"Break It in Your Face, so He Break It Not Behind" On Shakespeare's Toilet Puns and Their Romanian Translations

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"For all his admiration and even imitation of Rabelais, Shakespeare has hardly once or twice burnt so much as a stray pinch of fugitive incense on the altar of Cloacina," notes Algernon Charles Swinburne poetically on the playwright's toilet humor. Sixty years later, Eric Partridge, author of the seminal Shakespeare's Bawdy, would reiterate, along much the same lines, the dramatist's alleged contempt for the crudest of all manifestations of wit. Since then, however, scholarly attitudes toward crude humor have gradually become more lenient and inquisitive about what we perceive today as instances of off-colour wordplay, challenging linguistic myths about their anachronic attribution and devoting book-length studies to them. This article follows several of the Bard's most obvious and obscure puns on the podex and flatulence in an attempt to ascertain whether Romanian translators have aligned themselves with this phenomenon or, if not, how they approach this form of Shakespearean wit.

Keywords: humour, off-colour, pun, Romanian, Shakespeare, toilet, translation, wordplay

"Scatology he disdained," notes Partridge on Shakespeare's toilet bawdy, "and non-sexual coprology he almost entirely avoided" (9). To a certain extent, this early observation still holds true today, in that, as compared to the instances of wordplay built on other aspects of bawdy, puns on anus, flatulation, human waste, urination, and disgorging feature quite sparsely in his plays and almost always disparagingly. Indeed, as Patridge also argues, the playwright might not have been a Rabelais, yet the very existence of characters such as *MM*'s Pompey Bum and *AYL*'s Jaques, which play vividly on buttocks and latrine, indicates that such puns, although few, ranked prominently among his ribald wordplay precisely because, unlike other instances of language-play, "no Elizabethan would have missed" them (Kökeritz 91).

Comedy of Errors (3.2.124-127)	Ion Frunzetti & Dan Duțescu (1983)	George Volceanov (2015)
Antipholus of Syracuse. In what part of her body stands Ireland? / Dromio of Syracuse. Marry, sir, in her buttocks: I found it out by the bogs. = s1. marshes; s2. anus (Bate & Rasmussen 47n127)	În ce parte a trupului ei se află Irlanda? Să mă ia dracu! Dindărăt! Am recunoscut-o după mlaștini. (221)	În ce parte a trupului se află Irlanda? În zona bucilor, să mor eu. După smârcuri am recunoscut-o. (55)

In Shakespeare's works, the posterior, in contrast to the phallus or pudendum, was ex-ploited as a source of wordplay outside its sexual function, too. Take, for instance, Dromio of Syracuse's geographical description of Nell's body and his locating Ireland near her posterior, which he plays on by inserting a pun on 'bogs', at once a reference to 'marshes' and her anus. This secondary sense, however, disappears from Frunzetti and Duțescu's translation of this word, as by replacing it with 'mlaștini', they preserve the primary semantic component only. Volceanov, on the other hand, renders it as 'smârcuri', which recaptures the original first meaning and also designates pubic hair in its slang acceptation ("Smârc," *NODEX* def. 1; *Argou*). Although an equally viable translation solution in contexts where erotic undertones may be attached to it, this word fails to reappear in Gârbea's rendition of *Henry V*, published two years after Volceanov's *Comedy of Errors* as part of the same edition of Shakespeare's works.

Henry V (3.7.57-58)	Dragoș Protopopescu (1940)	Ion Vinea (1985	Horia Gârbea (2017)
Dauphin. […] they that ride so and ride not warily, fall into foul bogs. = s1. mires; s2. pudendum / posterior (Bate & Rasmussen 77n58)	[…] cei care călăresc așa și nu iau bine seama, cad în nas. (93)	[...],,cei ce călăresc așa și nu iau bine seama dau în gropi. (366)	[…] cei care călăresc așa și nu bagă de seamă, nimeresc în mlaștini. (88)

There, it is the Dauphin who quibbles on 'bogs', which Gârbea, like Frunzetti and Duțescu above, substitutes with 'mlaștini', unaware, apparently, that two years prior, another translator recreated both its punning quality and bawdy substratum. As in other cases, this points to a lack of consistency or, better put, familiarity among translators with their peers' work, even within the same translation project. Conversely, Protopopescu and Vinea, who also produced renditions of *Henry V*, either omit it altogether or replace the word with one whose primary semantic level matches that of the source-text 'bogs' to some extent. Specifically, the former renders 'fall into' only through the phrasal construction "cad în nas" ("fall flat on they face"), while the latter substitutes it with the slang expression "dau în gropi", which denotes the act of trip-ping and alludes to someone's folly in idioms the likes of "a fi prost de dă în gropi" ("Prost," *DLRLC* def. 1). Indeed, both expressions exhibit an additional argotic layer of meaning, since "a cădea în nas" may also refer to one's astonishment (Pănculescu and Bădescu 360) and as they both apply in the context of their renditions, it is only natural to argue that they qualify as puns. On the other hand, however, neither of the two recapture the ribald dimension of 'bogs'.

