

ROMANIA'S PAST ON FILM. THE CHALLENGES OF SUBTITLING

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Introduction:

In Romanian history, the darkest corners remain those in which communism crept in unawares and, slowly but surely, grew hideously. The film *Nuntă mută ... și întunericul a venit de la răsărit...* [*Dumb Wedding ... and the darkness came from the East...*], directed by Horațiu Mălăele and released in 2008, captures one such moment with its impact on individual lives. It goes against the grain (that is against the tradition of Romanian film-making, with its emphasis on brave monarchs and glorious events) and exposes the passive acceptance of the disease which was to contaminate the Eastern European space for decades.

1. Romania's Past on Film

Its tragic-comic story is one of the breaking of the Romanian spirit and traditions, of the destruction of the myths of community, family and home. The screenplay of this cinematographic project, as its director confesses, springs out of a real happening which took place somewhere at the frontier of the Real with the Imaginary. Witness – monumental, silent, cynical History itself. "I believe," he says, "that humanity owes the present, at least to eliminate the surprise and the bewilderment, explanations, be they cinematographic, about the wounds on the body of the past, so that the sleep of nations never give birth to such monstrous situations again. The film is intended to speak to the world, sentimentally and romantically, about love in a space capable of perpetuity. The film is intended to speak to the world about dictatorship and its consequences. It will be a film about life, death and Truth. It will be a film with considerable humour. I wish it to be a film liked equally by the elderly and the child, the stupid and the wise, the profane and the initiated. This is, in my opinion, the supreme delight of the artistic creator in his unilateral relationship with the receiver." (<http://www.nuntamuta.ro/index.php>)

The forwarding of the double-layered narrative is circular: it opens and ends in the drab present oblivious of its roots, after illustrative incursions into the symptomatic past event at its core. The layers consist of:

- the frame – built by a team of journalists who go to a remote town to do coverage of paranormal phenomena in a village populated almost one hundred per cent by old women. Here, they are told the story of a wedding which took place on March 5th 1953, the day Stalin died;
- the embedded story – that of Mara and Iancu, of their love, their wedding (broken off by the news of the death of the Father) and the sterile years which paradoxically follow the event;
- the link – the mayor who had witnessed everything and who, although adopting a grown up voice, narrates through the eyes of the child he once was.

At the deeper level, the filmic text flows through the description of the village years ago, when it was still pulsating with a life that evolved propelled by stereotypical engendered cultural patterns (with women working in the household, doing the washing in small wooded troughs, ironing laundry with charcoal ironing machines, making preserves for the long winters ahead, etc; with men working the fields, looking after the animals and spending a considerable amount of time in the village pubs); and when ancient patriarchal customs had it that women needed to stay virgins until marriage and that it was the duty of their fathers to see them married well or turned into “respectable women” if it should happen that someone had “taken advantage” of them prior to marriage.

It then covers the particular situation of Mara and Iancu, disclosing private moments in the life of the protagonists, to later zoom in on their wedding day (approximately a quarter of the whole film’s duration, that is 21 minutes out of a total of 82). The ceremony is finally decided on by all parties involved (spouses, in-laws, godfathers), the preparations are on their way and the wedding is about to begin, when news of Stalin’s death reaches them by way of three intruders: the pro communist mayor (Gogonea [Pickle]), a party activist from the city with a funny name (Comrade Păstaie [Pod]) and his superior, a Russian officer with an unpronounceable no-name (Безимяный/Bezimyany [“without a name”]). The Romanians, acting as humble subject (the mayor) or as representative and translator (Păstaie) of the Russian in command, tell the villagers of the interdiction of popular meetings in sombre mourning and respectful memory of the great leader.

