



**“A lot could be forgiven if you were funny”:
A case study of the Spanish subtitling
of queer humour in RuPaul’s Drag Race**

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**“A lot could be forgiven if you were funny”:
A case study of the Spanish subtitling of queer
humour in RuPaul’s Drag Race**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Literature

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how humorous utterances in the US reality TV show *RuPaul's Drag Race* (RPDR) are transformed in its official Spanish subtitles in streaming platforms. RPDR, which features a cast of drag queens each season, aired for the first time in 2009. It gained international success, which spread an American version of drag culture and its corresponding ideas about gender and sexuality. It is through the study of translations where the exchange of these ideas takes place that the power dynamics and the cultural negotiation involved can be revealed. The thesis focuses on the subtitles of humour because, in drag culture, linguistic creativity is considered essential for belonging to the community, and it is notoriously difficult to translate given the range of source culture-specific references and style.

The first part of the thesis discusses the existing theories and approaches in translation studies regarding audiovisual translation, subtitling, translation of humour, and queer translation. This overview establishes an appropriate methodology for analysing the subtitling of humour in RPDR by creating a list of priorities to be used for comparison with the translations. The second part is a detailed analysis of subtitles of humorous instances in RPDR into Spanish available on the streaming services Netflix and WoWPresentsPlus. This analysis focuses first on the subtitling of humorous cultural references and then on the subtitling of vulgar and taboo-based humour and sexually explicit humour. The analysis shows that the existing subtitles present a significant loss of humour when translating references, with some exception and they have a tendency towards attenuation of vulgarity, obscenity and sexually explicit humour.

Introduction

This thesis explores the transformation of humorous utterances in the US reality TV show RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR) in its official Spanish subtitles on streaming platforms for Hispanic American audiences. RPDR, which premiered in 2009, has achieved international success, spreading an American interpretation of drag culture and its associated ideas about gender and sexuality. The programme's humour, deeply rooted in linguistic creativity, cultural references, and camp aesthetics, presents unique challenges for translation. By examining how humour is adapted in subtitles for a Hispanic American audience, this research sheds light on the cultural negotiation and power dynamics involved in the global dissemination of drag culture, as well as the difficulties in recreating culturally-specific humour in another language.

The study contributes to the fields of audiovisual translation and queer translation by developing a methodology for analysing the subtitling of drag queen media, particularly humour, and providing a detailed analysis of Spanish subtitles of RPDR's humour. Drag culture places a high value on linguistic play and intertextual references, which are notoriously difficult to translate due to their cultural specificity and reliance on source-language nuances. This research aims to bridge the gap between translation studies and queer media by offering a framework that prioritizes the respect for the source culture, preservation of humour, cultural references, and the subversive nature of drag queen speech. By doing so, it seeks to enhance the accessibility and enjoyment of drag media for Hispanic American audiences while respecting the source culture and being aware of the power dynamic involved in this cultural exchange.

The primary objectives of this research are twofold: first, to describe and analyse the strategies used in the official Spanish subtitling of RPDR for a Hispanic American audience; and second, to evaluate whether these strategies align with the translation priorities necessary for effectively conveying the humour and cultural nuances of the show. These priorities include maintaining accessibility,

respecting the source culture, and preserving the humour's characteristics, while also considering the constraints imposed by the medium and the target audience's expectations.

The thesis is structured into two main parts in addition to this introduction. The rest of this introduction will provide some clarity on definitions, pronoun use, and an overview of the object of study, RPDR, and the specific corpus selected. The first part establishes the theoretical framework, drawing from translation studies, humour studies, and queer theory to outline the priorities and constraints relevant to the subtitling of RPDR. It also explores the cultural and linguistic challenges of translating drag humour, particularly in relation to cultural-specific references, vulgarity, and sexually explicit content. The second part presents a detailed analysis of the Spanish subtitles of selected episodes from RPDR, focusing on how humour is translated and evaluating how the strategies employed match with the established priorities. By combining theoretical insights with practical analysis, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in translating drag queen media.

In summary, this thesis not only contributes to the academic discourse on audiovisual translation but also offers practical insights for translators working with queer media. By developing a methodology tailored to the unique challenges of drag humour, it seeks to ensure that the cultural and linguistic richness of RPDR is preserved in its Spanish subtitles, fostering a translation culture that values both respect for the source culture and awareness of power-dynamics in a post-colonial world.

Definitions, considerations on terms and pronouns

Queer/LGBTQ+/GSD

The concepts of queer, identity, community, and language within Lesbian and Gay Studies, later Queer Studies has distinct interpretations across different languages and cultures. The translation of the word "queer" itself into different languages is always a complex topic and it is a good example of the difficulty in pinning down

these terms. In English, the word queer is a reclaimed slur, which lends it a subversive connotation. In Hispanic America, the use of the word in English is very popular, but other variations exist, such as “kuir”, “cuir” which seek to claim the concept while localising it. “Kuir” is not the same as “queer”, it is both queer and related to the specific struggles lived in Spanish-speaking countries. Another strategy used to translate this word has been to use words in Spanish that also have connotations of being used as an insult against LGBTQ+ people, such as “maricones” which is then adapted to the feminine as “mariconas”, or “mariconeo” as a descriptor for the behaviour that would make one “maricon” (in a subversive semiotic strategy).

All of these strategies illuminate the fact that “queer” is not a simple umbrella term that describes people who are not straight. It is a political stance of transgression and rejection of binary and static definitions of human sexuality and gender. For this reason, I have preferred the use of GSD, or Gender and Sexuality Diversities, or LGBTQ+ when discussing individuals that fit the description of not being straight or cis-gendered, without necessarily engaging the discourse of transgression and the political and cultural weight of “queer”. Queer in itself is a political stance, that not all GSD people ascribe to. I use queer, when the people, concept or behaviour described is intentionally transgressive and political.

Other terms

- **Cisgender/cis:** term describing individuals whose gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Transgender/trans/trans*:** “Trans” will be used in this thesis as an umbrella term describing anyone whose gender identity does not align with the one they were assigned at birth. This includes non-binary people. While trans* is sometimes used to emphasise a difference from a medicalised idea of transexual people, I will be using trans as the umbrella term, as that is the most common usage currently.
- **AMAB/AFAB:** Abbreviations that stand for Assigned Male at Birth and Assigned female at birth.

- **Latine:** Gender-neutral term that co-exists with “latinx” to refer to people from Hispanic American descent living the US. Both terms are still considered controversial as Spanish grammar rules would dictate the masculine “latino” is inclusive of all genders. However, I have decided to use “latine”, a term that can easily be pronounced in Spanish and does not carry the connotation of a masculine neutral reference point. It also emphasises the gender non-conforming standard of these communities, where using a gendered word seems inaccurate.

Pronouns

For clarity:

- RuPaul: *he* and *she* are used interchangeably as RuPaul has stated he has no preference (RuPaul [@RuPaul] 2014).
- For other drag performers: *she* is used when referring to a drag queen in drag, while out-of-drag performers will use *he*, *she* or *they* depending on their preference as far as is available publicly at time of writing.

Latin America / Hispanic America

In this thesis, the use of “Hispanic America” was preferred, as it refers to all Spanish-speaking communities in Latin America and this is often the main imagined audience for Spanish subtitles in streaming platforms. This term can also be interpreted to include the Spanish-speaking communities in the US and Canada, who would also avail of these subtitles. While the distinction between subtitles for Spain and subtitles for Hispanic America is not always present, the subtitles preferred for this analysis were always Latin American Spanish if the option was present.

Drag queen

Barrett defines drag queens as ‘mostly gay men that perform as women’ (Barrett 2017). The gender identities and sexualities of those who perform as drag queens are not as clear-cut as that definition might imply. While drag queens are very tied to gay male culture, some straight men perform in drag. In season 2 of *The Boulet Brother’s Dragula*, the gothic horror version of RPDR, contestant Disasterina

identifies as straight and is married to a woman. Moreover, not all drag queens are men. Many trans women perform as drag queens. Some of the most famous trans drag queens that participated in RPDR are Gia Gunn, Peppermint, Carmen Carrera, and Gottmik, the latter being the first trans man to participate in the show. Most of the trans women in the programme did not identify as trans when they participated, or at least were not out during their season, which meant that for the first four seasons, there were no out trans people in the programme. Furthermore, RPDR features only drag queens, not drag kings, which imposes a clear distinction between the two artforms. Genderqueer participants have also been present in the show, though with far less visibility. Courtney Act, for example, only addressed her gender fluidity well after her season, season 6 (Tunbridge 2015). Gigi Goode, a finalist in season 13, did not mention their gender until almost the end of the season. Some cis-women perform in drag as well and have done so for years –though they have not yet been allowed to appear in RPDR.

All of this has led to controversy and criticism of RPDR and RuPaul himself as not being inclusive enough for a programme meant for a queer audience. Outside of the confines set by RPDR and RuPaul, there does not seem to be a gender or sexuality requirement to perform in drag and it is fair to say that it is one of the most diverse communities in the world. The definition of ‘drag’ then seems to shift depending on who uses it. In episode 8, season 13 of RPDR, special guest Anne Hathaway describes drag as “a transgressive act of joy” (2020, S13E8), an accurate description of this artistic practice. As a tentative definition, drag is a transgressive artistic performance of gender. Drag queens generally perform more feminine traits, and drag kings perform more masculine traits. However, this definition is not meant to separate drag from the queer cultures it stems from and exists in.

Whether the drag queens themselves are gay men or not (or whether the drag kings are lesbian women), the art of drag itself is queer. Brusselaers argues that drag queens are performing as part of “a set of cultural and aesthetic practices that are somehow socially coded as gay male and associated with (though not exclusively performed by) gay men” (Brusselaers 2018). Historically, however, the strict separation between drag queens and trans women has been considerably

blurry. This is evidenced in the 1991 documentary *Paris is Burning* where all these identities belong to the same ballroom culture and are often blurred. As such, associating drag queens only with the social codifications of gay men is not entirely accurate either, as it is socially and stereotypically tied to a more amorphous understanding of GSD people assigned male at birth (AMAB) but who perform femininity (as an expression of their internal gender identity, an artistic impulse, or both). As these GSD identities have not always been separated into categories by a straight culture that does not necessarily understand the differences between a gay man, a trans woman, or any of the other gender and sexuality diversities, the cultural and aesthetic practices of drag queens are socially associated with this general cultural understanding of queer AMAB people. The controversies around the gender of the contestants allowed on RPDR, and how these rules have evolved with time, demonstrate a shifting idea of what those *inside* the community consider drag. RPDR represents a somewhat limited view of what a drag queen is and what is considered drag. This limited view is not one that holds true outside of the confines of the programme, and, in fact, is on the more conservative side of the spectrum for this artform.

Object of Study: Drag and RuPaul's Drag Race

RPDR in the world

RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR) is a TV programme centred around the art and culture of American drag queens. It has become one of the most popular programmes in the United States, boasting 63 Emmy nominations and 19 wins at the time of writing (Television Academy 2023). The programme is produced by World of Wonder, a production company focused on queer-related content, and has since become its flagship show. It was first aired on LogoTV (Viacom-owned) in the US and OUTtv in Canada, both GSD-aimed channels. In a matter of a few years, between 2013 to 2015, it grew to international success (Daems 2014a). It now has several spin-off shows, such as *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* and *Untucked*. It has also gained wide international success, spawning related programs all over the world. At time of writing there are at least eight international versions of the show

being produced, including RPDR UK, RPDR Canada, RPDR Thailand, RPDR Spain (Vary 2020), RPDR Mexico and RPDR France. In Hispanic America, *The Switch* and *La Más Draga*, from Chile and Mexico, respectively, follow a very similar format while not being directly related to the RPDR brand. This success led the show to being aired on VH1, a much more mainstream and international channel than the ones it had aired before. (Brennan 2018).

Queer history and pedagogy in RPDR

The show is characterised by its camp aesthetics and humour. Over-the-top runway looks, constant wordplay and verbal artistry, and references to American queer culture coexist with more serious conversations between the queens in their dressing room, discussing their life experiences as non-straight, often non-cis, and non-white individuals in the US. This show is a tribute to queer cultures that had previously been much more underground than they are now. RPDR's broad audience means that the show serves as an educational and political platform on GSD themes and issues in the US, and sometimes the rest of the world, to be broadcast to a broader (cis-straight) audience but it has also become a reference point for queer people around the world. RuPaul Charles –self-proclaimed “drag supermodel of the world” in her 1993 debut studio album (Charles 1993)– presides over the competition and presents herself as a mentor and confidante to its contestants. The show ostensibly offers one of its 12 to 14 participants per season an opportunity to follow in her footsteps to international stardom (Brennan and Gudelunas 2018). As such, the show's cultural background is grounded in RuPaul's own experience of drag culture in the *ball scene* in New York since the 1980s. A *ball* was a late-night event attended by mostly black and latine queer people where they would walk dressed for different categories, such as “Femme Realness” or “Butch Queen” (Flannery 1997). This culture is showcased in *Paris is Burning* which introduces the viewer to various members of the *ballroom* scene. The influence of *balls* and *Paris is Burning* is not just evident in RPDR; it is part of the show's DNA. In every episode, the queens must present a runway look following a theme. The runway show is always introduced by RuPaul's

announcement of: “the category is...” in the exact intonation used in the film. Many often-repeated phrases and expressions in RPDR are pulled directly from *Paris is Burning*, such as “tens across the board”, “why all gaggin’ so, she bring it to you every ball”, and countless others.

RPDR also showcases the different aspects and characteristics of drag culture, such as the different types of drag, the kind of humour that is expected at a drag show, and the intertextual reference system created by drag performers referencing the same media and each other. Since the first season, RPDR has strived to show different types of drag each season: all seasons have their ‘clown queens’, ‘glam queens’, ‘pageant queens’ and ‘big queens’. Though the specific terms to call each type change and some queens defy classification, the variety reflects many types of drag performances, some of which are so different it is surprising they belong to the same artform. Some of these denominations for types of drag performances have been reported as part of drag cultures as far back as Esther Newton’s 1972 *Mother Camp* (Newton 1972). The interconnectedness of RPDR to a drag history and culture is imbued in the very essence of the show. This makes it a platform to educate new members in the *herstory* of drag and, more generally, queer communities. The presence of several segments throughout the years aimed at historical pedagogy, such as asides explaining the Stonewall riots, evidences the importance RPDR puts in introducing contestants, and the audience, to a heritage they would potentially not have access to otherwise.

Perhaps the most notable element that reveals the deep connection between RPDR and broader drag culture is language use, particularly language play within a camp aesthetic and ideology. Drag queen speech could be described as camp talk with drag culture-specific slang and an emphasis on intentional indexical disjuncture, that is to say, the use of language associated with different identities to create a marked way of speaking characteristic of a specific sub-culture (Barrett 2017). According to Rusty Barrett, “[c]amp can be seen as a language ideology in which particular forms of language are given high symbolic value on the basis of

both their linguistic and rhetorical structure and their ability to index interactional contexts associated with gay culture” (2017, p. 19). RPDR reflects drag culture in that it thrives in a highlighted inauthenticity that reveals a deep scepticism of the power of language to convey the truth and even the existence of an established authenticity. As a result of their marginalised position in society, the relationship to language is much more intentional in GSD cultures than in straight ones. This can also be said of African American communities and many other minority groups. The intentionality results in creative language use, where language itself is the message rather than just the medium. Parody, wordplay, and inversion of expected language scripts are some of the main characteristics of camp talk (Harvey 1998) and, as such, of drag queens’ speech.

Corpus selection

To analyse the translation of humour and its implications in a globalised series like RPDR, the corpus was chosen to be as representative as possible of the evolution of the series and the tension between mainstream and GSD audiences. The seasons chosen for this analysis are meant to represent subtle eras of reinvention that RPDR has undergone. Before season 4, the programme was more localised to the US (though it started garnering an international audience), and catered to an audience closer to the one being represented: a queer audience with a strong black and latine presence. By season 4, the show had become a lot more popular, especially among queer white men (O’Keeffe 2018). Around season 7 (2015), RPDR’s popularity exploded worldwide, and a new audience of young white women became much more present on online platforms dedicated to the show. Season 9 (2017) was the first season to be aired on VH1, marking a definite breaking point between a programme that was made mainly by and for GSD audiences, to a programme that, while still catering to those audiences, also sought to appeal to a broader, more mainstream audience (Brennan 2018). To show this evolution, the seasons chosen for this analysis were season 3, 6, 9 and 12.

To reduce the corpus to a manageable but representative sample, several episodes per season were selected as representative of that particular era of RPDR. Almost all seasons of RPDR feature a “Reading Challenge” and a “Snatch Game”. In the former, the contestants must *read* each other, a practice characteristic of drag culture made into a game in the programme consisting of using linguistic creativity and humour to point out flaws in other queens. The latter is a parody of the game show Match Game where the queens must impersonate a celebrity, usually someone with some significance to drag or queer culture, and improvise as them in a humorous way. In season 12, the reading challenge appears under a slightly different format, where the queens delivered their reads through puppets in episode 11. The two episodes in each selected season are the bulk of the corpus. Episode 9 of season 12 was added as the main challenge is a presidential debate between the queens interpreting their version of a presidential candidate. This episode was chosen as it is emblematic of season 12’s theme of the 2020 US elections.

As such, the episodes chosen are:

- Season 3
 - Episode 6, “Snatch Game”, aired on February 21, 2011
 - Episode 8, “Ru Ha Ha!”, aired on March 7, 2011
- Season 6
 - Episode 5, “Snatch Game”, aired on March 24, 2014
 - Episode 6, "Oh No, She Betta Don't!", aired on March 31, 2014
- Season 9
 - Episode 6, “Snatch Game”, aired on April 28, 2017
 - Episode 8, “The Michelle Visage Roast”, aired on May 12, 2017
- Season 12
 - Episode 6, “Snatch Game”, aired on April 3, 2020
 - Episode 9, "Choices 2020", aired on April 24, 2020
 - Episode 11, "One-Queen Show", aired on May 8, 2020

The subtitles analysed for each episode were extracted from two streaming platforms: Netflix and WOWPresentsPlus (WOW+). The focus on streaming platforms rather than TV broadcasts is meant to create a more current and relevant corpus that reflects how current viewers access RPDR. Furthermore, it allows this analysis to discover how new technologies and translation practices are evolving in real time, making this research more relevant to audiovisual translation studies. The subtitles were last extracted in February 2022 from both platforms and again from WOW+ in May 2023 when different subtitles became available there. The choice of streaming platforms was based on availability and relevance, as Netflix was the most accessible by a mainstream audience in Hispanic America, and WOW+ is the streaming platform of RPDR's producers, World of Wonder. Authorship of these subtitles is not always easy to determine. For the Netflix subtitles, there is a guideline for translators to add their credits at the end of the subtitle file. Despite this guideline being in place since 2016 (Timed Text Style Guide 2023), there were no credits on the seasons 3 or 6 subtitles. Season 9's 2022 and season 12 did have credit. The former were created by Verónica Ferreyra and the latter by Florencia A. It was not possible to make contact with either of them.

RPDR first became available on Netflix in 2014, mostly with subtitles except for seasons 8 to 10, which were also dubbed. For some time, Netflix became the most accessible way to watch the programme outside of the US and Canada. Until 2023, all complete seasons of the show and its American spin-offs were available on Netflix, but weekly episodes were only legally available on WOW+. On this platform, only subtitles have ever been available. This streaming platform also houses all the international spin-offs and related content from RPDR alumni. Before 2023, the subtitles on WOW+ were the same as on Netflix, but they were often not synced with the video and were sometimes unavailable. In October 2022, Netflix lost the streaming rights to seasons 1 to 10 of RPDR for most countries. All seasons except 12 and 13 were no longer available on Netflix.

As a result of this complicated and changing availability, during the writing of this thesis, the corpus of subtitles was modified to include new additions, such as the

new WOW+ subtitles, as these changes also reflect translation and industry-wide choices. To clarify these different iterations of subtitles analysed, table 1 presents when the subtitles were extracted and if they were analysed independently or as the same iteration. If the subtitles only presented variations in segmentation and/or syncing, not content, they were analysed as a single version

Table 1: Subtitle selection

Season	Platform	Date Extracted	Credit	Differences	Version Name
3	Netflix	Feb 2022	Uncredited		Netflix and WOW22
	WOW+	Feb2022	Uncredited	Not synced after first 5 minutes. Some segmentation differences	
	WOW+	May 2023	Uncredited	Entirely different (MT)	WOW23
6	Netflix	Feb 2022	Uncredited		Netflix and WOW22
	WOW+	Feb 2022	Uncredited	Some segmentation differences	
	WOW+	May 2023	Uncredited	Entirely different (MT)	WOW23
9	Netflix	Feb 2018	Uncredited		Netflix
	Netflix	Feb 2022	Verónica Ferreyra	Very minor segmentation differences	
	WOW+	May 2023	Uncredited	Entirely different. (No subtitles were available in WOW before this)	WOW23
12	Netflix	Feb 2022	Florencia A.		Netflix
	WOW+	Feb 2022	Uncredited	Entirely different from Netflix	WOW
	WOW+	May 2023	Unavailable	No change	

Limitations

The shifting nature of streaming platform availability and the almost total invisibility of the people involved in subtitling for these streaming platforms are the main limitations of this research. The reasons for the different changes, the negotiations between the two streaming platforms and the authorship behind all of these different iterations of subtitles are beyond this research's scope. However, these external factors play an essential role in the translation choices, and the lack of information on this aspect constitutes a significant limitation of my research.

PART 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Evaluation of a translation

1.1.1 Should a translation be evaluated?

In order to establish a theoretical framework to meet the objective of evaluating the subtitling of humour in RPDR, it is important to explore how possible or desirable evaluating translation is. The question of whether a study of translation should be limited to the description of the translation or if it can indeed go beyond this and into evaluation or criticism is one that has been discussed in translation studies for decades. As early as 1972, in *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* James Holmes distinguishes first between pure and applied translation studies, pure translation studies being either theoretical or descriptive, and applied translation studies being professional aids, pedagogical or critical. For the author, applied studies are based on a priori judgments, which make them prescriptive and often opinion-based. Translation criticism for him falls under this category (1972). Holmes and Gideon Toury coined the term "descriptive translation studies" to refer to a subdivision in pure translation studies where the scholar refrains from criticism of the translation and only describes the changes between the source text and the target text. The field of translation studies has since been overall focussed on description rather than prescription. In 1996, Patrick Zabalbeascoa asserts that translation studies scholars seem reluctant to evaluate translations, even when other products of human performance are regularly evaluated using set criteria (Zabalbeascoa 1996). In 2012, Thorsten Schröler still considers that the evaluation of translations is basically taboo in translation studies (Schröler 2012).

However, in the translation of humour, somewhat counter to the rest of the field, studies are usually of a critical nature, or in a way, prescriptive. Amparo Hurtado Albir points out that, nowadays, translation criticism also uses the empirical knowledge gathered in the descriptive branch and from its own empirical studies. She adds that translation criticism is striving to use more objective standards that are obtained empirically rather than a priori (Albir 2011). When it comes to

establishing criteria for the evaluation of translations of humour, there are different approaches taken by different authors. A common sense assumption present in many analyses of translations of humour is that the translation of a humorous texts should be funny and that an unfunny translation indicates that the translation challenges could not be solved by the translator. However this idea is not universal among critics of translations of humour. Attardo's model to study the translation of humour based on his General Theory of Verbal Humor is a metric to determine how similar jokes are between the source and the target (Attardo 2002). In this model, similarity, and not funniness, is the important metric. When studying the translation of wordplay, which is one of the most studied types of humour in translation studies, many authors work with the implicit or explicit premise that wordplay in the source text should, as much as possible, be translated into comparable wordplay in the target text and preserve humour as well. The role of the translator then shifts towards creativity and away from reproduction (Martínez-Sierra 2006, Arampatzis 2012, Fuentes Luque 2012, Rossato and Chiaro 2012, Schröler 2012). Establishing the metric used in analysis is then essential to both the analysis and the evaluation of a translation. Whether the criteria is funniness or similarity, the aim of this prescriptive approach seems to be to find satisfactory solutions for translation challenges. This evaluation can be useful in translator training, for commercial purposes when focussing on the marketability of a translated text, and also in creating a bridge between theory and practice of translation.

1.1.2 How to evaluate the subtitles of RPDR?

The evaluation and analysis of the subtitles of humour in RPDR requires a theoretical framework that combines insights from several fields of academia. The main contributions to this interdisciplinary framework have originated in different branches of translation studies: namely audiovisual translation studies, especially in relation to commercial subtitling, the study of the translation of humour, and queer translation studies. It is important to note that all branches of translation studies are already interdisciplinary themselves. The study of humour in

translation requires input from scholarship on humour, its mechanisms, functions and social implications, as well as linguistic and cultural studies implied in all translation studies. Audiovisual translation studies combines translation studies with knowledge obtained in media, tv and film studies. Queer translation studies are at an intersection between queer studies and translation studies.

