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From Waterloo Road to the Champs-Elysées. A study of French translations of British and American pop songs

Abstract

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This paper investigates French versions of British and American pop songs from the post-war period until the early twenty-first century. The aim is to establish which translation methods were used when the songs were transferred into the target language and covered by French artists. Fifty target texts were analyzed by means of Franzon's typology of popular songs in translation. The corpus material was analyzed with regard to such factors as distribution among categories in the typology, the lyrical themes of the texts, the choices of individual translators, and the way these translators transferred the works of different composers. The results show that, even though no significant development over time could be detected, translation methods were rather evenly distributed on the spectrum between the fairly faithful variants and target texts bearing no resemblance in content to the source texts. The results also indicate that protest/anti-war lyrics were more faithfully transferred into the target language than texts exploring other lyrical themes. The domination in the corpus of covers made in the 1960s seems to reveal that decade as a golden age of pop song translation from English into French.

Keywords: song translation, British and American pop music, post-war period, lyrics, French singers

1. Introduction

There are many reasons why song lyrics are translated. The target texts may, for instance, be made for subtitles, or made to be performed vocally on stage

and/or on a record. It is the latter category of target texts, i.e. singable translations, that is of interest for this article, which investigates French versions of mainstream anglophone pop songs from the post-war period until the early twenty-first century. After World War II, Anglo-American cultural influences spread rapidly throughout western Europe, and France was no exception. Francfort (2020: 39) stresses the importance of imported cultural products such as pop songs in this context and uses the expression *soft power* to describe the American popular cultural dominance that emerged with the Cold War. This paper describes, compares and analyzes the methods used by the translators creating French cover versions of anglophone pop songs and answers the following research questions: What is the proportion of faithful and less faithful translation methods in the corpus? Is there any development over time? Are the lyrical themes of the source texts of any importance? Can the choices of individual translators be identified, and have the works of different composers been transferred differently? The theoretical framework of the study is made up of Franzon's (2021: 83–121) system of classification of popular songs in translation.

The translation of song lyrics places great demands on the translator. Franzon (2010: 49) argues that song translation is an activity that balances "between respect and hit capacity", which, of course, is a way of expressing the translator's eternal dilemma: how to find the right balance between translation choices that remain faithful to the source text and choices that are effective in the target language context? It is a known fact that the translation of singable lyrics requires a significant amount of freedom vis-à-vis the source text. Franzon (2010: 55), for instance, argues that the genre challenges the perception that a translator's main task is to transfer semantic content into the target language. Apter and Herman (2016: 14) confirm that the music accompanying the source text constitutes a challenge that is specific to this textual genre: "[i]n order to fit the music, a singable translation must sacrifice some literality, some meaning". Some academics even hesitate to use the term *translation* in the context of singable lyrics. Froeliger (2007), for instance, makes a clear distinction between adapting and translating song lyrics and prefers the term *adaptation* where Apter and Herman and other scholars would use the term *singable translation*. Froeliger (2007: 177) writes: "[a] translator puts words on paper; for an adapter, the lyrics must also be performable. Orality is first and foremost". The issue here, however, seems to be about terminological preferences, and there is no fundamental clash of opinions as far as I can see. Indeed, Guillemain (2019) bridges the gap by using the verb *tradapter*, a neologism that amalgamates the French verbs *traduire* ('to translate') and *adapter* ('to adapt'). Whatever one chooses to call the devising of performable song lyrics in a new language, the genre-specific constraints relate to what Low (2005) labels the "non-verbal code" – that is, the melody, the key, the chords, and the rhythm of the original song. As he explains:

> […] song-translating is significantly different from most interlingual translating (e.g. poetry translation). This is particularly true of the devising of singable translations: here the TT – the verbal message in the new code – is intended specifically to be transmitted simultaneously with the very same non-verbal code that accompanied the ST (Low 2005: 187).

As Rędzioch-Korkuz (2023: 65) points out in a recent metatheoretical article, "translation and music" can be considered "a new subfield of translation studies". Indeed, in the early twenty-first century, the translation of song lyrics was still a fairly unexplored research field; however, there has been a significant development over the last twenty years. Important contributions have been published by Bosseaux (2011), Apter and Herman (2016), and Low (2017), and there are collective volumes edited by Gorlée (2005), Susam-Saraeva (2008), Minors (2013), and Franzon et al. (2021), to name but a few of the main contributors. French translations of Anglo-American pop songs, however, have yet to be extensively examined by the research community, even if there are exceptions – see, for instance, Francfort's (2020) overview and articles focusing on French translations of Bob Dylan's lyrics (Froeliger 2007; Meunier 2020).

