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AUDIOVISUAL RETRANSLATIONS FOR CHILDREN: THE NEW LIVE ACTION VERSIONS OF DISNEY CLASSICS

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Abstract

The Disney company has recently experienced a significant artistic and economic revival. Apart from the obvious growth as a business (the company has its own audio-visual streaming platform and has purchased Marvel Entertainment and Lucasfilm), they have now released, as proof of this revival, the new live action and big budget versions of the famous Disney classics. In this paper, we intend, on the one hand, to frame these new versions within the concept of audio-visual retranslation for children. This concept will be revisited and studied extensively from a semiotic perspective, foregoing the mere (inter)linguistic level. On the other hand, we shall analyse the reasons that have led Disney to launch these new versions on the market, as well as the (re)translation methods that could be established after examining some of these new (and old) films for children and adults.

Keywords: Disney company. Classical movies. Audiovisual retranslation. Children. (Re)translation methods.

Resumen

Recientemente, la factoría Disney ha experimentado un gran resurgimiento artístico y económico. Prueba de ello, además del obvio crecimiento empresarial de la



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productora, que cuenta con su propia plataforma audiovisual en *streaming* y ha comprado otras compañías, como Marvel o LucasFilms, son las nuevas versiones, *live action* en su mayoría y de gran presupuesto, que ha lanzado de sus afamados clásicos. En el presente trabajo, nos proponemos, por una parte, enmarcar estas nuevas versiones dentro del concepto de retraducción audiovisual para el público infantil. Dicho concepto será revisitado, abordado y entendido de forma amplia, desde una perspectiva semiótica, y abandonando, por tanto, el plano meramente (inter)lingüístico. Por otra parte, analizaremos cuáles son los motivos que han llevado a Disney a lanzar estas nuevas versiones al mercado y qué métodos de (re)traducción se podrían establecer una vez realizado el estudio de varias de estas nuevas (y viejas) películas para niños y adultos.

Palabras clave: Factoría Disney. Clásicos. Retraducción audiovisual. Público infantil. Métodos de (re)traducción.

1. Introduction: are the new live action versions of Disney classics mere remakes?

In the decade of the 1990s, Disney started to market intermittently its classics in a technical format known as *live action*; however, it has only recently started to release regularly, and almost always in that format, its famous animated films. The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes the term *live action* within the context of films as a type of “action involving real people or animals, not models, or images that are drawn, or produced by computer”.

This trend started in 1994 with the film *Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book* (directed by Stephen Sommers), based on the original animated film *The Jungle Book*, from 1967. It was followed, two years later, by Stephen Herek's *101 Dalmatians*, based on the 1961 animated film of the same name. These first attempts at adapting classics in a live action format were resumed in 2010, when the acclaimed director Tim Burton premiered his particular live action adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*. Since then, we have witnessed the readaptation of *Sleeping Beauty*, this time with the title *Maleficent* (Robert Stromberg 2014); *Cinderella* (Kenneth Branagh 2015); *The Jungle Book* (John Favreau 2016); *Beauty and the Beast* (Bill Condon 2017); *Dumbo* (Tim Burton 2019); *Aladdin* (Guy Ritchie 2019); *The Lion King* (Jon Favreau 2019); *Lady and the Tramp* (Charlie Bean 2019); and *Mulan* (Niki Caro 2020). While the first films from the 1990s and those up to the year 2016 are clear remakes

of the originals, we may claim that those that have been released in the last five years (starting with *Beauty and the Beast*) are not mere adaptations, recreations or even imitations of the originals, and that go take one step further. This is due to the fact that they do not only show a high degree of fidelity to the contents of the original, but they also maintain great similarity (or equivalence) with the frames, scenes (and even sequences) and scripts of the originals. Therefore, in these specific cases, we can talk about audiovisual retranslation for young audiences. This work focuses on audiovisual retranslation, which will be discussed from a comprehensive approach with a semiotic perspective. My goal, therefore, is to forgo the merely (inter) linguistic sphere. In addition, I will analyze the reasons that led Disney to release these new versions and the methods of (re)translation that may be established after several of these new (and old) movies for children (and also adults) have been studied.

