

Title: Censoring *Lolita*'s sense of humour: when translation affects the audience's perception.

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Abstract

There are many reasons for taking an academic interest in both Nabokov's 1955 novel, *Lolita*, and its 1962 film adaptation by Kubrick. Not least of these is the interest *per se* of their work, in their quality (in both senses of the word) despite any controversy due to the theme chosen. Both works are growing in prestige. Their artists have a gift for provocation, but that alone is not enough for them to emerge as giants of literature and film-making. The point of interest here is the humorous nature of their work, and how that relates back to the nature of humour, and how all of this is relevant to translation studies, as illustrated in the examples presented. A useful measure for this venture is Adrian Lyne's own 1997 film version of *Lolita*, claiming as it does to be a more faithful rendering of the book than the 1962 one. Kubrick and Lyne both reflect much of Nabokov's novel, but only Kubrick's is (classified as) comedy. All other things being equal, mostly, this provides unique insight into the nature of humour (at least in comedy) and the benefits of translating it to be funny and, to fit the genre of comedy. We find that sex and taboo are alluded to by Kubrick in words and images, whereas Lyne is more visually explicit. The aim of this paper is to show a case study of how censorship, taboo and ideological misconceptions of an author's work can affect its perception by the public, so that it becomes unclear whether popular images of *Lolita* as a fictional character are a cause or a consequence of certain translations and new film versions such as Adrian Lyne's.

Key words. *Lolita*, Nabokov, Kubrick, taboo, humour, audiovisual

1. Introduction

In Woody Allen's *Bananas*, in the scene in the porn shop, he says, "I'm doing a sociological study on perversion. I'm up to advanced child-molesting." This has been changed [in the German version] to: I'm up to sexual offenses to mules. (Roger Ebert, 1997).

Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita* (1962) used to be considered something of a critical failure (Duckett 2014, 528). Duckett herself argues against this throughout her paper all the way to the conclusion, where she says, among other things, (pg. 539) "I would argue that we are also implicated as senseless critics". There are many reasons for taking an academic interest in both Nabokov's 1955 novel, *Lolita*, and Kubrick's film adaptation. Not least of these, above and beyond any morbid controversy, is the interest *per se* of their work, their quality (in both senses of the word). *Lolita* is included, for instance, on

Time's (Grossman and Lacayo, 2005) List of the 100 Best Novels in the English language since 1923 (the beginning of *Time*). Both artists have a knack for provocation, wittingly or unwittingly is beside the point, but provocation alone is surely not enough for them to emerge as giants of literature and film-making. My interest, in this study, is the humorous nature of their work, how it relates back to the nature of humour, and the importance of its relevance to translation studies, as illustrated below in a handful of representative examples. A useful measure for this methodological venture is Adrian Lyne's own 1997 film version of *Lolita*, claiming as it does to be a more faithful rendering of the book than Kubrick's. Kubrick and Lyne coincide in much of Nabokov's novel, but only Kubrick's is (classified as) comedy. Schuman (1978: 198) points out 'Kubrick's quite wild and often grotesque dark humor', hopefully illustrated in the examples presented and analysed here. So, I am not claiming to discover Kubrick's comic intention; I am merely stating its importance from the point of view of translation, and how and why it might appear and disappear in certain translations. Because there is such considerable overlap, this provides insight into the nature of humour (at least in comedy) and the benefits of translating it with a sense of humour, either to fit the genre of comedy or as a key feature of other text types. Viewers also find that sex and taboo are only alluded to by Kubrick, whereas Lyne is more visually and verbally explicit. Kubrick and *Lolita* 1962 refer to Kubrick's adaptation, and Lyne or *Lolita* 1997 to Adrian Lyne's film. The aim of this study is to show a case of how taboo and misconceptions of an author's work can affect its perception by the public, so that it is not clear whether popular images of Lolita as a fictional character are a cause or a consequence of certain translations and new film versions such as Adrian Lyne's. The following quote supports the methodology of the analysis of the examples presented below and the claim that there is something worthwhile in *Lolita* 1962, especially when compared to *Lolita* 1997.

In many respects *Lolita* might be considered an essential movie in the establishment of Kubrick's reputation as a provocative filmmaker, as well as making him aware of the subtleties of censorship. The movie [...] underlined the limits imposed to filmmakers who tried to tackle controversial issues [...] Interestingly, in recent years, critics and scholars are more inclined to reject a hard judgment on the miscarried adaptation [by Kubrick] and on the negative impact of censorship, especially when compared to Adrian Lyne's more faithful *Lolita* adaptation in 1997. (Biltereyst 2015)

The analysis of the examples is done within the theoretical framework of audiovisual translation, i.e. the translation of audiovisual texts, including films as audiovisual texts (Delabastita 1989, Zabalbeascoa 2001, 2008, among others), requiring an acceptance that its verbal, nonverbal, audio and visual elements are all textual constituents that are an integral part of the text. The following quote shows how scholars of literary adaptation to film agree with an audiovisual approach to gain insight into audiovisual texts and audiovisual translation alike.

"If we begin the task and start with the screen itself—that is, if we allow ourselves to have visual as well as literary depth—then we might finally have the freedom to let *Lolita* [1962] laugh" (Duckett, 2014, 539).

From this point of view of translation within audiovisual semiotics (Chaume 2001), and the specific language of film as an integral part of audiovisual text composition, any

meaningful analysis of audiovisual text and audiovisual translation must take into account the whole range of relationships that can be established between the various textual constituents through different semiotic codes, as Chaume defends, including the linguistic, the paralinguistic, the music, the photography, as well as the camera movements, shots and angles and the film narrative. Zabalbeascoa (2008) proposes (perfectly compatible with Chaume) the relationships that can be established between the (verbal and nonverbal, in any combination) constituent elements of audiovisual texts (complementarity, redundancy, contradiction, incoherence, separability, and aesthetic quality) to compose any audiovisual text such as a film. The second methodological tool is that of humour studies from an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, such as Attardo's (2001) general theory of verbal humour (GTVH), without going into an explicit account of this theory for lack of space, and its application within translation studies (Attardo 2002, Chiaro 1992, Zabalbeascoa 2005). The goal of this essay is not to make any strong claims about the quality of humour translation, in certain subtitles, based on a substantial corpus of instances but to raise awareness of how a relatively large number of important issues and factors (humour, translation, sensitive issues, literary film adaptations) converge and interplay in very specific little instances of interlingual subtitles, in a case study of important scenes within Kubrick's 1962 *Lolita*. If there is a claim to be made it is that the examples of important scenes and their analysis are interesting enough in their own right, both for purely theoretical thinking (Holmes 1972) and for applied studies, regardless of their statistical relevance.