As established in the previous section, the most important step in evaluating a translation of any kind is to first establish the metric or criteria to be used. The concept of untranslatability is an important one in this endeavour. A translation can only be held up against what could be possible to expect from a translator. In the study of humour in translation, there is a general acknowledgment by most authors that humour poses a real challenge for the translator. Even translators can sometimes take for granted the idea that humour is largely untranslatable (Zabalbeascoa 2005). For wordplay specifically, Dirk Delabastita considers that the definition itself of wordplay is that it cannot be translated into another language (in Schröler 2012). Schröler contests Delabastita's definition of untranslatability first by pointing out that sometimes, especially in linguistically close languages, wordplay can indeed be directly translated and retain all its humour and creativity. He continues by observing that even if a translation is considered unsatisfactory, it still exists as a translation, challenging the concept of untranslatability itself (Schröler 2012). Gottlieb's approach to untranslatability comes in the form of attempting the translation himself to establish whether he can find a better solution, in essence proving that the item or aspect can be translated through empirical means and, as such, if the original translator could have been expected to find a better translation.

Without taking up this challenge, authors on translation may either behave in a language-politically correct way and refrain from any value judgements, or –with nothing at stake– go on eagerly emphasising individual translator's shortcomings [...] Descriptive translation may go in the wrong direction if the prescriptive *what should be done* is replaced by the armchair translator's *what is done and why* and never supplemented by *what could be done*.

(Gottlieb 1997, p. 227)

The criticism of translation should, according to the author, rely first on the description of the translator's work, the acknowledgment of the constraints that lead to such a translation, an understanding of the purpose of a translation and an attempt by the critic to find more satisfactory solutions in order to prove that they could exist. Zabalbeascoa considers that any judgement of untranslatability needs to take into account a number of variables:

[I]tem or aspect X is untranslatable (or we could not have expected this item to have been translated much better) from language A into language B to fulfil purpose C in text D for recipient E and client or initiator F who have expectation G, with the translation task having to be performed by translator H under conditions I.

(Zabalbeascoa 1996, p. 236)

The evaluation of translations should then try to consider as many of these variables as possible to establish a reasonable set of criteria to examine the translation. The onus then shifts away from more abstract ideas of translatability and into practical considerations to achieve a translation goal (1996). The best translation that could be expected for a specific text or aspect is only determined in the context of the translation, the constraints implied by this context, and in relation to specific objectives.

Zabalbeascoa establishes a procedure for the evaluation of translation quality in terms of the translation of humour that is based on the function of the translated text, which can differ from the source text function. He suggests scholars attempt establishing a list of priorities of the translated text and evaluate the translation by determining how much it manages to meet these priorities. Meeting higher order priorities indicates a more satisfying translation than meeting lower order priorities. A translation that manages to meet many priorities often is more satisfactory than one which only meets a few. He states that there are four types of priorities a translation can have, though they do not necessarily need to have one or more of any:

- Top priorities, to be achieved at all cost

- Middle-range priorities, which are highly desirable but share importance with other priorities
- Marginal priorities, which can be attempted to meet only when higher order priorities have been met.
- Prohibited priorities, which should never appear in the text. (1996, 2005)

These priorities can come into conflict with the translation constraints that influence what is possible to expect from a translation. A satisfying translation is one that manages to strike a balance between meeting the highest priorities as much and often as possible while also dealing with translation constraints. This is the framework I consider the most appropriate to evaluate the translation of humour in the subtitles of RPDR as it takes into account the real factors that influence a translation choice. As such, I will be adapting this procedure, combining it with Gottlieb's advice for the critic to attempt the translation themselves, to create my methodology. To do this, a list of the likely priorities a subtitler of RPDR into Spanish could be working with needs to be established as the reference point with which to evaluate any translation choices they could have made.

1.1.3 Considerations about possible priorities of the subtitled versions of RPDR

Priorities are very tied to the function of the translated text, as the priorities for a text meant exclusively to amuse the viewers will be very different than a text supposed to function as a pedagogical device. The example the author gives as a translation where the top priority is humour is the Spanish dubbing of the Japanese TV programme *Takeshi's Castle*. This dubbed version was titled *Humor Amarillo*, a big departure from the original title which references the racialised idea of East-Asians as having yellow skin. According to Zabalbeascoa, the dubbing of this programme's humour was similarly distant from the source humour in meaning and type. With fanciful commentary and narration, and even the use of racist jokes and stereotypes of East-Asian people, the translation's priority was clearly to amuse the Spanish target audience, and not to maintain the source's

meanings or even type of humour (1996). Such a translation would not be possible at all now as it was in the 1990s. A translation based on negative stereotypes of the people of a reality show, especially if they represent a minority in the source or target audience, would likely be heavily criticised by a public that is now much less tolerant of such humour.

It is difficult to imagine RPDR translated in such a way without an immediate international backlash on social media. RPDR's audience, a significant portion of whom are dedicated fans and are often part of GSD communities themselves, take it upon themselves to hold the programme up to a moral standard. It is expected that content created by and for marginalised communities is aware and sensitive to issues that might affect these communities as well as any other minorities. In fact, RPDR has faced backlash and controversy many times. As a translation seeking to create humour without any regards for the source text would not be acceptable or desirable for many, if not all, humorous texts or utterances, it follows that there must be other priorities for these translations that precede or are as important as the amusement of the target audience. This is true even when the source text's main objective is to amuse the source audience.

Establishing the priorities the translators could have been working with for the subtitling of RPDR, and where humour is placed in the list, will require a more in-depth discussion of the possible functions of a humorous subtitled text that is commercially viable, as well as how the queer subject matter and characters and potentially queer target audience can affect these functions. This part of the thesis will attempt to create a framework of analysis to evaluate the translation of humour in the Spanish subtitles of the chosen episodes of RPDR by reviewing the literature in audiovisual translation studies, queer translation studies and the studies of translation of humour to establish the priorities that will be taken as reference in criticism, as well as the constraints and challenges involved in the subtitling into Spanish of the humour in RPDR. In order to do so, I will firstly explore the possible functions of the target text to draw up a tentative list of priorities that

should be taken into account when translating and analysing the subtitling into Spanish of RPDR. Secondly, I will consider the constraints and contexts that might influence translation decisions, and what is reasonable to expect from these translations. Finally, I will use all these insights to create a methodology of analysis for the subtitling of instances of humour in the corpus.

1.2 Functions of the official Spanish-subtitled versions of RPDR

The term “audiovisual translation” or AVT is usually employed as an umbrella term that encompasses several different translation types that deal with audiovisual media. This includes commercial or traditional subtitling and dubbing, as well as voice-over (often used for non-fictional media), audio description for visually-impaired audiences and subtitling for deaf or hard of hearing audiences. (Baños and Diaz-Cintas 2018). We can distinguish between intralingual AVT, where the audiovisual text is rendered either in subtitles or in audio description in the same language it was produced, usually for the purposes of making it accessible to more people within the same speech community, and interlingual translation, where the text is translated to another language by either replacing or overlaying the audio, or adding subtitles in the target language. The subtitles studied for this thesis are interlingual commercial subtitles in Spanish.

1.2.1 To grant access to a new audience

Any audiovisual text makes use of both visual and acoustic elements to convey a message. Generally, if the audience members can hear and see, they receive both channels simultaneously and assimilate and comprehend them as a unit. Subtitles are a visual addition that coexists with the original text, and becomes part of the whole in the target version. Subtitles communicate mostly information from the acoustic channel, with the exception of occasional written text on screen in the source language. Commercial subtitles –in contrast with subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing– translate almost exclusively the linguistic code present in the acoustic channel of the text into the target language, that is to say, the dialogues, monologues and voice-off narrations in the source text (Chaume and Tamayo

2016). This focus on the linguistic code corresponds with a common sense assumption that, because the audience has access to all other codes of meaning, the only code that would not be understood is linguistic. However, as Chaume and Tamayo state, it is important to remember that the audiovisual product functions as whole and the translator is meant to grant access to this cohesive unit, not only the information in a single code of meaning:

[E]l traductor audiovisual profesional es consciente de que la narración acústica y visual interactúan para formar un producto cohesionado y es la información fruto de esta interacción la que ha de poder trasladarse a la cultura meta, no la información fragmentada de los códigos de significación de ambos canales por separado.

(Chaume and Tamayo 2016, p. 317)

While the main task of the professional translator is to translate the linguistic code in the source to the target language, this is only to serve the function of granting access to the cohesive audiovisual unit by a new audience with a different language and culture. This distinction is relevant because other codes of meaning might affect translation decisions when a translation that communicates exclusively the linguistic information would lead to misunderstandings or a departure in meaning from the original audiovisual narration. For example, in cases when a culturally specific social script would be read differently in another culture, the translator might decide to modify an utterance in the subtitles to avoid confusion or misunderstandings in the target audience. An example of this can be found in the translation of honorifics in East-Asian languages to languages that don't use them. In the Netflix show *The Squid Game*, for example, a female character calls almost all male characters "oppa" at some point during the show. This would be translated literally in English as "brother" (for a younger woman) but is actually used for a woman's close older male friends, or more often, an older male romantic partner. This was translated as the first name of the character initially, then by the word "babe". Evidently, the translator considered that a direct translation of the linguistic code as "brother" would lead to a very different interpretation of the character and the interactions in the target audience. The

translator becomes a mediator between two cultures and two languages, and must decide how to better grant access to the source text.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration in trying to grant access to an audiovisual text, is the target audience this access is meant for. According to Gideon Toury, some target markets might expect the target audience to have a certain amount of competency in the source language, making the subtitles function not as a substitute for the linguistic code (the original audio retaining an expressive function through tone, pace, emphasis, etc.) but rather as an aid for comprehending the original dialogue (in Gottlieb 1997). In these cases, the subtitles need not depart too far from the original linguistic code or, in the case of utterances of humour, find alternatives for wordplay in the target language, or find creative ways of making the subtitles humorous. It is enough that the subtitles provide enough semantic information about the source utterance to allow the viewer to access its original meaning and humour.

Subtitling conventions in Hispanic America are far from this norm. The level of English competency in Hispanic America, which has been deemed very low to moderate in almost all Hispanic American countries (*EF EPI: Índice del Dominio del Inglés de EF* 2020), is nowhere near widespread or high enough to allow for such subtitling practices. However, I would argue that in the case of RPDR, there is a possibility for this kind of subtitling in the case of the show's recurring instances of humour, in particular wordplay. Familiarity with specific aspects of the source language or text could justify sections of a text to be translated using this method. Retaking the example of honorifics in Korean, it is notable that most fan subtitling of videos with idols (kpop artists) maintain common honorifics in Korean, trusting the audience –probably other fans– to understand the cultural implications of the terms used. In *The Wow Report* –a blog run by World of Wonder that publishes news about pop culture, nightlife, and of course everything drag related– a post was published in 2018 with the headline “This INSANE “Drag Race: Thailand” Preview Doesn’t Need Subtitles (If You Already Speak Drag Queen)”. This reference

to Drag Queen as a language is one that avid viewers of the programme can understand well. One of the most prominent aspects of the language used in RPDR is not just the constant presence of humour and the use of wordplay, but the constant repetition of the same jokes and instances of wordplay, which then gives rise to modifications and language play on the established jokes. This can be seen in the set catchphrases repeated every episode, or every season, some of which have evolved through the seasons, and some of which have stayed the same. “Start your engines”, for example, is an utterance used in every single episode of Drag Race, referencing the original meaning of drag racing, the one involving cars and not wigs. This plays on the incongruity of the macho posturing of traditional drag races with the gender madness and camp that is RPDR. A regular viewer of the show could probably recite the sentence even without any knowledge of standard English.

This establishment of show-specific vocabulary and reference system runs deeper than the relatively limited number of catchphrases used throughout the years. The repetition of previously used utterances of wordplay, then building on those instances to create humour, is one of the main features of the show. An example of this is the classic “how’s your head?” to which the interlocutor is meant to answer “I haven’t had any complaints.”. This pun was initially used in RPDR as a reference to *Elvira’s Movie Macabre*, a camp horror TV programme hosted by Elvira, a character created by Cassandra Peterson. While puns using the double meaning of ‘head’ as both the body part and the sexual act precede this use, the wording used in RPDR cites Elvira’s pun exactly. This means that a viewer would be able to understand the pun as a double-entendre even if they don’t know the specific reference to Elvira’s TV programme but they would miss out on why a very specific answer is expected, and the cultural relevance of Elvira in drag queen communities. Elvira, her fashion, and mannerisms, have often been referenced in RPDR. She was even a guest judge in two different episodes, making her part of RPDR lore, and as such a recurrent source of intertextuality. This pun has been used countless times in the show. Usually, RuPaul himself asks the question to one

of the contestants expecting the established answer. This creates a moment of positive interaction between RuPaul and the contestant, which functions as a way to break tension, to make both of them more sympathetic to the audience, or simply to establish through the reference a belonging to the same group. The most memorable uses of this pun in the programme, however, have been when the expected answer was not given, such as Rosé's in season 13's Snatch Game where she impersonates Mary Queen of Scots and speaks in a thick Scottish accent when she retorts: "Lots of complaints but I can't remember most of them. You know what they say: go underground for a few years you're probably gonna [accent becomes undecipherable]." (Episode 9, Season 13, 2021). This interaction got Rosé a nod from guest judge Ts Maddison for being able to exchange "head jokes" with RuPaul. In season 7, the exact opposite interaction happened repeatedly between RuPaul and Miss Fame. While wearing a wig of a knife through the head, Miss Fame's reaction to the question was to answer earnestly "it hurts, I can hardly hear a thing inside this muff." (Episode 6, Season 7, 2015). The judges and the contestant's reaction to this answer was one of amused bewilderment. Throughout the next couple of episodes, Miss Fame kept informing RuPaul on her state of mind and lack of headaches, seemingly completely missing the double-entendre. This turned into a recurring gag and it even led RuPaul to scold her, telling her she needs to listen more and that the answer to the question was not correct. Until finally, after a couple of episodes, and several hilariously awkward exchanges, Miss Fame triumphantly exclaims: "I've never had any complaints! I got it!" (Episode 8, Season 7, 2015). This example serves both to illustrate the almost ritualistic nature of such citational humour, where belonging to this community seems to imply knowledge of certain expressions, and the willingness to turn the break in tradition into something humorous in itself. The citationality of drag humour does not imply any sort of staleness, as creativity within this structure is highly valued.

The constant references and uses of previous utterances in the show fit with Keith Harvey's analysis of citationality in camp. According to Harvey, camp uses three

main types of citationality: of cultural artefact, of the medium used, and of femininity (2002). The previous examples can be placed in the category of citations of cultural artefacts: one quotes a well-known type of car racing, the other a TV programme. But the appropriation and repetition within the show manages to detach to a certain extent the utterance from the original reference. It is difficult to know now if a contestant is aware of Elvira's statement about her head when they answer RuPaul's question, or if they are simply aware of the *herstory* of the pun in RuPaul's Drag Race. However, the function of the utterance is the same:

[C]itation of cultural artefacts performs one important function, that of clearly signalling the presence of citationality itself in the discourse, and thus positioning both speaker and addressee in a discursive situation of highlighted non-authenticity.

(Harvey 2002, p. 1150)

Whether the drag queen is referring to internal or external elements, the heightened non-authenticity characteristic of camp and drag is emphasized in these interactions. Miss Fame's most egregious sin was to answer honestly and authentically to the question. This dynamic is so prevalent in the programme that a regular viewer is trained to recognise these instances of intentional intertextual non-authenticity and also recognises when the same reference is used over and over. In practice, this creates a complex system of vocabulary and language structures that is particular to the programme and its audience. Additionally, it creates in the audience an expectation of non-authenticity and intertextuality in the text, and even if they do not completely understand the reference or the source of humour, they do know instinctively what function the utterance has in the source text. In essence, the audience "speaks drag queen"¹. This effect of the show on its fans is not lost on Spanish-speaking audiences. The following quote is from a Spanish-language blog that focusses on pop culture: "Las reinas de RuPaul abren la biblioteca en el reading más pobre de la historia del programa" (RuPaul's Drag Race 11 | Semana 9 | 'L.A.D.P!' 2019). This use of "biblioteca" in Spanish and

¹ In a now-deleted article in World of Wonder Productions' website, the headline read: "This INSANE "Drag Race: Thailand" Preview Doesn't Need Subtitles (If You Already Speak Drag Queen)".

“reading” in English, references one of the recurring challenges of the show, where queens “read” each other (point out each other’s flaws through double-entendre and puns) humorously. Wordplay, both visual and verbal, is abundant in these segments: RuPaul declares “the library is now open” and hands the contestants reading glasses. The headline above references this wordplay bilingually, keeping part of the pun in English but translating the other. It is safe to assume then that there is an expected literacy with the way the pun works in English, even in Spanish-speaking audiences.

A type of drag literacy in the vocabulary and the references used in the programme in Spanish-speaking audiences could justify a translation approach like the one proposed by Toury. The subtitles could function only as a way of providing semantic information necessary to understand the source text, signalling what is being referenced, what type of citationality is being used, without needing to find ways to recreate it in the target language. Since the audience has access to the humour in English, unfunny subtitles do not necessarily imply a loss of humour in the final subtitled product. In fact, a translation that prioritises humour over access to the most recurrent instances of citationality could harm fans’ enjoyment of the programme by distracting them from recognising the type and function of citationality being used in the source.

1.2.2 Enhancing the value of the original text

The pleasure of watching RPDR in English rests on the creative language use and the humour combined with the extravagant visual elements present in the programme, and how they interact with this language use. It can be argued then that subtitles that add, or at least maintain, humour and wordplay can only increase the pleasure of the viewing experience and follow the ethos of the source text and culture. While traditional commercial subtitles tend to stick very closely with the source’s linguistic code, and to strict norms expected in the industry, some authors have proposed that subtitles could go beyond that to enhance the viewing experience. For Fuentes-Luque, the ideal translation of humour in

audiovisual texts is one that manages to be funnier than the source (Fuentes Luque 2012). The translator could find a pun that works even better in Spanish, or perhaps reference cultural elements that might strike a chord with the target culture. In a show and a culture that places such high priority on humour, wordplay, and linguistic creativity in general, adding humour through the subtitles is certainly a desirable translation outcome. The presence of previous knowledge in the audience presents itself as an opportunity to create more humour in the target text, as the translator has an established base of references and vocabulary to work with to enhance the humour through the subtitles.

Far from seeing subtitles as a seamless addition to the unit of the audiovisual text, Abé Nornes considers traditional commercial subtitling as a violent addition to the source. He even deems it corrupt because subtitlers “have developed a method of translation that conspires to hide its work –along with its ideological assumptions– from its own reader-spectators.” (Nornes 1999, p. 18). His answer to this is to advocate for what he calls “abusive subtitling”, a type of subtitling that leans into the invasive nature of subtitles and renounces any idea of inconspicuousness. He uses the example of fan-made subtitles for Japanese animation (anime) in the 1990s. He asserts that fans, without formal training, developed abusive subtitles naturally: they used different fonts, sizes, colours to convey information traditional subtitles usually omit, such as different dialects or characters speaking; they also placed the subtitles in different areas of the screen to translate written text in the image; and, to the delight of the author, they used footnotes in small font that required the viewer to pause the video and read at their leisure. This last development implies a very different assumed audience and viewing experience. The viewer needs to be able to pause in order to read this, which means they are expected to watch this at home and likely by themselves (1999). It also assumes that they would be interested and invested enough to not simply push through something they might not completely understand but rather pause and take in extra information that clarifies the subtitles. This could be related to Venuti’s

concept of foreignization, as it refuses any notion of invisibility of the translator or the process of translation.

Foreignizing translations that are not transparent, that eschew fluency for a more heterogeneous mix of discourses, are equally partial in their interpretation of the foreign text, but they tend to flaunt their partiality instead of concealing it.

(Venuti 2008, p. 34)

Variation in text styles and subtitling techniques could be an equivalent of the heterogeneous mix of discourses Venuti argues for: they make the audience-reader confront the translation and recognise the process. It diverts the audience away from passive viewing and forces them to participate in the process, understand the difficulties in translation and breach the gap the same way a translator would: through research and evaluation of cultural and linguistic differences.

These translation practices are still widely used, though they have evolved to different types of media. While fan subtitling is declining slightly in popular TV programme fandoms due to more accessible and faster official subtitling on streaming platforms, compilation videos, fan edits, interviews, scenes and song subtitles and explanations are very popular across many fandoms and they utilise this type of abusive subtitles. Annotations, creative text placement and movement, humorous commentary by the translator, and even lengthy text introductions with cultural or contextual information are very common in these types of videos. The description box in video hosting platforms such as YouTube also serves as a convenient location for translation footnotes. These types of videos are still more common for fandoms surrounding East-Asian media and artists, where the cultural and linguistic differences between the source and the target is prominent enough to call for further explanation. The mere existence of these translation practices alongside official subtitling is indicative of an audience seeking further information, finding additional value in abusive subtitling for the media they enjoy.

For the official commercial subtitles of RPDR into Spanish, it might not be reasonable to expect abusive subtitling techniques, as will be discussed in the 'Constraints' chapter of this section. However, the assumed audience of fan-made

subtitles and the assumed audience for popular media on streaming services might be similar enough to advocate for a general movement towards some of these techniques. One of the basic requirements for the use of footnotes and explanations is the ability and disposition to pause, which is even more likely in today's audiences than it was in the 1990s. Streaming platforms have pushed the normal viewer experience towards something much more individual, on demand, and usually on personal devices (Johnson 2018). The audience is now, more than ever, able to view at their leisure, pause, skip and scroll through the timeline.

In the case of RPDR, the near-constant use of language-play, references and slang, as well as the cultural specificity of drag queens in the US, makes it more unlikely that the casual viewer would be familiar with culture and language to the point of not needing further explanation. The existence of fan-made dictionaries, both in English and Spanish (Diccionario de RuPaul's Drag Race 2021), as well as forums, reddit threads and wikis dedicated to explaining the meaning, connotations and origins of expressions, slang and common wordplay, demonstrates that there is a public looking for more information and willing to put in more effort into acquiring knowledge related to the programme. While it has not traditionally been done in commercial subtitles, condensing at least some of that information in the official audiovisual text might expedite the engagement of a casual viewer and their conversion to a devoted fan. Over-translating and saturating the viewer with information might also harm the viewing pleasure, not only through visual contamination, but also by undermining the process of engagement and discovery of the budding fan or running the risk of annoying the consummate fan who is already familiar with the information provided. Caution and careful decision-making from the translator would be needed when employing these techniques so that they do indeed enhance the viewing pleasure and not detract from it. Abusive subtitling techniques could enhance the humour in the translation, using all the possibilities of text placement, design and movement to emphasise the humour, enhance it, or compensate for loss of humour in the simple linguistic translation.

The use of humour and word-play in the source culture is so important that it should be a priority to make the subtitled version funny and linguistically creative as well, and, when possible, make it even funnier than the source. The use of innovative techniques could aid in this endeavour, by making full use of the audiovisual nature of the text to enhance the value of the translated version for the target culture.

1.2.3 To maintain existing Spanish-speaking audiences and gain new ones

The main incentive for the commission of the subtitling of a popular TV programme is usually commercial. When a production company such as World of Wonder, or a streaming platform like Netflix, commission subtitles for one of their programmes, the function of these subtitles is to garner a wider audience for it. Subtitling RPDR opens a new market for these companies, growing the number of potential viewers considerably. The client's goal, whether the translator shares it or not, is commercial success. As a text aspiring to become part of popular culture, the overarching objective is to accumulate *popular cultural capital*, which translates into economic capital. This is the concept developed by John Fiske in 2002, based on Bourdieu's ideas on *cultural capital*, which mimics economic capital and creates social hierarchies based on it. Bourdieu differentiates between official culture, which gains legitimacy from being privileged by institutions, in particular education, and popular culture, which receives no such legitimization. While in official culture the distinction between the commodity or cultural object and the subject is scrupulously maintained, in popular culture there is no distance between the public and the cultural object. Fiske expands on this idea, focussing on the areas Bourdieu neglected: popular culture is not only that which is consumed by those with less economic power and in a lower class rank, it is also what people from socially discriminated groups consume. Fiske asserts that the exclusion of certain cultural objects from official culture is often due to its public being subjects of discrimination based on class, gender, race and age (Fiske 2002). To this, I would also add a discrimination based on sexuality, as the tastes of queer

people, in particular queer people of colour, have often been deemed not worthy of the official culture. While white gay men and their tastes have managed to gain access to official culture through camp and kitsch aesthetics, elevating their popular culture tastes to official culture, the media preferred by other queer audiences is still far from being considered official by any measure. This is the case of RPDR.

Fans play an important role in popular culture. They are consumers of industrial products and texts that create communities, systems and hierarchies related to a specific chosen object. These hierarchies are usually not recognised by official culture, but have an important role in fans' lives. While regular consumers and fans both play a role in the commercial success of an industrially produced object, the entertainment industries seek and cultivate fandoms, as they have the power to create cultural capital.

[T]he people are never at the mercy of the industries –they choose to make some of their commodities into popular culture, but reject many more than they adopt. Fans are among the most discriminating and selective of all formations of the people and the cultural capital they produce is the most highly developed and visible of all.

(Fiske 2002, p. 48)

Fostering a large community of fans that make the programme visible and part of everyday conversation, is a large part of its success. The cultural capital fans produce is highly sought after, which grants fans a certain power over the original text. RPDR has strived throughout the years to grow its fandom and cater to its fans. A translated version of RPDR is an extension of this quest to grow the fandom as far and wide as possible. If a translator is to satisfy these audiences, they must be aware of the emotional connexion that is created between audiences and certain products of popular culture like RPDR and take it into account in translation. One of the aims of the translation should be to garner new fans, maintain the existing fans, and through this accumulate cultural capital, which provides grassroots and word-of-mouth advertising for the programme to grow its fandom even more.