2. On the concept of audiovisual retranslation for an audience of children and young adults

2.1. On retranslation

Zaro (2007: 21) defined *rettranslation* as “the total or partial translation of a text that had been previously translated”. Three years later, Koskinen & Paloposki (2010: 294) referred to it as a second or subsequent translation of a single source text in the same target language. Zaro (2007: 21) considered that this topic had not been extensively explored by Translation Studies (virtually the only publication about it was the monographic volume that the journal *Palimpsestes* had edited on this subject in 1990), and that the concept was characterized, above all, by its imprecision:

For example, are indirect or secondary translations retranslations [...]? What about revised translations, a minor case of retranslation that could involve only variations in style? And what about the so-called “adaptations” or intersemiotic translations for the stage or the screen [...]? And pseudotranslations or autotranslations?

Although the concept of retranslation has been subject to study since the last decades of the past century (Chaume 2018: 10), the lack of research interest on this topic (Zanotti 2015: 110) and the conceptual vagueness around it

are still present. Bywood (2019: 815) states that, in spite of the apparent simplicity in its definition, it can actually be rather hard to determine what can and cannot be considered a retranslation. One aspect most researchers agree on is the tendency to mistake retranslation with the idea of *indirect translation* or *mediated translation* (Toury 1995). These two concepts should be separated from each other. Once again, according to Zaro (2007: 31), retranslation is a “broader” concept, because it “widens” four of the five key concepts established by Chesterman (1997) for Translation Studies (some of which have already been superseded): (1) the couple formed by ST and TT, (2) equivalence, (3) untranslatability and (4) literal-versus-free translation. In addition, other notions generally linked to retranslations are the concepts of *intertextuality* and *legibility* or *readability* which, according to Zaro (2007: 24) are related both to the reader’s understanding capabilities and to the emotional load that a specific text can generate, both of which tend to change over time.

Despite the fact that retranslation emerged in the field of literary translation, there are also other translation modes in which this phenomenon can be observed, such as audiovisual translation (AVT), which will be discussed in the next section.

The reasons why texts are retranslated have been set out by Venuti (2004: 25-30), among other authors. They include the fact that the previous translation may have become obsolete, behind the times or that it may have “grown old” (Berman 1990), and that retranslation may be understood as a “creation of value” (Venuti 2004: 29), because the retranslator can interpret the source text from a new perspective, according to new values that change the way in which the retranslation is received when compared to the first translation within the target system. Apart from these two possibilities, Venuti also refers to merely commercial reasons, because retranslating may sometimes be cheaper than acquiring the rights to an existing translation, for example.

Together with the idea of the aging of the first translation, there is also an argument, put forward by Bensimon (1990: iv) and shared by Berman, that retranslations provide the possibility to return to the exoticism of the original version, because first translations, according to Gambier (1994: 27) always tend to assimilate the target culture. Therefore, another reason that could justify a retranslation would be returning to the original and

highlighting the more foreignizing aspects in it. It is worth mentioning that these two concepts (the ageing of a translation and the return to the original) are the basis of the “retranslation hypothesis” put forward by Koskinen & Paloposki (2004).

These are, broadly speaking, the ideas around retranslation, the concepts that may be associated with it and the reasons why retranslations generally take place. Throughout these pages, we shall see how these ideas may be applied to the new live action versions that Disney has created from his classics since 2017.

2.2. *On audiovisual retranslation*

As it is mentioned above, retranslation emerged and takes place generally within the field of literary translation, but audiovisual texts (and mainly films) can also be retranslated, although they are analyzed from an exclusively interlinguistic perspective. In an article from 2018, Chaume makes it clear that his research on audiovisual retranslation is conducted from an interlinguistic approach, and that he does not discuss other types of translation, such as intralinguistic or semiotic translations or adaptations:

Here, I am referring exclusively to interlinguistic translation, thus excluding intralingual translations, intersemiotic translations (such as audiodescriptions) and adaptations of a pre-existing text (be it literary or not) into an audiovisual product, i.e. media adaptations, franchises and remakes, which are examples of media localization too (Chaume 2018: 11).

