

# Mediating Filmic Discourse. The Case of Subtitling

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**Abstract:** *Contemporary culture is consensually defined in terms of its being dominated by audiovisual communication, which is intermedial and functions along the multimodal coordinate and the multimedial coordinate. The filmic text, as audiovisual communicative enterprise and complex semiotic event, uses utterances, gestures, background noises, captions, pictures and music to shape meaningful contexts which address the viewer and allow individual responses, whose multiplicity reinforces the openness of the cultural message. Consequently, for the receiver and, especially, for the translator, film poses numerous difficulties, which range from linguistic choice to cultural equivalence, mediation requirements, translation strategies, technical confines and computer literacy. The paper looks into these difficulties, as obvious in the subtitling of Horațiu Mălăele's *Nuntă mută* [Silent Wedding].*

**Keywords:** *audiovisual communication, film, subtitling.*

## 1. Introduction

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In the last fifty years or so, the domination of audiovisual communication channels of communication has left a strong imprint on translation studies, with theoreticians and practitioners alike focusing on the pluses and minuses of film dubbing and film translation (following the growth of the motion picture), TV translation and media translation (as a result of the emergence of television), screen translation and multimedia translation (with the rapid development of electronic and digital media). The main specificities of audiovisual communication in today's world are its inner intricate patterning and outer border crossings, its intermediality in short.

Intermediality may be approached in various ways, but relevant here are its definitions in connection with Mikhail Bakhtin's 'dialogism' and Julia Kristeva's 'intertextuality'. As pointed out by the former in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), cultural texts find themselves in a permanent dialogue with other texts/authors, being informed and, in turn, informing previous work, thus conferring a sense of dynamism to the process of cultural production, seen as constantly in the making. Along similar lines, in *Desire in Language*:

*A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980), the latter suggests that texts are structured along the horizontal axis (which connects a text's author with its reader) and the vertical axis (which connects the text with other texts), structural axes whose intersection consists of a number of codes shared with previous or synchronic texts. Technically, intermediality observes three subcategories: medial transposition (the transformation of a given media product or of its substratum into another medium); media combination (film, theatre performance etc or mixed media); intermedial reference (references to painting in film, to photography in painting etc) (Rajewsky 2005: 51-52) If the emphasis is placed on the filmic text as audiovisual communicative enterprise, it results that all the above mentioned coordinates and specificities of this particular type of discourse need special consideration.

Via its complex semiotics, film's hyperreality simulates the reality that is or a possible, recognisable reality, that the consumer may engage with and be part of, while at the same time inhabiting his/her own [1]. Furthermore, being a markedly cultural product, film does not come out of the blue. It is part of a long line of tradition, engaging in a dialogue with precursor productions and leaving traces to be remodelled in future ones. More often than not, it involves an adaptation or a collage of other media products and refers to one or more of the other arts. It may therefore be seen as crossing medial frontiers and as representing hybridity. These aspects increase the number of difficulties that the receiver is confronted with and that the translator/mediator is undertaking when embarking upon its subtitling.

The film selected as corpus for the present demonstration is symptomatic for the recycling of the past and its subsequent reproductions, for evoking elements or structures specific to other media, for processing history and politics, for the implied act of intercultural communication. Its script has not yet been translated into English officially, the only version available on DVD not having been subtitled or dubbed.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In today's computer age, reading, writing and translation are conceptualised differently than before, mostly due to the environment and format of the new interface of the hypertext, which makes it

possible “to arrange and rearrange text, to disperse fragments of text, insert them into other texts, connect, dis- and interconnect texts as well as images” (Baker 2010: 435). Since the new technology has impacted on the notion of ‘original text’, which is steadily undergoing a process of multiple reproductions, translation too has to be perceived as one possible rewriting of a rewritten original. The changes in format and layout trigger changes in content, decoded under the influence of different stimuli, and ask for equivalent multimodal and multimedial translating efforts.

The visibility of the translator [2] increases as a result of such interventions at the level of the hypertext, his/her role consequently changing and becoming more significant as compared to the traditional situation in which, working with inscriptions on the page or with the print medium of the book, the only means of foregrounding his/her presence is the preface, the footnote, the critical commentary or the modification in font. The myth of authorship is thus also deconstructed, together with that of the original. This comes in support of the intercultural mediating task of the translator, raises the awareness of mid-way textual interferences and opens up the text to multiple readings and interpretations.

