I Couldn't Help But Wonder: Does Fansubbing Or Official Subtitling Do More Justice To S.A.T.C. Bawdy Puns?

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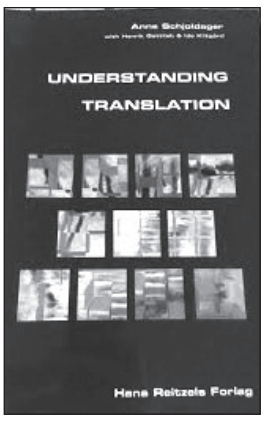
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Subtitling in Romania, a subbing stronghold surrounded by dubbing countries, is a phenomenon yet to be studied thoroughly by the autochthonous academia. Amateur subtitling or fansubbing, despite its prevalence among the younger generations, has been barely touched upon. What this paper aims to achieve is to shed a light on the manner in which these two audiovisual translation solutions have evolved in this geographic context with a view to highlighting professional and amateur subtitlers' approach to translating bawdy puns featured in American sitcoms. By drawing parallels between a series of eight vertical and horizontal instances of wordplay based on homonymy, homophony, and paronymy found in several episodes of Sex and the City, this article seeks to test the hypothesis that amateur subtitlers, unburdened as they are by any form of audiovisual regulation, are more likely to produce daring renditions of ribald words and phrases than their official omologues. Through these analyses, this paper also aspires to pave the way for research into this relatively new area of study in the Romanian translation studies literature and to elicit interest in how the autochthonous subtitlers and fansubbers of movies and sitcoms tackle instances of language that bring about moral and translational challenges.

Keywords: bawdy, fansubbing, pun, Romanian, Sex and the City, subtitiling, translation, wordplay.

In *Understanding Translation*, Anne Schjoldager explains 'subtitling' as the "diamesic translation in polysemiotic media (including films, TV, video . . .) in the form of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in sync with the original dialogue" (208), where 'diamesic' refers to the transfer of source-language speech to target-language writing. At the other extreme lies 'dubbing,' which Georg-Michael Lukyen defines as "the replacement of the original speech by a voice-track which is a faithful translation of the original . . . which attempts to reproduce the timing, phrasing and lip movements of the original"



(73). Romania, unlike other European countries such as France, Italy, Spain or Germany (Baker and Hochel 75) and its fellow communist nations, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic (Dries 36), tends to favour the former for a multitude of reasons.

In the Western world, for instance, dubbing is frowned upon because, among others, it costs a lot more than other AVT [audiovisual translation] strategies, it takes longer to produce, it robs the original film of its authenticity (Tveit 92), while allowing for "censorship and other kinds of textual manipulation" (O'Connell 126). In Romania, however, bootlegged videocassettes featuring dubbed Hollywood films, more often than not, by a single translator, Irina Margareta Nistor, who was also a national television employee, were the sole alternative to the heavily censored films broadcasted on TVR, the only TV station existing in Romania during the communist period, as portrayed in Ilinca Călugăreanu's docudrama *Chuck Norris vs. Communism* (Dwyer and Uricaru 207, 210-211).

Subtitling, on the other hand, was the preferred AVT mode of the communist party as, when coupled with content deletion and textual alteration, "interference of the 'original' [was] kept at a minimum" (207). Yet, despite its being used by the former regime as an instrument of censorship, subtitling has remained a pervasive phenomenon after the Romanian Revolution of 1989, so much so that prominent audiovisual translation scholars such as Josephine Dries (36), Jorge Díaz-Cintas (50), and Hayssam Safar (8) list it under the category of countries where subtitling prevails. This, however, is not to say that attempts have not been made to exploit the momentum dubbing enjoyed in the 80s: between 1998-1999, ProTV carried out an experiment, dubbing the Mexican telenovela *Mirada de Mujer* by using an entire cast of professional voice actors, and in 1995, national cinemas ran the first ever Romanian dubbed animation movie, *Babe* (Dwyer and Uricaru 209).

