WTF! Taboo Language in TV Series: An Analysis of Professional and Amateur Translation

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Caliban: "You taught me language, and my profit on't,
Is I know how to curse."
(W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2)

1. CENSORSHIP AND STRONG LANGUAGE IN AVT

Strong or taboo language and censorship have always been two closely interconnected issues. Several academic studies have recently focused on the translation of taboo language and swearing in Italian dubbing. Azzaro (2005), Bianchi (2008), Bucaria (2007, 2009), Chiaro (2000, 2007), Galassi (2000), Ledvinka (2010), Parini (2013), Pavesi and Maliverno (2000), Ranzato (2009) found that strong language is generally toned down if not deleted in Italian dubbed films and TV series.

According to Bucaria (2007: 235), censorial intervention is still commonly found in Italy, where the large majority of audiovisual programmes is imported from the United States and translated from American English. In both cinema and TV screening, dubbing is the form of AVT that allows for text manipulation without the audience noticing it, unless they are familiar with the original version. When watching a dubbed product, the audience has no way of knowing to what extent the translated text has been modified or censored (ibid.: 236).

In Italy, a censorial board is in charge of checking the suitability of films to be screened in cinemas (for everybody, for adults only, for over-fourteens only) and a similar body governs television programmes (Chiaro 2007: 256). When a TV programme contains strong scenes or language that are deemed inappropriate for children, both state-owned and private channels signal the suitability of the programme (e.g. adult viewing, viewing with parental guidance, family viewing) by using a verbal or visual warning (for example, symbols such as a red circle indicating that the programme is only for adults, a yellow circle indicating viewing with parental guidance, and a green circle indicating that the programme can be seen by all viewers). In addition, programmes that are considered appropriate for adults only tend to be screened late at night, what is known as *seconda serata*.[1] Chiaro (ibid.: 257) affirms that "where and by whom such decisions for television are made, […] remains unclear".

When it comes to the translation of TV programmes, the commissioners seem to be those who have the power to decide what can be said in Italian and what should be left out, according to a series of factors such as network policy, national regulations, expectations about the target audience and the time slot in which the programme will be aired. More subjective factors may also influence translation choices, such as translators' self-censorship or even incompetence (Bucaria 2007: 236). Bucaria (ibid.) and Chiaro (2007: 257) also suggest that dialogue writers are sometimes provided by commissioners with 'black-lists' of words that are not allowed in dubbed versions and references to taboo concepts that should be avoided because they might offend Italian viewers. However, as explained by Chiaro (ibid.), "no clear evidence of such a list can be found".

The aim of this paper is to focus on the translation of strong language, especially when swearwords are used to refer to taboo subjects. Two contemporary US TV series are taken into consideration, *Girls* and *Orange is the New Black*, together with their respective Italian dubbed versions and the subtitles made by fansubbers. These two series have been selected as significant cases of controversial shows characterised by an extensive use of strong language closely connected with the taboo topics and situations they represent on screen. Examples from the first seasons of the series are analysed in an attempt to show how dubbing and fansubbing deal with this problematic area of AVT.

1.1 Taboo Language and Swearing

A variety of terms exists to refer to language used in "its most highly charged state" (Hughes 1991: xvi): strong language, bad language, taboo language, dirty language, foul language, and swearing, just to mention a few. Swearwords are terms deriving from taboo subjects that are used as expressions of emotion, such as anger, surprise,

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[1] In the Italian TV system, there is a distinction between *prima serata* or prime time, from 9:00 pm to 11:00-11:30 pm, and *seconda serata*, which usually begins at 11:00-11:30 pm.

fear, disgust, awe, hatred, and the like. Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 53) suggest that "swearing can be defined as a type of language use in which the expression (a) refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture; (b) should not be interpreted literally; (c) can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes". According to Allan and Burridge (2006: 250), "tabooed expressions include sexual and scatological obscenities, ethnic-racial slurs, insults, name-calling, profanity, blasphemy, slang, jargon and vulgarities of all kinds, including the forbidden words of non-standard grammar".

Every community has its own taboo words and, consequently, swearwords based on different cultural, social, religious, and historical factors. For Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 15), taboo words in Western cultures are related to the following areas: sexual organs and sexual relations; religion; human waste or excrement; death or disease; the physically or mentally disabled; prostitution; and narcotics or crime. Sex is a sort of intercultural taboo that many cultures share. McEnery (2005: 30) suggests a division of swearwords into five categories: religion (*God*, *Jesus Christ*), sex (*fuck*), excrements (*shit*), sexist terms of abuse (*bitch*) and physical and mental handicaps (*spastic*).