The Babel myth of translation [3] represents the perfect trope for the postmodern condition that it functions within, having been contaminated by the indeterminate mix of texts, languages, traditions, cultures and peoples which compose endless kaleidoscopic representations of our global universe.

“Translation is characterised by in-betweenness: caught as it is between the demands of the source system and that of the target system, the demand to make familiar that which is other and to do justice to the other as other, to mediate meaning and negotiate the very instability of signification, translation is always a hybrid. As such, the translated text flaunts and re-emphasises the intertextual basis upon the exclusion of which the myth of textual, or authorial, autonomy is founded: always bearing the marks of (at least) two writers, always bearing the traces of other texts and contexts” (Littau in Baker 2010: 437).

### **2.1. Philosophical aspects**

Besides Bakhtin, Kristeva and Baudrillard (already referred to), other scholars having contributed to the consideration of translation studies within a postmodern(ist) frame and of translation practice within a hypermedia context are Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and

Michel Foucault. In what follows, a synthetic presentation of their theories will be given special attention to, in view of outlining the main hypostases of translation during the last several decades, where translation is one possible reading against the grain of a cultural text which is polyphonic and whose palimpsest bears traces of the text's precursors and engages in a dialogue with the text's followers. Once achieved and inscribed on traditional or electronic support, the translation as writing is involved in a similar process of continuous becoming.

### **2.1.1. Roland Barthes**

In 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes argues that a text is "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (1977: 146), that the writer mixes together to produce yet another quotation which will be processed further in the not yet written; along the way, meaning thus evaporates. Refusing to assign an ultimate meaning to the text (and to the world as text), writing "liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law" (147).

Taking the author and the critic off the pedestal that traditional thought has placed them on, stripping them of their authority, omniscience and God-like altitude, Barthes replaces them with the sriptor and the reader. In his own words,

"Succeeding the Author, the sriptor no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt: life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred." (146)

As for the reader, he/she becomes the space on which "all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost." (148) It is the conceptual reader (without any personal attributes deriving from history, biography or psychology) who is ultimately expected to decode the traces of multiple writings and their mutual relations of dialogue, parody and contestation that go into the making of a text. It is this unconventional reader and his/her reading that most of the critics of the twentieth century give prevalence to.

### 2.1.2. Jacques Derrida

In his deconstructionist approaches to cultural texts, collected under ‘The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing’, Jacques Derrida also argues in favour of dialogism and of the necessity of overturning the myth of stable conceptual oppositions and ‘violent hierarchies’, the most common of which being speech/writing, nature/civilisation, good/evil. (1997: 6-26) Developing an intricate method of exposing the way in which the latter contradict or undermine their own authority, Derrida starts from assuming that identity is a construct, therefore it produces meaning through the interplay of differences inside a system of distinct signs. Meanings are never absolute; they derive from the reciprocal determination with the opposing other, both synchronically and diachronically. The term he operates with is that of *différance*, synchronically defined as

“the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive (the *a* of *différance* indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distributed between the terms of this opposition) production of the intervals without which the ‘full’ terms would not signify, would not function.” (1981: 28)

Diachronically, *différance* is associated by Derrida with the process of deferring or postponement, whereby “an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces” (1981: 30) In short, the idea he is advancing is that, presupposing difference and *différance*, writing is beginning to go beyond the extension of language, actually comprehending language in its historical and cultural evolution. As ‘signifier of the signifier’, the text/writing (be it cinematographic, choreographic, pictorial, musical, sculptural, military, political, electronic) coexists with other texts/writings and polyphonically contributes to inscribing the world by means of devices other than the word.

### 2.1.3. Michel Foucault

Like Barthes and Derrida, in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault emphasizes the relativity of meaning, which he tackles in close connection with the relativity of truth and which he observes as deeply at work within discourse. Of interest to him remain

the discursive and practical conditions for the production of truth and the existence discursive meaning, his well known thesis being that truth claims emerge during various epochs on the basis of what was actually said and written during these periods, not the other way around, as was customarily believed (with truth/reality influencing and being reproduced in oral or written texts). Historically determined rather than pre-existing all forms of social organization and interaction, both truth and discursive meaning are found by Foucault to lie at the basis of the human subject, of subjectivity therefore – predominant in the word of the text and in the world as text. In drawing up his theory, he invites at dispensing of all notions of continuity (identified as tradition, influence, development, evolution and spirit),

“those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination [...]; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign. And instead of according them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept, in the name of methodological rigour, that, in the first instance, they concern only a population of dispersed events.” (1972: 24)

Also to be questioned are the divisions, categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalised types which “we are not even sure of ourselves when we use [them] in our own world of discourse, let alone when we are analysing groups of statements which, when first formulated, were distributed, divided, and characterised in a quite different way.” (1972: 25) Emerging is an understanding of texts/writings as open to multiple interpretations and as determining other texts/writings that lie in the future of the former.

