a link between novel narrative and film narrative but also a disjunction. Written texts might inspire films adaptations but films tend mainly to be presented as autonomous works, as though in order to succeed they have to create the work afresh⁸.

The film adaptation *Lives of the Saints* makes some major changes to the novels' plot, such as the disappearance of some characters, expansion of the figure of the schoolteacher Teresa (who is also Vittorio's aunt), and changes in the brother and sister's incestuous affair. However, the film follows the novels insofar as it narrates the experiences of an Italian family before and after they immigrate to Canada. Vittorio's childhood in 'Valle del Sole', a Southern Italian village in Molise, revolves around his mother Cristina, whose husband Mario has emigrated to Canada, and his Aunt Teresa, also the village school teacher, who gives him the book *Lives of the Saints* as a gift when he emigrates to Canada. During the trip by boat, Vittorio's mother dies giving birth to Vittorio's stepsister, Rita. The children join Vittorio's father, Mario, who works on a farm in Ontario, and Vittorio's uncle Alfredo who lives in the same farmhouse. Life proves difficult for the family since Vittorio is unable to show his love for the stepsister in front of his father, as her existence is a constant reminder of his wife's infidelity. As a consequence he becomes more and more alienated from his father, and in his twenties leaves the paternal house, fleeing to the far north. His isolated existence is shattered when he is forced to return home upon hearing of his father's suicide. At the funeral he is reunited with Rita who deals with her own demons and who, through an intervention by Teresa, meets her biological father. When this goes badly she turns to Vittorio for comfort in a sudden and passionate seduction. Vittorio is forced to come to terms with this encounter and eventually with the truth of his own parentage. Only when he returns to 'Valle del Sole' is he able to shed light onto these family secrets, one of which is that Teresa is his true mother.

In the film we encounter interlingual subtitling in only seven scenes, a small proportion of a four hour film. I shall separate subtitles into two categories. Firstly, those appearing when the code-switching is the outcome of a major change in setting or an introduction in the scene of a character from abroad and having thus a mimetic/realistic function. Secondly, those used in scenes where the code-switching (mainly dialectal words or Italian with a Southern Italian accent) is performed by characters in crucial moments of the story. Transcriptions of the spoken language in the seven scenes analysed, along with the subtitles accompanying them, are provided. The type of language used in the spoken conversation is indicated in brackets; the abbreviation 'SP' stands for spoken language, and 'Sub' for subtitles.

5. Analysis

The film *Lives of the Saints* contains four sequences in which we have a major change in setting. The first two scenes, (called here A and B), concern Vittorio's and Cristina's trip to Canada. Before scene A these characters speak English to each other, but as soon as they meet the crew of the boat the dialogue switches into Italian. A doctor asks Vittorio's mother when the baby she is carrying is due, and she claims she does not understand his English:

Scene A

Cristina (SP): 'Che dice? Io non parlo inglese' [informal Italian]
Sub: What's he saying? I don't speak English.

The conversation with the Irish doctor is interpreted by a nurse who diplomatically does not translate Cristina's anger towards the doctor:

Cristina (SP): 'Ma perché, e'ha paura di essere troppo ubriaco per farmi partorire?' [informal Italian]
Sub: Is he afraid he'll be too drunk to deliver it?

and she reports instead the following words:

Nurse (SP): 'She thanks you for being concerned'. [formal English]

In this dialogue, code-switching signals a change in setting and seems therefore to be motivated by a realistic intent. Since the characters are

Italian, once they leave their village and immigrate to Canada they are supposed not to understand automatically the English spoken by the foreign crew of the boat. The realism carries with it also the necessity of long stretches of conversation in Italian and therefore calls for translation, in the form either of interpreting or subtitling. If subtitling seems originally the outcome of a constraint (the necessity to make the dialogue understood), it is nevertheless a rich tool that can be wielded in order to depict the characters and to construct the scene. Subtitling occurs with code-switching, which represents a shift toward the focalisation of events by Vittorio and Vittorio's mother. Such a focus is loaded with feelings of hostility and distrust towards the doctor, and these feelings are accentuated by the juxtaposition of two languages, English and Italian, which mark different points of view, one embodying values associated with Italy and the other values associated with English speaking countries (Ireland, North America). Code-switching serves to characterise Cristina as a defiant character and contributes also to the construction of the plot, since her suspicion of the incompetence of the doctor anticipates the sinister unfolding of events that lead to her death in childbirth. Subtitling also marks an intervention from outside, introducing an external focalisation (more likely that of the screen translator or his/her commissioner) which can emphasize the gap between Cristina's view and the doctor's, by juxtaposing the subtitles with the spoken words (the nurse's translation is a sort of censorship of Cristina's words, offensive towards the doctor). The Italian used by Cristina is very colloquial, with a slight Southern Italian accent, in tune with her characteristic defiance and in contrast with the formality of the nurse. Subtitling omits Cristina's words 'ma perché' ('but why?'), which stress her antagonism even more, but mirrors Cristina's informal language by using contractions in English ('what's' and 'he'll').