Swearwords can serve several functions, as shown by various studies. Pinker (2007: 350) lists five different ways in which people can swear: "descriptively (*Let's fuck*), idiomatically (*It's fucked up*), abusively (*Fuck you*, *motherfucker!*), emphatically (*This is fucking amazing*), and cathartically (*Fuck!!!*)". Tartamella (2006: 9), in the first extensive Italian psycholinguistic book on swearing, affirms that civilisation could not exist without swearwords and states that at the beginning of civilization, men learned to hurl insults and vulgarities instead of throwing rocks at each other. According to the scholar, swearwords are the language of emotions, they are like magical words that have the power to express the inexpressible, and function more as actions than words in that they produce all sorts of effects, revealing a great deal about the person who utters them.

Taboo words, swearwords, and emotionally charged utterances such as interjections and exclamations are characteristic of "marked speech" (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 187) and are commonly exploited in films to convey characterisation. As Perego and Taylor (2009: 59) point out, "It is through talking that information is exchanged, that a genre or specific era are characterised, that characters are introduced and their identity revealed, that emotions are expressed, and relationships are shown." In other words, a "character's speech is an important part of his personality" (Tveit 2004: 16). Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 187) suggest that translators "should respect characters' manner of speaking, not only the content of their interventions". Emotionally charged language such as taboo language, swearwords and interjections often fulfils a connotative rather than denotative function, and it can be idiosyncratic or bound to specific situations and/or groups. Therefore, their translation is crucial to contribute to characterisation and to fulfil a thematic function in the translated production too. If a character in a film or TV series makes use of taboo or swearwords and the translated version conceals or reduces them, the emotional power of language risks being lost in translation.

2. STRONG LANGUAGE IN TV SERIES

The TV series chosen for the analysis are representative of what seems to be the most recent trend in American TV shows, which are increasingly characterised by strong language, explicit references to sexual activities, violence, drug use, and political incorrectness in general. After the incredibly successful series *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), sex has become an essential feature of many TV series produced in the US and subsequently imported in Italy, and it is a most prominent feature of *Girls* and *Orange is the New Black*, both visually and verbally.

2.1 *Girls*

Girls is a comedy-drama, also known as dramedy, first broadcast in 2012 on HBO. The show is created, directed and also interpreted by Lena Dunham. The comedy tells the story of a group of girls in their twenties living in New York: Hannah (Lena Dunham), a narcissistic aspiring writer who is cut off financially by her parents and tries to make her living in Brooklyn; Marnie (Allison Williams), Hannah's best-friend and roommate; Jessa (Jemima Kirke), a British bohemian and unpredictable globetrotter; Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet), Jessa's lively and naive American cousin; and Adam (Adam Driver), Hannah's friend with benefits, an aloof and selfish young man. Each season consists of 10 episodes of 30 minutes each.

The show, extremely successful in the US, recounts the experiences of misfit young people who struggle with adulthood, showing them at their worst moments and explicitly depicting their self-destruction. Like other innovative, controversial shows broadcast by HBO, like *Sex and the City*, *Girls* resorts to strong visual cues, with scenes displaying nudity and sexual activity, and to strong language, through the recurrent use of invectives and swearwords, often from the sexual sphere and closely connected to the slang spoken by young New Yorkers. As stated by Lena Dunham, the show is supposed to be honest and true to many aspects of life, and is targeted not only at women and men in their twenties, but also at older viewers interested in understanding how the younger generation lives.[2]

The first four seasons of the show (2012-2015) were broadcast on HBO at 10pm, and a fifth season is scheduled for 2016. The first season was broadcast in Italy on MTV from October to December 2012, while the second season was aired on the same channel from January to March 2013.[3] The Italian time slot for *Girls* was late at night: 11.10 pm. The Italian DVD version is not available on the market.

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[2] <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/241784/girls-talk-hbo-comedy-series-takes-young-adulth.html> (30 September 2015).

[3] Dubbing performed by Cast Doppiaggio Srl, Italian dialogue by Tatiana Visonà and dubbing director is Massimiliano Alto.

2.2 *Orange is the New Black*

Orange Is the New Black (*OITNB*), based on Piper Kerman's memoir, *Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison* (2010), is a US dramedy series created by Jenji Kohan and first released on the streaming service Netflix in July 2013. The second season premiered in June 2014, the third was released a year later in June 2015 and a fourth season is scheduled for 2016. Each season consists of 13 episodes of some 50 to 55 minutes each.