Resolute not to cancel the wedding, the villagers decide they would organise a silent, under cover one instead. New preparations are on their way, everything and everyone is taken indoors (after misleading gas lamps are left flickering at all village windows as if they were all about their houses) and the dumb ceremony begins, tragic-comically: the glasses are wrapped in bits of cloth not to clink, the cutlery is removed for fear of noises being heard while eating, the gypsy band mimes playing the musical instruments, as do the guests when toasting for the bride and groom, the children are all gagged lest they should utter a word, the cuckoo clock is put out of order and so on. When the sound of a thunder storm and of heavy rain deafens their ears, they unleash the usual wedding noises, singing, shouting, stamping their feet dancing against the roar of the trumpet, accordion, cymbal, drum and double bass. Shortly after, they can feel the ground shaking as if an earthquake had started; petrified, they stop only to see Russian tanks pulling the walls down. In the aftermath, all men are either killed or taken prisoners, the women being the only ones spared to live with the emptiness and the silence that the armed intrusion has left behind. (see min. 53.47-57.02, 69.20-71.08 and 71.37-73.24)

The ending features the same team of journalists that the film opens with, this time attempting to interview one of the widows of the village (as it happens, the Mara of the previous story). The last cues are memorable and sum up the film’s philosophy:

Journalist: Madam, we would like to take an interview in which...

Old woman: I can’t hear you, dear!

Journalist (raising his voice): Madam, we would like to take an interview...

Old woman (together with the other widows): What else do you want to take from us?

2. The Challenges of Subtitling

Subtitling the film for the benefit of foreign viewers interested in the metamorphosis of Romanianness has proved a challenging task, especially since many of the scenes, in their unreal reality, openly speaking of faults we as a people are to blame for, deliberately take the Romanians themselves by surprise. The problems spring out of two main aspects involved in the subtitling process, both of which are, on the one hand, necessarily to be taken into consideration for an intercultural dialogue and, on the other hand, quite restrictive due to the norms that go into the making of the representation and its translation on screen.

2.1. Screening history

Romania's communist past is difficult to be communicated years after it has been eradicated, to people who, for the most part, have not experienced it on a first hand basis and via an artistic medium like film.

Firstly, revisiting the past seems to involve a great amount of rewriting, simply because that is the way the human mind works and because it is accessed from a completely different standpoint. Naturally, that would presuppose a more detached, objective perspective on things, yet that seldom proves to be the case. Instead, one tends to inscribe the past with personal input, to subjectively interpret it. History thus becomes his story (or hers, for that matter), the special case of communism – a mystifier of history par excellence – leaving deep traces in the collective memory through the effacement of the crucial, painful realities in the making of a nation.

Secondly, presenting the intricate patterning of experiences had, feelings stirred and thoughts reminisced is an overpowering task when the receiver is treading new ground and the possibility of his/her empathising with the information provided is reduced to a minimum. Added to the barrier of time are those of reluctance, denial even, in the interaction with what seems to be someone else's past. However, if catchy language and spiced up scenery are used as oblique manipulative strategies, the effect achieved might be the desired one in the end.

Thirdly, film is, by definition, an art form. That has the advantage of freely and boldly tackling issues that maybe historians do not, in ways that are at once appealing and memorable, and the disadvantage of everything being taken for fiction, ergo unreality or untruth. On the contemporary stage, where the text scribbled on the page has fewer and fewer readers and where everyone sooner listens to, watches, browses, rather than reads in the old fashioned way, film has been empowered and, consequently, its language, themes, techniques and reception deserve special attention.

Nuntă mută [*Dumb Wedding*] foregrounds the silencing of the common people by an authoritative regime and attempts to represent the gradual process of how it came to be. Regardless of what the history books tell us about the period, the characters of this story (metonymical for the Romanians) go on with their lives pretending that the Russians aren't there, unaware of the danger lurking in the background (see minute 10.36 of the film, focusing on children playing in an idyllic setting while Russian tanks patrol the area).

The majority of the villagers are passive, do nothing either to show that they accept the intrusion or rebel against it. The most active positions they assume are reduced to making fun of the citizens (comrades) already converted to communism: see min. 14.57-15.27, where the villagers laugh at mayor Gogonea, the father of the present day mayor (political office is the privilege of the few!), who boasts of his having no education and of the fact that it has brought him a leading role in the local branch of the Communist Party; or min. 30.05-31.20 where the same mayor, showing off and addressing the community illiterately (wooden language at its worst!), is booed and mocked at. It all resembles a big joke; no one takes the mayor or any of his acolytes seriously. They will, nevertheless, pay a heavy price for their passivity not a fortnight later, at the bad luck wedding.

