

Fandubbing across time and space: from dubbing ‘by fans for fans’ to cyberdubbing

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Abstract

This chapter investigates a fandom-related phenomenon that has received scant academic attention so far: fandubbing. To understand the extent and impact of this participatory practice in the current mediatic landscape, the chapter sets out to examine fandubbing origins and to reflect on the motivations of those involved and on the needs met by fandubs at specific times. This will be done drawing on examples from fandubs created at different times and contexts. The variety of uses illustrate the plethora of motivations behind the phenomenon: while some fandubs are attempts from a fan community to address the lack of official dubbing of specific material, in other cases the aim is to express discontent, satirise, experiment, entertain audiences and even to achieve some kind of remuneration. These uses and motivations also question the suitability of the term fandubbing. Against this backdrop, and drawing on Díaz-Cintas (2018) conception of “cybersubtitles”, the chapter advocates using the term cyberdubbing to reflect the wide range of non-traditional online dubbing practices so prevalent nowadays, including both parodic and serious dubbing undertaken by fans, Internet users and digital influencers, be them professionals or amateurs.

Keywords: Fandubbing, parodic dubbing, fundubbing, cyberdubbing, activist dubbing, altruist dubbing, participatory culture

1. Introduction

The pervasiveness of fandom and fan-related practices is undeniable: we are surrounded by fans and embedded in a media ecology that nurtures their creations. Our understanding of these practices is now more comprehensive than it has ever been: dissected by fan scholarship and supported by networks of participatory culture (Jenkins 2006), fans are no longer those misunderstood and sneered at geeks. Yet, there are some areas in the realms of fandom that are still relatively underexplored. This is the case with fandubbing, which has received scant academic attention so far (Nord, Khoshsaligheh, and Ameri 2015; Spina Ali 2015; Wang and Zhang 2016) especially if compared to fansubbing, which has attracted much more interest in academia (see, among others, Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006; Dwyer 2017; Bogucki 2009; Massidda 2015; Pérez-González 2015; O’Hagan 2009; Nornes 2007; Orrego-Carmona 2015).

The use of fan, amateur or non-professional practices in the translation industry in general and within audiovisual translation (AVT) in particular unquestionably leads to much debate (see for instance, AVTE 2017) and foregrounds the need to address these issues from an academic perspective. Any attempt to understand the extent and impact of current participatory practices such as fansubbing and fandubbing without contextualising them and undertaking detailed investigation is futile. Indeed, this needs to be done within the remit of Translation Studies, to further define our discipline, whose borders and key principles are constantly being challenged (see, for instance, Chaume 2018).

To this end, this article sets out to explore the phenomenon of fandubbing by situating it in its current context, examining its origins and reflecting on the motivations of those involved in these translation practices. It also aims to explore how this collaborative and co-creational practice reflects the politics of dubbing, revealing similarities and divergences with official dubbing practices, as well as with other co-creational forms of AVT such as fansubbing. This will be done by drawing on examples from fandubs created at different times and contexts, with a strong emphasis on English and Spanish. The aim is by no means to provide a detailed analysis of these, but rather to use them to further our understanding of this phenomenon.

Due to the conspicuous role of anime in the origins of fandubbing, particular attention will be paid to anime fandom. Yet, the focus will be on media fandom in general, understood as “the recognition of a positive, personal, relatively deep emotional connection with a mediated element of popular culture” (Duffett 2013:2), which has emerged as a prolific phenomenon and has been transformed substantially in the past few years. Throughout this work, theoretical perspectives and notions through which fandubbing can be examined will be presented, framing this phenomenon in the current discussion of fan practices and participatory culture.

2. Historical approaches and current trends in fandubbing

The paramount role played by the Internet, social media and new technologies in fandubbing is highlighted in most of the definitions provided by authors investigating this phenomenon within Translation Studies. As such, Wang and Zhang (2016:173) define fandubbing as “the activity performed by Internet users who edit and dub video clips selected from some original contents [sic] (mostly TV programmes and films) and share these self-made productions on video-streaming websites”. In a similar vein, Chaume (2018:87) defines fandubs as follows:

home-made dubbings of television series, cartoons (particularly the anime genre) and trailers for films that have not yet been released in the target language country or region. Fandubs are usually translated and recorded by fans of the said genres; they download the film texts from the Internet and use a digital sound editing program in order to manipulate or eliminate the soundtrack of the original version, to then insert a newly dubbed track which they record at home using a microphone [...]. They are sometimes referred to as *fundubs*, when the main function of the ‘creative translation’ is parody; another name for them is *gag dubbing*, because of the witty and humorous nature of this type of home-developed dubbing.

Whereas the influence of technology and the Internet in the proliferation of fandubbing is undeniable, this phenomenon cannot be reduced to a technological trend and needs to be framed in ampler terms, considering the socio-cultural context in which it originated and was further developed. As Jenkins *et al.* (2006:8) posit “these activities become widespread only if the culture also supports them, if they fill recurring needs at a particular historical juncture”. Thus, discussing and reflecting on the motivations of fandubbers, and the needs met by fandubs at specific times, is of paramount importance. As shown in section 3 below, while some fandubs

are attempts from a community to address the lack of official dubbing of specific material, in other cases the aim is to express discontent, satirise, experiment and entertain audiences.

These motivations lie behind the very origin of fandubs which can be difficult to pinpoint exactly. Nord *et al.* (2015:2) suggest that the practice of fandubbing dates back to the early 2000s, customarily involving the translation of anime. While this might have been when Internet fandubbing became widespread, our research shows that the first cases of fandubs can be traced back to the 1980s, and they did indeed entail the dubbing of anime programmes.

2.1. The origins of fandubbing (1980s - 1990s): anime dubbed by fans for fans

In the early years of the phenomenon, fandubbing was a second-nature, obvious choice for anime fans, deeply involved in so-called “geeking out” genres of participation,¹ denoting “an intense commitment or engagement with media or technology” (Herr Stephenson, Horst, and Robinson 2010:65). According to Merrill (2008:online):

dubbing your own voice over somebody else's video is an idea that sort of comes naturally to the hard-core anime person [...] Anime fans of the 1980s by definition had to have intimate working knowledge of home video technology, and the leap to making their own song-tapes, music videos, and parody videos was not far at all.