The same thing occurs with other studies on audiovisual retranslation: almost all of them use an interlinguistic prism and, consequently, examine the reasons that lead to the production of new dubbed versions and subtitles. In addition, audiovisual products in this field are generally limited to films, because other genres, such as documentaries, live action series or cartoons are not usually retranslated. This is due, according to Chaume (2018: 11) to the fact that:

Dubbing documentaries, cartoons or TV series is often perceived as an artistic endeavour and contributes (or amounts to) perceiving the final product as a work of art. Consequently, the client and the audience may prefer watching a TT that has been completed when the original programme was released, rather than something that sounds ‘more modern’.

Although retranslation is relatively common in the audiovisual sector, there have not been many academic studies on this topic (Bywood 2019: 817). Bywood considers that this may be because, in fact, the reasons behind audiovisual retranslation do not match the “retranslation hypothesis” presented by Koskinen & Paloposki (2004) that was mentioned above.

Generally, audiovisual retranslations are not created because the previous ones have become old or because there is a desire to return to the original audiovisual text (although this may happen, for example, in the case of dubbed versions that have gone through censorship), but for essentially commercial reasons. Bywood (2019: 817) refers to the emergence of new media, such as DVDs or BlueRays, or of new streaming platforms, such as Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime or, in our case, Disney+. The release of films in these new formats generally creates the need to retranslate the existing dubbing or the subtitles. Therefore, one of the few reasons to retranslate would be the economic factor mentioned by Venuti (2004: 30). In this regard, Bywood (2019: 817) concludes that “it is primarily for commercial and/or operational reasons that retranslation is carried out in the context of AVT”.

Not all the ideas around retranslation can be applied in the audiovisual field at an interlinguistic level, and it would consequently be logical to think that the same thing might happen with the intersemiotic perspective applied to this work. Of course, there are authors that believe that straying from the linguistic sphere means moving away from the classical concept of translation. One example may be found in Susan Basnett and her stance regarding the translation of texts written to be performed. According to this author, their performability is incompatible with translation, because “ethical considerations are diminished; texts are cut, reshaped, adapted, rewritten and yet still described as translations” (Basnett 1991: 102).

However, as it was stated in the introduction, the concept of translation in this study (and, consequently, the concept of retranslation) has been understood in a broader sense. This is the case here, because translation is analysed at a semiotic level within the audiovisual context. I agree with Chaume (2018: 15) regarding the flexibility required to approach the subjects that may be included within a discipline or a field of study:

A discipline must be able to describe and explain all those phenomena that occur in its field of enquiry. Translation Studies is by now a research field in its own right and its scholars should strive to cover all those modes of language and culture transfer that take place within human communication via translation, from one source language into another or more. Devising different theories to explain each and every translation mode, or neglecting some of them, is a step backward rather than forward in the attempt to advance in our research field. General translation theories should become flexible enough to explain other processes of culture and language transfer.

2.3. On audiovisual retranslation for children and young adults

Finally, it is important to highlight some concepts related to audiovisual translation for an audience of children and young adults. To do so, I will refer to translation studies on children's and young adult literature (from here on, CYAL) because, according to Marcelo Wirnitzer & Morales López (2015: 214), both audiovisual translation for an audience of children and young adults and the translation of CYAL pay particular attention to their (dual) audiences, that is, children and young adults (and adults); and these two types of translation must address the coexistence of texts and images. These two authors are influenced by the Nordic theories led by Oittinen (2000), which focus on the child as a receiver, on the dual audience that was mentioned above, and on the close relationship in this type of literature between texts and images. Other authors that claim that AVT for an audience of children and young adults can be approached theoretically from the perspective of the translation of CYAL include Alvstad (2018), who considers that the translation of CYAL includes illustrated books, novels, short novels, drama, theater plays, poetry, rhymes, songs, comics and other materials targeted at children and young adults; and O'Sullivan (2013: 459), who also believes that we are witnessing a multimedia transformation of CYAL and that the research community nowadays is taking all of this into account. García de Toro (2020: 470) is also aware of this multimedia transformation of CYAL, and she states that, currently, "plays, puppet shows, computer and video games, films, and TV series are just as important as books in terms of entertainment for young people", which is leading to terminological discussions on how to name the target audiences of CYAL, because the term "reader" would not be enough in these cases. For this reason, some authors,

such as O'Connell (2006: 22, in García de Toro 2020: 470) opt to refer to "listeners" or "viewers".

