

**Franzon, J., Greenall, A. K., Kvam, S., Parianou, A. (Eds.). (2021). *Song Translation: Lyrics in Contexts*. Frank & Timme. (pp. 498)**

Given the fact that the present collection of essays comes close to 500 pages, the wealth of information it contains is not surprising. The editors, this should be stated right at the outset, have done an excellent job, adding another central element to the TransÜD series on the theory and practice of translation and interpreting. Fifteen contributions in English and German, an extensive introductory chapter, a combination of theory-based and empirically oriented articles, song material covering the period from the 1530s to the present day and originating from numerous languages (English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Turkish, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish) – this is the balance of an international research project that found its conclusion in 2019.

The merit of the book is twofold. On the one hand, the individual chapters meet high scientific requirements and bring up a diversified spectrum of translatorial problems, arranged around the sections "Analyses of popular songs", "Historical approaches", and "Multimodal and didactic approaches". On the other, the authors' introductory chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual framework, and it is only against this background that the individual chapters can be fully assessed in their specific light and value. I shall therefore concentrate on the introduction – an equally detailed, albeit merited discussion of the individual contributions would go beyond the scope of this review.

Drawing inspiration from recent publications by Minors (2013), Low (2016), Apter and Herman (2016), etc., the editors wish to respond to the rapidly growing academic interest in the "mutual influence of lyrics and music in translational processes" (p. 13), with a particular – and new – focus on the song format instead of the opera. As opposed to previous studies on song translation, they "place lyrics centre stage, but from an expressly non-instructional, non-evaluative, *descriptivist* angle" (p. 14) and invite the contributors to "demonstrate the wide variety of different contexts that lyrics enter into dialogue with" (p. 15). To provide a solid basis for the individual investigations and their critical reception in the academic community, they clarify in a first step the basic concepts 'song', 'song lyrics', 'translation', and 'context'. As far as song and song lyrics are concerned, the question of plurisemioticity is central, as far as translation is concerned, the authors dispel common preconceptions: They define translation as "a textual or non-textual operation" (p. 17) – very significantly, the volume contains an article on sign language –, they relativize the demand for maximum semantic closeness to a given source text and advocate the relevance of functional studies for song translation research. Such functional approaches of translation strongly admit contextual factors, they invite to critically reflect upon how translation, adaptation, appropriation, and rewriting of a text can be delimited and ultimately renew the debate of "the impossible task of drawing a line between translation and what cannot be regarded as translation" (p. 17). As to the concept of context, the authors consider the functional context as described above, the larger sociocultural context, and the musical one, which seem to be the only controversial point of the theoretical framework presented: In song research, music is more than a context – this is even briefly admitted on page 31, though without consequences for the system deployed –, music is a semiotic 'layer' of its own, interacting with the text and with what can be subsumed as interpretation-performance in the broad sense of the word.

This said, another concern of the present publication is to install Song Translation Studies as a sub-branch of the interdisciplinary field of Translation Studies as visualized in Figure 1 (p. 20). This visualization allows song translation to be perceived as a sub-category of the 'constrained', multisemiotic, multimedial, and multimodal category of audiovisual translation and at the same time as distinct from the category of translation for opera and film.

Equally illuminating is the subsequent outline of major trends in song translation research, which frames the following contributions and distinguishes between predominantly conceptual and predominantly empirical works. In the latter, the focus is not only on "how lyrics are translated in (and as a result of) their varying contexts", but also on how songs "travel within and across cultural contexts" (p. 23) and on the role song translation plays in complex artefacts as described in Section 3. Once again, the presentation impresses with clarity and solidity of information, although – similar to Low's pentathlon principle – the reader would wish to learn more details about the concepts of other researchers mentioned.