Patten (2004) dates the first fan-made dubbing of an anime video to 1983, when Phil Foglio and Nick Pollotta revoiced an episode from the legendary Japanese series *Star Blazers* to create the parodic dubbing *You say Yamato*. The first examples of fandubbing were thus *fundubs* or instances of parodic dubbing, understood as “the practice of replacing the original dialogue track of an audiovisual text with another track containing a mostly new script created with

humoristic purposes” (Baños, in press). This is not surprising since voice-recording developments were still rudimentary, with fans primarily using off the air recordings of their favourite anime programmes, a microphone and the audio dub button on VCRs (Merrill 2008). By choosing to dub for fun, fans released themselves from the pressure to meet the quality standards of commercially-produced dubbed material. Some widely-known fandubbing groups active in the 1980s include Pinesalad Productions, creators of fundubs such as “How drugs won the war” (based on *Robotech* episodes) or “Dirty Pair *duz* dishes” (based on *Dirty Pair* episodes). The subversive nature of this type of fandubbing is apparent in the work of this community, who describe themselves as “a group of Southern California anime fans [who] decided to turn their favorite Robotech characters into pimps, prostitutes, drug abusers and anything else they could think of” (Pinesalad Productions 2009:online). Also popular were Sherbert Productions (see Nornes 2007) and Corn Pone Flicks, that heavily edited and dubbed episodes of *Star Blazers*. Their satiric interpretations of these popular anime series were disseminated amongst small groups of fans or in anime conventions, as with other anime productions at the time which were often showed in their original version.

Due largely to technological developments, fandubbing bloomed in the 1990s, as did fansubbing (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006:37). The latter was largely aimed at overcoming the language barrier encountered by early anime fans who were only able to watch their favourite programmes in Japanese: “[o]ver time amateur translation groups developed to subtitle anime that had been recorded in Japan on videotape or commercial laserdisc and then subtitled by fan translators and distributed on videotape through fan networks (Newitz) or via the Internet” (Cubbison 2005:48). Yet, fandubbing groups in the 1990s were still mainly engaged in parodic dubbings and not in ‘serious fundubs’, i.e. those undertaken to overcome linguistic barriers and not for humoristic purposes. Once again, this was presumably due to both technical and time constraints (with dubbing software still only offering basic results and

the dubbing process being more time-consuming) as well as to the preference of many anime fans towards subtitling.

Whereas the debate dubbing vs. subtitling is currently sterile, considering this as well as general anime translation practices in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the US, can shed light onto the origin and nature of fandubbing at that time. As Patten (2004:23) explains, many popular TV cartoons broadcast during the 1960s in the US (e.g. *Speed Racer* or *Astro Boy*) were Japanese anime dubbed into US English. Their Japanese origin went unnoticed among the US public (*ibid.*) presumably due to the high level of domestication they were subject to during the dubbing process. As Cubbison (2005:46) maintains, “the marginal status of animation means that anime is more likely than live-action foreign film to be altered for each new national market it enters”. While alterations aimed at neutralising Japanese anime are arguably easier to be implemented through dubbing with the corresponding deletion of the original dialogue track, the erroneous association of animation with young audiences² also favoured the use of this AVT mode, used all over the world to translate children’s cartoons.

The latter also motivated the introduction of further alterations for age-appropriateness in some cases. The realisation from fans of the extent to which these texts had been altered for US audiences promoted the acquisition of original versions, “that had not been tainted by US distribution strategies” (Dwyer 2017:139), as well as the development of amateur fansubbing groups (Cubbison 2005:48). Fansubbing was thus frequently the only way for western fans to access translated Japanese anime that had not been commercially distributed outside Japan, staunchly becoming an endeavour carried out by fans for fans.

Whereas subtitling performed by fans contributed to building an audience for anime and to the far-reaching impact of this genre (*ibid.*), the mainstream attraction of dubbing in this context seems unassailable. While purist fans preferred watching the original Japanese anime with or

without English subtitles, sales were decidedly higher for English dubbed videos (Patten 2004:63). These statistics were attentively contemplated by the various anime distributors that became widespread in the 1980s and 1980s in the US, many of them stemming from the early anime fan clubs and groups (Cubbison 2005:48). As such, the distributor Streamline Pictures, created by Carl Macek and Jerry Beck in 1988 to import, translate and distribute anime in the US (Patten 2004:38) decided to dub all their anime in an attempt to promote this genre among the general US public, instead of just catering to the anime fan market (*ibid.*:78).

This brief historical overview portrays subtitling as an AVT mode nurtured and supported by fans to overcome linguistic barriers, accomplishing higher authenticity, and dubbing as a mainstream transfer mode, yet resorted to by fans for humoristic and subversive purposes. This could be glossed as fans not taking dubbing seriously, using home-made dubbings and “the foreign objects of their obsession to critique areas of the domestic intertext [...] all the while inserting their new text into current events in popular culture” (Nornes 2007:196). Indeed, Nornes (*ibid.*) illustrates how the first parodic fandub carried out by Sherbert Productions, “Dirty Pair: The Arrest of Mr. Macek”, ridicules one of the founders of the above-mentioned Streamline Pictures: Carl Macek. Based on an episode of the anime series *Dirty Pair*, dubbed into English officially by Streamline Pictures, this fandub openly criticises Macek, a controversial figure within anime fandom and firm proponent of dubbing and the alteration of original anime for a successful adaptation into the target market. In these examples of “subcultural poaching” (Nornes 2007:195), which dramatically depart from the original text while being extremely attuned to it and “embedding in a complex network of current events and popular culture” (*ibid.*:196), dubbing is both criticised and revered as a useful tool to satirise³.

Stating that dubbing was despised by all anime fans is far from the truth. This has been contended by authors such as Cubbison (2005) or Patten (2004) and is further supported by the

remarkable existence of serious fandubs of anime content in this period. Despite the technical and logistical difficulties associated with fandubbing, in 1993 the fandubbing group Corn Pone Flicks dubbed four scenes from the film *Vampire Hunter D* (Toyoo Ashida, 1985). This project, referred to by its creators as a “test dub” (Corn Pone Flicks, n.d.), started with a translation of the original script into English, undertaken in 1990 in an attempt to persuade potential investors to acquire the rights to *Vampire Hunter D* for its official distribution.