Once a day is set for the matrimony, the preparations begin and the camera catches the details of a typical Romanian countryside wedding: animals are slaughtered, tons of food are made, the wine and plum brandy are bottled, tables are set, a band is brought in, the dower is made ready, the spouses and guests dress up for the party, etc. Everyone is cheerful, congratulates Mara, Iancu and the in-laws, talks, laughs, looks forward to the evening when, from the East (an image powerfully constructed with the aid of light and shadow), Gogonea, Păstaie and Bezimyany show up (see min. 47.04-52.09). The three are not at all joking when forbidding the wedding. The pistol the officer holds and the smack over the mayor's face (when he asks why funerals too are forbidden since Stalin's is being

organised) give the villagers an acute sense of reality and force (although their stereotypical stubbornness and naivety are emphasised through graphic, exaggerated movement and silent awe), but do not manage to subject them fully (partly in fear, partly in rebellion, they decide they will go ahead with the wedding, but start preparations for a silent one this time). The game they play is a dangerous one which ends disastrously. They become aware of it all once it is too late. (see min. 74.16-76.40)

2.2. Texting history

Besides addressing the problems of style, myth and historical truth, when producing subtitles, one also needs to observe the norms of their language and the constraints of their practice. In this respect, the main points to be considered may be summarised as follows (see Ivarsson 1992 and Gambier 1998):

- The sentence structure should be kept simple (no excessive use of subordinate clauses, a minimum of digressions, breaks into readily digestible chunks...)
- When possible, the word order of the source language should be preserved, but not at any cost.
- The line should represent a coherent logical unit.
- Condensation, omission and paraphrase are recommended due to time and space limits.
- The reading speed (which depends on the visual information to be absorbed and on the colour contrast of the subtitles) should be adapted to the target audience (their age, status, education, expectation, etc).
- The original dialogues need to be translated accurately (since creativity will be taken for the translator's lacking competence).
- Internationally recognisable shouts, cries, threats, curses, etc and dialect representations on screen may be overlooked.
- An appropriate amount of censorship is permitted in cases of individual shouts, cries, threats, curses, etc.
- Repetitions, grunts, false starts may only be represented in simultaneous, not in consecutive subtitles.
- Inarticulate speech is generally rendered with the use of gaps and punctuation.

The actual process of subtitling takes place along a number of stages, which begin with the careful viewing of the film, go through making spotting lists (using initial translations of utterances rather than scripts), marking the speech and frame pauses (one frame generally covers 5-8 seconds and cannot show more than 37 characters, including blanks), noting the cue words which introduce the following frame/set of 2 subtitling lines), counting the blank, silent frames (with no subtitles), and end by checking the total time of both the speech and the subtitles.

In subtitling *Nuntă mută*, deliberately translated as *Dumb Wedding* (rather than *Silent Wedding*) to imply the figurative lack of the power of speech, not simply soundlessness or noiselessness, and to allow the polysemantic connotation to gain proleptic force, the cultural and technical problems encountered and, hopefully, overcome, were generally similar to the ones posed by the three sequences chosen here for exemplification and mentioned under "Comments".

2.2.1. [14.57-15.27]

<i>Primarul (către fiul său):</i> Dă, mă, aia încoace!	<i>The mayor (to his son):</i> You, give me that!
<i>Primarul:</i> Ulcior, mai dă o prună și o limonadă!	<i>The mayor:</i> Pitcher, another plum and
Băi, a sosit și vremea noastră, a ălora fără	lemonade! You, our time has come; the time
carte! Destul v-am slugărit!	of the uneducated! Enough fetching and
	carrying for you!
<i>Mardare:</i> Măi, ăsta, Gogonea, tu și tat'tu n-ai	<i>Mardare:</i> You there, Gogonea [Pickle] you and