While the trend of dubbing television series has not picked up, it has become the norm for children's films and cartoons, following a ten-year hiatus. From 2007 onward, US animation companies and TV stations such as Cartoon Network, Walt Disney and DreamWorks have regularly dubbed their productions, contracting local popular actors to lend their voices to the characters of major feature films as a means of luring and softening up young Romanian audiences (210), which in 2009, organized an online petition against dubbing of Cartoon Network programs which amassed more than 25,000 signatures (Varga 2016: 206). By adopting such a translational approach, they argued, this practice would have "devastating effects" on children's foreign language acquisition ability (Dwyer and Uricaru 210), with dozens of web forum members expressing their disapproval with the trend and desire to be able to opt for the original audio content (Softpedia).

Conversely, subtitling has remained "the only intelligent [translational] solution" for all other TV productions (qtd. in Tveit 86), although less than ten years ago, in 2011, deputy Victor Socaciu proposed in parliament replacing subtitling with dubbing in an attempt to preserve national identity (Vulpoiu 150). Unsurprisingly, it was met with heavy criticism on several grounds; much along Western lines, in Romania, this translative mode "is identified with cosmopolitanism, an awareness of foreign languages and cultures, and high levels of education and literacy" (Baker and Hochel 76; Dwyer and Uricaru 210). At the 2003 edition of the Cannes Film Festival in France, a country often seen as a "dubbing stronghold" (Tveit 85), "25 people working in the film industry [were surveyed] about their screen translation preferences. All but two said they favored subtitling" (92), an opinion shared by the vast majority of Romanian film aficionados who "equate [it] with "quality, 'art,' and authenticity" (Dwyer and Uricaru 210). Another factor is the fact that dubbing is "more costly and technically time-consuming" (Riggio 32): subtitling requires a team of two members–an editor and a translator, while that of lip-sync dubbing depends on the cooperation of translators, editors, and voice actors (Luyken 77), luxuries that, as Elena L. Vulpoiu and Nistor note, the Romanian TV industry cannot afford (151; qtd. in Dwyer and Uricaru 210).

Yet, despite priding itself on its status of subtitling nation among dubbing countries, there is a shortage of evidence in Romania as to how much content international, national and local television stations are required to subtitle per year: a TVR report retrieved from the homepage of Romania's National Institute of Statistics shows that the total broadcasting time of the TV series, films and cartoons that aired on TVR in 2015 amassed 8,368 hours. Since Romanian films amount to less than 10% of the total running time allotted to these TV genres, it becomes evident that some 7,532 hours of the full broadcasting time consist of fully subtitled TV series, films and cartoons (Varga 2017: 202-203). This, however, is not to say that they do not come with a series of errors, some grosser than others.

One of the most common such fallacies is the exceedance in the number of characters per line, i.e. more than 42. A few are neither the cases in which subtitles run past the margins of the screen, which tampers with their readability. An equally recurrent issue is subtitle synchronization: many a time, it appears too soon, disappears too quickly or exceeds the maximum screen time. Punctuation is also a source of frequent errors since full stops, contrary to subtitling guidelines, sometimes occur in the middle of the sentence, a blank

space separates exclamation points and question marks from the preceding text, and English-specific double quotation marks are used instead of the Romanian ones. There have been spotted numerous cases in which the segmentation of subtitles is faulty, with no attention being given to the syntax and semantics of the text, which, in turn, impacts negatively the rapid comprehension of the subtitling message. This, when coupled with an improper position, sometimes in front of other text featured in the motion picture, can lead to further issues (207-208).

Not a few are also the cases in which subtitles contain mistranslations: if those commissioned by the state during Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime "constituted instances of deliberate *mis*translation" (Dwyer and Uricaru 219, their italics) and the errors of the era's pirate dubbers were a consequence of their fast-paced work flow (Irina Margareta Nistor 2015), those appearing in subtitles today are the result of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors ranging from, among others, poor skills (xxxRaluca 2006; Lucca 2005) to the lack of formal training in subtitling (Katza 2003; Desirea 2012). It is for these reasons that numerous websites, specially designed for collecting such errors, have been created over the past decade. Online forums dedicate countless threads to this topic as well: Andrei Albu, a member of proz.com, a website targeting freelance translators, recounts how *The English Patient* was rendered, in a National Geographic documentary, as 'englezul răbdător,' which, back-translated into English, reads 'the patient Englishman,' a rendition that betrays, on the one hand, the subtitler's poor command of English and, on the other, his/her minimal general knowledge (2003). Ecaterina Rusnac, a member of the same website, notes how 'seeded player,' a phrase used to denote "one of the outstanding players in a tournament" ("Seeded Player") in the romantic comedy *Wimbledon*, is rendered 'jucător îmbobocit,' which back-translated into English reads 'blossoming player' (2008). If reliability is hardly the norm in the case of official subtitles, it follows only naturally that they can also be found in fansubs.