2. Kubrick and Lyne: films, styles, themes

Before we even go into a textual analysis of this case study, which can hardly escape from the subjectivity involved in textual interpretation (Richards, 2012; Duckett, 2014; Biltereyst, 2015), there are some aspects of both film-makers that seem to support the claims of this study. One remarkable fact is Nabokov's involvement in Kubrick's film and his ultimate approval of the final result, notwithstanding all of the constraints of prejudice and censorship of the time (Biltereyst, 2015). Another one is drawn from a quick comparison of the two directors' filmographies. *Lolita* 1997 is part of Lyne's 'sex sells' philosophy, with the addendum that the darker side of sex and scandal sells even more. One hardly needs to go into an explanation of the storylines of Lyne's films as the titles are great feats of synthesis of the director's intended marketing strategy. What makes this worse and should be taken into account when interpreting *Lolita* 1997 is that Lyne's female characters often carry some blame. *Flashdance* (1983) depicts a bright 18 year-old girl with a welding job who supplements her day job by doing erotic dancing by night. *Fatal Attraction* (1987) shows a woman involved in adultery which develops into stalking, obsession and crime. The more cryptic title *9 1/2 Weeks* (1986) deals with female masochism. The much more telling title *Indecent Proposal* (1993) is about both members of a married couple consenting to hire out the wife's sexual services for a night if the price is right. *Lolita* (1997) is Lyne's next film. And after that, the transparent title *Unfaithful* (2002) adds to Lyne's recurrent theme of 'dirty' sex in domestic settings with highly dubious moral standards: most frequently, adultery or sex for money. *Lolita* 1997 could be said to fit into this pattern because there is adultery compounded with crimes of child abduction, incest and

paedophilia, but it also seems to be consistent with Lyne's tendency to 'blame' his female characters somewhat.

Lyne's *Lolita* is an underage seductress, a slutty nymphet, very much in line with a popular imagery of what a 'Lolita' is, and Humbert Humbert's definition of nymphets. This is not Nabokov's 1955 *Lolita*, however, who remains blameless throughout the book. HH is the sick perverted criminal character of the novel. The interest and fascination of the character lies essentially in the literary point of view. The book is written as a first-person confession, and it is only natural for the fictional writer to wish to justify to some extent his behaviour, or at least raise some sympathy from the reader. Nabokov's technique of letting the character try to account for his past behaviour is very similar in that respect to other novels; for example, Kazuo Ishiguro's butler in *The Remains of the Day* (1989). The difference between the acceptability of the two novels is that nobody really wonders whether Ishiguro is actually defending or somehow similar to his character, despite the similarities in the books of psychological analysis through the first-person point of view and the ultimate ugliness of the portrayal, clearly showing how the author, in both novels, distances himself from his fictional 'I'.

Kubrick tends to draw inspiration from novelists and most of his films (*Paths of Glory*, 1957; *Spartacus*, 1960; *Dr. Strangelove*, 1964; *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968; *A Clockwork Orange*, 1971; *Barry Lyndon*, 1975; *The Shining*, 1980; *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987; *Eyes Wide Shut*, 1999) share two common traits that are of interest to the present study and distinguish him quite clearly from Lyne, making him comparable in these features to Nabokov's *Lolita*: they are among the best films of all time or are highly regarded in some way, and they also show traits of humour, which is clearly present though not always obvious to everyone. Kubrick may not be laden with Academy Awards and box-office triumphs but his films grow in prestige over time; appreciation and praise often appear years later, and never decline. Lyne deliberately seeks controversy and provocation as a commercial strategy, no matter how short-lived. Kubrick shares with Nabokov the curse of controversy and public outrage or incomprehension as a delaying factor in achieving full deserved acknowledgement for the value of their art. Kubrick and Nabokov agreed to turn the 1962 film into a farce as the best way to get around censorship, although pathos runs throughout the film as well. Burke (2003: 19) stresses Kubrick's inclination for 'playfulness and pathos rather than eroticism', no doubt due to the constraints of censorship. This is not to say that Lyne was unconstrained by censorship, simply that each author had to undergo different censorship constraints, which leads one to expect that the same would be the case for each translator.

There is no doubt that Kubrick and Harris would have made a different picture if there had been no external, institutionalised forms of censorship. The impact of these forces is evident on nearly every level of the film art, including the elaboration of the story line, very concrete actions, on character development, casting, the use (and absence) of very particular words and expressions, or on themes, as well as how very concrete scenes are filmed and edited. (Burke, 2003).

3. Sex, crime and taboo. How does humour come into the picture?

The academic challenge of a detached nonjudgmental study of cases like *Lolita* (any version) includes a number of thorny issues, such as the author's humorous treatment of paedophilia or statutory rape (e.g., without softening the seriousness of the crime and/or without offending when the intention is not to offend). Related to this issue is the question of how to portray the characters and their behaviour (e.g., regarding the readership's empathy and sympathy), and how all of this is affected—for the purposes of translation and taboo—by the fact that in some countries there are arranged marriages and commitments between families affecting extremely young girls or by the observation that the law and notion of 'age of consent' and women's rights vary across time in the same place as well as across national and cultural borders. A long-standing debate in translation studies is the notion of translatability (i.e. which items and texts, if any, are untranslatable?). Similarly, one might ask if there are topics which cannot be used as material for humour, and how is "offensive" humour dealt with (and translated), and who decides what can(not) be used for humour and translated, or whether and how it is translatable. Even when so many people seem to agree that rape is not a good topic for joking about, we can see that what actually constitutes rape is too often culturally bound. Further, jokes about rape can vary considerably according to who is targeted as the butt of the joke, namely the rape victim, the rapist, or third parties who may have some degree of responsibility, such as social groups or institutions. So, just by saying that rape, for example, is a no-go area is not necessarily doing rape victims a favour, but merely turning it into a taboo. One might even say that in dealing with such a topic, Nabokov alerts his readers to the dangers of apparently decent men who are actually monsters in disguise, and how certain social factors (including social taboos, prejudice and hypocrisy) may make women and children more vulnerable and exposed to sexual predators.

Apart from these general theoretical and research questions regarding humour and its translation there are specific considerations for the *Lolita* versions. In the book there is no real romance, no actual 'healthy' love. This crucial element of the novel is clearer in Kubrick's adaptation because Lyne's draws from the book the fact that the first person narrator (the sick paedophile) mentions love and the fact that Lolita feels very fond of the lodger who later becomes her stepfather, and may even have a crush on him. The humour in Nabokov's writing and Kubrick's film is carefully couched in a wealth of evidence that the story and its ending are quite sad and tragic, albeit presented tragicomically. In this sense, Kubrick brings the final chapter of the book to the beginning of the film, so there is no doubt that we are being shown the story of a tragic crime, with no-one else to blame but the two paedophiles, Humbert and Quilty, who both prey on a poor hapless girl and ruin her life forever.

What is in *Lolita* that is worthwhile adapting to film and translating? For Adrian Lyne, the answer seems to be restricted to smuttiness and scandal; and a mistaken theme, according to my reading of Nabokov's novel: the illusion that there really are man-eating girl-devils that can lure a man to his doom through their sexual prowess (so-called Lolitas, or nymphets). Most importantly, the very word *Lolita*, as a noun or an adjective, has taken on a very distinct meaning since Nabokov wrote his famous novel than it had before then, and he is only partly to blame for this; the rest of the blame

lies in Lyne-like myths created almost as soon as the book came out. Lyne misses, by choice or by oversight, Nabokov's insistence on Lolita's innocence and right to be considered as a tragic victim. Any shortcomings in her personality are carefully explained as being either a normal trait of her age, or very likely the result of some fault of her mother's, the early loss of her real father, and (most definitely) partly a reaction to Humbert's criminal acts towards her. Of course, there is some social criticism, too. However, Nabokov's greatest achievement does not lie in his choice of paedophilia as a topic, but in his fascination for the English language and in literary style and figures of speech, including alliteration, parody, wordplay and irony for the purpose of humour (Torres-Nuñez, 2005; Wepler, 2011; Duckett, 2014). Similarly, Kubrick is also more interested in the art of film-making and innovation in film language (Biltereyst, 2015) and modes of expression than anything else (also exploiting the possibilities of audiovisual irony).