In between 1990 and 1993, Streamline Pictures released the official dubbed version of the film and thus the original Corn Pone Flicks project came to a stall (*ibid.*), probably following the unwritten agreement of not distributing or pursuing fan translations of licensed programmes (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006:44). After watching Streamline’s version and realising its deficiencies in its translation and dialogue writing, and therefore the higher quality of their dubbing script, the Corn Pone Flicks team decided to go ahead and revoice four scenes of *Vampire Hunter D* (Corn Pone Flicks, n.d.). Screened only once at an anime fan convention soon after it was recorded, this fandub was complimented by the audience, impressed by the quality of the revoicing and the translation (*ibid.*).

The discussion in this section has illustrated how examples of fandubs carried out in this first period were noticeably done by fans for fans, primarily – yet not solely – for humoristic purposes, to be enjoyed only by those attending anime fan conventions and sharing a collective background and familiarity with anime productions. Since then, the practice of fandubbing has been influenced by two key facts that will be discussed below: (1) the substantial evolvement of fan practices and the concept of fan and fandom; and (2) the changes in audience consumption and engagement with media content sparked by technological developments and the “convergent media ecology” (Ito *et al.* 2010:10) we inhabit today. The preliminary forms of collaborative engagement with media and culture through dubbing outlined in this section

have increased in sophistication, resulting in the abundant manifestations of participatory culture that are so prevalent nowadays.

2.2. The consolidation of fandubbing (2000s - 2010s): from fan creations to user-generated content and convergence culture

Having been facilitated in the 1980s by the advancements in VCR technology, and in the 1990s by the development of the Internet and digital technologies, fans engagement with different forms of media consumption, distribution and appropriation skyrocketed in the 21st century. Such engagement has been remarkably influenced by the ability to upload, download, stream and share digital media content, as well as by the popularity of video sharing sites such as YouTube. Anime fandubbing groups in the 21st century no longer need to resort to VHS technology and wait for fan conventions to take place to share their creations or to meet other like-minded fans to collaborate with them. Instead, they can post recruitment ads on Facebook or on their websites, collaborate with others online in the comfort of their own home, and use YouTube or Vimeo to upload their fandubs. For example, the fandubbing group Fighter4Luv Fandubs, offering fandubs of episodes of the anime series *Sailor Moon* into English, has a specific section on their website where they provide information about how to submit voice samples⁴. And in order to prevent their videos from being removed from YouTube, they enable fans to download the episodes they have dubbed through links to cloud storage services.

These tools and technological advancements are not only at the disposal of fan communities. Video appropriation is easier than it has ever been in the current digital landscape, where *any user* can manipulate audiovisual content (adding subtitles or an audio track, for instance) with basic technical knowledge from a myriad of devices, and upload it online to share it with the rest of the world. As Ito *et al.* (2010:23) argue “the contemporary media ecology is

characterized by the growing centrality of user-generated content”. The term “user-generated content” is seen by Lange and Ito (2010:246) as a buzz word, together with others such as “Web 2.0”, “modding”, “prosumer” or “pro-am”, which underscore “how creative production at the ‘consumer’ layer is increasingly seen as a generative site of culture and knowledge”. It is now widely acknowledged that audiences are no longer passive consumers, but rather active participants, socially networked and deeply engaged in digital media consumption. As such, they are often involved in creative production of digital material which may include translation. Within Translation Studies, O’Hagan (2009:97) defines “user-generated translation” as “a wide range of Translation, carried out based on free user participation in digital media spaces where Translation is undertaken by unspecified self-selected individuals”. In recent explorations of this phenomenon, the focus seems often shifted from fans to users, and from translations done by fans to translations generated by users. This shift could be motivated by the evolution of the concept of media fan and media fandom, and not necessarily by a shift in actual agency. In this sense, Duffet (2013:17) warns about the elusiveness of these concepts, positing that the term “fan” now embodies a wide range of ordinary people who exhibit a positive emotional engagement with popular culture, and that it can “involve different experiences, concern different practices and mean different things in various contexts” (*ibid.*:19).

It is also significant that some fandubbing groups avoid including the term “fan” when advertising and presenting their work. For example, the fandubbing groups UndervoxStudios⁵ and Kyotodubs⁶, who mainly focus on the dubbing of anime into Latin American Spanish, often refer to their activity as independent or non-official dubbing. This could be due to the stigma still attached to the term “fan” (and perhaps recently also to fan activities such as “fansubbing”), as well as being an attempt to emphasise that some of the members of these groups are training or have been trained to become dubbing professionals and are not “mere” amateurs or fans.

Likewise, whereas some fandubbing groups present themselves as creators of dubbing material done for fans, especially those working with videogames and anime material, some home-made dubbings available online are not targeted at fans, but at a wide-range of Internet users. Fansubbing has also been affected by this shift, metamorphosing from a process instigated “by fans for fans” to one “by fans for all” (Díaz-Cintas 2018). This is the case with many of the parodic dubbings that abound online and with serious dubs of user-generated content of a humorous nature. In the former, netizens use dubbing as a form of protest against the powers that be and/or to freely express their ideas making their voices heard by borrowing audiovisual material widely recognised by audiences.

Examples of this type of political or activist dubbing are provided by Wang and Zhang (2016:173), who posit that these practices establish “a backchannel for commentators, many of whom are grassroots Internet users, to deliver critical and sensitive information which otherwise might not reach the general public in other forms due to censorship”. This type of dubbing is also popular in contexts where media censorship is not particularly widespread (at least not openly). For example, in a forthcoming article (Baños, in press) I have illustrated how Spanish Internet users “mess around” (Herr Stephenson *et al.* 2010) with technology, new media and foreign cult products (i.e. *Pulp Fiction* scenes), subverting them to criticise the political situation in Spain.

Serious dubs of user-generated content of a humorous nature also entail subversion. By dubbing audiovisual material that is not usually accommodated in conventional dubbing channels, which is often of a subversive nature itself (e.g. politically incorrect videos from YouTubers), fandubbers challenge the current media hegemony established by media and dubbing providers. As a form of “culture jamming” (Dery 2017), fandubbing may be used to “critique, subvert, and otherwise ‘jam’ the workings of consumer culture” (DeLaure and Fink 2017:6). A clear illustration of how the flow of corporate media is disrupted by fandubbers is

found in the YouTube channel Escardi Fandubs, where controversial videos created by independent studios (e.g. the Cyanide & Happiness animated shorts created by Explosm⁷), or single users (i.e. YouTubers) are dubbed into Spanish.