Later, during the sea storm, Cristina asks Vittorio to call for the drunken doctor to help her give birth. The nurse acts again as interpreter between the doctor and Cristina and the doctor and Vittorio. In this scene (B) there are some instances of Italian spoken by Cristina which are not translated or subtitled, where she complains that she would have had the baby on her own if the doctor had not arrived, and where she is given technical instructions by the nurse. In addition there are other parts of the dialogue in Italian relayed by the nurse to the doctor, and the rest is subtitled. The subtitles, therefore, seem to appear when there is a need for clarification, either because the viewer cannot infer what is happening from the images or because the words spoken in Italian are linked to crucial details of the plot and convey important ideas.

Scene B

- Cristina (SP): 'È maschio o femmina?' [standard Italian with a regional accent]
Nurse (SP): 'È una bimba' [standard Italian]
Sub: - Is it a boy or a girl?
- It's a girl.
Nurse (SP): 'Vieni a vedere tua sorella' [standard Italian]
Sub: Come and look at your new sister.
Nurse (SP): 'No, è bella come la tua mamma' [informal Italian]
Sub: No. She's as pretty as your mother.
Nurse (SP): 'Ha gli occhi blu' [standard Italian]
Sub: And she's got beautiful blue eyes.
Cristina (SP): 'Speriamo rimangano blu' [standard Italian]
Sub: I pray they stay blue.

The subtitles refer to the birth of Cristina's daughter, the outcome of her illicit affair with a German soldier. Cristina is happy that the baby is a girl with blue eyes, a response that comes to be relevant for the meaning of the story. The scene points to Cristina's rebellion against the patriarchal values of the Southern Italian village, 'Valle del Sole', she is fleeing from (because of the villagers' hostility towards her due to her illicit affair). In this village the wish for the mother-to-be is to give birth to a male baby. Her happiness at having a girl baby contradicts the expected reaction to the formulaic question 'It is male or female?' (A question, used by peasants to enquire about the sex of new born livestock, which loses its connotations in the subtitling)⁹, second, she is proud of the fact that her baby daughter bears the trace of her betrayal of the husband, since she has blue eyes like her foreign lover. The blue eyes, which are an uncommon physical trait in Southern Italy, represent freedom from the constraints of the village and are a symbol of the new life in Canada that Cristina is seeking for herself ('I pray they stay blue'). The word 'beautiful' attached to 'eyes' is added in the subtitles to make clear, for the English speaking Canadian viewer, the implication contained within it, the full meaning of a colour which refers not only to Cristina's illicit affair and the social law she broke but also to the foreignness and particularity of such a colour within a Southern Italian cultural context. The scene is focalised through the eyes of Vittorio (the camera fixes for a while his scared face and we see what he sees) who fears that the baby sister might have the head of a snake, in line with the villagers' superstitions about the moment when the baby was conceived, which was also the moment in which Cristina was bitten by a snake. The nurse's reassurance to Vittorio that the baby is not a monster but is beautiful and has beautiful blue

eyes seems to be an attempt to show the ironic contrast between the vision of the child, imbued with an immature belief in the superstitions of the village, and the vision of the adults on the boat who are unaware of his fears. This scene is important, since later actions and conflicts will be rooted in the feelings surrounding this newborn baby and the mystery it carries with it.

