

## TRANSLATING BRITISHNESS IN THE FRENCH VERSIONS OF *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*

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### INTRODUCTION

I am interested in the way fictional characters in narrative texts, whether written or audiovisual, are created and presented. This is referred to as characterisation, which I propose to identify and further define in the framework of Audiovisual Translation. Characterisation in audiovisual material refers to the way characters are created on screen through features such as actors' performance, voice quality, facial expressions, gestures, camera angle and soundtrack.

Characterisation is an area yet to be systematically researched in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) but a few studies present different viewpoints. For instance Palencia Villa concludes that "the credibility of the characters of a narrative sound film is strongly related to the sonorous interpretation of the text. Credibility depends on the film's voices and their semantic content. Dubbing does not modify this tendency" (2002), and Ramière (2004: 112) concludes that in the French version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, dubbing has entailed changes related to the perception of the characters and that some of them are radical.

The material chosen for investigation is the popular American television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (*BtVS*) tells the story of a young American girl, Buffy Summers, whose mission is to rid the world of evil forces. There are 144 episodes spanning seven seasons, each corresponding to one year in Buffy's life from when she is sixteen. The series has been successful worldwide<sup>1</sup> and has been studied by academics from

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<sup>1</sup> Boulton (2002) presents results from a study that she conducted with fans from the series from the USA, Australia, UK, Israel and Spain (2002: 428). In 2002, there were '3705 global *Buffy* and *Angel* websites' from the USA, UK, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Israel, Germany and Brazil (ibid). The series has been screened in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, Finland,

various backgrounds, such as Cultural Studies and Film Studies. It has been praised among other things for the construction of “believable” characters and its creative language, the “Buffyspeak” or “Slayerspeak”, characterised by the use of creative language (e.g. neologisms), humour, and slang. Another aspect of the “Buffyspeak” worth investigating in translation is the use of British English as opposed to American English since there are two British male characters (Rupert Giles and Spike) whose characterisation is mainly based on accent, vocabulary and cultural differences.

*BtVS* makes interesting material for research in characterisation since in translation accents, voice and vocabulary will undergo changes. In French, there are two translated versions, one dubbed, the other subtitled<sup>2</sup>. For this article, my case study consists of one passage of the episode “Tabula Rasa” (Season VI, episode 8). In this episode the characters lose their memories after a spell has been cast on them. As the episode unfolds each character slowly recovers their identity. In the analysis I focus on the way the protagonists come across first in the original and then in the translated versions. My ultimate goal is to identify shifts in the presentation of the characters and any possible patterns in the translation strategies applied.

## 1. CHARACTERISATION IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Studies in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) have covered various areas. There have been studies on the media constraints inherent in dubbing and subtitling and the relative merits of these two modes of translation; the norms or conventions that operate in the translations into the target culture; the translation of ideological and cultural elements or on the translation of humour. However, only a limited number of studies have looked into the presentation of characters, and none of these studies offer a systematic treatment of characterisation.

I am interested in the fictional universe presented in a text, which in previous work (Bosseaux, 2007) I have referred to as the “feel” of a text. The term “feel”, initially used by Paul Simpson (1993: 46), covers elements of character perception or characterisation. In this article I start complementing my earlier work (Bosseaux, 2007) which looked into how micro-elements at the level of vocabulary and grammar build up to give readers a specific image

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Hungary, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (ibid) and I should add France, Canada, Switzerland and Belgium.

<sup>2</sup> The dubbed version is broadcast on French terrestrial television, but on cable television the viewers can usually choose between the dubbed and subtitled versions. Both versions are available on the French DVD.

of the fictional world. To identify such a feel in audiovisual material I use linguistic elements as well as non linguistic codes of film; i.e. “signifying codes of cinematographic language” (Chaume, 2004: 16) manifested in features of performance such as speech and voice characteristics, facial expressions, and gestures. For instance in Bosseaux (2008) I focus on how performance can be affected by translation and particularly on the impact of dubbing on a character’s identity. Performance is “what the performer does in addition to the actions/functions she or he performs in the plot and the lines she or he is given to say. Performance is how the action/function is done, how the lines are said” (Dyer, 1979: 151). From a semiotic perspective, signs of performance are facial expression, gesture, body postures items of clothing, the use of lighting, body movements and voice<sup>3</sup>.