2. The corpus of the study

A corpus of fifty English source texts and their French target texts from the latter half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century has been selected with the purpose to create a representative sample of what could be called the standard repertoire of French cover songs of English originals. Of course, these fifty songs do not constitute the total sum of British and American pop songs covered in French during the period – but they may be, to many people, the most well-known examples of the genre. All of the songs, both the original and cover versions, were originally published as phonograms, either in a vinyl (record) format or in a digital (CD) format, and they may be categorized as songs aimed at the mass market. Some are popular mainstream songs performed by slick crooners and pop stars; some are more rebellious rock or protest songs that in the 1960s became an integral part of popular culture (see e.g. Francfort 2020: 40). The corpus was established using various means of selection. The songs are all performed vocally, and the examples quoted on the following pages show that they have entered the standard repertoire. A list of American pop songs covered in French (Francfort 2020: 49–54) was used as a means of finding cover versions in the target language, as were several online playlists and articles – especially those about British pop and rock songs covered in French[1]. In order to access

1| For instance, the Wikipedia page "Liste d'adaptations de chansons des Beatles en français" (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_d%27adaptations_de_chansons_des_Beatles_

the original lyrics as well as the French cover lyrics, a criterion of selection was that both versions had to be available on online streaming services such as YouTube. The original songs were often interpreted by famous stars of the day and, for the most part, they became big hits in the English-speaking world. The French cover versions were often recorded by artists well-known in the target culture, such as Tino Rossi and Edith Piaf in the 1950s, Johnny Hallyday and Eddy Mitchell in the 1960s, and Sacha Distel and Sylvie Vartan in the 1970s and 1980s. It is generally the English recording that has gained the status of a timeless classic. However, the title of the article alludes to one of the exceptions to this general trend. Joe Dassin's "Les Champs-Elysées"[2] from 1969 has become a veritable classic, a Parisian anthem of sorts. The original, "Waterloo Road",[3] recorded by the British band Jason Crest the year before, pales in comparison. It was at the time, and remains to this day, the lesser-known version of the song.

The objective was to include songs from the post-war period to the present day. It was relatively easy to find French cover versions of British and American pop songs dating back to the "vinyl era", that is, from the mid-1950s until the end of the 1970s. However, it proved more difficult to find examples from the immediate post-war period – when shellac records turning at 78 rpm still dominated the market – and later times when vinyl records were gradually being replaced by compact cassettes, then digital compact discs, and ultimately streaming services. The corpus consists of six target texts from the 1950s, 32 from the 1960s, and seven from the 1970s. Only three songs are from the 1980s and a mere two songs represent the more recent decades from 1990 and onwards (see Table 2, p. 81).

3. Analysis of the corpus material

In Section 3, the results will be presented with regard to the research questions presented in the introduction of this paper.

3.1. Lyrical themes

Thematically, the 50 source texts that make up the corpus of the study can be divided into three groups based on the subject matter of the lyrics. Most of the songs (30 of the 50 songs studied, or 60%) are *love songs*. Be they happy or sad, these lyrics deal in one way or another with matters of the heart. An illustrative

en_fran%C3%A7ais) was used for the selection of Beatles songs covered in French. Another source of inspiration was the site https://theculturetrip.com/france/articles/9-great-french-covers-of-english-songs (accessed: 12.02.2024).

2| French lyrics Pierre Delanoë. © CBS.

3| Music and lyrics Mike Deighan and Mike Wilsh. © Philips.

example is The Everly Brothers' "Made to love" (1960),[4] covered as "Belles, belles, belles" by Claude François in 1962.[5] A smaller proportion (8 of 50, or 16%) are *protest* or *anti-war songs*. Their main purpose is to deliver a critical social commentary of some kind, an example being Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the wind" from 1962,[6] known in France as "Écoute dans le vent" (1964) and interpreted by Richard Anthony.[7] The remaining 12 songs (24%) have been put into the group *novelty songs (and other themes)*, since they focus on very different lyrical topics. Their subject matter can range from a novelty song celebrating a new form of fashionable beachwear ("Itsi bitsi petit bikini" 1960)[8] to a parody of a third-class western movie ("Zorro est arrivé" 1964,[9] known in its original version as "Along came Jones", The Coasters 1958).[10] It may also be noted that two of the groups presented here – *love songs* and the group labeled *novelty songs (and other themes)* – span the entire period, from the 1950s until the early twenty-first century, whereas the remaining group (*protest/anti-war songs*) was published exclusively in the years 1962–1968.

