Translating Trek: Rewriting an American Icon in a Francophone Context

Caroline-Isabelle Caron

Italian translators use a now well-known cliché: “Traduttore, traditore.” Translating is betraying. It refers to the tension between the necessity of rendering meaning (or interpretation) and that of rendering style, metaphors, and images within the original source text. This tension is a profound one in literature. In translating television dialogues and in dubbing episodes, many more exigencies come into play. Television translators have to take into account questions of synchrony, linguistic limitations, the various dubbing traditions of different countries, and their own poetic license. The main challenge of television translation is to find a balance between being true to the source text and the sometimes necessary falsification of the original dialogue in order to accurately render the story being told. Those factors come into play when translating Star Trek, created by Gene Roddenberry. The largely visual Trek universe, with its own vocabularies and traditions, is a special challenge for translators.

This is especially true when translating Star Trek: The Original Series into French. In 1971-1972, all seventy-nine episodes were dubbed in Montreal, and the series was renamed Patrouille du Cosmos (Cosmos Patrol). It has aired nearly every year since. Sonolab (now a subsidiary of Covitec) was responsible for the dubbing; the texts were written by Michel Collet and the dubbing actors worked principally under the stage direction of Michel Georges.1 The translation available to all French audiences is Patrouille du Cosmos, though in France it was re-entitled Star Trek: Classique.2

Dubbers often translate for audiences that may or may not be familiar with the universe of the story being told (Dutter; Luyken 155). When dealing with TOS, these difficulties are more than obvious. Patrouille du Cosmos was one of the very first television series ever dubbed in Quebec.3 The Quebec dubbing tradition was still being invented when this translation was produced. The dubbers had to adapt and interpret dialogues taking place on other planets, pronounced by aliens in silly make-up and starship officers wearing goofy clothes. Furthermore, these shows were metaphors for profoundly American stories of frontier exploration and for societal debates that meant very little to the average Québécois in the early 1970s. The dubbers needed to make all of this intelligible to French-speaking audiences while remaining true to the original concepts, storylines, and ultimate moral messages of each episode. As I will show here, they had varying levels of success.

Today, Patrouille du Cosmos is as widely known in Quebec and France as Star Trek is in the United States.4 But Patrouille is not quite the same show as TOS. The “filter” of translation has created a similar yet distinct cultural product from its original English version. In this study,

---

Dr. Caroline-Isabelle Caron is an assistant professor of history at Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada. She specializes in the cultural history of Québec and Acadian Francophones in Canada.
I will explore how the transformations resulting from the dubbing process have changed Star Trek into Patrouille du Cosmos, and how, as a result, Francophone audiences have been watching a different show than Anglophones. This study is based on a review of all seventy-nine episodes, and I will refer to fourteen selected episodes representing all three seasons. When quoting dialogue, parentheses ( ) indicate off-screen dialogue, E indicates the original English text, Q the Quebec translation, and LT the literal English translation of the Quebec text. The literal translations are my own. For E and Q, the dialogue is in quotation marks, since it was actually spoken, as opposed to LT. Character name codes and the names of the dubbing actors are in Appendix 1. I will give examples of the various types of transformations and of some of the most striking translation challenges faced by the dubbers. The purpose of these examples is to offset how the TOS stories and characters were modified—in short, how they were “betrayed.” I will also posit hypotheses as to how Patrouille du Cosmos was incorporated into the French-language collective imagination and culture.

The Challenges of Dubbing Trek

The process of dubbing a television show poses special challenges for the translators. Television shows, like all audiovisual productions, “have generally as much to do with music, images and acting as with words” (Luyken 149). Translators, therefore, have to take into account that the texts must be spoken (their “actability”) and that the sounds of the translated texts must more or less fit what is being seen, especially the lip movements (Whitman-Linsen 14; Ladouceur 20-21). In short, the translated text must be in synchrony with the visual portion of the production. In her book Through the Dubbing Glass, Candace Whitman-Linsen breaks down the different types of synchronies into categories that are both intertwined and mutually dependent. As she explains, “All of the types are highly woven in with semantic, phonetic, psychological, aesthetic and semiotic considerations” (19).

Whitman-Linsen divides between visual/optical and audio/acoustic synchronies (19). Of the former, she identifies lip synchrony, syllable articulation synchrony, length of utterance synchrony (gap synchrony or isochrony), and gesture and facial expression synchrony (kinetic synchrony). Of the latter, she categorizes idiosyncratic vocal type, paralinguistic elements (tone, timber, pitch of voice), prosody (intonation, melody, tempo), cultural variations, and accents and dialects. In order to produce high-quality versions into other languages, most (ideally all) of these synchronies must be realized; failing that, the viewers may not believe the televised performance they see and hear.

Television translators and dubbers also face practical constraints. The dubbing of audiovisual media is almost always done with a minimal budget and under strict time constraints. It is therefore difficult to produce quality dialogue (Pommier 104-45). The casting of actors is not always easy and is always expensive. In a few Patrouille du Cosmos episodes, the same actor dubbed two characters, changing his voice and accent in the process. Most of the time, only a very attentive ear will detect it. But this can also lead to problems. In “Balance of Terror”/“Zone de terreur,” for example, the actor dubbing Scotty also dubbed another character, Lieutenant Stiles. In most episodes, this would not be a problem, since the second character would usually have so few lines that the actor’s double duty would go unnoticed. But in a scene where both characters have to speak in close proximity, this difficulty had to be resolved somehow. This is what happens in Act 4:

K: E “Weapons’ status.”
Q “L’état des armes?”
LT The state of the weapons?

(Sc): E “We’ve only the forward phaser-room, Captain.”
Q [line omitted]

K: E “Fully operable, Scotty?”
Q “En état de marche, Scotty?”
LT In working order, Scotty?
E “Yes, sir. But specialist Tomlinson is manning it alone. No stand-by crew available.”

Q [line omitted]

St: E “Sir, my first assignment was weapon’s control.”

Q “Monsieur, ma première affectation était le maniement des faiseaux.”

LT Sir, my first affectation was beam handling.

The narrative was clearly modified here. It was decided to omit Scotty’s lines altogether. Contrary to the original, when Kirk calls Scotty, he only hears silence and his questions serve to emphasize Scotty’s lack of response. What the Quebec version implies is that the engineer has been hurt in the previous battle and cannot answer the bridge. The original indicated that Scotty had his hands full in engineering and needed help. But in French, when Stiles offers to man the forward phaser room, he is acting as a proficient officer replacing an injured comrade. The result is a dramatic scene in which the actor did not have to speak the lines of two different characters in succession and give himself away.

Such acting constraints are compounded by the techniques used for voice-overs in various countries. In French-speaking countries, dubbing is done with the bande rythmo method in which the source text is divided into one-minute segments and shown to the dubbing actors on a screen at the top or bottom of which is a timing indicator and a scrolling band (see Appendix 2). On the band is the dubbed text, as well as indications for rhythm, tone, accentuation, and emphasis. As the text scrolls past the timing indicator, the actors know exactly when to pronounce which syllable and make which sound.

The result is usually very tight synchrony and isochrony. Often, however, the outcome is a flattening of the general tone of the acting performance, as the actors are never acting more than a minute of dialogue at a time. It can also lead to overacting. The bande rythmo technique prevents the dubbing actors from fully interpreting any given scene. Most French dubbing technical manuals explain that the actors must keep an eye on the dubbed scene at all times, keep the other on the scrolling band, and pronounce every word, every syllable at the precise moment when they scroll past the timing indicator, a veritable ocular gymnastic (Pommier 39; Whitman-Linsen 75). As a result, the dubbers’ acting performance is not always believable, or simply not very inspired, no matter how good the translated text (Pommier 105-06). Most Patrouille du Cosmos episodes suffer from this kind of flattening. As a result, the grand eloquence of William Shatner is more tame, and Spock’s original neutral, logical tone is sometimes nothing short of somber in the Quebec version.

Inevitably, dubbing is a difficult process. The linguistic elements (vowels, syllables, lip movements, and so on), paralinguistic elements, facial expressions, body movements, and breathing are inherent to all performed texts (Ladouceur 20-21). The translation of dialogues must therefore provide for coherence in all of those categories. This is not always possible. In every case of visual media translation, the translators and dubbers are forced to accept some level of compromise.

In some cases, compromising means sacrificing meaning for better lip synchrony. For example, in the episode “Assignment: Earth”/“Mission: Terre,” the principal character “Gary Seven” becomes “Gary Savant” in French. The number seven translates as “sept” in French, and clearly couldn’t be used. Since Seven’s main characteristic is his advanced knowledge, the choice of “Savant” fits both synchrony and the overall storyline. Even if the use of a number would have underscored the fact he is not of planet Earth, his French last name serves a similar purpose. In the episode “Miri,” the crew lands on a planet inhabited by children who turn out to be over three hundred years old. “Grups” (the name the children gave to adults, short for grown-ups) was translated as “Grands Pieds,” literally “Big Feet.” Translation erased the original meaning and its obvious reference to kiddy-talk, while introducing a quirky reminder that adults have bigger feet than children. However, it assured lip synchrony, as the bilabial sounds found in “Grups” are also found in “Grands Pieds.” The same happens with...
the name the children gave themselves, “Onlies” (because they are the only ones left), which is translated as “Élus,” or “Chosen,” as if the children had concluded that the adults killed by the “Life Prolongation Project” had died in divine punishment.

At other times, the translators compromise synchrony to ensure stronger dramatic effects or grammatically correct sentences. The episode “A Journey to Babel”/“Un tour à Babel” contains several examples of this, the most evident of which is heard during the party scene in Act 1.6 After a heated discussion between Spock’s father Sarek, Andorian ambassador Shras, and Terralite ambassador Gav, the conversation comes to a close with a retort by Spock’s mother Amanda:

\[\text{Sh: } \text{E “Have you met Gav before, Ambassador?”} \]
\[\text{Q “Avez-vous rencontré Gav auparavant, ambassadeur?”} \]
\[\text{LT Have you met Gav before, Ambassador?} \]
\[\text{Sa: } \text{E “We debated during my last council session.”} \]
\[\text{Q “On s’est affronté lors de la dernière session du conseil.”} \]
\[\text{LT We confronted each other during the last council session.} \]
\[\text{A: } \text{E “Ambassador Gav lost.”} \]
\[\text{Q “ Ça s’est soldé par la défaite de Gav.”} \]
\[\text{LT It ended with Gav’s defeat.} \]

Amanda’s line means essentially the same in both versions, but the length and number of syllables are quite different. The Quebec version has eleven syllables instead of the six quick syllables in English. A literal translation like “Ambassadeur Gav a perdu” would not have had the same kind of punch as the original, and would have provided for even worse synchrony. To resolve this problem, the dubbers chose to end Amanda’s line while her face was partially hidden by her hand bringing a drinking glass to her mouth. The result is that the viewers would notice the lack of synchrony, but the dubbing would not look as bad as it could have under other circumstances.