Both Nabokov and Kubrick are obsessed with detail and perfection in composition, one literary, the other, audiovisual (Duckett, 2014). Nabokov was undoubtedly interested in film as much as Kubrick was keen on literature, so they were both aware that books and film are different modes of expression and require different story-telling strategies. The fact that Lyne follows the narrative structure of the book more closely and includes more direct quotes, then, is probably not enough to make the film necessarily more faithful to the novel, nor (more importantly) a better film, as the Biltereyst quote above points out, even though he has the benefit of being able to draw inspiration from Nabokov and Kubrick, and the passage of time, and a more permissive censorship system. It might be said that for Kubrick's project humour becomes a substitute for a more explicit display of images, language, and treatment of topic, especially if compared to Lyne's proposal. Compared to the book, Kubrick's audiovisual humour is probably more readily accessible to a wider public. It could be a film-making strategy of compensation for a more subtly elaborated kind of humour which works in written literature but requires 'adapting' as the very term film adaptation indicates. These could be important considerations for understanding aspects of *Lolita's* (1962) dubbed and subtitled versions. It cannot be ruled out that any omissions or changes in the funniness of Kubrick's film may be due to ideological or cultural forces or censorship. An alternative or complementary factor could be the translators' grasp of the text and/or their self-appointed duty towards the target-text viewers (moral or aesthetic or whatever). Kubrick certainly uses humour as a substitute for censored explicit images and language (turning it all into a joke since he feels he cannot deal with these issues openly and frankly, not even within artistic fiction). Interpretation and appreciation (by audiences and translators) of Kubrick's *Lolita* no doubt have a lot to do with censorship, culture and ideology.

Also of paramount importance is the realisation that the myth that there are real-life Lolita-nymphets misses the literary 'point of view' that it is a fiction of a sick man's mind. What one cannot know (unless by direct interrogation and unquestioning belief in the answers forwarded) is what is going on in the translator's mind when confronted with a variety of possible interpretations, with the additional complication that by 'translator' we are often actually referring to anyone and everyone who had any responsibility in the job or who could have edited, censored or supervised the translated text. The translation could be influenced somehow by a preconception or

prejudice of the whole *Lolita* concept. Certain shifts and renderings could be a manifestation of incompetence, oversight, personal interpretation, a particular translating ethics or deliberate manipulation. A translation commission could be deliberately assigned to someone who could be expected either not to spoil a popular though possibly mistaken view of what Nabokov and Kubrick were trying to do or to intervene proactively to censor censorable lines and scenes by means of translation 'errors'. In other words, raising such issues and possible motivations, linked to ethics and censorship, is an attempt to frame the difficulties in providing an explanation of how and why humour can be affected in an audiovisual translation where a potentially taboo theme of paedophilia (with the aggravating circumstances of incest, technically speaking) or a smutty theme of pre-teen temptresses may overshadow the comic side of the film to favour a darker side.

4. The targets of Kubrick's jokes. Examples of verbal and audiovisual humour.

Humbert is a pathetic laughable figure who cannot fool anyone except Lolita's mother, and even she sees through him eventually. He is entirely to blame for his crime towards Lolita, just as Quilty is, his antagonist and alter ego, for trying to introduce her into pornographic films. Lolita's mother, Charlotte, is only guilty of being vain, blind, and 'not smart', but she is also a very lonely widow. Charlotte's friends are caricatured by insinuating extramarital sex, just as in the book several minor characters embody Nabokov's social criticism. Kubrick reserves one of the funniest scenes for Mr. Swine, the hotel night manager, who displays a very particular sense of humour, in one of the clearest illustrations of the difference between the two film versions. The young girl (1962) is not the butt of any joke and in this sense Kubrick does not make fun of statutory rape or child molestation victims. Actually, many of the jokes about sex deal with adult (extra)marital sex (e.g., Charlotte's friends' hints), or goings-on in the hotel as narrated by Swine. By contrast, Lyne sees and portrays Lolita as a nymphet, and Humbert has a certain sad romantic quality about him.

The purpose of the examples is to illustrate the humorous quality of *Lolita* 1962 and how it may fare if the translator does not treat it as an important factor, either inadvertently or as part of a (censoring?) strategy. Bold type is used in the examples to show oral stress or emphasis as performed on screen. Each example includes the synchronised subtitles in German and Spanish from the 2001 DVD distributed by Warner Home Video. The film was not dubbed in Spain until 1982 (eldoblaje.com). A twenty-year time lapse due to the workings of censorship seems like a feasible hypothesis.

Example 1. Humbert suddenly agrees to rent a room from Charlotte.

Charlotte — What was the decisive factor? My **garden**?

Humbert — I think it was your **cherry pies**.

00:17:42:21 - 00:17:45:18	¿Cuál ha sido el factor decisivo? ¿El jardín? What was the decisive factor? The garden?
00:17:47:20 - 00:17:49:19	Creo que sus pasteles de cerezas. I think it was your cherry cakes.

00:17:42:21 - 00:17:46:00	Was hat Ihren Entschluß am meisten bestärkt? Mein Garten? What has strengthened your resolve most? My garden?
00:17:47:10 - 00:17:49:19	Nein, ich, glaube, es waren wohl... Ihre Plätzchen. No, I think it was probably ... your biscuits.

Example 1 part of a scene that is one of high moments of the film, as it is love-at-first sight for Humbert, and the first time Lolita is shown (spectacularly) to the audience. Following Chaume 2001 and Zabalbeascoa 2008, there is a meaningful relationship of complementarity between the words spoken, and the nonverbal cues offered by the image (camera shots). Thus, cherry pies seems to refer to Lolita's virginity as Humbert echoes Charlotte's mention of one of the attractions of becoming her lodger, 'I can offer you a comfortable home...a sunny garden...a congenial atmosphere...my cherry pies' (17:01). The camera (nonverbal elements) focuses squarely on Lolita immediately after Humbert's line. The Spanish subtitle is a translation of the literal meaning only, and consequently does not render Humbert's private joke (i.e. Charlotte is not meant to grasp it). It does not even carry over the parallel possessives very well (my cherry pies, my garden, your cherry pies). The German subtitles spoil the joke by translating cherry pies with two different renderings: literally, *Kirschkuchen* (17:01) and *Plätzchen* (17:47), German Christmas biscuits. Two audiovisual details support the humorous interpretation of these words. One is the fact that the camera lingers on Lolita as Humbert says 'your cherry pies'; the other is how both 'my cherry pies' (Charlotte) and 'your cherry pies' (Humbert) are said with noticeable pauses at either end, which makes them stand out verbally and mix in semiotically with Lolita's onscreen beauty and Humbert's irrepressible staring (in what might constitute another, non-verbal visual joke, a travesty of love at first sight). Always important for audiovisual translation is to know whether there are visual restrictions such as a camera shot of the cherry pies, for instance. In this particular case they are not visible at any point, thus providing the translator with an opportunity to explore alternatives that could fit in with the apparent requirement of something like a word to do with attractions for lodgers and a homophone meaning loss of virginity or something so outrageous that it would be natural for Lolita's mother not even to contemplate such a rude interpretation, even though the joke would remain accessible to the audience.