The need for clarification is therefore achieved in the subtitles through the technique of expansion (adding 'beautiful' to 'eyes'), which helps to focus on what the film director possibly considers the core concepts of the film. Focalisation (internal and external) shifts constantly among different perspectives and contributes to the creation of the multifaceted Italian-Canadian subject. The encounter between Cristina and the doctor, loaded with fears and ill-omened premonitions, anticipates the unfolding of the plot. In the film there are a further two scenes (here called **C** and **D**) where the need for subtitling is mainly due to mimetic considerations, since there is a character from abroad who is not familiar with the new setting and who speaks a different language (standard Italian or an Italian dialect). In scene **C** the boy Vittorio arrives in Canada and in front of his father, while looking at his new baby sister in the cot, comments:

Scene C

Vittorio (SP): 'È bella come mamma' [informal Italian with a strong regional accent]

Sub: She's pretty like mama.

The comment carries a subtle irony, originating from the clash between Vittorio's focalisation and his father's. The child's innocent response to the beauty of the baby, who reminds him of his mother, and whose birth celebrates life despite the rules imposed by society, contrasts with the feelings of Mario, who does not recognise the beauty of such a creature since he can't claim to be her biological father, and is trapped in feelings of anger towards her. Subtitling preserves the informality of the speech through the word 'mamma' transcribed with a single m ('mama'), which can be either considered as a way to render the child's language and his focalisation or as a misspelling which shows the changes undergone by the Italian language spoken abroad.

Scene **D** concerns the arrival of Teresa, Vittorio aunt's and a former schoolteacher¹⁰. She speaks in Italian and dialect as she is supposed, as a newly arrived immigrant, not to be competent in English (although in the Southern Italian village of 'Valle del Sole', she spoke mainly English).

Scene D

- Teresa (SP): 'Come fa friddu' [Southern Italian dialect]
Sub. This country's so cold!
Teresa (SP): 'È quella la bambina che mi ha fatto attraversare tutto
l'oceano' [Italian]
Sub. So this is the little girl who made me cross the ocean.
Teresa (SP): 'Ah Rita, come il libro che t'ho dato' [informal Italian]
Sub. Oh, like the book I gave you.

In the subtitles of her conversation with uncle Alfredo, there are omissions of parts of the dialogue, considered irrelevant maybe because they belong to ritualistic speech, such as greetings for arrival and formulaic conversation which we can infer easily through the images. The only sentence subtitled is about Teresa's shock at being in a new environment with different weather ('this country is so cold'). The other two subtitles refer instead to the reasons of her arrival in Canada, to take care of Rita who has been neglected by Mario, Vittorio's father. In the film (departing mere from the novels) the name Rita is given to the girl by Vittorio and he takes it from the book *Lives of the Saints* that has been given to him as a gift by Teresa before his trip to Canada. Whereas the meaning of the name Rita linked to the life of the Saint Rita¹¹ (and to the beliefs of Southern Italians about the Saints) is spelled out in the novels, in the film there is a change. First the name Rita is given to the girl by Vittorio and not by the aunt; second the emotional link between Teresa and Vittorio is strengthened in the film, since Vittorio chooses a name from the book given to him by the schoolteacher. In the film, therefore, Vittorio appears more attached to the sister than he is in the novels (where his feelings towards her are more mixed). He also seems more attached to Teresa, who will reveal to him as his true mother at the end of the film, contrary to what happens in the novels. Vittorio's book *Lives of the Saints* represents, therefore, the cohesive device which links past and present and hints at the facts which will follow – the discovery at the end of the film that Teresa is the true mother of Vittorio. By subtitled these parts of the dialogue (and leaving other parts in English or without subtitling) there is intent to stress the crucial importance of this information for the construction of the plot.

In the film there are another four subtitled scenes (here called E, F, G, H) where there is no change in setting. In scene E Mario lashes at Vittorio since the child gets irritated at the refusal of his father of calling his sister Rita by name.

Scene E

- Mario (SP): 'Prendi quella contrara.' [standard Italian and Southern Italian dialect]
Sub: Take the girl....

The subtitling focuses on the order Mario gives his son to take Rita to bed. He calls the child with a dialect word, 'contrara'¹², which denies the child's identity as a person. The switch to dialect represents a shift in focalisation; it hints at Mario's beliefs as a Southern Italian man, torn between his fatherly duties and the impossibility of accepting the little girl as his daughter because she carries the shame of the wife's betrayal. The standardised English translation 'take the girl', although losing the flavour given to the scene by the dialect, reproduces the impersonality of Mario's relationship with his step daughter. In scene F we have another reference to the shame of betrayal in the dialogue between Mario and his sister Teresa.