In reverse, shortcuts are sometimes taken in the dialogue because the French version would simply require too many words to render exactly. This is the case in the episode “Balance of Terror”/“Zone de terreur.” In a complicated scene in Act 1 where Spock briefs the crew on the situation at the border of the Neutral Zone, the visuals show close-ups of Spock interspersed with shots of various crew members listening to him. The translator had to write a text that would explain the situation as precisely as in the source text, but that would still be isochronic. In short, every time Spock comes into view, the French text must say the same thing as the original, and the explanation must not run longer that it does in English.

\[\text{Sp: } \text{E “Referring to the map on your screens, (you will note beyond the moving position of our vessel, a line of Earth outpost stations, constructed on asteroids, they monitor the Neutral Zone, established by treaty after the Earth-Romulan conflict of over a century ago. As you may recall from your histories, this conflict was fought, by our standards today, with primitive atomic weapons and in primitive space vessels) which allowed no quarter, no captives, nor was there even ship-to-ship communication. (Therefore, no Human, Romulan or ally has ever seen the other.) Earth believes the Romulans to be warlike, cruel, traitorous. And only the Romulans know what they think of Earth. (The treaty set by subspace radio, established this Neutral Zone, entry in which, by either side, would constitute an act of war.) The treaty has been unbroken since that time. Captain.”} \]
\[\text{Q “Vous référant à la carte qui est sur votre écran, (vous noterez au-delà de les chemins suivis par notre vaisseau une ligne de stations interspatiales. Construites sur des astéroïdes, elles surveillent la Zone Neutre, qui fut déterminée après le conflit qui survint entre la Terre et Romulus il y a un siècle. Si vous voulez bien vous souve nir, les combattants utilisèrent de pri-} \]
mitifs vaisseaux spatiaux et de non moins primitives armes atomiques. Ce fut une véritable hécateombe.) Il n’y eu ni blessés, ni captifs. Il n’y eu aucun corps-à-corps visuel pendant les combats. (Par conséquent, il n’y a même pas eu de contact humain entre les combattants.) Les Terriens croyaient que les Romulans étaient sauvages, cruels, trai- tres. Il n’y avait que les Romulans qui connaissaient les Terriens. (Le traité de paix établi par radio déterminait une Zone Neutre, qui ne devait être violée par aucun des partis sous peine d’une nouvelle guerre.) Le traité n’a jamais été rompu depuis ce temps. Capitaine.”

LT Referring to the map on your screen, you will note beyond the route followed by our vessel a line of interspace stations. Constructed on asteroids, they monitor the Neutral Zone, which was determined after the conflict which occurred between Earth and Romulus a century ago. If you would recall, the combatants used primitive space vessels and no less primitive atomic weapons. It was a veritable slaughter. There were no casualties, no captives. There was no visual hand-to-hand during the battles. Consequently, there was not even human contact between the combatants. Terrans believed that the Romulans were savage, cruel, traitorous. Only the Romulans knew the Terrans. The peace treaty established by radio determined a Neutral Zone, which was not to be violated by either party, lest the beginning of a new war. The treaty was never broken since that time. Captain.

The italicized sentences posed the most difficulty for the translator and are ultimately inaccurate. Clearly, this passage also shows that the translator was forced to cut out less important details in favor of isochrony. The depth of the episode was lost to the necessity of making it all fit visually (Fodor 77-79).

In other cases, translators compromise by modifying the actual text of the dialogue to better render the overall storyline. The result is a better understanding of the story, but a different rendition of what the text originally said. In Act 3 of the same episode, the Romulan Commander and his officer Decius do not agree on the proper course of action. The former would rather go home, but the latter is eager to go back into battle against the Enterprise.

D: E “We are in the Neutral Zone. They will not enter. If you refuse, permit me the glory of the kill, commander.”
Q “Ils n’entreront jamais en Zone Neutre. Si vous refusez, accordez-moi la gloire de me tuer, commandant.”
LT They will never enter the Neutral Zone. If you refuse, allow me the glory of killing myself, commander.

Here, the French-language version better emphasizes Decius’s eagerness than does the original, and implies that he would not go home alive without having destroyed their enemies. As such, he compounds later lines by the Romulan Commander, played by Mark Leonard. In Act 4, he explains to Kirk that Romulans are “creatures of duty” (“créatures de devoir”), after which he honorably activates his ship’s self-destruct mechanism.

As in the previous example, sometimes a translator will choose to add meaning, lines, jokes, or details that do not appear in the source text in order to beef up the story being told. In Patrouille du Cosmos, the most common form of these transformations is the addition of jokes. In the episode “Bread and Circuses”/“Sur les chemins de Rome,” there are several instances of striking changes, including additional gags. Many of the added jokes build upon dialogue already in the source text. At the beginning of Act 1, for example, Spock detects noticeable levels of air pollution similar to twentieth-century Earth’s. The Francophone gag is stronger here than the Anglophone.

Mc: E “The word is ‘smog.’”
Q “Ça s’appelait le ‘smog.’”
LT It was called ‘smog.’
Sp: E “Yes, I believe that was the term. I had no idea you were that much of a historian, doctor.”
Q “Je crois bien que c’était le terme. Oh! Je ne vous connaissais pas ce talent d’historien, docteur.”
LT I well believe that it was the term. Oh! I did not know you had the talent of a historian, doctor.
Mc: E “I am not, Mister Spock! I was simply trying to stop you from giving us a lecture on the subject! Jim, is there anything at all we know about this planet?”
Q “Je n’en suis pas un, Monsieur Spock! Je voulais seulement éviter l’enumeration complete de ce qui compose le smog, Spock. Jim, à part le smog, y a-t-il autre chose que l’on connaisse sur cette planète?”
LT I am not one, Mister Spock! I only wanted to avoid the complete enumeration of what comprises smog, Spock. Jim, besides smog, is there anything else we know about this planet?

In the French-language passage, the smog gag in set up more strongly by McCoy, by insinuating clearly that this is superfluous knowledge about an otherwise unknown planet. In that episode, however, the best added gag is found in the very last lines of the episode in Act 4. After having escaped with their lives and finally understanding that they had been among Romans and Christians, Kirk tells Chekov that it is time to leave:

K: E “Wouldn’t it be something to watch, to be a part of it, to see it happen all over again. Mister Chekov, bring us out of orbit. Warp factor one.”
Q “J’aimerais bien y assister, en faire partie, voir ce qui arrivera, seulement une fois. Monsieur Chekov, sortons de l’orbite chrétienne. Mach facteur un.”
LT I would like to see it, to be part of it, to see what will happen, only once. Mister Chekov, let us leave the Christian orbit. Mach factor one.
C: E “Yes, sir.”
Q “Ave, César!”
LT Hail, Caesar!

The added gag underscores the plot of the entire episode by inserting a play on words. “Sortir de l’orbite chrétienne” can mean “To leave the Christian orbit,” but also “To leave the Christian zone of influence” in much the same way the Romans were trying to do in the episode. Chekov’s witty retort only adds to this, by mockingly placing Kirk in the position of imperial leader of the Enterprise.

Other changes completely transform the original text in order to add a passage that would be much funnier and more intelligible to Francophones. At the very end of “Miri,” Act 4, Yeoman Rand, Kirk, and McCoy reflect on the events that just took place. Rand is worried about the children:

R: E “Just children. Simply to leave them there with a medical team . . .”
Q “Ce n’était que des enfants. Ils ont besoin d’être sous contrôle médical, Jim.”
LT They were only children. They need to be under medical control, Jim.
K: E “Just children. Three hundred years old and more. I’ve already contacted Space Central. They’ll send teachers, advisors . . .”
LT Children? The youngest was three hundred years old. I contacted the proper authorities. They will send them educators.
Mc: E “And truant officers, I presume.”
Q “Des fonctionnaires, comme d’habitude.”
LT Civil servants, as usual.
K: E “They’ll be all right.”
Q “Probablement.”
LT Probably.

The theme of the incompetent civil servant is an extremely familiar one to Francophones of Quebec and France. It comprises the very old cliché of civil servants who do not know what they are doing and sleep at their desks all day. Clearly this is what the translator refers to here. The implied image is that the civil servants sent to the planet will be completely overrun by those three-hundred-year-old children, and will in no
way be able to control them. Doctors, on the other hand, might have better luck, as Rand implies.

As the previous example shows, it is sometimes necessary for translators to change the cultural references in the source text in order to make it funnier, or simply more intelligible to the target (other-language) audience. For example, in “Bread and Circuses”/“Sur les chemins de Rome,” when commenting on the extent of the similarities with Earth, Spock explains,

Sp: E “Complete Earth parallel. The language here is English.”
Q “Vraiment, on se croirait sur Terre. Jusqu’a la langue qui est française.”
LT Truly, one could believe to be on Earth. Even the language is French.

Since the language spoken in the Quebec version is French, a literal translation of this passage would have made little sense. Spock could not have commented in French that the language heard by him and the audience was English. A change of cultural allusion was necessary.

Most of the time, referential substitution provides meaningful information to replace cultural allusions that the target audience would not normally possess (Leppihalme 37-77). With the new cultural allusions in place, the target audience can now make sense of the dialogue or the storyline being depicted. In the case of Star Trek, most of the allusions to beasts, literary authors, or other cultures are invented and integrated into the overall Trek universe. There is little need to cut out a reference to a Denebian Slime Devil in order to replace it with another reference; it is self-explanatory. The only reason to do so would be to solve difficulties in synchrony.