The unprecedentedly rapid advances in technology that marked the last decade have prompted multimedia translation scholars to pay more attention to the increasingly popular phenomenon of amateur subtitling. More commonly known as 'fansubbing,' it originated in the anime community in reply to the growing global interest in this genre and as a means of compensating for mainstream media's unwillingness or inability to keep up with the demand and/or fast-paced episode production of popular anime shows (Díaz Cintas and Sánchez 37). The term has since come to have a far wider coverage, including, among others, famous TV series, which are usually subtitled "with the aim of providing them as free downloads or video streamings from the Internet, without any authorization from the official producers or distributors" (Liu and de Seta 125). This activity is, more often than not, a collective enterprise, "initiated by self-organized online communities in which participants collaborate with motivations other than monetary" (Jiménez Crespo 76). This is, for example, the case with titrari.ro, a Romanian website "started by four students using their own funds and [which] now includes approximately 70 translators." Self-described as "a project of pure passion for film," the website provides Romanian-language subtitles for the latest films as well as "free downloads of software necessary for using the Romanian-language subtitles . . . , and for adding the subtitles to legally purchased DVDs not intended for the Romanian market," all while also "running an Internet forum where questions can be asked and [subtitle] versions compared, providing free training for beginner translators and awarding a yearly prize for the best subtitles" (Dwyer and Uricaru 217).

Yet titrari.com is hardly the only site to offer such services: the first five pages Google returns for 'subtitrari' feature no less than seven such websites, primary among them being rosa-team.ro, regielive.ro and subs.ro. However, it was titrari.com that came under the spotlight when, in 2009, it was revealed that the then-Romanian president, Traian Băsescu, used to watch films unlicensed for public screenings subtitled by one 'veverița_bc' when travelling on Air Force One (Realitatea). The nickname came as no surprise, since the translator behind it has produced, as of 2009, 450 subtitles (Tabu). Like other star pirate subtitlers such as Biotudor, a Clinical Lecturer in Medicine (qtd. in Jurnalul) and Patronu, "administrator and guru" of titrari.com (Dwyer and Uricaru 217), Robert, the latter's moderator and the IT professional behind 'veverița_bc' strives to "educate viewers between 15 and 30 of age, put differently, the majority of those watching movies online" who commit errors of spelling and grammar frequently (qtd. in Ana-Maria Onisei, my translation). Yet this is not to say that all unofficial subtitles are devoid of errors; Felixuca, a literature graduate and amateur subtitler, explains: "[s]ome websites collaborate with each other, while others are in competition as to which comes up with subtitles the fastest. But the faster they [subtitles] are produced, the more errors they feature" (qtd. in Jurnalul, my translation). When asked about the piracy allegations (Tabu) against their hobby in light of the 2009 presidential scandal, Patronu (Dwyer and Uricaru 217), Avocatul31, a lawyer and amateur subtitler (qtd. in Jurnalul), and veverița_bc (qtd. in Ana Maria Onisei), all agree that, although it is not their desire to stimulate the bootlegged film industry, they operate on the edge of legality. Yet, as Ana Maria Onisei, former editor of *Tabu,* puts it in her interview with

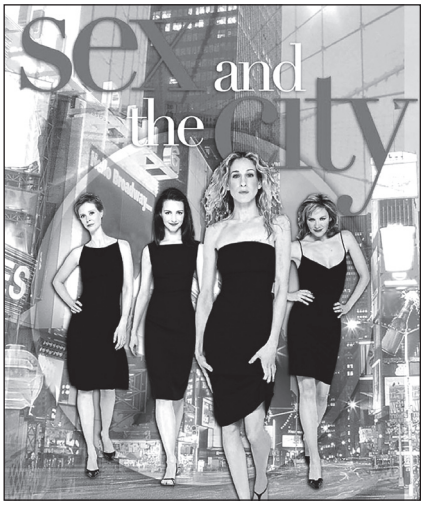
the subtitler behind 'veverița_bc,' titrari.com's average of 30,000 visitors per day and 200,000 downloads of subtitles a month per movie attest to the prevalence of this phenomenon in Romania (Tabu). So far, however, no legal action has been taken against it. As Constantin Vică, PhD student in the philosophy of technology, puts it: "The owner of the film is the only entity to have the right of authorizing the [official] use of a given set of subtitles, yet at the same time, they can't say which set of subtitles I can use. If I had access to bad official subtitles and good unofficial subtitles, why wouldn't I use the latter?" (qtd. in Tabu, my translation).

