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The Translation of Graphemes in Anime in Its Original and Fansubbed Versions[1]

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Introduction

Anime can essentially be defined as animation created in Japan; it is "a phenomenon of popular culture" (Napier 3), and an immense one at that. In anime "much (some would argue most) of its products are short-lived, rising and falling due to popular taste and the demands of the hungry market place" (Napier 3). It is so ubiquitous that it is the most successful type of animation on the planet, as "60% of the animation done worldwide is anime done in Japan" (Goto-Jones 3), "with the ratio in Europe exceeding 80%" (Nakamura and Onouchi 30). Anime is aired every day on Japanese TV with high-budget films shown primarily at Japanese cinemas. It is, however, increasingly the case that anime is shown on TV and in the theatres outside of Japan, especially in countries like China and the United States. The medium is easily found online and has consequently risen to be a powerful global media.

Concerning the translation of anime, several large anime translation houses (large meaning around 60 employees)[2] exist in the US, amongst them Crunchyroll, TokyoPop, Viz Media, and Funimation. Many translation houses suffered financial losses during the 2008 recession. For instance, Viz had to close its New York City office, firing 62 people in the process (https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/comics/article/43145-viz-media-lays-off-60.html). At the time of writing this article (February 2017), the two most popular companies, which stream anime online, were Crunchyroll and Funimation.

Anime continues to be a Japanese media powerhouse. Its sales and the number of shows produced continue to rise, with production peaks every decade since the seventies (Josephy-Hernández 2017). There is no sign—nor reason—for this trend to change, as anime's popularity grows more and more all over the world. Anime is an international, global and successful medium of popular culture, and because of this, its translations and their disseminations must be studied more. There are no previous articles written regarding the study of graphemes in anime, hence this article seeks to first identify them, then categorize them, and finally explain how they are subtitled (both officially and unofficially) dealing with several films and shows. The following section deals with what has been written about anime in translation studies.

[1]Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Shaily Zolfaghari and Jorge Rivera-Marín for their revision of and suggestions for this article; as well as the journal's editors for their helpful comments. Sankyū! All images and copyrights belong to their respective owners.

[2] This is a high number for a translation company. For example, videogame translation companies in Japan, e.g. 8-4 Play (http://8-4.jp/about/en/) employ an average of 4 or 5 persons. http://www.crunchyroll.com/, http://www.tokyopop.com/, https://www.viz.com/, https://www.funimation.com/.

Audiovisual Translation

There has been much work done on audiovisual translation (AVT) in recent years. Indeed, it is the main area of study in translation studies. During the sociological turn of translation studies, scholars like Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2005), Hélène Buzelin (2005), and Sergey Tyulenev (2009) led the way in exploring the relationship between sociology and translation. The "AVT turn" also happened at the same time, pioneered by scholars such as Pilar Orero (2004), Frederic Chaume-Varela (2004), Jorge Díaz-Cintas (1999, 2008), Luis Pérez-González (2006, 2014), Patrick Zabalbeascoa-Terrán (2008) and many others. AVT has indeed become one of translation studies' main areas of research for the last decade, just as the distribution of audiovisual material became more widely and easily accessible to people, especially those with an internet connection. Long gone are the days of tape trading to see your favourite shows— the trading now occurs online through peer-to-peer distribution and streaming.

AVT continues to evolve not only with the internet and subtitling programmes—which are now widely available to the average layman—but also with audiences' needs and desires concerning the other product changes. This has been happening for a long time "since the early days of the cinema, in order to make these audiovisual programmes comprehensible to audiences unfamiliar with the language of the original, different forms of language transfer on the screen have been required" (Díaz-Cintas and Anderman 4). In order to make these "audiovisual programmes" (or texts, or products) available to "those unfamiliar with the language of the original" (Díaz-Cintas and Anderman 4), two different approaches exist: subtitling, which involves keeping the original soundtrack, but adding a written-word translation on screen; and dubbing, which involves replacing the speech soundtrack with a new soundtrack in the target language.

An important part of studying audiovisual products is that of multimodality, "the combination of speaking, writing, visualization and music […] an interdependence of semiotic resources in audiovisual texts" (Pérez-González 2014, 185). Pérez-González, in his section on "New Directions" for AVT, identifies "sub-modes" found in the multimodality of audiovisual texts, and he argues that these sub-modes have not been explored enough (Pérez-González 2014, 199). Within these sub-modes, Pérez-González lists graphemes, along with phonemes, lexical items, grammatical structures and syntactical patterns as a verbal signifier (Pérez-González 199). Pérez-González defines a grapheme as simply "letters" (2014, 199). A grapheme, however, could be understood "as the smallest unit of writing (Pulgram 1976); the smallest speech segment represented in writing (DeFrancis 1989); or an autonomous unit without reference to speech, taking into account the structural characteristics of the language alone (Eisenberg 1985)" (Coulmas 175). This article, then, explores the different ways graphemes—a sub-mode of verbal signifiers (Pérez-González 199)—have been represented in anime in (1) the original, official anime, and (2) in the case of graphemes added through fansubbing. Pérez-González (2014, 199) also lists other sub-modes of the medial variants: speech para-verbal means, which includes volume, intonation, rhythm, etc.; static writing, which includes typography, layout, font, colours, ornaments, spacing, and margins; and animated writing, which includes all of sub-modes for

static writing, plus directions, speed, rhythm, and special effects.

Fansubbing

Fansubs are, in essence, "subtitles produced unofficially by Japanese animation (anime) fans for non Japanese-speaking viewers outside Japan" (O'Hagan 2). In the early years of fansubbing, fansubbers worked almost exclusively with anime. Today, with different pieces of software (e.g. Subs Factory, Aegisub, and Subtitle Composer) available to anyone with an internet connection and a computer, inserting subtitles into a film or TV show is very easy even for relatively inexperienced users (Bogucki 50). New users can start creating subtitles with a few hours of practice using computer programmes like the ones I have just mentioned.

Fansubbers are not remunerated for the work they carry out, although they occasionally ask for money in order to cover server-hosting costs. They fansub as a hobby and to provide a "service" for fans so that other fans who lack knowledge of Japanese can understand a show that has been recently released, but not yet with the official subtitles. Of course, sometimes fansubbers' own linguistic knowledge of Japanese is also limited as well. Denison explains that "fan subbers' distribution of anime is in many ways not unlike the work of other active fan-producers who create ancillary texts ranging from fan fiction to fan art" (2011, 450). These "ancillary texts" could be, for example, the doujinshi (amateur manga) that fans draw and that are based on an already-existing show or manga.