Scene F

- Mario (SP): 'Traditrici maledette' [Italian with strong Southern Italian accent]
Sub: You destroyed my family!

Mario discovers the letters written by his wife Cristina to her German lover, hidden for years by Teresa to protect her sister in law. He is furious, shouting that women are 'damned betrayers' (my back translation). Again the code-switching represents the shift towards his focalisation of events as a Southern Italian man who can't accept such a betrayal, since it collides with his idea of being a proper man (a collision that eventually leads him to commit suicide). The subtitled words are quite different from the spoken ones. We can call this technique a mixture of paraphrasing and expansion, compensating for the strong Southern Italian accent with a change in phraseology. The words 'You destroyed my family' instead of a more literal translation such as 'damned betrayers' suggest an attempt to make the English/Canadian audience grasp the dramatic meaning of the full implication of betrayal for a Southern Italian man (and to justify Mario's overwhelming anger). The betrayal of Cristina is loaded with personal shame for Mario not having been able, as a man, to take revenge for his wife's betrayal. These concerns are repeated in scene G where Mario talks to his sister about the concept of respect.

Scene G

- Mario (SP): "Tu ti ricordi Salvatore Amellio?" [Informal Italian]
Sub. You remember Salvatore Amellio?
Mario (SP): 'Aveva rispetto, era rispettato' [Italian with strong Southern Italian accent]
Sub. He demanded respect!

Salvatore Amellio gained respect because he shot his wife and her lover as a result of her betrayal, therefore complying with the unwritten Southern Italian rules of seeking vengeance as a way of reappropriating a lost sense of honour, thus reinstating a sort of order. Mario wishes he had done the same but the scene implies that he could not have, since he did not know his wife's lover but also because in Canada this would not have had the same implications as in Italy. The first subtitle reproduces the oral feature of discourse by using a non grammatical form ('you remember') while the second changes the meaning of the source text by implying that Amellio had to exercise some form of pressure to obtain respect, instead of earning it, as implied by the words 'Aveva rispetto' (he was respected). This Italian expression is, however, ambiguous and can also mean 'he was respectful toward others or towards the non written rules'. The subtitle thus, not only alters our perception of the character (making him more aggressive), but also loses the full implication of the Southern Italian concept of respect which should be bidirectional.

The concept of respect is tied up with that of vengeance, the latter considered to be the correct tool in order to address problems. Respect is also linked to the concept of shame, carried mainly by women. There is, however, another scene where the concept of shame refers to ungratefulness. The adult Vittorio is quarrelling over the will with his uncle Alfredo, who has shared his father's house and has been his father's business partner for over twenty years, and throws him out of the house.

Scene H

- Alfredo (SP): "Tu me cacci fuori a me?" [Southern Italian dialect]
Sub. You're throwing *me* out?
Alfredo (SP): "Dopo vint'anni" [Southern Italian dialect]
Sub. After twenty years?
Alfredo (SP): "Vergognati!" [standard Italian]
Sub. You should be ashamed!
Alfredo (SP): "anche tu vergognati!" [standard Italian]
Sub. and you too!

In this scene the shame invoked by Alfredo (we have a shift towards his point of view on the events) is the shame of not being grateful and respectful towards a member of the family (a sacred institution), and is considered another type of betrayal. Alfredo in the film speaks a Southern Italian dialect (from Molise region), which characterises him as an unsophisticated man, prone to raising his voice although more friendly and light-hearted than Mario. Code-switching is, therefore, a device used by the filmmaker/film producers to colour the character, often producing humorous effects. This scene gains particular meaning if compared with many others in which Alfredo's speech is not translated or interpreted at all (when for example he talks to his wife and children around the dinner table) since those other moments are probably not considered important in the understanding of the story. The prosodic effects of dialect are lost in the subtitles, except for the first where there is an attempt to preserve them by stressing the word 'me' (as in the spoken language) using italics.

To summarise, in the second group of scenes analysed (E, F, G, H) the subtitler and the subtitling commissioner's intent is to highlight moral values extremely important in order to understand the film. However, in some cases, as expressed specifically in the subtitling of dialect in the scenes F and G, there is an attempt to emphasise the negative implication of these values, by accentuating the theatricality of the situation and the aggressiveness of the men involved (see 'you destroyed my family', 'he demanded respect').