This is what happened in “A Journey to Babel”/“Un tour à Babel.” During the aforementioned party scene, immediately after the passage discussed earlier, Amanda reveals to McCoy that her son Spock had a pet as a child. In English, she describes the seblat as “Sort of like a . . . a fat teddy bear.” Teddy bears are part of the Quebec cultural universe, and comparing a seblat to an “ourson” or an “ours en peluche” would have made perfect sense. However, it would have allowed for terrible synchrony. The translator therefore chose to change the comparison to “Une sorte de gros cheval de bois” (a kind of a big wooden horse). The number of syllables is the same, the lip movements are synchronized, and the passage keeps its original reference to a child’s toy. However, the mental image created by the dialogue is quite different. This image is further changed by Spock’s additional description:

Sp: E “Not precisely, doctor. On Vulcan the teddy bears are alive, and they have six inch fangs.”
Q “Non, pas tout à fait, docteur. Sur Vulcain, un cheval de bois, ce n’est pas en bois. Ça vit et ça a des canines d’éléphant.”
LT No, not precisely, doctor. On Vulcan, a wooden horse, it’s not made of wood. It lives and it has elephant canines.

The spirit of the dialogue and the impression of the alien quality and the possible threat posed by the beast are kept intact, though the actual image has changed.

On the other hand, some changes made by the translator were not necessary. Meanings and words were changed significantly, even if a literal translation would not have been problematic. There is a certain amount of poetic license in the choices made by the writer of the Quebec text. Often, the balance between necessity and preference is not always detectable. In most scenes, questions of synchrony complicate matters. However, in a scene where most of the text is in voice-over (no lip movement), one could expect a literal translation to take place. But this is not always the case. “The Cloud Minders”/“Nuages” has a good example of this. In Act 1, while Kirk and Spock are resting in the cloud city of Stratos of the planet Ardana, the latter reflects on the situation at hand and announces to the audience the main plot twists of the episode. The entire speech is in voice-over, with shots of the sights and characters of the episode. It is necessary to
This troubled planet is a place of the most violent contrasts. Those who receive the rewards are totally separated from those who shoulder the burdens. It is not a wise leadership. Here on Stratos, everything is incomparably beautiful and pleasant. The High Advisor’s charming daughter Droxine particularly so. The name Droxine seems appropriate to her. I wonder: can she retain such purity and sweetness of mind and be aware of the life of the people on the surface of the planet? There, the harsh life in the mines is instilling the people with a bitter hatred. The young girl who lead the attack against us when we beamed down was filled with the violence of desperation. If the lovely Droxine knew of the young miner’s misery, I wonder how the knowledge would affect her.

None of these changes was necessary, since there was no synchrony to take into account. In the Quebec version, there is no mention of Spock’s opinion of Droxine’s name, but there is an insistence on her exceptional beauty. There is also a paraphrase of Invitation au voyage by the Terran poet mentioned in the underlined sentence, Charles Baudelaire: “La, tout n’est qu’ordre et beauté/Luxe, calme, et volupté” (“There, all is order and beauty/Luxury, calm, and opulence”) (67). There is a stronger emphasis on her ignorance of the conditions below than in the source text. It better underscores the contrasts spoken of at the beginning of the passage. This also furthers the comparison with Baudelaire’s poem by enhancing the impression that Stratos is like the luxurious and comfortable room he described. Notable is the use of the words “calfeutré et éthéré” (“closed and ethereal”), which aptly describe both the city and a Baudelairean atmosphere.

Another subtle change is the use of the verb “se désolidariser” (“to dissociate oneself”) in the first sentence. The verb in French clearly implies a
socialist/marxist outlook. In the original episode, there was an evident antislavery message, referring back to America’s controversial institution. The translator chose to turn the Troglyte miners’ strife for emancipation into a class struggle by using a word that would inevitably remind the audience of the history of unionized labor. Since the vocabulary used to describe Stratos is eminently bourgeois, the effect is inflated further. Thus, the dubbed speech alters the viewers’ outlook on the entire story in just a few words. The insertions of new cultural allusions served to add meaning and to emphasize a particular interpretation of the events taking place. “By altering dialogue and performance,” Jeff Davidson explained, “plots can be re-routed, characters re-modeled, bad jokes re-funnied” (Whitman-Linsen 166).

Translating the Untranslatable

Profound alterations, like those shown so far, sometimes come into play because of greater translation difficulties. Translators often have to deal with sentences, names and designations, even entire storylines that cannot be translated easily, if at all. Imaginative solutions are often the only way to resolve such tough problems. In TOS, this is especially true in high-concept episodes where intricate vocabularies and colloquial speech types were invented. In “The Way to Eden”/“Le chemin d’Eden,” the space hippies looking for a mythical planet called those who disagreed with them “Herbert.” That word caused particular difficulties for the translator because it is not easily pronounceable by Francophones. It was translated as “Sceptique,” (“Skeptick,” or unbeliever). That choice served to better explain the hippies’ opposition to those who would doubt them. But the choice had significant consequences in the translation of the rest of the episode. In Act 1, when Kirk asks Spock to define “Herbert,” the Vulcan is embarrassed:

Sp: E “It is, em, a somewhat, em, uncomplimentary, Captain. Herbert was a minor official, notorious for his rigid and limited patterns of thoughts.”
Q “C’est ainsi, euh, qu’ils surnomment, euh, je vous demande pardon, qu’ils surnomment les irrécupérables, les conservateurs, les tenants de l’aphorisme, méthodiques, ceux qui se mettent la tête dans le sable. Les autruches, quoi.”
LT This is how, em, they call, em, forgive me, how they call unsalvageables, conservatives, proponents of rigid thought, methodicals, those who bury their heads in the sand. In short, ostriches.

Because of the choice of “Sceptique” for “Herbert,” the translator was forced to change the definition Spock states. In doing so, he had to do away with the familiar incompetent civil servant theme, but found an imaginative way of inflating the joke. Since Kirk was constantly being called “Herbert” in the episode, his being compared to an ostrich makes Spock’s comments (and William Shatner’s subsequent facial expressions) hugely funny.

The opening of Act 1 in the same episode was difficult because of the hippie-like slang the Eden seekers were using. Ideally, the translator would have had to look for a way to stay true to the spirit of the dialogue, while ensuring that the lines sounded “hip.” Instead, he chose another path:

Sp: E “One.”
Q “Logos.”
LT Logos.
Se: E “We are one.”
Q “On a le Logos.”
LT We have the Logos.
Sp: E “One is the beginning.”
Q “Logos est la Raison Suprême.”
LT Logos is the Supreme Reason.

By using the Greek word “Logos” to name the ideal the space hippies were striving for, the translator went around the near impossibility to solve this translation. Logos was the name of the supreme deity in Stoicist doctrine. Clearly, the translator tried to turn the space hippies into Neo-Stoicists who follow “the Supreme Reason,” thus giving them a little more credibility in the
eyes of the Quebec audience. By changing them into a philosophical movement with Greek origins, the translator changed the message of the episode. The Eden seekers were no longer a reference to a contemporary phenomenon, and the story no longer served as social commentary. By displacing the cultural allusion, the translator made the cultural background of this episode even more foreign, as well as more respectable. This choice also made the translation of the next lines easier. Had Spock said “un” in lieu of “one,” the whole dialogue would have sounded a little off. To render the meaning implied in the English dialogue, “unifié” would have been a proper term, but synchrony would have been gravely compromised. Although “Logos” is not much better, it does allow for a better flow in the subsequent lines.

As the last example shows, some passages are extremely difficult to render in French. In such cases, the translator has had to use feats of imagination in order to circumvent those problems. Technobabble is more often that not a major pitfall. For example, Star Trek has customarily used naval terminology in its dialogues. This has served the franchise well. However, the equivalent French terminology is rarely synchronic. Trek translators have the unenviable choice of either sacrificing synchrony for exactitude, or the reverse. In the case of Patrouille du Cosmos, the choice has often been the former. “Bridge” and “deck” are always replaced by their exact French naval equivalent “passerelle” and “pont.” In the same vein, “shuttle” and “shuttlecraft” are almost always translated as “navette.” However, the latter word also was given sometimes as “maraudeur,” meaning “marauder” or “prowler.” This is an ingenious choice in that it emphasizes the maneuverability of the craft.

Invented technology posed the greatest difficulties. How does one translate “warp,” “phaser,” “transporter,” and “sensors”? Each was dealt with differently. “Warp”—meaning the warping of the space–time continuum in order to achieve faster-than-light speeds using the principals of continuum distortion propulsion (Sterbach and Okuda 54-74)—would translate as “distorsion” or “déformation.” “Warp factor three” would then become “facteur de distorsion trois.” This would not do very well visually.8 In light of the necessity of making it sound technical, the dubbers chose to translate “warp” as “mach,” despite the fact that it refers to the speed of sound, not light. In some instances, the translator avoided using the term altogether, like in the last scene of “Bread and Circuses”/“Sur les chemins de Rome” mentioned earlier. At other times, phrases such as “poussée facteur un” (“thrust factor one”) were used, like in Act 4 of “Arena”/“Arène.”

“Phasers” were also a problem. The translator could have kept the acronym exactly as it was, the same way the acronym “laser” was accepted as is in the French language.9 For some reason, the translator chose several other words, including “laser,” that were used indiscriminately during the three seasons. The most common were quite imaginative. When referring to the ship’s phasers, the term “faisseaux” was generally spoken. It translates as “beams,” and as such is more generic than the original. Yet it defines exactly what the viewer is seeing on the screen: beams shooting out of the Enterprise’s hull. Therefore, in Act 3 of “Balance of Terror”/“Zone de terreur,” Lieutenant Stiles can call out:

St: E “Paris pattern. All phasers fire.”
Q “Ordre du capitaine. Tous les faisseaux, feu.”
LT By order of the captain. All beams, fire.

In this quote, the translator also had to deal with the “Paris pattern” of the phaser shots, which is not translatable literally in French. His solution erased a cryptic passage in the original, and emphasized the vessel’s chain of command—an elegant solution. From the beginning of the second season, phasers (especially the hand-held models) were also called “fuseurs,” meaning “fusers.” This solution had the advantage of sounding technical, even though the implied function of the device is different. Instead of producing beams of phased directed energy, fusers shoot beams that evidently fuse the matter they hit. A secondary meaning can be implied, since
the French verb “fuser” means “to spurt,” hinting to the great strength of the jets of energy the devices emit.