In terms of how fansubbers actually work, Łukasz Bogucki, a Polish scholar who has written on fansubbing, explains that "amateur subtitle producers typically work with a recording of the original, but they have no access to the post-production script. The quality of their product is thus conditioned by how much they understand of the original" (49). Indeed, as soon as the original Japanese film (the "RAW" version—which is most likely a TV recording, but can also be a copy of a DVD or BluRay) is released and then obtained by the fansubbers, those fansubbers will immediately start translating it. They do not have access to the film's script, which means that they subtitle everything "by ear", i.e. they hear a dialogue from a show, or see a written word in it, and then subtitle it. The problem in this case, of course, is that this can lead to many translation mistakes because of the fansubber mishearing what was said in the anime.

Compared to any other animated medium, anime is the animation style in which—undoubtedly—the most amount of graphemes (e.g. letters, symbols) appear on screen at the same time. Pérez-González refers to these graphemes as "pictorial subtitles" (82), a term that I find misleading, since the subtitles are not really "illustrations", hence the term *graphemes* is used throughout the paper. The following segment is a representational analysis of these graphemes.

The Representation and Translation of On-screen Graphemes

The representation and translation of graphemes can occur in six different circumstances. First with the original anime (i.e. not as a subtitle or any form of addition on the part of a translator)

these graphemes appear: these graphemes appear:

1. when an utterance by a character is rendered on screen graphically or an explanation of a plot twist is shown graphically on screen; and
2. when a Japanese sound has a graphical representation on screen (like in manga).

And second , these graphemes appear in fansubbed anime:

1. when the opening or ending song has a karaoke subtitling for its lyrics;
2. when the fansubber provides an explanation of a Japanese concept/term that has been included in the subtitles;
3. when the fansubbers add a translator's note on the screen explaining something; and
4. when the fansubbers add whatever they want on the screen, even if it is not related to the show, or to simply express an opinion about it, a sort of "excessive fansubbing".

In Anime: An Utterance Rendered as a Grapheme

This section explains the cases in which a specific utterance is rendered graphically on screen. In the following examples taken from *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann!* ("*Pierce the Heavens, Gurren Lagann!*" 2007; Dir. Imaishi Hiroyuki; released by Studio Gainax) an explanation of a critical plot development is rendered graphically on screen, covering up almost all of the screen space with each sentence.

Figure 1: *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann!* Former Supreme Commander Simon […]. Screenshot taken from Anime Ultima. http://www.animeultima.io/.

Figure 2: *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann!* [continues] For immeasurable war crimes […]. Screenshot taken from Anime Ultima.

Figure 3: *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann!* [continues] Sentenced to death. Screenshot taken from Anime Ultima.

The use of a heavy font to render a plot twist, as employed in *Gurren Lagann,* is one of the trademarks of director Imaishi Hiroyuki, who later left Gainax to establish Studio Trigger in 2011. *Gurren Lagann* is about humans who have lived below the earth's surface for a long time, and what happens when the descendants of those humans return to the surface above. When

there is a plot twist or an important development in the show it makes use of a heavy white font set that covers part of or the entire screen, as shown in the images above. These graphemes are actually part of three different sub-modes Pérez-González lists (199). It is a grapheme, so naturally it is part of the sub-mode of verbal signifiers. But it is also part of the static writing sub-mode, featuring a specific typography, with a layout that of heavy fonts of Japanese characters in white that feature little space between each other and the margins in order to maximize the text's impact. Even more, these graphemes are also part of the animated writing sub-mode, as it has a specific direction (downwards) and speed (the speed in which the graphemes appear).

These type of graphemes are also seen in one of Imaishi's other hallmark series, *Kill la Kill* (2013), featuring female characters that fight each other with their clothes' seams. In this show the characters' attack is rendered graphically on the screen in an even heavier font set than in *Gurren Lagann!*, covering the entire screen, as seen in the following examples.

Figure 4: Kiryūin Satsuki and her *Junketsu Whirlwind*, from *Kill la Kill*. Screenshot from Underwater Fansubs. http://underwater.nyaatorrents.org/.

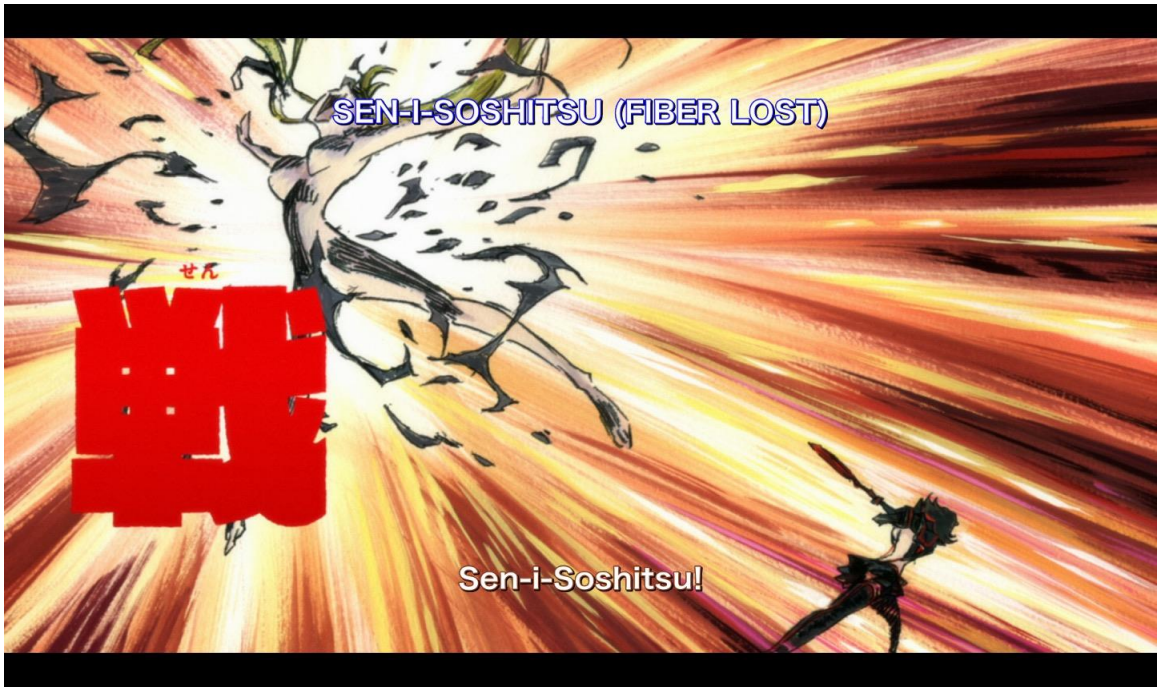

Figure 5: *Kill la Kill*, AnimeRG fansubs: *Sen-i-soshitsu* [1]