## **2.2. Technical aspects**

The filmic text is part of a manifold process of production, transmission and reception, which involves communication across cultures. Its informational core is generally made explicit via a series of multimodal and multimedial practices, available for all viewers. More specifically, however, with regard to intercultural communication facilitated by audiovisual translation, it also presupposes intermedial ones, forefront among which is the diasemiotic one of subtitling, which allows the shift from the spoken medium to the written one. (Baker 2010: 14)

Subtitling adds yet another decoding tool, juxtaposing the written text at the bottom of the screen to the utterances spoken in visually delineated contexts. In so doing, they need to observe a number of relatively strict rules (dictated by the cinematic frames they are part of and by the speed of language production), so that the simultaneity of occurrence may not be disrupted.

In approaching a film in view of attempting its audiovisual translation, the first steps to take are: watching the whole cinematographic production; comparing the existing script/scripts with the actual utterances and noting the differences; translating the cultural codes (or picture information); observing the time cuts, breaks, flashbacks, close-ups etc. (used for dramatic reasons); paying attention to problems of vocabulary, forms of address, family relations, titles and other such details; carrying out additional research, if needed (spelling of names, lyrics that are difficult to hear, historical events, literary issues etc).

### **2.2.1. Film script and soundtrack**

When available, film scripts have to be analysed in terms of what Halliday and Matthiessen call metafunctions of real life: the ideational (information exchanged, experiences expressed), the interpersonal (relationships created and sustained) and the textual (the way speakers structure their dialogue, syntactically and semantically) (2004: 107). That is, under the lens for the translator should be the factors of real conversation taken into account by the scriptwriter when constructing the dialogues. From among these, the most noteworthy have been pointed out (Taylor 1999: 264-265) as resulting from: whether the speakers know each other; who establishes centrality in conversation and who proves to be the weaker party; who generates and who accepts involvement in conversational events; how authority is assumed and how modality is expressed etc.

Actors, nevertheless, do not always observe the exact instructions given in the film script, choosing or being forced, at times, to improvise or to bring their own contribution to the overall filmic situation. Listening carefully to the soundtrack and taking notes imposes itself as the next step in subtitle preparation. This activity lends itself to considerations on the intention and result of creating and reproducing genuine language in film, mainly due to the fact that there are a number of factors working against it and thus the translator's task will be rendered even more challenging, since his/her

choices will have to eventually satisfy all requirements – technical, linguistic and cultural alike. Many of the difficulties are a direct consequence of the fact that everyday speech is extremely hard to render on screen. Actual conversation is banal, garbled, full of phatic devices; it flows with ease, has a normal feature attached and gives rise to numerous subtopics all the time. By contrast, film language is dramatic, pertinent or creative and tends to stick to the point; its content is more ideational or factual; artificial pauses are created to stimulate tension or to raise expectations; it helps to build character based on immediate context rather than cultural heritage. (Taylor 1999: 265-267)

### **2.2.2. Subtitling policy**

As for the subtitling techniques and constraints proper, they are determined by the specificities of what has come to be known as ‘the language of subtitling’, one which involves further synthesising, because it is usually expected to be even less sophisticated than that of written texts, being built on simple sentence structures, with no excessive use of subordinate clauses, with digressions kept to a minimum, with longer segments broken into readily digestible chunks. For clearly outlining the main coordinates (Ivarsson 1992) that subtitling activities should be carried out along, attention needs to be focused upon: target language/audience; the spoken/written medium; time issues; spatial boundaries; worksheets (cueing, pre-coding); editing (condensing the text, omission or paraphrase, muddled speech, ellipsis, merging short dialogues, simplifying syntax and vocabulary, dialogues, displays and captions, punctuation, other conventions regarding fonts numbers, time, currency, units of measurement, song lyrics, opera, poetry, abbreviations, presentation of characters, titles and institutions, proper names and brand names, forms of address, strong language, film/programme/episode titles, credits, subtitler’s credit and copyright).