The series tells the story of Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling), a 32-year-old girl living in Brooklyn, who is sentenced to 15 months in Litchfield Penitentiary, a women's federal prison. When younger, Piper had carried a suitcase full of dirty money to her former girlfriend Alex Vause (Laura Prepon), an international drug dealer, who later named Piper in her trial, causing her arrest. The series starts ten years after the crime, when Piper has moved on to a quiet, decent life among New York's upper middle class, and her sudden and unexpected arrest seriously disrupts her relationship with her fiancé Larry (Jason Biggs) and her family. In prison, Piper is reunited with Alex and meets her fellow prisoners in the B-Dorm. The episodes often show flashbacks of significant events from the inmates' past, explaining how they came to be in prison. Their stories raise issues of love, friendship and family, homosexuality, sexual identity, mental illness, the role of religion, drug abuse in prison, corrupt staff, the troubled relationship between prisoner and jailor, and the almost complete lack of guidance for life after prison.

OITNB, described by *Entertainment Weekly* in May 2014 as "the strangest, kinkiest and most surprising hit on TV",[4] has received critical acclaim and won several accolades, among which four Emmy Awards, three Critics Choice Awards, Best Comedy Series (2015 Television Critic Awards), Best International TV Series at the TLVFest LGBT Media Awards and Favorite TV Dramedy at the 41st People's Choice Awards. *OITNB* is a revolutionary show in both form and content. First, Netflix released the episodes all at once, giving birth to what is now known as television marathoning or binge-watching. Secondly, with its plot dealing with race, class, and criminal justice, *OITNB* has shed light on largely unexplored issues on television, advancing the visibility of transgender individuals,[5] emphasising diversity in casting and challenging heteronormativity.

The first season of *OITNB* was first released in Italy[6] on the pay-per-view streaming platform Infinity (Mediaset) in June 2014, subsequently on the pay-per-view channel Mya (Mediaset Premium) in September 2014 (at 9 pm, *prima serata*), and finally on the state-owned digital channel Rai4 late at night (at 10:50 pm, *seconda serata*). The second season was aired on the channel Mya in November 2014, whilst

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[4] <http://oitnb.com/oitnb-ladies-make-cover-ew-may-2014-issue> (30 September 2015).
[5] Laverne Cox, with her role as Sophia Burset, is the first transgender black woman to appear in a TV series.
[6] Dubbing performed by Video Sound Service; Italian dialogue by Barbara Berengo, Antonella Damigelli, Roberta Fregonese, Marina Guadagno, Anna Rita Pasanisi, Roberta Pelliccioni, and Susanna Piferi; dubbing directors: Anna Rita Pasanisi and Isabella Pasanisi.

the third season was released on Infinity in June 2015 and later broadcast on the pay-per-view channel Premium Stories (Mediaset Premium) in September 2015. The Italian DVD version is not available on the market.

3. THE TRANSLATION OF STRONG LANGUAGE: DUBBING AND FANSUBBING

In her study, Ledvinka (2010) analysed a corpus of six films produced in the period 1987-200, focusing on the dubbing of swearwords in Italian. Her findings reveal that censorship and self-censorship still play an important role in the work of the translator-adaptor: only 65% of the total number of swearwords appearing in the original dialogue are maintained in the dubbed versions. Bucaria (2007, 2009) and Chiaro (2007) carried out similar studies focusing on the translation of controversial TV series, and their findings highlight a general tendency in Italian dubbing to deleting and toning down strong language. However, the trend is not consistent and the level of censorship varies from one TV show to the other, probably for economic and marketing reasons. As far as dubbing is concerned, there does not seem to be a coherent approach to the transfer of expletives and the above-mentioned studies paint a fragmented picture that suggests the existence of a certain amount of subjectivity and arbitrariness in the process of translation.

In a country such as Italy, where dubbing is still the main mode of audiovisual translation, the phenomenon of fan translation is gaining more and more visibility. Fansubs (i.e. subtitles produced by fans) are nowadays the most important manifestation of fan translation (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006). Fansubbers are amateur translators who subtitle for free foreign TV productions that still have to be broadcast domestically and share their translation freely on the web. Communities of amateur translators such as *Italian Subs Addicted* and *Subsfactory* provide subtitles in Italian for animated Japanese films and for a vast number of US and British TV shows. Fansubbers fight against Italian official programming practices and, in particular, against the delays in the Italian scheduling of US TV shows (Barra 2009: 517). These communities enjoy a professional-style organisation, in which not every fan can become a fansubber, since all would-be fansubbers have to pass an entry test that verifies their linguistic and translation skills before joining the communities (ibid.).