The “transporter” received two translations. In the first half of the series, “transbordeur” was generally used. In naval terms, this is a literal translation of “transporter-platform.” The word is a derivative of the verb “transborder,” or “to transship.” In the second half of the series, the inventive “salle de téléportation,” in lieu of “transporter room” became the norm. “Télérporteur”—from the Greek prefix télé meaning “at a distance” and the Latin portare, “to carry”—became the habitual translation for the “transporter.” It renders more exactly the function of the device—so much so that, even in English, “teleportation” had become the generic term designating the principle of matter–energy conversion transport. (See Sterbach and Okuda 102-09.)

“Sensors” might not have been a problem, were it not for the fact that, in both English and French, the word is a homonym of “censors.” The potential confusion had to be avoided. As with the previous examples, the translators used different terms at different times in the series. “Radars” was a frequent choice, but the most ingenious solution was the invention of the term “scrateurs” (literally, “scrutinizers”). While maintaining lip and syllable articulation synchrony, the word better explains the actual function of the sensors as devices that intensely examine the ship’s surroundings and identify minute details.

Dealing with such difficulties forced the translators to modify greatly the dialogues in order to make them intelligible in French. A short exchange between Kirk and Scotty in Act 1 of “Bread and Circuses”/“Sur les chemins de Rome” is a perfect example:


LT A moment. I have proof of our good intentions. It is only a small box. I will take it out slowly. Kirk to Enterprise.

(Sc): E “Scott here, captain.”
Q “Scott à l’inter, capitaine.”
LT Scott at the intercom, captain.
K: “Scotty, lock in on my transmission beam. Scan us.”
Q “Scotty, branchez les scrutateurs sur ma fréquence. Vous nous voyez?”
LT Scotty, connect the scrutinizers on my frequency. You see us?

(Sc): E “Scanning, sir.”
Q “Je vous ai dans l’écran.”
LT I have you on the screen.

The technobabble was rendered in such a way here that, even if the terms used are different, Kirk’s orders and the devices used are perfectly understood. However, this passage also has its own problems: Kirk’s first line, “Come in,” was not translated as “Répondez” (“Respond”), as it usually was in the series. In French it was cut out, which left Shatner’s lips moving without a sound.

The more unusual devices also posed problems. In “Mirror, Mirror”/“Miroir,” the “agony booth” of the mirror universe’s ISS Enterprise was referred to as “salle de torture” (“torture room”). It was also quickly called “cabanon,” a very awkward translation that means both “hut” and “cell.” In Quebec, a “cabanon” also commonly refers to a backyard storage shed. Since it is spoken very fast in the French-language dialogue, most viewers would probably miss it. In the same episode, the hand-held punishment device called an “agonizer” could have been translated as “agoniseur.” Rather, it became the “auto-destructeur” (“self-destroyer”), which implies that the device kills, contrary to the original intention of the authors (Okuda, Okuda, and Mirek 3). In short, the dubbers have invented their own technobabble—though not as standardized as in the original—and in so doing altered the stories being told.

What the previous examples show is that the translator could not always translate the source text literally. Michel Collet sometimes had to rewrite the dialogue completely. This works well in most instances, but some scenes and even entire
episodes can prove themselves utterly untranslatable. This is the case in “Bread and Circuses”/“Sur les chemins de Rome.” Several examples taken from that episode have already been analyzed in this article. The reason for so many instances of text modification is that the episode is based on an untranslatable premise. At the heart of the story, the Enterprise’s crew members face a situation started by their inability to understand a simple play on words. The away team meets escaped slaves who call themselves “Children of the Son,” as in the Son of God, since they are Christians. Kirk and the others understand the phrase as “Children of the Sun.” Thinking they are dealing with Sun worshippers, they go about the episode wondering how they can advocate peace. It is not until the end of the story that Uhura figures it out:

U: E “I’m afraid you have it all wrong, Mister Spock, all of you. I’ve been monitoring some of their old-style radio waves. The Empire spokesman trying to ridicule their religion. But he couldn’t. Don’t you understand? It’s not the Sun up in the sky? It’s the Son of God.”

The problem facing the French-language translator was that the episode is based on a homonym untranslatable into French: “sun” is “soleil,” and “son” is “fils.” In literature, there are typically four translating strategies used to solve such a problem (see Henry). Whenever possible, a translator should strive for an isomorphic translation, where a play on words is rewritten into another play on words that is as close to a literal translation as possible. Usually this is impossible with puns (see Lendvai; Politzer; Hetzron; Marino). A homomorphic translation would, for example, replace a pun with another different pun. Here, however, it was simply impossible to rewrite the slaves’ religion into an entirely different set of beliefs where a homonym would be possible. A heteromorphic translation would replace it with a different type of play on words. Although not inconceivable, the confusion of the away team would have quite a different foundation than in the original dialogue. In the end, purely written strategies would not work. The translator chose to do a free translation, where plays on words are translated into regular prose and sometimes prose is turned into gags. As mentioned earlier, this episode is rich with such cases.

The translator was forced to accept the fact that the basic premise of the episode would not make any sense to French-language viewers. “Soleil” and “fils” are not homonyms, and there is no escaping it. And so, when they meet the escaped slaves, the latter do not ask “Êtes-vous des Enfants du Fils?,” but “Êtes-vous des Enfants du Soleil?”, even if it makes no sense whatsoever that Christians would refer to themselves as “Children of the Sun.” Uhura’s explanation of the away team’s error makes little sense either:


LT I’m afraid you are in the wrong, Mister Spock and all of you. I spent my time studying the messages they sent by radio broadcasts and the Empire’s transmitter trying to ridicule this religion. But with no results. But don’t you realize that it’s not the Sun [Soleil]. It’s the Son [Fils] of God.

It seems evident that the translator was rather frustrated by the challenge of this episode. Overall, it was very well translated, with imaginative solutions to problems that might have been left dangling in other episodes. For example, the Roman television announcer’s lines in Act 3 are nearly perfect:

An: E “And first tonight, ladies and gentlemen, a special surprise extra. In the far corner, a pair of highly aggressive Barbarians. Strong, intelligent, with strange ways and I’m sure full of surprises. And facing them, two
favorites here from previous encoun-
ters, Achilles and Flavius. [pause, 
applause and cheers] Victory of 
Death? And for which of them? Well, 
ladies and gentlemen, you know just as 
much about that as I do because this is 
your program. You Name the Win-
ner!

Q “Le premier combat que nous vous 
offrons est une surprise extraordinaire. 
Dans le coin le plus éloigné, une paire 
de terrifiants barbares, forts, intelli-
gents, qui se battent de façon étrange. 
Ils nous réservent bien des surprises. 
Ils feront face à deux de nos combat-
tant favoris, Achille et Flavius. [pause, 
applause and cheers] Combat à mort. 
Qui sera le vainqueur? Eh bien, je n’en 
sais pas plus que vous et je vous laisse à 
votre programme. Cherchez le vain-
queur!”

LT The first fight that we give you is 
an extraordinary surprise. In the 
farthest corner, a pair of terrifying 
Barbarians, strong, intelligent, who 
fight in a strange manner. They have 
surprises in store for us. They will face 
two of our favorite fighters, Achilles 
and Flavius. [pause, applause and 
cheers] Fight to the death. Who will 
be the victor? Well, I do not know any 
more than you and I leave you to your 
program. Find the Victor!

However, the episode also contains several 
instances where the translator has added gags and 
inserted plays on words in the French text. For 
instance, in the last scene of Act 4, McCoy refers 
to the now-late Flavius as a “fils du soleil,” 
literally “son of the sun.” As such, it seems the 
translator has simply taken his revenge by 
creating lines that could never be translated back 
into English! The Roman television announcer’s 
last lines are a wonderful example of this. The 
italicized pun in the channel’s French slogan is 
untranslatable into English:

An: E “Good evening, ladies and gentle-
men. Before tonight’s first heat, a 
simple (execution. The State Unitas 
Channel has a lot of excitement 
coming your way).”

Q “Bonsoir, mesdames et messieurs. 
En intermède avant nos émissions, 
ous vous présentons (une simple 
exécution. Mais restez branchés sur le 
Canal des Arènes pour vos jeux 
favoris. Canal des Arènes, la Reine 
des canaux!”

LT Good evening, ladies and gentle-
men. As an interlude before our 
broadcasts, we present to you a simple 
execution. But stay tuned to the Arena 
Channel for your favorite games. 
Arena Channel, the Queen of chan-
nels.

The examples presented so far show transfor-
mations of the source text, at times spectacular 
one. Individually, each underscores the different 
types of changes that translation has caused, the 
results of difficulties inherent in any translation 
process. Put together, they create a significantly 
different cultural product than the original. 
Different allusions have been added to shift the 
cultural background of the show, such as refer-
cences to specific poets and philosophers. Many 
changes are quite profound. If the stories are 
different, so are the characters.

Transfigurations

In Patrouille du Cosmos, characterization is the 
result of several factors, only some of which are 
inherent in the original Anglophone version. The 
dubbing actors’ performance, their stage direc-
tion, French-language dubbing traditions, and the 
allusions made in the translated dialogues all alter 
the viewers’ ultimate perceptions of the charac-
ters. Kirk in French is not the same as in English; 
neither are the other members of the Enterprise’s 
crew.

One striking change is a consequence of the 
way the characters are played by the dubbing 
actors. The fact that dubbed performances are 
often flatter and more aloof has already been 
mentioned. If that often means that their acting is 
somewhat uninspired, it also results in an
impression that the characters are stoic and unemotional. In French, Starfleet officers are not easily moved or exited by the situations around them. Kirk’s grandiloquent speeches are spoken in a poised and reflective tone. Scotty’s excited commentaries are transformed into determined analyses and cynical retorts.

The way in which the other characters address each other is also different. During season one, the “Sir” used by the crew to address Kirk was almost always translated as “Monsieur.” But given the obvious visual difference of the words, the translator found an inventive solution. In seasons two and three, “Sir” is often rendered as “Chef” (“chief”). In the Francophone version of “Miri,” Janice Rand calls Kirk “Jim,” which she never does in English. What these changes imply is a looser, friendlier chain of command than what would be deduced from the action on the screen.