As one might expect, most of the target texts explore the same lyrical theme as their original versions of the song. There are, however, exceptions: Ben E. King's hit "Stand by me" (1961)[11] has been classified as a love song, since its overall message is that everything will be all right if only the narrator's "darling" stands by his side. The song was covered in 1963 by Dalida as "Tu croiras".[12] The French title can be translated as 'You will believe', and the target lyrics introduce the theme of religious salvation, a subject that is completely absent from the source text.

3.2. Qualitative classification

As previously mentioned, the theoretical framework of the study is made up of Franzon's (2021: 83–121) system of classification of translated pop songs. His typology consists of six categories, ranging from the most faithful translation method to cases where the target texts bear no resemblance to the source texts. In the following sections, each category is briefly presented and illustrated with examples taken from the corpus.

4| Music and lyrics Phil Everly. © Warner Bros.
5| French lyrics Claude François. © Fontana.
6| Music and lyrics Bob Dylan. © Columbia.
7| French lyrics Pierre Dorsey. © Columbia.
8| French lyrics André Salvet and Lucien Morisse. © Barclay.
9| French lyrics Bernard Michel. © Rigolo.
10| Music and lyrics Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. © ATCO Records; London Records.
11| Music and lyrics Ben E. King, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. © ATCO Records; London Records.
12| French lyrics Jacques Plante. © Barclay.

3.2.1. Near-enough translation

The most faithful translation method in Franzon's typology is characterized by target texts that bear a close, if not complete, resemblance to their source texts – hence the term "near-enough" translation. The translator has a certain amount of room for maneuvers, as some deviations from the original lyrics are permitted within this category. Franzon (2021: 91) explains: "[t]he label 'near enough' covers a plethora of changes that are manifold and recurrent but somehow minor: concerning syntax, exact references, emphases of points, stylistic values and such". An example taken from the corpus of this study is "Qu'as-tu appris à l'école?", the French version of "What did you learn in school today?".[13][14]

Table 1: "What did you learn in school today?" (source text) and "Qu'as-tu appris à l'école?" (target text), excerpts

"What did you learn in school today?" (music and lyrics by Tom Paxton 1964)[13]	**"Qu'as-tu appris à l'école?" (French lyrics by Graeme Allwright 1968)**[14]
What did you learn in school today, dear little boy of mine? I learned that policemen are my friends I learned that justice never ends I learned that murderers die for their crimes Even if we make a mistake sometimes And that's what I learned in school today That's what I learned in school	Qu'as-tu appris à l'école mon fils ? À l'école aujourd'hui Que les gendarmes sont mes amis Et tous les juges très gentils Que les criminels sont punis pourtant Même si on s'trompe de temps en temps C'est ça qu'on m'a dit à l'école Papa C'est ça qu'on m'a dit à l'école

We can easily see how close the target text keeps to the original version. The story is identical: the narrator asks his son what he learned in school, and the child candidly responds that he was taught about the flawlessness of the police and the judicial system. The innocence of the young boy brings home the song's message: equality before the law does not exist, but the system of education indoctrinates children to believe it does. The departures from the source text are rather insignificant and are only minor in detail. For instance, in the French cover version, the boy states that "tous les juges [sont] très gentils" ('all judges [are] very kind'), which is a more direct (and perhaps also more child-like) way of expressing that "justice never ends". The original lyrics state that "murderers die for their crimes", but in the target version "les criminels sont punis" ('the criminals are punished'). This could be considered a generalization, as the French phrase by definition covers other types of offenders than merely murderers and

13| © Elektra.
14| © Mercury.

a broader range of punishments than merely the death penalty. However, these modifications are indeed minor, and the text is a good illustration of a near-enough translation.