Voice quality is defined as “the permanently present, background, person-identifying feature of speech” (Crystal, 1991: 376) from a linguistic perspective with characteristics such as tempo or pitch, and “impressionistically” with affective terms such as “poignant”, and “jovial”. Studying voice falls into the remit of Sound Studies and Film Studies. Although such studies are on the increase it is fair to say that it is still a rather underresearched field. Major studies on voice started in the 1980’s within a psychoanalytical framework<sup>4</sup>. Recent studies on voice focus more on practical aspects with detailed film analysis. For instance Susan Smith (2007) focuses on the “cinematic contribution” of the voice and its singing, speaking, verbal and non verbal aspects (2007: 164). She comments on “the capacity of the human voice to bring a quality of feeling and texture of meaning to the medium of film that may not be possible to convey through the visuals alone” (2007: 164). She is interested in “vocal release”; moments when the actors convey a particular feeling and offers a close reading of actors’ vocal responses paralleled with the text’s visual images.

When analysing performance and voice Andrew Klevan (2005) points to the importance of the tone of words (2005: 33-35 and 76) and that of the use of special/repetitive vocabulary (2005: 34-35 and 28). This is particularly interesting from a translation point of view. For instance with reference to *Sons of the Desert* (William A. Seiter, 1933) starring Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, Klevan discusses humour and rhythm in the dialogue and concludes that when:

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<sup>3</sup> These features have been explored in studies of characterisation and performance in Film Studies (e.g. Dyer 1979, Klevan 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Chion’s *The Voice in Cinema* (1982, translated in English in 1999).

Ollie makes a glaring grammatical mistake when using “when did she went”, the use of “went” is more appropriate to the rhythm of his speech – and to their exchange: it completes the repetition of went [...] and cannot avoid crowning the welter of “w”s (“wonder”, “where”, “went”, “know” [...]) (2005: 29).

However, voice has mainly been discussed in the context of original films and the importance of choosing a voice for a dubbed version has hardly been discussed in Translation Studies. In Film Studies, Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2007), in an article on the various phases of the dubbing process in Germany, comments that:

a “good” voice is necessary for an actor to be successful in dubbing: “good” in this context means several things: the actors need to be able to use their voices effortlessly [...] In questions of doubt, the dubbing voice tends to match the appearance of the original actor more than the original actor’s voice. For example, in the television series *Magnum P.I.* (1980-1988), lead actor Tom Selleck’s voice is unexpectedly and uncharacteristically high in pitch compared with the actor’s masculine appearance, while the German voice of Norbert Langer is much lower in pitch and thus fits the actor’s outward appearance better (Wehn 1996: 11). The dubbing voice thus has to be both appropriate for the original actor and it should appeal to a wide range of listeners – even if the character portrayed by the original actor is unpleasant, the dubbing voice must convey unpleasantness without offending the listener (2007).

This highlights the difference between the “properties” or “characteristics” of original and dubbed voices. But what is an “appropriate” choice? Can viewers be expected to engage differently because of changes in voice and pitch? These are issues which will be considered during the analysis.

Among the few studies looking at character perception in AVT is Ramière (2004) who investigates the perception of fictional characters and their interpersonal relationships in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and its dubbed and subtitled French versions. She concludes that the translation of elements of modality but also of the phatic/emotive functions can lead to changes in the way the audience will perceive the characters. She also highlights some slips in register. She mentions the tone of voice of one of the characters and elements of the non-verbal codes (actors’ performance, décor and music) but does not completely integrate this in her analysis.

Voice is also dealt with in Armstrong (2004) who studies sociolinguistic and linguistic patterning in *The Simpsons* and its French dubbed version. Armstrong discusses the use of accents, cultural transposition and voice quality and concludes that the quality of the characters’ voices transfers closely

from English to French because “its physicality lends it universal properties, e.g. Marge Simpson’s hoarse voice is “permanently present” and “person-identifying”. It symbolises the fact that she is tired and harassed by her role (2004: 106-8). One aspect of particular interest raised in his article is the notion of voice as defining identity but this is still an underresearched area in Film, Sound or Translation Studies.

In Bosseaux (2008), I focus on voice and performance in dubbed versions. I am also interested in performance and characterisation in subtitled versions. When compared to dubbing, subtitling allows the original dialogue to be kept, the voice quality and intonation of the original actors, but at the same time this authenticity is partly lost when it comes to reconstructing the polysemiotic whole (Gottlieb, 1998):

from a semiotic point of view, subtitling – although retaining the original soundtrack and thus creating a more authentic impression than dubbing – is less authentic than dubbing. Subtitling constitutes a fundamental break with the semiotic structure of sound film by re-introducing the translation mode of the silent movies, i.e. written signs, as an additional semiotic layer. Technically speaking, subtitling is a supplementary mode of translation (2005: 21).