RPDR's audience has changed significantly since 2009, both in the US and in Hispanic America. The show first started with a small core audience that consisted mostly of queer people of colour in the US. The programme aired in the US on LOGO, a channel that in 2011 was officially described as showing "entertainment programming for lesbians and gays and just about anyone who enjoys a gay point of view." (Frequently Asked Questions in Edgar 2011, p. 134). While writing about the programme in 2011, Edgar stated that it seemed "unlikely that a viewer would stumble across *Drag Race* accidentally while channel surfing." (2011, p. 135) Season 4 brought the show to a wider queer audience, mainly queer white men (O'Keeffe 2018). However, the first four seasons of RPDR had been airing sporadically on VH1 Latinoamérica since 2011, garnering its own small dedicated audience there (Villanueva Jordán 2019). While VH1 had no particular ties to a queer audience in Hispanic America, it was a subscription channel, which limited its audience to those who could pay for it, and those who were interested in English-language music and US reality TV shows. The episodes airing on VH1 Latinoamérica were approximately six months behind those aired in the US. They were often aired out of order, creating a demand for pirated content, fan subtitling, and organised fan communities to gain access to the programme. The Facebook group *RuPaul's Drag Race en Español* was created in 2012 to meet this demand. The group sent links to watch the episodes aired in the US in real time, or close to it, provided the interested fan emailed the page administrators to get it. They also posted a few minutes before each episode aired on VH1 so the fans could tune in on time (RuPaul's Drag Race en Español 2012). Several other fan groups emerged in this period, creating affective communities of translation and a digital meeting place for RPDR fans (Villanueva Jordán 2019). While detailed data on the sexuality and gender of this initial RPDR audience in Hispanic America does not exist, a majority of the most engaged members of these Facebook groups in 2012 through 2013 are queer men and women, most of them displaying different arrays of queer symbols on their profiles, and some posting pictures of themselves in drag. Considering the difficulty in gaining access to the episodes in order, it is a fair

assumption that those seeking RPDR episodes at this time were those already interested in drag, that is to say, mostly queer people. This initial audience in Hispanic America exemplifies the agency fans have regarding the media they consume. They organised around a product that was not yet completely available to them and gained access to it, often through illegal means. Subsequent official subtitles, and easier access to the episodes, were a response to this demand.

In November 2013, seasons 1 through 4 were made available on Netflix Hispanic America subtitled in Spanish. Season 5 reached Netflix Latin America in December of the same year, and since then, every season has been made available usually within a few months of its release in the US. This transition to Netflix made the programme more widely available, first to the original audience of determined and empowered fans, and then to the casual Netflix user who may have stumbled upon this show. The popularity of the programme grew progressively from this point forward. Facebook groups dedicated to RPDR in different Hispanic American countries emerged and grew exponentially. Fan subtitling and piracy to gain access to the show at the same time as US American audiences were still very common but started slowly dwindling as official access became easier.

It is around season 7 that the change in demographics of the English-speaking fandom became obvious. RPDR's exploding popularity on social media, especially Twitter and Instagram, revealed its new audience: young white women. In 2015, towards the end of season 7, RuPaul's Drag Con was first introduced. It is a convention meant for fans to meet their favourite queens, buy merchandise and expensive passes to access the most popular queens. This has taken the epicentre of the drag artform outside of gay bars and into spaces meant for expensive consumption by fans who are no longer overwhelmingly queer (Crookston 2020).

The tension between the original black and latine queer audiences and the new white and straight audiences is evident in many fan discussions (O'Keeffe 2018). The displacement of drag performances towards expensive straight venues and

away from queer spaces, as well as the perceived homogenization of the artform through the programme's standards, has created a distance between the current audiences and the original target audiences. In Hispanic America, the change has followed a similar path from mostly queer audiences to a relatively straighter audience, while it has also influenced and interacted with drag cultures and communities in complex ways.

Martínez Expósito has theorised that there is a neo-colonial globalisation of GSD communities and cultures through imitation, especially of gay male culture. Many cities in the world now have a gay scene and culture and they are, in general, rather similar to each other and modelled on the basis of a US American gay culture that has been communicated through media, in particular audiovisual media, of which RPDR is a part (Martínez Expósito in Martínez Pleguezuelos, 2018). This has been encouraged by online spaces where communication regardless of national boundaries is not only possible, but the norm. The emergence of online communities dedicated to supporting people of non-normative gender and sexual identities, as well as fan communities for programmes like RPDR –which often serve a similar purpose of emotional support, communal enjoyment and activism– has accelerated this process. The popularity of RPDR led to fans, a lot of them drag queens themselves, to organise events such as viewing parties and drag shows, and eventually started bringing Drag Race alumni to perform in venues that were often not associated to a queer audience at all. This was the case with Alaska Thunderfuck's performance in Bogotá in 2018, which was in a popular club in one of the most affluent parts of the city (Lopez 2018).

However, access to the main RPDR events such as Drag Con and the Werq The World tour is impossible to almost all audiences in Hispanic America, as they would have to travel to North America or Europe. Additionally, in Hispanic American countries one of RPDR's effects has been to give more popularity to the artform, resulting in the emergence of new drag houses in these countries, as well as visibility and financial opportunities for new and existing drag queens or

transformistas (this was the term preferred by most female impersonators in Colombia before the popularization of “drag queen”) and the possibility to perform both in gay and straight nightlife venues and even theatres. These performances can have highly subversive elements that might not be accepted in RPDR and which often question the influence of the programme, evidencing the complex cultural exchange at play between the imported text and the autochthonous response to it (for example the performance of *NOCHES DE FANTASÍA* 2018).

The subtitling of RPDR into Spanish for Hispanic America is part of this complex cultural exchange, which implies an unbalanced power relationship between the original culture and the receiving target culture. The translator can have as a top or middle-range priority to satisfy the fans of the programme and encourage more engagement, but the particulars of such a priority are evidently very difficult to define. Should the translator work with the idea of a wide mainstream audience in mind, in particular young, social-media-savvy women and cater to what might attract them? Or should the translator aim to entertain GSD communities in the target countries? A possible answer to this is in the description of the original broadcasting channel for RPDR: “entertainment programming for lesbians and gays and just about anyone who enjoys a gay point of view.” (Frequently Asked Questions in Edgar 2011, p. 134). Regardless of the actual eventual demographics the subtitled version reaches, anyone who watches RPDR has to enjoy a “gay point of view”, or the perspective of the actual people on the show. The fans who went looking for it when VH1 was not airing it to their satisfaction, or the ones who buy or make their way into WOW Presents Plus, or even the casual fans who find it on Netflix are all expecting that perspective. The fans, the audience most likely to generate important cultural capital, are part of a wider community, the international RPDR fandom, and they hold a significant amount of power that way. A perceived offense towards the object of fandom in the translation is criticised and, if it is deemed unacceptable enough, it reaches international fans and leads to public outcry. Consequently, catering to the fans in subtitling should focus first

on what *not* to do, that is to say, to disrespect or offend the object of fandom: the show and its participants. To add value and humour, and to participate in the cultural exchange actively can share the same importance, but cannot exceed it.

1.3 The importance of humour in drag culture and RPDR

It is possible to argue, that maintaining the humour, whether it is in effect or in characteristics, is also an essential part of respecting the object of fandom since the source culture places such a high value on humour. Since humour is highly valued in this context, preserving its effects and characteristics in translation respects the source text's integrity. This section explores the functions of humour in drag culture and RPDR, and the translation challenges this humour poses, especially regarding identity and cultural specificity.

1.3.1 Indexicality and humour in Drag Culture

Humour, like all language, is a manifestation of the speaker's positionality, culture, and social context (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Barrett theorises that in queer subcultures or counter-cultures, language is developed in opposition to mainstream language use. This queer language use reflects and contributes to the creation of a worldview that is distinct from the dominant cultural ideology. To explore queer language, Barrett uses the concept of *indexicality*, in which specific features of a language are related to something else in the world. The concept of indexicality is developed from Butler's idea of *performativity*. According to Butler, identity, particularly gender identity, is built in interaction with others, in the relationship that is formed between the individual and the always-already-there system of meaning existing in the social culture surrounding the individual. There is nothing inherently feminine in the behaviours that we associate with female traits; instead, their performance has been given this meaning by society: through behaviour, language use, clothing, and scripts, a person may consciously manifest their identification with the nebulous and shifting reference of "woman" (Barrett 2017). These signifiers of identity are indexes. Barrett, building on Kira Hall and

Mary Bucholtz, points out that no one person ever keeps to a single set of indexical references.

Indexical markers of categories such as gender, class, and ethnicity are often enmeshed in very complex ways, with individuals indexing normative assumptions about the relationship between language and identity to position themselves in relation to dominant language ideologies (eg., Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005).

(Barrett 2017, p. 40)

Any individual is constantly using indexes from different references in the construction of their position and identity from moment to moment (Barrett 2017). Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz theorised that in order to mark a difference from a dominant culture, people may adapt distinct indexes from other marginalised groups and perhaps combine them to create a new one (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). The use of indexical signs from different categories to create a distinct identity, as a community or as an individual, is often done consciously, although it can be an unconscious process as well. In the case of queer identities, there is nothing inherent in ways of talking that denote sexuality or gender. Harvey considers this paramount to understanding the way sexual preferences function semiotically to become an identity: “‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ as specific identities predicated on choice of sexual objects disintegrate into a cluster of largely non-sexual gestures and (speech) acts.” (Harvey 2002, p. 1149)

Drag queens are mainly linked to each other by a shared profession and an art, but there are many intersecting identities that have played, and still play, a significant role in the communities built around the art of drag. In the US, drag was often performed in drag balls, gathering places for queer people who had been rejected by the dominant society (*Paris Is Burning* 1991). Black, Latine, trans, gay, lesbian identities intersected in the environment US drag culture comes from. It is no surprise then that many of the indices that appear in drag queen speech are also ones that would appear in black and latine queer communities. This can also be said of semiotic strategies that might be more common among these communities. An example of this is found in the practice of *signifying* in Black American

communities (Barrett 2017). Signifying is the practice of using language to ostensibly convey one message to someone while expecting the listeners to extract a different meaning from it as well, usually as an insult. Signifying has been traced to ideas of speaker responsibility from black communities across the continent, which differ greatly from the dominant (white) culture (Morgan 1991, Mitchell-Kernan 1999).

Harvey notes that in camp, “comments seem often to be part of a performance that is ostensibly directed at an interlocutor while actually having a wider audience in mind.” (Harvey 2002, p. 1159) Indeed, the practice of shade, where the speaker indirectly insults either the interlocutor or someone listening, is a very common source of drag queen humour. These similar cultural practices between black communities and camp language might stem from the context in which they have existed: as marginalised groups who develop a relationship to language that is different from the dominant one. However, the influence of black language and communication practices cannot be overstated in drag queen, and camp, speech. The language that drag queens use in the US is a queer, black and latine language; it exists in that liminal position, and individual users mark their belonging or difference to this position.

1.3.2 Indexical disjuncture and Camp as Ideological Tools

The enmeshed quality of queer and black language is further explored by Rusty Barrett and Nathaniel Simmons as they both point out that one of the main semiotic characteristics of drag queen speech is the purposeful combination of seemingly incompatible indexical markers, such as markers for African American men and markers for white women (Barrett 1998, 2017, Simmons 2013). For Barrett, the combination of indices that are normally opposed is a common way to challenge the normative associations between fields of reference. For example, the use of signs related to religion by a drag queen challenges the normative assumption that most religions would not approve of the practice in the first place. Using a sign that indexes something that is not normally associated with the context makes that sign stand out, and it becomes marked. Barrett calls this

indexical disjuncture and asserts that “the centrality of indexical disjuncture to LGBT culture can be interpreted as a rejection of the heteronormative gender ideology that marginalizes LGBT individuals.” (Barrett 2017, p. 17) The deconstruction of identity inherent in this practice reveals an underlying ideology that is present in most queer languages: a distrust of the link between the sign and the signified, between the marker and what it indexes. This is a camp ideology and sensibility.

As Harvey theorised, the citationality in camp, where a network of references are constantly being invoked and which is almost always meant to be humorous, creates a sense of heightened non-authenticity, and reveals a scepticism to the mainstream idea that language has the capacity to communicate reality. This ironic approach to language itself is one of the main characteristics of drag queen humour and it corresponds with a specific and well-established ideology. Camp is a queer cultural critique that aims to “mock, dodge and deconstruct the multiple binarisms in our society that stem from the postulation of the categories’ natural/unnatural’.” (Harvey 2002, p. 1148)

Drag queens’ humour is firmly grounded in camp ideology and tropes. When describing the comedy RuPaul has based his career on, Vulture writer Alex Jung states that “it’s always a perspective bent slightly askew — a way to direct our attention at the fiction of social constructions.” (Jung 2017). In an interview with Jung, RuPaul herself says: “We do not stand on ceremony, and we do not take words seriously.” (Jung 2016) The ironic distance from social constructions and from words themselves is one of the main sources of humour in drag queen speech and especially in RPDR.

1.3.3 Humour as resilience and subversion

Another purpose for humour in these cultures is that of de-sensitisation to the cruelty that individuals might encounter outside of them. Reading is humorous insulting between members of the community. This ritual of insulting each other humorously has a specific social function. In a context where the members of this culture are often subject of ridicule and discrimination from the

outside world, they should learn to take these attacks with humour, as to not let it break them. It is meant to give them tools to deal with a world that is often unkind and even dangerous. This recourse to humour as an armour against the outside world, the straight world, is one that runs as an undercurrent in much of drag queen humour. Understanding the dynamics relating to humour, and when an utterance fails or succeeds is paramount to understanding the actual narrative and characterisation of each season. Humour functions as resistance, echoing Rusty Barrett's view that "the potential for language to create an alternative understanding of reality is important for understanding LGBT forms of language" (Barrett, 2017)

Queer humour, in same vein as feminist humour, can also be subversive in the use of rage as a source of humour. For feminist humour, writer Kate Clinton created the term "fumerism", that "captures the idea of being funny and wanting to burn the house down all at once" (in Willett 2013, p. 19). Using humour to dispel stereotypes, to cut through the normative and normalized ideas that oppress queer people, to point towards the absurdity at the heart of these ideas is effective as it bypasses the usual filters that prevent them from being revealed. In their article "'Laughing ourselves out of the closet': comedy as a queer pedagogical form", the authors establish the "the potential of laughter to disrupt social hierarchies and embody other ways of being in the world"(Henry *et al.* 2023, p. 156). Rage at a society and system that oppresses a community can be a powerful source of disruptive and even revolutionary humour.

This is most obvious in RPDR in episode 9 of season 12, when the contestants are all tasked with participating in a presidential debate as fictitious presidential candidates. This season was aired in the context of the build-up towards the presidential election of 2020, after 4 years of Donald Trump being in office. His first presidency pushed towards the stripping of rights for trans people across the US, as well as women and immigrants. The humour in this episode reveals both a rage at a society and political system that shuns GSD people and a need to reveal and disrupt the absurdity behind the ideologies of that system and society.

1.3.4 Humour in the context of a drag reality TV show

As an edited competition programme, RPDR encourages a condensed and heightened version of the humour characteristic of US drag cultures. Depending on the type of drag that is performed, humour and linguistic creativity can be the main focus and marker of quality for a drag queen. As a marker of quality, it becomes especially important in the context of a competition, and RPDR's is formatted in such a way that instances of humour occur often and are highlighted for the audience. If a queen wants to win the competition, she is encouraged in explicit and implicit ways to participate in a constant exchange of references, jokes, puns and a general ambience of linguistic play. In a way, RPDR is a school of humour for these contestants (Jung 2017). Not participating in the humour, not engaging in the specific type of humour expected from the other contestants, the judges and the audience is a sure-fire way to be eliminated and in the worst cases, actually constitute professional suicide even outside the confines of the show. Being a drag queen is the job and livelihood of these queens and the opportunity to gain an audience, not only in the US but also in other countries and language communities, is a life-defining one. Whether a queen is perceived as funny and entertaining is sometimes more important even than winning the programme as it opens professional opportunities and a loyal group of fans always willing to buy whatever the queen is selling. This is exemplified by the result of Miss Vanjie's elimination in season 10. When she was eliminated, Miss Vanjie exited walking backwards while reciting her name over and over. Despite being the first one to be eliminated in her season, she managed to secure a comeback in All Stars, as well as a loyal fan-base by making an impression and amusing the judges, especially RuPaul, with her unconventional exit. The fandom surrounding her is now as strong as many of the queens who actually won their seasons, and certainly bigger than most queens who passed through RPDR without leaving much of a trace.

Furthermore, the programme's editors use several strategies to highlight the humour and to keep the audience in an almost constant state of expectation for

the next amusing turn of phrase. As this is a generalised ambience, many instances of humour in this programme are not necessarily jokes that would be funny in another context: they are light shows of linguistic creativity or references that are there to maintain and build the tone.

However, even in the instances where it is not a traditionally formatted joke, the humour in RPDR is based on an intertextual network of references that points towards the many texts, celebrities, events and ideas that constitute a canonical US drag culture. It would be impossible to assert that this reflects exactly the values of drag communities outside of the programme. The humour of RPDR reveals values and premises of a broader drag culture that are filtered by the process of selecting a certain type of participant, encouraging a specific tone and editing to suit the values of the producers. In short, it is a somewhat distorted representation of a much more diverse culture with diverse values. The overwhelming popularity of the show, in turn, establishes these values as a sort of canon for the whole community, and in translation there is an assumption of it being a required canon internationally as well.

Reference-based humour in RPDR is then essential to both the enjoyment and the understanding of the source text. As such, maintaining the humour is important not only to refrain from offending the source culture, but simply to grant access to the source text to a new audience. In a programme such as RPDR, humour plays a very important role in establishing the basis for pleasure and enjoyment in the audience. It is a programme meant firstly to entertain, to amuse. When watching RPDR, the humour is one of its most recognizable aspects. It would be a much less enjoyable show if the humour was entirely lost. It is important then to maintain at least some humour, as much as possible, to maintain the pleasurable aspects of the programme for the target audience as a way to facilitate the series success in a new context.

1.3.5 Types of humour characteristic of RPDR

RPDR showcases a wide array of humorous utterances, each contributing to its camp tone. Some of the most characteristic of the show are:

- **Cultural-Specific References (CSR):** References to US drag and gay culture are interwoven throughout RPDR, creating a framework of humorous citationality. Viewers derive pleasure from catching these references, which form an “in-joke” atmosphere and challenge the authenticity of dominant narratives. The prevalence of CSR creates unique translation challenges, as humour often depends on shared cultural knowledge.
- **Impersonation:** Essential to drag performance, impersonation is celebrated in RPDR, especially in the Snatch Game challenge. Accurate portrayals are valued, as seen with Adore’s Anna Nicole Smith impersonation in Season 6, but humour is paramount, as RuPaul critiques Gia Gunn’s Kim Kardashian impersonation by saying, “a lot could be forgiven if you were funny” (S06E05). This layered humour serves to honour beloved celebrities or critique public figures, and translating such references effectively requires sensitivity to both humour and cultural familiarity.
- **Drag Personas:** Drag personas extend beyond simple impersonation; they represent the public-facing identities of contestants. Catchphrases like Shangela’s “Hallelloo!” or Monique Heart’s “Brown Cow Stunning” become aspects of queens’ branding. These phrases then become part of RPDR’s citational repertoire and can enter the US gay cultural canon, complicating translation, as they embody cultural and linguistic specificity unique to RPDR.
- **Language Play:** Puns, modified expressions, and ironic language highlight RPDR’s camp sensibility. Translators face the challenge of preserving this linguistic creativity to retain the humor’s layered meanings while respecting its camp sensibility.
- **Taboo, vulgarity and sexual atmosphere:** As part of subversion of cultural norms and expectations, drag cultures tend to emphasise humour that cis-straight cultures might find offensive, crass or vulgar. In translation, it is important to not tone down this aspect of the culture.

1.3.6 Implications for translation

As we have discussed previously, the translator's role is to grant access to the full product, the unit of the text that gathers all codes of meaning, so it is possible to argue that from the obvious reactions of the people involved in a humoristic utterance, namely if they are amused or not, the success or failure of the utterance is conveyed to viewer. However, I would argue against this approach in translation as it could lead to the target audience missing moments in which the utterance's potential response is different than the reaction obtained. Attempts at humour are not always only funny or unfunny, there are different types of humour meant to elicit different reactions, and there is also a certain subjectivity to what is considered funny or not.

It is then clear that maintaining humour in the subtitled version is important in order to grant access to the narrative of the source text, to allow the participation of Spanish-speaking fans to the wider fandom conversations, to facilitate the enjoyment of the show, and to honour the potentially subversive aspects of drag queen humour. Recreating the humour at the appropriate places and maintaining the type and function of the humorous utterances is an important priority in subtitling RPDR into Spanish.

1.4 Queer Representation and Community and the ethics of Translation

1.4.1 The RPDR fandom as an imaginary international queer community

To treat the source text, the object of fandom, with respect also implies understanding its importance to the fans. Fiske's concept of semiotic productivity is useful here. According to Fiske, fans are productive, and not simply receptive. This productivity "occurs at the interface between the industrially-produced cultural commodity [...] and the everyday life of the fan." (Fiske 2002, p. 37) Semiotic productivity is characteristic of popular culture and it is the "making of meanings of social identity and of social experience from the semiotic resources

of the cultural commodity.” (2002, p. 37) An example of this is how Madonna fans, mostly young women, made meaning of their own sexuality outside of patriarchal semiotic constructions (idem.). In the case of RuPaul’s Drag Race, there are many aspects of the show that could contribute to this semiotic productivity. The catchphrase that ends every single episode “if you can’t love yourself, how in the hell are you gonna love somebody else!” has been appropriated by many fans, who exercise defiant self-love within a capitalist, straight and white system that often undermines it. However, this semiotic productivity is particularly important where it pertains to queer identity and queer community.

Keith Harvey defines community and identity as two separate but perfectly co-dependant aspects of sexuality. Identity is, for Harvey, a matter of belonging rather than being. In this sense, saying “I am gay” and “I belong to the gay community” are equivalent. But the complexity in these concepts arises from two processes in this identification. Identity has both an internal and an external mechanism. Internally, a person questions their place in the world, and whether they are different to those around them. This is a constant ongoing process that most gay people –and most queer people,– go through. The external identification mechanism refers to presenting as queer, that is, using one of the many ways of speaking, of dressing, of behaving, that are considered queer. This second mechanism is directly linked to queer communities as a shared space between queer people. But, according to Harvey, the community is also an imaginary concept, something to which the internal identity question can latch onto. These dynamics between internal and external, and physical and imaginary are important in the context of fandom as well. The fan communities built around RPDR in Hispanic America have also served as places of community and acceptance for queer identities. In countries where GSD representation is rare or rarely positive, queer fans often need to look to foreign media, in particular media in English, for alternative identity and imagined communities that fit their internal identity question better than those available in their own culture. Translation plays a very important role in this dynamic and the relations between intercultural

queer communities. Harvey points out that the differences between the source and the target in a translation creates a space of indeterminacy that allows for the reader to find their own answers in their quest for identity. Access to those translated texts allows for the identification with an imaginary global community and becomes essential in the building of gay identities and communities. (Harvey 2000) The fact that there is a remainder in translation, that not everything is culturally translatable, allows for that queer distance between the source and the target, where a productive semiotic experience can occur for fans and viewers who can negotiate autochthonous identity constructions with an imagined global community.

1.4.2 RPDR homonormativity and pedagogy

Serena Bassi exposes another layer of queer visibility by pointing out a certain tension between gay and lesbian visibility and queer visibility. She analyses Venuti's translation into English of the Italian best-seller *A Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed* in which a secondary character is queer. According to the author, Venuti inadvertently changes a character with ambiguous and contradictory gender expressions and sexuality into something more stereotypically gay by American standards. She relates this to the concept of a mainstream American "homonormativity" that dominates US cultural production (Bassi 2014). In fact, this American homonormativity is one that has been criticised in regard to RPDR many times. While RPDR showcases people of many gender expressions, ethnicities, bodies and backgrounds, there is still a sort of homonormativity in the types of narratives it portrays. The essential and cathartic narrative of the "coming out" ritual, for example, is constantly reinforced, even when it comes in contact with different social scripts from first or second generation immigrant queens, such as Kim Chi. Upon the disclosure that Kim Chi, a second generation Korean-American, had not told her family of her sexuality or her work, RuPaul insisted that, for her personal growth, she should come out to her family, enforcing an American narrative on a culture where such an approach has very different social consequences. This can be related to Bassi's analysis of the Italian *It Gets Better*

project. In this project, there was a global open call to upload videos on YouTube that followed the narrative of the project, that is, that life for GSD people gets better as society becomes more accepting. This resulted in a sort of invisible translation where the narrative is constructed in an intercultural and multilingual way. However, the imposition of the narrative is based on notions of positivism and modernism that are not universal. The very translation of the project's name into Italian as "things change" indicates the complexity of this issue. The Italian narratives that come out of the project disassemble and reconstitute "dominant discourses on sexuality and subjectivity in late capitalism" (Bassi 2017, p. 67).