Retranslation in the field of CYAL has been studied, among others, by Oittinen (2000: 31), who posits that the conception of the world and the expectations of the recipients of CYAL change periodically, which means that the translations of CYAL must be reconsidered regularly; and particularly by Du-Nour (1995), who applied Toury's norms (1995) to prove that the retranslation of children's books is motivated by commercial reasons and by the ageing of the language. CYAL is a type of literature particularly sensitive to the changes of values in a society.

In the following pages, we will see that Disney's new live action versions are not only motivated by the commercial aspect, as is generally the case in audiovisual retranslations, but that their creators also took into account concepts that involve the translation of CYAL, such as the (dual) recipient, the ageing of the original version and the transformation of social values.

3. Disney and its new live action classics: a phenomenon of audiovisual retranslation for children, young adults, and adults at a semiotic level

As we saw at the beginning, even though Disney started to produce remakes and sequels of its internationally famous films in the 1990s, it was not until 2017 that this process of recovery of classics has experienced a new twist and broken the barriers of the mere adaptation, recreation, or imitation. This is due to the fact that, whereas the remake is generally marked by the specific view of the new director, who builds the new film based on their interpretation of the old one, the new live action versions of the classics are defined by their extreme fidelity to the original, both regarding its contents (in many cases there are several lines from the original script that remain unaltered) and its cinematographic characteristics. In fact, the soundtrack is usually maintained, and we can find frames, scenes and even full sequences that are identical to the originals: the need to allow the viewers to easily recognize the original and even to take pleasure in that extreme similarity puts these films in a unique category.

The Disney Company has always been characterized by being a pioneer and a leader in a trend that takes classical tales to the silver screen.

However, whereas their intersemiotic translations are mainly characterized by a paternalist behavior (Lorenzo 2014), because they are generally full of tone restrictions and omissions (*cfr.* García Jiménez 2018), as well as by their ideological and sociocultural manipulation (for example, the visual esthetics in each film matched the American beauty and lifestyle standards of their time); the new live action versions (which could also be considered intrasemiotic auto-retranslations) are defined, as was shown above, by the opposite feature, that is, by being as similar to the original as possible. In this context, one question arises:

Why were there alterations in the translation from the book to the screen and there are almost no significant changes in the (re)translation from the original film to its live action version?

To begin with, while in the first case there was “a change in substance or in the semiotic system” (Eco 2003), in the second one everything remains part of the same audiovisual system, which simplifies the translation task enormously.

Secondly, and as we shall see below, the production company, with the arrival of new technologies to the sector (CGI, special effects, etc.) was aware that, from a technical perspective, its films had aged, and it was necessary to update the classics without the need to address other aspects.

Finally, we can find economic factors and factors related to social status, because Disney’s intention was to revitalize (and thus promote) its classics. Therefore, in this case, the introduction of major changes could have been interpreted as a slight on the original production.

Another possible question is: could this specific phenomenon be considered an audiovisual retranslation for children, young adults, and adults? Obviously, I believe this is the case, because many of the ideas presented in the previous section can be applied to these examples.

First of all, we find ourselves, according to Zaro (2007: 31), before a very broad notion that expands on some of the key concepts of Translation Studies, such as the following:

(1) The couple formed by ST and TT: in this case, the ST would be the classical films, which are in turn intersemiotic translations of popular stories, as in the case of *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* or *The Lion King*, which was based on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

(2) The concept of equivalence: Oddly enough, we can see that most of the films analyzed below want to achieve maximum equivalence with the original version. In this case, concepts such as fidelity, even at a formal level, become particularly relevant once again.