Finally, the editors present their "descriptive-explanatory approach to studying lyrics in context" (p. 28) by describing song translation strategies on three different levels: the macro-level with the decision not to translate or to translate, and in the case of the latter to translate singably or not; the mezzo-level in the case of singable translations with the decision between approximation and redo, and finally the micro-level where both Low – with his pentathlon principle of sense, singability, naturalness, rhyme, and rhythm – and Franzon – with his distinction between near-enough translation, perspective change, lyric hook transposition, single-phrase spinoff, phonetic calque, all-new target lyric – come into focus again. All in all, it is with compelling rigor that the authors explore the challenges of the comparatively new field of song translation research, and like before, it is not a 'too much' of information that might displease the reader, but possibly a certain 'too little' on the micro-level where one would love to dig deeper with regard to the strategies that respond to the influence of music on the translational process.

As far as the individual contributions are concerned, the variety of genres, periods, contexts, and strategies addressed is immense. In Section 1 dedicated to 20th-century popular songs both Kelandrias and Franzon focus on collections of English/Italian and American songs and their respective translations into Greek and Swedish, but the results could hardly be more different: While in Kelandrias' corpus the strategy of translational transformation is dominant, in Franzon's song collection near-enough translations prevail and even allow for distinguishing different temporal eras within a period of 100 years. Axelsson presents a micro-level case study on Hall's "Harper Valley P.T.A." and its translations into Norwegian and Swedish, concentrating on the lyrics and selected narratological aspects. Angelsen and Michell on the other hand draw attention to the musical setting, the backing band, and the women lead vocals in their discussion of interlingual versions of Cohen-songs performed by Norwegian women performers. They state that "a shift in the gender of the performer involves a fundamental recontextualisation of the text" (p. 152), but there is "no single and simplistic, 'female' way of [performing]" (p. 173). In her study of (R.) Cohen's song "Dans mon quartier" and its translation into Turkish, Susam-Saraeva comes close to Text and Music Studies precepts as practised in Germany and France<sup>1</sup> and from which the volume as a whole

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mathis-Moser, U. (2015). Pour une 'cantologie germanophone'. Bilan et nouvelles perspectives. In: Hörner, F. – Mathis-Moser, U. (eds.) (2015). *Das französische Chanson im Licht medialer (R)evolutionen. La chanson*

might have drawn additional inspiration. By not prioritising the text but focusing on the interrelation between text, music, and performance instead, she shows that next to the lyrics the music, the performance and even the video impact the Turkish translation. Greenall closes Section 1 with an illustration of Fillmore's scenes-and-frames approach, showing that source-orientedness may be supported by a deeper level of correspondences and strategies of compensation, not only on the textual, but also on the musical and visual levels.

Sections 2 and 3, which present historical approaches as well as multimodal and didactic ones, are by no means less inspiring than Section 1. Examining the translation of liturgical texts in the Swedish reformation, Lundberg concludes that in song translation "lay popularity of melodies should receive much more attention" (p. 249), while Kvam argues on the basis of Grieg song translations that singability is more than the mere congruity of syllable structures in the target text and a given melody. Schopp describes the change of function of a student song that eventually turns into a national anthem in its translation, and Parianou explores the translations of traditional children's songs and the importance of the melody in this particular context. Last but not least, Fryer illustrates the translation strategies that contribute to transforming a popular hymn into a parody. Section 3 finally gathers studies as diverse as Viljanmaa's reflections on Finnish sign language, Svenhard's investigation of the diverse recontextualizations of Ibsen's character of the troll, Grønn's didactic work on the translation of a rap song into Spanish, or Salvarani's Italian translations of several examples of music theater with the purpose of being performed by pupils.

The present volume is doubtlessly fundamental to translation and interpreting studies, its strengths outweigh by large the few critical observations that were made. It will serve both those in search of a competent synopsis of a highly complex interdisciplinary field of research and those interested in particular song genres, periods, contexts, and strategies.

## References

- Apter, R. Herman, M. (2016). *Translating for Singing: The Theory and Craft of Translating Lyrics*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Low, P. (2016). *Translating Song: Lyrics and Texts*. London: Routledge.
- Minors, H. J. [ed.] (2013). *Music, Text and Translation*. London: Bloomsbury.

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