In terms of translation approach, fansubbers try to offer an alternative to dubbing, which is often accused by fan groups of simplifying the semantic and cultural complexity of the original text. Fansubbers' main rule is to preserve the foreign nature of the source text as much as possible, in order to allow fans to enjoy the shows without the cultural lens of dubbing. Fansubbers try to respect the cultural and stylistic flavour of the original, adopting translation solutions that range from literal to creative renderings. This literal approach to translation results in the conservation of key features of the original version, such as the abundance of swearwords. Fansubs can be the first contact the audience have with audiovisual materials in their target language: this may affect the choices available for official translators, since often the amateur translation of nicknames or catchphrases can

become so popular that the target audience expects them to be kept in the official translation (Ferrer Simó 2005).

The amateur subtitles analysed in this paper have been produced by one of the most popular fansubbing communities in Italy, namely *Italian Subs Addicted* (www.italiansubs.net).

3.1 Swearwords

In this section, examples containing coarse language that is generally considered offensive, mainly pertaining to the sexual/scatological sphere, sexual identity, and blasphemy, will be discussed. Table 1 provides a quantitative account of the number of swearwords found in the pilot episodes of the two series in the English and in the Italian versions (dubbed and fansubbed):[7]

	English	**Italian dubbed version**	**Italian fansubs**
Girls	41	26	37
OITNB	56	50	52

Table 1. Number of swearwords in the English and Italian versions

As Table 1 shows, the two TV series present a high rate of invectives in English, with more than one being heard every minute. A comparison with the Italian dubbed versions of the pilot episodes highlights a low rate of deletion in *OITNB*, where 89% of swearwords have been maintained in the translation, and a higher rate of omission in *Girls*, where 63% of the total number of English swearwords have made it to the Italian dubbing. As for fansubbing, the tendency to maintain expletives is virtually the same in both series: 90% for *Girls* and 92% for *OITNB*.

From these quantitative data it can be inferred that while dubbing does not seem to follow a consistent set of rules in the translation of taboo and coarse language, fansubbers adopt a more literal strategy which is regularly applied. Even though their translations are not professional and may present technical and linguistic inaccuracies, their faithful approach to translation does not seem to be influenced by any particular form of self-censorship.

3.1.1 Four-letter words: *fuck* and *shit*

According to Jay (1999: 261-262), the four-letter word 'fuck'—together with its different variations—is one of the most common swearwords in the US. The results of his research analysing data recorded in college communities in Los Angeles and Boston show that 'fuck' and 'shit' account for 50% of the total cursing episodes.

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[7] The quantitative analysis was carried out focusing on the pilot episodes of the two shows, while the qualitative analysis focused on the entire seasons.

Interestingly, the dominance of these two terms is also found in the two series under analysis: throughout the first season of *OITNB*, the 'f-word'—together with its morphological variants—is the most uttered swearword appearing 437 times, followed by 'shit', which appears 292 times. In the first season of *Girls*, 'fuck' appears 216 times, while 'shit' is uttered 60 times.

'Fuck' is one of the most feared and flexible terms in the English language (Spears 1982: 158). According to *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) "the word **fuck** remains—and has been for centuries—one of the most taboo words in English". Used as a verb and a noun, it mostly refers to sexual intercourse or to the act of ruining something. Used as an exclamation or an intensifier, its function is to express anger, annoyance, contempt, impatience, surprise, or simply emphasis (especially in its form as a modifier, 'fucking'). Because of its polysemous nature, the f-word is usually translated into Italian in a variety of ways. In the pilot episode of *OITNB*, 'fuck' and 'shit' are repeated 22 times and in the pilot of *Girls* they are uttered 16 times, accounting in both cases for 40% of the total number of expletives.

In the pilot episode of *OITNB*, all the occurrences of 'fuck' and its variants were translated in the dubbed version (see Table 2), and they were also translated, apart from one, in the fansubbers' version (example 11). A wider range of translation solutions can be observed in the dubbed version where the intensifier ('fuck', 'fucking') that modifies nouns, adjectives and verbs is rendered with different exclamations in Italian such as *cazzo* [cock], *vaffanculo* [fuck you], or with compensatory solutions in which a different swearword is used in order to maintain the same impact in the target text (9-11). In example 9, 'fucking white girl' becomes *questa stronza di bianca* [this white bitch] in the dubbed version, while fansubbers prefer a more literal translation with *la cazzo di ragazza bianca* [the prick white girl]. In general, fansubbers seem to favour the term *cazzo* (and the variants *cazzo di* + noun, *cazzata*) to translate 'fuck/fucking' when used as an emphatic intensifier or interjection (1-6, 8, 10).