(3) The idea of (un)translatability: any information, regardless of the semiotic system it is part of, can be translated.

(4) The duality between free and literal translation: as we shall discuss later, these retranslations are characterized by the fact that they are formally very literal, but freer whenever there is an attempt to make the story convey new social values.

On the other hand, we can find the concepts of *intertextuality* and *legibility* or *readability*, adapted in this case to a viewer rather than a reader.¹ These concepts are related, and they depend on the historical moment considered, the level of comprehension of the recipients and the emotional load of the original version. In this case, and as we shall see in greater detail when we discuss the idea of the dual recipient, one of the incentives to watch the live action versions of the classic is precisely the idea that the classic can be recognized and enjoyed once again.

Finally, with regard to the reasons why these classics have been retranslated, we can find the following:

(1) The ageing of the original: this is something that occurs mainly from a technical perspective. The animation industry is constantly introducing technological advances, and Disney has always been a pioneer in this regard. The arrival of Pixar and of computer animation (we may just cite the technical revolution represented by the release of *Toy Story* in 1995) was a milestone in the world of animation and, since then, almost every animated film was created with computers. In fact, Disney Animation Studios tried to keep classically animated productions alive, but it was forced to desist completely after the failure of *The Princess and the Frog* (Ron Clemens & John Musker 2009) or *Winnie the Pooh* (Stephen J. Anderson & Don Hall 2011). The classics, therefore, had become old and clashed with the new generations of audiences, who did not conceive any reality other than the

1. García de Toro (2020: 470), refers, in the context of CYAL, to Desmet's study from 2001 on the terms of *intertextuality* and *intervisuality*.

one with images generated through a computer. Disney, in the name of the modernization of images and in search of greater realism, decided then to develop live action films.

(2) The creation of values: classic films had not only aged from a technical perspective; their scripts transmitted, both explicitly and implicitly, messages that are now considered inappropriate (in the case of Disney, it is not always difficult to find sexist or racist contents), and the new technical reformulation has been coupled in most cases with an ideological reshaping more in line with current social values. With regard to sexism, we may just mention that the topic of “Disney princesses” has gained increasing relevance in the academia, as can be seen in the studies published by Perera Santana & Bautista García (2019), Brugué & Llopart (2020), Pascua Febles (2020), or Rodríguez Rodríguez (2020), which all agree that CYAL must promote gender equality through the introduction of female role models more in keeping with the times.

(3) The return to the original: as it was explained above, it is evident that, with these retranslations, Disney wanted to reclaim its world-famous classics and, at the same time, to make them known for current audiences. However, it is also necessary to acknowledge that this is a strategy by the production company to maintain its prestige as the entity that establishes the canon for popular tales. According to Tatar (2012: xvi),

for several decades, the fairy tale franchise came to be known by the name of Disney rather than Grimm, and the films became our portal to “tales as old as time”, as Mrs. Potts puts it in *Beauty and the Beast*.

For Disney, this return to the original is a return to its films (which probably explains their interest in making them easily recognizable), rather than to the tales of the Grimm brothers, Perrault or Andersen, among others.

(4) Finally, there are commercial reasons, which have undoubtedly had the greatest influence on the creation of these retranslations. Here we can also find a clear intersection with the concept of audiovisual retranslation, which is mainly created for economic reasons. The main goal of Disney in these cases has been to present a dual campaign, because together with the release of the new version, in which technical virtuosity is at the core of its

commercial attractive, there is also a promotion of the classic film, which viewers are likely to enjoy again after watching the retranslation.

Within the field of audiovisual retranslation, apart from the commercial factors, there are also considerations regarding the broadcasting format, which, as Chaume (2018: 16) and Bywood (2019: 817) observed, is often the cause behind retranslations. Here, unlike in the case of interlinguistic retranslations, there are no copyright or company policy obstacles, but there may be a new broadcasting format that acts as a marketing asset, as in the case of the streaming platform Disney+. The latest two live action versions of the studio, *Lady and the Tramp* (2019) and *Mulan* (2020) were released exclusively on this platform. In this case, Disney, which is aware of the commercial success of its previous retranslations, has used these films to attract new subscribers to its platform. It is worth pointing out here that publication formats are also being increasingly analyzed in the field of CYAL as a new and promising line of research (García de Toro 2020: 470).