Therefore dubbing “retain[s] the semiotic composition of the original while recreating the semantic content in another (verbal) language” (Gottlieb, 2005: 11). We will see in the analysis how these differences impact on translation choices and eventually on character perception.

I am interested in the way characters relate to one another as well as to the audience, and how the audience constructs a picture, a feel of the characters. In the case study fictional dialogue will be investigated as it is instrumental in constructing the character’s personas or profiles. The approach is multimodal since linguistic elements are investigated as well as other codes from the acoustic channels<sup>5</sup>. The analysis will be predominantly language and text-based with the inclusion of some elements of MAK Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar with emphasis on the interpersonal metafunction. The interpersonal metafunction in Systemic Functional Grammar is the element of meaning which transmits the relationship between the writer and reader. It is concerned with the communication role adopted by the speaker (e.g. informing, questioning, persuading, etc)<sup>6</sup>. Interpersonal relationships can be

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<sup>5</sup> Multimodal analyses make emphasis on the various film modes, their interrelation and interaction. See for instance Baldry and Taylor (2004) and Pérez-González (2007).

<sup>6</sup> In English, the major lexicogrammatical realisation of this metafunction is modality, i.e. ‘the speaker’s judgement of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying’ (Halliday:

investigated by considering the translation of the personal pronoun “you”. When translating “you” in French there are two options “tu” and “vous” and this will be integrated in the analysis.

Characterisation in a film can thus be studied by investigating the traits of characters, their actions and relationships through for instance actors’ performance, voice quality, speech and voice characteristics, facial expression, gestures, and camera angles (Dyer, 1979). In the context of translation some of these parameters for character construction will stay intact such as gestures, actions, structure and *mise en scène*. However the speech of characters will be altered and when supplementing the linguistic code I particularly pay attention to an actor or actress’s voice quality. Nevertheless, given that this is new research and one of my first attempts at presenting a multimodal audiovisual analysis of an audiovisual text, the analysis will inevitably and mostly be linguistically oriented. In what follows the material chosen for investigation is presented before moving on to the analysis.

## 2. *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* IN AMERICA AND FRANCE

*BtVS* (1997-2003) tells the story of a young American girl, Buffy Summers, whose mission is to rid the world of evil forces. In America the series was broadcasted on Warner Bros (1997) and UPN (2002). In France, *Buffy contre les Vampires* was aired from April 1998 on Série club (cable television) and M6 (terrestrial TV)<sup>7</sup>. As mentioned previously, one of the most interesting aspects of *BtVS* is its use of creative language, called the “Buffyspeak” or “Slayerspeak”<sup>8</sup>, characterised by the use of humour<sup>9</sup>, the opposition between British English and American English, slang (Adams, 2003) and neologisms. At the level of syntax and vocabulary there are metaphorical or metonymic substitutions as well as changes in word order and word form (Adams, 2003; and Wilcox, 2005: 29). For instance:

- changes in word order: “We so don’t have time” (in “Welcome to the Hellmouth” I, 1);

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1994: 75).

<sup>7</sup> Dubbing was undertaken by PRODAC (1-4)/LIBRA FILMS (5-7) and the Subtitling by Visiontext <[www.visiontext.co.uk](http://www.visiontext.co.uk)>.

<sup>8</sup> This last term appeared first in *Entertainment Weekly*.

<sup>9</sup> Wilcox talks about the ‘ludic elements of Buffy’s language’ (2005: 18).

- changes in word form: “what’s the sitch [situation]?” (in “Welcome to the Hellmouth” I, 1); or when Buffy and Willow admire a boy for his “owenosity” (in “Never kill a Boy on the First Date” I, 5);
- an adverb becomes an adjective: “you’re acting a little overly, aren’t you?” (in “Never kill a Boy on the First Date” I, 5);
- an adjective becomes a noun: “love makes you do the wacky” (in “Some Assembly Required” II, 2);
- metaphorical or metonymic substitutions: “I’ll talk to you later, when you’ve visited Decaf land” (in “The Dark Age” II, 8).