However, not a few are the cases in which cases of plagiarism appear within the fansubbing industry and, at times, cross-industry. Patronu (qtd. in Dwyer and Uricaru 217), Avocatul31, and veverița_bc (qtd. in Jurnalul) recount how their subtitles are posted on other websites under different nicknames. Avocatul31 remembers that, on one occasion, "a colleague had changed the name of a country [*sic*], writing 'Côte d'Azur' instead of 'Côte d'Ivoire'," and "the next day, subtitles featuring that mistake appeared on a different website under a different nickname" (qtd. in Jurnalul, my translation). The same three star subtitlers claim that there have been cases in which their amateur subtitles have been used for public screenings. In Avocatul31's words: "Somebody told me they had watched the film *Broken Flowers* at 'Eforie' cinematheque [and] at the end [of the film] 'Avocatul31' appeared [on the screen] (qtd. in Jurnalul, my translation).

Since amateur subtitles, unlike official ones, are not subject to the regulations of the National Audiovisual Council of Romania (CNA), one would expect them to propose daring and up-to-date translations of bawdy and/or slang phrases. Yet, the discussion is far more complex than this; Dan Pop, blogger and amateur subtitler, believes that "a swear word you 'read' is a lot uglier, dirtier and harsher than a swear word you 'hear'," and presumes that "the majority of [viewers] have enough knowledge of English . . . to realize that a [source-language] swear word is more profane than the manner in which it has been translated" ("Titrări," my translation). In the commentary on their edulcorated subtitles for *Reservoir Dogs*, Quentin Tarantino's directorial feature debut famed for its frequent use of the word 'fuck,' MCIC and Dappon, the two titrari.com subtitlers who teamed up in 2005 to translate it, advise viewers "who are against 'censorship' of off-colour expressions [to look for] a different set of subtitles" (Titrari.ro). Others such as Felixuca, for instance, have gone to great lengths to translate slang terms in TV series the likes of *The Wire* (Jurnalul). A similar debate exists among professional subtitlers as well ("Invectiva în subtitrare," "Cum traduceti cuvintele obscene in subtitrari?"), with some aiming for 'juicy' translations (Bogdan Honciuc 2007), others claiming that swear words are meant to be heard, not read (Mihaela Bufnila 2007), and still others adapting their translative approach based on their relevance in the context of the film (Cristiana Coblis 2007).

Coupled with Díaz-Cintas's findings that "the TV version of the film [*La flor de mi secreto*] adheres in fact more literally to the original when it comes to translating the sexual[] taboo," (Yuan 88), the statements presented so far serve as a starting point for this article the scope of which is to examine the manner in which professional and amateur Romanian subtitlers have tackled the bawdy puns in the TV sitcom *Sex and the City*. Its framework of reference is Dirk Delabastita's wordplay definition and wordplay taxonomy. He defines the pun as "the textual phenomenon in which certain features inherent in the structure of the language used are exploited in such a way as to establish a communicatively significant, (near)-simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings and more or less similar forms" (57). As for their typology, Delabastita posits the coexistence of two classifications: on the one hand, he differentiates between vertical (paradigmatic) puns, which are featured once within a given textual fragment and horizontal (syntagmatic) puns, the effect of which depends on the (near-)confrontation of two or more punning words within the same portion of text, and on the other, he distinguishes between wordplay based on homonymy, homophony, and paronymy (194). The official subtitles analyzed in the following case studies are retrieved from the *SATC* [*Sex and the City*] episodes found on the HBO Go platform, while the amateur ones are taken from their respective files posted on titrari.com. Their author is listed between brackets at the end of the citations. Before proceeding to examining the corpus in this study, it is necessary to introduce the four female protagonists in *Sex and the City*.