Original version	Dubbed version	Fansubbing
1. You're a **fucking** waitress.	**Cazzo**, fai la cameriera.	Sei una **cazzo** di cameriera.
2. And who the **fuck** asked you?	E chi **cazzo** te l'ha chiesto?	E chi **cazzo** te l'ha chiesto?
3. It's not **fucking** working again.	Questo **cazzo** di computer non funziona.	Non funziona di nuovo, **cazzo**.
4. **Fuck** no.	**Cazzo**, no!	Col **cazzo**!
5. What the **fuck**?	Ma che **cazzo**?	Che **cazzo** fa?
6. How the **fuck** are you going to jail tomorrow.	Come **cazzo** puoi andare in galera domani?	Come **cazzo** è possibile che tu vada in prigione, domani?
7. **Fuck** her. **Fuck** her.	**Vaffanculo. Vaffanculo**.	Che se ne vada a **fanculo**. Che se ne vada a **fanculo**.
8. That was an epic **fuck** up.	Figura di **merda** epica.	Hai fatto una **cazzata** epocale.
9. Now get the **fuck** out	Adesso fuori dalle **palle**.	Adesso sciacquati dai **coglioni** però!

of the way.		
10. **Fucking** white girl speaks Spanish.	Anche questa **stronza** di bianca parla spagnolo.	Anche la **cazzo** di ragazza bianca sa lo spagnolo.
11. How hard is it to **fucking** count?	Questi **coglioni** non sanno neanche contare.	Quanto sarà mai difficile contare?

Table 2. *OITNB* Pilot episode: translations of 'fuck'

In the pilot episode of *Girls*, two occurrences of 'fucking' used as a modifier are not translated in the dubbed version (examples 16, 21), and the same happens in the fansubbers' version where only two omissions of the intensifier 'fucking' occur (examples 19, 21). It is interesting to note how the verb 'fuck' used in its principal sexual meaning (i.e. to have sex) is rendered with a mitigated expression in the Italian dubbed version *farsi qualcuno* [to have sex with someone] in example 22, while it is transferred with a more forceful verb in the fansubbed version *scopare* [to shag], though still avoiding its more literal translation *fottere* [to fuck].

Original version	Dubbed version	Fansubbing
12. You're so **fucking** classy.	**Cazzo**, se hai classe.	Sei così di classe, **cazzo**.
13. You should never be anyone's **fucking** slave.	Non devo permettere a nessuno di fare di te la sua schiava.	Non dovresti essere la schiava di nessuno, **cazzo**.
14. **Fuck**	**Cazzo**	**Cazzo**
15. It's **fucking** incredible	E' incredibile **cazzo**.	E' incredibile, **cazzo**.
16. It's affordable. It's **fucking** consistent	A prezzi ragionevoli e qualità uniforme.	E' economico. E' coerente, **cazzo**.
17. I'm **fucking** pregnant	Sono incinta **porca puttana**	Sono incinta, **cazzo**.
18. But you're getting played by a major **fucking** player!	Ti stai facendo fregare da una consumata attrice del **cazzo**!	Ma ti stai facendo **infinocchiare** da una professionista!
19. I want to sit by a **fucking** lake	Voglio sedermi davanti a un **cazzo** di lago.	Voglio starmene seduta in riva al lago!
20. It was really fun when she **fucked** Carolyn's boyfriend. She didn't **fuck** your boyfriend.	Divertente quando **si è fatta** il ragazzo di Carolyn. Sì, ma non **si è fatta** il tuo.	Sì, è stato davvero divertente quando si è **scopata** il ragazzo di Carolyn. Non si è **scopata** il tuo.
21. I haven't applied for a job in a long **fucking** time	E' parecchio che non cerco un lavoro, bimba.	Non faccio un colloquio di lavoro da una vita.

Table 3. *Girls* Pilot episode: translations of 'fuck'

Table 4 shows the translation of 'shit' in the pilot episode of *OITNB*. Professional adaptors and fansubbers have translated this four-letter word by using mainly three

strategies: close rendering, where the swearword is translated literally *merda*, as in example 22; substitution, where the original term used as an exclamation is rendered with a different swearword in Italian that conveys a similar pragmatic intensity (23, 24); and complete omission (25-27). It is surprising to notice that professional translators and fansubbers have decided to omit the exact same occurrences of 'shit', which perhaps suggests that fansubbers' activity might sometimes have an influence on professional translators. The decision to omit 'shit' in examples 25 and 26 may be related to the personality of the character speaking, Larry, Piper's boyfriend, who is portrayed as a weak, shy, insecure man, as opposed to his strong, unconventional, and courageous girlfriend. In example 27, the character uttering the line is Sophia Burset, a transgender inmate who works as the prison's hairdresser: she is portrayed as a very kind person who cares about the other inmates and loves being a woman, especially after the difficulties she had to face before and during the transition phase. As there are no constraints imposed by the audiovisual nature of the text (i.e. lip synchronisation) since the character shows her back to the camera while speaking, the choice to omit the swearword may be related to the character's feminine side and her kind personality. Incidentally, it must be noted that the voice used to dub her character is very masculine, which does not reflect the quality of Sophia Burset's original voice in English.