Finally, I will discuss here the concepts more closely linked to the retranslation of CYAL to show, once again, that they can also be applied in these cases. They are the following:

(1) The dual audience: Oittinen (2000) was one of the first researchers to develop this concept that is intimately associated with the production and translation of CYAL, which must be attractive not only for children, but also for adults, who are ultimately the ones who decide whether to acquire the product or not. Disney, particularly in the projects led by Pixar (characterized by the dual reading of its films), has considerable expertise in the creation of audiovisual products that can be successful in these two contexts, and its new retranslations are one example more. In this case, the fact of releasing a live action version of the classics seems to be more attractive for the adults who grew with the originals than for children, which will probably watch the film at the instance of their parents. However, apart from the element of nostalgia, we can also find that the new techniques with which the new versions have been produced (live action, CGI, a higher rate of frames per second that enhances the rhythm of the action, humor, etc.) meet the requirements of younger audiences. Therefore, although the main attraction seems at first to be targeted at adult audiences, the contents and the format of the films are addressed at children and young adults.

(2) Ideological and sociocultural changes: although it has been mentioned above, it is worth insisting on this idea, which is constantly present in the retranslation of CYAL and which can be observed in the retranslations studied here, because the creators of these new versions have introduced social values much more suited to the current times.

At the end of 2020, Disney announced that, from then on, classic films such as *Dumbo* (1941), *Peter Pan* (1953) or *The Jungle Book* (1967) would include an advisory note for “racist connotations that can be seen and heard in the films before they are watched” (Various authors 2020). This disclaimer lasts 10 seconds and appears before these films in the platform Disney+. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the retranslation of these classics, in spite of the need to maintain the story as similar as possible, show some variations in this regard and have introduced examples, as we will see in the next section, of feminism, tolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community and interracial coexistence, something that is increasingly present, as was mentioned above, in the studies on CYAL.

The constant reconstruction of popular tales is something that defines this type of literature. In the words of Fernández (2021), in an interview for the Spanish newspaper *El País* on the rewriting and reconstruction of classic stories:

This is a constructive revisionism, like a breeding ground of stimuli, which proves that while these archetypes may still be in force, they do not mean the same, because they are influenced by feminism, identity politics and the talent of the mainly female writers who have strived to turn them around.

4. Methods of audiovisual retranslation in the case of Disney

According to the categorization established by Hurtado Albir (2001: 266), in this last section I will present the translation methods used by Disney to retranslate its classics. It is important to point out that I will refer to “methods” (rather than “techniques” or “strategies”, which are associated with the microtextual sphere) because, considering the semiotic nature of this analysis, I believe that in these cases global decisions have been taken that affect the entire audiovisual text and are related to the goals of the (re) translation (Hurtado Albir 2001: 26). Therefore, in my view, the methods

of audiovisual retranslation used in this case are related to technical, commercial, or ideological reasons.

4.1. Audiovisual retranslation through the improvement of technical resources

This method consists in the reproduction, as faithfully as possible, of the original, but with innovative technical means, such as live action or computer-generated images (CGI). This mimicry is not only observed from the perspective of the plot (the scripts maintain many lines from the original, apart from the same structure), but also at a cinematographic level, because the soundtrack is maintained and many of the frames, scenes and even sequences of the original are copied.

One example can be seen in *Beauty and the Beast* (Bill Condon 2017), whose promotional strategy before the premiere highlighted its similarity with the original version released by Disney in 1991.



Image 1. Compared frames from *Beauty and the Beast* (1991/2019)

This method of retranslation reached its peak with *The Lion King* (John Favreau 2019), in which the degree of similarity with the original was remarkably high, and which was reviewed by the critic Jordi Costa in an article published in *El País* in 2019:

This new version of *The Lion King* believes it necessary, for example, to reproduce even the camera movements of the original version to tell essentially the same story with very few variations, but with the arrogance of those who think that they are correcting a draft, when in fact they are degrading an excellent work. Favreau's film seems targeted at the type of viewers who think that the best drawings are those which are indistinguishable from a photograph.