Current fandubbing practices reveal how new media has empowered Internet users, and clearly reflect the dynamics of what Jenkins (2006) has termed “convergence culture”, “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (*ibid.*:259-260). As envisaged by Jenkins (*ibid.*:19), while many corporate media resist these practices (e.g. by reporting fandub videos on YouTube as illegal (Spina Ali 2015:760)), others have embraced them.

A case in point is the popular streaming service Netflix, which used a parodic dubbed video of their series *Narcos* for its promotion in Spain. The parodic dubbing⁸ was carried out by Carles Caparrós, a Valencian dubbing actor and YouTuber who uses the pseudonym of Korah to publish parodic dubbings on his YouTube channel⁹. Published just before the launching of the Fallas Festivity in 2018, taking place in March in Valencia (Spain), this promotional parodic dubbing embeds scenes from *Narcos* in references to popular culture surrounding this festivity. The Colombian politician and Escobar’s partner Fernando Duque is portrayed in Korah’s reinterpretation as the local artist responsible for the creation of Escobar’s *falla*, a monument made up of *ninots* (caricature pieces) built to portray and satirise current social issues. Duque is summoned by Escobar who disagrees with his modern and conceptual interpretation of the *falla*, and suggests a more traditional approach (with *ninots* portraying big-breasted women and cigar-smoking gentlemen).

These examples are not only manifestations of new media production and consumption dynamics. In their realisation the limitations of the term “fandubbing” unfold, as does the need to search for more suitable nomenclature.

2.3. Beyond fandubbing: cyberdubbing and the search for more suitable nomenclature

This chapter has so far illustrated the evolution of fandubbing, presenting it as a complex and rich socio-cultural practice, difficult to be neatly labelled and slippery to be defined. Fandubbing has been used as an umbrella term to refer to manifestations of participatory and convergence culture involving the use of dubbing, regardless of whether these are undertaken by fans, amateurs who do not deem themselves fans, or even dubbing professionals. This terminological conundrum is not exclusive to dubbing, having been recently broached by Díaz-Cintas (2018) in the case of subtitling.

When exploring the social significance of new forms of subtitling that have surged in the age of digital media, he proposes the term “cybersubtitles” to encompass these activities, arguing that it “subsumes the many varieties of subtitles encountered on the net in a more transparent way” (*ibid.*:132). Further classifications of subtitles can be established within this category, namely: fansubs, done by fans for all; guerrilla subtitles, “produced by individuals or collectives highly engaged in political causes” (*ibid.*: 134); and “altruist subtitles”, a less militant, belligerent version of guerrilla subtitles. His suggestion could easily be adapted to accommodate the realities and specificities of dubbing, with “cyberdubs” encompassing the wide range of non-standard dubbing practices found in cyberspace. Considering the examples provided in section 2.2. and the aim of these practices, the further sub-classifications can be established: (1) promotional dubbing; (2) political or activist dubbing; and (3) altruist dubbing.

Promotional dubbing is undertaken to promote the material being dubbed and/or the very act of dubbing. Fandubbing would fall into this category, being often performed by Internet users who regard themselves as media fans and thus exhibit a positive emotional engagement with popular audiovisual culture. In **political or activist dubbing**, activism is understood in ampler terms, whereby “cyberdubbers” resort to these practices to criticise, satirise or instigate some kind of social or political change. The category **altruist dubbing** may not be as widespread as altruist subtitling, exemplified by the subtitles freely contributed by netizens to the platform TED (*ibid.*). Yet, educational projects like Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org), mentioned as well by Díaz-Cintas, benefit from altruist dubbing, with the educational videos created by its founder Sal Khan translated and revoiced by volunteers from English into Spanish or French, for example. Aimed at children and teenagers, and with videos often illustrating graphics, diagrams and text on screen, the use of dubbing as an AVT mode could be deemed more effective than subtitling, enabling students to receive linguistic information simultaneously through the acoustic and the visual channel, and being suitable for younger children.

Altruist dubbing is thus an area likely to be further developed in the coming years, with the possibility of future projects embedding automatic voice synthesis for the dubbing of educational material, taking advantage of technological developments. Audiovisual companies have also started grasping the potential of such projects, with companies like Unilingo specialising in dubbing educational videos from successful YouTuber channels primarily into Spanish¹⁰, but also into other languages.

These projects bring another interesting distinction to the fore: while some cyberdubbing projects are mostly self-commissioned - especially fandubs, with fans determining what gets dubbed and how – others are commissioned by institutions and organisations, who may resort to volunteers (unpaid) or to translation and dubbing professionals (paid). Also in line with Díaz-

Cintas’s (*ibid.*) argumentation, and as has been reiterated throughout this chapter, the individuals behind the production of cyberdubs can be either amateurs or non-amateurs, with the latter including both dubbing professionals and trainees.

Díaz-Cintas (*ibid.*:134) also argues that the three categories of cybersubtitles can be either “genuine”, “when they adhere closely to the message and linguistic formulation of the original text”, or “fake”, when “the subtitles that accompany the video unashamedly depart from the message being conveyed in the original dialogue”, a distinction that is echoed in the terms “serious dubbing” and “parodic dubbing”. While activist dubbing tends to be parodic, and altruist dubbing serious, promotional dubbing can fall into either of these categories. Figure 1 illustrates how Díaz-Cintas’s terminological suggestion of “cybersubtitles” could be adapted to dubbing, while Table 1 provides specific examples of each category, which are discussed briefly throughout the chapter.