Hamlet (2.2.407)	Adolphe Stern (1877)	Victor Anestin (1908)	Dragoș Protopopescu (1938)	Vera Călin & Maria Banuș (1948)
Hamlet. Then came each actor on his ass. = s1. donkey; s2. posterior (Bate & Rasmussen 77n58)	«Atunci actorii umblau pe măgari.» (98)	Atunci să vină fiecare actor pe măgarul lui. (97)	Atunci a venit fiecare actor pe câte un măgar! (77)	Și veni fiecare actor călare pe un măgăruș... (75)

Ion Vinea (1959)	Ștefan Runcu (1962)	Vladimir Streinu (1970)	Leon Leviţchi & Dan Duţescu(1986)	Dan A. Lăzărescu (2009)
«Veni atunci și fiecare / Actor pe un măgar călare.» (590)	Atunci a venit fiecare actor călare pe măgar. (238)	Atunci, călări pe cîte un măgar. (64)	Și-atunci actorii fiecare, veniră pe-un măgar călare. (364)	Pe un măgar. (110)
Violeta Popa & George Volceanov (2010)	Nicolae Ionel (2016)			
Câte-un actor pe un asin. (221	Atunci, fiecare actor a venit pe măgarul lui. (1128)			

The argotic meaning of this lexeme has evolved to refer, in informal British English, to the lavatory, yet other punning words such as Hamlet's 'ass', which plays on a synonym for 'donkey' and the posterior, has successfully stood the test of time, in that the two homonyms he quibbles on are still recognizable to the modern English reader of the playwright's works. However, it is only recently that Shakespeare scholars have acknowledged its existence. Vacillating between deeming Hamlet's reply as "a line of a ballad" (Harness 270) and an animal epithet for Polonius (Dyce 328), editors have long discarded the possibility of a deliberately stricken phonetic agreement between Hamlet's insult and an argotic lexeme for the backside. As a result, neither do its Romanian translations reiterate it, rendering 'ass' as 'măgar[i]' ('donkey[s]') in all but one case of the eleven produced thus far, where Călin and Banuș opt instead for the diminutive 'măgăruș'.

Comedy of Errors (4.4.15-18)	Ion Frunzetti & Dan Duţescu (1983)	George Volceanov (2015)
Antipholus of Ephesus. To what end did I bid thee hie thee home? Dromio of Ephesus. To a rope's-end, sir, and to that end am I returned. Antipholus of Ephesus. And to that end, sir, I will welcome you. = s1. purpose; s2. posterior (Bate & Rasmussen 60 [nn 15, 16])	,,La capătul mesajului cu care Ți-am spus să treci pe-acasă, ce era? Un capăt de otgon! L-am dus la capăt! Ei bine, pentru capăt, ai s-o capeți! (239-240)	În ce scop te-am trimis acasă? / Păi, S-aduc o funie. Iaca, am adus-o. Da, dar să știi c-ai rupt-o-n fericire. (71)

More obscure albeit easier to recreate in the target language, Antipholus of Ephesus's wordplay on 'end', referring at once to 'purpose,' 'way,' 'buttocks,' and 'whip' in Dromio's "rope's end," appears to have also resisted translation. In concrete terms, Frunzetti and Duțescu substituted it with 'capăt,' its exact Romanian counterpart, whose polysemy they harness by exploiting its two possible meanings, 'final part' and 'fragment' ("Capăt," *DEX '09* def. 1, 2), and which is then played upon in Antipholus's reply, when the translators confront it with its paronym, '[ai s-o] capeți' ('[you'll] get it'), a verb they deploy to render his "I will welcome you." Although unsuccessful bawdy-wise, their translation solution is nonetheless effective in that it preserves all the four occurrences of this lexeme and produces an instance of wordplay on an otherwise non-punning word. Volceanov's, on the other hand, delivers at neither of the two levels; in an attempt to conform with the first sense in which Antipholus uses the noun 'end,' he replaces it with 'scop' ('purpose') and proceeds to eliminate all the occurrences, without endeavoring to build a pun on other textual elements available in the two characters' exchange.