Another important dynamic to be taken into consideration is the queer pedagogy that RPDR engages in. RPDR strives in many episodes to become that centre of community for the US, providing new queer audiences with a history, a culture and a set of values to identify with. This was explored by Tommy Mayberry's conference paper at the 2019 Northeast Modern Language Association convention "'RuPaul's School for Girls': Positioning RuPaul and RuPaul's Drag Race as Popular Pedagogy". Mayberry focused on the religious aspect of this public pedagogy. Mayberry established the idea of pedagogy as a performative practice and media as a powerful form of public pedagogy and an informal educational site. According to Mayberry, one of the main lessons taught through RPDR is a reclaiming of Christianity through a camp appropriation of its discourse and form. The show itself functions as a sort of church congregation, always ending with RuPaul's call of "can I get an Amen up in here", replicating African American congregations. The values of love, forgiveness and positivity are framed as Christian and the ideal for "America's Next Drag Superstar". RuPaul simultaneously claims these Christian values while creating a certain irony, characteristic of camp. With statements such as "not compromising my Christianity" when referring to performing specific sexual acts, for example, the camp irony works by distancing from traditional Christian values by cross-dressing and simply being gay, while simultaneously claiming Christianity as compatible with these practices. In this way, according to Mayberry, RuPaul teaches "the

children” to interpret the Bible in a way that does not conflict with queer identities. This is a queering of public pedagogy (Mayberry 2019). This is also obvious in segments about the Stonewall Riots, for example. While the edification of a sort of queer canon determined by an industrially produced medium can be argued to be arbitrary, selective and even oppressive –many queer people are very uncomfortable with Christianity for example– it becomes even more complicated in transit.

The semiotic productivity that RPDR fans from Hispanic America engage in is an appropriation of ideas, scripts and narratives from the source, making meaning through these ideas to their everyday lives. A fan might find in the idea of coming out, flamboyant self-expression, and the American discourse on sexuality, religion and subjectivity a useful and even revolutionary semiotic tool. They may also have a resistant reaction to these notions, and in that conflict also produce meaning for their own lives. A wider discussion on the power dynamics between the US and Hispanic America in relation to the translation of queer material is important to understand the position in which the translators inevitably find themselves and the role translation plays in the cultural exchange.

1.4.3 Power dynamics in queer translation

In this section I will be writing about the dynamics that come into play when translating queer texts, that is texts with GSD characters, for a GSD audience, with a queer theme, or created by GSD people. My focus is the translation from English into Spanish, which, as has been discussed, is a complicated relationship, especially when it comes to translation for Hispanic America. A significant portion of queer translation scholarship in the last decade has argued against a commonly held belief that GSD identities are a Western concept that has been exported to other cultures. The idea that concepts relating to non-normative sexual and gender identities are imported from a nebulous “West”, is one that has been used across the political spectrum in many of the countries that are perceived as the receptors to advocate for the oppression and exclusion of GSD people. In

Chechnya, among growing concerns in 2017 about the disappearance, detention and torture of gay people, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov terrifyingly asserted that gay people simply did not exist in Chechnya, making it impossible for them to be detained and tortured (Taylor 2017). In Colombia, the communist guerrilla FARC used a similar procedure to justify violence against GSD people across the territories they controlled, as they were symbols of US imperialism (Parda *et al.* 2015). The practical urgency of denouncing and disproving this idea has been felt thoroughly in academia, evidenced by the many refutations coming from queer translation studies as will be discussed below.

Bauer argues that it is in linguistic and cultural negotiation that the idea of different sexualities emerged in the first place. Furthermore, the discourse separating “western” countries from the rest of the world in matters of sexual liberation and acceptance towards varying sexualities and genders is, according to Bauer, a product of postcolonialism. In this way, traditionally colonial countries can continue to cast other countries as backwards and undeveloped if they have not adopted the values the anglophone world claims to embrace. (Bauer 2015). This same point is emphasised by Baer when he argues that sexuality studies have not considered the central role that translation has played in the articulation of ideas about sexuality. He disputes the idea of a Western transmission of these ideas by arguing that this paints non-Western peoples as “passive victims of US cultural and economic imperialism” (Baer 2017, p. 38). Many authors have analysed the adoption, appropriation and translation of the actual terms to refer to different concepts relating to sexual and gender divergence to illuminate the ways in which the concepts behind the terms have been negotiated locally. Baer analyses the way the terms “gay” and “queer” have been adapted globally, in particular in Russia. He argues that while the global use of these terms can represent the Anglophone monopolisation of sexual discourse, through translation, non-Western queers can undermine the imaginary binary of the West vs the rest of the world. He states that translation “deconstructs the myth of a

single, unified, West, as well as the mutually defining opposition of Russia and the West” (2017, p. 53).

Song Hwee Lim complicates this idea in her analysis the translation of queer as Ku’er in a Taiwanese in a radical journal. The term *tongzhi*, literally meaning comrade, was already used as non-specific term for GSD identities without any gendered connotations at the time of this translation, making the use of the borrowed, though modified Ku’er a decidedly political decision. The introduction of Ku’er in the semantic landscape “had the effect of complementing, complicating, and even confounding” (2008, p. 240) the already existing terms, requiring them to shift in meaning to accommodate for this addition and creating in itself a new subcategory for GSD people to identify with. The motivations for such a translation are particularly interesting, as it appears in a publication to promote two newly translated novels, indicating that “the introduction of a queer discourse in Taiwan may have as much to do with marketing strategies as with identity politics.” (2008, p. 239)

Song’s assertion of this possible economic motivation for the adoption of anglicised terms in contexts influenced by the imperialist cultural dominance of English and the US, already points towards the complex and often camouflaged interests and ideologies that come into play in the cultural negotiation of queer ideas. Furthermore, while many authors have focussed on the cultural specificities of GSD cultures and concepts across the world in order to combat the notion of a passive receptiveness, Andrea Bachner warns against the glorification or reification of national and ethnic categories that might incur from this pursuit. Indeed, focussing on the many different native imaginings of gender and sexual diversity, and the agency of those on the receiving end of anglophone dominance, risks minimising the actual effect of such dominance. Hispanic America has undoubtedly been heavily influenced, often through literal or metaphorical violence, by the US and GSD people have never been exempt from being perpetrators or victims of this violence.

In order to analyse the translations of RPDR into Spanish for Hispanic America, it is essential to understand the implications of such a translation and the participation of the text and the translator in an exchange that is tainted by colonialism, imperialism and violence. As Diego Falconí writes, it is important to sometimes do away with grand generalisations of Spanish across the ocean, and to focus on the dynamics that influence Hispanic America's relationship with the Anglophone world, in particular the US (Falconí 2018). This is a focus I have decided to implement in this study. Falconí writes about the inherent colonialism of the concept of "gay", by discussing the canon that has been established as "gay culture" or "gay canon" which is evident in Halperin's *How to be Gay* (Halperin 2012). Halperin's aim seems to be similar to that of certain pedagogical aspirations in RPDR, that is to say, to create a centralised resource, a body of cultural products that feed the semiotic productivity and the identification with the idea of "being gay". Both RPDR and Halperin strive to document, and perhaps create, a gay history that endures through any possible attempts at erasure, which has been a real danger for any history that is not straight, white and male. RPDR might blur the category of gay history to a more inclusive queer *herstory* (at least that of AMAB bodies), but the similarity with Halperin remains. In RPDR, as in Halperin's work, the corpus of references is eminently from the US (with a few exceptions in both).

[E]l orgullo gay del Norte no solo se construye por la memorable épica de Stonewall que lucha por ciertos derechos, sino también por "civilizar" sexo-genéricamente a los sujetos del Sur, a los que además, como "bárbarxs", hay que temer (/desear) ya que podrían atentar contra las formas de ciudadanía sexual que caracterizan al capitalismo posindustrial que genera lo gay.

(Falconí 2018, p. 210)

Indeed, it is still an important part of the narrative of gay identity, community and activism in the US that it is a place –the original place– that allows and maintains the freedoms necessary to live freely as a GSD person. The idea of the US as saviour and liberator of the oppressed sexual minorities in the global South, combined with some concept of a global gay, a global imagined community, positions this US-centric canon as the universal gay, or queer, culture.

Falconí even uses an example from RPDR to support his take on the colonialism of the concept of “gay”. In episode 9 of season 5, the task is for the contestants to become drag mothers, to create a drag persona, for gay combatants from the US army. These men lived through the “don’t ask, don’t tell” era of the US military, widely regarded within the community as a symbol of oppression and discrimination. Surrounded by patriotic paraphernalia –which is far more present in the programme than might be expected–, the queens and the army men bond through their shared identities as queer people in the US, as well as a dynamic of a younger queer generation learning about the lives of a previous generation, and as such, their queer *herstory*. However, the most striking sentiment in this episode comes in the uncontested assertion that these men are to be thanked for the freedoms the new generation enjoys, as directly related to their participation in the army. The resistance to the oppression and discrimination the generation of men represented here participated in can be related to the eventual changes in policy and culture. However, RuPaul’s statement that “thanks to these men, we have the freedom to be fierce” implies not only that the US army, and the gay men in it, are somehow responsible for defending US freedoms by protecting it from outside forces, from all those less enlightened countries that are not the US. Falconí’s comment on this episode seems very pertinent:

Me parece que lo que esconde ese agradecimiento al ejército (gay) no es solamente una retórica nacionalista y de respeto a las vidas que protegen un país, sino la idea de que la violencia neocolonial puertas afuera, garantiza la fabulosidad, un orgullo altamente estetizado puertas adentro.

(Falconí 2018, pp. 211–212)

What actions exactly does RuPaul think the army has taken that has led to further freedom in the US? Perhaps the invasion of the Middle-East? Or the growing amount of military bases across the globe? (Falconí 2018). The implication of such a statement that somehow the actions of the US army outside of the US are instrumental to the “fierceness” of queer people inside it, clearly reveals the

deeply seeded ideologies of colonialism and dehumanization of the South embedded in the conceptualisation of gayness, and queerness, itself.

It is also important to point out that there is a class element at play in these translations. As Falconí mentions, the imposition and influence from the North in Hispanic America is not merely an outside factor. The upper class within Hispanic America, which has historically been placed and maintained through an alliance or compliance towards colonialist or imperialist influences, play a significant role in cultural domination. Those who have access to a programme such as RPDR in Hispanic America are those who have reliable access to an internet connection and who have access to a Netflix account. These facts are not peripheral to the issue of power dynamics in the translation of US media into Spanish for Hispanic America. In a region where access to the internet is still low, the public that will be reached by these ideas is to a great extent the one that is the most likely to have the power, or interest, to perpetuate them. The relation between Hispanic America's middle class and the US is complex, but it is possible to say that a certain deference towards the more dominant culture is paid. When discussing the complexity of identifying as gay in Mexico, List Reyes writes:

El hecho de que muchos sujetos que se identifican [con la palabra gay] se visualicen como "blancos" [...] a pesar que en el mejor de los casos desde el vecino país del norte sea nombrado como "latino", por tanto *no blanco*— [...] resalta el sentido aspiracional que define a la clase media, que además [...] es la que ha marcado la agenda política a nivel global privilegiando temas como matrimonio, familia, progenie, herencia, principalmente en detrimento de otros temas.

(List Reyes 2018, p. 117)

The middle and upper class, especially those who are racialised white, are the ones most likely to receive and adopt the ideas of what constitutes a gay person, or a queer person, from the US. They have a vested interest in replicating a relatively conservative discourse regarding class, race and ethnicity, and to maintain social hierarchies, whether they necessarily benefit them or not (List Reyes 2018).

However, as List Reyes notes, identifying as “gay”, and I would extend this to all other letters of the acronym, can be a political decision that leans towards change. In cultures where non-normative desires and identities are systematically denied and excluded, adopting a specific label constitutes a political tool to centralise efforts towards obtaining and maintaining the rights and freedoms necessary to live safely and fully. The acknowledgement of the postcolonialism and imperialism that is an undercurrent of the exchange of ideas about queerness is in no way meant to imply that the Hispanic American audience of RPDR, or the translator, has no agency in this. It is rather a reminder that no matter how global and how connected the communities created around RPDR are, the power dynamics that have determined the cultural exchanges between the two geographical areas are always present. This does not neutralise the political possibilities of some ideas of queerness that are imported or created in this exchange.

A final consideration here is the presence of Latine queens in the show, as this adds a new layer to the power dynamics of this translation. Popular media in the US tends to offer “racialized, hypersexualized representations of Latinas” (McIntyre and Riggs 2018, p. 63), and this is very present in RPDR. Latine queens, who are mostly Puerto Rican, very often lean into and exaggerate their racialised stereotypes to create comedy, offering a version of Latinidad that is marked as Other in the context. This is particularly evident in their language use, as their struggles with English are one of the main sources of humour in their performances and presentation in RPDR.

In RPDR, Latinidad stereotypes are fused with occurrences of linguisticism, a potent combination that serves to fortify the show’s representations of North American universalism.

(McIntyre and Riggs 2018, p. 67)

When in season 3, Alexis Mateo is instructed by RuPaul to go more over-the-top with her already very Puerto Rican performance during a challenge, she plays into the stereotype and even uses a long, ostensibly impossible-to-pronounce (by English-speaking monolinguals) name in Spanish. This earns her praise and recognition from the judges, reinforcing the fact that they expect a specific

performance of Latinidad, and they find humour in the mere existence of other languages and cultures. Of course, Alexis (and all other Latine queens that have been on the show) has consciously made the choice to use this stereotype and accept this kind of portrayal. This is most likely a choice related to social and professional opportunities, coping and survival mechanisms to exist in the US, and participation in a capitalist system. In the translation into Spanish for Hispanic America, these dynamics become a real linguistic and even ethical challenge for the translator. How do we show the otherness implied by the use of Spanish in a target text that is now in Spanish? Should the translator attempt to maintain these stereotypes when the victim of this type of humour is the target audience? These are all important questions to keep in mind when attempting this translation.

The takeaway from this is to caution against a glorification of the source material and an unwitting participation in the propagation of ideas such as the cultural superiority of anglophone cultures or their status as supposed saviours of Hispanic American GSD people with their progressive ideology. The translator must find a balance between respect towards the object of fandom, (both to please the fans and also as an ethical consideration), and the acknowledgement that as a product of an imperialist and culturally dominant territory being transmitted to territories with less cultural and political power, this translation is part of a complicated context.

1.5 A tentative list of priorities.

In this theoretical framework, I have explored the possible functions the subtitled version of RPDR could serve and their implications. Based on all these considerations, the list of priorities for the target text I will use as a guide in my analysis of the translations of humour in RPDR is as follows:

1.5.1 Top priorities (to be met at all costs)

1. Being accessible to a Spanish-speaking audience.

2. Being enjoyable for the target audience.
3. Respecting the object of fandom: RuPaul, the contestants, the programme and US drag culture more broadly.

1.5.2 Middle-range priorities (share importance with each other)

1. Maintaining or recreating humour in the translation of humorous utterances
2. Maintaining the characteristics of the humour in humorous utterances
3. Being cautious about its potential participation in an unequal power dynamic.
4. Allowing and encouraging fan creation and engagement, including the participation in an international fandom.

1.5.3 Marginal priorities (to be met only if top and middle-range priorities have been met)

1. Adding more humour to the target text that is coherent with the characteristics of the humour in the source text.
2. Pushing towards more creative styles of subtitling, in a style that is coherent with the characteristics of the source text.
3. Create links to local drag and GSD communities through use of slang or language use characteristic of these communities.

1.5.4 Prohibited priorities (should never happen in the text)

1. Disrespecting the object of fandom or drag communities in the source or target. (for example: misgendering, using slurs, overtly or covertly denying ,or adding negative connotation, to GSD identities or racial and ethnic minorities)

1.6 Constraints

As was discussed in Section 1, a satisfactory translation is one which manages to meet as many priorities as possible, while also dealing with the constraints that might affect the final result. Having established a list of priorities, I will now explore the possible constraints that might affect the subtitling the humour of RPDR into Spanish for Hispanic America.

Various authors have established different types of constraints that might affect a translation. For Gottlieb, there are three types of potential constraints that can make it difficult to translate a humorous utterance or text:

1. Language-specific
2. Media-specific
3. Human constraints

Firstly, he mentions language-specific constraints, meaning that the humour in the source text relies in great measure on the source language, making it difficult or impossible to translate. The second potential constraint is media-specific, where humour is impossible to convey in the specific medium of the translation. This is of particular importance in intersemiotic translation such as the subtitling of humour and this leads to what this author calls the “dual gap” (1997, p. 210) of subtitling humour, meaning that humour must first go through the change from one language into another –and as such from one culture to another– and then from oral speech to written text. The third is a human constraint such as mistakes made by the translator or even in Gottlieb’s terms “a lack of talent” (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 216) of the translator.

All of these types of constraints are relevant in the translation of RPDR. Drag queen humour relies heavily on wordplay and slang, making it very language-specific and difficult to translate directly. The subtitling of the show also implies that the translator does need to bridge the dual gap of language and medium. Intonation, pronunciation and style can play a very important role in drag humour, and these are difficult or impossible to render in text. It might be possible for the viewer to pick up on some of these elements without understanding the speech, but it is

also likely they could miss a lot of the specifics. Finally, human constraints are perhaps the most limiting in the translation of RPDR as most platforms rely on outsourcing of the translations and do not necessarily use the same translator for the whole series, or even a translator familiar with the culture at all. Consistency and a macro-level view of the text is basically impossible for the translator.

Zabalbeascoa also emphasizes the contextual constraints that might influence the translator, such as the tendency to choose minimalistic solutions to translation challenges in the fear that the client, the employer, or the audience would criticise a riskier choice that they could not justify as a close translation of the source. What Zabalbeascoa blames for unsatisfactory translations is the lack of recognition of the translator, which leads to a lack of support, lack of proper tools and resources, and an exclusion from the decisions leading to the final result eventually available to the audience or reader. This is similar to Gottlieb's human constraints, and Zabalbeascoa also mentions language-specific constraints for translating humour. What he calls technical constraints could be equated to Gottlieb's media-specific constraints. However, the author also adds some of his own items to the list of types of constraints that I consider pertinent. His full list of constraint types is as follows:

1. Differences in the background knowledge of original and prospective audiences.
2. Differences in cultural and moral values, customs and traditions.
3. Differences in conventional humorous themes, and joke-telling techniques.
4. Technical constraints
5. Verbal humour depending on the source language.
6. Lack of time, incentive, tools or skills for the translator to produce a satisfactory translation. (Zabalbeascoa 1996)

Zabalbeascoa has two additional types of constraints to Gottlieb: the differences in background knowledge in audiences and the difference in cultural and moral values and in customs and traditions between them as well. These constraints

might play a role in any kind of translation, but they are particularly important in the translation of humour. What one culture finds amusing, another might find offensive, and a lot of humour might depend on information that would not be widely known to a foreign audience. For RPDR, this is very relevant. Drag queens often reference media, events and people that have had an impact on LGBTQ+ cultures in the US and other English-speaking contexts but that might not be known in Spanish-speaking ones. However, as we explored earlier, there might be a reasonable expectation for its target audience to be more familiar with the references and the culture of the source text.

Based on these lists, as well as Zabalbeascoa's insights on types of jokes related to translation (Zabalbeascoa 2005), these are the types of constraints I will take into account during my analysis and evaluation.

1. Differences in the users of the source text and the intended users of the target text:
 - a. Different degrees of familiarity or appreciation for certain subject matters or themes
 - b. Different knowledge of culture-specific linguistic information: stereotypes, dialects, linguistic variation, slang
 - c. Different culture-specific references
 - d. Different scripts: differences in societal norms and expectations, which behaviours or utterances are marked and which ones are not.
2. Medium-related constraints
 - a. Inherent: what is possible to communicate through a specific medium, a difference in medium for the translated version (intersemiotic translation), technological constraints related to the tools available.
 - b. Incidental: norms and expectations for a specific medium. For example, the idea that subtitles need to be either white or yellow and at the bottom of the screen.
3. Human constraints and context of the translation

- a. Logistics of the translation (team, communication, revision)
- b. Translator's familiarity with the content
- c. Translator's talent or ability to create humour
- d. Mistakes resulting from misunderstanding of the source utterance, lack of sufficient knowledge in the target language, or simple inattention.
- e. Resources available (time, references and information, software)
- f. Client expectations and demands.
- g. Audience expectations and preferences

Almost all of these constraints apply not only to the translation of humour but to the translation of any aspect of a text. These categories are not absolute. Some constraints might belong to several categories: the norms and expectations for a specific medium can be enforced (explicitly or not) by the client making it both medium-related and a human constraint. The technical possibilities available to a translator when subtitling for a platform like Netflix or WoWPresents Plus could be seen as an inherent medium-related constraint, but it is also related to incidental medium-related constraints and client expectations. While neither Netflix nor WoWPresents Plus use technology that would facilitate a subtitling that veers away from the most traditional norms for this medium, other platforms do use technology that could be exploited towards a more creating translation. In Amazon Prime, for example, information about the actors appears on screen in a semi-opaque pop-up which can be clicked to expand this and more information. Currently, this feature is used exclusively for information that is external to the audiovisual text biographies of directors and actors, and filmographies in particular. However, it would work very well in RPDR to provide additional information on terms, wordplay, intertextual references and drag culture. This information only appears if the user pauses what they are watching, which means it would not disrupt the viewing experience of a casual audience member not interested in accessing this information, or that of the consummate fan for whom it would be superfluous. Since this constraint is one that does weigh on the current

translators of RPDR into Spanish for Hispanic America, I do not think it could be expected for them to subvert it, but in my own suggestions for possible translation alternatives, I will be considering whether this tactic would be appropriate for any specific utterance.

Audience expectations and preferences can also be an important constraint in the possible subtitling techniques and strategies used. For example, the method of abusive subtitling that was discussed previously was tried by a group of fans in the Peruvian Facebook group Racers Nation. The main fan in charge of this project, who went by GAD, worked with a few other RPDR fans to translate season 10 and All Stars 3. GAD was in charge of adding his own thoughts to the subtitles in brackets in order to enhance the humour in the subtitled version to better emulate the humour in the source². This project coincided with WoWPresentPlus, WoW Presents streaming platform, starting to release Spanish subtitles of each episode only hours after the original was released. According to GAD, the fans that would use Racer Nation's fansubs preferred the speed and convenience of the original subtitles over the creativity of the subtitles they made.

This is a good example of what an audience prioritises in a subtitled version of a show they wish to watch. Immediate access to the audiovisual text is a much higher priority for them than any experimentation in the subtitles. Consequently, the only feasible way to make creative decisions that might take longer, is for the translator to have more time before the original is released, so that the convenient and fast official translation is of better quality. This makes it a constraint of time and resources for the translator, and the client might not be inclined to afford more time for translation as it increases the risk of information about the show leaking before the preview, or it is logistically awkward.

² I was in contact with GAD directly over chat and he shared his thought process when creating these subtitles.

However, fans will take notice of particularly egregious translation mistakes or missteps, such as in this image, which was posted to RuPaul's Drag Race en Español on Facebook, mocking the Netflix translation of "untuck", which refers to "tucking", meaning the technique AMAB drag queens use to disguise their genitals. When RuPaul asks the queens to 'untuck', she simply means for them to relax, as they do have to come back in full drag after the break. The translation in subtitles as 'to unfold your penis' was posted on the group as an example of bad translation.

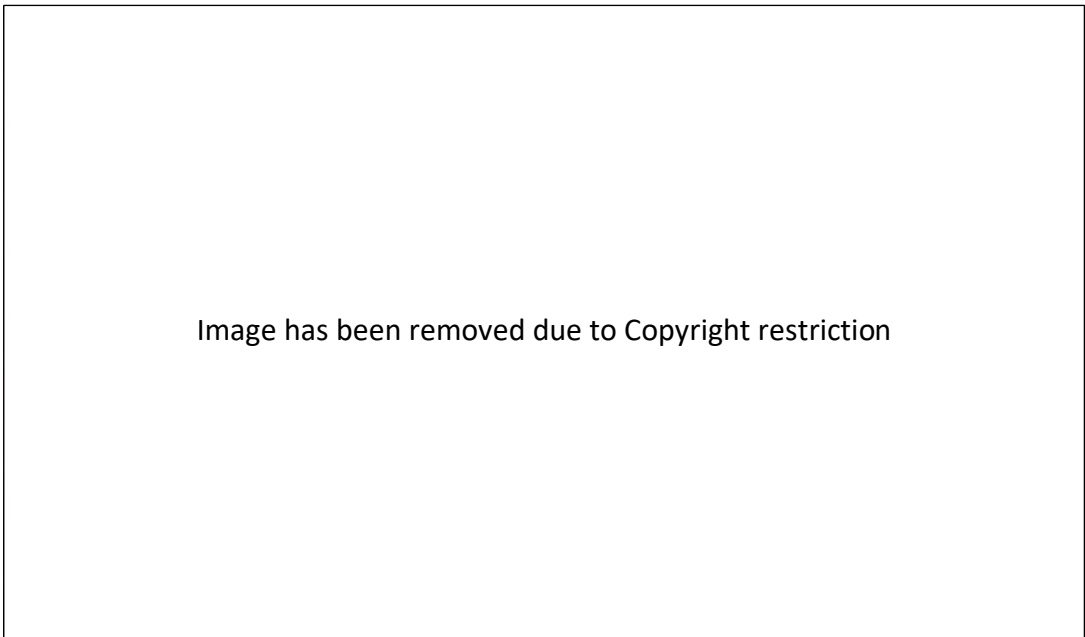


Image has been removed due to Copyright restriction

(FROM RPDR En Español Facebook Group: Netflix original translation)

This demonstrates that while fans are willing to accept less elaborate translations to prioritise speed, there is a limit to what they are willing to overlook. The translation still needs to be readable, respectful and accurate. This is something that WOWpresents Plus has sometimes disregarded, such as the subtitling of season 3 of RPDR UK, which are entirely machine translated. In fact, the platform offers subtitles in many languages as soon as the episodes are released, indicating that all or most of these subtitles have been added automatically and have not been revised by a human translator. This unfortunate choice reveals the biases and faults imbedded in machine translation, as prohibited priorities appear systematically in the Spanish subtitles. The automatic translation shows a clear bias in constantly choosing to translate any sentences that are not gendered in

English into masculine forms of adjectives and articles. Unless a sentence clearly indicates the speaker or subject is feminine, the Spanish subtitles are in the masculine forms. This happens even if the subject in sentences surrounding it is feminine. This is particularly unnerving in this season, as it is the first season across all RPDR programmes to have a cis-woman as a contestant and her dialogue is systematically translated into masculine. Additionally, almost the entirety of the translation is in standard Spanish, all slang terms are translated literally, and there is no regard for maintaining any of the humour. These subtitles serve as an example of the worst possible translation of RPDR into Spanish.