The hit TV series *Sex and the City* consists of six seasons with a total of 94 episodes and was produced by HBO, an American cable TV station. Partially based on the book by the same name written by Candace Bushnell, the sitcom hit the box office and was nominated for more than fifty Emmys and twenty-four Golden Globes. With New York as its setting, *Sex and the City* revolves around "four attractive, fashion-conscious, career-minded and independent female characters" (Østergaard Pedersen 16). Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker) is a fashionista and columnist in her mid-thirties, writing weekly articles for the fictional newspaper New York Star and she also provides the narration for each episode (Hill 204). Cynical Miranda (Cynthia Nixon) is "a hardworking and successful corporate lawyer" (16). Her sardonic personality is balanced by Charlotte's (Kirstin Davis), a hopeless romantic art gallery manager (Hill 204). Sexually



liberated Samantha (Kim Cattrall), slightly older than her other three friends, is a bold and confident executive of her own public relations agency (Østergaard Pedersen 16). Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha have different personalities, with "Carrie sit[ting] somewhere in the middle of the group, demonstrating traits that relate her with each of her friends" (Hill 204).

Carrie's three friends provide her with different perspectives on relationships, men and sexual experiences, becoming a source of inspiration for her articles in which "she tries to make sense of the city's dating jungle" (Østergaard Pedersen 16) and "challenge[s] the conventionally held beliefs regarding appropriate female sexuality and sexual behavior" (Yuan 130). Although scriptwriters or directors of the TV series did not develop the show as a feminist sitcom, "the show addressed many of the key issues and themes discussed by third wave [feminist] writers" (Henry 66): "committed friendships between women" and "the bawdy talk the women engage in about their sexual partners" (Gerhard 43), the mastery with which they were portrayed in the sitcom prompting scholars to state that "few TV series have had such an impact on our contemporary culture as *Sex and the City*" (McCabe and Akass 2). Yet, it is to the translation of the four protagonists' titillating instances of wordplay, "representative," as Kim L.S. puts it, "of the changing face of feminism in televisual discourse" (qtd. in Yuan 104), that this paper now turns.

Example (1) introduces an exchange of lines between Samantha, the most sexually active of the four friends, and a dildo model whom she meets at a party in Los Angeles and who invites her to attend a private launching party, a scene featured in season three, episode thirteen, *Escape from New York*. A vertical bawdy pun based on homonymy, words alike in pronunciation and meaning, yet with a different meaning, featured in their flirtatious dialogue is transcribed below and rendered as follows by an official and an amateur subtitler into Romanian:

Mr. Dildo: Here's an invitation, *come*.
Samantha: I always do.
Officially subtitled [henceforth abbreviated '*OS*'] *Mr. Dildo*: Poftim o invitație, dacă *vrei*.
OS Samantha: Eu *vreau* totdeauna.
Unofficially subtitled [henceforth abbreviated '*US*'] *Mr. Dildo*: Uite o invitație. *Vino*.
OS Samantha: Întotdeauna. (Andreea 2x)

Here, Samantha plays on the denotative meaning of 'to come,' i.e. 'to move or travel towards or into a place' and its connotative sense of reaching coital climax or 'to ejaculate' ("Come," def. 1, 6), an instance of wordplay that undergoes some changes in translation. For instance, the officially subtitled version of this pun proposes a horizontal variant of it where 'to come' is replaced with 'a vrea,' the Romanian equivalent of the source-language 'to want' whose literal meaning, used in Mr. Dildo's line, is confronted with Samantha's use of the figurative sense, through which she expresses sexual interest ("Vrea," def. 3). As is evident, the professional subtitler's version of this flirtatious dialogue preserves the erotic undertones of the original, yet falls short of reaching its high level of bawdy. The unofficial subtitler, on the other hand, loses the bawdy pun altogether in his/her version of their dialogue. To be specific, there is nothing in Samantha's line that shows, like in the original, that she has distorted Mr. Dildo's use of 'to come' to her liking. Yet, his decision to render the verb verbatim could have produced, under different circumstances, what Dirk Delabastita calls a parallel translation, namely a "pun [that] shares either s1 plus s2," (195), since 'a veni,' the target-language counterpart of the English 'to come,' has the same two meanings (*DEX '09*, "Veni," def. 1; *Argou*, "Ejacula"). Had he also used the appropriate form of the verb in Samantha's reply, such as in "Eu vin întotdeauna," for instance, his rendition would have perfectly recreated the level of punning as well as bawdy in the original exchange of lines.