3.2.2. Perspective-shift translation

In this category of translation, some aspects of the source text have been more noticeably reworked, and the story is narrated from a different point of view than the original text. For instance, a common enough phenomenon is *gender transposition*, which means that the story is narrated from a female, instead of a male, perspective (or vice versa) (Franzon 2021: 99). In the corpus, a case of gender transposition can be found in "Elle chantait ma vie en musique" (1973),[15] a cover version of Roberta Flack's smash hit "Killing me softly with his song" (1972).[16] As the English title indicates, the original lyrics are narrated from Flack's female point of view, and the object of desire (or at least admiration) is a male singer performing on stage. The female narrator thus starts the chorus with: "Strumming my pain with his fingers/ Singing my life with his words". The French version is performed by a male artist (Gilbert Montagné), and the person put on a pedestal is a woman – heterosexuality, of course, being the normative sexual orientation in mainstream popular music. The French refrain begins: "Elle chantait ma vie en musique/ Elle disait mes mots en chanson" ('She sang my life in music/ She said my words in song').

3.2.3. Lyric hook transposition

The modifications in this third category in Franzon's typology have to do with central textual aspects such as "the setting", "the subject matter", and "the premises of the story" (Franzon 2021: 101). However, the title phrase and/or the chorus of the source text – that is, the song's "lyric hook" – is transferred into the target text. An illustration of this translation method can be found in "Fiche le camp, Jack" (1961),[17] a cover version of "Hit the road, Jack" (1960).[18] The title and the lyric hook are clearly transferred into the target language, but elsewhere the French text diverges substantially from the original lyrics. For instance, the male protagonist in the American version is dismissed for being poor ("You ain't got no money, you just ain't no good") – the French "Jack", on the other hand, is accused of being unfaithful to his wife: "Tu n'es qu'un coureur, avec elle je t'ai vu c'était pas ta sœur" ('You're nothing but a womanizer, I saw you with her and she wasn't your sister').

15| French lyrics Eddy Marnay. © CBS.
16| Music and lyrics Charles Fox and Norman Gimbel. © Atlantic.
17| French lyrics Georges Aber. © Columbia.
18| Music and lyrics Percy Mayfield. © ABC–Paramount.

3.2.4. Single-phrase spinoff

A single-phrase spinoff is a target text that is partly based on a foreign song text but where the main inspiration is derived from another source. The cover version is linked to the original text by a principle that Franzon (2021: 107) calls "random fidelity". This means that the translator creates new lyrics out of a single phrase in the original song, thereby taking many liberties with the source text. Franzon (2021: 107) explains: "[i]n a *single-phrase spinoff*, the TL lyricist has taken only fragments from the source lyrics and has spun her/his lyrics around them". An example of this category of target texts can be found in the French version of "Apples, peaches and cherries" (1953),[19] called "Scoubidou (pommes et poires)" (1959).[20] In Peggy Lee's original version, the story is narrated from a third-person perspective. An itinerant merchant, accompanied by his beautiful daughter, sells the above-mentioned fruit from a cart. A young man falls in love with the girl, and the listener learns that he "wooed and won the maiden's heart/ And now ten children ride the cart", which may be interpreted as being a variation on the theme "and they lived happily ever after". However, in the French version, a male first-person narrator meets a girl at a friend's place. They fall in love, dance all night long, and start a romantic relationship. Unfortunately, the love story turns sour. The man decides to leave the girl, uttering the following words: "La leçon que j'en ai tirée/ Est facile à deviner/ Célibataire vaut mieux rester" ('The lesson that I have learned from this/ Is easy to guess/ It's better to stay a bachelor'). Hence the denouement is quite the opposite to the one expressed in the original lyrics. There are, nevertheless, fragments of the source text that are transferred into the target version. The association of the fruit motif and the theme of romantic love also appear in the French text, as the girl sells "pommes et poires" ('apples and pears') for a living, and this information is repeated in the song's chorus. Therefore, we can conclude that the French lyricists have taken this association of ideas from the original text and built a new story around it.

3.2.5. Phonetic calque

This translation method is based on the premise that the phonetic sounds of the lyrics are sometimes just as important for a pop song as the semantic meaning of the lyrics. Therefore, it may very well make sense to the translator to transfer the phonetics rather than the semantics of the source text, especially in "rhetorically effective places" (Franzon 2021: 117). This translation method can be combined with any other category above. An obvious example from the corpus is the line "itsi bitsi tini ouini" which is devoid of meaning in

19| Music and lyrics Lewis Allan (pseudonym for Abel Meeropol). © Decca.

20| French lyrics Maurice Tézé and Sacha Distel. © Philips.