When comparing the original version (OV), dubbed version (DV) and subtitled version (SV) of *BtVS* it can be said that dialogues in the OV are sharper, wittier and more daring than those of the DV. The DV is usually more neutral and language is more dated. The SV is usually closer to OV identity most particularly when slang/sexual terms are used. For instance in the first episode Buffy gets ready to go to a nightclub and wants to make an impression; the audience sees her choosing clothes which are quite revealing and she says to herself “Hi, I’m an enormous slut”. The DV translates “Salut tu m’invites à boire un verre?” [Hi do you want to buy me a drink?] erasing the vulgar connotations, and the SV has “Salut je suis une grosse pétasse” [Hi I’m a big slag]. Another instance is from “Becoming Part 2” (II, 22) when Buffy tells Spike that his “girlfriend is a big ho”. The DV translates “big ho” with “ta petite copine te largue” [your girlfriend is dumping you] and the SV uses the word “poufiasse” [slag].

Neutralisation can also be seen in the translation of cultural references made to Britain and America. For instance, in “Becoming Part 2” when Spike explains why he does not want the world to end he compares people to “happy meals with legs”. The DV translates “bon repas ambulants” [good walking meals] and the SV chooses “hamburgers à pattes” [burgers with legs]. Spike enumerates things he does not want to see disappear, among which “Manchester United”. The DV translates with the generic “les équipes de foot” [football teams] whereas the SV keeps “Manchester United”. Spike then says “Goodbye Piccadilly, farewell Leicester bloody Square”. The DV translates again using more general expressions “Adieu beaux paysages, bon vent le monde entier” [Farewell beautiful landscapes, good riddance to the entire world] while the SV keeps the references to London landmarks and drops the British-English adjective “bloody”. It says “Adieu Piccadilly, Leicester Square” [Farewell Piccadilly, Leicester Square]. Such translation strategies in the DV echo Peter Fawcett’s conclusions (2003). When investigating French films and how they are subtitled in Britain and America, Fawcett explains that foreign elements are

filtered through the dominant culture. He denounces a normalising approach when cultural references are translated with strategies of generalisation, adaptation, and substitution (with colonising substitutes). The foreign culture is “made invisible”.

The “Buffyspeak” is also characterised by what Wilcox (2005) refers to as “linguistic separateness”. Wilcox comments on the “differentiation of teen language in Buffy” (2005: 18) in which teen language is strikingly different from adult language (represented by Giles and Buffy’s mother). Wilcox argues that the “fact that many cross-generational conversations are between Buffy and Giles, the British Librarian played by actor Anthony Stewart Head, accentuates the separation” (2005: 27)<sup>10</sup>. This “linguistic separateness” also “emphasises the lack of communication between the generations” (2005: 18). In terms of characterisation, then, Giles’s marked vocabulary and British accent have a specific function and cast him into a particular role. The other British character is the vampire Spike who is played by actor James Marsters<sup>11</sup>. However both characters come from different social backgrounds and this is made evident in their accents and use of vocabulary. The following case study will show what happens to Giles and Spike’s accents in French translation and to the marked vocabulary that they use. To identify the influence of the translators’ choices on our perception of the characters the focus will be on the translation of Britishness (and related British cultural elements), humour and interpersonal relationships in the episode “Tabula Rasa” (VI, 8)<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. CREATIVE TRANSLATION: “TABULA RASA”

In this episode Willow casts a spell so that Buffy and Tara forget about painful experiences<sup>13</sup>. However the spell goes wrong and everyone around Buffy and Tara forgets who they are after falling into a deep sleep. When the characters wake up they slowly rediscover or recover their identities and Giles and Spike, the two British characters, become aware of their Britishness. The

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<sup>10</sup> In “Reptile Boy” for instance (II, 5) Buffy says “I told one lie. I had one drink” and Giles responds: “Yes, and you were very nearly devoured by a giant demon snake. The words ‘let that be a lesson’ are a tad redundant”.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, James Marsters is not English but American. Turnbull (2005) refers to an interview with James Marsters and notes that as opposed to Spike, he does not have an English accent.

<sup>12</sup> The results have been interpreted taking translation problems into consideration in terms of languages but also audiovisual constraints (lip sync, dialogues length/ reading time).

<sup>13</sup> Buffy died in the previous season (season 5) and in season 6 she is resurrected by her friends. However she thinks that when she was dead she was in Heaven and feels depressed. Tara is disappointed that her girlfriend, Willow, uses so much magic.



analysis starts after Willow and Tara say that they think they are in a magic shop to which Giles replies:

[OV] Magic? Magic's all balderdash and chicanery.  
I'm afraid we don't know a bloody thing.  
Except I seem to be British, don't I? And a man.  
With glasses. Well, that narrows it down considerably.