Example 2. Charlotte and Humbert play chess. She struggles, he's bored to tears.

	Charlotte — You're going to take my queen ? (Lolita comes into view, and quietly walks up to lean on Humbert's shoulder)
	Humbert — That was my intention, certainly. (Lolita leaves after saying goodnight to both) [...]
	Humbert — Well, that wasn't very clever of you. (smugly)
	Charlotte — Oh, dear. Oh dear. Ooh! (desperate, as Humbert takes her queen)
	Humbert — It had to happen sometime. (suddenly less bored)
00:18:42:02 - 00:18:44:00	¿Va a comerse mi reina? Are you going to eat my Queen?
00:18:44:08 - 00:18:46:11	No era esa mi intención. [...] That was not my intention. [...]
00:19:07:13 - 00:19:09:19	No ha sido una jugada muy inteligente. That was not a very smart move. (no subtitle for "Don't! No! Oh!")

00:19:14:09 - 00:19:15:21	Alguna vez tenía que suceder. It had to happen sometime.
00:18:42:02 - 00:18:44:06	Wollten Sie meine Königin attackieren? Did you want to attack my Queen?
00:18:44:08 - 00:18:46:11	Ja, das wollte ich allerdings. Yes, I wanted to, indeed.
00:19:07:13 - 00:19:10:00	Ah! Das war aber nicht sehr überlegt von Ihnen. Ah! But this was not very careful of you.
00:19:10:02 - 00:19:11:23	Nicht doch! Nicht doch! Och! Don't! No! Oh!
00:19:14:09 - 00:19:15:21	Das mußte dochmal passieren. It just had to happen.

Example 2 is also one of verbal wordplay reinforced with the camera's point of view (fitting Chaume's theoretical model of camera movement as a semiotic code), bringing Lolita into the spectator's view just on cue (complementarity between the word "queen" and the image of Lolita), as she walks up to Humbert. Charlotte is not clever enough for chess, nor is she capable of seeing Humbert's move to take her other 'queen', Lolita. The German subtitles use 'attack' rather than 'take / take away' (*meine Königin nehmen / wegnehmen?*), and the Spanish uses 'eat', quite colloquial for chess, instead of the more technical 'take' (*tomar* or *capturar*), which potentially could have a rude (funny?) interpretation of its own, unlike *attackieren*. In both of these examples, the humour is underlined by the background music. Surely, this scene can be interpreted as foreshadowing Humbert 'taking' Lolita. And the tune becomes a humorous theme in a number of scenes throughout the 1962 film, signalling that a joke is on the way, even when the characters themselves are suffering, and the victim of this kind of humour is nearly always Humbert Humbert. All of the main characters are quite literally pathetic figures, Lolita and her mother as victims, and Humbert as any debased criminal would be if we were inclined to follow the ethics of 'hate the crime and pity the criminal'.

Even though Humbert is fundamentally pathetic, especially as the story develops, Kubrick forces us to admire his intellectual superiority over Charlotte, and even his barefaced cynicism, just as many villains often have certain attractive, even admirable qualities that make them likeable, and certainly more interesting characters in fiction than flat goody-goody characters, the epitome of this being John Milton's (1667) Satan (Rosenfeld, 2008). The Spanish version translates, 'that was my intention' as 'that was not my intention' (*no era esa mi intención*), which would be more polite and expected and less cynical but also less fitting with the nature of the game of chess unless the player is more worried about being gentlemanly than winning the game. In this case, although the translation states the exact opposite of the utterance in the 1962 source text it could still work as a humoristic element, to be understood as irony rather than barefaced sarcasm which helps to contribute to the 'blindness' theme of the film. In this case, Charlotte cannot see her daughter is in danger, she cannot see Humbert for what he is and she cannot even see she is being insulted. The cynical and foreboding quality is obviously enhanced by the nonchalant words 'It had to happen sometime' and a brilliant accompanying performance of them by James Mason. Of course, the insult of 'that wasn't very clever of you', thus calling her stupid to her face is downplayed in Spanish, making it a much more impersonal reference to a 'wrong move', limited to the scope of chess (literally, 'that was not a very smart move').

Kubrick's script seems carefully worded so the whole exchange can also refer to HH's taking Lolita from under Charlotte's nose, surely a feature that would be desirable to keep in uncensored translation.

Example 3. Lolita is counting the number of times she can get a hula hoop to spin around her hips. Humbert is sitting in a chair, with a book in his hand. He does not reply to Charlotte's observation.

Lolita — 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47,
48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53 (interrupted by her mother's presence)

Charlotte — See how **relaxed** you're **getting**? (to Humbert)

00:19:14:09 - 00:19:15:21 ...31, 32, 33 ...

00:19:32:22 - 00:19:34:21 ¿Ve lo relajado que está?

You see how relaxed you are?

00:19:16:06 - 00:19:17:21 ...31, 32, 33, 34 ...

00:19:32:22 - 00:19:34:21 Sie saßen eben ganz versunken da!

You were sitting just completely absorbed.

Example 3 is another case of audiovisual irony (the relationship of contradiction between the word "relaxed" and the nonverbal element of the look on his face and his tight jaw), Charlotte's mistaken impression that Humbert is relaxed is ridiculously funny with the camera showing him to be pretending only, and quite unsuccessfully, too. The German and the Spanish subtitles miss an opportunity to render this joke quite effectively by keeping close to its literal meaning; 'relaxed' is important but so is 'getting' for the ironic humour to work to its full potential. Lolita's counting gives the idea of progressiveness which is supported by the gerund; the implication is that the pervert is getting more and more excited at the sight of the young girl moving her hips, with him strategically placed a few feet away, wearing something akin to a bath robe and showing his naked knees while sitting with his legs crossed. The Spanish version uses 'See how relaxed you are' instead of 'you're getting relaxed', which could have provided various possibilities for innuendo (e.g., *se pone / se va poniendo*). The German version uses 'absorbed' instead of relaxed, missing the importance of the relaxed/excited opposition. A closer alternative to the humoristic value (and the words) of this line might have been '*Sehen Sie, wie entspannt Sie sind*' or '*Sehen Sie, wie gut Sie hier entspannen können?*'

A visual component of this joke which is very important for understanding the relationship between these three characters is how it shows that Charlotte only has eyes for Humbert, completely blind to her daughter's needs and any harm she might come to, though she is not a particularly bad mother, either. The audience can also see how Lolita is Humbert's obsession and his vision is focused entirely on her, while she remains oblivious of both adults, and certainly ignorant of their darker feelings and intentions. This blindness is the main cause of the downfall for each of them (albeit in different ways). Crucially, it is also used for comic purposes. My claim here is that a good audiovisual translator should have analytical tools to break these semiotically coded messages (Chaume, 2001). When they are overlooked or otherwise interpreted and rendered (especially after ignoring a profusion of clues and repetitions, which is the case of the examples provided here) it can either be because the translator (as

defined above) deliberately chooses to ignore the clues, in some sort of censoring strategy, or that in a different sort of censoring strategy the employer has wilfully chosen a translator who is not up to the job, or has imposed highly problematic working conditions (e.g., tight deadline). Or there is a woeful lack of literary, cinematic and translational sensitivity and / or training.