<p>fost buni nici de slugi!</p> <p><i>Primarul:</i> Băi cârnule, măi Mardare, tu crezi că dacă ți-ai pierdut moșia la cărți ești intelectual? Băi, eu n-am avut carte și ia uite ce-am ajuns!</p> <p><i>Mardare:</i> Păi, eu am avut carte și uite ce-ai ajuns tu!</p>	<p>your old man weren't even good at that!</p> <p><i>The mayor:</i> You pug-nose, you Mardare, you think that you're an intellectual just cause you can read them playing cards you gambled your land away with? You... I'm not educated but I'm someone!</p> <p><i>Mardare:</i> I'm educated and you're someone!</p>
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<p>1: 14.57 – 15.02</p> <p>You, give me that!</p> <p>Pitcher, another plum and lemonade!</p>	<p>2: 15.02 – 15.07</p> <p>You, our time has come;</p> <p>the time of the uneducated!</p>
<p>3: 15.07 – 15.09</p> <p>Enough fetching and carrying for you!</p>	<p>4: 15.09 – 15.14</p> <p>You there, Gogonea, and your old man weren't even good at that!</p>
<p>5: 15.14 – 15.17</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>6: 15.17 – 15.19</p> <p>You pug-nose, you Mardare, you think you're an intellectual</p>
<p>7: 15.19 – 15.21</p> <p>...just cause you can read them playing cards</p>	<p>8: 15.21 – 15.23</p> <p>...you gambled your land away with? You... I'm not educated but I'm someone!</p>
<p>9: 15.23 – 15.27</p> <p>I'm educated and you're someone!</p>	

Comments:

- The translation of proper names (Gogonea) and of nicknames (Ulcior), was considered necessary in support of the tragic-comic mode of the film, but could not be made to fit the subtitles. As in the other cases, their translation remains to be given in the opening section of the film, with the introduction of the cast.
- The typical Romanian brandy, usually made out of plums (cheap and abundant in this part of the world) and referred to simply as “prună” was uncreatively translated as “plum”, to remain as close to the original as possible.
- The “time of the uneducated” might raise difficulties in the cross-cultural communication, with the exception, maybe, of those who, like the Romanians, have experienced the regime. It was preserved, however, without cumbersome explanations, because of the play upon words that follows.
- The presence of the local bankrupt landowner, a must in the representation of the Romanian village life of the time, enriches the scene, but cannot inform on the age-long practice of the wealthy affording to study (abroad, in most cases), while the rural masses were illiterate (a politics in itself, justifying the crave for another).
- Repetitive patterns (“you”) and relative pronouns (“that”) were omitted for spatial economy.
- Suspension dots were used to introduce a continuation of someone's speech in the next frame (frames 7 and 8).
- Most frames last less than 5-8 seconds due to the high speed of Gogonea's speech.
- Frames 6-8 were subtitled on the principle of borrowing time (from subsequent frames in the set) for the same reason.

2.2.2. [30.05-31.20]