[DV] Magie!, ah! la magie n'est que billevesée et crétineries  
[Magic, ah! magic is all stupidity and nonsense].  
Nous n'en savons guère plus je le crains  
[We hardly know more I'm afraid]  
Si ce n'est que j'ai le flegme britannique hé, hé  
[Except that I've got British unflappability eh, eh]  
Donc je suis anglais, je suis un homme qui porte des lunettes  
[So I'm English, I'm a man who wears glasses].  
Voilà qui réduit notre champ d'investigation.  
[Well this reduces our field of investigation].

[SV] La magie, c'est balivermes et compagnie.  
[Magic is balderdash etc].  
Je crois qu'on ne sait rien du tout.  
[I think we know nothing at all].  
Si ce n'est que je suis britannique, et de sexe masculin.  
[Only that I'm British and of male sex].  
Et que je porte des lunettes.  
[And that I wear glasses].  
Ca réduit le nombre de possibilités.  
[This reduces the number of possibilities].

[OV] We'll get our memory back. It'll all be right as rain.  
[DV] Nous retrouverons notre mémoire et le brouillard se dissipera  
[We'll get our memory back and the fog will dissipate].  
[SV] On va retrouver la mémoire et tout rentrera dans l'ordre.  
[We'll get our memory back and everything will be back in order].

Translating accents and register is undeniably a challenging task. For instance Peter Howell (2006) looks at indices of character and character voice in the translation of Japanese anime films into English and shows that even if it was not possible for translators to convey aspects of the local colour of dialects of Japanese, the US subtitles use pronunciation spelling (*gonna*) and a choice of spoken register “to recreate some of the social intimacy associated

with dialect” (2006: 304). He also highlights other compensatory procedures such as interjections, typographic devices (capitalisation), and orthographic devices (pronunciation spelling). Another study is that of Mailhac (2000) who investigates the English versions (dubbed and subtitled) of French film *Gazon Maudit*. One of the characters, Antoine, has a very thick Mediterranean accent. In the US dubbed version he becomes Antonio with an Italian accent in an attempt to differentiate him from other characters. Furthermore in the French version, the Spanish actress Victoria Abril resorts to Spanish on various occasions. Her words or whole sentences are kept in the dubbed version but not in the subtitled one and Mailhac concludes (2000: 136) that “as far as accents are concerned [...] the dubbed version does greater justice to characterisation by avoiding the neutralisation inherent in subtitling”. Finally Ramière (2004) explains that even if accents are lost in the French dubbed version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the register level is successful.

Here, in the original *BtVS*, Giles’s voice is characterised by an upper-class English accent. He has been educated in Oxford. When compared with the other characters’ American accents, his manner of speaking is pedantic. He has a soothing voice, which conveys calm and control. When he says “magic” he sounds shocked and almost outraged. In French, Giles’s status is conveyed by his use of high register for instance “billevesée” (DV) “balivernes” (SV). He also has an upper-class French accent and sounds well educated. Both versions successfully convey Giles’s status although the SV is slightly more colloquial or vernacular with the use of “on” as opposed to “vous”. Moreover, in the DV Giles uses a pictorial and poetical expression (“le brouillard se dissipera”); which is more in line with the idiomatic expression used in the OV. The SV also does not translate the tag “Don’t I” whereas the DV adds an interjection “hé hé”. Hence in terms of register, this first example seems to confirm Ramière’s conclusion, although the DV is closer to the original than the SV.

Then Spike addresses Giles and sounds annoyed when he says:

[OV] Oh listen to Mary Poppins. He’s got his crust all stiff and upper, with that Nancy-boy accent.

[DV] Ecoutez-le le rosbif. A l’entendre on croirait qu’il annonce la météo à la télévision.

[Listen to the roast beef. Listening to him we’d think that he’s announcing the weather forecast on TV].

[SV] Ecoutez Mary Poppins. Il ne perd ni son flegme ni son accent de chochette.

[Listen to Mary Poppins. He doesn’t lose either his unflappability or his sissy accent].

[OV] You Englishmen are always so....

[DV] Vous les Anglais, vous êtes tellement... [You Englishmen, you are so...].

[SV] Vous les Anglais, vous êtes toujours si... [You Englishmen, you are always so...].