All in all, what may be stated at this point is that a much more detailed and restrictive translation policy emerges in the case of subtitling under the conditions of the norms and conventions presented above. It is of recent date, permanently subject to modification, as obvious in the reference to filmed opera, whose subtitling is still not fully regulated by the specialists in the field. Although extremely fixed and authoritative, it cannot however be used by the translator to justify harsh interventions, overlooking questions



of alterity and national specificity and thus prove scholars like Annie Brisset right in saying that

At the most basic level, translation is born of an inability: the inability to express oneself in the language of another. By empowering the individual to overcome this obstacle, translation is tantamount to an entrustment. It is a fiduciary action that clearly carries with it a danger of confiscation and censure. Hence the exorbitant power of the translating agent (in Petrili 2003: 102).

Instead of being perceived as a potential for influencing and for manipulation, the power of the translator is accepted here as more of a commission to communicate on national characteristics, local manifestations and historical determinations in a language familiar to many and in keeping with the arbitrary system of signs represented by the internationally recognised subtitling practices. The case study chosen and presented in what follows will hopefully illustrate that the translating effort contributes to communicating the cultural self and prove rewarding to the scriptor's self.

### *3. Under focus: subtitling Nuntă mută [Silent Wedding]*

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#### **3.1. Film synopsis**

*Nuntă mută* [*Silent Wedding*] includes a number of 25 scenes, two of which are set in 2008, focusing on a journalistic investigation and a narration of past events (1 and 25), the rest being set in 1953 and focusing on the slow pace of Romanian rural life in the fifties (2-24).

Eighteen of the scenes (1, 3, 5-11, 13, 15-19, 21, 23, 25) give a voice to the characters and outline the images and representations of the Romanian spirit. Seven scenes are marked by silence to different degrees, contributing to rounding up the narration with details which escape linguistic formulation: two (the love-making ones: 2 and 12) have positive, natural and human, sounds in the background; one (the circus comes to the village late at night: 14) brings sinister music anticipating disaster; two (with the Russian armed forces: 4 and 24) background, then foreground the communist repression; two (of the wedding proper: 20 and 22) are governed by an overwhelming silence that one can almost hear. Moreover, what seems symbolical is that,

when Russian is spoken (19 and 24), the Romanians are reduced to silence, the only exception being that of the translator.

### 3.2. Subtitling in practice

To illustrate the compiling of subtitles for this film, but also to emphasise its political substratum, a selection of three relevant scenes was made (Scene 4, Scene 5 and Scene 7 – Part 1).

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
SCENE 4. [00.10.10-00.10.55] 1953: Russian tanks against the background of the countryside			
		<b>Frame 131</b> [00.10.10- 00.10.15] <i>(cemetery in the background; total silence)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 132</b> [00.10.16- 00.10.20] <i>(cemetery in the foreground; total silence)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 133</b> [00.10.21- 00.10.25] <i>(shots are heard)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 134</b> [00.10.26- 00.10.28] <i>(Russian tanks in sight)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 135</b> [00.10.29- 00.10.30] <i>(Iancu, Sile, Gogonică – watching, facing the camera)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 136</b> [00.10.31- 00.10.43] <i>(Iancu, Sile, Gogonică – watching, their backs to the camera)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 137</b> [00.10.44- 00.10.55]	- blank frame

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
		<i>(Iancu, Sile, Gogonică – in the woods, coming towards the village)</i>	
<b>SCENE 5. [00.10.56-00.12.03]</b> <b>1953: Life in the rural environs, interrupted by communist activity</b>			
<i>Iancu:</i> Să trăiești, nea Gogonea. <i>Gogonea, Primarul:</i> Noroc, Iancule.	<i>Iancu:</i> Good day, Mayor. <i>Mayor Gogonea [Pickle] :</i> Hello, Iancu.	<b>Frame 138</b> <b>[00.10.56-00.10.58]</b> – Good day, Mayor. – Hello, Iancu.	- 18/15 characters, with spaces - dashes used to show 2 speakers - the Romanian familiar “nea” could not be preserved; “Mayor”, instead of “Mr. Mayor” was preferred
<i>Gogonea, Primarul:</i> Gogonică, hai tată, hai.	<i>Mayor Gogonea [Pickle] :</i> Come along, Gogonică [Little Pickle], come along, son.	<b>Frame 139</b> <b>[00.10.59-00.11.01]</b> Come along, Gogonică, come along, son.	- 21/16 characters, with spaces - utterance split on two lines - the idea of “tată” was preserved in “son” - the note on “Gogonică” = “Little Pickle”, to be made in the list of characters, at the beginning of the film
		<b>Frame 140</b> <b>[00.11.02-00.11.04]</b> <i>(Iancu, Sile, Gogonică – in the woods, coming towards the village)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 141</b> <b>[00.11.05-00.11.10]</b> <i>(Gogonea and Gogonică enter the village pub)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Iancu:</i> Coriolane, vezi mă, că ai pană, mă.	<i>Iancu:</i> Coriolan, you’ve broken down.	<b>Frame 142</b> <b>[00.11.11-00.11.13]</b> Coriolan, you’ve broken down.	- 29 characters, with spaces - the wording was changed, for a pun to remain operative (“break down”/“breakdown”) -