In one of the jokes shared by all three (1955, 1962 and 1997) versions, *Lolita* is sent by her mother to Camp Climax (!) for young girls in order to get her out of the way, so the grownups can develop their romance together. Although Camp Climax is not translated in either the Spanish or the German version, it is mentioned once orally and appears several times in writing on the screen. It is transparent enough in all likelihood for large sections of both audiences, certainly among the younger generations. Swine would be the same case for German audiences. The novel displays a rich variety of wordplay involving names and a fraction of that humour is picked up and reflected in Kubrick's film. Surely no-one can deny the tongue-in-cheek humoristic intentionality of this particular name, which, in turn, should alert the translator to the presence of humour there, and potentially elsewhere as part of a stylistic pattern; additionally, guided by the clue that the happy theme tune on the soundtrack becomes louder when Camp Climax comes into view. If ever any music could be defined as 'ironic' it has to be this jazzy piece (Chaume's musical semiotic code), especially the way it is used by Kubrick. When Charlotte is accidentally run over and killed, Humbert rushes to Camp Climax to 'take' *Lolita*, as foreshadowed in the chess scene (example 2). His behaviour at the camp is pathetically funny, trying to act as a respectable stepfather, and example 4 is part of the conversation he has with *Lolita* as they drive off towards The Enchanted Hunters Lodge to spend the night.

Example 4. Humbert is trying to change the topic of conversation.

Humbert — Did you have a **marvellous** summer?
 Lolita — Yeah, I guess so.
 Humbert — Were you sorry to leave?
 Lolita — Not exactly.
 Humbert — You know, I've **missed** you terribly.
 Lolita — I haven't missed **you**. In fact, I've been **revoltingly** unfaithful to you.
 But it doesn't matter a bit, because you've **stopped caring** anyway.
 Humbert — What makes you say I've stopped caring for you?
 Lolita — You **haven't even kissed** me yet, have you?
 01:09:30:19 - ¿Has pasado un buen verano?
 01:09:33:02 Did you have a nice summer?
 01:09:34:13 - Sí, creo que sí.
 01:09:35:22 Yes, I think so.
 01:09:36:01 - ¿Te ha dado pena marcharte?
 01:09:37:18 Were you sad to leave?
 01:09:37:21 - No exactamente.
 01:09:39:03 Not exactly.
 01:09:50:11 - No sabes cuánto te he echado de menos.
 01:09:52:14 You don't know much I've missed you.
 01:09:53:15 - Yo a ti, no. La verdad es que
 01:09:57:12 te he sido horriblemente infiel.
 I haven't missed you. The truth is I've been horribly unfaithful to you.

- 01:09:58:08 - Pero da lo mismo, porque ya no te importo.
 01:10:01:23 But it doesn't matter, because you no longer care about me.
- 01:10:02:17 - ¿Qué te hace decir que ya no me importas?
 01:10:05:08 What makes you say I no longer care about you?
 01:10:06:16 - Ni siquiera me has dado un beso.
 01:10:08:16 You have not even given me a kiss.
-
- 01:09:30:19 - Ah, hast du... hast du
 01:09:33:16 einen schönen Sommer gehabt?
 Ah, Did you ... did you have a nice summer?
- 01:09:34:13 - Ja, es ging.
 01:09:35:22 Yes, it was.
- 01:09:36:01 - Hat es dir leid getan, fortzugehen?
 01:09:37:19 Were you sorry to leave?
 01:09:37:21 - Nein, gar nicht.
 01:09:39:03 No, not at all.
- 01:09:50:11 - Nebenbei habe ich dich sehr vermisst.
 01:09:52:14 By the way, I missed you very much.
 01:09:53:15 - Ich dich dafür gar nicht. Im Gegenteil,
 01:09:57:19 ich war dir geradezu empörend untreu.
 I did not miss you at all. On the contrary, I was downright outrageously unfaithful to you.
- 01:09:58:08 - Aber das ist dir ja gleich,
 01:10:02:02 du magst mich ja nicht mehr, junger Mann.
 But to you it is all the same, you do not like me any more, young man.
- 01:10:02:17 - Wie kommst du denn darauf?
 01:10:05:08 What makes you think that?
 01:10:06:16 - Du hast mich noch nicht einmal geküßt.
 01:10:08:16 You have not even kissed me yet.

In example 4, 'terribly' is already suspect and could be rendered carefully in translation so that it is coherent with what is to follow. The Spanish subtitle plays down 'marvellous' as 'good', which does not help to build up the string of hyperboles as they appear in English (marvellous, terribly, revoltingly). Spanish norms for good style recommend that a writer steer away from the copresence of adverbs ending in *-mente* (the Spanish equivalent of *-ly* ending for adverb formation in English). Despite the unidiomatic (and uncharacteristic for Lolita) *horriblemente* for 'revoltingly', the subtitle resorts quite skilfully to a slight shift for 'terribly' to 'you don't know how [much] I've missed you'. What seems most out of place in the source-text script, compared to what one would normally expect from a father and daughter's conversation in similar circumstances, is Lolita saying 'revoltingly unfaithful', leading up to what could easily be regarded as the punch line of the joke, i.e. the way she says 'kissed me'. Actually, from a semiotic point of view the punch line is the visual effect of the car revving up and shooting down the road just after Lolita utters these words, in a clear audiovisual metaphor of Humbert getting all excited (Chaume's semiotic code of camera shots and angles), and also a clear hint that censorship would not allow anything more explicit than that in 1962. This technique of the car shooting down the road as a metaphor of sexual excitement is repeated as a follow-up to the so-called "seduction scene" which starts with example 8.

The whole car scene can be straightforwardly compared to Lyne's film, most probably inspired by the 1962 scene, and it is quite obvious that Lyne plays the card of an erotic scene with partial nudity and on-screen kissing as an alternative film directing strategy

to Kubrick's metaphor, visual ellipsis and humour. In 1962, *Lolita* is only slightly provocative, mostly through some of the things she says (example 4); in 1997, by contrast, she literally jumps on top of her stepfather and kisses him quite hard. Just as *Lolita* (1997) teases Humbert, Lyne teases his audience by creating a false expectation of more explicit sex scenes under the cover of supposedly faithfully adapting Nabokov's book, while actually being faithful to his own filmography, as we have already seen. The Spanish and German versions of this scene seem to disregard the importance of a double discourse that could be a father-daughter exchange or an argument between lovers, by the presence of carefully planted words leaning one way or the other (e.g., miss, care and kiss). 'Not exactly' is rendered as '*Nein, gar nicht*' (not at all); but more mysterious is the translator's decision to include '*junger Mann*' (young man) as if she were older than him. The important repetition of the word 'caring' is kept in Spanish but avoided in the German subtitles, just as it was for 'cherry pies'. A small but important detail can be found in the Spanish rendering of 'kissed me' as 'give me a kiss', because of the difference between giving someone a kiss (as one would give one's daughter) or kissing them (more fitting with sexual activity, foreplay or petting). Nor is there anything for 'yet', or 'have you', which help the provocative tone.