The Merry Wives of Windsor (4.2.171-173.)	Dragoș Protopopescu (1943)	Vlaicu Bîrna (1958)	Adriana & George Volceanov (2010)
Mistress Page. Come, Mother Prat, come, give me your / hand. Ford. I'll prat her. = s1. trick, play tricks on; s2. buttocks, beat (Bate & Rasmussen 81 [nn 171, 173])	Vino, maică Prat, vino cu mine, dă-mi mânuța. Maică Prat, i-arăt eu maică / Prat. (112)	Hai, mătușă Prat, hai, dă-mi mîna. Lasă, c-o mătușesc eu. (253)	Hai, mătușica, hai, dă-mi mâna. Las' că-i arăt eu. (473)

His approach to Mistress Page's wordplay on 'Prat' displays a similar unawareness of its double meaning. Specifically, in his rendition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, co-produced with Adriana Volceanov, the two translators discard this lexeme, which said character deploys punningly to refer to Falstaff's fortune-teller persona as the old woman of Brainford and to anticipate Mistress Ford's attempt to spank him. What remains is the term of endearment 'Mother,' which they substitute with the diminutive 'mătușică' ('auntie'). The root noun, 'mătușă,' appears as a translation solution in Bîrna's rendition as well, yet unlike the Volceanov duo, said translator preserves 'Prat' and seems to have endeavored transferring the wordplay onto the confrontation of this lexeme and '[-o] mătușesc,' his rendition of ('[I'll] prat her'). According to *MDA2*, the dialectal 'a mătuși,' which denotes a young woman with no foreseeable chances of getting married, is a reflexive verb ("Mătuși") and as such, Bîrna, who uses it transitively, cannot be suspected of deploying the word in this meaning. Consequently, it may very well be that he simply verbalizes the noun in order to mimic the polysemy of 'prat' and hint at Ford's assault on Falstaff, which the subsequent stage direction help disambiguate. In other words, what he appears to attempt is a reworking of Protopopescu's "i-arăt eu maică Prat" ("I'll show her Mother Prat"). While both effective in conveying the humorous effect of this dialogue, as they imbue lexemes with new meanings through repetition, these rendition solutions, like the Volceanovs', fail to lend themselves to a bawdy interpretation.

Measure for Measure (2.1.212-217)	Nicolae Argintescu-Amza	Leon Levițchi	Ioana Ieronim	George Volceanov
Escalus. [...] What is your name, Master Tapster?	Spune-mi cum te cheamă?	Cum îți spune?	Cum te cheamă?	Cum te cheamă?
Pompey. Pompey.	Pompey.	Pompey.	Pompey.	Pompei.
Escalus. What else?	Și mai cum?	Și mai cum?	Și mai cum?	Și mai cum?
Pompey. Bum.	Șale, Înălțimea-voastră.	Thur.	Bucă, domnule.	Buci, domnule.
Escalus. Troth, and your bum is the greatest thing about you.	Într-adevăr, șalele sunt ce-i mai mare-n dumneata. (46)	Așa e, cel mai mare lucru la tine e turul pantalonilor. (421)	Chiar așa! Și bucile sunt lucru mare la tine, […] (54-55)	Într-adevăr, la tine predomină bucile. (243)

In contrast, other instances of punning onomastic scatology allow for smoother transfer to target-languages. This is the case of *MM*'s Pompey, whose last name, Bum, serves to offer Escalus, the Duke's advisor, an opportunity for wordplay. Unlike *MND*'s Nick Bottom, the surname of whom is still under debate as to whether it qualified as a pun on the posterior in Shakespeare's day as it does today (Morton 76; Smith 68), Escalus's horizontal quibble on Pompey's family name indicates that the playwright had intended it to trigger a play on this body part, despite its possessing another meaning, 'sham' (Watts 94). The renditions available advance a wide array of solutions for this wordplay, ranging from edulcorated such as Argintescu-Amza's 'Șale' ('Back'), through 'Bucă/Buci' ('Buttock/s') opted for by Ieronim and Volceanov,