<p><i>Agitatorul comunist:</i> Trupă, stai! Unde sînt americanii?</p> <p><i>Trupa:</i> Au fugit ca șobolanii!</p>	<p><i>Communist agitator:</i> Troop, halt! Are the Americans here?</p> <p><i>Troop:</i> No, like rats they disappear!</p>
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<p><i>Agitatorul comunist:</i> Asta e! Trupă, ia loc!</p> <p><i>Primarul:</i> Băi, ce faceți aici? Nesimțiților!</p> <p><i>Primarul:</i> Trupă, drepti! Trupă, alinierea! Astăzi vom executa o acțiune de culturalizare. Ce executăm noi?</p> <p><i>Trupa:</i> Cultura!</p> <p><i>Primarul:</i> Asta e! Ia loc! Iată încă o dovadă, tovarăși, că Partidul gândește pentru noi. Începând de mâine, vă aștept la Sfatul Popular să vă înscrieți în Gospodăria Agricolă.</p> <p><i>Mardare:</i> Măi, Gogoneo, rău e să fii prost!</p> <p><i>Primarul:</i> Mie-mi spui...</p>	<p><i>Communist agitator:</i> That's it! Troop, sit down!</p> <p><i>Mayor:</i> Hey, you! What are you doing there?</p> <p>Good for nothing brats!</p> <p><i>Mayor:</i> Troop, attention! Troop, right dress! Today we shall execute a cultural activity. What do we execute?</p> <p><i>Troop:</i> Culture!</p> <p><i>Mayor:</i> That's it! Sit down! This is further proof, comrades, that the Party is thinking for us. Starting tomorrow, I am waiting for you at the Popular Council to sign in for the Collective Farm.</p> <p><i>Mardare:</i> Hey, Gogonea, stupidity hurts!</p> <p><i>Mayor:</i> You're telling me...</p>
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1: 30.05 – 30.09 Troop, halt!	2: 30.09 – 30.12
3: 30.13 – 30.15 - Are the Americans here? - No, like rats they disappear!	4: 30.16 – 30.20 That's it! Troop, sit down!
5-6: 30.20 – 30.27	7: 30.28 – 30.31 Hey, you! What are you doing there? Good for nothing brats!
8-10: 30.32 – 30.43	11: 30.44 – 30.47 Troop, attention! Troop, right dress!
12: 30.48 – 30.50 Today we shall execute a cultural activity.	13: 30.50 – 30.52 - What do we execute? - Culture!
14: 30.52 – 30.54 That's it! Sit down!	15: 30.55 – 30.58 This is further proof, comrades, that the Party is thinking for us.
16: 30.59 – 31.01 Starting tomorrow, come to the Popular Council	17: 31.02 – 31.04 ...to sign in for the Collective Farm.
18: 31.05 – 31.09	19: 31.10 – 31.14 Hey, Gogonea, stupidity hurts!
20: 31.15 – 31.20 You're telling me...	

Comments:

- The role of the communist agitator is not explained, but results from the activities he is involved in.
- The myth of being saved by the Americans (frame 3) is referred to without additional information, again due to constraints of space. The rhyming pattern was preferred in the translation, with concession made to equivalence.
- The intrusion of the Communist Party in all cultural manifestations is criticised via the translation of the scene as a whole, producing laughter, but inviting careful consideration.
- The communist institutions were translated ("Popular Council", "Collective Farm") although the equivalents are non-existent in the target culture.
- Condensation (of "I am waiting for you at" into "come") was operated in frame 16.
- Dialogue dashes were used to easily identify speakers (in frame 3).

- Suspension dots were used with sentences continued from one subtitle frame to another (14).

2.2.3. [47.04-52.09]