1.7 Methodology

Having established the possible priorities and constraints that influence the translation of RPDR into Spanish for Hispanic America, I will use these to analyse and evaluate the subtitles of my chosen corpus. I will delve into cultural-specific references and sexually-explicit and vulgarity based humour, as these are two categories of humour that are particularly representative of the culture. This will allow me to further demonstrate the importance of humour in this text, as well as offer more insight into how some priorities could be met and what constraints are important for each utterance. Then, I will be focussing on the specific utterances and their translation. To do this, I have extracted the humorous utterances present in the source text, as well as the subtitles used to translate them.

The analysis of these utterances and their subtitles allows me to discern what priorities and constraints are relevant for each utterance and how the translation has dealt with finding a balance between them. Based on this analysis, I will establish whether the official subtitles provided are satisfactory or not for that specific utterance.

PART 2: ANALYSIS OF SUBTITLES

2.1 The Subtitling of Humorous Culture-Specific References in RPDR

The Culture-Specific References (CSR) in RPDR are a fundamental part of the humour of the show. As well as being omnipresent, the references add to the programme's ludic atmosphere and highlighted non-authenticity. This creates a framework within which utterances taken out of their context might not seem funny, but they are an integral part of the overall humour of the programme. The references create the tone of the programme and an expectation in the audience, and the contestants and judges. CSR are also often used as part of jokes, through wordplay, as part of reads (insult humour), or in impersonation. RuPaul and the contestants who have gone through the programme have also contributed to the creation of references that are used again and again in the programme, some of them being CSR themselves. This *Inception*-style referencing is the most obvious in the programme's catchphrases, of which a few examples will be analysed first. Impersonation is one of the essential characteristics of the art of drag, and the impersonations are usually from the source culture. The impersonation itself is a CSR, where prosodic variations, mannerisms, catchphrases, and exaggerations of the character are all part of the humour and are all culture specific. These references are often related to American pop culture, especially what has been deemed relevant to the gay canon. Because the references are so crucial to the source culture, and RPDR engages in a pedagogy on the culture, it would perhaps be inappropriate to replace them with target culture references. The strategy of substitution in Díaz-Cintas and Remael's taxonomy of translation of CSR in Audiovisual translation (in Dore 2019, p. 188) is rarely used in the corpus. Omission, calque, literal translation, and lexical recreation are the most common strategies.

2.1.1 Catchphrases

The programme's structure and the deliberate efforts to quote as often as possible have also resulted in the creation of in-references, for example, through

catchphrases coined by RuPaul or by the different queens that have participated in the show. More often than not, these catchphrases reference other texts and add to the overall programme's humorous and ludic tone. In this section, I will examine the subtitling of the catchphrases in the corpus containing external references and determine how well they meet the priorities set in the theoretical framework.

“You’ve Got SheMail”



(*RuPaul's Drag Race* 2011, image from Ramirez 2014)

At the start of every standard episode of RPDR, after a recap of the previous episode, the contestants gather in the *werkroom* and await instructions for the next challenge. They are allowed to talk among themselves for a moment before they are inevitably interrupted by an announcement signalling they need to gather around the TV to receive a pre-taped message from RuPaul. This message is a short statement that hints at what awaits the queens in the episode through references, wordplay, and rhyme. In seasons 1 to 6, the message was signalled by a recording of RuPaul saying, "Ooh, girl. You've got SheMail."

While this utterance might not be laugh-inducing in itself, it is an example of the sort of CSR that contribute to the humorous tone of the source text. The wordplay between two different references indicates that this was meant as a playful catchphrase to add to the collection of phrases coined by the programme that then became part of its canon. As one of the catchphrases in this early era of RPDR, it illustrates the complexities of CSR and their use in the source text.

First, this statement references the 1998 romantic comedy *You've Got Mail* with Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks. Popular romantic comedies are part of the canon that any American would be expected to know, but they are also significant for the American gay canon. In the case of *You've Got Mail*, the presence of such a well-known female celebrity as Meg Ryan makes it even more likely for gay men to attach value to it. This movie was an international success, and, like many Hollywood films, it was exported to Hispanic America to be shown in theatres and is even now broadcasted on TV from time to time. It could be expected for a target audience member to be familiar with this movie, albeit less so than an average source text audience.

The second reference in this catchphrase is “she-male”, an outdated term still used sometimes in porn in English to signal that at least one of the actors is a person with a feminine-presenting body but male genitalia (Herman 2015). This term is highly offensive, and this catchphrase was the object of online criticism by fans, resulting in it being changed in later seasons (Ramirez 2014). The use of reclaimed slurs will be further examined in the section on the translation of taboo-based humour. As has been discussed before, the use of vulgarity, sexually explicit language and references to porn are characteristic of drag queen’s use of language in RPDR and, more generally, in drag performances aimed at adults³.

³ In recent years, the US conservative discourse has taken drag queen’s readings to children as a rallying issue to push the narrative that queer people are sexualising children and grooming them. To be very clear: drag queen performances are not always vulgar or make any reference to sex. This is characteristic of the language used in a context where vulgarity and references to porn are appropriate: a programme targeted at adults.

The recording also features a recognisable intonation on “ooh, girl” which is common among black women in the US. This specific pronunciation of “ooh, girl”, elongated and with a rising intonation, is a variation of the use of “girl” analysed by Spears (Spears 2009). Spears describes one use of “girl” in African American Women’s Language as a discourse marker holding several features characteristic of African American Language, among which is prosodic semantics (i.e. conveying or adding meaning through pronunciation, intonation or rhythm). The intonational meaning of this use of girl is added to the dictionary definition of the word (woman or non-adult woman). In the context of this recording, I believe the sub-meaning that applies the most, from the ones described by Spears, is “hot news” (2009, pp. 89–90)⁴. However, the added “ooh” and the variation in the intonation —rising on “ooh” and plateauing on “girl”— conveys an additional meaning of flattery. This intonation is also common in AAWL and indicates admiration for someone’s appearance. Among African American women, both discourse markers also index identity and belonging. Spears notes that it would not usually be used to talk to men. Drawing from AAWL is common for American drag queens, especially but not exclusively black ones. This corresponds with what has been described by Barrett and Simmons on the use of different identity markers to destabilise the concept of identity itself. (Barrett 1998, 2017, Simmons 2013).

In summary, this one catchphrase holds four items that can be classified as references.

1. Internal reference: sentence as a whole is a recurring phrase for several seasons.
2. AAWL reference: prosodic. Indexes a source-culture identity.
3. SheMale: vulgar and irreverent, shock value.

⁴ Spears’s emphasis is on the more general not context-independent intonational meaning but adds 3 pragmatic submeanings detaching from it, which are context-dependent. These are HOT NEWS, DIRE WARNING and WEIGHTY PRONOUNCEMENT. (Spears 2009, p. 89)

4. *You've Got Mail*: source cultural artefact, popular/low culture related to female celebrity.

In the following section, we will analyse how these four elements and their implied cultural weights are dealt with in translation.

Season 3, Episode 6

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Ooh Girl! You got SheMail!	Chica, tienes correo de RuPaul. BT: Girl, you have mail from RuPaul	>> OH, NIÑA! // ¡TIENES SU CORREO! BT: >> OH, GIRL! // YOU HAVE THEIR MAIL!

Season 3, Episode 8

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Ooh Girl! You got SheMail!	Chica, tienes correo de RuPaul. BT: Girl, you have mail from RuPaul	>> OH, CHICA // TIENES SU CORREO ELECTRÓNICO BT: >> OH, GIRL! // YOU HAVE THEIR E-MAIL!

Season 6, Episode 5

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Ooh Girl! You got SheMail!	Nenas, llegó el correo de RuPaul. BT: Babes (f.), you have mail from RuPaul	>> OH, NIÑA! // TIENES MALA SUERTE. BT: >> OH, GIRL! // YOU HAVE BAD LUCK

Season 6, Episode 6

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Ooh Girl! You got SheMail!	Chicas, tienen correo de RuPaul. BT: Girls, you have mail from RuPaul	>> ¡OH! NENA, TIENES SU CORREO ELECTRÓNICO BT: >> OH! BABE (f.) YOU HAVE THEIR EMAIL

1. Internal reference

In the subtitles in the corpus, it is notable that despite this being a catchphrase used for six seasons, there is no consistency in the chosen translation. This means that despite changing the subtitles in 2023, WOWPresentsPlus subtitles still do not opt for consistency. This is the main obstacle towards building an in-text

citatoriality which could compensate for some of the inevitable losses when translating references.

Netflix and WOWPresentsPlus, up to 2022, have three similar translations “Chica(s), tienen/tienes correo de RuPaul” (“Girl(s), you have mail from RuPaul”). This translation is more related to the image on screen than the recording playing, as it refers to “RuPaul’s mail”. The plural option might seem like a small change. However, it turns the phrase from a somewhat unrelated statement to an explicit call to the participants. “Ooh girl” is more obviously a citation, especially when used with that intonation. Choosing the plural “girls, you have mail” turns the phrase into a direct address to the present queens, covering the citational aspect of it. This undermines the middle-range priority of maintaining the characteristics of the humour in humorous utterances.

A catchphrase such as this contributes to the ludic atmosphere of the programme, specifically because of its detachment from the context. It highlights the pronouncement from “normal” speech and marks it as different. This is further undermined in the subtitles that mention “RuPaul’s mail”, as it fully connects the call to the context of the contestants getting a message from RuPaul. There is only one subtitle that deviates from the norm of clarification as a translation strategy. In season 6, episode 5, WOW23 show a completely different approach: “Tienes mala suerte” (you’re unlucky). While this translation could perhaps meet the missed priorities of maintaining the characteristics of humour by keeping the phrase non-contextual, it misses many other priorities, such as the top priorities of being accessible. It could even be considered to engage our only prohibited priority of disrespecting drag communities in the source or target by translating “sheMail” as “bad luck”, a troubling association for the term that could point towards violence committed towards trans women when cis-straight men find out that the person they are attracted to is not cis. This association is a stretch of logic and very likely not intentional in the subtitles, but the translation should still be avoided in order to not meet the prohibited priority.

Additionally, the translation of “girl” alternatively as “chica”, “chicas”, “niña”, “nena”, and “nenas” is a testament to the lexical variation in Spanish depending on the region. All of these terms are used across Hispanic America, but depending on the region, and social contexts, they might have different connotations, and some might be more common. In Colombia, for example, “chica” is not as used as “nena” to refer to women colloquially. “Nena” is preferred among young people and is common in GSD communities, making it an appropriate translation for Colombia. However, “nena” has stronger connotations in other regions, where it is seen as offensive to call adult women this way. This added connotation is not necessarily unwelcome in this context, as “girl” in English to refer to adult women has a similar ambiguity. “Chica” is less colloquial and more widely used across Hispanic America. “Niña” is also very common but far less used for adult women. Consequently, “nena” and “chica” could both be appropriate translation choices. However, the switch between them, and their plural forms, detracts from the possibility for consistency.

Opting for non-consistency and connecting this catchphrase more to its context makes it impossible to meet translation priorities. The inconsistency in translating the catchphrase across seasons and platforms undermines the top priority of accessibility by failing to establish a recognizable, recurring phrase for the audience. Consistency in translation would also better serve the middle-range priority of encouraging fan engagement, as fans rely on familiar catchphrases to participate in the fandom, and a fun, consistent catchphrase could enhance that experience. The lack of a standardized translation also misses an opportunity to reinforce the marginal priority of creative subtitling, which could enhance the viewing experience by mirroring the source text’s playful tone. The fact that the source text is still accessible somewhat mitigates this, as a visual element pops up with this recording regardless of subtitle consistency.

2. AAWL prosodic reference

Considering that the intonation is still something the audience can hear, that it remains consistent and that it might have been encountered by the audience before, the translation loss is not as direct here. However, omitting “ooh” on the Netflix and WowPresentPlus 2022 subtitles makes the element less relevant to the audience. It makes the sentence less of a random pronouncement and integrates it more into the context, which, as discussed before, undermines meeting the middle-range translation priority of maintaining the characteristics of the humour. The omission also misses the opportunity for meeting marginal priorities of adding more humour and pushing towards creative subtitling styles. It would be fun, humorous and engaging to have a subtitle that either moves through the screen in a visual representation of the intonation, or with a font design that could mark it as different.

3. SheMale

Vulgarity and taboo are completely neutralised in all the subtitles. As discussed in the corpus selection, it is clear from the formatting of the WOWPresentsPlus 2023 subtitles that they were translated directly from the English closed-captioning. However, in this specific case, despite the close captions in English retaining the statement, it was a conscious decision by all the translators to omit this aspect. The result is a systematic censorship or softening of the source text in the subtitles. The systematic omission of "SheMail" in all translations addresses the prohibited priority of avoiding disrespect by censoring an outdated and offensive term and not attempting a direct translation. However, this choice also conflicts with the middle-range priority of maintaining humour characteristics, as the shock value and irreverence of the original are lost. As the prohibited priority takes precedence over marginal priorities, this is an appropriate and justified sacrifice in translation, but the loss could be mitigated. A potential compromise could involve finding another vulgar or taboo term to create a new catchphrase in Spanish that does not have the offensive connotations of the source.

4. You've Got Mail

Similarly, not a single translation opts to reference the official translation of the film: “Tienes un e-mail”. There is also no attempt to replace this reference with a target culture reference or a more recognisable alternative to the target audience. The failure to reference the film misses an opportunity to meet the middle-range priorities of maintaining humour characteristics, recreating humour in the target, or creating links to local drag and GSD communities through use of slang or language use characteristic of these communities. The latter could have been attempted with a grammatical gender queering of a slang term for “email” in Spanish: *emilio*. “Emilio” is a common name in Spanish that is used, mostly in Spain, as a fun alternative for “e-mail”. While this usage is not linked to GSD language use, the changing of grammatical gender would give it that connotation. A possible translation that could meet more translation priorities would then be: “¡oooOoh nena, tienes una Emilia!”. This translation references the film title while also having some wordplay.

In conclusion, the translation of the catchphrase “Ooh, girl! You got SheMail!” in *RuPaul’s Drag Race* mostly aligns with the top priorities of accessibility, enjoyment, and respect for fandom by using familiar Spanish terms like “chica” and “nena.” However, inconsistencies in these translations—switching between terms and adjusting plural forms—could detract from the intended humour and audience familiarity. The translation omits potentially offensive elements, such as the “she-male” reference, which aligns with middle-range priorities of avoiding participation in unequal power dynamics. Yet, this cautious approach sometimes lessens the humorous impact, especially as cultural nuances, like African American Women’s Language intonation in “Ooh, girl,” are softened. While respecting fandom and avoiding harm, the translation could further benefit from consistency and a slightly bolder approach to capturing the playful, irreverent humour that defines the original, balancing respect with creativity to enhance target-audience engagement.

“In the great tradition of *Paris is Burning*”

Image has been removed due to Copyright restriction

(Screenshot from: *Every Reading Challenge (Compilation Part 3) | The Library is Open | RuPaul’s Drag Race 2018*)

Rather than a single catchphrase, this utterance combines three catchphrases that are used to introduce the “Reading” challenge in each season. They are not always in the same order and are usually surrounded by RuPaul making some sort of wordplay-filled speech. The humour in this section often relies on the wordplay, the call-and-response format, and the delivery, which is usually theatrical and parodically self-important. Individual instances of this introduction might add other elements that contribute to the humour. For example, in Season 9, the introduction to the speech is RuPaul announcing that she has just returned from the eye doctor. The out-of-place statement is humorous as it parodies bland opening lines for official speeches and lays the groundwork for the wordplay that follows.

In the corpus, all seasons, except season 12 feature this challenge and this introduction. In season 12, the challenge was replaced by a puppet show which does not have the traditional references and wordplay this challenge usually entails. This was not a permanent change, and the reading challenge was reinstated in season 13, so the change does not imply any will to disavow this section of the programme.

The three catchphrases that appear in the introduction of the reading challenge are:

1. In the great tradition of *Paris is Burning*...
2. Because reading is what? (response) Fundamental!
3. The library is now open.

The first catchphrase, “In the great tradition of *Paris is Burning*”, is a very straightforward call to the 1991 documentary by Jennie Livingston (*Paris Is Burning* 1991). As mentioned before, this documentary constitutes one of the main reference points for RPDR intertextuality. It depicts the ball scene in New York from which RuPaul emerged, and as such, the culture portrayed in the documentary is celebrated in RPDR. It is unlikely that a fan of RPDR is entirely unfamiliar with this documentary, and it is evident that RuPaul considers it essential viewing for everyone interested in the culture. Despite being such a core text for queer people, especially queer people of colour in the US, this documentary was not widely distributed in Hispanic America until it was made available on Netflix with the title untranslated. While this catchphrase is not very humorous by itself, it instantly references all other instances where it has been used before, and the humour comes from knowing the wordplay and the challenge that will follow. The humour can also be complemented by the tone that RuPaul uses in this catchphrase, which is usually very exaggerated and playfully grandiose. The word choice supports this: “the great tradition” gives this statement importance and weight. This exaggeration and over-the-top delivery might indicate in other contexts an ironic detachment from what is being said –that *Paris is Burning* is a serious and important reference from where “great tradition” is obtained. However, the ironic detachment here is not from the idea of *Paris is Burning* as high culture but rather from the normative ideal of a high culture and great traditions, where the culture portrayed in *Paris is Burning* might be considered of lesser value. The humour here relies on, on the one hand, mocking the concept of high culture, while simultaneously claiming *Paris is Burning* as “high” culture: an important text.

The second catchphrase is a call and response, in which RuPaul says, “Because reading is what?” and the contestants answer, “fundamental”. This is a reference to the most famous US literacy non-profit, called Reading is Fundamental, which focuses on giving books to children and increasing literacy in children across the US. This reference is easily understood in the source culture, even beyond drag or queer culture: any person from the US could be expected to have some knowledge of its existence. Indeed, the name of this non-profit is one that most children growing up in the US would have been exposed to, and, especially in low-income areas, many would have been on the receiving end of RIF programs and campaigns. However, outside the US, there is no reason to believe the majority of the target language audience would know about this organisation or the impact it has had on US children.

This specific catchphrase is one of the most quoted and requoted within the programme and by fans and alumni of RPDR. It is especially effective since, being part of regular school life, this reference functions as a placeholder for normative straight culture. It is then integrated with the drag slang term “reading”, creating a wordplay between the usual understanding of this term and the drag understanding of “reading”. As such, this sentence functions as a playful queering of what would seem to the target audience as the most normative, straight, constrictive parts of US culture. The humour resides in this juxtaposition and reclaiming of mainstream culture into drag culture.

This dynamic is at the heart of RPDR’s overall dynamic of queering the mainstream, of making space for the queer within areas that would ostensibly be as far from queer as possible. In season 6, the humour in this is complemented by introducing another childhood-related reference: the educational TV programme *Sesame Street*. “Today’s episode is sponsored by the letter T” refers to the usual practice in *Sesame Street* for the characters to choose a letter or a number as the one sponsoring the episode. Again, this reference to a popular children’s programme

is combined with slang to create wordplay (Toulemonde 2017). The wordplay between the letter T and the slang “tea”, meaning gossip or truth, is further integrated into drag language with the following sentence “as in all tea, all shade, hunty.”. This is yet another reference to a common saying in drag slang⁵: “no tea, no shade”, which is used before a statement to mean that the speaker means no harm by the words that will follow. “All tea, all shade” modifies this for the reading challenge, creating humour in this modification.

The third catchphrase that usually comes up in this challenge introduction is “the library is now open”. This can be accompanied by some reference to reading glasses, eye doctors, library cards and so on. This, along with any other mentions of reading and eye-related things is further wordplay with “reading”, playing on the common understanding of the word. It usually is also visual wordplay, as physical reading glasses are used as props throughout the challenge. This catchphrase is not an external reference, but as many other catchphrases in the programme, is often quoted and used in further wordplay, or as added humour through the reference itself. In the example in season 3 episode 8, when the challenge is about to start, RuPaul calls to Yara Sofia, a Puertorican queen, to start her reading, and says “La biblioteca is open”, referencing the catchphrase that was just used and is well known, but modifying it by adding “biblioteca” in Spanish. This is to playfully create a link to Yara’s first language, but also relies on the ongoing jokes relating to Yara’s foreignness. This presents a translation challenge when subtitling into Spanish, as there is no foreign nature to the word in Spanish. Though this is a benign manifestation of this, the ongoing joke on Yara’s strangeness might have a different perception in the target culture.

Season 3, Episode 8

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
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⁵ While this slang originated in ballroom culture, meaning a combination of latine and black queer people, “tea” and “shade” have been widely used by black communities across the US, and has been popularised by the show and by internet communities to the point where it can be found outside the context of either queer or black language use.

[RuPaul] So in the great tradition of Paris Is Burning,	Así que siguiendo la tradición / de "París se quema",	ASÍ QUE SIGUIENDO LA GRAN TRADICIÓN DE // PARÍS ESTÁ ARDIENDO, ESCAPA
break out your library cards. [Carmen] Oh, god.	saquen sus carnets de / biblioteca. / - Oh, Dios.	TUS TARJETAS DE LA BIBLIOTECA. // >> OH, DIOS.
[RuPaul] Because reading is what? Fundamental.	¿Porque, qué es la lectura? / Algo esencial.	>> ¿PORQUE LEER ES QUÉ? // FUNDAMENTAL.
[RuPaul] Now, for today's mini challenge,	Ahora, para el mini concurso de / hoy,	AHORA, PARA EL MINI DESAFÍO DE HOY,
you'll take turns reading each other.	se turnarán para "leerse" / entre ustedes,	SE TURNARÁN PARA LEER CADA UNO // OTRO.
Or throwing shade. Ladies, the library is open,	o para ridiculizarse. / Damas, la biblioteca está / abierta,	O ARROJAR SOMBRA. // SEÑORAS, LA BIBLIOTECA ESTÁ ABIERTA,
Okay?	- ¿"Okay"?	¿ESTÁ BIEN?
[All] Okay	- Okay.	>> ESTÁ BIEN.
[RuPaul] Alright! Yara Sofia. La biblioteca is open.	Bien, Yara Sofia. / La "biblioteca" está abierta.	>> YARA SOFÍA. // LA BIBLIOTECA ESTÁ ABIERTA.

Season 6, Episode 6

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] ladies, today's mini challenge is sponsored by...	Niñas, el Mini Reto de hoy / es patrocinado por...	- SEÑORAS, EL MINI DESAFÍO DE HOY / ESTÁ PATROCINADO POR...
The letter "t,"	...la letra "S".	LA LETRA «T»,
As in all T/tea, all shade, hunties.	De: "Sin ofensa pero es real", nenas.	COMO EN TODA «T», / TODA LA SOMBRA, CAZADORES.
In the great tradition of Paris is Burning...	Siguiendo la gran tradición de / Paris is Burning,	EN LA GRAN TRADICIÓN / DE «PARÍS ESTÁ ARDIENDO...»
The library is open!	¡la biblioteca está abierta!	¡LA BIBLIOTECA ESTÁ ABIERTA!
Because reading is what?	- Porque leer es ¿qué...?	- PORQUE LEER ES QUÉ?
[All] fundamental.	- ¡Fundamental!	FUNDAMENTAL.

Season 9, Episode 8

ST	Netflix 2018 - 2022	WOW23
[RuPaul] Ladies, I just came from the eye doctor,	Señoritas, vengo de la oculista,	- Señoritas, acabo de llegar / del oculista,
and she prescribed me these new reading glasses.	y me recetó estas gafas para leer.	y me recetó / estas nuevas gafas de lectura.

And her timing couldn't have been better	Y no pudo ser más oportuna	Y su momento / no podría haber sido mejor
because in the great tradition of Paris Is Burning,	porque en la gran tradición de Paris is Burning,	porque en la gran tradición / de París está ardiendo,
it's time for the reading challenge.	es hora del desafío de lectura.	es hora de / el desafío de la lectura.
[RuPaul] Because reading is what?	Porque leer es ¿qué?	¿Porque qué es leer?
[All] Fundamental.	Fundamental.	-Fundamental.