to Levițchi's foreignized 'T[h]ur,' which, as shown previously, signifies the seat of one's trousers and, by extension, the posterior. According to Wikipedia's *Listă de nume românești* [List of Romanian Surnames], all but the former translation choice feature as existing family names across this territory. Whether the translators conducted any onomatological research in this regard, it is difficult to assess, particularly in the first two cases, yet what is certain is that Argintescu-Amza's 'Șale' constitutes an instance of euphemization, Ieronim's and Volceanov's 'Bucă/Buci' allow for wordplay on its two senses, i.e. 'cheek' and 'buttock,' and that through his 'Thur,' Levițchi attempts to compensate for the gratuity of a pun on 'tur,' a lexeme that, in Romanian, does not carry, like the original 'Bum,' two semantically distant signifieds.

As You Like It (1.2.100-101	Lucia Demetrius (1936)	Petre Grimm (1942)	Virgil Teodorescu (1986)	Violeta Popa (2013)
Touchstone. Nay, if I keep not my rank— Rosalind. Thou losest thy old smell. = s1. standing as a wit; s2. smell of gas passed (Bate & Rasmussen 27n100)	Dacă nu-mi păstrez rostul... Îți pierzi dibăcia. (17)	Păi, dacă n'oi face ca acei de soiul meu... Ai să ajungi soios. (25n1: s1: rînced)	Păi dacă mi-aș lăsa știrbită cinstea… Atunci ai fi știrb. (127)	Păi, dacă nu-mi țin rangul... E ca și cum n-ai fi tu. (39)

According to Partridge, "[f]latulence was, in Shakespeare's day, the source and the tar-get of humour and wit among all classes," frequently accompanying or intertwining itself with comical references to the backside, as witnessed in *Othello*'s 'wind-instrument' (3.1.6; 10-11). However, upon translating them, few of the punning remarks on this bodily emission respond well to the process. Take, for instance, the wordplay on 'rank,' which *As You Like It*'s Clown deploys to denote his standing as jester and Rosalind takes to mean his staleness, caused by his habit of passing wind. On two occasions, translators acknowledge and attempt to either reproduce the pun or insert a new instance of wordplay, yet on two others, it appears to have slipped under the radar. This is especially surprising as the pun confronts homonyms that are not relegated to the dramatist's period and whose meanings are very much established today. As a result, its disappearance from Demetrius's and Popa's translations cannot be attributed to the degree to which wordplay research was available to and readily accessible by the two translators, even if the roughly eighty-year span between the two renditions may prompt some to believe that this variable could have had an impact on the outcome, at least to a certain extent. Conversely, Grimm's and Teodorescu's renditions are less prone to speculations; the latter substitutes the polysemic pun on 'rank' with another built on his equivalent for the Clown's "[I] keep [not]," '[-aș lăsa] știrbită" ("[allow] [my honour] to be chipped away"), and its nominal form, 'știrb' ('toothless'). Closer in meaning and structure to the original is Grimm's, as it replaces 'rank' with 'soiul' ('standing') and 'smell' with the adjective 'soios,' which denotes an unwashed individual oozing a pungent scent, a reading also supported by his footnote. His Rosalind may therefore be said to mock the Clown for his hygiene, since there is nothing in Grimm's translation to suggest that his odor derives from having gas.

Comedy of Errors (3.1.78-82)	Ion Frunzetti & Dan Duțescu (1983)	George Volceanov (2015)
Antipholus of Ephesus. Go fetch me something, I'll break ope the gate. Dromio of Syracuse. Break any breaking here, and I'll break your knave's pate. Dromio of Ephesus. A man may break a word with you, sir, and words are but wind: Ay, and break it in your face, so he break it not behind.	Adu-mi ceva! Sparg ușa, și-apoi ce-o fi să fie! Hai, sparge-o, derbedeule, că-ți sparg eu ție! Ei, sparge omul ghiața, și rupe-o vorbă-n doi! / Cuvîntu-i cuvînt! (Pe față, spus; nu pe dinapoi!)	Adu-mi ceva, sparg poarta, cu ăștia nu se știe. Dacă o spargi, golane, te sparg la scăfârlie. O vorbă schimb cu tine și vorba e doar vânt Și ți-o spun drept în față, făr' acoperământ.