Kirk’s original nickname for McCoy served a similar purpose in TOS by underlying the friendship between the two men. However, “Bones” presented quite a challenge to the translator. The literal translation “Os” would have been nothing short of silly. It could not be “Doctor” either; the difference would have been too obvious to the viewer. Perhaps the translator allowed himself to be inspired by the French version of Walt Disney’s Snow White. In Patrouille, Kirk’s nickname for McCoy is “Prof,” the same as the French name of the dwarf Doc. However, what the French nickname implies is the reverse of the crew’s use of “Chef.” “Prof” underscores the extent of McCoy’s knowledge and education, and his position of authority both on the ship and in his friendship with Kirk. It places him on a higher level and produces the opposite effect of its source word. Even in the most casual of contexts, “Prof” has a deferential aspect. The chief medical officer is then presented as the older, wiser friend of the brash captain of the Enterprise. The various scenes where McCoy counsels Kirk take on a much deeper meaning in that light.

These changes in tone and implied narrative are compounded by an aspect of French dubbing tradition that always significantly alters spoken dialogues. French-speaking audiences as a whole insist on linguistically and stylistically correct dialogue (Luyken 138). This has significant consequences. In a large proportion of French-language dubbed audiovisual media, the level of the spoken language is quite high. The language used is what is known as Français International, a version of the language devoid of regional indicators. Accents and phrases are neutral and standardized so that the geographical origins of the speaker cannot be identified. Until the end of 1970s, this was the language commonly used in Francophone-dubbed shows and films, and was considered the only proper way to speak in audio and visual media. The German language has a similar form, Hochdeutsch, which is the preferred language for dubbing in Germany even today (Herbst 295-303). Both Hochdeutsch and Français International are more comprehensive forms of language standardization than “Received Pronunciation” is for the English language, as they also affect language structure and ideally eliminate all region-specific colloquialisms. However, there is a social (class) component to both Received Pronunciation and International French, of which Hochdeutsch is largely exempt.

In Patrouille, characters speak International French. The result is that most audible regional indicators in the original dialogue are erased. There is no difference to be heard between characters who originally spoke with various British or American accents. This is true for Scotty’s heavy Aberdeen accent, Lieutenant Kyle’s Irish inflections, and McCoy’s Southern drawl. Their “quaint ethnic” phrases have been eliminated as well. Scotty’s wearing of a kilt in a few episodes and the occasional reference to Scotland are the only reminders of his origins. Audibly, he is ethnically indistinguishable from Kirk. McCoy’s Southern US origins have completely disappeared, since there are no visual signs of his provenance. He is no longer the “good-ol’ family doctor” he was in the original version. Spock and Kirk’s origins were established mostly in dialogue (and in the Vulcan’s pointed ears), and so are still present, but only within those limits.

The end result of all of this is that the Enterprise’s crew speaks in a manner that implies
an extensive education, some degree of refinement, great psychological strength in the face of danger, and an underlying uniformity of social provenance. The wide spectrum of regional accents in French certainly would have allowed for an approximation of the ethnic differences within the Enterprise’s crew. But if Scotty were to have spoken with a Marseille accent, he would not have been a Scot but a French Southerner; McCoy speaking like a Montrealer would not have made him an American Southerner but a Québécois. As Whitman-Linsen points out, “Target language ‘correspondences’ have a disconcertingly incongruous effect and tend to sound completely misplaced” (51). Standardization was unavoidable.

However, even with a uniformization of the language, some accents can still be heard in Patrouille. Chekov is still played with a very heavy, caricatural Russian pronunciation, like in TOS. The reason is that a Russian accent is feasible in French, unlike a Southern drawl. Other accents were added. This is especially true of Sulu. In the original American version, Sulu is the quintessence of excellent elocution, and George Takei played him in the best of the King’s English. On the other hand, Daniel Roussel’s Sulu speaks grammatically correct French but in a very strong mock-Asian nasal accent. Sulu is a “truer” and more believable Asian because of it.14 It is a sad fact that in early 1970s Quebec, an accentless Asian would not have been believable, in the same way that an accentless Black would not be believable to an audience in France even today (Plourde i-ii). Thankfully, Uhura has only a very slight (and ethnically indistinguishable) accent in Patrouille du Cosmos, due to the dubbing actress’s own inflections.15 The greatest change in her character has much to do with pronunciation, however, though not with accent. In Patrouille, she is named “Uhara.” This modification is meant to facilitate French elocution, since the b sound in the middle of Uhura would not be pronounced in French; [u-α-ra] is difficult to say, but [u-α-ra] flows quite well.

The change in accents serves the same purpose as most modifications in cultural allusions in translated texts (Whitman-Linsen 125). Accents and stereotypes reflect internalized moral values, shared political and historical identity, and collective aesthetic tastes that infiltrate the plot and are widely taken for granted by the audience. A certain accent, a certain “ethnic” reference can ensure that viewers believe in the characters being played and understand the relative positions of the characters within a given story. Consequently, as the previous examples show, these changes sometimes imply having to cater to prejudices and stereotypes common to the target audience in order to make the narrative come alive for them.16 A most stunning example is found in “Bread and Circuses”/“Sur les chemins de Rome.” Spock is fascinated by the similarities between planet Eight Ninety-Two-IV and Earth. He voices his thoughts on the people they meet at the beginning of Act 1. The Roman slave Flavius makes a remark about Spock’s ears:

F: E “Where are you from? What do you call those?”
Q “Et vous, d’ou` venez-vous? C’est quoi ces choses?”
LT And you, where are you from? What are those things?
Sp: E “I call them ears.”
Q “Ces choses sont mes oreilles.”
LT These things are my ears.
F: E “Are you trying to be funny?”
Q “Est-ce une plaisanterie?”
LT Is it a joke?
Q “Non, des oreilles. C’est le type parfait de l’Italo-Américain du vingtième siècle, de la mafia.”
LT No, ears. He’s the perfect type of twentieth-century Italian-American, from the mafia.

In the Quebec version, when responding to Flavius’s insult, Spock makes an ethnic slur, obviously meant as a joke by the translator. The likable Roman brute in the source text becomes an archetypal mafioso. Besides simply pursuing the succession of jokes written into earlier parts of the scene, the slur also creates a mental image and allowed the 1970s Quebec viewers to better believe in the Earth parallel. By playing with the
prejudices of his target audience, the translator underscored what the original authors were trying to convey.

The unfortunate result is a much different philosophy in the show than in Gene Roddenberry’s original vision. Characters in Patrouille du Cosmos are sometimes frankly xenophobic or intolerant, where TOS was not. In the original, McCoy often would throw slurs at Spock to provoke an emotional response in the Vulcan. In the translation, his comments don’t seem to be said so half-jokingly as before, like in Act 4 of “A Journey to Babel”/“Un tour à Babel”:

Mc: E “That thick-headed Vulcan stamina. I couldn’t have pulled them through without it.”
Q “Ces bourriques de Vulcains sont obstinées mais sans leur tenacité, j’aurais échoué.”
LT These Vulcan asses [donkeys] are obstinate but without their tenacity, I would have failed.

Scotty was also one to pass judgment on a person’s appearance or behavior, but here too his reactions are stronger than in the original. In the trailer of “The Way to Eden”/“Le chemin d’Eden,” he is quite stunned by the appearance of the space hippies. In the original, he refers to the group he has just beamed aboard as “a nice lot too!” In French, he proclaims he has never seen “une si jolie brochette de clowns!” (“such a pretty string of clowns!”). From simple surprise, Scotty’s lines now pass judgment.

Gender relations also are affected. There is a definite slant toward a more sexist dialogue in the Quebec version of TOS. The original is far from exempt of sexism—the entire plot of “Turnabout Intruder”/“L’Important” is proof enough. However, Roddenberry was famous for trying to be as egalitarian with female characters as the network would allow. In Patrouille du Cosmos, dialogue alterations move away from these attempts.

Over the course of the seventy-nine TOS episodes, the original stories whose plots or characters (good or bad) denigrated women—such as “Turnabout Intruder”/“L’Important” or Nomad’s attack on Uhura in “The Changeling”/“Le Korrigan” because she was an illogical female—only serve to inflate the added sexist comments of the Quebec version. The result, in today’s eyes, can be disconcerting. In the final scene of “Balance of Terror”/“Zone de terreur,” Kirk goes to the ship’s chapel to give his condolences to Ensign Angela Martine, whose fiancé was killed in the last Romulan attack:

K: E “Never makes any sense. We both have to know that there was a reason.”
Q “Les mots ne veulent rien dire. Je voulais vous dire que je suis avec vous.”
LT Words mean nothing. I wanted to tell you that I am with you.
Ma: E “I’m all right.”
Q “Je vous remercie.”
LT I thank you.

The dialogue has been completely transformed. Still, Kirk easily could have said something like “C’est insensé, enseigne. Nous devons nous demander s’il y avait une raison” (“It does not make any sense, ensign. We have to ask ourselves if there was a reason.”); Martine could have answered: “Ça ira” (“It’ll be all right”), with few synchrony problems. The spirit of the original dialogue would have been kept. Why the translator chose to change both characters’ lines is debatable, especially considering that the dubbed dialogue poses serious synchrony problems (both actors are shot in close-up). It makes more sense when contextualized over the three seasons of Patrouille du Cosmos. Quebec dialogues regularly appear to emphasize female inferiority and emotionalism. In the previous passage, it is logical to posit that Michel Collet did not think the audience would believe that a grief-stricken woman would say she was “all right.” Perhaps he did not believe it himself.

A character like Kirk, known for his success with women, would likely be affected by such a downward slant—and he was, though often subtly. However, the shift in “Miri” is nothing less than blatant. In the previously mentioned last scene, when McCoy, Kirk, and Rand recapitulate
the events of the episode, Rand concludes on the title character, a three-hundred-year-old adolescent girl:

R: E “Miri. She really loved you, you know.”
Q “Miri. Elle était tombée amoureuse de vous.”
LT Miri. She had fallen in love with you.
K: E “Yes. I never get involved with older women, Yeoman.”
Q “Oui. Personnellement, je dois dire que j’aime assez les fruits verts.”
LT Yes. Personally, I must say that I rather like green fruits.

In the original, Kirk’s comment was partly ironic. The audience understands he would not have gotten involved with an adolescent, no matter how old and no matter how tempting. He feels compassion toward her. In French, on the contrary, the comments are rather offensive for today’s ears. Kirk is proving himself a veritable macho who likes younger women, whom he can pluck at a time when they still do not have the experience to resist. The sentence structure of Kirk’s French retort also indicates a much more categorical rejection of Miri, and a measure of spite toward older women. This fact is compounded by Yvon Thiboutot’s tone in the dubbed passage. In the original (in light of Kirk’s reaction to the girl in the previous scenes), his rejection of Miri is a question of propriety, not necessarily a lack of attraction. In the Quebec dialogue, only her great age justifies the rejection. His obvious attraction to the girl in the previous scenes then seems to prove his preference for very young, inexperienced women.