6. Conclusion

This paper set out to investigate the specificity of the Italian-Canadian immigrant experience by looking at the role of language interplay, and its treatment in translation, in the TV film *Lives of the Saints*. The main reason for using Italian and a Southern Italian dialect in this film is that they function as a statement of identity. However, since code-switching is related to focalisation and therefore involves constant shifts in perspective, it can be used to undermine stereotypes by juxtaposing contrasting images associated with a particular language. The Italian-Canadian immigrant is constantly shifting between the often-opposing values of two (or three) different languages and cultures, in an attempt to express him/herself and to reconcile the inevitable sense of splitting (Pivato 1994: 124). This movement from one language to another destabilises the English language by hinting at something foreign and other

than itself; it often contributes to multiplying the ambiguity of words, signalling the loss of Italian and Italian dialect contaminated and changed by exposure to Canadian-English. Code-switching therefore shows the contradiction inherent in any pretence of portraying a fixed and stereotyped idea of Italianness or Canadianness. The film's dialogues highlight the complexity of Italian-Canadian identity. Characters such as Cristina (scene A and B), for example, are suspicious towards some English-Canadian values, but at the same time they challenge other Southern Italian behavioural codes. Although we encounter more stereotypical characters such as Alfredo (in scene H), others are less defined, like Mario, who is trapped in the impossibility of conforming to the stereotype of the Southern Italian man, having emigrated to Canada.

Thus, in *Lives of the Saints* the cultural and technical effects of multilingualism, that is the constant shifts in position and mingling of perspectives, are preserved. Code-switching, due to mimetic intents and readership constraints (scenes A, B, C, D), requires forms of translation, one of which is subtitling. Subtitling, in contrast to dubbing, involves the least interference with the original and permits the importation of the flavour of a foreign language. However, the decision to subtitle some dialogue while leaving other speeches untranslated often represents an ideological intervention on the part of the film production (as in scenes E, F, G, H) in order to stress those concepts, which are important for the understanding of the plot. There is both a wish to transmit a piece of dialogue through the foreign language, and a need to clarify the meaning of that message which risks not being fully understood. Subtitling is a way of compounding the already complex focalisation of the film by adding an external focalised perspective in order to signal to the viewer the crucial events of the story that he or she needs to take into account in following the narrative plot. This is shown by subtitling techniques such as expansion, which aims to clarify the dialogue, and by the desire to recreate in English the effects and the implications of colloquial Italian and Italian dialect. The subtitling permits what in written narrative is made possible by the nuances of literary language. In that way it can be used, as in scene A, as a source of ironic effect and as a means of substantiating characters. Subtitling therefore contributes to enhance the effects of multilingualism, adding more complexity to the already multifaceted construction of characters and plot.

In *Lives of the Saints* there has been an attempt to portray the linguistic and cultural specificity of the Italian-Canadian immigrant experience. This operation has also been reinforced, I believe, by using the format of the mini-series, which tends to segment the story into quasi-inde-

pendent episodes and is thus better equipped than cinema to reproduce on screen the intricacies and rhythms of the written narration (Chaniac 1996: 31). Another advantage has come from subtitling, which represents both a way of preserving a foreign language and accent and of stressing the ideology of the film. However, subtitling the film has not proved an easy task, because of the implications of the languages used.