Figure 6: *Kill la Kill*, AnimeRG fansubs: *Sen-i-soshitsu* [2]

Figure 7: *Kill la Kill*, AnimeRG fansubs: *Sen-i-soshitsu* [2]

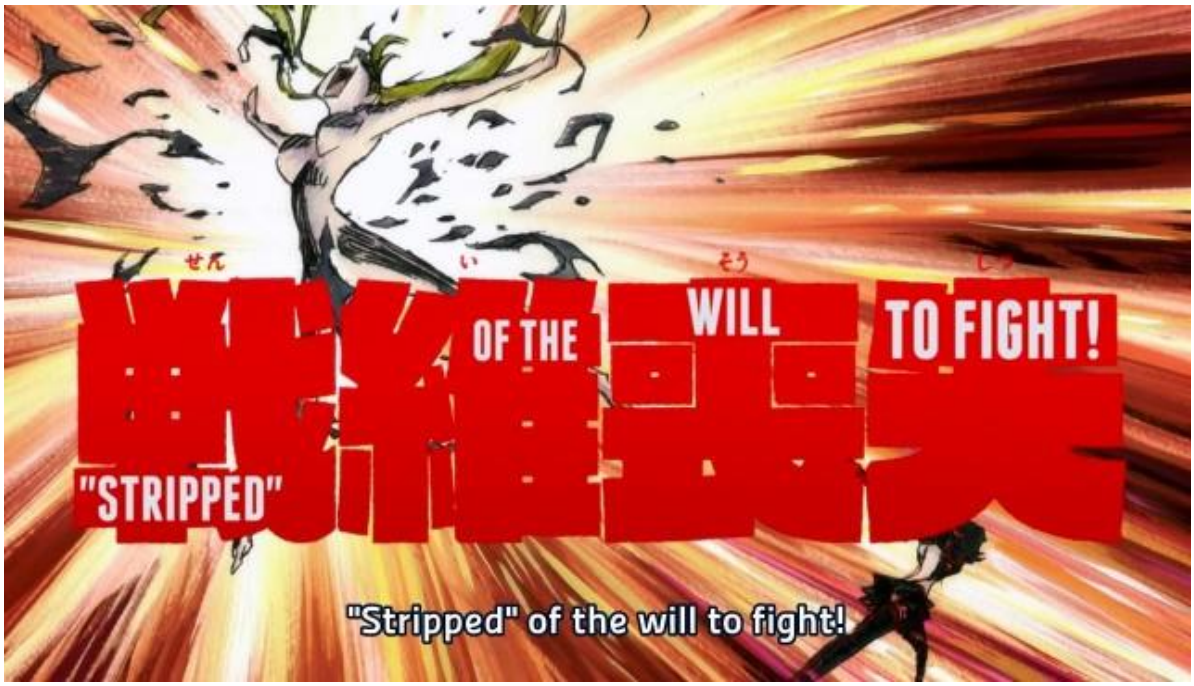

Figure 8: "'STRIPPED' OF THE WILL TO FIGHT!", by Underwater Fansubs.

Figure 9: Crunchyroll (official) subtitles for *Kill la Kill*. (C) Crunchyroll.

Exactly as in *Gurren Lagann*, the bold, red graphemes are part of the verbal signifier, and the static and animate writing submodes. These graphemes, though, are also part of another submode which is normally not related to graphemes, the sound mode (Pérez-González 2014, 206). Pérez-González aptly explains that "the role of noises will be one of complementing or accentuating the semiotic contribution of other signifiers" (2016, 206), which is the case with *Kill la Kill*, as every time the heavy-font set appears on screen—something that is frequent—a sound resonates or chimes, depending on the character or the event that happens. For example, if the name of a tough, buff character appears as a grapheme, a deep and resounding, yet brief sound, is played at the same time. Similarly, when a cute character such as a dog appears, a bubbly sound is played at the same time as the grapheme. In another case, when a cute female character appears, her name is shown on screen with a chime. *Kill la Kill*, then, covers the former three sub-modes (verbal signifier, static and animated writing), plus the sound core mode (Stöckl 2004, qtd. in Pérez-González 2014, 206).

Moving on to an anime film, the following case is taken from one of the opening scenes of the film *Tokyo Godfathers* (2003), directed by Kon Satoshi. *Tokyo Godfathers* is about three homeless people—Hana, a transvestite; Gin, a middle-aged alcoholic man; and Miyuki, a runaway teenager—who find a baby in a garbage dump on Christmas Eve. In Kon's acid critique of Japanese society, Hana recites a poem after she has found Kiyoko in the garbage dump. The poem is then rendered graphically on screen as such:

Figure 10: Still from *Tokyo Godfathers* (Kon, 2003).

The poem on the right side of the screen reads:

Osanago no [5 syllables]/ A little baby
houhou ni konayuki [7 syllables]/Powdery snow on its cheeks
kiyoshi kono yoru [5 syllables]. On this holy night

The poem is not simply narrated, but also graphically rendered on screen in a really innovative touch by Kon. As it is a grapheme, it is a verbal signifier, as well as part of the static and animated writing submodes. The haiku appears line by line just as Hana is reciting it, and the vertical layout is different from most cases in which a grapheme or subtitle appear on screen, as seen in the previous cases. However, in the official release of the *Tokyo Godfathers* DVD, the clunky, yellow subtitles are too big, not only covering the main characters on the screen, but also interfering with the poem. As will be shown in the next images, the official subtitles do not affect the poem's readability, but it interferes visually with the Japanese graphemes, perhaps in this case interrupting the solemnity of the moment.