One of the funniest scenes in the film features Peter Sellers in the role of Quilty, Humbert's nemesis, talking to the night manager, Mr. Swine (part of which is transcribed as example 5). The conversation is quite bizarre in many ways, the kind of verbal incoherence (at least in appearance) that tends to disarm translators, so often formally trained to look for and keep 'the sense' of a text. So nonsense humour and surrealism can be just as problematic if not more so than symbolism, irony and metaphor. This is why a translator would do well to read the warning signs before and after such problems appear, in order to have a firmer ground on which to make decisions and come up with suitable solutions. In this respect, there are several nonverbal, visual clues. One is the body language of all three characters, including Quilty's female partner. She mysteriously never utters a word out loud, and seems like some sort of dominatrix (Richards, 2012), in her appearance and general demeanour.

Example 5. Quilty is talking to Swine, amiably, almost flirtatiously.

- Swine — ... What do **you** do with **your** excess energy?
 Quilty — Well, **we** do a lot of things with **my** excess energy. One of the things **we** do a lot of is **judo**. Did you **ever** hear about that?
 Swine — Judo! Yes, I've heard about it. You do judo **with the lady**?
 Quilty — Yes, she's a yellow belt, I'm a green belt, that's **the way nature made** it. **What happens is** she throws me all over the place.
 Swine — **She** throws **you**?
 Quilty — What she does, she gets me in a sort of thing called a sweeping-ankle throw. She sweeps my ankles from under me. **I go down** with one hell of a **bang**.
 Swine — Doesn't it **hurt**?
 Quilty — I lay there **in pain but I love it**. I really love it. I lay hovering between **consciousness and unconsciousness**. It's the **greatest**.

01:10:02:17 - 01:10:05:08 ¿Qué hace usted con su exceso de energía?
 What do you do with your excess energy?

01:11:19:07 - 01:11:22:00	Hacemos muchas cosas con mi exceso de energía. We do a lot of things with my excess energy.
01:11:22:03 - 01:11:24:07	Una de las cosas que hacemos es judo. One of the things we do is judo.
01:11:24:09 - 01:11:26:13	-¿Ha oído hablar del judo? Have you heard about judo? - ¡Judo! Judo.
01:11:26:15 - 01:11:28:08	Sí, he oído hablar de eso. Yes, I've heard about it.
01:11:28:23 - 01:11:30:13	¿Practica el judo con la señora? Yes, I've heard about it. you practise judo with the lady?
01:11:30:15 - 01:11:34:19	Sí, ella es cinturón amarillo y yo, verde, así lo quiso la naturaleza. Yes, she's a yellow belt and I'm a green one, that's how nature wished for it to be.
01:11:34:21 - 01:11:37:09	Lo que ocurre es que siempre me tira por los suelos. What happens is she always throws me on the floor!
01:11:37:13 - 01:11:38:17	¿Ella a usted? She throws you?
01:11:38:19 - 01:11:42:21	Lo que hace es cogermme en una especie de llave que llaman barrido de tobillo. What she does is catch me in a sort of technique they call an ankle sweep.
01:11:44:13 - 01:11:47:01	- Y me pego un batacazo de aúpa. I take a jolly almighty fall. - ¿No se hace daño? Don't you hurt yourself?
01:11:47:03 - 01:11:49:19	Me quedo un poco dolorido, pero me encanta, de verdad. It hurts a little bit, but I love it, really.
01:11:49:21 - 01:11:54:00	Estar echado en un estado de semiinconsciencia es lo mejor que hay. To lie there in a state of semiunconsciousness is the best there is.
01:11:16:00 - 01:11:18:19	Und was machen Sie mit der überschüssigen Energie? And what do you do with the excess energy?
01:11:22:03 - 01:11:24:07	Wenn wir zu Haus sind, machen wir meist Judo. When we are at home, we usually do judo.
01:11:24:09 - 01:11:26:13	- Haben Sie schon mal davon gehört? Have you ever heard of it? - So, Judo. Why yes, judo.
01:11:26:15 - 01:11:28:12	Hab' schon viel davon gehört. I've heard a lot about it.
01:11:28:23 - 01:11:30:13	Treiben Sie Judo mit der Dame? You do it, the judo, with the lady?
01:11:30:15 - 01:11:34:19	Ja, sie hat einen gelben Gürtel und ich einen grünen. Yes, she's a yellow belt and I'm a green one.
01:11:34:21 - 01:11:37:09	Sie wirft mich vielleicht über das Parkett! She throws me all over the floor!
01:11:37:13 - 01:11:38:17	Die Dame wirft Sie? The lady throws you?

01:11:38:19 - 01:11:42:21	Ja, wie sie das anstellt, ich weiß es nicht. Yes, how she does that, I do not know.
01:11:44:13 - 01:11:47:01	- Sie hat so ihre Tricks. She has her tricks. - Tut das nicht weh? Doesn't it hurt?
01:11:47:03 - 01:11:49:19	Und wie! Aber je mehr es wehtut, umso mehr Spaß macht's. And how! But the more it hurts, the more fun it is.
01:11:49:21 - 01:11:54:00	Und wenn der Partner der Richtige ist, dass ist diese Sportart... And if the partner is the right one, it's that kind of sport.

Example 5 belongs to a scene of key importance in the film as it depicts the atmosphere of the place where Humbert will make his first criminal sexual assault on Lolita (presumably, as this is not shown explicitly). Example 5 has been chosen to show an instance of Quilty's considerable contribution to the humour of *Lolita* 1962 (by his paralinguistic and nonverbal performance of the words in the script). The absurd conversation is sexually charged and is supported by the actors' delivery of their lines, in their intonation and looks, and how closely they lean towards each other, with their foreheads almost touching. Quilty's 'lady' is present (and fittingly bizarre-looking) as Swine talks about her almost as if she were not there. Two points are essential for translating the humour here. First, a rendering of double-entendre through idiomatic language to go beyond the apparent nonsense; second, the parallel scene that comes immediately after it, involving Humbert and Swine, which is funny because of how differently it plays out. Humbert's antagonising clumsiness (e.g., he stands stiffly away from his interlocutor) puts him at the mercy of the night manager, who has seen all sorts of customers and their behaviours, the implication being that Humbert is fooling nobody but himself. Certain changes or decisions in any translation can either convey all of this or help to destroy the effect. In particular, the scene of Humbert's (1962) conversation with Swine is also present in Lyne 1997, and it is turned into a very sombre, sinister situation, because the 1997 villain is Quilty, whereas Humbert and Lolita just have a sort of impossible romance, downplaying the paedophilia somewhat. Even the music for these scenes is quite different from one adaptation to the other (underscoring comedy or suspense, respectively). The carefully crafted script (example 5) tellingly makes Swine refer to Quilty's partner as 'the lady' and the effect of this choice of wording is picked up in the German dubbing as *gnädige Frau* in a display of exaggerated, false respect, interestingly repeated this time for 'she throws you?' (unlike 'caring' and 'cherry pies' before) even though it is not repeated in English.