Kirk’s character was changed in other aspects as well. The same way that McCoy and Scotty’s spoken improprieties were exaggerated in Patrouille du Cosmos, so was Kirk’s sometimes brusque irreverence. In many TOS episodes, Kirk’s impatience with officials and ambassadors only underlined what would later be defined as “cowboy diplomacy” by Star Trek: The Next Generation’s Captain Jean-Luc Picard. In their dialogue in Patrouille, it is a more complicated matter. At times, Kirk is simply impolite. In Act 3 of “A Journey to Babel”/“Un tour à Babel,” in the heat of a battle against an unknown assailant, the diplomats on board are worried:

U: E “Captain, the intercoms are jammed. All the ambassadors are asking what’s going on.”
Q “Capitaine, les communications intérieures sont rompues. Les ambassadeurs demandent ce qui se passe.”
LT Captain, internal communications have been severed. The ambassadors are asking what’s going on.
K: E “Tell them to take a good guess, but clear that board, lieutenant.”
Q “Dites à ces messieurs de prendre un verre! Ce n’est pas le moment de nous embêter, lieutenant.”
LT Tell these gentlemen to have a drink! It’s not the time to bother us, lieutenant.

Kirk’s response is significantly different in the French version. Whereas in the original Kirk made Uhura keep order on the ship and ensure reliable communications, the French-speaking Kirk dismisses the ambassadors as bothersome. In the first, Shatner said his line in such a way that the viewers would understand that Kirk wished to say something impolite but refrained. In the second, Thiboutot’s line as Kirk is simply rude, and he played it with audible spite in his voice.

In light of the innumerable modifications made in the dialogues and the adjustments in the stories that followed, there is little doubt that translation into French has significantly metamorphosed TOS into a related yet distinct cultural product. In many ways, the French-language show is much more of a comedy than the original, since so many of its episodes were “re-funnied.” Patrouille du Cosmos is not the “Wagon Train to the Stars” that TOS was: McCoy is no country doctor and Kirk is no cowboy. Furthermore, the latter is sexist and rude in measures the original was not. Similar comments could be made for most characters of the series. Despite what the original opening narration states, the Enterprise is not exploring the frontier. It is on Cosmos Patrol; it is there to maintain order in space. One need only ask how
this cultural icon has been incorporated into French-language culture.

Bring the Spock!

The question of audience perception of a cultural product can be addressed in two ways. The first is directly, by asking questions to a chosen sample. The second is indirectly, by looking at the reappropriation of a cultural product. For the purpose of this article, the latter approach is more interesting. It allows for the understanding of how a product has been integrated into the common vocabulary of a culture, whereas the first approach opens a door only on an audience’s impressions of the viewed product.22 With TOS, the question of appropriation becomes interesting because one must take into account the mediation resulting from its translation into Patrouille du Cosmos. Because Patrouille is not quite the same as TOS, the result of its acculturation should affect its place in common culture.

Fan fiction in French, from France or Quebec, would be a particularly good window into this phenomenon. However, there is very little French-language Trek fan fiction to be found, with virtually none inspired by TOS, and none from France.23 This reveals that Patrouille du Cosmos has not inflamed the imagination of its audience like TOS has in the United States. Rather, Japanese anime serials, Buffy contre les vampires, and other popular dubbed television shows have the favor of Quebec and French fan fiction writers.24 What little TOS fan fiction in French there is comes exclusively from Quebec and is in text. Yet the two audiovisual exceptions I have found offer an interesting explanation.

In 1990-1992, a group of audiovisual media and communications students at the Cégep de Jonquière (Qc)25 chose for their two-year project to write, produce, and shoot an original twenty-eight-minute episode of TOS. Entitled “Le Juge” (“The Judge”), the episode was written by Daniel Lavoie (who plays Spock) and produced by Éric Bédard (who plays McCoy). It features all of the main characters, as well as Klingons, a mysterious and beautiful female alien, and an omnipotent being standing in judgment of humanity. The episode is a mix of several familiar storylines and decors, mostly taken from “Arena”/“Arène” and “The Empath”/“L’Impasse.” At first glance, “Le Juge” could be interpreted as paying homage to TOS, as a filmed role-playing game that offered a group of dedicated fans the opportunity to act out their favorite characters. Sets, costumes, and camera movements and angles have been very carefully and successfully reproduced. Original music and sound effects also were used. Visually, it is extremely close to TOS. But this is misleading. In reality, “Le Juge” is an episode of Patrouille du Cosmos.

The dialogues are very well written in impeccable International French. They include all of the aforementioned features of Patrouille, including the opening monologue and a racial slur by McCoy, who again compares Spock to a donkey. The actors, though all amateurs and not all talented, try their best to reproduce the characteristics of their respective characters—and there lies the paradox. They must emulate the physical acting styles and typical body movements of William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, and DeForest Kelley, but imitate the vocal performances of Yvon Thiboutot, Régis Dubost, and Michel Georges. The best actor in the group is Carl Poulin, who plays Kirk. An examination of his performance is very revealing. When sitting in the command chair on the bridge, Poulin’s physical movements (his hitting of the comm button on the chair’s right arm, his swinging of the chair to look at Uhura or Spock, and so on) are all typical of Shatner’s Kirk. However, his poised vocal tone, his intonations, and his careful enunciation are strikingly reminiscent of Thiboutot. The result is similar to watching TOS in French. The performances are all a little off the mark, not only because of their amateurism, but mainly because fluctuating kinetic synchrony is an inherent feature of Patrouille du Cosmos. The actors’ movements and facial expressions do not always fit what is being said. Clearly, Patrouille
Patrouille du Cosmos’s main characteristic is the result of the dubbing process, otherwise Bédard, Lavoie, and the others would not have attempted to reproduce it so closely. They have assimilated these elements and presented them on the screen, both as fans and as members of the Quebec audience. The second example emphasizes this to its fullest. Star Trek: The Sitcom is a 2001, three-minute short produced for Montreal’s Kino project (a forum for the creation and presentation of film shorts by budding and underground directors) by Éric Dupuis and Richard Lacombe. In it, an array of visibly handheld TOS action figures tell inane jokes. We discover that Captain Kirk is really Batman (played by Gumby) in search of the Joker, who has snuck on board the Enterprise. The entire short is voiced by the two men speaking in equally flat and false tones, clearly evoking dubbing. The dialogues are also written in perfect International French. Dupuis and Lacombe intentionally reproduced and exaggerated the linguistic characteristics and uninspired acting inherent to most dubbing performances. In doing so, not only is the dialogue ridiculous because of its content, its very form focuses on and makes fun of Patrouille du Cosmos’ nature as a translated cultural product. Though, Bédard and Lacombe’s works are generally inspired by American popular culture and genre movies, they normally use these references to criticize today’s society. Their other science fiction short, Odysée 2001, plays on the Kubrick classic’s visuals as a moving exploration of mental illness. Star Trek: The Sitcom is their only short with no redeeming social qualities whatsoever.

Star Trek: The Sitcom’s deliberate use of bad dubbing voices and Le Juge’s familiar storyline and paradoxical acting prove that the effect Patrouille has had on its audience is more about form than about content. Patrouille is a common vocabulary that can be spoken and acted. It is a cultural allusion in and of itself. When reproduced in the visual and audible spirit of the original, the result is undeniably a hybrid of two cultural worlds. However, in the face of the virtual nonexistence of French-language TOS fan fiction, the obvious conclusion would be that Patrouille du Cosmos serves a different function in the Francophone collective imagination than among Anglophones.

This can be seen in science fiction shows written and shot in Quebec. One must first notice just how few there have been. Of all science fiction television shows to have played on Quebec television from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, fewer than ten were produced in Quebec and all were child-oriented programs. The rarity of Quebec science fiction shows cannot only be
explained by budget constraints. The fact they are all youth programs hints at a particular perception of the genre that will become evident in the next paragraphs. Since 1990, their rarity has not changed and the shows still have the same target audience.

From 1999 to 2001, the space adventure/slapstick comedy/satire Dans une galaxie près de chez vous (“In a galaxy near you”) was the only Quebec-made science fiction program on Quebec television. It targeted the early adolescent viewers of the youth cable network Vrak.tv (who now enjoy twice daily reruns). During its three seasons and sixty-five episodes, Dans une galaxie presented the adventures of Capitaine Charles Patenaude and his crew aboard the Planetary Federation spaceship Romano Fafard (see Figure 1) in the early 2030s. The opening narration states their mission: to find a suitable planet to which the human population can escape Earth, now deprived of its ozone layer, and to go “where the hand of Man has never set foot.”

The series has all of the expected characteristics of a spaceship show. In addition to the opening narration and stereotypical storylines, the vessel Romano Fafard looks like it was made out of tin cans. But it also has all of the features of a Starfleet starship, with primary and secondary hulls and a warp nacelle. It has a multicultural and mixed crew, but of various intellectual capacity and dexterity, all of them prone to pie-in-the-face physical comedy. Yet this is not simply another Red Dwarf; Dans une galaxie is clearly spoofing Patrouille on several levels.

Capitaine Charles Patenaude (played by Guy Jodoin) is a dashing officer, ready to run into danger to accomplish his mission. Here too, language plays a key role in the captain’s character definition. Patenaude expresses himself in poised yet pathos-filled, long-winded speeches. His accent and vocabulary are perfect International French. He only breaks from this when he speaks in aside, where he uses Quebec dialect in order to emphasize a scene’s gags. Patenaude mentions poets and philosophers, though in ridiculous

Figure 2. The valiant crew of the Romano Fafard, third season (left to right): (front) councilor Valence Leclerc, Capitaine Charles Patenaude, Pilot Bob Dieudonné Marcelin, (back) science officer Brad Spitfire, operations officer Flavien Bouchard, medic Pétrolia Stanesslofski, android Serge 2 (© Zone 3, 2001)
combinations. Physically, his movements are grand and theatrical. In short, he speaks and moves like a captain should—that is, he moves and speaks like Kirk does in *Patrouille du Cosmos*. The major difference is that here, the comedic effect is intentional and exaggerated.