Spike's English accent is working class. His voice is sharper and rougher than Giles'. He is also slightly pedantic but not as much as Giles. Both translations are playing on different stereotypes. *Mary Poppins* is a Walt Disney film directed by British director Robert Stevenson (1964). The main character, Mary Poppins, is the quintessential English nanny and she uses magic. Her name thus conveys connotations of care and kindness<sup>14</sup>. Giles is also looking after everyone; he is calming people, trying to make sense of the situation whilst keeping his composure. The original also plays on the stereotyped view that English people, as opposed to American people, have an effeminate accent. The dubbed version picks up on the vocabulary used in English about rain and follows a well-known English stereotype to do with the weather; i.e. the fact that English people always talk about the weather. Giles is talking as if he were announcing the weather. Reference is thus made to Englishness but the reference to *Mary Poppins* is dropped and the term "rosbif" [roast beef] is used to refer to Giles. "Rosbif" is a pejorative term used to allude to the stereotypical image that English people like having beef for a Sunday roast lunch or dinner. Typical food and reference to the weather are thus used to characterise Englishness in the DV, which does not convey the sexual connotations of "Nancy boy accent" ("Nancy boy" is slang for gay/sissy). On the other hand, the subtitled version keeps *Mary Poppins* and the effeminate connotations of *Nancy Boy*<sup>15</sup>.

When comparing episodes of the original versions of *Mad about you*, *Friends*, and *Veronica's closet* with their French DV and SV, Lebtahi (2004: 404) concludes that keeping certain cultural references in subtitled versions is "motivated" by issues of authenticity. In the dubbed version, there are no more

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<sup>14</sup> The actress Julie Andrews is British. She also happens to be a gay icon.

<sup>15</sup> Generally connotations of what it is to be British in the DV and SV are different. For instance in 'The Harvest' (I, 2) Giles makes a convoluted statement about using computers and says to Buffy 'that was a bit British wasn't it?'. In the DV we have 'c'était un peu ... vieux jeu non?' [it was slightly old style, no?] and the SV has 'l'informatique ce n'est pas trop ma tasse de thé' [computers are not my cup of tea]. And in *Amends* (III, 10) Buffy and Giles are reading books about demons which use complicated and somewhat ridiculous images. She tells him 'No wonder you like this stuff it's like reading the Sun'. The DV has 'Je ne vois pas à quoi ça nous avance, c'est complètement nébuleux' [I don't see how this helps us, it's completely nebulous]. The SV translates 'Pas étonnant que cela vous plaise. On dirait le Sun.' [it's not surprising that you like this. It's like reading The Sun.] This last example also shows that Buffy's register is higher in the DV than it is in the SV.

semantic constraints, and she finds in her corpus that either the translation has nothing to do with the original or that it is considerably adapted. It seems that the same is happening in *BtVS*. Lebtahi concludes that this has serious consequences on the type of audience targeted. I will come back to audience considerations later on.

Spike then realises that he is also English and carries on:

- [OV] Bloody hell. Sodding, blimey, shagging, knickers, bollocks.  
 [DV] Bon sang, Reine Elizabeth, Big Ben, Tour de Londres, Tamise, Buckingham.  
     [Damn, Queen Elizabeth, Big Ben, the Tower of London, the Thames, Buckingham]  
 [SV] Bon sang. Sacrement, flûte, forniquer, marmelade, fichtre  
     [Damn. Damn it, shit, fornicate, marmalade, gosh]
- [OV] Oh God. I'm English.  
 [DV] Oh non. Je suis britannique. [Oh no. I'm British]  
 [SV] Mince. Je suis anglais. [Blimey. I'm English]

And Giles responds:

- [OV] Welcome to the Nancy tribe  
 [DV] Bienvenue au club des rosbifs. [Welcome to the roast beef club]  
 [SV] Bienvenue chez les chochottes. [Welcome to the sissy club]

Spike enumerates words that are from a British-English vocabulary. They relate to sex (“sodding, shagging”), anatomy (bollocks), items of clothing for private parts (knickers) and there is one interjection (bloody hell). The adjective “bloody” is one of the recurrent words used mainly by Spike<sup>16</sup> although Giles can also use it (as in the first example) but he does so less often. Spike’s nickname before he was turned into a vampire was actually “William, the Bloody”. However he was named like this not because he was violent: “they call him William the Bloody because of his bloody awful poetry in ‘Fool for Love’ ” (V, 17). The DV uses British landmarks after translating the very British “bloody hell” by “bon sang” which is the equivalent translation but is dated in French. Therefore Spike can prove to himself that he is British because he can enumerate various landmarks that are famous in England. The SV uses adjectives and nouns which are dated and archaic such as the