Image 2. Compared frames from *The Lion King* (1994/2019)

Although the term used to differentiate between these new versions and the originals is *live action*, this technique (live action or real images) is not always used in this type of films. In fact, in *Beauty and the Beast* there is a combination of live action (most of the actors are real people) and CGI (used for the fantasy characters). For its part, *The Lion King* is a film with computer generated images in its entirety.

This method of retranslation through the improvement of technical means was obviously motivated by commercial goals (both films broke records at the box office at the time of their release) because the main attraction for the audience was the possibility to watch again the original movie with a technical adaptation to modern times. This method has been used in all the subsequent versions, although the importance granted to it has been reduced, as we shall see below.

4.2. Audiovisual retranslation through the participation of a renowned director

Another retranslation method used by the studio (probably in response to the critics received because of the feeling of emptiness of the plots in these perfect reproductions of the originals with last-generation technical resources) was hiring renowned directors who could present their particular version of the classic. This retranslation method is motivated, once again, by commercial reasons, because in this case the attraction lies in the style of the acclaimed director that was hired.

The studio had already used this method in 2010, when they hired Tim Burton to develop his unique view of *Alice in Wonderland*. In this case, we can observe a reinterpretation in Burton's style in which it was sometimes difficult to recognize the original from 1951, particularly on an esthetic level. However, this has not been the case in the new live action versions, because in these cases the need to recognize at all times Disney's original film prevailed, probably more for the sake of adult audiences than of children or young adults.

These were the cases in *Dumbo* (2019), which was directed once again by Tim Burton; and *Aladdin* (2019), directed by Guy Ritchie. We can find here two directors that are known for their singular esthetic premises and their unique ways of managing the cameras. Nevertheless, both of them, probably due to the demands of the studio, remained faithful to the original cinematography while they maintained their personal style.

In this regard, the most unique view belonged, once more, to Tim Burton. *Dumbo* is divided into two parts: the first part lasts approximately until minute 42 and, in it, Burton faithfully reproduces the (abridged but complete) film that Disney released in 1941. The second part is precisely that, a sequel in which the director uses new characters and the circus aesthetics (more suited to his personal style) to create a new story with Dumbo as the main character.



Image 3. Compared frames from *Dumbo* (1941/2019)



Image 4. New frames of the new characters and plots from *Dumbo* (2019)

For his part, in *Aladdin*, Guy Ritchie remains faithful to the structure, the script (once again, full sentences from the original can be heard) and many of the frames and scenes of the original film from 1992. However, the style of the director is evident with the introduction of some esthetic elements that had not been seen until that moment, such as the clear reference to Bollywood productions or the unmistakable camera movements that are the signature of this British director.



Image 5. Compared frames from *Aladdin* (1996/2019)



Image 6. New frames with references to Bollywood from *Aladdin* (2019)

4.3. Audiovisual retranslation through updated social values

One characteristic shared by virtually all these audiovisual retranslations is the fact that there have been variations particularly concerning the (re) construction of some characters, which reveals a clear intention by Disney to embrace and transmit the new values that are in force in our current society, especially with regard to feminism and tolerance in matters of race and sexual orientation. In the words of Perera & Bautista (2019: 131), the Walt Disney Company has heard the concerns of the current society, for example, about values related to equal education for boys and girls, and they have decided to give expression to these concerns by promoting “new heroines with features and motivations in keeping with the times”. The goal is to recover the moralizing and didactic function (a characteristic in CYAL) that has always been displayed by the studio. Therefore, while on the one hand, all the sexist or bigoted traces from the original classics have been removed (once again, let us remember the warning included by Disney+ before many of them), in the retranslations more importance is given to female roles (women acquire more prominence and highlight elements such as autonomy, intelligence and even physical strength), and interracial or homosexual couples are introduced, as can be seen in the following examples:

(1) In *Beauty and the Beast* (Bill Condon 2017) there is racial diversity among the villagers and the character of LeFou, played by Josh Gad, is openly homosexual.