Figure 11: *Tokyo Godfathers*' official English subtitles. (C) Sony Pictures, Madhouse.

This scene is even more problematic in the Spanish, Portuguese and French translations, since the text is larger in those languages; the subtitles further interfere (graphically) with the original Japanese haiku.

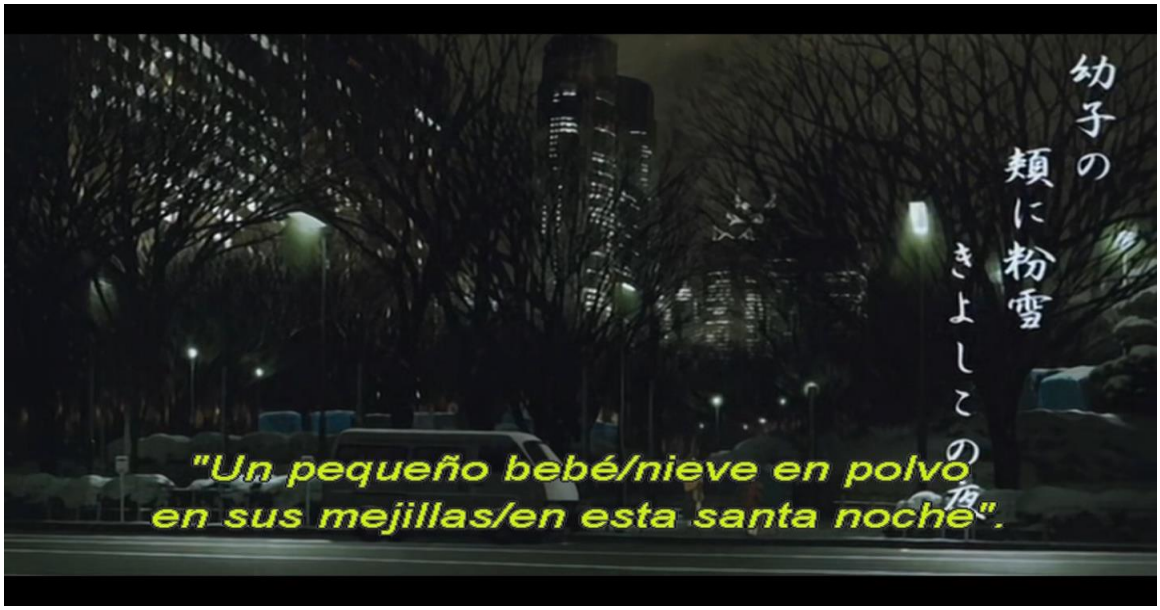

Figure 12: *Tokyo Godfathers*' official Spanish subtitles. Notice how "*noche*" covers the last part of the haiku. (C) Sony Pictures, Madhouse.

Figure 13: *Tokyo Godfathers*' official French subtitles, which cover part of the Japanese haiku. (C) Sony Pictures, Madhouse.

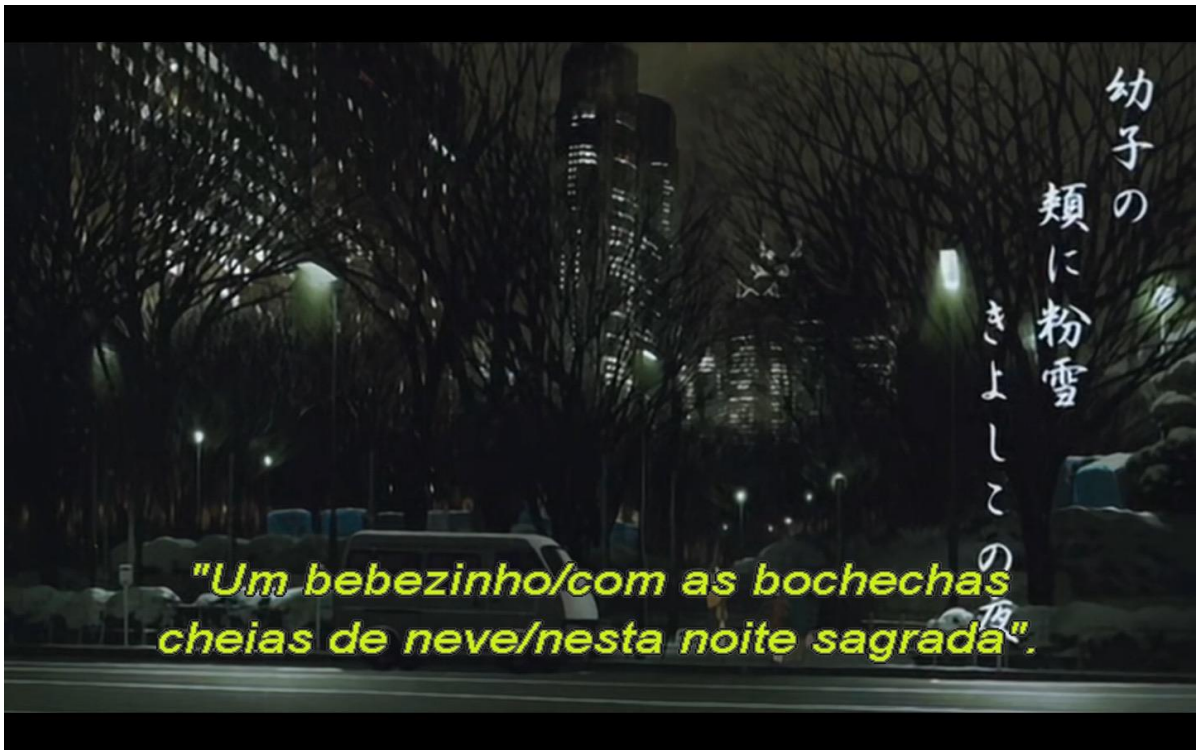

Figure 14: *Tokyo Godfathers*' official Portuguese subtitles, with the same issue as the previous two. (C) Sony Pictures, Madhouse.