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
<i>Coriolan:</i> Unde mă, unde?	<i>Coriolan:</i> What? Where?	<b>Frame 143</b> [00.11.14-00.11.15] What? Where?	- 12 characters, with spaces - two separate short questions were preferred, for conciseness
<i>Sile, Piticul:</i> La cap, bă, la cap!	<i>Sile, the dwarf:</i> Upstairs! Upstairs!	<b>Frame 144</b> [00.11.16-00.11.17] Upstairs! Upstairs!	- 19 characters, with spaces - two separate short answers were preferred, for conciseness and symmetry reasons
		<b>Frame 145</b> [00.11.18-00.11.19] <i>Coriolan laughs</i>	- blank frame
<i>Coriolan (râzând):</i> Boilor!	<i>Coriolan (laughing):</i> Idiots!	<b>Frame 146</b> [00.11.20-00.11.21] Idiots!	- 7 characters, with spaces - the animal reference is not operative in English; "idiot" seemed more appropriate in connection with the previous remarks
		<b>Frame 147</b> [00.11.22-00.11.23] <i>(Iancu and Sile walk towards the village centre, facing the camera)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 148</b> [00.11.24-00.11.29] <i>(Iancu takes Sile by the shoulders; they walk towards the village centre)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 149</b> [00.11.30-00.11.35] <i>(Troop marches in the village; someone whistles the pace)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 150</b> [00.11.36-00.11.37] <i>(Iancu turns a corner, with Sile on his shoulders)</i>	- blank frame

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
		<b>Frame 151</b> <b>[00.11.38-00.11.39]</b> <i>(Troop marches in the village; someone whistles the pace)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 152</b> <b>[00.11.40-00.11.41]</b> <i>(Iancu walks around, with Sile on his shoulders)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Agitator comunist:</i> Trupă, stai!	<i>Communist agitator:</i> Troop, halt!	<b>Frame 153</b> <b>[00.11.42-00.11.43]</b> Troop, halt!	- 12 characters, with spaces - military terms used
<i>Agitator comunist:</i> Măi tovarăși, ce vrem noi?	<i>Communist agitator:</i> Comrades, comrades are we sure?	<b>Frame 154</b> <b>[00.11.44-00.11.45]</b> Comrades, comrades are we sure?	- 31 characters, with spaces - modification made and repetition used for rhyming purposes
<i>Trupa:</i> Noi vrem pace, nu război!  <i>Agitator comunist:</i> Asta e.	<i>Troop:</i> We want peace, we don't want war!  <i>Communist agitator:</i> That's it.	<b>Frame 155</b> <b>[00.11.46-00.11.48]</b> – We want peace, we don't want war! – That's it.	- 35/12 characters, with spaces - dashes used to show 2 speakers - rhyming pattern employed
<i>Sile, Piticul:</i> Pace vouăăăăăă... <i>Iancu și Sile, piticul:</i> Paaaceeeeeee...	<i>Sile, the dwarf:</i> Go in peace... <i>Iancu and Sile, the dwarf:</i> Peeeeeaaace...	<b>Frame 156</b> <b>[00.11.49-00.11.53]</b> – Go in peace... – Peeeeeaaace...	- 14/14 characters, with spaces - clerical nuance preserved - repeated vowels included to show mimicry and mockery
<i>Iancu:</i> Ce faci, mutule?  <i>Mutu</i> (face semn că se duce să bea ceva)	<i>Iancu:</i> How are you, dumbie?  <i>Dumb man</i> (signals he is going for a drink)	<b>Frame 157</b> <b>[00.11.54-00.11.56]</b>  How are you, dumbie?	- 20 characters, with spaces  - the more familiar “dumbie” preferred instead of “dumb man”
		<b>Frame 158</b> <b>[00.11.57-00.12.00]</b> <i>(The dumb man stumbles towards the village pub)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 159</b> <b>[00.12.01-00.12.03]</b>	- blank frame