Example (2) features one of Samantha's lines in episode two of the third season, *Politically Erect*. In this context, the four women discuss good-looking politicians, as Carries herself is dating one. In what follows, I will explore the manner in which Samantha's horizontal homonymic pun on 'fuck,' written in italics below, is rendered into Romanian by a professional and an amateur subtitler:

Samantha: The country runs better with a good-looking man in the White House. I mean, look at what happened to Nixon. No one wanted to *fuck* him, so he *fucked* everyone.
OS Samantha: Țara merge mai bine cu un tip arătos la Casa Albă. Gândiți-vă cum era Nixon! Nimeni nu voia să i-o *tragă*, așa că le-o *trăgea* el tuturor!

US Samantha: Țara merge mai bine cu conducători la Casa Albă care arată bine. Gândește-te la Nixon! Nu l-*a vrut* nimeni așa că i-*a făcut* el pe toți. (Myreya9)

In an attempt to explain her views on politics, Samantha exploits the homonymy of the verb 'to fuck' which, literally, refers to 'hav[ing] sexual intercourse with' somebody and figuratively, 'to damag[ing] or ruin[ing]' someone ("Fuck," def. 1, 2), to allude to how Richard Nixon's lack of sex appeal prompted him to make decisions that have since proved to be detrimental to the US populace ("Nixon's Unpopularity"). In the official translation of this utterance, 'to fuck' is substituted with 'a trage,' the slang sense of which is 'to copulate with' (*DER*, "Trage," def. 17) and which, in certain verbal expressions such as 'a trage în piept' (*DCR2*, "Trage în piept") and 'a trage pe sfoară' (*DEX '09*, "Trage," def. I.1.b.), points to the act of misleading and cheating. Although, in this particular context, 'a fute' would have been a more inspired choice in terms of bawdiness and appropriateness of meanings, as it can refer to copulation, deception, as well as retribution ("Fute," def. 1-2, 5, 10), 'a trage' does nevertheless succeed in conveying a message similar to that transmitted by Samantha. Myreya9, on the other hand, resorts to a rather edulcorated rendition of Samantha's utterance. Specifically, the amateur subtitler replaces the first occurrence of 'to fuck' with 'a vrea,' which, in this context, means 'to like someone' ("Vrea," def. 3), and the second with 'a face,' which refers to either the act of deceiving or a meaning similar to that expressed by the second original sense of 'to fuck.'

Example (3) brings forward yet another flirtatious dialogue, at the same party in Los Angeles, this time between Miranda, the voice of reason in *Sex and the City* and a man with a peculiar name, Mr. Dique, an exchange of lines found in the already mentioned episode thirteen of the third season, *Escape from New York*. His vertical bawdy pun based on homophony, i.e. words of different origins that happen to share an identical pronunciation, is translated as follows by two Romanian subtitlers, one professional and the other an amateur:

Mr. Dique: - It's spelled *D-l-Q-U-E*. It's Dutch. And yes, I've thought about changing it.

Miranda: - Well, it could be worse.

Mr. Dique: - How?

Miranda: - If your first name was Little.

OS Mr. Dique: - Se scrie *D-I-Q-U-E* și m-am gândit să-mi schimb numele.

OS Miranda: - Se putea și mai rău.

OS Mr. Dique: - Adică?

OS Miranda: - Dacă prenumele tău era „Micul"…

US Mr. Dique: - Se scrie *P-U-D-Z-A*. Și da, m-am gândit să-l schimb.

