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Introduction to volume 15 of the journal *Studia Translatorica* on song translation studies

This volume owes its existence to the coincidence of two happy events. The first was the 10th EST Congress, taking place in Oslo in 2022, which housed a well-filled panel named *Song translation studies*. Chaired by Johan Franzon and Annjo Klungervik-Greenall, the panel was the first of its kind in the history of EST congresses and contained some of the papers appearing in this volume. The second was the journal *Studia Translatorica*, which, apart from being consistently ambitious and well-edited, has begun to take an interest in the subject. Its volume 14 contained an analysis by Anna Rędzioch-Korkuz (2023) about the challenges facing translation and music as a new subfield within translation studies. In its history, it also boasts an article about the prolific Polish song translator Wojciech Młynarski (Wysocka 2020). By these events, a general ambition to collect and collaborate on insights about translation and music turned into an actual, welcome opportunity.

This subfield of translation studies did not originate as a naturally unified school of research. From the outset, the writings on the subject have entered from different directions, with quite different goals. The oldest interest seems to be the one connected to singable opera translation, for performance as well as printed publications (e.g. Apter/ Herman 2016; cf. Apter 1985; Apter/ Herman 1995; Gorrée 1997). Another goal was to offer practical help in the translating of all kinds of song lyrics – with an emphasis on translating as opposed

to rewriting (e.g. Low 2017). A third direction followed a socio-cultural interest: it may be illustrated by, for example, Susam-Saraeva's publication from 2015 concerning a genre of Greek music and its presence in Turkey, examined through its cultural and political as well as textual consequences. Last but not least, a fourth opening can be seen as stemming from a theoretical interest in multimodal or intermedial interactions (e.g. Kaindl 1995; Desblache 2019; Kaindl 2020). Several collected volumes have also provided input from disciplines as varied as semiotics, musicology, popular music studies, theatre studies, or just plain empirical, descriptive investigations into largely uncharted translation practices (e.g. Gorlée 2005; Susam-Sarajeva 2008; Minors 2013; Şerban/Chan 2020; Cayuela/ Bertoneche 2020). In encyclopedic overviews, all these strands of input are increasingly seen as an established, common field of research (García Jiménez 2012; Mateo 2012; Bousseaux 2012; Desblache 2018; Greenall et al. 2021; Low 2022).

The object of study within this (sub)field has gone under different names: vocal translation, translation and music, translation of music, translation of song, translating texts of songs, and translating for singing. Accordingly, the field gives an impression of being undefined, fragmented, or fractured. A simple, symptomatic sign of this is evident in the bibliographies of earlier studies and collections, which have few references that they share. Still judging only by references, many of the articles appearing in the overviews and collections show limited acquaintance with one another. To be honest, there are some that show little explicit connection to translation studies at all. Nevertheless, the creation of sound theoretical systems is dependent on there being empirical data of enough variety to base them on. Every edited collection is a step in this direction. This volume hopes to be yet another step toward more shared knowledge and a more easily overviewed research field.

Song translation studies is the name we have chosen for this volume. It is grounded in the fact that the act and fact of song is central to all 12 articles presented here. In most of them, the object of study is *song* in the sense of 'an artistic artifact comprised of music and lyrics', often published in a recorded or printed form, thus copyrighted, though sometimes living primarily in oral tradition. Some of the articles focus more on *song* in the sense of 'sung performance'. The English language allows a conflation of the double meaning – one can say both “sing that song” and “raise your voice in song”. This close link between song and singing is natural in languages as different as Italian (*canzone, canto*), Finnish (*laulu, laulaminen*), and the Scandinavian languages (*sång* or *sang*). Unfortunately, there are languages with a more split terminology; they include German (*Gesang, Lied, Popsong*) and Polish (*śpiew, pieśń, piosenka*). But as discussed in the article by Franzon (in this volume), we find *song translation* (and thus possibly *Übersetzen von Liedern* and *tłumaczenie piosenek*) to be the

most practicable and commonly used term for what is at the center of attention in this field of study.

Naturally, this volume also is a smorgasbord offering demonstrations of different aims, approaches, and materials. It contains pairs of languages, some of whose song traditions and norms for singability have not been studied much before: from Ryukyuan languages into Japanese and English (in the article by Guay), and between English and Polish, French, Spanish, Italian, Finnish, German, and Uchinaaguchi. One study of German-into-French translation may serve to defy the anglicization that appears to somewhat dominate both the business and research field of song translation.

We have representations of different media and genres, from printed novels and printed music based on printed poetry (the case of Schubert–Müller, in the article by Agnetta) to opera, musical theatre, Disney songs, punk cabaret, and a few examples from the vast field of “folk music”: songs in non-standardized form belonging primarily to vernacular language contexts. Several papers deal with what, at one point in this volume, is called “the golden age of pop song translation”, i.e. the post-WWII growth of an international music business and its need for translations, which was different then than now. It can be pictured both as a story of American exports to the world (as in the case of rhythm and blues in the article by Wesley) and as a project of inter-European exchange (in the form of a Polish variety television show in the article by Rędzioch-Korkuz).

