

Dubbing *The Flintstones* and *The Simpsons* in French. A Comparative Perspective between France and Québec

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation conducts a comparative study of the dubbing of two American animated TV series, *The Flintstones* and *The Simpsons*, in two francophone regions/countries, Québec and France. Since audiovisual products are complex blends of semiotic signs, in which the interplay between the visuals and the verbal is crucial to the understanding of the product, and since these products convey their own cultural world, the study is led along three axes: the verbal/nonverbal dynamics, the language(s) used in the dubbing and cultural references. While most theories rely on either a linguistic or a cultural approach to the dubbing process and product, the present research creates a bridge between both and offers an interdisciplinary analysis.

The dubbed shows are conceived as processes and products of the “contact zones” understood as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 1991: 34). These contact zones create points of tensions inscribed within a power play at the industrial, linguistic and cultural levels. The dubbing industry is conceived as a space of negotiations or a contact zone between the local and the global characterized by power relations. The dubbing process becomes a subversive “Third Space” (Bhabha 1994: 36) in both versions, a space in between the verbal/visual dynamics, language(s) and cultures that generates a semi-(in)visible translation.

The present interlinguistic and interlingual research presents a three-tier methodological approach focusing on three axes within the dubbing process of *The Flintstones* and *The Simpsons* in France and Québec: (1) the language(s) used; (2) the verbal/visual dynamics and (3) the cultures in contacts. The contact zone will be the running thread of the present research relying on an interdisciplinary approach and will allow me to touch upon the politics within the dubbing industry and process.

Ultimately, both versions become rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) entities connecting heterogeneous elements within the dubbing process that blurs the TV series’ fixed identities. The translation becomes literally political in *The Flintstones* through multiple references to Québec’s language policies and figuratively in *The Simpsons* by featuring a meta-commentary on the state of the dubbing industry as an invisible art. The French version incarnates a limbo place or a Third Space in *The Flintstones* matching its artificial Third language and, in *The Simpsons*, evolves towards a more concrete patchwork matching a more ‘authentic’ language.

Both France and Québec use American programs, their values and codes, as nodes from which to develop their own linguistic and cultural communities or identities; they produce adaptations that are not purely Americanized or “francisées/québécisées”. The dubbing process and product in that sense is a “becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari 106), a process that is always inbetween.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation, dubbing, France, hybridity, Québec, rhizome

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