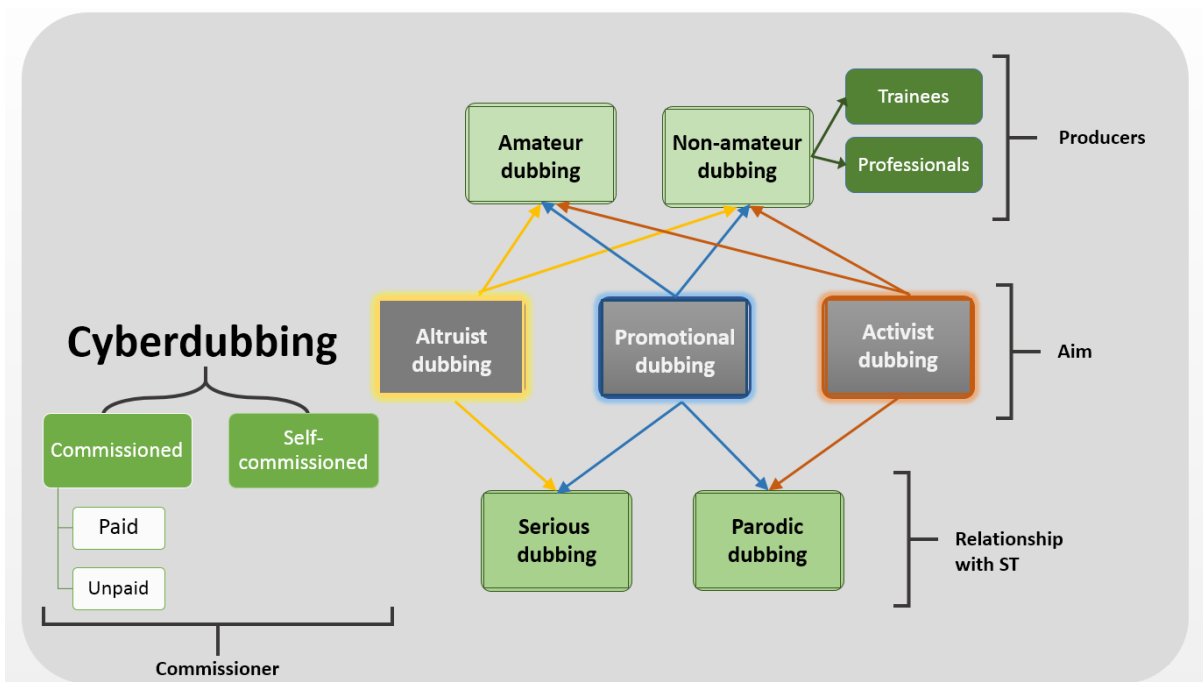


Figure 1. Dubbing practices in cyberspace, drawing on Díaz-Cintas’s (2018:133) concept of cybersubtitles.

Cyberdubbing							
Type (aim)	Example	Amateur	Non-amateur	Parodic	Serious	Self-comm.	Commissioned
Promotional	1) Anime series <i>Clannad</i> dubbed by the fandubbing group Kyotodubs into Spanish https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vz_bXzmJJUY	X (fans)			X	X	
	2) Grand Theft Auto footage edited and dubbed by a group of professional dubbing actors, coordinated by Korah https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9p2GmI4Mh0&t=4s		X (prof.)		X	X	
	3) Parodic dubbing of <i>Narcos</i> commissioned by Netflix to Korah https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMI_9QH0w9w		X (prof.)	X			X
	4) “Dirty Pair <i>duz</i> dishes” by Pinesalad Productions, currently distributed online https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zCdCwHqAjE	X (fans)		X		X	
Activist dubbing	1) Dubbing of <i>Pulp Fiction</i> car scene into Spanish to criticise the political situation in Spain, undertaken by YouTuber Moi Camacho https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Tc0s8LYUN8	X		X		X	
	2) Dubbing of <i>Pulp Fiction</i> car scene into Spanish to criticise political parties in Spain, undertaken by Korah, seemingly commissioned by online platform Flooxer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYxDmP9fqdw		X (prof.)	X			X
Altruist dubbing	1) Khan Academy video “Introduction to Radians”, created in English by Sal Khan (https://www.khanacademy.org/math/algebra2/trig-functions/intro-to-radians-alg2/v/introduction-to-radians), translated and revoiced by volunteers into Spanish (https://es.khanacademy.org/math/algebra2/trig-functions/intro-to-radians-alg2/v/introduction-to-radians), and French (https://fr.khanacademy.org/math/algebra2/trig-functions/intro-to-radians-alg2/v/introduction-to-radians).	X			X		X

Table 1. Examples of types of cyberdubbing.

Encompassing fandubbing, cyberdubbing is thus articulated in opposition to traditional dubbing practices and triggered by a myriad of motivations, from the promotion of specific audiovisual material and the altruistic dissemination of dubbed material, to the criticism and instigation of socio-political changes. Including both parodic and serious dubbing undertaken

by Internet users with very diverse backgrounds (amateurs and non-amateurs), who may or may not be regarded as media fans, cyberdubbing embraces practices that are changing the current mediatic landscape, being implemented both non-for-profit for the benefit of the wider community, and commercially.

3. Motivations behind cyberdubbing: fandom, nostalgia and discontent

The discussion above suggests that cyberdubs are often a response to discontent from a specific community. Dissatisfaction might be motivated by the lack of official dubbings of specific material and fuelled by the sense of belonging to a fan community, whereas in other cases factors like nostalgia or subversion might also play an important role.

3.1 Lack of official translations and discontent with existing translation policies

In the same way that western anime fans resorted to fansubbing in the 1980s and 1990s to access Japanese anime that had not been commercially distributed outside Japan, some anime fans in the 2010s have turned to amateur dubbing to the same end. Official translations are still not available for many anime series, and fans have to resort to unofficial translations be it in the form of subtitles or dubs. Thanks to the fandubs released by the above-mentioned Undervoxstudios or Kyotodubs, for example, Spanish-speaking anime fans of series such as *Eden of the East*, *Fairy Tail*, *Soul Eater* or *Clannad* have been able to enjoy watching some episodes of their favourite series dubbed into Latin American Spanish, instead of having to resort to fansubs or to watching the original untranslated.

In other cases, however, the official translation might only be provided in the form of subtitles. Cyberdubs created in these circumstances reflect the discontent and objection of the online

community to existing translation policies. This seems more common in the case of videogames, with an illustrative example found in the Spanish non-official dubbing of a video from the controversial videogame *Grand Theft Auto* (GTA). Coordinated by Carles Caparrós (Korah), this cyberdub was distributed through YouTube and social media and presented as a ‘fake trailer’ of *Grand Theft Auto V - The Movie*. Its aim was to demonstrate the ‘look and feel’ of this popular videogame if a translation for dubbing into Spanish was ever commissioned, given that the GTA series is only available subtitled into Spanish. As Caparrós explains in the comments on the posting of the video in his YouTube channel¹¹, he edited the video from existing *GTA V* footage and recruited professional dubbing actors who contributed to the project voluntarily. The high number of views of his video in YouTube (close to 1.5 million as of September 2018) and the positive comments made by fans on this site are testimony to its popularity. Such comments also illustrate how fandubbers receive feedback from fans, as well as the preference of some gamers for a dubbed version to enjoy this and similar games, where following subtitles can hinder gameplay, especially during fast-paced action scenes requiring a great deal of concentration from players.