Notes

- ¹ The main partners for Canada the UK and France, followed the USA and Germany (Hoskins et al. 1997: 129).
- ² The film *I Lives of the Saints* is the adaptation of the trilogy of novels by Nino Ricci, *Lives of the Saints* (1990), *In a Glass House* (1993) and *Where She Has Gone* (1997).
- ³ Italian-Canadian writing is a body of literature produced by writers of Italian descent living in Canada. This writing exists in English, in French, in Italian and in some Italian dialects and shares many thematic similarities with reference to the discourse of ethnicity, since it mainly explores the dilemmas of the Italian-Canadian identity formation. Italian Canadian literature began in about 1975 with the work of Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, who was also one of the founders, in 1986, of the Association of Italian-Canadian Writers. To date, this genre has received very little attention, in spite of the fact that it offers a rich body of texts for the study of language and identity (Pivato 2008).
- ⁴ Regiolect is defined as the language spoken in a certain region in Italy and is characterised by the mixture of local dialect and regional varieties of standard Italian (Heiss and Leporati 2000: 44). The alternation of Italian language and Italo-Romanian dialect in the speech of the same speaker is a very common phenomenon in everyday conversation in contemporary Italy (Berruto 1997: 394). In the film we have mainly the presence of a Molisan dialect and a Molisan regiolect, although the regions of provenance of the actors and actresses of the film (Campania, Lazio etc.) complicates the situation. However, we can also say that Molisan dialect belongs to the group of centre/Southern Italian dialects, specifically to the subgroup of Southern intermediate dialects, and shares many characteristics with other Southern Italian dialects from the regions of Abruzzi, Puglia, Campania and Basilicata (Coveri et al. 1992: 35).
- ⁵ Ethnolect refers to the ethnic belonging of a speaker born in a place where the language he/she speaks is not his/her mother tongue (Salmon Kovarsky 2000: 68).
- ⁶ Focalisation refers to 'the point behind the lens where the light rays from a point being photographed converge to form an image' and by extension also 'to the location from which a subject will record sharply on film'. It can also refer to 'the degree of sharpness and definition of the image' (Konisberg 1988: 133).
- ⁷ 'Embedded' translation and 'cushioning' are terms used by Camarota (2005: 233-234) to talk about similar phenomena. By cushioning she refers to the action of embedding the foreign word (in this case the Italian one) into the English text as to make the meaning virtually explicit. This technique is used in narration more than in direct speech where is more common to find embedded translation. The structure of the conversation (questions and answers) permits easily to infer the meaning of the sentences since answers give insights into questions and vice versa.

- ⁸ It is difficult to transpose narrative into film since, according to Orr (1992: 8), 'the narrator retroactive imposition of a desperate reason upon the volatility of emotions is what gives the narrative its power'.
- ⁹ The subtitles report the words boy or girl, which, I would argue, comply with the English-speaking target culture expectations. This simplification, however, makes disappear the contrast between the nurse's answer ('è una bimba', 'it's a girl', a term with a social meaning) and Cristina's question, which uses a more generic term in referring to the sex of the baby (female or male).
- ¹⁰ In the film these two roles are linked while in the book the schoolteacher is not Vittorio's aunt.
- ¹¹ Santa Rita, as narrated in the film and in the novels, is a woman who had married a violent man who treated her and her sons very badly. She had prayed for him to become a better man and for her sons, who wanted revenge once their father was killed in a fight, to renounce their vengeance plans. After they died she entered the convent. In Southern Italy Santa Rita is supposed to be the saint of impossible causes; men pray to her when they need to be forgiven and she is believed to protect women when they are going to have children. The life and the beliefs about this saint bear resemblance to the life of Rita and her mother Cristina in Ricci's trilogy.
- ¹² In the regiolect of Molise the word 'contrara' means 'girl' and derives from the Indoeuropean 'kwatara', a girl who carries 'kwatrar' (water). For the general features of Molise regiolect see Raso (1994) and Iannacito-Provenzano (2006).

References

- BAKER, Mona (ed.). 1998. *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. London/New York: Routledge.
- BAL, Mieke. 1985. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- BERRUTO, Gaetano. 1997. 'Code-Switching and Code-Mixing'. In MAIDEN & PARRY (1997): 394-400.
- BOLLETTIERI BOSINELLI, Rosa Maria, Christine HUISS, Marcello SOFFRITTI & Silvia BERNARDINI (eds.) 2000. *La Traduzione Multimediale: quale traduzione per quale testo?*. Bologna: Clueb.
- BRUNI, Francesco. 1994. *L'italiano delle regioni*. Turin: Utet.
- CALHOUN, Craig (ed.). 1994. *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford/Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- CAMARCA, Silvia. 2005. 'Code-switching and Textual Strategies in Nino Ricci's Trilogy', *Semiotica* 154-1(4): 225-241.
- CHANIAC, Régine. 1996. 'Au commencement était l'adaptation', *CinémaAction* 79: 28-36.
- COVERI, Lorenzo, Antonella BENUCCI & Pierangela DIADORI (eds.). 1992. *Le varietà dell'italiano*. Rome: Bonacci.
- DE LINDE, Zoe & Neil KEY. 1999. *The Semiotics of Subtitling*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.