French but mimics the English "itsy bitsy teeny weeny" in the chorus of "Itsi bitsi petit bikini" (1960),[21] the French cover version of "Itsy bitsy teeny weeny yellow polkadot bikini" from the same year.[22] The onomatopoeia "Bang bang"[23] in the French version of "Bang bang (my baby shot me down)"[24] (both versions from 1966) also serves the purpose of transferring the phonetics of the original hit song into the target text. Other examples in the corpus include various "oh-ohs", "woahs", and "yeahs" – exclamations that mimic those of the source lyrics. There is, however, no example of an exclusively phonetic calque in the corpus material.

3.2.6. All-new target lyrics

With this last category, we have reached the utmost point of the fidelity–freedom continuum: a category of target texts that bear no semantic resemblance to their source lyrics at all. The result is a completely new and unrelated text, built upon the "non-verbal code" (Low 2005: 187) of the original song. Franzon (2021: 113–116) explains that the method has been used for a long time and for a variety of reasons. For instance, secular songs received new spiritual lyrics with the purpose of being used in a religious context. The case of "Tu croiras", the target text that introduced a religious theme completely absent from the source lyrics of "Stand by me", has already been mentioned. Another example of this phenomenon is "La terre promise" (1966),[25] which contains phrases like "C'est pour toi Seigneur qu'ils ont tant marché/ Tous ces voyageurs récompense-les/ Toutes les églises sont pleines à craquer/ La terre promise ils l'ont bien méritée" ('It is for you, Lord, that they have walked so long/ Reward all these travelers/ All churches are cram-full/ The promised land, they have indeed deserved it'). These phrases have no equivalents in the source text "California dreamin'" (1965).[26] They are, therefore, clear examples of the last category of target texts, all-new target lyrics.

3.3. Quantitative results

In Section 3.3, the following research questions will be addressed: What is the proportion of faithful and less faithful translation methods in the corpus? Is there any development over time? Are the lyrical themes of the source texts of any importance?

21| French lyrics André Salvet and Lucien Morisse. © Barclay.
22| Music and lyrics Paul Vance and Lee Pockriss. © London American Recordings.
23| French lyrics Claude Carrère and Georges Aber. © Philips.
24| Music and lyrics Sonny Bono. © Polydor.
25| French lyrics Pierre Delanoë. © Columbia.
26| Music and lyrics John and Michelle Phillips. © Dunhill.

3.3.1. Translation methods: absolute numbers and distribution

The categorization of target lyrics according to Franzon's taxonomy is no exact science. When classifying the translated texts, I sometimes hesitated between the categories of near-enough translation and perspective-shift translation, as well as between lyric hook transposition and single-phrase spinoff. Consequently, there is no guarantee that another researcher would classify each and every target text in the exact same category as I have done here. There are, however, sufficiently clear distinctions between, on the one hand, the two categories that sit at the faithful end of the spectrum and, on the other hand, the two freer variants in the middle. Likewise, the all-new target lyrics distinguish themselves clearly from all the other categories and can hardly be confused with any other group.

As shown in Table 2, the classification of the 50 songs included in the corpus reveals the following results: 18 target texts (or 36% of the corpus material) remain sufficiently close to the source lyrics to be classified as near-enough translations, 2 texts (4%) present the characteristics of the category of perspective-shift translation, 11 target texts (22%) are lyric hook transpositions, 8 texts (16%) are categorized as single-phrase spinoffs, and the remaining 11 texts (22%) bear no resemblance to the source text and therefore fall into the final category, all-new target lyrics. Put together, these five categories make up the entire corpus (50 songs, or 100%). As previously mentioned, no example of an exclusively phonetic calque was found in the corpus material, but this method always serves to complement other translation categories. Nine target texts of various classifications also show the characteristics of a phonetic calque.

3.3.2. Development over time

In an analysis of the figures in Table 2, the first thing worth noting is that the corpus is largely dominated by target lyrics dating from the 1960s (32 texts out of 50), which is a phenomenon mentioned earlier in the paper. The results are summarized in Table 2.

The figures in Table 2 show no clear development over time with regard to translation methods. For each decade, there are roughly as many target texts that lean toward the faithful end of the spectrum (near-enough translations and perspective-shift translations) as there are freer variants (lyric hook transpositions and single-phrase spinoffs), with no significant differences to be observed. There are also some examples of all-new target lyrics in the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s. Hence, there is no "new-fidelity trend" to be identified in this material, as opposed to what was found in previous studies targeting Swedish renditions of French *chansons*.[27]

27| See Aronsson (2021a and 2022), where a change over time from somewhat loose adaptations to more faithful translations was identified with Swedish cover versions of Jacques Brel's and Georges Brassens' songs.