Tokyo Godfathers was fansubbed by several groups, but *bxyh* offers the best solution not only compared to the other fansubbing groups, but also—and more evidently—compared to the official subtitles, which look extremely large on the screen. *Bxyh* took a creative approach and included the translation of the haiku on the opposite side of the screen, in white letters (the same colour as the haiku itself) instead of yellow. *Bxyh*'s approach allows for the solemnity of the scene to be kept, and do not interfere—unlike both official and unofficial subtitles—with neither the display of the film's main characters, nor with the haiku on the right side.

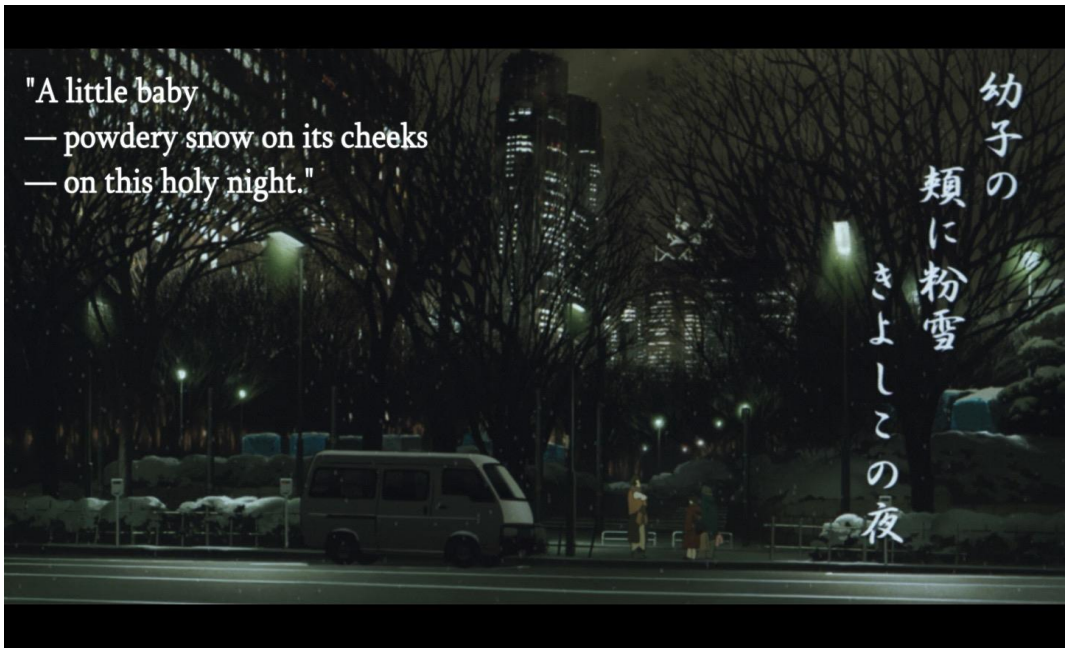

Figure 15: Fansubs by *bxyh*.

Other fansubbing groups fansubbed this scene as shown in the following images, showing that even if their translation is not as creative as *bxyh*'s, it is still better than the official ones, as they do not interfere graphically with the haiku:

Figure 16: Fansub version. Group unknown.

Figure 17: Commie Subs' version.

The use of these graphemes, as in the cases of *Gurren Lagann*, *Kill la Kill* and *Tokyo Godfathers*, poses several problems for the subtitler in the sense that the subtitler must use all of his creativity in order to place the subtitles in a manner that will not interfere with the graphemes, but that at the same time, include subtitles that would be readable by the audience. In *Tokyo Godfathers,* the fansub group *bxyh* offers the best solution, as the official subtitles are

positioned in the usual space, but in doing so invading the haiku's space and blocking the main characters—Hana, Gin and Miyuki—on the screen. For *Kill la Kill* the best solution is once again provided by a fansubbing group and not by the official subtitles, as the former, in a very creative manner includes the subtitles *within* the graphemes themselves (Fig. 1.4), unlike the official ones that simply includes them on the top. Fansubbing is indeed once more at the forefront of how a script can be subtitled, and provides better and more artistic solutions than official subtitles.

In Anime: Japanese Sounds

The inclusion of an onomatopoeia rendered as a grapheme on screen is a recent tendency in anime and can be seen in shows such as *3-Gatsu no Lion The Tatami Galaxy* (Dir. Yuasa Masaaki), *3-Gatsu no Lion* (Dir. Okada Kenjiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, 2016), and *Jojo's*, and *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* animated TV series *Stardust Crusaders* (David Production, 2014). This type of grapheme representation of sounds is standard in manga, but not in anime. These sounds in manga and anime—and occasionally TV shows— can be divided into two types of sounds: Onomatopoeia (*giongo*), which are words that imitate real sounds, human, animal or otherwise; and mimetic words (*gitaigo*), which are words that phonetically express states that do not produce sounds, such as an emotion, a movement or state of things (Inose 98).

In *Jojo*, Japanese onomatopoeia frequently appears on screen describing a character's actions, "aura" or intent. For example, in Fig. 1.17, one of the "bad guys," Alessi, has a *go go go*, ("menacing") aura. This mimetic word is, in quite an innovative manner, rendered graphically on-screen. As seen in Fig. 1.18, one of the main characters, Polnareff, detects Alessi's evil aura and "stares" at him. This stare is rendered graphically as *jiro* ("stare"). In this case, the translators for Crunchyroll decided to render these onomatopoeias and mimetic words onscreen as well. They even chose the same (or almost the same) colour as the original Japanese grapheme—although it lacks the fluidity or movement of the Japanese one. This means that, while the Japanese grapheme is part of the "animated writing" submode, as well as the "verbal signifiers" and "static writing" ones (Pérez-González 2014, 199), the subtitles are only part of the latter two, without the animation. This type of grapheme representation is common in manga, where readers frequently see the Japanese onomatopoeia represented as a grapheme. In the case of *Jojo*, however, the producers clearly want to make the anime similar to the manga, at least graphically speaking. Can this be considered a form of inter-semiotic translation?