The audiovisual vocabulary of *Patrouille* appears in *Dans une galaxie* for the same reason (but for the opposite effect) than in *Le Juge*. In order to be a recognizable science fiction spoof, *Dans une galaxie* must first be recognizable as a science fiction show. It therefore contains recognizable elements of the best-known science fiction show to have played on Quebec television (see Figure 2). Because the audio and visual elements of *Patrouille* are not perfectly coherent, and because the costumes and make-up (especially when seen today) are somewhat silly, the effect may be comedic. Using this, the writers and producers of *Dans une galaxie près de chez vous* built a comedy and a satire of the entire science fiction genre.

This aspect of *Patrouille du Cosmos* (and older science fiction television in general) is constantly used in Quebec television in order to produce comedic effect. *TOS* references in Quebec television are not many, but they are always used to produce a laugh. As a cultural allusion, *Star Trek* equals ridicule.

This fact is nowhere better illustrated than in the works of comedic playwright and author Claude Meunier. His television and film works contain several references and allusions to the *TOS* universe. In 1991, Meunier alluded to *TOS* in *Ding et Dong—Le Film*. This feature film presented the comic duo Ding and Dong (Serge Thériault and Claude Meunier), whose dismal attempts at success lead them on one ridiculous adventure after another. At one point, they trap a movie producer in his office in an effort to pitch him a project. Ding and Dong play an out-of-control action scene, during which they proceed to destroy his office. It is a hodgepodge of allusions to a dozen popular American movies of the 1980s, from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to *Rocky*. One particularly surreal moment in that scene has Claude Meunier (Dong) throw himself on the intercom, press the speak-button and scream in broken English, “Capitaine Kirk! Capitaine Kirk! Brrrrrrrrring de Spock!” *TOS* is one of many allusions to American cultural icons that serve two purposes in the scene.

At first glance, the Trek reference adds to the sheer madness of the scene and gets a laugh. On a second level however, the allusions to American popular culture collectively serve to underscore how desperate for success Ding and Dong have become. At that point in the film, they have sunk to their lowest level ever. In the following scenes, they will be forced to sell their schtick door to door. This “action scene” actually caters to a common belief in Quebec that, no matter how exciting and hugely popular, American culture is a subquality culture, and American television and movies are generally intellectually inferior and banal (see Atkinson). When Ding and Dong invade the offices of Roger Ben Hur Productions, the audience understands that they are willing to stoop to the level of American popular culture to attain success. On both levels, their passing reference to *TOS* emphasizes it as funny and camp.

In 1992, Ding and Dong made another reference to *TOS* in Meunier’s television special *Le merveilleux monde de Ding et Dong* (“The Wonderful World of Ding and Dong”). The show featured a skit where the two title characters insert themselves into the *TOS* universe, with hysterical consequences. The *Enterprise*’s crew, having been sexually abstinent in space for years, find themselves on a planet inhabited by women, and laughter ensues. However, this spoof of the *TOS* episode “Spock’s Brain”/“Le cerveau de Spock” is very different from a similar re-enactment in *The Wonder Years*. The latter, entitled “Just Between You and Me . . . and Kirk and Paul and Carla and Becky,” underscores the main characters’ realization of the power of women over their growing bodies: an essentially nostalgic allusion. Meunier’s Ding and Dong simply played on the ridiculousness of the women’s planet premise and its potential for slapstick.

This function of *TOS* in Meunier’s work culminates in 1996. *La Petite Vie* (“The Little
Life,” as in ordinary life) is Quebec television’s most successful series of all time. At its highest peak, virtually all of the province’s French-speaking adults would be watching, almost four million viewers. The sole writer of the series, Meunier used its quirky characters to satirize and criticize the most common cultural traits of those of Quebec, with dialogues emphasizing their absurdity. Therefore, the main characters are Quebec archetypes: Popa, the distant father with a garbage bag fetish (played by Meunier), Moman, the overbearing mother with a turkey fetish (played by a man, Thériault), and their adult children, among whom are Rod (the mama’s boy) and Caro (the hysterical daddy’s girl). In the series’s four seasons and sixty episodes, Meunier explored and ridiculed everything from Quebec’s inferiority complex with France, to game shows and stardom, to old-age homes and homosexual marriage. Inevitably, Star Trek would eventually come into play.

The third season episode “Le rêve de Moman” (“Moman’s Dream”) features Moman dealing with her monopolizing family and Popa’s toothache by escaping into a Trek dream. In it she is Capitaine Skirt and her husband is Monsieur Spot on the bridge of their vessel, a mix of the Enterprise’s command center and their pink harborite kitchen. They are attacked by Klingons and surly aliens who turn out to be family members wanting an invitation to Sunday dinner. This episode is typical of the series, as it contains one absurd gag after another, and Moman’s dream is marginally more surrealist than her “real” little life.

Meunier has used Trek typology to underscore the ridiculousness of his characters as much as the comedic potential of the TOS universe. Moman’s turkey fetish, for example, appears in her dream in the form of turkey drumsticks in lieu of her ship’s warp nacelles. Monsieur Spot’s bridge console is a brightly colored work bench. The transporter is a functioning shower head. The relationship between Popa and Moman also hints back to Kirk and Spock. Sexually frustrated for years, Moman in her dream echoes Kirk’s active libido. Of course, Skirt is attracted to Spot, but he refuses her advances, stating that such actions are illogical.

It is because of the fact that Trek, as known in Quebec, is perceived as silly that Meunier could replay its themes in his works. Meunier’s use of TOS allusions shows how well integrated Patrouille du Cosmos is in the Quebec collective imagination. Because it was so popular and was rerun year after year, Spock’s ears and Kirk’s sexual attractiveness are immediately recognizable.

Concluding Thoughts

The translation of Star Trek: The Original Series into Patrouille du Cosmos has changed the former into a different yet related cultural product. Through the filter of translation, the Trek universe was not simply transposed; rather, it was altered so that original stories, dialogues, and even character definitions were not the same in the version viewed by French speakers. This both allowed and affected Trek’s integration into Quebec’s common culture. Trek is a vocabulary, a set of commonly known archetypes that can be reused in order to transmit a message. Trek is a cultural allusion all its own, but because of its dubbing, the nature of this allusion—the set of expected meanings understood in its Quebec version—differs in part from that which is implied in the original English.

Like everywhere, Kirk is remembered for his active libido, Spock for his ears. The costumes and sets are immediately recognizable. Episode structures and storylines, space vessel shapes, and alien make-ups are familiar to viewers of both languages. The differences in the referential nature of TOS are mostly the result of the approximate synchronies of Patrouille. Kirk’s sexist remarks and other characters’ racist comments are not a part of the English common knowledge of Trek. McCoy’s depiction of Vulcans as donkeys is a catch phrase in French, whereas the ever-famous “Beam me up” is without an equivalent. In short,
visual allusions are similar, language-based allusions are not.

The most striking differences, however, can be inferred from the reuse of Trek vocabulary and imagery in Quebec television. TOS references are typically used to emphasize and ridicule, for kitsch and silliness. It is as such that Quebec popular culture knows Star Trek. It is the campiness of 1960s Trek and its status as an archetypal American television series that take precedence. Many French-language episodes were intentionally written to be funnier than the original, thus turning this science fiction icon into something of a space comedy. Furthermore, Trek is used because it is visually and audibly silly, because it is recognized as an antiquated American—thus foreign—icon of the 1960s and 1970s.

Of course, American television and film have no shortage of Trek spoofs, from numerous episodes of The Simpsons to the recent movie Galaxy Quest. But where such references, designed to make the audience laugh, have equivalents in Quebec television and movies, there is a high number of American Trek references that denote a certain amount of nostalgia, even behind the laughter. Like in the episode of The Wonder Years mentioned earlier, nostalgia for the 1960s is a common theme in many American television shows. The X-Files’s Fox Mulder was depicted in childhood flashbacks wearing full Spock regalia in “Dreamland II.” These images date from a time before Mulder’s sister was abducted by aliens, at a time when extraterrestrials were still make-believe to him. Even William Shatner’s famous 1986 “Get a Life!” skit on Saturday Night Live has a certain nostalgic aspect to it, as it shows him regretting the better days before Trekkies, when people still knew this was “only a TV show!” Both cases refer to simpler, more innocent times.

Nothing of the sort appears in Quebec television’s references to Trek. The inadvertent ridiculousness of Patrouille du Cosmos, from the dated looks to the gaps in synchrony, have done for TOS what its incorporation into American culture could not. Like monster movies and dubbed Chinese kung-fu features, Patrouille is psychotronic. It is with this in mind that Daniel Lavoie and his colleagues at the Cégep de Jonquière filmed Le Juge. Otherwise, they would not have been so careful to replicate the synchronic gaps found in Patrouille and would have endeavored to create a purely TOS episode, or even to do a TNG or DS9 story. This better than any other argument proves the independence of Quebec popular culture before such a watershed cultural phenomenon as Star Trek.

Appendix 1
Character name codes and dubbing actors

French-language texts: Michel Collet
Principal dubbing stage direction: Michel Georges

Character codes: Characters—dubbing actors
Narrator: Daniel Roussel, Yvon Thiboutot
K: Captain James T. Kirk—Yvon Thiboutot
Sp: Commander Spock—Régis Dubost
Mc: Doctor Leonard McCoy—Michel Georges
Sc: Engineer Montgomery Scott (Scotty)—Julien Bessette, François Cartier
Su: Lieutenant Hikaru Sulu—Daniel Roussel
U: Lieutenant Nyota Uhura (Q = Uhara)—Arlette Sanders
C: Ensign Pavel Chekov—André Montmorency
R: Yeoman Janice Rand—Élizabeth Lesieur
D: Romulan Officer Decius—Edgar Fruittier
Sh: Andorian Ambassador Shras—Benoit Marleau

Character codes: Other characters—unknown dubbers
A: Amanda (Mrs. Sarek)
An: Roman television announcer
F: Flavius
G: Tellarite Ambassador Gav
Ma: Ensign Angela Martine
Sa: Vulcan Ambassador Sarek
Se: Doctor Sevrin
St: Lieutenant Stiles

Source: “Patrouille.”
Appendix 2
Dubbing studio using bande rythmo method

Key: (1) Mixing engineer (2) In-line computer (3) Mixing console (4) Projection room (5) Sound speaker (6) Monitor (7) Soundproof glass (8) Stage manager or director (9) Dubbing actors (10) Timing indicator (11) Bande rythmo (© Dave Leclerc, 2003, d@studiobionic.com)

Source: Plourde Ixis.