Whatever sexual allusion there may be in 'do judo' as a code word is also attempted in the phrase *Treiben Sie*, which could mean do judo or (*es treiben*) have sex (do it). The outrageous logic of 'that's the way nature made it' is dubbed as *und Sie versteht es!* ('she knows how to do it!', literally, 'she understands it') and is simply omitted from the subtitles although there is enough time to fit in an extra subtitle. In Spanish, a near-literal translation is blurred by expressing it as 'that's way nature wished for it', which in Spanish sounds almost pious (or blasphemous) echoing of 'God willing'. The calculated ambiguity of 'all over the place' becomes a more specific *vielleicht über das Parkett*. The double meaning and innuendo of 'bang' is missed in the German dubbed rendering ... *ich fliege auf die Erde* (I fall down on the ground), and again not even

attempted in the subtitles. The Spanish translation is quite similar in abandoning any attempt to portray the double meaning of ‘bang’, and matters are made worse by choosing words which might just as well have come straight out of a Spanish nun’s mouth, but definitely not something one would hear from a man-of-the-world playwright. The German translation of Quilty’s last turn in example 5 adds two features from the translator’s own initiative: one is that the utterance stops as if unfinished and the other is the inclusion of the word ‘sport’. The Spanish rendering is bizarre grammatically and idiomatically, but not comically bizarre, just the opposite of the English words which are grammatical but full of comic sexual allusion. This is noteworthy as there seems to be no obstacle in the way of an effective literal translation.

Example 6. Quilty leaves the reception desk as Humbert arrives with Lolita, in the scene immediately following example 5, to book two rooms or twin beds for the night. Swine tells Humbert the hotel is full, except for a room with a double bed.

Humbert — Well, perhaps you could find a **folding** bed or a **camp** bed.

Swine — **Potts**, do we have any **cots**? (...) I’m sure you’ll find **one** room satisfactory. Our double beds are really **triple**. One night we had **three ladies** sleeping in one.

01:12:43:02 - 01:12:46:22	Tal vez podemos arreglarnos con una cama plegable. Maybe we can make do with a folding bed.
01:12:47:02 - 01:12:48:20	Potts, ¿tenemos camas plegables Potts, do we have any folding beds?
01:12:50:21 - 01:12:54:18	Creo que con una habitación les bastará. Nuestras camas dobles son triples. I think that with one room you’ll have enough. Our double beds are triple.
01:12:54:20 - 01:12:56:23	Una noche durmieron tres señoras en una. One night three ladies slept in one of them.
01:12:43:02 - 01:12:46:22	Hätten Sie noch ein Klappbett? Would you have a folding bed?
01:12:47:02 - 01:12:48:17	Haben wir ein Feldbett frei? Do we have a free camp bed?
01:12:50:23 - 01:12:54:18	Trotzdem wird das Zimmer ausreichen. Unsere Doppelbetten sind so groß, Nevertheless, the room is sufficient. Our double beds are large,
01:12:54:20 - 01:12:56:23	neulich haben 3 Herren in einem übernachtet. recently we had 3 men spending the night in one.

‘Cot’ is used repeatedly in the 1962 film, including comments by several characters and synonymous alternatives as in example 6, encouraging the viewer to see the connection with babies and paedophilia, and it becomes a theme within the film and a metonym of the paedophilic assault. This connection is harder to see in the Spanish and German translations, which use words that are restricted to equivalences of folding bed or camp bed (e.g., *Klappbett*, *Feldbett*, or even *Couch*, as used in the dubbing), but not to a word like cot, which so effectively helps to visualise the crime. In this sense the joke relies on how Humbert avoids the word and flinches pathetically as Swine insists on repeating it out loud (paralinguistic code, to use Chaume’s term), quite amused, as if he were in the know. This is developed further when the cot is

brought to the room in a comical scene that echoes silent-film slapstick. Spanish offers the possibility of *catre*, because it is a literal translation of camp bed or folding bed and often used idiomatically as a vulgar metonym for fornication.

Swine never refers to Lolita as anything but 'the girl', and refers to adult females (examples 5 and 6) as 'ladies' rather than women or other synonyms, sounding somewhat offensive or vulgar in doing so. In the German subtitles as well as the dubbed version there is a remarkable change from ladies to men, spending the night in one bed. It is not clear whether this is a typo (the dubbed version also uses men) or an attempt to clean up the dialogue ... or to make it dirtier! Who knows!

Example 7. The bellhop and Humbert manage to unfold the bed not without considerable effort, in a hilarious silent scene that further develops "the cot theme".

Bellhop — We **did it**, Sir!

01:22:27:14 - 01:22:29:01 Lo conseguimos, señor.
We achieved it, sir.

01:22:27:14 - 01:22:30:11 Idiot! Passen Sie doch auf!
Go carefully, you fool!
Ja! So, jetzt steht es.
Yes! Now that's it.

Example 7 includes the expression "do it", which can be seen as meaning "to be successful", but also "to have sex". This interpretation is not very farfetched, at least jokingly, since they have been literally rolling around together on the bed trying to get the cot to unfold and stay open. The Spanish subtitle definitely misses on an easy opportunity to translate the pun almost literally, with only a slight change to keep it just as idiomatic. The wordplay in "do it", can be replicated in Spanish with "hacerlo", but the subtitle has opted for a less literal translation (*conseguir*) which explains better only one of the meanings (achieve), the less naughty one. The problem in the German subtitle seems to be of a technical nature, with words that belong to a different subtitle, with no correspondence in the English version, producing audiovisual incoherence (Zabalbeascoa, 2008).

Example 8. Daybreak. Humbert is lying in the cot, which is lying on the floor. Lolita has slept in the double bed.

Lolita — By the way, what happened to your bed? It looks a lot lower.

Humbert — Well, the bed collapsed. It's a collapsible bed.

01:25:25:24 - 01:25:29:10 Por cierto, ¿qué le ha pasado a tu cama?
Parece mucho más baja.
By the way. What happened to your bed? It looks a lot lower.

01:25:29:15 - 01:25:33:06 Se ha plegado. Es una cama plegable.
It's folded up. It's a folding bed.

01:25:26:00 - 01:25:29:10 Was hast du mit dem Bett gemacht?
Es ist so niedrig.
By the way, what happened to your bed? It is so low.

01:25:29:15 - 01:25:33:06 Das Bett ist nicht zusammenlegbar,
es ist zusammenbrechbar.
The bed is not a folding bed, it is a collapsible bed.

Example 8 is also wordplay, but unlike example 7, the speaker is punning deliberately. It also closes the “cot theme” after several minutes of verbal and nonverbal play. The German subtitle uses words with similar pronunciations rather than different meanings (*zusammenlegbar* and *zusammenbrechbar*) to say that the bed is not “foldable”, it is “collapsible” to imply that it is low because it has broken and collapsed, establishing complementarity between the two words in a different way. The Spanish subtitle is incoherent with the nonverbal image (Zabalbeascoa, 2008), strictly speaking, because it states that the bed has folded up, meaning to close like a book, which is how it was brought into the room. But the scene shows the bed completely unfolded, flat on the floor. If the Spanish subtitles had really been interested in rendering some sort of joke they could have done something similar to the German version: “no es una cama desplegable, es desmoronable” to say the bed is not one that folds, but a bed that crumbles. It is clear in these examples that the whole “cot theme” is of paramount importance in the film; it is the focal point of sexual tension and paedophilia reduced to ridicule and farce.