A reader will find research ventures placed at both ends of the spectrum of fidelity and liberty: from a natural wish to respect the intentions of great creators, be it Mozart, Schubert, James Joyce, or Lin-Manuel Miranda – and several other original creators of the musical *Hamilton* – to freer uses, or appropriations, of song for various purposes such as sung or subtitled music videos, satirical theatre productions, or covers for immediate release onto a current, domestic pop scene. Reasons are given to ponder the translation needs of booklets accompanying CD editions, the functionality of AI translations, the effect of subtle shifts such as the rearrangement of repeated verses (evaluated through the idea of *Invarianz*, which is how fidelity is conceptualized in German terminology), or the opportunities for amateur or professional song translators to exert some creativity or authorial agency. Theoretical input comes from the disciplines of musicology, popular music studies, ethnolinguistics, narratological and literary theory, multimodality studies, and various areas of translation studies, such as translation didactics.

The articles may pave the way for mapping the field of song translation studies in different ways. We find here at least two possibilities in the application of theory. One is through more exact specification in order to get a deeper understanding of single cases and examples, such as distinguishing between three kinds of intra- and extradiegetical singing in literary fiction (in the article

by Autieri/ Niskanen), distinguishing between convergence or divergence in musical semiosis, or identifying several levels of analysis related to musical narrative, rhetoric, and semantics, as well as within the verbal, visual, and audio mode in multimodal artworks. But, in order to forge paths through larger corpora of song, rougher distinctions can be of use, as between semantic and semi-otic retentions in cover recordings or between three general genres: love song, protest song, and novelty song (including every other kind of song, in the article by Aronsson). Another basic choice of focus may be between three research areas: source text analysis (of music in the article by Reus, or of the multimodal whole in Carpi); the technical and practical “how to” (as in the articles by Wilson-deRoze, Guay, and Kodura); or possible reasons why, concerning, for example, textual themes (religious, in Mach) or the connotations of a special musical genre (R&B, in Wesley).

A more practical way of ordering studies is according to the choice of subject matter, which in this volume makes them fall roughly into three groups: pop music studies, multimodal and musical meaning, and special cases and applications. The volume opens with an overview of the subfield presented by **Johan Franzon**, who attempts to systematize previous research on song translation and create a map of song translation studies. Franzon proposes a threefold division into a source-oriented branch, meant to embrace the genius of the song; a transfer-oriented branch, with special focus on different modes and media; and a target-oriented branch, dedicated to the study of “the afterlife” of source songs, their target versions, and the post-translation effects. He claims that the breadth and variety of research on song translation, which often creates a relatively non-coherent picture of the subfield, may indeed be an advantage.

This metatheoretical paper is followed by articles that utilize the descriptive-explanatory methodology, which has been considered one of the most suitable means of analysis within song translation (Greenall et al. 2021). **Kenny Wesley** presents an analysis of French and Spanish translations of English-language songs representing the so-called *yé-yé* period in the 1960s, when anglophone songs, both originals and covers, contributed to the development of new genres of pop music in western and southern Europe. Wesley provides an explanatory analysis of four songs representing the R&B genre, concentrating on individual strategies, changes at different levels of the songs, and the socio-cultural context. He shows how a musical genre that originally was of merely a local, even marginalized, significance gained an increasing presence and popularity in Europe, where some attentive re-creation combined with changes caused by socio-political circumstances.

Similar research material is discussed by **Mattias Aronsson**, who examines French translations of British and American pop songs released in the 1950s and onwards from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. His research

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proves that songs reached their target pop market through strategies representing the whole continuum of semantic fidelity, starting with the most faithful renditions and finishing with all-new lyrics that bear no semantic resemblance to their source texts. Among the many factors that may determine choices of translation strategy, two important ones are the genre identity of songs and the fact that the translators often had their own stakes and status within the music business.

The question of genre is further examined in the paper authored by **Anna Rędzioch-Korkuz**, who presents a descriptive analysis of translation strategies used in translating foreign songs presented in the early episodes of a well-known entertainment show broadcast on Polish National Television. In addition to offering a descriptive overview, she indicates significant changes made to English-language songs at the level of genre, medium, and mode, thus highlighting the significance of multimodality in song translation as well as drawing attention to salient non-linguistic constraints.

That paper is a bridge between descriptive methodologies and those which are slanted toward the problem of multimodality and musical meaning. In what follows, **Beatrice Carpi** draws attention to the question of adopting a holistic approach to song translation, as it can help embrace the significant quality of songs being plurisemiotic artworks. She puts forward her own model of analysis, which accommodates the multimodal nature of songs. Having analyzed a song from the musical *Hamilton* (2015), Carpi demonstrates how meaning is conveyed through the interplay of various semiotic resources, which she groups under the labels of verbal, audio, and visual modes. She provides us with detailed and step-by-step instructions on how to apply the model, thus encouraging researchers to test it against other genres and contexts and translators to bear in mind that theatre song lyrics are closely involved with staging and acting.