Notes

1. The history of Quebec’s dubbing industry is yet to be written.

2. This is very unusual, considering French laws concerning the broadcast of visual media dubbed outside of France. Since 1978, only forty-two hours of Quebec-dubbed shows were allowed per broadcaster per year. Since 1996, all Quebec-dubbed American television shows have been forbidden on France’s major networks (Lagueux and Charron; Saint-Germain 35-38). In Francophone countries, Patrouille du Cosmos is distributed by various Paramount-affiliated companies, such as Viacom Enterprises Canada for Quebec. Until the end of 2001, Patrouille du Cosmos played on Canal D in Quebec, and is currently playing on Canal Jimmy in France. Canal Jimmy shows episodes in English with French subtitles and in repeat in French (Canal Jimmy; GEOS).

3. Sonolab purchased dubbing equipment from France in 1968 (information given by Hélène Rozon).

4. The only contender for Patrouille du Cosmos’s success is Cosmos 1999, the Quebec-dubbed version of Space 1999, which also has had considerable airtime both in Quebec and France, though much less than Patrouille. In any case, both in the Francophonic and in the United States, the later series has enjoyed considerably less influence on collective cultures and imaginations. Yet Cosmos 1999 is one of the few “classic” American sci-fi series to be the subject of fan fiction in French, a status that Patrouille du Cosmos does not enjoy. See Franco FanFic Web site.

5. For average cost statistics for Europe, see Luyken 89-109; for Quebec, see “L’industrie du doublage au Québec.”

6. Note the play on words in the Q title, taken from the phrase “La tour de Babel/The Tower of Babel.”

7. Note the word play in the Q title, referring to the known proverb, “Tous les chemins mènent à Rome/All roads lead to Rome.”

8. Nevertheless, the French translators of TNG have chosen to sacrifice synchrony and use this exact phrase. In fact, synchrony is generally sacrificed in preference of meaning in this particular version, because these dubbers lean toward a nucleus-synch approach rather than simple lip-synch. Nucleus-synch favors matching the nuclei (stressed syllables) of the target-language dialogue with “the movements of the [actors’] body, slight nods, raising of the eyebrows,” and all other gestures that “always coincide with the stressed syllables” in speech (Luyken 160-61). Because a one hundred percent accurate lip synchrony is impossible, an accentuation of the visual performance of the actors often provides a greater impression of naturalness in the dubbed version (see also Herbst 292-95).
9. This is what the translators of TNG chose to do. In the real world, “laser” stands for “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.” In the Trek universe, “phaser” stands for “phased energy rectification,” which refers to the method by which stored or supplied energy entering the phaser system was converted to another form for release toward a target (Sterbach and Okuda 123).

10. Again, the translators of TNG have moved away from synchrony in favor of precision and generally translated “sensors” as “détecteurs” (“detectors”).

11. Such changes are inevitable when translating from a Germanic to a Romance language. For similar examples from Italian to English, see Ulych.

12. Since the 1970s, two philosophies for French-language dubbing have come into existence and have been the subject of considerable debate. The first is that of using International French in all revoicings, even in films set in regions and social classes that have distinctive accents in the source language. The result is similar to the case examined in this article. However, an increasing number of dubbed films in Quebec and France are done in these regions' respective dialects and reflect the differential accents of each country's social classes. Lower classes speak Parisien Argo' or Verlan for France, and Joual for Quebec. Higher classes speak grammatically perfect French in varying accents. Translations that present social and geographical dialects in the target language have become more acceptable in the last two decades. The result is that Parisian translations are not necessarily understandable to Montréalers, though they tend to be more so than the reverse. Therefore, one country's translations are not readily acceptable to the other country's viewers, and are often considered inferior, both to the original and to their own country's version. French laws against foreign French-language dubbed material only inflate the mutual acrimony (see Paquin).

13. Recurring character in all three seasons, relief helmsman and transporter technician, played by John Winston (Okuda, Okuda, and Mirek 258).

14. See what Plourde has to say about the social meaning of such an accent, especially in his conclusion. See also Whitman-Linsen 48-53; Danan; Robyns.

15. It is therefore very surprising (and a relief) to note that TNG's Geordie LaForge has no accent whatsoever in the French version of the show. This is especially important when cultural mores and what is considered acceptable in the source culture's film and television differ from those of the target culture. For examples from Russian to Italian, see Salmon Koverski.

16. The female executive officer Number One, played by Majel Barrett in TOS's first pilot, “The Cage,” was just one of those instances when Gene Roddenberry attempted to include female authority figures in the show (Okuda, Okuda, and Mirek 328-29). In this case, his attempt failed and she was cut from the regular cast. Nevertheless, footage from the pilot was used, with the Number One character intact in the two-parter “The Menagerie, Parts I and II”/“La ménagerie, première et deuxième parties.”

17. This shameful episode depicts a Dr. Janice Lester driven stark raving mad by the fact that she was not allowed to become a starship captain due to her sex. The depiction of women is caricatural and the dialogue is overacted. Ultimately, women are proven psychologically unstable and Starfleet's discrimination is justified. The true irony is that this episode was originally meant to denounce the sexism of 1960s American society and of the television networks that would not allow female authority figures on their shows.

18. The female executive officer Number One, played by Majel Barrett in TOS's first pilot, “The Cage,” was just one of those instances when Gene Roddenberry attempted to include female authority figures in the show (Okuda, Okuda, and Mirek 328-29). In this case, his attempt failed and she was cut from the regular cast. Nevertheless, footage from the pilot was used, with the Number One character intact in the two-parter “The Menagerie, Parts I and II”/“La ménagerie, première et deuxième parties.”

19. More precisely, Nomad attacks Uhura because he finds her illogical and paradoxical. Spock justifies Uhura's internal conflicted nature by the fact that she is a woman. He asserts this matter-of-factly, as a nondebatable reality.

20. In an argument with Spock in “Unification, Part II.”

21. There were two different translations of the “Space. The final frontier” narration. The first monologue was a close approximation of the original and was voiced by Daniel Roussel, who usually played Sulu. In the second half of the series, the narration departed from its source text and is voiced by Yvon Thiboutot, the voice of Kirk:

Q: “Espace. Frontière de l’infini vers laquelle voyage notre vaisseau spatial. Sa mission, explorer de nouveaux mondes étranges, découvrir de nouvelles vies, d’autres civilisations et, au mépris du danger, reculer l’impossible.”

IT: Space. Border of infinity toward which travels our space vessel. Its mission, to explore strange new worlds, discover new lives, other civilizations and, in defiance of danger, push back the impossible.

22. On methodologies for identifying television audiences and publics, see Proulx. For an example of a comparative reception study (in the case of Dallas), see Katz and Liebes.

23. Most fan fiction stories to be found in French are set in the TNG and DS9 timeline, like the several fan fiction novels published online on the Web site of Star Trek Quebec, an email role-playing game club. France has several similar sites. They depict original ships and crews, and are novelizations of the club's scenarios. Rare TOS exceptions are the works of a few members of Star Trek Quebec, such as Sylvie Manseau who wrote “L'Ultime mission,” a TOS/TNG crossover story. In France, Virtual Star Trek Season Project was launched in 2000 but has yet to produce a single story. The only TOS fan “fiction” found to date on the French Internet or in print are “doctored” erotic pictures of the women of Trek, both of dubious quality and very bad taste on Thierry Le Trekker's Web site.

24. A quick internet search on Yahoo! France or La Toille du Quebec with keywords like “anime,” “Sailor Moon,” “Buffy contre les vampires,” or “Dawson” will reveal hundreds of fan fiction sites. See also Franco FanFic Web site.

25. Cégep = Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel. Cégeps are Quebec educational institutions providing two- and three-year programs, and are an obligatory level of education between the fifth year of secondary schooling and the first year of university.

26. The most important were Les Chiboukis, Les 100 tours de Centours, Les Oraliens, Kosmos 2001, Opération-mystère, and Les Égriègues. There also have been a few sci-fi inspired kids' game shows, most notably Les Satellipopettes. See the Les émissions de notre enfance Web site.

27. The narration changed slightly every season to follow the timeline and, in Season 3, to criticize Canada's federal television funding policies. In Season 1, the narration was as follows:

Q: “Nous sommes en 2034, la situation sur la Terre est catastrophique; la couche d'ozone est complètement détruite par la gaz carbonique des voitures, l'industrie chimique et le ‘pouche-pouche’ en cacane. Résultat : la Terre cuit sous les rayons du soleil, les espèces vivantes disparaissent. La situation devient critique. Il faut sauver la Terre et le plus vite possible.”

IT: We are in 2034, the situation on Earth is catastrophic; the ozone layer is completely destroyed by carbon dioxide from cars, the chemical industry, and “push-push” in a can. The result: Earth bakes under the rays of the Sun, harvests are completely burnt,
there is almost no drinking water left, and sunscreen companies are getting richer. The situation is becoming urgent. One must find a new planet to which move 6 billion bozos. This is why on 28 October 2034 the space vessel Romana Fafard left Earth toward the ends of the Universe. There where the hand of Man has never set foot.

28. In 1995-1996, at the time of the example studied here, La Petite Vie had fallen to fifth place, with an average of 1,422,000 viewers, which nevertheless amounted to nearly a third of Quebec’s adult population (Info Presse Communication 52).

29. Meunier had used a similar gag in Le merveilleux monde de Ding et Dong.

30. Among many, Deep Space Homer contains numerous Trek references, like the usual “Beam me up Scotty” joke and an Itchy and Scratchy skit entitled “Scar Trek: The Next Laceration.” In Itchy and Scratchy, the family watches a promotional trailer of “Star Trek XII: So Very Tired,” featuring a very old Kirk and a very fat Scotty.

31. Like, among numerous others, the amateur series Star Trek: Hidden Frontier, executively produced by Rob Caves of the USS-Anges club in Los Angeles, California.

Works Cited


Franco FanFic. 5 May 2002 (http://www.francofanfic.com).


La Toile du Québec. 5 May 2002 (http://www.toile.qc.ca).


Les émissions de notre enfance. 5 May 2002 (http://www.emissions.ca).


Audiovisual Works