Dromio of Syracuse. It seems thou want'st breaking" = s1. usual sense, speak, beating; s2. pass gass (Bate & Rasmussen 42 [nn 79, 80, 81, 82)]	Ai boală, văd, la rupt azi" (213-214)	Sictir, că vrei bătaie" (49n21: s2)

In other cases, it is solely the paratext that points to an attempt on the translator's part to reproduce an instance of wordplay. This is the case of the most recent rendition of Dromio of Ephesus's pun on the polysemy of 'break' in phrases such as 'break a word/break wind' and 'break it in your face/break it behind.' There, Volceanov replaces the proverbial "words are but wind" with a literal translation, "vorba e doar vânt," most likely because 'vânt' ('wind') carries, in Romanian as it does in English, two meanings, 'breeze' and '[intestinal] gas.' The issue with his rendition lies in the fact that "[ți-o] spun [în față]," his counterpart of "break [it in your face]," fails to trigger the secondary sense of 'vânt,' since 'a spune' ('to say') falls short of replicating the idiomatic applicability to passing gas as well. On the other hand, Frunzetti and Dutescu resort to the tautological "[c]uvântu-i cuvânt" ("a word is a word") to render said mock-syllogism, which, in turn, prompts "pe față" ("to one's face") and "nu pe dinapoi" ("not behind one's back") to read as a reference to honesty and gossip, since they too attach these idioms to the verb 'a spune.' It should, however, be noted that 'wind' vanishes altogether from their translation and with it, any punning mention to flatulence, however forced.

Timon of Athens (5.4.12)	Dan Duțescu & Leon Levițchi (1988)	George Volceanov (2012)	Nicolae Ionel (2016)
Alcibiades. And pursy insolence shall break his wind. = s1. gasp for breath; s2. flatulate (Bate & Rasmussen 220n12)	[…] își va da răsuflul Trufia răpciugoasă. (78)	[...] și-obeza insolență o să facă pe ea. (432)	[...] trufia-și va da duhu[l]. (277)

In contrast, Alcibiades's vertical wordplay on 'break [his] wind' escapes all but one translator of *Tim.* Specifically, Duțescu and Levițchi substitute it with the idiomatic "își va da răsuflul" ("breathe its last"), while Ionel opts for the semantically congruent "[-și] va da duhul" ("give up the ghost"), which recreate the primary level of meaning in Alcibiades's expression. Conversely, Volceanov replaces it with the phraseological "a face pe ea," which implies urination rather than flatulence. Unsuccessful at first sight, Ionel may be suspected of attempting a reproduction of his pun, in that their choice of idiom accommodates a secondary bawdy reading. In concrete terms, "a-și da duhul" can also constitute a euphemism for 'to ejaculate' ("A-și da duhul," *Argou* def. 2), which the immediate textual surroundings would have supported, since fear may cause not only emissions of flatus or one's death, but also a seminal discharge, as evidenced by Redmond et al.'s 1983 study "Spontaneous Ejaculation Associated with Anxiety". Yet, there is little if any target-text evidence to suggest that Ionel intended this idiom to carry this additional semantic layer.

Conclusions

With only a single instance of wordplay preserving the secondary layer of scatological meaning, the Bard's toilet puns ranks high in the hierarchy of Shakespearean language-play to have rarely traveled successfully to Romanian. In fact, they come dangerously close to culture-specific wordplay such as his quibbles on syphilis or what was then known as 'the French disease' (Martin 2016). Similarly, in the most fortunate of cases, they are disambiguated or substituted by another bawdy pun, yet more often than not, translators relegate them to footnotes, where they either rationalize their inability to render these instances of language or testify to their lack of apprehension about what are actually playing on. This study, although limited corpus- and length-wise, uncovers yet another surprising phenomenon: translators tend to be unaware of the effective rendition solutions provided by their peers. This is understandable in the case of plays for which translations have been regularly produced and recurrent puns that appear across different works published by the same author and whose number or availability

of target-language counterparts render it difficult for the often time-pressured translator to consult them. However, when an instance of wordplay features sporadically across a writer's *oeuvre* and for which a successful translation precedent already exists within the very same project, the fault of an unsatisfactory rendition lies less with the restrictions of the source text and more with the translator. This is not to say that this phenomenon is symptomatic of a pervasive attitude among professionals in this field toward this language device. Nicolae Argintescu-Amza's first ever translation of *Measure for Measure* into Romanian hosts one of the most original and effective reproductions of the pun on 'French crown,' which George Volceanov, the latest translator of the play, comments on and re-utilizes in his rendition fifty years later (222n7). What this article aims to achieve is, in fact, to advocate for increased cohesion among translators and the seminal role of research as a prerequisite for effective pun rendition.

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