3.2 Discontent with existing translation approaches: foreignising and domesticating nostalgia

Cyberdubs can also be triggered by disagreement with specific approaches to dubbing. As briefly discussed above, this was the case of the first serious fandub known to date, undertaken by the fandubbing group Corn Pone Flicks, who decided to finally pursue the dubbing of *Vampire Hunter D* after realising the deficiencies of the official dubbing released by Streamline Pictures. Given that this fandub was not released in the cyberspace and dates back to the 1990s, it cannot be considered a cyberdub strictly speaking; yet it is an enlightening example of motives behind these practices. According to Matt Murray¹², one of the founders of this

fandubbing group, Streamline's version did not only contain mistranslations¹³ but also strayed off the original intentionally in many places, in an attempt to bring the dialogue closer to the target audience. In addition, intertextual references that were absent from the original version were introduced in the English translation, with dialogue mirroring phrases from *The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980), for example. Such alterations were not justified by the need to keep lip synchrony, disregarded in many cases in Murray's view, with lines of four syllables used to revoice one-syllable utterances even if the character's mouth was clearly visible (and no longer opened).

Murray also complained about the use of geographical variation in Streamline's revoicing, with British, Mexican and stereotypical Transylvanian accents used inconsistently by dubbing actors, disregarding the plot and thus breaking the suspension of disbelief amongst US viewers. With their fandub, Corn Pone Flicks expressed their objections to the extreme manipulation implemented by official anime distributors in the US. They also demonstrated that it was possible to dub anime into English without departing from the original substantially, granting as authentic an experience as possible to fans, in the same way as fansubbing did.

As Dwyer (2017:141) notes, although "anime fansubs come in many shapes and forms, covering a broad spectrum of foreignising and domesticating, literal and liberal approaches", anime fansubbing is widely aligned with formal experimentation, foreignisation and Japanophile traits. By contrast, fandubbing seems to have been aligned with manipulation, over-translation and domestication in the limited existing literature, probably due to the prevalence of parodic dubbing among dubs carried out by fans or amateurs. Whereas the serious fandub undertaken by Corn Pone Flicks questions this view, other examples reveal the impossibility of establishing clear boundaries between liberal/literal or domesticating/foreignising approaches in fandubbing, and the need to consider the socio-

cultural context in which these practices take place. Testimony to this is the fascinating case of the fandubbing of *Sailor Moon* into English undertaken by Fighter4Luv Fandubs.

Originally created as a manga series, *Sailor Moon* was adapted into an anime series by Toei Animation and broadcast in Japan in the 1990s. The series follows the adventures of Usagi Tsukino who, accompanied by other Sailor Scouts or Guardians, fights against villains to prevent the theft of the Silver Crystal and the destruction of the Solar System. After becoming a hit in Japan, the series was launched in international markets, including the US, where DiC Entertainment acquired the rights to broadcast the show dubbed into English. As was common at the time, the producers decided to alter the series substantially, assuming that the US audience would be put off by the inherent otherness of the original series. As McNally (2014:online) explains, in the US dub, Usagi was called ‘Serena’, ‘pork buns’ became ‘doughnuts’, and images were heavily manipulated: “scenes that depicted people driving cars were reversed so that the steering wheels were on the opposite sides, and Japanese writing was rotoscoped, or airbrushed, out”. The series was also edited for age-appropriateness and images or dialogue lines deemed offensive or upsetting to the target audience (which was younger for the US dubbed version if compared to the original, marketed to slightly older girls in Japan) were either deleted or toned down (*ibid.*).

In 2014 Viz Media acquired the rights to this series and redubbed the original episodes, which were also broadcast without the editing originally implemented by DiC Entertainment. The approach taken by Viz Media in the dubbing of this series differs greatly from that of DiC Entertainment. This is shown in Table 1, which includes the dialogue of a popular scene from the pilot episode of *Sailor Moon* (“A Moon Star is Born”), where the leading character (Serena/Usagi) meets Luna, a talking black cat who reveals her true identity. The dialogue corresponding to the dubbing done by DiC Entertainment in 1995 is compared against that

done by Viz Media in 2014 to illustrate the substantial semantical differences between both scripts.