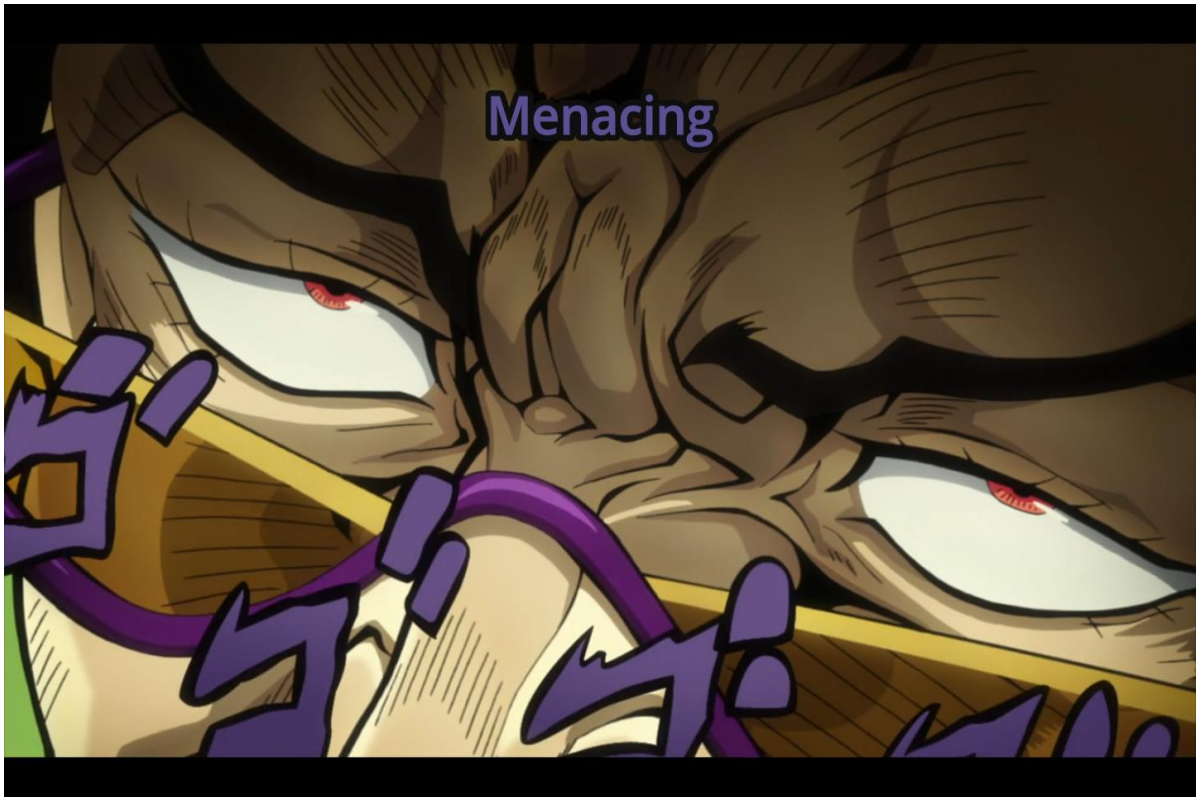

Figure 18: "*Go go go go*", Japanese onomatopoeia for "menacing". (C) David Production

Figure 19: "Jiro", meaning "stare". Note how the fansubber(s) went as far as to write the subtitle in the same colour as the onomatopoeia, even if it lacks the latter's dynamicity. Notice, on the left, the manga version of the same series. (C) David Production, Shueisha.

That said, the act of representing onomatopoeias and mimetic sounds as graphemes in anime is rare—although more frequent today—as can be seen in shows such as *3-Gatsu no Lion*. Since the graphical representation of onomatopoeia is rarely used in anime, this particular utiliszation of it really distinguishes specific shows from the clutter of anime released every

season. Shows like *3-Gatsu no Lion* pose many challenges for the subtitler due to the plethora of signs that could be subtitled (i.e. the script plus the graphemes). A subtitler, then, would have to decide where to position the subtitles for the graphemes, or perhaps to avoid subtitling them at all because shows featuring a constant use of graphemes might fill the screen, resulting in a "cluttered viewing" (as seen in the following images).

However, is that necessarily a bad thing? In the next section I will categorize the different purposes in which graphemes can be used in fansubbing.

Figure 20: *3-Gatsu no Lion*, *HorribleSubs* fansubs.

Figure 21: *3-Gatsu no Lion*, *HorribleSubs* fansubs.

Graphemes Added by Fansubbers

Pérez-González (2014, 194) explains that fansubbers make use of "animated writing in the opening and ending credits of anime, where the viewer is faced with a wealth of information in Japanese and the target language". Officially-subtitled anime today rarely includes subtitles for the opening and ending sequences of an anime, let alone include a karaoke version of it. Fansubbed anime, however, can include (1) a translation of the lyrics, (2) a roumaji version (i.e. the Japanese lyrics written in the Roman alphabet), and (3) the lyrics in Japanese characters, all while the roumaji and Japanese are highlighted when the lyrics are sung, just like in a karaoke version. These karaoke subtitles have what Pérez-González (2014, 195) calls "dynamic realization of the language mode", as can be seen in the following image from *Dragon Ball Super* (2015):

Figure 22: Karaoke subtitles for *Dragon Ball Super*. Fansubs by *Fujiwara no fansub*.

Pérez-González (2014, 195), in his example for the karaoke opening of *Dragon Ball Super* anime, includes an image from Naruto, released in 2006, which also includes the Japanese characters for the karaoke version (these characters are not part of the Japanese original). However, it seems that today the karaoke version only includes the roumaji lyrics, not the Japanese one, whereas ten years ago the song would have included the Japanese characters as well. This can be seen in the following images, taken from *Fuuka*, a show released in 2017 (for more images refer to https://fansub.co/):

Figure 23: *Fuuka* opening theme subtitled by *Dissolution* fansubs

Figure 24: *Fuuka* opening theme, subtitle by *Kantai* fansubs.

The second manner in which a fansub can make use of graphemes consists of the addition of explanations provided by the translators. The fansubbers include a Japanese term in the main subtitles in the bottom, which is then explained in another part of the screen, usually at the top.

Figure 25: "*Torii*". A scene from *Dennou Coil* (2007, Dir. Iso Mitsuo). Fansubs by *CoalGirls*. (*Coalgirls* is a fansub group—now on hiatus—dedicated to the release of 1080p, FLAC sound quality fansubs, i.e. fansubs with a high picture and sound quality, something rare in fansub groups.)