1. Paris is Burning

This reference and the humorous theatricality of the catchphrase are the most straightforward in translation. The challenge is the possibility that the target audience might not know the reference. However, a source audience member unfamiliar with drag culture would also not necessarily be aware of the documentary. Because the humorous effect comes from the ironic detachment from the idea of high culture, the fact that, initially, the audience might not know what is the "great tradition" might not be an unfavourable translation result. However, the two primary purposes of this catchphrase are first to pay homage to the impact and influence that *Paris is Burning* has had on drag culture and second, to establish it as a great tradition. In this context, the translation should give interested viewers the tools to find the referenced documentary and should be consistent enough to be an internal reference. As we have noticed in the previous catchphrase, there is very little consistency in the subtitling. The Netflix and WOW2022 translation in season 6 and Netflix in season 9 use the English title of the documentary. Considering there was no official title in Spanish, this is an adequate translation. In season 3, before this consistency was established, the strategy used was literal translation: "Paris se quema". In WowPresentsPlus, after the 2023 change, the translation strategy used is an even more literal translation of the title "Paris está ardiendo". Consequently, the most consistency is in WOW2023. However, "Paris está ardiendo" is not something that a viewer could relate to the actual documentary, which interrupts the canon creation in process in the use of this reference. This fails to meet to a certain extent the top priority of respecting the object of fandom, as a revered point of reference is obscured by inconsistent translations.

2. Reading is fundamental

The reference to the literacy non-profit presents an inevitable translation loss, as the target audience would not be familiar with the organisation or its presence in a typical US childhood. As this is such an iconic sentence in the programme, consistency should be the highest priority, as well as keeping a closeness to the source text to allow audience participation in the call and response if possible. Since “fundamental” has the same meaning in English and Spanish, the target audience could not only understand but participate in the call and response as long as there is consistency. This would meet the middle-range priority of allowing and encouraging engagement. From the six instances in the sample, five use minor punctuation variations of “Porque leer es ¿qué? / Fundamental”, which makes this the most consistently translated catchphrase. The strategy used is a literal translation, which does not try to replace or find compensatory alternatives for the reference. Considering that the humour in this exchange comes from the call-and-response format, the recognition of the reference, and the juxtaposition between the school script and the drag show script, this translation maintains the format, contributes to the creation of a target language catchphrase, but loses all contrast between the two scripts. In season 3, Netflix and WOW22 use adaptation in the translation “¿Porque, qué es la lectura? / Algo esencial”. This adaptation uses correct grammar and makes the sentence more formal than the source. The added formality could be a compensatory strategy, re-introducing the educational script into the exchange. However, this translation does not allow the target audience to participate in the call and response. As such, this translation meets the least amount of priorities out of all the options.

The addition of the *Sesame Street* reference in season 6 creates a further translation challenge and an opportunity to maintain the humour. *Sesame Street*, *Plaza Sésamo* in Hispanic America, is a very popular program there as well. This makes it more likely that the target audience would recognise the reference in “es patrocinado por... / ... la letra “S””. The subtitles in Netflix and WOW22 also

translate “ladies” as “niñas” in this part, which brings out, even more, the idea of a school teacher informing her students. The education script loss from the recurring catchphrase is somewhat compensated in this specific case, as it is further expanded in the source. The wordplay in “all T/tea, all shade, hunties”, is less successful in this translation, although the strategy of adapting it is interesting. The letter T is changed to “S”, to be the first letter in “sin ofensa pero es real, nenas”. While this translation attempts to reproduce the wordplay in the source text, the result is a misinterpretation of the source and standardisation of the drag slang and reference. “Sin ofensa pero es real” (*no offense but it’s real*) is almost the exact opposite of “all tea, all shade”. The literal translation in WOWPresents Plus 2023 keeps the same letter T and then repeats the same meaning instead of mentioning anything relating to the slang for tea or truth. The wordplay is lost. The reference to the drag expression “no tea, no shade” is entirely lost in both subtitles and the slang term “hunties” is softened in Netflix and WOW22 into “nenas” and completely mistranslated in WOW23’s “CAZADORES” (hunters). While the educational script is boosted in the translations of this instance of the reading challenge speech, the drag index markers that should contrast to it to create humour are almost entirely lost. There was an opportunity in this CRS-based wordplay for meeting the top priority being enjoyable to the target audiences, the middle-range priorities of maintaining or recreating humour and maintaining the characteristics of the humour, and the marginal priority of adding more humour. However, all translations of this episode failed to meet these priorities and instead relied on attenuation of the slang and vulgarity while also misinterpreting the meaning of the wordplay.

3. The Library is now open

All the subtitles in the corpus for this catchphrase use literal translation, and as such, this is translated consistently as “la biblioteca está abierta”. This consistency is helpful in creating the internal reference and works with the visual wordplay of reading glasses and the mentions of eye-related issues. This meets the middle-range priority of allowing and encouraging fan engagement in the target culture,

which is further supported by the fact that this part of the catchphrase is used widely by Spanish-speaking fans.

In the Season 3's modification where RuPaul uses "biblioteca" in Spanish, the subtitles in Netflix and WOW22 add quotation marks to signal that the word was used in Spanish in the source. WOW23 does not distinguish this modified catchphrase from the regular one in any way. The quotations might be a more accurate translation but the loss of cultural humour is inevitable. Avoiding changing it to another language does meet the middle-range priority of being cautious about its potential participation in an unequal power dynamic.

In summary, the translations of this catchphrase mostly align with the top priorities of accessibility and enjoyment. Consistency is the main component in meeting the middle-range priority of allowing for fan participation, which is much more respected in this catchphrase than the previous one. However, the reference to *Paris is Burning* is inconsistently translated, with subtitles alternating between literal translations like "Paris está ardiendo" and the untranslated English title, potentially confusing viewers unfamiliar with the documentary. However, the literal translation of "Because reading is what? Fundamental!" remains largely consistent, supporting audience engagement through a call-and-response format. While this consistency aligns well with fan engagement and accessibility priorities, it loses some humour due to the lack of cultural contrast inherent in the original references. Additionally, though the educational tone introduced by the reference to "Reading is Fundamental" is sometimes retained, the drag-specific nuances are softened, especially in translations of slang like "all tea, all shade." This does not meet the priorities relating to maintaining humour and humour characteristics.

2.1.2 References to Queer Canon

2.1.2.1 What is queer canon?

Identifying what is part of the queer canon in the United States and what is merely a popular culture reference is somewhat subjective. In the context of drag queen culture, the references that seem to be considered canon tend to have some

characteristics that might make this process easier. The first of these characteristics is a preference for popular culture rather than high culture and a tendency to treat this popular culture as if it were high culture, which is also a characteristic of camp. The second characteristic is a fascination for female celebrities, which are regarded with great reverence and inspire many impersonations. There is a genuine love for these figures in the community. Examples are Judy Garland, Anna May Wong, Cher, Princess Diana, Joan Crawford, Tina Turner, Marlene Dietrich, Eartha Kitt, Kylie Minogue, Lady Gaga, Madonna, Dolly Parton, Selena, and any supermodel. This list is far from exhaustive, but it is worth noting that these celebrities are retained as icons far beyond the generational turnover seen in mainstream straight culture. In RPDR, younger queens are expected to know these cultural references. This is not always true in practice, but it is an expectation. A few elements that might make a female celebrity into a queer icon are: having a striking aesthetic; being a fashion icon; being related to musical theatre; being a reality TV star; singing music popular in queer clubs; belonging to a racial minority; expressing support, directly or indirectly, to the queer community; being queer or having speculations surrounding them about this.

In fact, beyond just female celebrities, queer celebrities (either out or with many speculations surrounding them) are almost systematically in the queer canon of references. This suggests that there is a level of looking for figures to identify with in popular culture. People like Carson Kressley, Ricky Martin, Elton John, Humphrey Bogart and Sam Smith, are good examples of this. This extends to fictional characters, where many fictional characters in popular media who are queer or have been interpreted as queer by a queer audience are considered part of the queer canon. Examples of this would be Xena from *Xena Warrior Princess* or Bert and Ernie from *Sesame Street*. It is worth noting that the characters portrayed by celebrities who are part of the canon are often also in the canon, as the line between the fictional characters and the actors behind them is not particularly relevant. This indicates a typical process in camp and in the

consumption of popular culture by fandoms (Fiske 2002) where the distinction between the product and the consumer is blurred.

Another characteristic of the references in this enormous queer canon is the admiration for cult films, with a preference for B movies in the horror genre. Some notable examples would be *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Valley of Dolls*, *The Craft*, and anything aired on the TV program *Elvira's Movie Macabre*. Somewhat related to that are the villains in horror films, but also children's films. Disney villains, for example, are very popular. It is a well-known fact that Ursula from Disney's *Little Mermaid* was based on the drag queen Divine, an icon in her own right and John Walter's collaborator and muse. *The Little Mermaid's* producer, Howard Ashman, was a gay man with a passion for musical theatre and entrenched in the Baltimore creative scene, just as Divine was (Pasulka and Ferree 2016). This love for villains, horror, and the grotesque is a part of drag culture and shapes a significant part of the queer canon. This is evidenced by the TV programme *The Boulet Brother's Dragula*, the dark, horror-based equivalent to RPDR.

2.1.2.1.2 The importance of queer canon for GSD people

The emotional connection between queer people and their icons is complex and varied. Fiske's concept of semiotic productivity, through which the receivers of a cultural product create meaning and identity, is relevant here. It is through this canon that GSD people can find a connection to an imagined de-localised queer community. Queer fandom can be very passionate, and the lines between the product and the audience are made thin through this passion. Many of these queer canon icons are well aware of their status in queer communities, sometimes because they are part of these communities and sometimes because they notice how a significant fraction of their fans are GSD people. This awareness and their response create meaningful parasocial relationships that further re-enforce their significance in queer culture. RPDR, while part of the canon, is also a platform for creating and re-enforcing this canon for new generations of GSD people. Guest judges, for example, are often relevant in the canon, such as Lady Gaga or Elvira.

This is particularly relevant during the Snatch Games episodes, as the choice of celebrity to impersonate during this challenge is usually part of the canon as well.

Consequently, in using constant references from different sources and referencing RPDR and its many offshoots, it becomes difficult to always distinguish between what is a reference to a must-know cultural figure or text and what is an internal reference in the show. RPDR's success has resulted in creating a new queer canon for a new generation while integrating the references from previous generations. In season 3, Raja and RuPaul seemed to be poking fun at this phenomenon when Raja decided to impersonate Tyra Banks during the Snatch Game.

“[Raja] I’m doing Tyra.

[RuPaul] Now, didn't she win the last RuPaul Drag Race?

[Raja] No, not the other Tyra, the actual Tyra.”

Season 3, Episode 6

Here, RuPaul is referencing Tyra Sanchez, the winner of season 2, whose name is inspired by Tyra Banks, or in Raja's words, “the actual Tyra”. As the host of America's Next Top Model, a supermodel, and a famous black woman, Tyra Banks is one of the most referenced celebrities in RPDR, and is part of the queer canon. There is no ambiguity here when Raja refers to Tyra Banks by her first name only, but RuPaul pretends to be confused between the two Tyras, finding humour in the blurring of the boundaries between the external reference and the internal one.

2.1.2.1 Female Celebrities

2.1.2.1.1 Tyra

Tyra Banks was one of the most celebrated supermodels in the 90s. Her TV reality competition programme, America's Next Top Model (ANTM), is one of the main inspirations for the format of RPDR. The winners of RPDR are supposed to be, according to RuPaul's announcement every season, “America's next drag superstar”, which is already a reference to ANTM. She is well-known in Hispanic America as well, especially as ANTM was aired on VH1 on cable TV. It has inspired local versions such as Mexico's Next Top Model. It is then reasonable to expect the target audience to be at least aware of who Tyra Banks is and possibly recognise

the references to her mannerisms and often-used phrases. The examples discussed here are all from season 3, episode 6.

The actual Tyra

As discussed previously, the humour in this interaction rests on RuPaul jokingly placing the previous winner of RPDR on the same level as Tyra Banks. There is also some humour in Raja's choice of adjective to distinguish Tyra Banks from Tyra Sanchez: "actual". The mild humour in this comes from acknowledging the artifice of drag. Tyra Sanchez is a drag character created by James William Ross IV, inspired by Tyra Banks. However, in the world of RPDR, drag names are the only ones ever used, and the reality TV format turns this into the name that the performers are known as. In a way, Raja's clarification is a fourth wall break.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Raja] I'm doing Tyra.	[...]- Voy a imitar a Tyra.	>> ESTOY HACIENDO TYRA.
[RuPaul] Now, didn't she win the last RuPaul Drag Race?	¿Ella no ganó el último / "RuPaul Drag Race"?	>> AHORA, ¿NO GANÓ LA ÚLTIMA // ¿RUPAUL DRAG RACE?
[Raja] No, not the other Tyra, the actual Tyra.	No la otra Tyra, / la Tyra de verdad.	>> NO, NO LA OTRA TYRA, LA // NEUMÁTICO REAL.

Season 3, Episode 6

Both Tyra Banks and Tyra Sanchez are references that a target audience somewhat familiar with the show can be expected to know. For this reason, Netflix and WOW22's subtitles, which use a literal translation, are adequate and maintain the humour in the interaction. The choice "de verdad" to translate "actual" adds humour. "De verdad" emphasises Raja's distinction of Tyra Banks as the Real Tyra, and invokes allusions to Pinocchio as a Real Boy, "un niño de verdad". This idea of Tyra Sanchez yearning for a star to turn her into Tyra Banks fits perfectly within the context and is a very successful translation. It perfectly meets all top priorities of being accessible, being enjoyable and respecting the object of fandom. It also meets the middle-range priorities maintaining or recreating humour and maintaining the characteristics of humour. It also manages to meet the marginal priority of adding more humour in a style that is coherent with the source.

WOW23's subtitles present a humorous mistake in translating "the actual Tyra" as "LA NEUMÁTICO REAL" (*The (f.) real tyre*). While this translation completely muddles the reference and context, the unexpected queering of the grammatically masculine "neumático" (tyre) with the feminine article "la" and the fact that Tyra's name was somehow translated in such a way does add humour to these subtitles. Nevertheless, it is a translation mistake that would undoubtedly confuse the Spanish-speaking viewers. This is a good example of a translation that meets a marginal priority (adding more humour) but fails to meet higher-range priorities such as accessibility and respecting the object of fandom, making it a failed translation.

Tyra-ize them

In this example, Raja is describing how she will make impersonating Tyra funny during the Snatch Game, pointing out the contrast in Tyra behaviour, where on the one hand she is very "proper", but on the other she can drop that affectation and, essentially, act more black. The humour here comes from the switch into a very exaggerated physical performance of this behaviour and how it triggers RuPaul into also code-switching and using wordplay and slang. Raja's physicality carries a lot of the humour in this exchange, and it relies on a reference to African American intonational semantics (Spears 2009) and the exaggerated stereotype of how African American women speak and behave. RuPaul adds to the humour with the wordplay on Tyra's name with the word "tyrannise" as she encourages Raja. This works especially well with the image that Tyra Banks has in popular culture as a somewhat tyrannical figure in ANTM. Both RuPaul and Raja keep the joke going by using slang and intonational variations.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Raja] Sometimes she's, like, quite proper and she seems really educated,	A veces parece ser / muy correcta y educada,	A VECES ES COMO SI FUERA BASTANTE // ADECUADA Y PARECE QUE REALMENTE
and then she'll just like... [gestures] hey! You know, "mm-hmm!"	pero de pronto...	EDUCADA, Y LUEGO LO HARÁ // IGUAL QUE...» ¡HOLA!» // YA SABES, «MM-HMM!»
[RuPaul] Tyra-ize them, hunty.	"Tyránízalos", querida.	>> LLÉVALOS A NEUMÁTICOS, CARIÑO.

Honey, work!	¡Trabaja, cariño!	>> CARIÑO, ¡EN SERIO!
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Season 3, Episode 6

The phrase “Tyra-ize them” plays on the word “tyrannize,” connecting it to Tyra Banks’ authoritative persona on *America’s Next Top Model*. The Netflix and WOW22 translations handle this wordplay with “Tyranízalos,” which preserves the humour and maintains the cultural link by retaining the connotation of “tyranny” associated with Tyra Banks. This translation choice aligns well with the middle-range priority of maintaining the humour characteristics while also meeting all top priorities. In contrast, WOW23’s “Llévalos a neumáticos” (Take them to tyres) distorts the original reference completely, resulting in a nonsensical phrase that could confuse viewers and detract from the humorous tone. Although this unexpected phrase adds a layer of humour due to its absurdity, it undermines accessibility and familiarity, diverging from the priorities of respecting cultural references and creating fan engagement.

Smizing

This example introduces the concept of “smizing”, or smiling with your eyes, as RuPaul explains it. This is something that Tyra teaches to the prospective models in ANTM. It is again a reference that would be easily understood by most US queer people, at least those that keep up with the canon.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Raja as Tyra Banks] Hey, Ru.	- Hola, Ru.	>> HOLA, CORRE.
[RuPaul] Girl, I saw you smiling with your eyes.	Te vi sonriendo con los ojos.	>> CHICA, TE VI SONRIENDO CON // TUS OJOS.
What do they call that?	¿Cómo se llama eso?	¿CÓMO SE LLAMA ESO?
[Raja as Tyra Banks] Smizing.	"Ojосonriente".	>> TAMAÑO.

Season 3, Episode 6

(later)

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Are you smizing too hard?	- ¿Te "ojосonreíste" muy fuerte?	>> ¿ESTÁS SONRIENDO DEMASIADO?
[Raja as Tyra Banks] I think I’ve smized so hard my eyes bled, girl.	- Tanto, que los ojos me sangraron.	>> CREO QUE HE BEBIDO TANTO // ME SANGRARON LOS OJOS, NIÑA.
[RuPaul] Oh, my goodness!	¡Dios mío!	>> ¡OH, DIOS MÍO!

Season 3, Episode 6

Image has been removed due to Copyright restriction

(RuPaul's Drag Race 2011. Season 3, Episode 6)

The Netflix and WOW22 translations use “ojosonríe,” an inventive adaptation that merges “ojos” (eyes) and “sonriente” (smiling), conveying the same idea in a way that is accessible to Spanish-speaking viewers. The target viewers might not be immediately aware of how specific this reference is to ANTM, but the context and the creative grammar combines with the on screen visual of blood pouring out of Raja’s eyes as she mechanically smiles, manages to maintain the humour. These subtitles then transform the term into a reflexive verb “te ojosonreíste” (you eye-smiled yourself), which adds to the humour. This choice meets all the top priorities and the middle-range priority of maintaining humour, though it might lose some of the cultural specificity. The WOW2023 translation, which occasionally renders “smizing” as “tamaño” (size), obscures the intended meaning, likely confusing viewers and detracting from their engagement. This translation fails to meet the top priorities of granting access to the source text and being enjoyable.

2.1.2.1.2 Cher

Cher is an iconic figure in queer cannon and drag culture. Her long-standing career, unique persona, and influence on pop culture make her a popular figure for drag impersonations, as she embodies resilience, glamour, and a sense of theatricality that resonates deeply within the drag community. Cher’s influence is frequently evident in RPDR, where she is referenced in most, if not all, seasons. In season 3,

she was Delta Work's Snatch Game choice for impersonation, though this was not a very successful one, as it lacked humour.

Never-ending tour

In this example, RuPaul introduces Delta's Cher impression with the first prompt of the Snatch Game. Delta answers with a line that plays on the idea of Cher's long-lasting career, implying that she's always on tour and perhaps distances herself from romantic connections. This is not a particularly successful attempt at humour, as her mannerisms are not accurate enough and the barb is not sufficiently cutting. There is a tradition of age jokes and humour in drag, but just pointing out how long Cher's career has been was not layered enough as a joke to fully garner laughter.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Let's start with Cher. Instead of kissing her dates good night...	Empecemos con Cher. En vez / de despedirse con un beso...	>> EMPECEMOS CON CHER. // EN LUGAR DE BESAR SUS CITAS
[Delta as Cher] She buys them tickets to my never-ending tour.	Compra boletos / para mi gira sin fin.	>> LES COMPRA ENTRADAS PARA MI // GIRA SIN FIN.

Season 3, Episode 6

Both translations are very literal, and keep the meaning of the attempted joke well. Cher is well known in Hispanic America and her long-lived success is also recognised. The lack of layers and complexity to this joke makes it easier to translate and meet the translation priorities. The marginal priority of adding more humour would interfere with making the source text accessible to the audience, as the failed humour is important to the narrative of the episode. As such, a non-humorous translation is appropriate here

Believe

Delta's impersonation of Cher was deemed lacklustre enough to land her in the bottom two. As is tradition in the programme, RuPaul announces this with some wordplay. She references Cher's record-breaking song "Believe" to express how little Delta managed to bring the judges into her impersonation.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Delta work, your impersonation of Cher didn't make any of us believe.	Delta Work, tu imitación de Cher /no se la creyó nadie.	DELTA WORK, TU SUPLANTACIÓN // DE CHER NO HIZO A NINGUNO DE NOSOTROS CREER

Season 3, Episode 6

The wordplay between the song title and the literal meaning of the word is fully missing in both translations. While the original utterance is not meant to be enormously funny, it does contribute to the programme's tone of ludic enjoyment of language and citationality. The subtitles instead feel harsher than the source, as the lack of an external reference and wordplay means that a Spanish-speaking audience would only get the harsh criticism that Delta wasn't a good Cher. This fails to meet most of our priorities, except for not incurring in the prohibited disrespect and being cautious about unequal power dynamics.

2.1.2.1.3 Tina Turner

As another legendary figure in queer canon, Tina Turner has been a popular character for drag impersonations for decades. Within RPDR, Turner's legacy is frequently honoured, with contestants like Shangela and Widow Von'Du choosing to embody her during the Snatch Game challenge. As a staple for impersonations, just like Cher, any contestant attempting to do Tina is not only compared to other attempts in the show but to the rich history of drag performers who have interpreted her before.

Rough

In this scene, RuPaul asks Shangela's Tina if she will be "nice or rough" during the Snatch Game, referencing Tina Turner's song Proud Mary, a cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival she first recorded with her husband Ike in 1971 but then became one of her most popular solo songs. The lyrics referenced are "We always do it nice and rough" (Turner and Turner 1970). RuPaul's utterance also plays on the sexual innuendo associated with "rough," and Shangela successfully picks up on the reference and quotes more of the lyrics while maintaining the sexual innuendo.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Are you gonna be nice or rough on the snatch game?	¿Vas a ser simpática o dura / en este juego?	>> VAS A SER AMABLE O // ¿ES DURO EN EL JUEGO DE ARREBATAR?
[Shangela as Tina Turner] I always do it rough.	Yo siempre lo hago duro.	>> SIEMPRE LO HAGO DE FORMA RUDA.

Season 3, Episode 6

In the Netflix and WOWPresentsPlus 2022 translation, the subtitle “¿Vas a ser simpática o dura en este juego?” (will you be kind or tough in this game?) loses the innuendo but it is recovered in Shangela’s response, “Yo siempre lo hago duro,” (I always do it rough), maintaining the humour in this regard while inevitably losing the lyric reference. In this way, all the top priorities are met, and the middle-range priority of maintaining humour characteristics is partially met. In the WOW23 subtitles, the line is translated as “VAS A SER AMABLE O ¿ES DURO EN EL JUEGO DE ARREBATAR?” (Will you be kind or. is it hard in the snatching game?). This version introduces awkward and confusing phrasing by literally translating the name of Snatch Game (also losing any wordplay and innuendo in this name) which may disrupt the flow and humour for Spanish-speaking viewers. Shangela’s response, “SIEMPRE LO HAGO DE FORMA RUDA,” (I always do it in a tough way) lacks the straightforwardness of the 2022 version and misses the humour and the innuendo. This version fails to meet the top priorities of being accessible and enjoyable. It also fails to meet any middle-range priorities.

Tinta Turnter

In this interaction during the Snatch Game, RuPaul modifies Tina’s name to “Tinta Turnter,” playing with pronunciation for comedic effect. RuPaul tends to exaggerate or add sounds to specific words and these pronunciations can sometimes become intertextual references. Another example of this would be the pronunciation of “dollars” as “dolls hairs”, which has now become a very common RuPaul reference inside RPDR and out. Shangela then engages RuPaul in a call and response exchange that culminates with her quoting Tina’s famous song “What’s Love Got to Do with It”. While she is successful in adding intertextual references, the humour doesn’t quite hit the mark, and Manila later calls this “the worst Tina Turner I’ve ever seen.”

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] All right, Tinta Turnter.	Vamos con "Tita Turcer".	>> MUY BIEN, «TITA TURCER».
[Shangela as Tina Turner] You wanna know one thing? [RuPaul] Yes, I wanna.	- ¿Quieres saber algo? / - Sí.	>> ¿QUIERES SABER UNA COSA? // >> SÍ, QUIERO.

[Shangela as Tina Turner] You wanna know why? [RuPaul]I wanna know why.	- ¿Quieres saber por qué? / - Quiero saber por qué.	>> ¿QUIERES SABER POR QUÉ? // >> QUIERO SABER POR QUÉ.
[Shangela as Tina Turner] Love. [RuPaul] Love. What's love got to do with it?	- Amor. / - ¿Qué tiene que ver el amor?	>> AMOR. // >> AMOR. // ¿QUÉ TIENE QUE VER EL AMOR CON ESTO?
[Shangela as Tina Turner] Oh, no, no, no. Mm-mm, can't do it.	- No, no. No puedo.	>> OH, NO, NO. // MM-MM, NO PUEDO HACERLO.