<p><i>Grigore:</i> Cuscre, hai! Nașule... Ce e, măi, Gogonea?</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> Bună ziua, măi, tovarăși!</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Hai sictir! Care-i treaba?</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> Dânsu' este... de la oraș... tovarășu' Păstaie Dumitru, și dânsu' este căpitan Vladimir Boz... Biz...</p> <p><i>Ofițerul rus:</i> Безимяный (Bezimyany, "fără nume")</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> Așa! Comandantu' Diviziei a Patra și reprezentantu' Marelui Stat Major al Uniunii Sov...</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Băi Gogoneo, dac-ai venit pâ-n-aici să ne-arăți că ești prost, te-ai deranjat degeaba, că știam. Da' dacă vrei să bei ceva cu noi, că ești și bețiv, atunci ia-ți prietenii și hai să ciocnim un pahar.</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trad):</i> Nu știm dacă sunteți informați, dar azi noapte a încetat din viață Tătucul nostru, Iosif Vissarionovici Stalin.</p> <p><i>Haralambie:</i> Să fie sănătos!</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trad):</i> Marele Consiliu al Sovietelor Unite și Libere a decretat șapte zile de doliu internațional, așa încât, în afara întâlnirilor de doliu, sunt interzise cu desăvârșire toate manifestările cu caracter popular. Steagul național va fi coborât în bernă.</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> În ce?</p> <p><i>Nașul:</i> În beznă.</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trad):</i> Cei care nu vor respecta acest decret vor fi deferiți justiției și judecați în regim de urgență pentru înaltă trădare.</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Măi Gogoneo, tovarășe... c-am uitat...</p> <p><i>Păstaie:</i> Păstaie</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Păstaie. Ajutați-ne cumva. Avem rude care-au venit tocma' de la mama dracu'. E o nuntă. Avem carne... Am tăiat patru porci, doi viței, sarmale, răcitură... În șapte zile se duc toate dracu', Doamne iartă-mă...</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trad):</i> Nu se face nici o excepție! Sunt interzise cu desăvârșire toate manifestațiile care ar putea distra poporul român de la recunoștința pe care i-o datorează Părintelui Popoarelor!</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trad):</i> Fără râs, fără meciuri de fotbal, fără nunți și fără înmormântări!</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> Ați auzit, bă? Se interzice orice! Cum</p>	<p><i>Grigore:</i> Come on! What is it, Gogonea?</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> Good day, comrades!</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Get lost! What's the matter?</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> He is from the town, comrade Dumitru Păstaie, and he is Captain Vladimir Boz... Biz...</p> <p><i>Russian officer:</i> Безимяный (Bezimyany, "no name")</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> That's it! Commander of the Fourth Division and representative of the General Headquarters of the Russian Uni...</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Gogonea, if you came all this way to show us that you're stupid, you shouldn't have bothered, because we already knew that. But if you want to have a drink with us, because you're a drunkard too, then take your friends and let's raise our glasses.</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trans):</i> We're here to inform you that our Father, Iosif Vissarionovici Stalin, passed away last night.</p> <p><i>Haralambie:</i> To his health!</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trans):</i> The Great Council of the United and Free Soviets has decreed seven days of international mourning, so that, with the exception of mourning meetings, all popular manifestations are strictly forbidden. The national flag will be lowered to half mast.</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> To what?</p> <p><i>Godfather:</i> To half past.</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trans):</i> Those who will not conform to this decree will be taken to justice and tried urgently for high treason.</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Gogonea, comrade... what's your name...</p> <p><i>Păstaie:</i> Păstaie</p> <p><i>Grigore:</i> Păstaie. Help us somehow. We have family who have come from miles away. It's a wedding. We have meat... We've slaughtered four pigs, two calves... Stuffed cabbage, meat jelly... In seven days, it will all go to waste, God forbid...</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trans):</i> There will be no exception! All manifestations which might distract the Romanian people from the gratitude they owe to the Father of Nations are strictly forbidden!</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trans):</i> No laughter, no football matches, no weddings and no funerals!</p> <p><i>Gogonea:</i> Did you hear that? Everything is forbidden! Funerals too? Aren't they burying comrade Stalin?</p>
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<p>și înmormântările? Păi pe tovarăsu' Stalin nu-l înmormântează?</p> <p><i>Păstaie (trad): Aveți o oră să părăsiți locul!</i></p>	<p><i>Păstaie (trans): You have one hour to leave the premises!</i></p>
1: 47.15 – 47.59	2: 48.00 – 47.05 Come on!
3: 48.06 – 48.12	4: 48.13 – 48.16 What is it, Gogonea?
5: 48.17 – 48.18 Good day, comrades!	6: 48.19 – 48.22 Get lost! What's the matter?
7: 48.23 – 48.27 He is from the town, comrade Dumitru Păstaie	8: 48.28 – 48.32 ...and he is Captain Vladimir Boz... Biz...
9: 48.33 – 48.36 - (Bezimyany, "no name") - Commander of the Fourth Division	10: 48.37 – 48.40 ...and representative of the General Headquarters of the Russian Uni...
11: 48.41 – 48.43 Gogonea, if you came all this way to show us that you're stupid,	12: 48.44 – 48.45 ...you shouldn't have bothered, because we already knew that.
13: 48.46 – 48.48 But if you want to drink with us, because you're a drunkard too,	14: 48.49 – 48.50 ...then take your friends and let's raise our glasses.
15: 48.51 – 48.59	16: 49.00 – 49.03 We're here to inform you that our Father, Iosif Stalin,
17: 49.04 – 49.07 ...passed away last night.	18: 49.08 – 49.12 To his health!
19-20: 49.13 – 49.23	21: 49.24 – 49.28 The Great Council of the United and Free Soviets has decreed
22: 49.29 – 49.33 ... seven days international mourning. Except for mourning meetings,	23: 49.34 – 49.36 ...all popular manifestations are strictly forbidden.
24: 49.37 – 49.38	25: 49.39 – 49.40 The national flag will be lowered to half mast.
26: 49.41 – 49.43 - To what? - To half past.	27: 49.44 – 49.50
28: 49.51 – 49.54 Those who will not conform will be taken to justice	29: 49.55 – 49.56 ...and tried urgently for high treason.
30: 49.57 – 49.59	31: 50.00 – 50.05 Gogonea, comrade... what's your name...
32: 50.06 – 50.07 Păstaie	33: 50.08 – 50.11 Păstaie. Help us somehow.
34: 50.12 – 50.13 We have family who have come from miles away.	35: 50.14 – 50.18 It's a wedding. We have meat...
36: 50.19 – 50.21 We've slaughtered 4 pigs, 2 calves...	37: 50.22 – 50.25 In seven days,