DiC Entertainment dub - 1995	Viz Media dub - 2014
<i>Serena/Usagi is asleep in her bedroom. Behind her, her window opens. The sound of it closing wakes her up.</i>	
<p>Serena: Ah, you scared me! What are you doing here? Luna: Why, Serena, I came to see you, of course, who else? Serena: Huh? A talking cat? Oh, man, I have been studying too hard! Luna: My name is Luna and I have been searching for you for a very long time. Luna: You are the chosen one, and I have been sent here to guide you on the path to your ultimate destiny.</p>	<p>Usagi: Ah, the cat with the bald spot! Luna: Eh, it's not a bald spot, don't be rude! Usagi: You can talk! No way! How can a cat talk? Luna: Usagi, my name is Luna and you can't imagine how long I have been looking for you. Luna: But first things first. I wanted to say thank you for saving me from those kids earlier today.</p>
<i>Flashback of Serena/Usagi removing a bandage from Luna's head</i>	
<p>Luna: I wasn't sure if you were the one the first time we met, but I've been watching you and now I absolutely know that you are the Sailor Scout of the moon, hahaha. Serena: I am hallucinating! Luna: No, you are not, Serena. You are Sailor Moon and your friend Molly is in big trouble! You have got to help her! You don't believe me? Well, all right then, I'll prove it to you! Serena: What is that? Luna: It's a special locket just for you. Serena: Wow! For me? It's beautiful! How should I wear it? On my school uniform... Luna: Serena, it's not just a piece of jewellery, listen to me! Do you hear what I am saying? Sailor Moon sworn to defend the princess of the moon. Powerful evil forces have appeared here on Earth and that special locket can help you fight them. You are Sailor Moon and you must fight evil when it confronts you, you must not be afraid. Serena: Yes, right, just like Sailor V! Luna: This is no joke, Serena, do you hear me? This is your destiny! Serena: My destiny? I must be dreaming! Luna: It's no dream. I'll prove it, Serena. Just repeat after me: Moon, Prism, Power! Serena: Okay. Moon, Prism, Power!</p>	<p>Luna: Not to mention taking that bandage off. With it on, I can't talk, and it dulls my sensory powers. I thought I was done for when those kids put it on, but because of that, it led me to you, hahaha. Usagi: Good night! Luna: What are you doing? This isn't some kind of a dream, you know? Come on, stop playing around! Okay, then let me prove to you it's not a dream. A little gift from me, just for you. Usagi: Wow! For me? It's so beautiful! Luna: Usagi, I need you to listen to me. Usagi: Thank you so much! Luna: I need you to listen to me! Strange things are happening in this city. Even the police can't handle what is going on! A dangerous enemy has appeared! You're the only one who can defeat this enemy! You're the guardian that's been chosen for this mission. But there's more than just that. You also have to find the other guardians and our princess! Usagi: Wow! Really? How cool! Hihi! Luna: You don't actually believe a single word I am saying, do you? Usagi: Oh, sure, of course I believe you! Luna: Great, just repeat the words I am about to say, right? Moon, Prism, Power, Make up! Usagi: Right! Moon, Prism, Power, Make up!</p>
<i>Serena/ Usagi transforms into Sailor Moon.</i>	

Table 1. Comparison of *Sailor Moon's* dubbing done by DiC Entertainment in 1995 and Viz Media's redub from 2014.

In addition to being closer to the original, Viz Media dub is more coherent with the image and with previous scenes from this episode, as illustrated by the mentioning of Luna and Usagi's

encounter, and the reference to Luna's bandage in the 2014 version. One could assume that fans would welcome this redub as it purportedly offered a more authentic and "faithful" portrayal of the original anime. Nevertheless, some fans were too familiar with the original English dubbing to fully accept these changes. Against this nostalgic backdrop, the fandubbing group Fighter4Luv Fandubs was formed in 2007 with the aim to dub the episodes of the last season of the series into English (as these had not been dubbed) as well as to:

fan dub Sailor Stars in the way that DiC would have. Also making sure that "Serena" and her Sailor Scouts weren't forgotten. [...] We wanted to bring back the nostalgia of the old English adaptation, so we had script adaptors, voice actors, pieces of the Bob Summers music score, transitions, & 2D/3D graphics to start off with. Then we made edits, major script changes; believing we were doing the DiC series justice (Fighter4Luv Fandubs 2018:online).

Fighter4Luv Fandubs was thus motivated by nostalgia and arguably by fans' discontent with the dubbing practices that were widely implemented in the 2000s and materialised later on in the Viz Media redub of *Sailor Moon*. The case of this particular group highlights that authenticity is experienced differently amongst fans, while portraying fandubs as spaces of re-narration or "rewriting" of texts (of an audiovisual nature), as understood by Lefevere (1992). The motivation behind the rewriting of *Sailor Moon* undertaken by Fighter4Luv Fandubs rebels against the dominant anime dubbing conventions at the time; yet, this is done by conforming to old-fashion conventions, thus embodying a conservative and protectionist approach to translation. While Corn Pone Flicks members appointed themselves guardians of the source text and culture, Fighter4Luv Fandubs members became the gatekeepers of anime dubbing tradition.

The fandub of *Sailor Moon* undertaken by this community also illustrates the dynamic nature of the audiovisual polysystem (Baños 2015), as Fighter4Luv Fandubs (2018:online) decided to change their approach to dubbing at a later stage:

After a few years into production, we decided to change our ideals, and although we kept all the main elements of the English version, we wanted to bring the fans more than just a DiC ripoff. Times had changed and we made the decision to continue the fandub in a slightly different direction. Keeping the English names and personalities, but retaining the main Japanese story plots, and most importantly completely UN CUT.

Their motivations evolved and changed with time, and so did their translation decisions and the conventions implemented when dubbing episodes of *Sailor Moon*. In a most captivating way, tradition and nostalgia co-exist with subversion and rebellion in these cyberdubs done by fans for fans, shedding light onto the politics of dubbing in the new mediascape.

3.3 Activism, recreation, recognition and success

As discussed in the previous section, some cyberdubs are aimed at entertaining audiences (e.g. parodic videos and serious dubbings of comic YouTube videos), challenging and critiquing dominant forms of power (e.g. political parodic dubbing), and subverting the workings of the audiovisual industry (e.g. fandubbers decide to dub and publish material that would not normally be released in dubbed form). In addition, new modes of distribution of digital material (e.g. the widespread use of video-streaming platforms like YouTube or Netflix) have resulted in the use of cyberdubs fully or partly in exchange of some kind of compensation.

This can be in the form of financial remuneration or social recognition, with altruist cyberdubs being still an exception. The above-mentioned *Narcos* parodic cyberdub is targeted at increasing Netflix revenue in Spain, as well as the creator's, who was presumably paid for this job. Likewise, Korah's *GTA V* fake trailer can be regarded as an investment, aimed at promoting the services of the dubbing actors involved. It is also noteworthy that YouTubers monitor closely the number of views reached by their videos and the number of subscriptions in their channels. These ensure the viability of their projects and in some cases provide substantial financial remuneration through advertising, making the non-for-profit motto of original fandubs no longer applicable. This further grey area between the non-professional and professional status substantiates the all-encompassing definition of cyberdubbing. Another aspect worth of note here is that whereas cybersubtitling is conceived as a collective undertaken, where the community takes precedence over the individual (Díaz-Cintas 2018:137), cyberdubbing can be rather individualistic at times, with producers working independently and looking for individual and not collective compensation.