Season 3, Episode 6

Both translations, with “Vamos con ‘Tita Turcer’” and “MUY BIEN, «TITA TURCER»” maintains the idea of RuPaul’s playful mispronunciation. While not a direct equivalent, it retains the intent to alter Tina’s name humorously. The line “¿Qué tiene que ver el amor?”, while it is a literal translation loses the reference unless the Spanish-speaking audience is familiar enough with Tina’s music that they know the translation to her songs. This means that the middle-range priority of maintaining the humour characteristics is tentatively met, and this is an adequate translation.

Season 12 Widow Von’Du portrays both Tina and her husband Ike in the Snatch Game for a much more successful result than Shangela. In this example, we can see how RuPaul’s pronunciation of the name is now, 9 seasons later, fully established as a reference in the show to add some comedy. Widow also emphasizes the importance of Tina in the queer canon when she reacts to Heidi’s recognition of her wig as marking her as cultured for having recognized it. This is a moment of acknowledgement and respect, played for humour.

ST	Netflix	WOW
[Heidi] -It looks like Tinta Turntur./ [Widow] - Thank you.	- Parece Tinta Turnter./ - Gracias.	-Se parece a Tinta Turntur. / - Gracias.
[widow] Someone's cultured/in this bitch.	Al fin alguien es culta.	Alguien tiene cultura / en esta perra.

Season 12, Episode 6

Both translations maintain the RuPaul reference on the mispronunciation, which a seasoned target audience member could pick-up on. This meets the top priority of being accessible and the middle-range priority of maintaining humour characteristics. However, Netflix’s version tones down the use of profanity by

omitting “this bitch”. This softening goes against this same priority of maintaining humour characteristics. WowPresentsPlus translates this literally, which preserves the tone more but can be confusing as the slang way of referring to a place as “bitch/perra” is not as established in Spanish. It is overall a more successful translation as it respects the priorities of preserving humour as much as possible. Both of these translations seem somewhat flat and miss the opportunity to meet marginal priorities by adding some more humour.

What’s love got to do with it?

In this scene, Widow as Tina banter with RuPaul, who praises her look and asks, “What does love have to do with it, Tina?” Once again referencing the famous song. Widow responds with, “When you find out what’s love got to do with it... I’ll let you know,” which does not further the reference like Shangela did a few seasons before, but rather plays with it and adds some confrontational energy, which adds some humour.

ST	Netflix	WOW
[RuPaul] -Hey, Tina./[Widow as Tina Turner] - How you doing, Ru?	- Hola, Tina./ - ¿Cómo estás, Ru?	-Hola, Tina. / -¿Cómo te va, Ru?
[RuPaul] Oh, you look fantastic.	¡Te ves fantástica!	Ah, te ves fantástica.
What does love/have to do with it, Tina?	¿Qué tiene que ver el amor, Tina?	A propósito, ¿el amor qué tiene / que ver con eso, Tina?
[Widow as Tina Turner] When you find out what’s love/got to do with it...	Cuando lo descubra...	Cuando descubras lo que el amor / tenga que ver con ello...
[RuPaul] -Uh-huh./[Widow as Tina Turner] -I’ll let you know.	te lo diré.	-Ajá. / -Te dejaré saber.

Season 12, Episode 6

Both translations of this exchange are fairly literal, though Netflix’s “te lo dire” (I’ll tell you) is more natural in Spanish than “te dejaré saber” (I will allow you to know). Again, whether the reference is transmitted in Spanish or not depends on the level of familiarity with Tina’s work and whether the fans know not only the song but how it translates in Spanish. In this way, the priorities of maintaining humour and its characteristics are not met, but admittedly, the constraint of working with source-culture lyrics references is difficult to overcome. A possible strategy would be to add translation notes, which would further meet the top priority of being accessible, and might also meet the middle-range priority of allowing and encouraging fan creation and engagement.

In conclusion, the portrayals of iconic female celebrities like Tyra Banks, Cher, and Tina Turner in *RuPaul's Drag Race* serve as both tributes to their influence and as sources of humour that enrich the show's intertextual queer canon. The translations across Netflix and WOW reflect varying degrees of success in conveying these references to Spanish-speaking audiences. Netflix/WOW22 translations more consistently meet top and middle-range priorities through a more creative approach to translation, using literal translation to facilitate accessibility and favouring more natural-sounding phrasing. It has a certain tendency towards omission of vulgarity, which harms the overall tone. WOW23 demonstrates many pitfalls of poor machine translation which leads to often violating top priorities of accessibility, though some unintentional additional humour is added. Both translations would benefit from more consistency and more creative approaches to translation that might help in minimizing the CSRs.

2.1.2.2 Cult Films

Paris is Burning

This documentary features interviews with several drag queens, such as Dorian Corey, Pepper LaBeija and Brooke Xtravaganza, that have acquired the status of legends within drag communities in the US today through the airing of the documentary and their influence in the ballroom scene. Another important aspect of this culture shown in the documentary is the support system created between individuals who have largely been ostracised by society and have had to create their own families and community. In *Paris is Burning* we see the different “houses” lead by a “mother”, a more experienced drag queen who takes younger members of the community under her wing to form a chosen family. The “house” is often a literal house shared by its members, but it is also a name that carries status and meaning within the community (*Paris Is Burning* 1991). Many notable houses from the era, some of which were portrayed in the film, still exist, and the family names are used as a badge of honour in RPDR. The references to *Paris is Burning* are constant and in different level of explicitness. We have already discussed one of the regular references in the translation of catchphrases.

This example is a more veiled reference to the documentary, and it could be argued that it is more a reference to ballroom culture than the documentary about it. The idea of the “legendary children” is mentioned in the documentary as an established descriptor for the shining stars in the ballrooms: the performers who had become legends in the scene. Legendary children has become a recognisable name for queer people who shine brightly through self-expression in their community despite the struggles and discrimination they may face. It is a title that carries deep history and emotional weight of beauty and joy used as a resistance strategy against discrimination and oppression. Calling someone a legendary child is a compliment and a warm welcome into the long and rich history of queer performers. While not meant to be exactly humorous, it contributes to the ludic and safe atmosphere: recognition that the title brings a wholesomeness and emotional care can would inspire a smile or a chuckle. While much of the humour in RPDR could be seen as cutting, vulgar and shocking to cis-straight audiences unfamiliar with the culture, this sort of community and cultural care woven through the programme alongside the other types of references and humour showcases that this is a show for and by queer people.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] My legendary children. A drag superstar	Mis niños legendarios. / Una súper estrella drag	>> MIS LEGENDARIOS HIJOS. // UNA SUPERESTRELLA DRAG NECESITA
needs to develop a pretty thick skin.	tiene que desarrollar / una coraza muy gruesa.	DESARROLLAR UNA PIEL BASTANTE GRUESA.

Season 3, Episode 8

All the subtitles for this title use masculine words to translate “children”, both “niños” (boys) and “hijos” (sons) rely on the grammatical masculine default, which makes this a literal translation. However, assigning gender to this title does not respect the source culture. While familiarity with the idea of “legendary children” and *Paris is Burning* as a reference might not be as common in Spanish, within queer communities in Hispanic America, it can be expected that at least some would understand the reference, especially if they are fans of RPDR. As such, a literal translation could work and maintain the cultural relevance of the source. In

assigning a masculine default gender, this potential is completely discarded. Legendary children are queer legends and should not be constrained by the restrictions of grammatical gender. This translation then incurs in the prohibited priority as it is a violence against the object of fandom and drag communities. The literal translation assumes familiarity with the reference, arguably meeting the top priority of accessibility, but the gendered language alienates the intended audience by erasing the queer inclusivity of the term. This in turn undermined meeting middle-range priorities as the wholesome, celebratory tone of "legendary children" is lost due to the masculine default, undermining the cultural weight of the phrase. It reinforces heteronormative language norms, contradicting the subversive intent of the original and as such also missed the middle-range priority of being cautious about its potential participation in an unequal power dynamic. A gender neutral translation, such as "niños legendarios" or "criaturas legendarias" (legendary creatures), would avoid the domino effect that incurring in the prohibited priority has on all other priorities.

Elvira: Mistress of the Dark

While Elvira in general and this film in particular are quoted and referenced in many ways in RPDR, the most notable reference is the one that was explained in detail in part 1 of this thesis, namely the call and response "how's your head? Haven't had any complaints." These two examples from the corpus further exemplify how deviating from a set reference can be desirable for humour, or undesirable if the reference is not properly handled.

In season 3, episode 8, Carmen fails to pick up on the reference and wordplay implied by RuPaul's question after she talks about being in her head a lot. In this interaction, RuPaul is shifting the atmosphere back into something ludic, and Carmen missing the cue is framed in the programme as an awkward moment that reflects badly on her ability to be comedic. Rita Rudner, the guest judge who is coaching the contestants as they build a stand-up set, steps in and completes the prompt, cementing the dynamics that put the audience on edge thinking Carmen will fail at her stand-up challenge as she is not portrayed as funny enough. This is

one of the narratives that creates tension in the episode. Carmen ends up doing fairly well in the challenge, but this moment is the set up for the low expectations.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Carmen] Some people, I guess think that I might be,	Alguien podría pensar que quizás	ALGUNAS PERSONAS, SUPONGO, PIENSAN QUE
like, not paying attention and not focusing, but I'm always in my head.	no prestaba suficiente atención / porque siempre estoy ensimismada.	PUEDO QUE NO ESTÉ PAGANDO // ATENCIÓN Y NO CONCENTRACIÓN, PERO // SIEMPRE ESTOY EN MI CABEZA.
[RuPaul] How is your head? [Carmen] My head is good.	- Mi cabeza está bien. / - Mi cabeza está bien.	>> ¿CÓMO ESTÁ TU CABEZA? // >> MI CABEZA ESTÁ BIEN.
[Rita] Haven't had any complaints yet.	Aún no tengo quejas.	>> NO HE RECIBIDO NINGUNA QUEJA // TODAVÍA.

Season 3, Episode 8

Both sets of subtitles translate “head” as “cabeza”, which is the literal translation but does not have the same connotation related to oral sex in Spanish. The reference to Elvira is not one that would be widely known in Spanish-speaking countries. Consequently, the translation does lose a lot of the humour and cultural relevance. However, as this is such an often-repeated joke in the show, it is possible that through consistent translation, an avid viewer could understand it as an internal reference, while still missing the wordplay. The omission of the wordplay also contributes to a sanitising of the programme, as the sexual nature of the joke is fully removed. This reduces the enjoyability for fans familiar with the recurring joke and as such, fails to meet one of our top priorities. The translation ignores the intertextual link to Elvira and drag’s taboo humour, failing then to meet the priority of respecting the source culture.

In season 12, this reference makes a comeback with a twist: instead of asking about someone’s head, RuPaul asks the guest judge Jonathan Bennett about his cakes. This is a clever way to welcome this particular guest as the actor was a host of the TV programme *Cake Wars* from 2015 to 2017. Furthermore, this modification does not lose out on wordplay humour, as cakes also has another connotation than the literal one as it is a common slang for buttocks. Jonathan answers in the expected way, which still works somewhat with the new meaning. This is not enough for RuPaul, who shows her creativity and humour by adding another layer of sexual innuendo when she asks “are they moist?”. Jonathan follows the innuendo by stating that his cakes are not dry.

ST	Netflix	WOW
[RuPaul] Actor and TV host Jonathan Bennett, how's your cakes?	El actor y presentador de televisión: Jonathan Bennett. // ¿Cómo está tu trasero?	Actor y presentador de / televisión / Jonathan Bennett, ¿y tus pasteles?
[Jonathan] Never had any complaints, Ru.	Nadie se ha quejado.	No he recibido quejas, Ru.
[RuPaul] [laughs] Are they moist?	¿Está húmedo?	¿Son esponjosos?
[Jonathan] Oh, they aren't dry, let's just say that.	No está seco, digamos eso.	Ah, no soy secos, hay que decir eso.

Season 12, Episode 8

The two translations are quite different and prioritise different aspects of the source. For the translation of “cakes”, Netflix’s subtitles get rid of the subterfuge and wordplay by translating it as “trasero” (buttocks). Then, “moist” is translated with “húmedo” (wet), pushing the innuendo towards the explicit. This translation prioritises not sanitising the humour at all which could fit into the priority of respecting the object of fandom and the source culture. The characteristics of the humour are lost however, as there is no wordplay in these subtitles, RuPaul directly asks Jonathan about the wetness of his buttocks, which might be funny by simple shock value of this being a first introduction for the guest judge. WowPresentsPlus’s subtitles leans away from the sexual innuendo to the point where it disappears entirely. Translating “cakes” as “pasteles” (cakes/pastries) and “moist” as “esponjoso” (fluffy/spongy), eliminated both the wordplay and the sexual innuendo entirely. Furthermore, the translation of “they aren’t dry” as “no soy secos” (I am not dry (plural)), is not grammatical and makes little sense. This whole translation falls flat and does not meet any of the three top priorities of respecting the object of fandom, being accessible or enjoyable to the target audience.

While the Netflix translation follows the priorities more, there is a lost opportunity here to create a link to GSD cultures in the target language and adding humour as Spanish across the world has a variety of pastry-related slang to refer to lesbians. Any of these terms could have worked if used carefully so as to not be offensive.

These examples illustrate how relevant and entrenched in the culture these cult films are in drag culture. We see a pattern here of Netflix subtitles ostensibly meeting the accessibility top priority, while WOW subtitles often fail to meet it.

However, in these examples at least, failing to meet middle-range priorities or even incurring in the prohibited priority results in lack-lustre translations.

2.1.2.3 RuPaul and RPDR

RuPaul and her very long career in entertainment is also a source for many of the intertextual references in RPDR. An example of this appears in episode 9 of season 12, when during the mock presidential debate in which every contestant pretended to be a presidential candidate, Gigi Goode proposed the idea of making RuPaul's song "Cover Girl" be played in every crosswalk in the country. She also states she will teach all men and women in the US to "sissy their walks", following the lyrics of the song. One of the guest judges and pretend moderators in the presidential debate in this episode, Jeff Goldblum, asks how she plans to do that, and she asks for permission to approach them. The other "moderator", Rachel Bloom, gives her permission to "come anywhere you'd like". She does so to the rhythm of a remix between RuPaul's song and the Star Spangle Banner, the national anthem of the US.

The whole episode is a pastiche of presidential debates in the US, exemplified by the fake serious tone which lends to the humour of this interaction. Rachel Bloom's innuendo while using very formal language exemplifies the tone of the episode. "Sissy that walk" is one of RuPaul's quintessential runway songs: songs made to stomp down the runway like a supermodel. "Sissy" has a strong negative connotation in cis-straight culture. It is a slur and an insult used against gay men. In typical queer fashion, this term has been reclaimed with pride. The humour here comes from the contrast between the seriousness of a political debate, undercut by the frivolousness of walking down the runway and being camp. However, there is also a criticism and deconstruction implied in this episode about the pageantry of US politics. Teaching every woman and man (notice the use of binary and non-inclusive language as she is impersonating a politician) to "sissy their walks", might seem silly, and it is, but it is also a far better policy than much of what is actually proposed by real politicians. This is especially relevant in a context of the absurd right-wing tilting of US American politics led by Donald Trump. Gigi, by quoting RuPaul's song in this context, is using humour to shine a light on the ridiculousness

of US politicians on one hand, while also implying that it would be a better policy if everyone was taught to be a little more transgressive, a little bit queerer. Additionally, the remixing of “Sissy that Walk” with the national anthem further underscores the lesson this whole episode is trying to teach the audience: queer people of all backgrounds in the US are part of the country, and the culture portrayed here is a proudly US American culture. There is a simmering rage and need for revindication in this humour resulting from a context in which GSD people are being stripped from their rights in the US and are fighting against a wave of dangerous ideology by leaning into humour to reveal its profound ridiculousness.

ST	Netflix	WOWPresentPlus
[Jeff] Gigi Goode, same question.	Gigi Goode, misma pregunta.	Gigi Goode, la misma pregunta.
[Gigi] My first act would be to forcibly play RuPaul's Cover Girl	Mi primer acto sería poner / la canción de RuPaul "Cover Girl"	Mi primera acción sería / reproducir / a la fuerza Cover Girl de RuPaul
in every crosswalk in the nation.	en todas las peatonales de la nación.	en cada cruce peatonal / de la nación.
It will train the men and the women of this brave country	Entrenaré a los hombres y a las mujeres / de este valiente país	Entrenará a los hombres y / mujeres / de este valiente país
to s-s-s-sissy their walks on the way to work.	a que se contoneen yendo a su trabajo.	a caminar con estilo / hacia sus trabajos.
[Jeff] How would we sissy our walks?	¿Cómo haríamos el contoneo?	¿Cómo caminaríamos con estilo?
[Gigi] Do you mind if I come up front?	¿Les puedo mostrar?	¿Te importa si voy al frente?
[Rachel] Permission granted for you to come anywhere you like.	Permiso otorgado / para que nos muestres todo.	Permiso concedido / para que vengas como tú quieras.
[Jeff] No sissification so far. But wait.	Hasta ahora no veo contoneo...	No hay estilización hasta ahora. / Pero espera.
[Rachel] Sissy that walk, girl.	Contonea, querida.	Camina con estilo, chica.
[RuPaul] Now, sissy that walk. [Star Spangled Banner plays]		Bien, camina con estilo.

Season 12, Episode 9

The translation of most of the humour in this episode has an extra layer of complexity as there is an undercurrent of US patriotism enmeshed with the criticism of the political system and politicians in the US. The specific brand of patriotism exemplified by sentences such as “this brave country”, is one that audiences might be somewhat familiar with and would understand in the context with the literal translations provided by both sets of subtitles. Since the US has a tendency to be over-involved in world politics, and in Latin American politics in particular, the results of any election and the lead up to it are usually well-known to a Hispanic American audience. The references to the specific format of a

presidential debate and the national anthem might be fuzzier, but still somewhat understood. As fans, the audience is likely to be familiar with the two RuPaul songs mentioned. The first one's title is kept in English so it would be understood by a fan audience. While "Sissy that walk" is translated so the specific reference is lost. The song itself plays then remixed with the anthem so the idea might still come across but not the wordplay present.

Netflix subtitles here keep more of the tone and the humour than the WOW subtitles. Rachel's innuendo is cleverly translated as "¿les puedo mostrar? / "Permiso otorgado para que nos muestres todo" (Can I show you? / Permission granted for you to show us everything). While this is less sexually explicit than the source, it keeps the wordplay and the innuendo and maintains the humour. Furthermore, "sissy that walk" in the Netflix subtitles is "contonearse", a verb that does not have a specific translation in English but means to move sensually while moving your hips. It has a somewhat negative connotation that lends itself to this context well, as it is clearly framed as a desirable and thus subverts the negative connotation. This meets the top priorities of accessibility and respect for the source culture. The reference to the song is lost but other elements are maintained, including the humour, which meets the middle-range priorities of maintaining humour characteristics.

The same cannot be said for the WOW subtitles: the innuendo is fully lost, and "sissy that walk" is translated as "camina con estilo" (walk with style) which fully loses any connotation of queerness or feminisation. The humour does not come through, failing to meet middle-range priorities of maintaining or recreating humour and its characteristics. WOW's sanitization also avoids queer resistance, aligning poorly with the episode's critique of heteronormativity and failing then to meet the middle-range priority of being aware of power dynamics.

This second example comes from the same episode and is rather simple but also demonstrates the use of references from previous seasons to create humour. The episode itself is called "choices" and this word is repeated during the debate by several contestants one after the other in the same intonation. This is a reference

to RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars season 2, where contestant Tatiana coined the catchphrase after her read of another contestant: "we all make choices, but that was a choice". The intonation and facial expression in which she says it has since become a widely used meme to signify that someone has done something inappropriate or questionable.

ST	Netflix	WOW
[Heidi] -Choices. / [Jackie] -Choices.	- Elecciones. / - Elecciones.	-Elecciones. / -Elecciones.
[Widow?]-Choices. / [Heidi] - Choices.	- Elecciones. / - Elecciones.	-Elecciones. / -Elecciones.

Season 12, Episode 9

Both sets of subtitles have the same translation for this reference: "elecciones" (elections). This prioritizes accessibility (top priority) by referencing with the episode's presidential debate theme, but it fails to maintain the humour's characteristics (middle-range priority) as a meme-worthy reference to Tatiana's iconic read. It also misses an opportunity to encourage fan engagement (middle-range priority). However, the fact that this reference is often accompanied by a judgemental look the camera and a particular intonation, it is possible that fans would still pick up on the reference, partially salvaging the enjoyability (top priority) for those familiar with the source material.

A creative translation solution could perhaps be used here by including a meme of Tatiana while maintaining the literal translation. Adding memes to subtitles is not a practice used in streaming platforms, but creative subversion would suit RPDR so much better than plain text does.

2.1.3 Conclusion

This analysis has demonstrated the myriad difficulties that a translator might face when attempting to translate CSR in the context of US drag culture to a Hispanic audience. Meeting the priority of maintaining the characteristics of the humour in humorous utterances is particularly hard when translating this type of humour. However, since the programme establishes a network of intertextual references that most fans grow familiar with, a concerted effort towards consistency would improve this systematic loss of cultural meaning and humour. Netflix subtitles

consistently meet top priorities, especially accessibility, and sometimes use creativity to meet middle-range priorities, but can miss the opportunity to meet more priorities due to the constraints of the industry. WOW subtitles, especially when they seem to be machine translations, often fail to meet even the top priorities. Literal translation seems to facilitate meeting the priorities of accessibility as they promote consistency, it can often lead to systematically not meeting the priorities for conservation of humour or its characteristics when dealing with CSRs.

2.2 The subtitling of obscenity, heightened sexual atmosphere, taboo and vulgarity-based humour

2.2.1 Introduction

The shock value of statements containing taboo subjects, vulgarity and obscenity makes them a very useful tool for humour in contexts where it is appropriate. There is an inherent bias in determining what is vulgar, taboo, or obscenity, or what is appropriate, as this is something that changes depending on the culture, the context, and even the person. In drag cultures and GSD cultures more broadly, it is common to push the boundaries of what would be considered acceptable to say in mainstream straight culture. This, combined with a tendency towards hyper-sexualisation common in allosexual⁶ GSD spaces, means that the bar that needs to be pushed to create shock through vulgarity, obscenity and taboo in a show like RPDR is significantly higher than in other contexts. Furthermore, as GSD people often deal with ostracization from straight mainstream society, and because humour can be a way of engaging, criticising and negotiating pain and conflict, topics like religion, sex, and other taboos are often used for humour. Drag, being itself an art of transgression, revels in the exploration of the outer edges of what is acceptable to say, to joke about, to find humour in. This chapter will evaluate

⁶ Allosexual is the opposite of asexual. The hyper-sexualisation of GSD spaces has been a contention between people in the asexual spectrum and the rest of GSD communities. However, this is not something that has yet appeared in RPDR explicitly.

the ways in which these explorations are subtitled into Spanish in the corpus with special attention to any possible attempts at censorship.

2.2.2 Sexually Explicit humour and Sexually Heightened Atmosphere

Cum-guzzling whore

During the Snatch Game challenge in Season 3, while Raja is impersonating Tyra Banks, one of the sources of humour she uses in this impersonation is to poke fun at the public feud between her and her fellow supermodel Naomi Campbell. In the following examples, Raja combines Tyra's serious mannerisms, such as her very particular delivery of results in America's Next Top Model, or her characteristic modelling face, which were both discussed in the previous chapter, with a very over-the-top, full-bodied tantrum against Naomi Campbell, calling her a "cum-guzzling whore". The change in demeanour between proper TV presenter and screaming foul-mouthed diva plays into the shock value and adds to the humour of the words. The next use of this phrase is as a call-back, cashing on the established humour of the shocking vulgarity and adding by repetition and weaving the characterisation of Tyra from one answer to the other.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Raja as Tyra Banks] I only have one answer in my hand.	Solo tengo una respuesta / en la mano,	>> SOLO TENGO UNA RESPUESTA EN MI // MANO.
And this answer is the only answer.	y esta respuesta / es la única respuesta:	Y ESTA RESPUESTA ES LA ÚNICA // RESPONDER.
Naomi Campbell is a cum-guzzling whore!	¡Naomi Campbell es una perra!	NAOMI CAMPBELL ES UN [pitido]

(next answer)

[Raja as Tyra Banks] That answer is smizes. [RuPaul] She smizes them.	- La respuesta es: se "ojosonríe". / - Ella se "ojosonríe".	>> ESA RESPUESTA ES SMIZES. // >> LOS SONRÍE.
[Raja as Tyra Banks] And Naomi Campbell is a cum-guzzling whore!	¡Y Naomi Campbell es una perra!	>> Y NAOMI CAMPBELL ES UNA // [pitido] ¡PUTA!

Season 3, Episode 6

For this phrase, the Netflix and WOW22 subtitles translate "cum-guzzling whore" by a much tamer "perra" (bitch). Considering this has been used extensively in the subtitles to translate the very commonly used "bitch", this translation would not stand out as anything particularly vulgar or even sexual, incurring a significant loss of humour. The strategy used here is a drastic attenuation, to the point, in this

context, of neutralisation. This strategy has been observed in subtitling vulgar language for a long time (Ciordia 2016). This translation fails to meet several priorities in a cascading effect. The translation sanitizes the deliberate use of shock value, undermining the subversive ethos of drag culture, as such not meeting the top priority for respecting the source culture. This also undermines the humour, making it both less humorous and not have the same characteristics which fails to meet middle-range priorities related to humour.