- DOLLERUP, Cay & Anette LINDEGAARD (eds). 1992. *Teaching Translation and Interpreting: Training, Talent and Experience*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing.
- FAWCETT, Peter. 2003. 'The Manipulation of Language and Culture in Film Translation'. In PEREZ (2003): 145–163.
- GENETTE, Gerard. 1980. *Narrative Discourse*, tr. Alan Sheridan. New York: Columbia University Press.
- GOTTLIEB, Henrik. 1992. 'Subtitling. A new University Discipline'. In DOLLERUP & LINDEGAARD (1992): 161–170.
- . 1998. 'Subtitling'. In BAKER (1998): 244–248.
- HEISS, Christine. 2004. 'Dubbing Multilingual Films: A New Challenge?', *Meta* 49(1): 208–220.
- HEISS, Christine & Lisa LEPORATI. 2000. 'Non è che ci mettiamo a fare i difficili, eh? Traduttori e dialoghetti alle prese con il regioletto'. In BOLLETTIERI BOSINELLI *et al* (2000): 43–65.
- HERVEY, Sandor & Ian HIGGINS. 1992. *Thinking Translation*. London/New York: Routledge.
- HOSKINS, Colin, Stuart MCFADYEN, Adam FINN & Anne JACKEL. 1997. 'Evidence on the Performance of Canada/Europe Co-productions in Television and Film', *Journal of Cultural Economics* 21: 129–138.
- IANNACITO-PROVENZANO, Roberta. 2006. *Il dialetto molisano di Villa San Michele (IS): Fonologia, morfologia, sintassi e lessico*. Ottawa: Legas.
- IVARSSON, Ian. 1992. *Subtitling for the media*. Stockholm: TransEdit HB.
- KONISBERG, Ira. 1988. *The Complete Film Dictionary*. London: Bloomsbury.
- MÄÄTTÄ, Simo K. 2004. 'Dialect and Point of view: The Ideology of Translation', *Target* 16(2): 319–339.
- MAIDEN, Martin & Mair PARRY (eds). 1997. *The Dialects of Italy*. London/New York: Routledge.
- MILROY, Lesley & Pieter MUYSKEN. 1995a. 'Introduction: Code-switching and Bilingualism Research'. In MILROY & MUYSKEN (1995b): 1–14.
- MILROY, Lesley & Pieter MUYSKEN (eds). 1995b. *One Speakers, two Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ORR, John. 1992. 'Introduction: Proust, the Movie'. In ORR & NICHOLSON (1992): 1–9.
- ORR, John & Colin Nicholson (eds). 1992. *Cinema and Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- PÉREZ, María Calzada (ed.). 2003. *Apropos of Ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology – Ideologies in Translation Studies*. Manchester/Northampton, MA: St Jerome Publishing.

- PIVATO, Joseph. 1994. *Echo: Essays on Other Literatures*. Toronto: Guernica.
- . 2008. 'A History of Italian-Canadian writing'. Athabasca University: <http://www.athabascau.ca/cll/research/hisitcan.htm#_what> [accessed 1 April 2009].
- RASO, Tommaso. 1994. 'Gli Abruzzi e il Molise'. In BRUNI (1994): 605-638.
- REMAH, Aline. 2003. 'Mainstream Narrative Film Dialogue and Subtitling', *The Translator* 9(2): 225-247.
- RICCI, Nino. 1990. *Lives of the Saints*. Dunvegan: Cormorant Press.
- . 1993. *In a Glass House*. New York: Picador Usa.
- . 1997. *Where She Has Gone*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- RIMMON-KENAN, Shlomith. 1983. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Methuen.
- RUDIN, Ernst. 1996. *Tender Accents of Sound: Spanish in the Chicano Novel in English*. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue.
- SALMON KOVARSKI, Laura. 2000. 'Tradurre Pernoletto: come doppiare in italiano l'"accento ebraico"'. In BOLLETTIERI BOSINELLI *et al.* (2000): 67-84.
- SOMERS, Margaret R. & Gloria D. GIBSON. 1994. 'Reclaiming the Epistemological "Other": Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity'. In CALHOUN (1994):37-99.
- TUZI, Marino. 1997. *The Power of Allegiances. Identity, Culture and Representational Strategies*. Toronto: Guernica.
- VERDICCHIO, Pasquale. 1997. *Devils in Paradise: Writings on Post-Emigrant Cultures*. Toronto: Guernica.

Websites

- Author's website: <<http://www.ninoricci.com>> [accessed 1 April 2009].
- Lives of the Saints* webpage: <<http://www.ninoricci.com/Lives%20of%20the%20Saints%20Press%20Kit.htm>> [accessed 1 April 2009].