Image 7. LeFou is Disney's first openly gay character

(2) In *Lady and the Tramp* (Charlie Bean 2019), the action takes place in New Orleans (the original version was set in a town of the American

Midwest) and, once again, we can find many black characters, and the owners of Lady, the main dog character, are an interracial couple. It is worth pointing out here that, according to García de Toro (2020: 466), ideological manipulation is a constant feature of CYAL, and some of the elements more prone to being manipulated are racist references, which have been removed here in order to present a multiracial society.



Image 8. The owners of Lady are an interracial couple in *Lady and the Tramp* (2019)

(3) *Aladdin* (Guy Ritchie 2019) highlights the independent, cultured and entrepreneurial features of Jasmin. Once again, according to Rodríguez Rodríguez (2020: 3), the film underscores “the traits that can help to give more visibility, if possible, to equality between boys and girls”. Similarly, the character of the genie trapped in the lamp that must obey his master and wants to be free is played by Will Smith, in a clear reference (and as a rebellious decision) to the slavery of African Americans in the United States.



Image 9. Will Smith plays the genie in *Aladdin* (2019)

5. Conclusions

The new versions of Disney classics are known as live action versions, although it is important to point out that many of them do not use this technique and employ others such as computer animation. However, the reference to the idea of live action involves the technological improvements applied to these films. Unlike in the case of remakes, recreations, or imitations (already created by the production company since the 1990s), these new films, and particularly those released from 2017 on, show one particular feature: their similarity, equivalence, and mimicry with regard to the originals. For that reason, they could be framed into a new category and be considered audiovisual retranslations for an audience of children and young adults.

The choice of the term *rettranslation* is motivated by the many characteristics that these new versions share with the retranslations produced in the literary sphere, and it infringes on basic notions of the field of Translation Studies, such as equivalence, (un)translatability or the dual notions of ST/TT and literal-versus-free translation. Similarly, it maintains a close connection

with the concepts of *intertextuality* or *legibility*, and both types of retranslations are created for the same reasons, such as the ageing of the original, the need to return to it, the creation of new values and, above all, commercial motivations.

In addition, there are also links with audiovisual retranslation, although this practice is generally only studied from an interlinguistic perspective (rather than semiotic, as in this case), and it is limited to the fields of dubbing and subtitling. However, it can be seen how in both cases the economic factors place great pressure on them, together with the prevailing need to adapt to the new broadcasting formats that emerge in the audiovisual industry.

Finally, the presence of a dual audience (children and adults) and the changes in values that take place in society, which are defining characteristics that influence retranslations in the field of CYAL also apply to these new live action versions.

In this study, we have observed that Disney retranslates its classics, first and foremost for merely commercial reasons, but also because it needs to update them technically (thus the live action phenomenon), because it wants to return to the original and highlight its own role as a creator of the canon in children's tales, and finally because it must eliminate the social aspects that have become obsolete and are no longer accepted in order to introduce a new set of values more adapted to the current society as an example of its didactic role.

After an analysis of several of these films from a semiotic perspective, three retranslation methods have been established, all of them greatly influenced by economic factors, because they represent, in themselves, a commercial attraction.

These methods are: (1) using new technological means in an attempt to reproduce the original as faithfully as possible and to make it recognizable for its audiences (particularly adults); (2) hiring an acclaimed director who maintains to a greater or lesser extent the script and cinematographic features of the original and also presents their own vision of the classic films and adds some novelty to it; and (3) introducing, through the (re) construction of some characters, new social values to update once again the classic from an ideological perspective, thus recovering the moralizing and didactic function that has always been part of Disney's brand. This

company, according to Perera & Bautista (2019: 133) wants to keep causing an impact “in the shaping of the culture we live in”, which means that “it is not enough to present products loaded with intentions as if they were mere entertainment pieces”. For this reason, it needs to adapt, update its creations and, ultimately, retranslate itself for the current times.

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