Another key feature of *Lolita* 1962 is the character called Quilty, Humbert’s “partner in crime” and nemesis. Quilty adopts different disguises, the most unlikely one being that of some sort of German psychiatrist. We can guess he is German as he speaks non-native English with stereotypical traits of what is often taken for Germans failing to speak English properly. The foreign-sounding speech is the only item of his fake persona apart from a pair of thick glasses, so it is an important element to render in translation, apart from being very funny, because Humbert has spoken to Quilty earlier on and could easily recognise him otherwise. The stereotypical German flavour of his English can be heard in the accent, in the choice of words and in quirky grammar, as can be seen in example 9. He repeats Humbert’s name three or four times, but nearly always mispronouncing it to sound like “Humbert’s”, stretching the “s” sound.

Example 9. Quilty is disguised as Dr Zeph, the psychiatrist, speaking in an improbable German accent, as part of his disguise; the other part is a thick pair of glasses.

Quilty — Dr. Humbert (pronounced “Humbertssss”), would you mind if I am putting to you the blunt question?

01:40:42:15 - 01:40:47:11 Dr. Humbert, ¿le importa que le haga una pregunta directa?
Dr. Humbert, do you mind if I ask you a direct question?

01:40:42:15 - 01:40:47:11 Dr. Humbert, sind Sie böse, wenn ich eine etwas heikle Frage an Sie richte?
Dr. Humbert, do you mind if I ask you a slightly tricky question?

In a way, all of this foreignness, as both Humbert and the fake psychiatrist are not originally from the USA, sets up the joke in example 10.

Example 10. Dr Zemph is interviewing Humbert, compared to a much earlier scene with Quilty speaking to Humbert in a different guise.

Zemph — We Americans... [referring to himself and Humbert]

....

Quilty — You are either Australian...or a German refugee.

01:43:11:22 - 01:43:13:06	Nosotros, los americanos, We Americans,
00:07:17:12 - 00:07:19:23	Usted es australiano... You are Australian...
00:07:20:17 - 00:07:22:08	o un refugiado alemán. or a German refugee.
01:43:11:22 - 01:43:13:06	Wir Amerikaner... We Americans
00:07:17:12 - 00:07:19:23	So, entweder sind Sie ein Gangster... So, you're either a ganster
00:07:20:17 - 00:07:22:15	oder ein verkommener Vagabund. or a dissolute tramp.

Zemph's remark is an extraordinary audiovisual contradiction, coming from someone posing as a German speaking to an English character that stands out wherever he goes in America, even if we grant that both might wish to become naturalised US citizens. It is a funny selfdescription coming from someone with such a thick accent. However, neither the Spanish nor the German subtitles show any foreignness or linguistic variation at all. This has two effects, one is that Quilty's disguise depends entirely on his glasses (visual code) with no accent (paralinguistic and verbal code), and the other is that any joke like the one illustrated in example 10 is completely invisible to the Spanish and German viewers. The rationale for the German case is revealed in how it renders "Australian or German refugee" as "a gangster or a dissolute tramp". This means that any mention of anything German is as much of a taboo, at least, as paedophilic sex. The relationship between the audiovisual elements as established by the German subtitles for example 10 are not contradictory (i.e. incongruous) and hence not funny, as all mention of foreignness and German origin have been deleted, coherently and humourlessly. The Spanish subtitles, unlike the German ones, translate all the nationality words faithfully (Australian, German, American) thus creating an unfunny relationship of incoherence between the audiovisual text elements (verbal and nonverbal) because there is no accompanying accent or clue to justify the explicit comments on national origin.

5. Conclusions

I hope to have shown that humour, as a main feature of *Lolita* 1962, especially when compared to *Lolita* 1997, needs to be addressed in any dubbed or subtitled version, unless it is purposely deleted or impoverished. Omission of humour may be because the translator has missed it or disregarded it, believing the film to be (more) about a taboo crime of paedophilia, or because humour would either distract from a morbid

approach, or somehow endorse child abuse. *Lolita* (any version) is often referred to as ‘controversial’, almost as an inevitable collocation: i.e., “controversial *Lolita*”. Eventually, it is taken for granted that a book or film called *Lolita* must be controversial *per se*, without any analysis to support or explain the claim. Nabokov’s novel was initially labelled “pornographic” also with the implication that no further analysis was needed. Leaving aside morbose controversy, Nabokov’s 1955 and Kubrick’s 1962 *Lolita* can be regarded as works of art that are about much more than a story of paedophilia. More importantly, they provide wonderful samples of literary and cinematic composition, respectively. The examples presented here—and the analysis of their translations—is intended to support the idea that maybe a translation with certain ‘shortcomings’ and ‘errors’ could constitute a form of censorship, or no longer requires the presence of active censorship, by making the final result one of poorer quality and diminished interest.

These examples illustrate a variety of translation issues. Some of them avoid a straightforward solution that could be achieved by means of a literal translation (“ladies” translated as “men”, in example 6) or by respecting the repetition of a key word (“cherry pies”, example 1). There is a challenge for the translator sometimes (“cot”, example 6) that does not seem insurmountable but is nevertheless hardly even attempted, possibly through a lack of sufficient interest (e.g., maybe because of taboo helping to diminish such an interest). There is an obvious comic purpose in many of the names Camp Climax, Swine, Potts, and others that do not appear in the examples (e.g., Captain Love, *Enchanted Hunters*, Dr. Cudler). Another kind of problem is the comical nature of innuendo and double discourse, as can be seen in examples 4 and 5. In example 4, the dialogue can be interpreted as being spoken by a father and his daughter, but also by two lovers talking about missing each other and being faithful or otherwise. Example 5 is a conversation about judo that is clearly not about judo, but about masochistic sex between consenting adults.

Adrian Lyne’s film is supposed to be a faithful adaptation because it follows the chapters of the 1955 novel more closely than Kubrick’s film does, and includes more direct quotes from the novel. But Adrian Lyne’s humour is lamer and scarcer than Kubrick’s, and even Nabokov realised that film is a different medium and requires a different approach. Casting and performance are essential aspects of filmmaking and *Lolita* 1962 is better and funnier than *Lolita* 1997 partly because of Kubrick’s cast and their performances. Proof of this is synthesised in each of the ten examples provided, some because they are replicated in 1997 (example 4) and are easy to compare, and others (examples 5, 9, 10) because they are absent, so that the absence of a humorous scene or the way it is dealt with is telling of authorial intent and resulting effect. Ultimately, both Kubrick and Nabokov, and critics and scholars long after them (Burke, 2003, Richards, 2012, Duckett, 2014, Biltreyst, 2015) understood that artistic quality (literary or audiovisual) is a more worthwhile goal than likeness, almost in the vein of *belles infidèles*, so well known in translation studies. This view of translation could be applied to film adaptation as translation (Catrysse, 1992), and to the translation of humour, when comic effect is a high priority (Zabalbeascoa, 2005).

6. References

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