Original version	Dubbed version	Fansubbing
22. I look like **shit**.	Sto di **merda**.	Sto di **merda**.
23. Tough **shit**.	Oh **cazzo**!	**Cazzi** tuoi!
24. Holy **shit**!	**Porca troia**.	**Porca puttana**.
25. I gotta lock this **shit** down before you leave, Pipes.	Devo riuscire a blindarti prima che tu vada via, Pipe.	Devo fare in modo che tu sia davvero mia prima che tu parta, Pipes.
26. Piper, listen to me, you cannot lose your **shit**.	Piper non devi perdere la testa	Piper, ascoltami, non puoi dare di matto, ok?
27. She'll burn the **shit** out of your scalp.	Quella te li brucia i capelli	Quella ti brucia il cuoio capelluto.

Table 4. *OITNB* Pilot episode: translations of 'shit'

Table 5 shows the translation of 'shit' in the pilot episode of *Girls*. While professional translators frequently leave it out (28, 30) or tone it down (31), fansubbers tend to be more faithful to the pragmatic force of the expletive (28, 29, 31), except for one case of omission (30).

Original version	Dubbed version	Fansubbing
28. I was comp lit and it hasn't done **shit**.	Io con la letteratura comparata ci ho fatto zero.	La laurea non serve. Io ho fatto letterature comparate ma non è servito a un **cazzo**.
29. No, I mean I wouldn't take **shit**	Insomma, dai miei non vorrei un **cazzo**.	Cioè, io non prenderei un **cazzo** dai miei genitori. Sono dei buffoni.

from my parents.		
30. When I get back, I want you in the exact same position, but take all the rest of the **shit** off.	Quando torno ti voglio nella stessa identica posizione, ma togliti tutta quella roba.	Quando torno ti voglio nella stessa esatta posizione ma... togliti tutto.
31. Every time I do coke, I **shit** my pants.	Ogni volta che mi faccio di coca mi **caco** addosso.	Con la coca, mi **cago** addosso.

Table 5. *Girls* Pilot episode: translations of 'shit'

As illustrated in the examples above, the behaviour of fansubbers is all but arbitrary; on the contrary, their faithful approach to the source text is a regular trait in their translation solutions, which can contribute to preserving the style and register of the original.

3.1.2 Sex

In *Girls* and *OITNB* references to sexual activities, sexual organs and scatological references are numerous. For reasons of space, only a limited number of examples from the episodes of the first seasons of *Girls* and *OITNB* will be included in the following paragraphs.

The term 'cunt', "by far the strongest of genitalia-related items" (Azzaro 2005: 38), is occasionally used, both to denote the organ itself and as a form of insult. As Table 6 shows, professional translators opt for the Italian equally vulgar corresponding term *fica* to translate 'cunt' (32, 34, 35) and *passera* and *patata* to translate 'pussy' (36, 39). Interestingly, the fansubbers of *OITNB* consistently opt for the term *figa* not only to translate 'cunt' but also to translate 'pussy'. According to Chiaro (2009: 269), *figa* is "a sort of supra-regional highly taboo term in which a series of Italian informants claim that the 'g' makes all the difference (cf. fica)". However, the term *figa* is now used by Italian speakers in some regions as an interjection, thus partially losing its strong sexual connotation. On the other hand, the fansubbers of *Girls* often omit the term altogether, using a vulgar expression to refer to a sexual activity (39).

As for male genitalia, the most frequent term in both series is 'dick', translated with the vulgar *cazzo* or the only slightly vulgar *uccello* by fansubbers and professional translators in *OITNB*. The dubbed version of *Girls*, on the other hand, prefers the mitigated term *pisello*. From these examples, it is clear that the vulgar term *figa* is one of the 'forbidden' words in dubbing, while *cazzo* is avoided only in certain dubbed shows, such as in the case of *Girls*.

Original version	Dubbed version	Fansubbing
32. Baby, it's a **cunt**. Huh? It stretches. (*OITNB* 1x05)	Piccola, è una **fica**. Si allarga.	Tesoro. E' una **figa**.