US Miranda: - Ar fi fost și mai grav dacă prenumele tău ar fi fost Little („Micul"). (Andreea 2x)

Spelling and faux foreignization are frequent modes of smuggling in and foregrounding erotic allusions, dating back to William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, where Malvolio recognizes Maria's handwriting through the way in which she styles her "C's, her U's, and her T's" (2.5.72-73). Fast-forward four hundred years later and find Britney Spears's *If U Seek Amy*, a song whose very title, pronounced phonetically, spells 'f-u-c-k me' ("If You Seek Amy"). In the context featured above, the allusion to the male sexual organ is signaled twice: first, by Mr. Dique's "And yes, I've thought about changing it" and secondly, by Miranda's "If your first name was Little." Yet, some of the original content seems to be missing from both the official and unofficial versions of this exchange of lines: the professional subtitler eliminates the reference to the origin of Mr. Dique's name, while his amateur counterpart omits not only this piece of information, but also Miranda's first line and Mr. Dique's question. As for their treatment of this instance of ribald wordplay, it is evident from above that HBO's subtitler has left it as such, whereas the amateur translator has opted for an exoticised spelling of the target-language informal, childish term 'puță,' the Romanian equivalent of the source-language 'winkle' ("Puță," def. 1). Although ingenious, his/her translation solution does nevertheless propose a rather toned down version of the original pun. Had he/she transcribed a bawdier Romanian word for penis, such as 'sculă' or 'pulă,' in a way that bears some degree of resemblance to the spelling of traditional Dutch last names, he/she would have produced a perfect target-language counterpart of the original pun.

Example (4) introduces yet another of Samantha's lines, uttered this time in the fourth episode of the third season, *Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl*. Here, the four friends discuss sexual orientations in light of the recent discovery that Carrie is dating a younger bisexual man. Two subtitlers, one professional and the other amateur, render her horizontal homophonic pun on 'tri-/try' as follows into Romanian:

*Samantha***:** I'm a "*tri*-sexual." I'll *try* anything once.

*OS Samantha***:** Eu sunt *tri*-sexuală. Aș face-o și cu *trei* deodată!

*US Samantha***:** Eu sunt „*încearcă*-sexul". *Încerc* totul cel puțin o dată. (Aurafas)

If, in this context, Samantha plays on the different spelling and identical pronunciation of the prefix 'tri-,' meaning 'three' ("Tri-"), and 'to try,' a verb, to express her availability to experience anything sex-related once, in the official rendition of her utterance, she is more specific: through the use of the numeral 'trei,' the

Romanian counterpart of the source-language 'three,' as a replacement for 'to try,' professionally subtitled Samantha alludes to her openness to threesomes, a rendition of the original line that, in spite of its change in meaning and omission of 'to try', retains the level of punning and ribaldry in the protagonist's utterance. Aurafas, on the other hand, uses a hyphenated compound word of his/her own, bringing together the target-language counterpart of the English 'to try' and the word 'sex,' which, coupled with the literal translation of the original 'to try,' expresses an idea similar to Samantha's, albeit less punningly.

Example (5) features a line belonging to Samantha that appears in season five's episode three, *Luck Be an Old Lady*, which expresses her disappointment with her decision of bringing Robert, her serial cheating boyfriend, to Atlantic City, known for its casinos packed with attractive women. Her vertical bawdy pun based on paronymy, namely the near-homophones 'city' and 'titty,' is translated as follows into Romanian by an official subtitler and his/her unofficial counterpart:

Samantha: I don't know what I was thinking, bringing a cheating man to "*Atlantic Titty*."
OS Samantha: Nu trebuia să aduc un bărbat care m-a înșelat în *Atlantic City*.
US Samantha: Nu știu la ce mi-a stat capu', să-l aduc pe omul care înșeală la „*Atlantic Titty*." [sic] (MiSsy_R)

As is evident from above, neither of the two Romanian subtitlers has succeeded in finding an equally punning and bawdy target-language equivalent for the original pun: in the official subtitles, 'Atlantic Titty' becomes the euphemism-free 'Atlantic City,' while the amateur rendition of her line remains unchanged as far as this instance of wordplay is concerned. It should also be noted that the professional subtitler, through his/her translation of 'cheating man' as "un bărbat care m-a înșelat," "a man who's cheated on me," refers clearly to an earlier episode where Samantha walks in on him and catches Robert in the act of cheating on her (4.18). The unofficial subtitler, on the other hand, commits a spelling error, adding an extra '-e' in 'înșelă.'