In WOW23, the first instance is entirely replaced by the notation in square brackets of “[pitido]”. The same notation replaces “cum-guzzling” in the second instance, while “whore” is translated literally by “¡PUTA!” (¡WHORE!). The notation means “bleep”, as in the sound that plays over an expletive when it is being censored. The sound, as well as its written notation, is used for humour in some instances, even in RPDR, to allude to what could possibly be censored, leaving it to the imagination of the audience or interlocutor. However, as the vulgar interjection is not censored in the source text, and the level of vulgarity is part of the humour in these instances, the addition of these notations is bizarre. Bleeping these in the subtitles is using very explicit censorship on the language choices of the performer but it is done inconsistently, since “whore” is translated nonetheless. This inconsistency further confirms that these subtitles are probably a machine translation with little human editing.

The attenuation and omission of obscenity actively goes against the priority of respecting the object of fandom, and being cautious about its potential participation in an unequal power dynamic. Attenuating obscenity assumes norms of how vulgar, how explicit it is acceptable to be and places those norms on a community that actively uses the sexually explicit and the vulgar to shock and subvert.

Schlong

The format of the Snatch Game lends itself to the use of vulgarity-based humour, as RuPaul asks a fill-in-the-blank question, and it is expected that the guests and contestants answer with something humorous. Using vulgarity is an easy way to

do this. This example illustrates this, as the episode's guest answers "schlongs" to the prompt: "freaky Fanny is so freaky, instead of shaking hands, she shakes...". "Schlong" is a vulgar word borrowed from Yiddish to refer to a penis. Making this sexually explicit humour.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[RuPaul] Now Aisha, freaky Fanny is so freaky,	Aisha, la rara Fanny es tan rara,	AHORA AISHA, FREAKY FANNY ES TAN
instead of shaking hands, she shakes...	que en vez de darte la mano, / te agarra...	// EXTRAÑO, EN LUGAR DE TEMBLAR
[Aisha] Schlongs.	- La "salchicha".	MANOS, SE ESTREMECE...
		>> SCHLONGS.

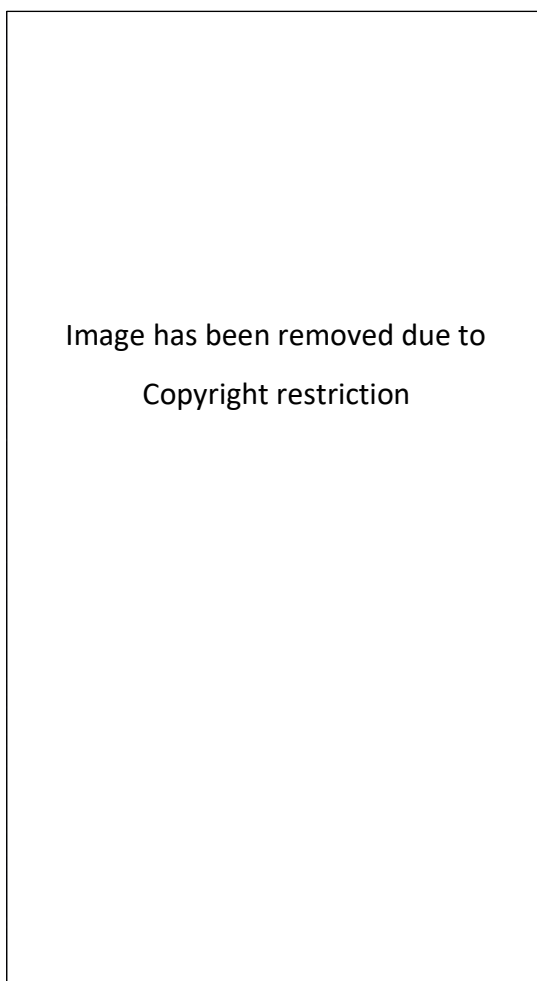
Season 3, Episode 6

The Netflix and WOW22 subtitles mostly maintain the humour when translating "schlongs" with "salchicha" (sausage) in inverted commas. "Salchicha" is also slang for penis in Spanish, maintaining the joke about what "freaky Fanny" shakes. The subtitles even modify the prompt slightly to make the humour work in Spanish, as the equivalent of "shaking hands" is to "give someone the hand", so the meaning would be entirely changed if the same verb was kept. The literal back translation of the prompt in these subtitles is: "Weird Fanny is so weird, that instead of giving you the hand, she grabs your... "sausage"". The joke is therefore adapted to work in Spanish. The use of inverted commas is interesting here, as they seem to function to signal the use of slang in Spanish, making it stand out, and pointing out the joke. This could be seen as an over-translation that detracts slightly from the humour. In the context of RPDR, vulgarity is ever-present and casual, even when used for shock, and this instance is not extremely shocking. The use of inverted commas here is not needed in this case and detracts from fully meeting the middle-range priority of maintaining the characteristics of humour.

WOW23 is, once again, a good example of the failures of machine translation. The subtitles in this case are not grammatical or understandable, and one instance of "freaky" and "schlongs" are kept in English without any translation. The second "freaky" is translated by the masculine "extraño" (strange), instead of the feminine adjective that would be appropriate. There is also no adaptation for the difference in formulation in Spanish for "shaking hands", resulting in a translation that makes very little sense. An attempt at a back translation: "*Freaky Fanny is so*

strange (m.) instead of trembling hands, she shivers... *shlongs*". There is no humour, or meaning, in these subtitles, which fail to meet any priorities.

Old Glory hole



(From <https://squirrelsandfriends.com/> Season 12, Episode 9 runway looks)

The attenuation of sexually explicit humour is slightly less present in the subtitles for later seasons, at least in the Netflix subtitles. This example is from season 12, episode 9, during the runway. In this section, the contestants show their looks while walking down the runway and the judges make puns based on the look or the context. In this case, Carson is playing on the Western style of Heidi's patriotic look when he says "old glory". "Hole" is a reference to Heidi's famous tooth gap, which was used extensively for comedy during the presidential debate in the same episode.

ST	Netflix	WOW
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[RuPaul] Heidi.	Heidi.	Heidi.
[Carson] Serving Old Glory-hole.	Al servicio de un buen agujero glorioso.	Nos entrega: Antiguo Hoyo de / Gloria.

Season 12, Episode 9

While the specifics of the wordplay are lost in both translations, in the Netflix subtitles there is an attempt to recover the humour and maintain the sexually explicit nature of it. “Al servicio de un buen agujero glorioso” (In the service of a good glory hole), removes the idea of old glory, but inserts a military connotation with “al servicio”. Considering US patriotism tends towards the militaristic, this is a clever way to capture the contrast between the patriotic and the sexually explicit. This meets the top priorities well and the middle-range priority of maintaining or recreating humour in the translation of humorous utterances.

WOW’s subtitle “Nos entrega: Antiguo Hoyo de / Gloria” (Gives us: Ancient Hole of Glory), loses the humour while attenuating the sexually explicit and does not even retain the idea of Old Glory of the old west. These subtitles then fail to meet most of the top and middle-range priorities.

The analysis of these examples show a clear pattern of sanitization in both sets of subtitles, which detracts from meeting the priority of respecting the source culture and maintaining the characteristics of humour. However, unlike the WOW subtitles, Netflix subtitles are good examples on how to use adaptation and creativity to meet priorities of maintaining or recreating the humour and its characteristics.

2.2.3 Vulgarity and Obscenity

Yara’s stand-up

In episode 8 of season 3, the contestants have to do a short stand-up piece. Yara’s stand-up starts with her walking out on her knees with a flamenco dress, impersonating a highly stereotypical Spanish little person. Yara is one of the two Puerto Rican contestants on her season, and one of the most striking examples of the othering that occurs in RPDR to non-native English speakers. Her brand of racialised humour, and how it is portrayed in the programme, has been the subject

of research and analysis. It is important to note that the hyper-sexuality, the over-the-top crazy character, and the use her accent and (exaggerated) difficulties with English for humour are characteristic of the stereotypes assigned to Latines in North American media.

“Yara and Alexis achieve success on the show via the execution of particular intelligible Latinx identities that accrue to them a certain degree of cultural capital. While this cultural capital is premised on a narrow form of inclusion, it arguably translated into brand recognition for them and longevity following each of the seasons.”

(McIntyre and Riggs 2018)

In North American media, the difference between Latines and Spanish people are not portrayed as important and are usually conflated into the same category. These identities are conflated even in an academic setting, exemplified in McIntyre and Riggs’ introduction of pop culture icon Charo as “a Spanish-born musician and entertainer” immediately followed by “representations of Latinas such as Charo”. Yara uses this conflation of identities when she portrays what is obviously a Spanish stereotype to lean into the racialised brand of humour that has granted her an (unstable) cultural capital as a Puerto Rican queen. While her language use and mannerisms are marked as other in the context where the judges and the other queens hold English as “an attribute of the universal” (McIntyre and Riggs 2018, p. 66), she uses this and leans into it to create and enhance her humour. The whole stand-up is set to be as shocking as possible, and this is also reflected in the language she uses. In the first scene described, where the character she portrays goes to McDonald’s for a date, Yara leans into the linguistic difference by “misunderstanding” the translation of “chicken” as the Spanish slang “polla”, meaning penis. In the next scene described, her date takes her to a hotel and surprises her with the size of his penis, which then veers into a third scene that relies even more on chaotic scatological humour, including farting noises and a reference to Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory. The humour is compounded by Yara’s physical comedy, the not-quite-correct English combined with fast speech and minimal context during each scene, and the shock value of what is being described. Even when she seems to fumble the delivery of the joke, such as

switching between “polla” (penis) and “pollo”(chicken), the overall set is deemed as successful by the judges. Billy B, the guest judge for that episode comments: “I don't know what you talked about, except chicken and some shit.” (Season 3, Episode 8). Rita Rudner and RuPaul comment on the level of inappropriateness of the set, while praising it. In these discussions we can see how the boundaries of what is appropriate and what is taboo are explored on the show. In the wider context of drag, this set is not outside of what can be expected. Already in 1972, Divine was eating dog excrement in *Pink Flamingos*, so the scatological and sexual aspects of Yara’s humour are not revolutionary in drag. In the context of RPDR Season 3, there seems to be certain concern for how an outside audience might receive it.

Yara: I have a friend that is a little person, and he pushed me to do it.

RuPaul: And he would not be offended by this at all?

Yara: No. I did it with the respect. This is the stand-up comedy that comedians do in Puerto Rico.

Rita: I was wondering if it was going to be too graphic, but I knew your energy would take care of it, and we loved watching you.

Season 3, Episode 8.

Yara makes a point to mention that she has a friend who is a little person and assuages RuPaul’s concerns by confirming that he would not only not be offended by her set, but he *asked* her to do it. She also asserts that this is the type of humour that would be used in Puerto Rico. Yara’s strategy to legitimise her taboo humour is to call on the authority of a member of the community she is likely to upset and to further lean into her own cultural difference. The level of chaos and the possible difficulty in understanding what she is saying also contribute to making this acceptable for the judges and the audience. However, the core of the humour is revelling in the shock value, the disgust and the chaos. As observed by Martínez Sierra, physiological functions, along with politics, religion and sex, are especially susceptible to omission (Sierra and de València 2020). The subtitles in Spanish in this section show a heightened use of avoidance, deletion, and negotiation strategies.

This set has three main peaks of humour that flow from one to another with relative ease.

Chicken means polla

In the first scene, Yara is describing being taken to a fancy dinner to McDonalds, where someone asks whether she would like a chicken sandwich. Leaning into the bilingual humour, Yara uses the similarity between the Spanish slang for penis (“polla”) and chicken in Spanish (“pollo”). This is slang used in Spain, so it would not be something Yara herself would use, but it lends into the over-the-top portrayal of the Spanish, flamenco dancing, little person she is playing.

The humour starts with the delivery of the line “what the hell is chicken”, which is very aggressive and already detaches the narration from any verisimilitude.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Yara] You want chicken sandwich? What the hell is chicken?	"¿Quieres un sándwich de 'chicken'?" / "¿Y qué diablos es 'chicken'?"	«¿QUIERES UN SÁNDWICH DE POLLO?» // DIGO, «¿QUÉ DIABLOS ES? ¿POLLO?»
She told me, Chicken means polla.	Y la cajera me dijo: / "'Chicken' significa ' polla '."	ELLA ME DIJO: «POLLO SIGNIFICA...» [habla español].
Pollo means cock in Spain!	¡"Polla" significa "pene" en España!	[habla español] SIGNIFICA «[pitido]» // EN ESPAÑA!
So I don't want to eat a fucking dick sandwich .	Así que no quiero comerme / un sándwich de pene .	ASÍ QUE NO QUIERO COMER UN [PITIDO] // [pitido] SÁNDWICH.

Season3, Episode 8

Both sets of subtitles use very different approaches. To convey the bilingual nature of the source, where Yara asks for clarification on the word “chicken”, the subtitles in Netflix and WOW22 keep chicken in English, which then allows them to set up the joke “‘Chicken’ significa ‘polla’”. The subtitles here use quotation marks to show what in the narrative is said by the McDonald’s worker. They also use them to show the words being discussed: “Chicken”, “polla”, “pene” (penis). The punctuation in these subtitles is grammatically correct throughout, which is not the case for the subtitles in WOW23. Furthermore, the translation for both “cock” and “dick” is “pene” (penis). Both terms have in English a much more vulgar connotation than “pene”. Once again attenuation is one of the main strategies to subtitle vulgarity.

The Netflix and WOW22 subtitles also correct the slight fumble with the joke Yara makes in English when she says “pollo (chicken) means “cock” in Spain”, as for the

joke to work, she should have kept the mistaken gender from the previous line, which is done in the subtitles. Another correction occurs in the addition of “la cajera” (the till worker) to translate “she”. In the source, there is no other indication of who is speaking than “she” and from context we are meant to understand what is happening. The subtitles make the imagined scene a little easier to understand by adding the role of the worker. Finally, there is an omission of the emphatic expletive “fucking” in “I don’t want to eat a fucking dick sandwich”. The Netflix and WOW22 subtitles, while containing some humour by properly conveying the linguistic joke, show a tendency towards softening, omission, and correction of what in the source is more vulgar, and a lot more chaotic. This goes against the priorities of respecting the object of fandom and being cautious of unequal power dynamics.

The WOW23 subtitles display a radically different strategy. As is consistent in these subtitles, the punctuation, and formal aspects such as the capitalisation vary without any discernible logic. In the set up for the joke, the word “chicken” is translated into “pollo”, which does not allow for the bilingual play on words. Furthermore, “polla”, the only times Spanish is used in the source, is not translated at all, but rather replaced by the unhelpful clarification in square brackets: [habla español] (speaks Spanish). “Cock”, “fucking” and “dick” are likewise not translated but replaced, as has been the case before, by “[pitido]” (“[bleep]”). All these replacements and punctuation variations lead to an impossible to read translation: “[habla español] SIGNIFICA «[pitido]» EN ESPAÑA!” (b.t. “[speaks Spanish] MEANS “[bleep]” IN SPAIN”). While there could be some humour to be found in the idea of inverted brackets very formally quoting a written bleeping sound, these subtitles are simply unreadable and unhelpful to any Spanish speaker who wishes to understand any aspect of what is being said.

These subtitles fail to meet all main priorities, especially that of being accessible to a Spanish-speaking audience and being enjoyable.

They both make me cry

In the second scene in the stand-up, Yara's date takes her to a hotel, where she discovers the considerable size of his genitals. She then sets up an often used structure for a punchline joke by stating "what is the difference between an onion and a 14-inch dick", and the punchline comes in as "they both make me cry". The well-known format of this joke prepares the audience to hear something funny but part of the humour is the fact that she does not state a difference but rather something they have in common. This plays into the role she is playing of ditzy and not fully fluent flamenco dancer. Much of the humour here also comes from her exaggerated tone, her mannerisms and the continued barrage of vulgarity.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
After that, he took me to the apartment,	Después, me llevó a su apartamento	DESPUÉS DE ESO, ME LLEVÓ AL // APARTAMENTO, Y SE LA LLEVÓ
and he took <i>her</i> clothes off.	Y se quitó la ropa.	QUITARSE LA ROPA.
"Oh, my god, what the hell is that?"	"Oh, Dios mío, ¿qué rayos es eso?"	«OH, DIOS MÍO, QUÉ DIABLOS ES // ¿ESO?»
He was huge.	Era enorme.	ERA ENORME.
The difference between an onion and a 14-inch dick ,	La semejanza entre una cebolla / y un pene de 35 cm ,	LA DIFERENCIA ENTRE UNA CEBOLLA // Y UN [PITIDO] DE 14 PULGADAS , AMBOS
both makes me cry.	Es que ambos me hacen llorar.	ME HACE LLORAR.

Season3, Episode 8

All subtitles in this section show some corrections of Yara's speech. When Yara uses the pronoun "she" instead of "he" to describe the man taking his clothes off, the subtitles display that in a genderless but grammatically correct way. In the Netflix and WOW22 subtitles, there is a further correction, as there is a change of "difference" into "semejanza" (similarity), which detracts from the source humour. Once again, the word "dick" is translated as "pene" in Netflix and WOW22 and is replaced by "[pitido]" in WOW23, both attenuating the vulgarity in the source.

Willy Wonka

In the final scene from Yara's standup, the theatricality comes to a crescendo when during sex with her date she starts farting and then defecating to the point where

she “felt like a Willy Wonka Chocolate Factory”. The scatological humour here is underscored by Yara’s performance and her use of the Spanish expletive “cabrón”.

ST	Netflix and WOW22	WOW23
[Farting noises]		[risas] [imita la flatulencia]
Get out, get out, get out, get out, get out!	¡Sal, sal, sal, sal, sal!	SAL, SAL, SAL, CONSIGUE // ¡FUERA, FUERA!
Get out, get out, cabrón .	Sal, sal, " cabrón ".	SAL, SAL DE AQUÍ, CABRÓN .
There was shit all over the bed.	Había excrementos por toda la cama.	HABÍA [PITIDO] POR TODO EL // CAMA.
I felt like a Willy Wonka Chocolate Factory.	Me sentía como una fábrica / de chocolate	ME SENTÍA COMO UN WILLY WONKA // FÁBRICA DE CHOCOLATE.

Season3, Episode 8

The humour of the Willy Wonka Chocolate factory being referenced as part of this scene is maintained in the Netflix and WOW22 subtitles, as the reference is well known in Spanish-speaking countries. However, the translation of “shit” by “excremento” (excrement) detracts from the vulgarity of the source. WOW23 subtitles show “[pitido]” instead of “shit”, which means that the reference to defecation is fully lost and so is most of the humour.

2.2.4 Conclusion

Through the analysis of the subtitles of sexually-explicit and vulgarity and taboo-based humour, it becomes clear that the translation process leans towards the attenuation, omission and even censorship of this type of humour. This highlights the challenges of capturing the humour and shock value characteristic to drag culture. Subtitling choices often lean towards softening explicit language which regularly leads to a reduction in humour and an alteration of the show's transgressive spirit, especially when machine translations introduce inconsistencies and impossible to understand sections. Some creative choices in Netflix’s subtitles mitigate this loss on occasion and this problem is less marked in later seasons. However, the use of these strategies detracts consistently from meeting the top-level priorities of respecting the object of fandom, granting accessibility, and from middle-range priorities of maintaining humour and its characteristics. Since vulgarity and taboo are so revealing of the values of a culture and RPDR engages in a constant exploration of the boundaries of appropriateness, attenuation, censorship and omission also fails to meet the priority of being aware

of unequal power dynamics. This is due to the insinuation created by these omissions that the level of vulgarity used was somehow too much, too vulgar, too taboo.

CONCLUSIONS

The subtitling of *RuPaul's Drag Race* (RPDR) into Spanish exemplifies the intricate challenges of translating humour, cultural references, and the identity-rich language unique to drag and queer communities. Through a focus on humour and linguistic creativity, RPDR promotes a culture that revels in verbal artistry, subversion, and citational humour—all aspects that are particularly complex to translate. This thesis has evaluated these challenges through a structured framework of translation priorities—top, middle-range, marginal, and prohibited—which serve not only to assess *RPDR*'s subtitles here but could also to guide the translation of similar media featuring drag queens. The findings reveal persistent tensions between accessibility, cultural fidelity, and humour preservation, with significant variations in quality between platforms like Netflix and WOWPresentsPlus.

Translating Culturally Specific Reference- Based Humour: The Struggle for Consistency and Creativity

The first part of this analysis focused on the subtitling of CSRs, where humour relies heavily on intertextuality, drag terminology, and queer cultural knowledge. The Netflix and WOW22 subtitles, which were very likely on Netflix first, benefit enormously from a human translation. Here, the top priorities—accessibility, enjoyability, and respect for the object of fandom and culture—are often met in Netflix's subtitles, but middle-range priorities, particularly maintaining humour and its characteristics, frequently suffer due to the accepted traditional format of subtitling which not conducive towards creative translation decisions that could mitigate the loss of humour or even add more humour. Literal translations, while promoting consistency when there is no external control towards it, often strip

CSRs of their humour, leaving Spanish-speaking audiences with disjointed or confusing references. WOWPresentsPlus's subtitles, especially those seemingly machine-translated, exacerbate this issue, at times failing even basic accessibility. However, the study also identified opportunities for improvement. Since *RPDR* cultivates a self-referential universe, translators could mitigate losses by adopting a more systematic approach to recurring CSRs (e.g., catchphrases or iconic quotes). For instance, the occasional creative solutions in Netflix—such as relevant adaptations or additions—demonstrate that meeting marginal priorities (*adding humour, creative subtitling, linking to local drag communities*) can enhance middle-range success. Unfortunately, such efforts remain sporadic, constrained by industry norms that prioritise standardised formats over linguistic or technical playfulness.

Vulgarity and Taboo-Based Humour: Attenuation and the Loss of Transgression

The second part of the analysis examined the translation of sexually explicit and taboo humour, a core aspect of *RPDR*'s boundary-pushing culture. Here, subtitles overwhelmingly lean toward attenuation, omission or even textual bleeping that cannot be defined as anything but censorship, significantly diluting the programme's provocative spirit. This not only undermines middle-range priorities (maintaining humour and its characteristics) but also inadvertently violates top priorities (respecting the fandom) by implying that the source material's vulgarity is excessive or inappropriate. Such choices reflect broader power dynamics in translation, where dominant norms implicitly devalue queer modes of expression. Netflix's subtitles occasionally counter this trend with creative compensations—for example, using Spanish slang to approximate the original's raunchiness—but these are exceptions rather than rules. Meanwhile, WOW's inconsistent handling of vulgarity (e.g., machine-translated segments that render jokes incoherent) exacerbates the problem, at times even straying into prohibited priorities. Failing to engage with taboo humour doesn't just neuter the programme's comedy, it enacts a form of cultural silencing, contradicting the priority of awareness of unequal power dynamics.

Fan Resistance

The change in availability on Netflix, made it increasingly difficult for international fans to know how to access episodes from the franchise. The paywall required to access varied streaming platforms, the low-quality translations for earlier seasons in WOW (ostensibly the place where fans are meant to watch the programme), and the lack of translation for new episodes have driven the fans back to unofficial ways to access RPDR, circulating episodes through grassroots networks. In 2023, a Latine fan group even launched an unofficial Video On Demand platform, SoyQueer, created to host RPDR in its many iterations and a wide variety of content that might interest fans. Most of this content is presented with embedded subtitles in Spanish, which sometimes seem taken from official sources such as DVDs or TV recordings for older episodes but are sometimes are fan translated. This grassroots response highlights a missed opportunity for WOWPresentsPlus, which, as the programme's producer, could pioneer more innovative subtitling practices, embracing creative flexibility, collaborating with drag communities, and treating translation as an act of cultural preservation rather than a mere afterthought.

Implications for Translation and Future Research

This thesis's framework of translation priorities offers a scalable tool for evaluating translations of drag media, emphasising that humour and cultural specificity are not marginal concerns but core to preserving queer narratives. A lack of cultural knowledge or sensitivity sometimes leads into incurring in the only prohibited priority: disrespecting the object of fandom or the source culture, and in these cases it is especially obvious how this has a cascading effect on the whole translation. Through the analysis, it also becomes obvious that there is a stacking effect with the priorities: failing to meet all middle-range priorities often implies that the top priorities are not fully being met. Not even attempting to meet marginal priorities makes it less likely that middle-range priorities can be met. An outstanding translation manages to meet at least one marginal priority, most

middle-range priorities and all top priorities. This is an insight that can be useful to translators wishing to undertake the subtitling of similar media.

Future research could apply this framework to other languages or examine the inverse scenario: how English subtitles handle CSRs and taboo humour in non-English drag media (e.g., *RPDR España* or *Mexico*). Such work could reveal whether the same compromises persist when translating *into* English, or if power dynamics shift when the cultural flow is reversed.

Ultimately, *RPDR*'s Spanish subtitles for Hispanic America exemplify the broader struggles of audiovisual translation in drag culture. While constraints like time, space, and platform regulations are real, they should not justify erasing what makes drag transformative: its irreverence, its linguistic inventiveness, and its defiance of respectability. Two lines of grammatically correct white or yellow text sitting neatly at the bottom of the screen are simply not enough and not adequate to translate a culture that bubbles with transgression, creativity and, most importantly, humour.

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