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<sup>16</sup> For instance in “Normal Again” (VI, 17) Spike tells Buffy “you’re not drawn to the dark light like I thought. You’re addicted to the misery.... Stop with the bloody hero trip for a sec and we’d all be the better for it”.

interjections “Sacrément”, “flûte”, and “fichtre”. The verb “forniquer” is also dated but it keeps the reference to sex present in the original (with “sodding” and “shagging”). There is also one reference to food “marmelade”.

The two French versions thus present two different ways of characterising Britishness: the DV uses British referents and outdated vocabulary whereas the SV uses reference to sex and food and outdated terms. To sum up the results found until now, we can say that, in the DV, British people are identified through iconic monuments, stereotypes connected to the weather, composure, food and conservative or outdated vocabulary. In the subtitled version, Britishness is associated with sexual orientation, as it is in the original, and outdated vocabulary.

The identity recovery goes on and because Spike and Giles are both English they begin to think that they could be related: Spike thinks that he could be Giles’ son. When all the characters are trying to remember their names, Giles asks Spike “what did I call you?” and Spike looks into his suit jacket in the hope of finding a clue. He reads:

[OV] “Made with care for Randy”

[DV] “Manufacturé pour Candide” [Manufactured for Candid]

[SV] “Confectionné avec soin pour Laverge” [Made with care for “Thepenis”]

[OV] Randy Giles?

[DV] Candide Giles?

[SV] “Laverge Giles”

[OV] Why not just call me “Horny” Giles or “Desperate for a shag” Giles.

[DV] Autant m’appeler “innocent” Giles ou bien “simplet” Giles tant qu’on y est !

[Why not call me “innocent” Giles or “simple” Giles while you’re at it]

[SV] Et pourquoi pas “La trique” Giles ou “J’ai la tringle” Giles.

[And why not “hard-on” Giles or “I’ve got a hard-on” Giles]

The adjective “randy” in British-English means to feel great sexual desire; a synonymous expression of to feel “horny”, also used in the OV. Again Spike’s Britishness is expressed in the OV through his accent as well as with the use of British-English vocabulary. In the DV “Randy” is translated with “Candide”. “Candide” is the title of a play by 18<sup>th</sup> century French author Voltaire in which the main character is called Candide and is naïve and credulous, as his name indicates. Therefore there is no connection between the connotations of the OV and those of the DV. The subtitle uses the made name “Laverge”. In French

“verge” is a synonym of “penis”. It is a feminine word so it takes the article “la” to creatively make “Laverge”. The translations operate on two very different levels. The DV refers to innocence and naivety whereas the subtitle version follows the original’s sexual connotations. Finally the OV uses the adjective “horny” and then the verb “shag”: two British-English vocabulary choices. The SV successfully recreates the sexual content of the original by referring twice to the male organ with “la trique” and “la tringle”.

It has been argued that subtitles are expected to “provide a high degree of transparency” (Mailhac, 2000: 138). Moreover slang, strong language and colloquialism have been said to have a stronger effect in writing than in speaking. This would then have consequences when dubbing and subtitling are concerned and Mailhac (2000: 144) concludes that “dubbing does again greater justice to characterisation than the subtitled version, since in the latter, characters will be perceived as less informal and more refined than they actually are”. Fawcett (1997: 116-122) also speaks about films being “expunged” or “weakened” in translation as well as Gambier (2002: 214) and Nedergaard-Larsen (1993: 213) who both explain that because of the stronger effect of written forms subtitles would be “toned down”. As far as subtitling is concerned Gottlieb (2005) explains that “colloquialisms, slang, cursing, pragmatic articles and repetitions are among the most condensed oral features ending up in the text “normalisation” (2005: 19):

a large part of the reduction (still) found in subtitling follows directly from its diasemiotic nature; the deletion or condensation of redundant oral features is a necessity when crossing over from speech to writing – a language mode more concise than oral discourse [...] the oft mentioned time-and-space constraints of subtitling may serve as a convenient excuse for leaving out controversial or cumbersome elements of the original film dialog.

My results thus seem to be atypical as the SV keeps slang, cursing and sexual connotations more than the DV in which sexual connotations are non-existent.