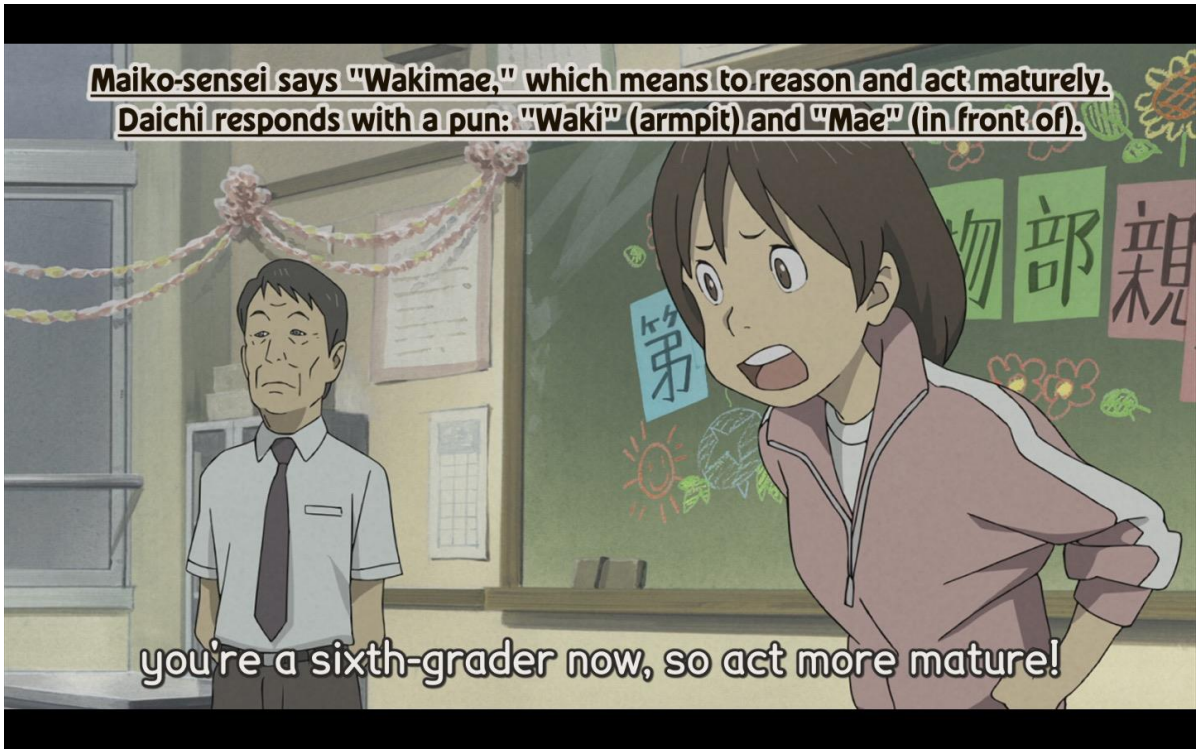

Figure 26: A scene from *Dennou Coil*. Fansubs by *CoalGirls*.

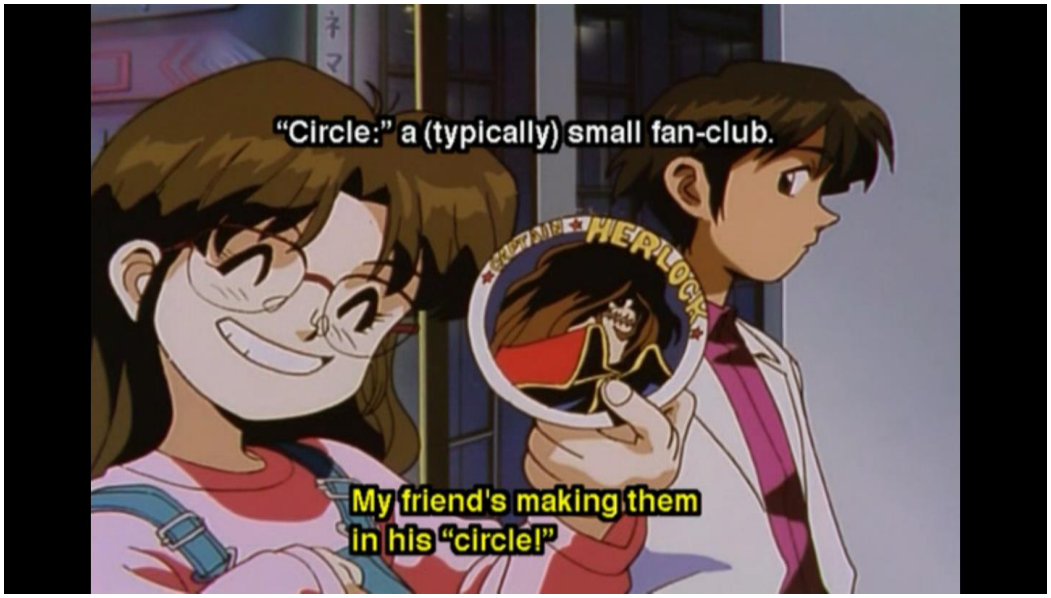

Figure 27: "Circle". Scene from *Otaku no hideo* (1991, Dir. Mori Takeshi). Fansub group unknown.

Nonetheless, some fansubbers have taken matters into their own hands, and instead of translating the Japanese text, they leave what they would label as essential terms in Japanese, and then add a translator's note explaining the meaning of these terms. This a heavily exoticized form of translation, in which the subtitlers keep an English word order, but makes a heavy use of Japanese terminology. It is an *otaku* form of Japanglish. This can be observed in the following image:

Figure 28: Unless the viewers pause the image, or have a large knowledge of Japanese culture and terms frequently used in anime, the subtitles above do not make much sense. Group unknown.

A translator's Notes, Comments or Opinions

Much like the previous case in which the fansubbers explain a Japanese term, the following examples represent those cases in which the translator explains an event or action regarding the show's plot, or regarding a term used in the show. Many of these cases are not explanations per se, but assumptions or humorous commentaries about the show.

Figure 29: TL, or "Translator's note". Perhaps it is obvious that the calf is not referring to a human part, but in this context the fansubber found it necessary to expand on the subtitles and add a note. Group unknown.

Figure 30: "*Noru*" means to board/to get on/to ride in Japanese. In this case, the translator explained the possible joke uttered in the Japanese dialogue. Group unknown.