		Eh? Si dilata.
33. She is a **cunt**. I'm an embarrassment. (*OITNB* 1x01)	E' una **stronza** e si vergogna di me.	E' una **stronza**. Io sono una vergogna.
34. How are things with you and super-**cunt**? (*OITNB* 1x06)	Come vanno le cose tra te e super **fica**?	Come vanno le cose tra te e la super **troia**?
35. I'm gonna go eat her **cunt** on the sidewalk right now. (*Girls* 1x08)	Le leccherò la **fica** sul marciapiede adesso.	ora andrò qui fuori a **leccargliela** fino a farla svenire.
36. You like **pussy**, Piper? Or do you prefer pipes as your name suggests? (*OITNB* 1x01)	Ti piace la **passera** Piper? O preferisci le pipe come suggerisce il tuo nome?	Ti piace la **passera**, Piper? O preferisci fare le pippe come suggerisce il tuo nome?
37. Well, she's gotta start working on tightening her **pussy** muscles, 'cause her fiance's **dick** is so small, it's like a hot dog in a hallway. (*OITNB* 1x06)	Deve stringere la sua **fica** perché il **cazzo** del suo fidanzato è così piccolo che sembra un hotdog in un corridoio.	Vedi, lei deve iniziare a far Stringere i muscoli della **figa** perché il **cazzo** del suo fidanzato è così piccolo che è come un hot dog in un salone.
38. That bitch got a plastic **pussy** or some shit. (*OITNB* 1x06)	Questa stronza ha una **fica** di plastica o qualche altro trucchetto di merda.	Questa troietta ha una **figa** di plastica o qualche cazzata del genere.
39. Oh, and I like to eat **pussy**, too. (*Girls* 1x04)	Ah, e mi piace leccare la **patata**.	Oh e mi piace anche **leccarla**.
40. Is that what you think this is about? That I like **dick**? (*OITNB* 1x11)	Davvero pensi che sia per questo? Perché mi piace il **cazzo**?	Credi che si tratti di questo? Che mi piaccia il **cazzo**?
41. That is a big **dick**. (*Girls* 1x04)	Ha un **pisello** bello grosso	E' proprio un **cazzo** grosso.
42. I don't want a picture of your **dick**. (*Girls* 1x04)	Non voglio una foto del tuo **pisello**.	E poi non voglio una foto del tuo **uccello**.

Table 6. Translation of vulgar terms referring to genitalia

3.1.3 Homophobic terms of abuse

Both *Girls* and *OITNB* make extensive use of terms of abuse of different kinds: animal ('pig', 'cow'), sexist ('bitch', 'whore'), intellect-based or related to disability ('idiot', 'dumb'), racist ('coconut'), and homophobic ('queer', 'faggot'). Homophobic terms of abuse, which frequently appear in both series, may be challenging to translate, especially when a corresponding derogative term is not available in Italian. Both professional translators and fansubbers seem to be aware of the derogative force of the terms, especially when it is a heterosexual character who uses the offensive expression to refer to a homosexual person (43, 46). An interesting case is the word 'dyke', which, originally meant to be an insult, has been 'domesticated' by many lesbians who now use it to refer to themselves or to other lesbians (44). However, it is still considered offensive to use this word if the speaker does not self-identify as one. In Italian, both 'dyke' and 'lesbian' converge into *lesbica* (45), which is not a derogative term unless it is modified by a pejorative adjective, such as in *brutta lesbica* [stupid lesbian]. In all the examples found in the corpus of analysis, 'dyke' has been translated by professional translators and fansubbers as *lesbica*, thus producing a more neutral effect in the target text.

Original version	Dubbed version	Fansubbing
43. - It hasn't become like a **gay** thing, has it? - No, fuck, no. **Gay**! The 'stache is not for **fags**, it's for fuckin' men. Yeah. It's **fuckin'** all-beef, fucking **cunt**-ramming awesome. (*OITNB* 1x08)	- Non è diventato da **gay** avere i baffi? - No **cazzo** non è da **gay**. I baffi non sono da **finocchio**. Sono da uomini veri. Già. Da uno tutto muscoli. E sono una calamita per le **passere**.	Non sono diventati una cosa dei **gay**, vero? No, cazzo no! **Gay**! I baffi non sono per i **finocchi**. Sono per gli uomini veri, **cazzo**. - Sì. - Sono per i duri, **cazzo**, sono splendori attira-**figa**.
44. I just think it would have been smarter for her to pick a **dyke**. A real **dyke**. (*OITNB* 1x06)	Avrebbe fatto meglio a scegliere una vera **lesbica**.	Pensavo solo che fosse più furbo scegliere una **lesbica**. Una vera **lesbica**.
45. Yeah and if I wanted to go on some dates, I would. But I don't, because they're for **lesbians**. (*Girls* 1x02)	Se volessi andare a certi appuntamenti, ci andrei. Ma non ci vado, perché è roba da **lesbiche**.	Se volessi degli appuntamenti, li avrei. Ma non lo faccio, perché è una cosa da **lesbiche**.
46. You dated Hannah for two years when all the while you were a secret **queer**. (*Girls* 1x07)	Tu sei stato con Anna per due anni e in tutto quel tempo tu eri segretamente **frocio**.	Sei stato con Hannah per due anni, e tutto il tempo hai tenuto segreto di essere...

		finocchio.