Stuffed cabbage, meat jelly...	it will all go to waste, God forbid...
38-40: 50.26 – 50.52	41: 50.53 – 50.57 There will be no exception! All manifestations which
42: 50.58 – 51.00 ...might distract the Romanian people from the gratitude they owe	43: 51.01 – 51.03 ...to the Father of Nations are strictly forbidden!
44: 51.04 – 51.06 No laughter,	45: 51.07 – 51.08 ...no football matches,
46: 51.09 – 51.10 ...no weddings	47: 51.11 – 51.13 ...and no funerals!
48: 51.14 – 51.16 Did you hear that? Everything is forbidden!	49: 51.17 – 51.22 Funerals too? Aren't they burying comrade Stalin?
50-55: 51.23 – 52.06	56: 52.07 – 52.09 You have one hour to leave the premises!

Comments:

- The Romanian “cuscre” was not translated because of the unnatural form it would have in the English vocative (frame 2).
- The English diminutive for “Father” was not an option since it would have induced the meaning of family, protection... (intended, but not equivalent to the political connotations of the Romanian “tătucu”).
- The Latin transcription of “Bezimyany” and its translated meaning were included in the subtitles to facilitate understanding, but also for the sake of foregrounding the absurdity and danger of the situation (the unknown enemy, difficult to fight and blame, for the simple reason that it does not seem to exist).
- The invitation in frames 13 and 14, inexplicable culturally (accepting the other as guest) decodes itself through the gradual acknowledgement of a means to an end.
- The passages in Russian were not translated, for two reasons: they are followed by Păstaie’s translation (this time translated) and they contribute to building the atmosphere.
- The typical Romanian toast “Să fie sănătos!” was preserved in the translation, despite its inadequacy (in frame 18), to show culturally rooted rituals and automatic behaviour.
- The request for help (in frame 33), pointing to the Romanian belief that exceptions can always be made is another case of inadequacy purposefully maintained.
- The interdictions in frames 44-47 also carry cultural significance, with the very short list of leisure activities for an otherwise overworked people/community and with the denial of just that as inflicted pain (although the reference to football seems a bit anachronous).
- Necessary omissions were operated: “That’s it!” (frame 9), “Vissarionovici” (frame 16), “of” (frame 22), “to this decree” (frame 28).
- Condensation was the solution found in frame 13, where “to have a drink” was reduced to “to drink”.
- The shorter form “except for” was used in frame 22 instead of the initially suggested “with the exception of”.

Conclusions

Generating meaning inside its audio-visual text and mediating cultures through representations with a significant impact on the public worldwide, the film is approached from a multitude of perspectives, the main foci of its analysis being aesthetics, medium specificity, genre, realism, communication and reception. Added is the translational feature, by means of which understanding across languages and cultures in the global space is

promoted. The interplay of possible, negotiated meanings which emerge as the film is watched by insider/outsider viewers may be decoded by anchoring the text to its context of situation (the immediate context within which the story evolves, its input – clipped as it may be) and to its context of culture (the implicit, hidden ground – slippery but pertinent) – both observable at the level of its language and, ideally, carried forth by its subtitles. In the particular case of *Nuntă mută ...și întunericul a venit de la răsărit...* [*Dumb Wedding, ...and the darkness came from the East...*], attempts have been made in that direction, but the end result is surely open to debate.

References

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