Example (6) brings forward an exchange of lines between Miranda and Carrie in season five, episode three, *Luck Be an Old Lady*. In this particular context, Samantha, Carrie and Miranda are taken aback by Charlotte's skimpy outfit, with the latter two having the following dialogue, which is translated as follows into Romanian by, on the one hand, an official subtitler and on the other, an amateur translator:

Miranda: - Charlotte, are you in there?
Carrie: - No, but I think Harlot is.
OS Miranda: - Charlotte, ești acolo?
OS Carrie: - Nu. E doar o „boarfă".
US Miranda: - Charlotte, ești acolo înăuntru?
US Carrie: - Nu, dar cred că Harlot este. (MiSsy_R)

Here, the confrontation between Miranda's reference to their friend Charlotte's name and Carrie's use of the paronym 'harlot' produce a horizontal pun that perfectly captures their surprise at her choice of wardrobe, which, unfortunately, is missing from both the professional and amateur subtitles. Specifically, the official subtitler substitutes 'harlot' with 'boarfă,' a noun used to refer to both an 'old, used piece of clothing' and a 'woman of ill-repute' ("Boarfă," def. 1, 3). By using this particular word, the professionally subtitled Carrie alludes, in a fashion similar to original Carrie, to her friend's floosie-like appearance, even though the source horizontal pun, as transcribed above, is lost. Yet, this is not to say that the official subtitle's translational approach does not retain some of the punningness of the original wordplay. MiSsy_R, on the other hand, resorts to a word-for-word rendition of the pun or, better put, a non-translation of it, since 'Charlotte' and 'Harlot,' the punning words upon which the source wordplay is built, appear as such in the amateur subtitles listed above.

Example (6) introduces a short punning exchange of lines between Miranda and Carrie, taking place while the former is playing a slot machine at an Atlantic City casino, a scene featured in the same episode three of the fifth season, *Luck Be an Old Lady*. Their horizontal paronymic play upon 'spin/spinster' is translated as follows into Romanian by, on the one hand, a professional subtitler and on the other, an amateur translator:

Miranda: - Here we go. This is the *spin*.
Carrie: - Yes, you're quite the *spinster*.
OS Miranda: - Acum voi da *lovitura*.
OS Carrie: - Tu ești as la *lovituri*.
US Miranda: - Hai să vedem. Asta este o *rotație*.
.*US Carrie*: - Da, ești chiar o *femeie necăsătorită*. (MiSsy_R)

Although neither of the two subtitlers featured above has succeeded in recreating the original bawdy pun in Romanian, their translational treatment is nevertheless worth analyzing. The official subtitler, for example, turns it into a jocular repetition of the singular and plural forms of 'lovitură,' or, in this context, 'jackpot.' Back-translated into English, Miranda's officially subtitled line refers to her hitting the jackpot, while Carrie's professionally translated reply describes Miranda as some sort of a 'jackpot master,' even though no scene in this episode points to Miranda being on winning streak at the casino. Yet, if this new punning doublet is interpreted against her career life, where she excels, the use of the idiom 'a da lovitura' indeed makes sense as in both English and

Romanian it denotes success ("Hit the jackpot;" "A da lovitura"). His unofficial omologue, on the other hand, has opted for a word-for-word translation of the original wordplay, yet in the target language, there is no punning connection between 'rotație,' 'spin' and 'femeie necăsătorită' or 'spinster.'

The present study, while having no pretense of settling the dispute on whether professional or amateur subtitlers have proved more successful at translating *SATC* titillating puns into Romanian, does provide a basis for further research on the relation between media, subtitling and fansubbing in this geographical context, an area of study uncharted, of late, by the Romanian academia. One thing is, however, clear: the majority of subtitlers listed above, both official and unofficial, seem to have invested substantial effort in translating these instances of language, with the former recreating four of the six puns analyzed above and proposing two other instances of wordplay of notable quality, and the latter putting forward just two successful translations of the original puns included in this article. Of note is also another finding, namely that, statistically, the most challenging type of such instance of language appears to be that based on paronymy as of the three specimens studied above, only for two of them satisfactory, albeit far from perfect, equivalents have been found. Yet, in order to pass a fair final judgement on the matter, additional inquiries based on a larger corpus must be made. It is only by further exploring this field of research that the Romanian academic advancement in this particular area of multimedia translation studies, represented by the articles cited through this paper, can be fully aligned with the progress it has seen overseas.

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