Finally I would like to close this case study by investigating aspects of interpersonal politeness, which can be conveyed in French using the tu/vous distinction. At the beginning of their conversation Spike and Giles use “vous” to talk to each other in both SV and DV. Then Giles and Spike start to argue Giles uses “tu” to address Spike in both versions, whereas Spike uses “vous” in the DV and “tu” in the SV. When Spike discovers his name, he is not pleased with his “father’s” choice and tells Giles:

[OV] I knew there was a reason I hated you.

[DV] J'étais sûr d'avoir une bonne raison de vous détester.

[I was sure there was a good reason why I hated you]

[SV] Voilà pourquoi je te déteste.

[That's why I hate you]

When choosing between tu/vous there are different dimensions to be taken into consideration: "age, generation, sex, kinship status, group membership, rural and political authority as well as emotional solidarity" (Anderman 1993: 65). Switching from one pronoun to the other can convey anger, contempt, intimacy, remoteness or respect (Mailhac 2000: 145). When Giles switches to "tu" he is angry at Spike because he insulted his girlfriend. Giles is also Spike's alleged father (and older) so he can switch without this being seen as a problem. Spike's use of "vous" in the DV is marked because only in very specific social contexts would a child address their parents using "vous". However, because efforts have been made so far to emphasise the snobbery and conservatism of British people, such a choice seems informed. Moreover the combination of "vous" and "détester" is interesting in this context because it adds even more scorn to Spike's statement conveyed mainly in the OV with a contemptuous tone. The SV is more neutral. The use of "tu" is what would be expected of a son-father relationship but in terms of characterisation this is less creative than the DV. Such a result is also in line with Mailhac's (2000) conclusion that dubbing does greater justice to characterisation when the translation of tu/vous is concerned<sup>17</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

This article has shown that the two French versions of *BtVS* present different translation strategies which I would like to argue have consequences on characterisation. In general the DV is toned down and uses a neutralised vocabulary when sexual references are made and slang is used. In the DV, Britishness is identified through iconic monuments, stereotypes connected to the weather, composure, food and conservative vocabulary. All sexual connotations are erased and lost. In the SV, Britishness is mainly associated with sexual orientation, as it is in the original and outdated vocabulary. However in the passage analysed, the DV was closer to the OV's feel when the translation of "you" was concerned.

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<sup>17</sup> Mason (1989) and Hatim and Mason (1997) also conclude that interpersonal elements are usually reduced in subtitling.

Reasons behind the changes made in the SV and DV can be multiple. Lebtahi (2004) concludes that the SV of *Mad about you* is more faithful to the original than the DV but that there are still changes, for instance the characters are more vulgar in the SV. The series is modified through the personalities of characters. The adaptation (or DV) is conceived to facilitate the introduction and diffusion of the sitcom in the target country but there are consequences on the perception of the characters' and the original's identity. Usually in France dubbing is made for broadcast whereas subtitling is made for DVD<sup>18</sup>. Consequently there are two different audiences and that of the dubbed version is a larger one. Sarthou (2006) explains that the larger the audience the more neutralised the language. Therefore because of audience requirement, highly localised features would inevitably be lost in any translation, which makes for a certain blandness in the DV although it is still successful in conveying the characters' Britishness. One could also speak of self-imposed censorship (also discussed in Scandura, 2004: 133) by which translators writing dialogues for the dubbed versions will tone down the language automatically because they know that it will be neutralised eventually.

Translating a passage which is loaded with numerous cultural elements and sexual connotations is a difficult task. In a translation context, the irony is that the characters are expressing their Britishness in French. Some of the subtitlers<sup>19</sup> working on *BtVS* told me that the hardest thing to translate was the language which they found "subtle" and "snappy" and humour with many wordplays and "mots d'esprit". One of them mentioned the difficulty of finding jokes which would correspond to the "Buffy Universe" and provoke an equivalent reaction in the French audience even if the translated jokes would not have much to do with the original ones.

By way of conclusion, I would like to add that the analysis of this passage eventually shows how creative audiovisual translators have to be in order to reproduce a comparable feel in translation in order to preserve characterisation<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> TV schedule, air time and ratings are also important. When it was on terrestrial channel M6 the series had a PG 12 certificate. It was screened alternatively at 10 pm and 7pm.

<sup>19</sup> I would like to thank Emmanuel Denizot, Nathalie Diu and H elo ise Vostf for answering my questions on their experience of writing the subtitles of *Buff y: the Vampire Slayer* into French.

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