A music-centered model of analysis is demonstrated in the paper authored by **Tim Reus**. Having employed three paradigms of meaning in music – musical narrative, music rhetoric, and music semantics – the author presents an in-depth analysis of how meaning is constructed in the song “Let it go” from the popular Disney animated film *Frozen* (2013). Reus foregrounds the meaning conveyed by the vocal melody and the progressive growth and flow of the musical accompaniment on the soundtrack. By doing this, he underlines the significance of music in song translation and offers an analysis tool for song translators to at least sharpen their ears toward how music can communicate meaning.

Karen Wilson-deRoze also advocates the music-based approach to song translation, arguing that music can amplify or modify the semantic meaning of words, and as such, it carries significant implications for translation. This is done by critically discussing Jeremy Sams’ English singable translation of Mozart’s

Le nozze di Figaro (1786) and juxtaposing it with her own solutions that give primary attention to musical semiosis, i.e. the interplay between the verbal and the musical content. Even though her in-depth analysis pertains mainly to the genre of opera, her conclusions are of universal relevance, as again, they underline the need to consider the musical dimension while translating songs.

The importance of minding an artful composition is carried on by **Marco Agnetta**, who sees it through the idea of cyclicity – how the coherence created by a series of poems gets rearranged in the processes of setting them to music and translating them. The case studied is the song cycle *Winterreise* by Wilhelm Müller and Franz Schubert (1828). By concentrating on intratextual and extratextual references, he traces how the French translator Bélanger, whose translation is discussed in detail, negotiated the basic demands of singability without changing Schubert's music. Even so, some significant changes in the cyclical structure can be seen: in his manipulating of repetitions, an essential characteristic of song, and certain lexical choices, such as concerning religious elements.

The concluding four papers present case studies of particular problems concerning different languages, cultural and medial contexts, and translation *skopoi*. The paper by **Matthew Guay** shifts attention to the socio-cultural importance of song translation and the sensitive relations between translation and indigenous languages. He discusses the highly endangered languages of the Ryukyuan Archipelago, the southernmost Japanese islands, and argues the unique opportunities that song translation may afford. More systematic study, informed practices, and comparisons with other endangered languages can help song translation contribute to the preservation of indigenous languages.

Arianna Autieri and **Lauri A. Niskanen's** paper addresses the problem of translating songs that are only alluded to, as they are presented as part of prose fiction in a printed novel. This offers another challenge for translators when a text that by definition is multimodal and multimedial switches to a (theoretically) monomedial channel. The authors provide a thorough analysis of nine Italian (re)translations of the songs in the chapter "Sirens" from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and two (re)translations into Finnish. As they work with two comparatively different languages, they indicate not only objective impediments resulting from the structure of the source and target languages but also various means of making literary fiction sing and different strategies used by the translators in order to make "on-paper" lyrics resemble the songs as vitalized by Joyce. The fact that opera arias are generally known for being sung in Italian, but in the 19th century were also often sung in translation, is a further complicating factor.

The translator's decision-making process is also investigated by **Anna Mach** from a contrasting point of view. Instead of a literary translator aiming for fidelity, we see a song translator taking responsibility for producing effective or

entertaining songs. She discusses a theatrical production based on Polish translations of songs by the British band The Tiger Lillies, focusing mainly on reconstructing the translator's rationale, as evidenced in the departures he made from the source texts. Questions regarding (self)censorship and deliberate domestication, the intertextuality of political discourse, and differences in factual knowledge between source and target audiences are raised and discussed in relation to the creativity and appropriating practices that we often find in song translation.

In her paper, **Małgorzata Kodura** demonstrates how song translation may contribute to the education of translation trainees. Having conducted a small-scale experiment in which she used both machine-generated and human-generated translations in a university course, she confirms that song translation is characterized by a relatively high degree of difficulty and requires a good deal of culturally relevant creativity. Since the latter is a necessary skill of translators, the author encourages incorporating song translation tasks into translation courses or workshops.

In our attempt to keep an update on everything new in this field where music, song, and translation meet, we include reviews of an edited collection and two monographs that cultivate the field in three different ways. First is an entry in a well-established book series of popular music studies, whose eighth volume, edited by **Ádám Ignác**, gives us a many-sided understanding of Hungarian popular music history, with some emphasis on translating the influx of "beat music" of the 1960s in a politically oppressive climate. **Dinda L. Gorlée's** book serves as a perfect example of a holistic approach to analyzing the word-sound or language-culture interplay, emphasizing the concept of artistic transduction, which she explains as a process of transenergizing creativity. **Sigmund Kvan's** monograph focuses on **Edvard Grieg's** art songs and their translations into German and Norwegian/Danish, which are analyzed from a communicative-functional vantage point. **Kvam's** work is a significant contribution to the study of singable song translations within German discourse on translation.

The editors would like to thank **Anna Małgorzewicz** and the editorial board of *Studia Translatorica*, as well as the other individuals lending their invaluable efforts to producing this volume. We hope that all the papers will contribute to the development of the field of song translation by providing insightful observations and opening promising research avenues.

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