The wide range of motives behind cyberdubs, both of a parodic and a serious nature, reveal the evolution of this cultural phenomenon across time and space. In cyberspace, dubbing has revealed itself as a most effective tool for the expression of discontent, be it with the lack of availability of audiovisual material, the implementation of specific AVT practices, the existing socio-cultural and media hegemony or with old-fashioned models for digital distribution. In so doing, cyberdubs purportedly rebel against dominant dubbing conventions and official dubbing practices. As such, the standards by which cyberdubs are assessed are more dependent on viewers' reception, deviating from standard dubbing conventions. Cyberdubbing is regulated by digital audiences, with practices being influenced by the feedback provided by fan communities and Internet users in general. The lines between producers and consumers are

thus blurred further, with non-traditional practices establishing a more interactive, dynamic and equal relationship between producers and consumers.

4. Final remarks

This chapter has explored the phenomenon of fandubbing in an attempt to draw the contours of an underexplored area in Translation Studies, and to comprehend a phenomenon deeply impacted by the profound shift witnessed by the media industry in the past few years. Fandubbing has thus been presented as a dynamic socio-cultural practice that has developed extensively from its origins, setting up the scene for current cyberdubbing practices, to the extent that the term once coined to refer to these co-creational and subversive practices is unable to accommodate all instantiations that currently populate the cyberspace. No longer self-commissioned and undertaken solely by fans for fans, such practices have evolved to align with the “convergent media ecology” (Ito *et al.* 2010:10) we inhabit today. Against this backdrop, and drawing on Díaz-Cintas’s (2018) conception of “cybersubtitles”, the term cyberdubbing seems to more appropriately encompass the myriad of non-traditional dubbing practices found online.

Through these practices, far from being despised by users, dubbing is creatively used for altruistic endeavours and for the expression of dissatisfaction and discontent. Like fansubbers, fandubbers (or cyberdubbers) also “respond proactively towards perceived failings, transforming limitations into possibilities and proposing a course of creative reinvention” (Dwyer 2017:136). In line with Dwyer’s (2017:135) conception of fansubbing, cyberdubbing can be seen as an errant or improper form of AVT that is reconfiguring and challenging the paradigms and politics of the dubbing industry. Yet, unlike fansubbing, cyberdubbing is not often seen as a threat to the dubbing industry, with some scholars actually arguing that fandubs

could “act as a catalyst for professional dubbing” (Chaume 2012:42). This was indeed the thinking behind the non-official dubbing of the ‘fake trailer’ of *Grand Theft Auto V - The Movie* mentioned above, as well as the original motivation of Corn Pone Flicks when planning their test dub of *Vampire Hunter D* in the early 1990s.

The discussion has unveiled interesting similarities and divergences with traditional, long-established dubbing practices and with other co-creational forms of AVT (such as cybersubtitling) not only as far as translation policies and approaches are concerned, but also regarding notions of individualism/collectivism, authenticity, prestige, remuneration and self-promotion, which deserve to be explored further. While research on parodic cyberdubs (Izwaini 2014; Nord *et al.* 2015; Wang and Zhang 2016; Spina Ali 2015) has unveiled how these stand out from traditional approaches to dubbing from an ideological and linguistic point of view, this field is still underexplored, especially as regards serious cyberdubs. Further investigation is also needed to ascertain the prevalence of these practices globally, bearing in mind the specific socio-cultural contexts nurturing them. This seems to be the most appropriate way to accurately contextualise this controversial yet far-reaching and fascinating phenomenon, and to truly obtain a representative picture across time and space.

Endnotes

1. Ito *et al.* (2010) introduce three genres of participation for understanding youth new media practices that are equally relevant to comprehend how varied audiences (and not only young people) engage with such media. According to these authors, “[t]he genres of participation - hanging out, messing around, and geeking out—reflect and are intertwined with young people’s practices, learning, and identity formation within these varied and dynamic media ecologies” (Herr Stephenson *et al.* 2010:31). These can thus be seen as

types of media engagement, based on modes of participation rather than on types of media platform, frequency of media use or categories of individuals. As Herr Stephenson *et al.* (*ibid.*:53-54) posit, “[w]hereas hanging out is a genre of participation that corresponds largely with friendship-driven practices in which engagement with new media is motivated by the desire to maintain connections with friends, messing around [...] represents the beginning of a more intense engagement with new media”.

2. Patten (2004:19) posits that one of the unique traits of Japanese animation that has made it so accessible today is “the Japanese acceptance of cartoon animation as a medium of cinematic storytelling for all age and interest groups, rather than just for children (as is the Western bias)”. As a result of such bias, some anime aimed at older audiences in Japan was targeted in western markets at younger audiences, and had to be heavily edited for age-appropriateness. In the US, this was done for series such as *Battle of the Planets*, *Star Blazers* (Patten 2004:55–56) or *Sailor Moon* (McNally 2014). Anime is not the only subgenre affected by this erroneous assumption, which is perhaps not as widespread nowadays. The poor audience ratings achieved by *The Simpsons* when this series was first shown in Spain in 1991 were likely due to episodes being broadcast after the watershed. As Marta Lazo and Tovar Lasheras (2011:144) suggest, the series became a success once episodes started being broadcast at lunch time and prime time in 1994, being watched and favorited by very young audiences since then.
3. In a similar vein, Wang and Zhang (2016:182) discuss how fandubbers of *The Big Bang Theory* in China express their dislike towards official dubbing in the actual fandub of this series. Among others, they do so by ridiculing expressions typically used in Chinese official dubbings and by having one of the characters say he will learn Chinese to avoid having to go through the official dubbing process.
4. See <http://starsfandub.com/about/> (Consulted 14.09.2018).

5. See <http://undervoxst.blogspot.com/> (Consulted 14.09.2018).
6. See <https://www.facebook.com/Studios-Kyotodubs-491007407684206/> (Consulted 14.09.2018).
7. See <https://www.youtube.com/user/ExplosmEntertainment/> (Consulted 14.09.2018).
8. At the time of writing, this video is available from the YouTube channel Netflix España, and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMI_9QH0w9w (Consulted 14.09.2018).
9. See https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQWPc-n_8Ld3v94MeQHPxrA (Consulted 14.09.2018).
10. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9p2GmI4Mh0&> (Consulted 14.09.2018).
11. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jk7vonBKrsA> (Consulted 14.09.2018).
12. Matt Murray (Corn Pone Flicks founder), email messages to author, 4-6 August, 2018.
13. According to Murray, one of the biggest translation blunders in the Streamline dub was the use of the term ‘dampeal’ to refer to a half-human, half-vampire, when it should have been ‘dhampir’.

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