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
		<i>(People walking around the village)</i>	
<b>SCENE 7. [00.13.30-00.16.40] 1953: At the village pub</b>			
		<b>Frame 174</b> <b>[00.13.30-00.13.33]</b> <i>(Cloggy, smoky atmosphere in the pub; flies everywhere)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 175</b> <b>[00.13.34-00.13.36]</b> <i>(People drinking; hens on tables...)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 176</b> <b>[00.13.37-00.13.38]</b> <i>(Marinela, the village prostitute, drunk, smoking...)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Coriolan:</i> Doamna Marinela, deci e simplu, pui la roată un dinam, din dinamul ală vin două fire, pui un bec și electricăm tot satul, domnule. E simplu!	<i>Coriolan:</i> It's simple, Mrs. Marinela, you attach a dynamo to the wheel, from that dynamo come two wires, you add a light bulb and the village is electrified. It's simple!	<b>Frame 177</b> <b>[00.13.39-00.13.40]</b> It's simple, Mrs. Marinela.	- 27 characters, with spaces - reversed word order in English
		<b>Frame 178</b> <b>[00.13.41-00.13.43]</b> You attach a dynamo to the wheel,	- 33 characters, with spaces - the more familiar "you" used instead of the imperative
		<b>Frame 179</b> <b>[00.13.44-00.13.45]</b> ... from that dynamo come two wires,	- 34 characters, with spaces - deliberately reversed word order - suspension dots for continued sentence
		<b>Frame 180</b> <b>[00.13.46-00.13.47]</b> ... you add a light bulb	- 22 characters, with spaces - the more familiar "you" used instead of the imperative - suspension dots for continued sentence
		<b>Frame 181</b> <b>[00.13.48-00.13.49]</b>	- 34 characters, with spaces - suspension dots

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
		... and the village is electrified.	for continued sentence - the "It's simple!" at the end was omitted; it would have been confusing after the suspension dots
		<b>Frame 182</b> <b>[00.13.50-00.13.52]</b> <i>(Villagers play games, place bets on catching flies)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 183</b> <b>[00.13.53-00.13.55]</b> <i>(Pub owner, Pitcher, blows a trumpet)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 184</b> <b>[00.13.56-00.13.57]</b> <i>(Everyone laughs)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Sătean:</i> Ulcior, încă patru la picior!	<i>Villager:</i> Pitcher, bring us another four!	<b>Frame 185</b> <b>[00.13.58-00.14.00]</b> Pitcher, bring us another four!	- 31 characters, with spaces - nickname preserved - the rhyme was overlooked for clarity reasons
		<b>Frame 186</b> <b>[00.14.01-00.14.04.02]</b> <i>(Gogonea, with a straight face)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Gogonea:</i> Tovarășu' Coriolan, lumina vine de la răsărit. Când or vrea ei să electricificăm, electricificăm.	<i>Mayor Gogonea</i>  [ P i c k l e ]  Comrade Coriolan, the light comes from the East. When they want us to electrify, we electrify.	<b>Frame 187</b> <b>[00.14.03-00.14.04]</b> Comrade Coriolan,	- 17 characters, with spaces - communist form of address preserved, although uncommon in English
		<b>Frame 188</b> <b>[00.14.05-00.14.07]</b> ... the Light comes from the East.	- 32 characters, with spaces - suspension dots for continued sentence - capital letters were used to underline the communist message
		<b>Frame 189</b> <b>[00.14.08-00.14.10]</b>	- 31 characters, with spaces - order of sentences

ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
		When they want us to electrify,	preserved to support further commentaries made
		<b>Frame 190</b> <b>[00.14.11-00.14.13]</b> ... we'll electrify.	- 18 characters, with spaces - suspension dots for continued sentence - future tense used to express strong volition/implication
		<b>Frame 191</b> <b>[00.14.14-00.14.16]</b> <i>(Silence; people laugh)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Sătean:</i> O să electrificați o p...!	<i>Villager:</i> You'll electrify my arse!	<b>Frame 192</b> <b>[00.14.17-00.14.18]</b> You'll electrify my arse!	- 25 characters, with spaces - jargon preserved; term replaced to tone down strong language
		<b>Frame 193</b> <b>[00.14.19-00.14.21]</b> <i>(Everyone laughs out loud)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 194</b> <b>[00.14.22-00.14.26]</b> <i>(People go on drinking, talking...)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Marinela:</i> Numai' s-o electrificați și p-ai-a...	<i>Marinela:</i> That's all you'll electrify...	<b>Frame 195</b> <b>[00.14.27-00.14.29]</b> That's all you'll electrify...	- 28 characters, with spaces - changed pattern, idea of impotence preserved - disbelief suggested through suspension dots at the end of the sentence
		<b>Frame 196</b> <b>[00.14.30-00.14.34]</b> <i>(Everyone laughs out loud)</i>	- blank frame
<i>Gogonea, Primarul:</i> Coriolane, bağă-ți minșile-n cap, să nu crezi că dacă ai Virtutea Militară și nu știu ce școală mă impresionezi.	<i>Mayor Gogonea</i> <i>[Pickle]</i> Come to your senses, Coriolan, don't think that I'm impressed if	<b>Frame 197</b> <b>[00.14.35-00.14.37]</b> Come to your senses, Coriolan!	- 30 characters, with spaces - separate exclamatory sentence used for clarity
		<b>Frame 198</b>	- 30 characters,



ROMANIAN ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES	COMMENTS
	you have the Military Virtue and I don't know what schooling.	<b>[00.14.38-00.14.39]</b> Don't think that I'm impressed	- with spaces - main clause separated from the rest
		<b>Frame 199</b> <b>[00.14.40-00.14.43]</b> ... if you have the Military Virtue and I don't know what schooling.	- 33/32 characters, with spaces - suspension dots for continued sentence - logical, digestible chunks used
		<b>Frame 200</b> <b>[00.14.44-00.14.45]</b> <i>(Coriolan makes faces)</i>	- blank frame
		<b>Frame 201</b> <b>[00.14.46-00.14.48]</b> <i>(Marinela laughs and continues to smoke)</i>	- blank frame

The three scenes representing the corpus of the discussion on multimedia translation progressively take the viewer along the path of silenced politics and are symptomatic for the filmic strategy as a whole.

The first has a proleptic force which announces the stereotypical behavioural patterns of the Romanian peasants and the plot's tragic dénouement, through the crafty handling of camera angle and écart, through strong imagery and the symbolical breaking of nature's peace and quiet. The fact that no words are spoken increases the tension; the viewers' attention is focused solely on the visuals and on the sounds, which seem to tell the story in reverse. The cemetery foregrounded connotes death, death may be caused by shooting, shots are fired by the Russian tanks. The whole succession of frames is firstly reflected in the characters as mirrors, and only then directly zoomed in on. The fact that they remain impassible and then turn their backs on the whole situation somehow emphasises the idea that they deserve the punishment that will be inflicted on them, since they pretend the problem does not exist and do nothing about it in advance (a typical "Miorița" attitude). In the case of a silent scene like this, the translator/subtitler will just have to hope that the images do, indeed, communicate meaning on Romanianness, because he/she cannot

actually intervene on the screen to provide additional cultural information. The only way this might be achieved is to have it included in a separate text file which customarily accompanies the film proper on the DVD.

The second scene, immediately following the first, features a number of rural characters, mostly peasants, but Coriolan too, someone with an education, a “teacher” interested in scientific experiments, standing for progress as against inertia. Coriolan, however, is a somewhat ridiculous character, that the villagers do not take seriously, especially since he may frequently be seen wearing a pair of man-made wings and working on developing the capacity to fly. Their happy cohabitation is troubled by the appearance of a troop of pro-Russian communist agitators who, despite the fact that no one pays attention to them, introduce a cutting edge message, almost resonant of a threat (*We want peace, we don't want war!*). This remark is proleptic also, enforcing silence and acceptance on the small community, non-compliance coming at a price (evident in the violent repression of the wedding party towards the end). Everyone else seems to be either coming from or heading towards the heart of the village – its pub – linking most of the scenes, groups of characters and subplots. The few subtitles asking for translation efforts involve cultural and stylistic appropriation (rhyming schemes, clerical diction, rural register), together with a separate note on Romania's tradition in flight engineering, with Aurel Vlaicu or Henri Coandă at the forefront, which might be read into the film invited by Coriolan's hobbies.