Figure 31: A simple explanation of the onomatopoeia "moo". Group unknown.

Extreme Fansubbing

Fansubbers are unrestrained by the industry regarding what liberties they can take with the subtitles, such as with how many subtitle lines can be shown on screen. As Bogucki explains "in amateur subtitling there is no strict limit as to the number of lines per subtitle, but experienced subtitle producers realise that human perception is not boundless; as cinema-viewers themselves, they subconsciously tend to apply the conventional limit of two lines per subtitle" (Bogucki 50). However, fansubbers do not care about the "conventional limits," or "conventions" for that matter, and frequently take things "to the extreme".

The following examples are some of the most extreme cases of fansubbing, where the fansubbers have taken complete, unreserved liberty with the text and decide to add whatever they desire, such as a grapheme, an opinion, an explanation or discussion relating to the plot, or a translation of the dialogue. Anime fansubbers frequently decide there is no limit whatsoever to how many lines can be added on the screen, occasionally covering the entire page in subtitles, as seen in the following image:

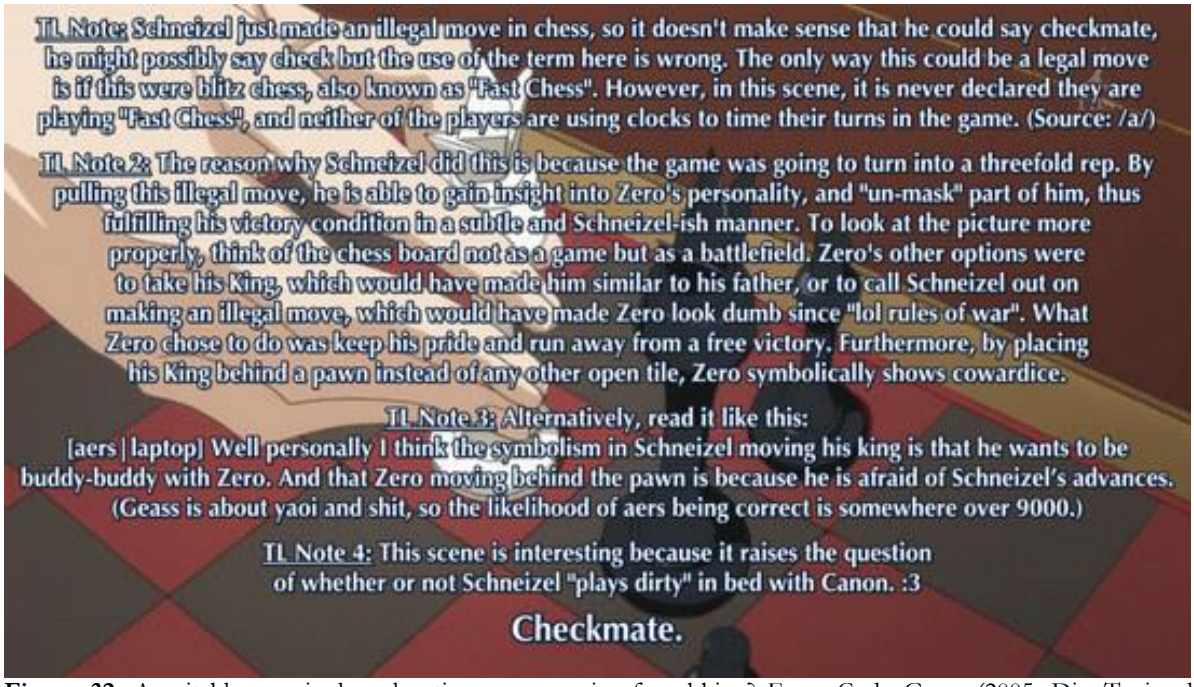

Figure 32: A suitable, required explanation, or excessive fansubbing? From Code Geass (2005, Dir. Taniguchi Goro). Fansubs by a major fansub group, *CommieSubs*. https://commiesubs.com/about/.

In the previous image the viewer must undoubtedly pause the scene, and read all the text, or simply ignore it and move on. This is a recurrent trope for *CommieSubs*, as they have subtitled a scene of Sailor Moon Crystal ep. 16 in exactly the same way. Even though it may appear excessive to cover the whole screen in subtitles, the fansubbers have explained many cultural notions and plot details that viewers might have otherwise missed. Many of the comments here, however, are of a personal nature. The subtitlers even make guesses as to the character's intentions.

However, since people who download fansubs are likely fans of Japan and Japanese (pop) culture, they most likely will pause the video and read the majority of the text. In other cases, such as the fansubs for the *Mononoke* (2007, Dir. Nakamura Kenji) series, the torrent package created by *anon subs* or *Anonymous* (https://myanimelist.net/fansub-groups.php?id=911) actually includes some separate .rtf files with translation notes for each episode. This, however, is not the norm within fansub groups, and if the fansub groups have extra cultural information or opinions regarding a specific scene or show, they will simply add it to the scene. This creates a cluttered shot that does not let the viewer see the actual image, but one that will, hopefully, provide the avid fan with valuable information regarding the show or Japanese culture—or at least a few chuckles. However, this unusual case of fansubbing will most likely be enjoyed by fans only.

Conclusions

In this article I have attempted to create a basis for future analyses of multimodality in AVT, specifically in anime. I have found that the use of graphemes in anime can give prominence to a

specific emotion or action happening on a scene. This use of graphemes makes anime even more multimodal, with graphemes being a verbal signifier sub-mode in the core mode of language, as well as part of the medial variants "static and animated writing" of that same core mode (Pérez-González 2014, 199). They can also even be, on occasions, part of an entirely different core mode, that of sound (Pérez-González 2014, 206). The translation of these graphemes can pose serious challenges to the subtitler, making him find the best way to translate them without covering the screen with letters.

However, fansubbers, with their creative and unrestrained freedom, and always at the vanguard of how a release can be subtitled, precisely cover the screen with graphemes. Even if fansubbing can be criticized for having inaccurate translations (Bogucki 2009)—fansubbers do not have the script, after all—many fansub groups such as *bxyh* and *Underwater* (and their fansubs for *Tokyo Godfathers* and *Kill la Kill*, respectively) illustrate how an unrestrained approach to subtitling can have better, and certainly more elegant, solutions to subtitling and the subtitling of graphemes in anime.

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