Table 7. Translation of homophobic terms of abuse

3.1.4 Religion and profanity

References to God or Jesus Christ, and other blasphemous expressions like 'goddamn' or 'Jesus fucking Christ', tend to be mitigated in the dubbed versions, while fansubbers once again opt for more literal renderings. While the expression 'Oh my God' is usually rendered literally as *O mio Dio* in both translated versions, other potentially offensive exclamations such as 'Jesus!' and 'Jesus Christ!'—especially when the modifier fucking is used—are often dubbed through the strategy of substitution (47, 48) while fansubbers opt for literal solutions. However, various irreverent comments on Jesus and the Catholic religion have not been censored in the Italian dubbed version (49).

Source text	Dubbed text	Fansubbing
47. Jesus fucking Christ! (*OITNB* 1x07)	Porca di quella troia!	Cazzo, Gesu' Cristo.
48. Jesus fucking Christ! (*Girls* 1x01)	Ma che cazzo stai facendo?	Cristo santo, cazzo.
49. You know you would have gone my way if you hadn't married Jesus. (*OITNB* 1x01)	Andiamo sorella me l'avresti data se non fossi andata con Gesù.	Dai, sorella. Sai che saresti venuta con me se non avessi sposato Gesù.

Table 8. Translation of blasphemy and profanity

3.1.5 Visual censorship

From February until May 2015, the state-owned digital channel Rai4 broadcast the first season of *OITNB*, in which a few scenes displaying both lesbian and heterosexual intercourse were cut whenever the omission was possible (e.g. during overlapping scenes). A form of visual censorship was applied in spite of the dubbed version containing a high number of occurrences of swearwords and taboo language, however mitigated compared to the original. Fans of the show who had previously watched the episodes, either in the original version or on the pay-per-view channel, complained when noticing the censoring, posting angry comments on *OITNB* official pages on different social media like Facebook and Twitter.[8]

It could be argued that dubbing is becoming more 'vulnerable' to the judgment of a more conscious and informed audience, who is often already familiar with shows imported from the US, most of the time thanks to the activity of fansubbing communities who share their translations on the web.

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[8] <https://www.facebook.com/OITNBIta/?fref=ts> (17 December 2015).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that contemporary Italian TV audiences are more and more used to obscenities and vulgarities that frequently populate local TV programmes, such as reality and talk shows, it seems that the trend in audiovisual translation is still one of toning down the disturbing nature of imported shows. The findings of the present paper mainly confirm those in Bucaria's study (2009: 1), according to which, as far as Italian dubbing is concerned,
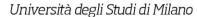
> no recurring patterns indicating a specific rationale for the deletion or toning down of swearwords or other potentially disturbing elements seemed to emerge from the analysis, perhaps suggesting a certain level of arbitrariness in the translational choices.

However, the analysis in this paper has also highlighted that this tendency towards linguistic standardisation is perhaps gradually and slightly changing. While the dubbing of *Girls* presents several cases of omission or weakening strategies, whereby the potentially offensive elements have been translated with milder equivalents, the dubbed version of *OITNB* is characterised by an extensive use of swearwords and strong language that follow the original dialogue closely.

The different translation approaches found in the dubbing of *OITNB* and *Girls* may be due to a number of reasons, such as the different dubbing companies in charge of the translation, the channel broadcasting the show, the scheduling of the show in terms of time slots, the expected audience, and the translators' different levels of self-censorship. Furthermore, the setting and the subject matter of the show may have had an influence on the translation: while *OITNB* is set in a prison, where inmates are expected to use bad language, *Girls* revolves around the lives of young women living in New York, therefore the use of swearing is probably considered less relevant.

Although the dubbed version of *OITNB* presents less text manipulation than that of *Girls* in terms of rendering strong language, fansubs certainly represent a more faithful, uncensored version that reveals an attempt to give more importance to the original text rather than to the target audience's sensitivity. Changing the level of tabooisation in the target text means changing the original author's intention as well as the nature of the text, highlighting that "the audiovisual translation industry takes the public into greater account than the author himself" (Ranzato 2009: 46).

As a final note, it should be pointed out that further research is needed concerning the translation of strong language in TV shows, in order to verify the extent to which adaptation choices are subject to a consistent set of criteria. Moreover, it could be useful to investigate TV audience's expectations in order to find out what Italian viewers find or do not find acceptable.

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