The last scene introduces more metonymical characters, making the filmic text polyphonic, revealing the multiple strata of the local society and offering insight into the effects of national politics on individual lives. Particularly interesting in this respect is Mardare – the former local landlord, now disowned by the communists, spending most of his time drinking after having gambled what was left of his money. Amongst the villagers is Mayor Gogonea, with his characteristic speeches on the benefits of the Russian intrusion. He stands for the uneducated man at the head of the community and, as in the previous scenes, what he has come to represent is not taken seriously; people mock at his treasonable deeds, laugh at his newly acquired convictions. The danger, nevertheless, remains and the part he plays is a destructive one, for which he himself will pay the supreme price in the end. The whole atmosphere is one of poverty, filth, promiscuity and drunkenness, seemingly in need of thorough forced sanitation. The flies everywhere

enforce a recurrent symbol for death, decay, corruption, the devil – all, in turn, associated in the film with silence or the prohibition of free expression. When things are extremely silent, one cannot even hear a fly buzzing, according to the Romanian phrase “a nu se auzi nici musca” [you might hear a feather/pin drop] which runs through *Nuntă mută* [*Silent Wedding*] from beginning to end. Again, for the translator, the challenges arise from cultural specificity and stylistic difficulty (pun, repetition, inversion, strong language, familiar forms of address, ironical remarks etc). As for the translator’s notes, separate information may be given on the persecution of the landed gentry and of the intellectuals of the time, but only after careful documentation based on informed historical writing.

#### 4. Concluding lines

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Induced by present day developments in technology, the subtitling policy adds to the main coordinates of audiovisual communication (the multimodal and the multimedial), functioning as an essentially intermedial mode or as medial transposition. It translates sound into image, spoken language into written text and constructs the hyperreal under the form of a subtle representation of the way in which communism brought about a reversal of natural and social order and had it installed on Romanian territory (certified by documents and confirmed by personal histories). The film’s memorable symbolism, overtly conveyed through the already mentioned symbol of the fly and covertly, playfully resumed by the overwhelming symbol of the sign (on Mara’s neck) shaped as a map of Romania allows for it to be read simply as about the marriage of a nation with communism.

At a deeper level, the world of *Nuntă mută* [*Silent Wedding*] as filmic text may only be accessed meaningfully if the traces of the other writings that it carries are decoded (Barthes). In other words, to understand the inner message of the drama, or to derive meaning from the reciprocal determination with the opposing other, both synchronically and diachronically (Derrida), incursions into other cultural texts which have previously “written” Romanianness are necessary. It is these texts that the film engages in a dialogue with, that it parodies or contests. It is these that it rewrites. However, since no two people have the same identical set of readings, interpretation remains a

subjective enterprise shaped by historically determined truth and discursive meaning (Foucault).

The translator's intervention serves to limit its range and facilitate intercultural communication through the subtitles provided and the notes on essential factual data (Romania exiting the Second World War on the losing side and its having been banned East of the Iron Curtain) and the cultural heritage of a nation (classical popular ballads, the inter-bellum novel of rural inspiration, the socialist realist prose of the post war years) – all texts which have created contexts for other texts and which have gone into the making of the drama under focus.

### Notes

- [1] An interesting proposition of interpretation in this respect is made by Jean Baudrillard in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), where he speaks of our world as a world of simulacra (the counterfeit – from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution; production – in the industrial era; simulation – in the current code-governed phase). Identified are four forms of realistic simulation (the detailed deconstruction of the real – paradigmatic close reading; abyssal vision – endless splitting and duplicating, infinite refraction; the serial form – syntagmatic linearity, monotonous similarity; binarity and digitality – not simply pure repetition, but minimal difference) and thus the real is ultimately defined as that of which it is possible to provide an equivalent reproduction. For Baudrillard, it follows that, at the end of the process of reproducibility, the real becomes that which is always already reproduced: the hyperreal.
- [2] Two of the most ardent supporters of a translator's visibility are Lawrence Venuti (*The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* – 1995) and Barbara Godard ('Translation Poetics from Modernity to Post-Modernity', in *Translation Translation* – 2003).
- [3] A myth that was made famous through George Steiner's groundbreaking *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975), where conventional theories of translation are challenged, with translation defined as all human communication between languages. It is here that Steiner points to the fact that translation is a systematic *hermeneutical* task, and proposes a model of analysis comprising four "movements": trust and retribution (in relation to the source text and its author's intentions), aggression and incorporation (in relation to the target text and the translator's input).

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