Table 2: Translation methods classified by decade

	Near-enough translation	Perspective-shift translation	Lyric hook transposition	Single-phrase spinoff	All-new target lyrics	Total
1950s	2	0	1	2	1	**6**
1960s	13	1	7	5	6	**32**
1970s	2	1	2	0	2	**7**
1980s	0	0	0	1	2	**3**
1990s	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
2000s	0	0	1	0	0	**1**
2010s	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Total	**18**	**2**	**11**	**8**	**11**	**50**

3.3.3. Lyrical themes

If time does not seem to be an important factor in the analysis of this English–French corpus material, there are, however, other features that are worth investigating. If we return to the three genres of source texts – love songs, protest/anti-war songs, and novelty songs (and other themes) – we receive the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Translation methods classified by lyrical theme

	Near--enough translation	Perspective--shift translation	Lyric hook transposition	Single--phrase spinoff	All-new target lyrics	Total
Love songs	8	2	7	6	7	**30**
Protest/ anti-war songs	6	0	1	1	0	**8**
Novelty songs (and other themes)	4	0	3	1	4	**12**
Total	**18**	**2**	**11**	**8**	**11**	**50**

When we look at the figures in Table 3, we see that the genres of love songs and novelty songs (and other themes) show roughly the same proportion of songs leaning toward the faithful and the less faithful side of the spectrum, which

indicates that a variety of translation methods were used when these songs were transferred into French. The genre that stands out here is the socially conscious protest/anti-war songs. Most of the songs belonging to this genre (6 out of 8 songs, or 75%) have been classified as near-enough translations. This is a significantly larger proportion than for the love songs (8 out of 30 tunes, or 27%), and the group novelty songs (and other themes) (4 out of 12 songs, or 33%). The conclusion is that, generally speaking, the French translators transferred the protest/anti-war songs in a more faithful manner than was the case with the other types of songs.

3.4. The translators

All the translators in the corpus were in the music business, either as performing artists (singer-songwriters) in their own right or as professional lyricists who translate song lyrics on the side. None of them has made a career from translating other textual genres. It can be noted that 31 of the 35 translators in the corpus (or 89%) are men[28]. Hence, the material reflects the gender situation that prevailed prior to both the general breakthrough of women in the labor market and the feminization of the translation industry in particular. We can note that the person responsible for most target texts in the corpus is Pierre Delanoë, since he transferred five of the 50 songs into French. Georges Aber translated four songs and is followed by a group of individuals who each translated three texts: Ralph Bernet, Graeme Allwright, Hugues Aufray, and Michel Mallory. With the possible exceptions of Aber and Bernet, they all belong to the category of translators and mediators that Casanova (2002: 18) calls "consacrants consacrés" ('consecrating and consecrated'). What this means is that they are well-known and well-respected in the target country, and that they can use their symbolic capital to promote a new product – in this case, a French cover version – and give it their seal of approval. The other translators (of just one or two songs each) are more anonymous and illustrate the category of intermediaries that Casanova (2002: 17) calls "médiateurs ordinaires" ('ordinary mediators').

The corpus material makes it clear that the translators to a certain extent follow individual preferences or habits when it comes to the translation of song lyrics. On the one hand, there are those translators whose contributions all fall neatly into the category of near-enough translations. This is the case with Bernet, who transferred "I saw her standing there",[29] "Anyone who had a heart",[30]

28| A similar phenomenon was identified in a previous study focusing on Swedish translations of 200 French popular songs, where 81% of the translators were male (Aronsson 2021b: 37).

29| French title "Quand je l'ai vue devant moi" (performed by Johnny Hallyday). © Philips. Original music and lyrics Paul McCartney and John Lennon. © Parlophone; Odeon.

30| French title "Ceux qui ont un cœur" (performed by Petula Clark). © Disques Vogue. Original music and lyrics Burt Bacharach and Hal David. © Scepter Records.

and "(There's) always something there to remind me"[31] into French, and Allwright, who translated (as well as was recorded singing) French versions of the songs "Little boxes",[32] "What did you learn in school today?",[33] and "Suzanne".[34]

Meanwhile, there are those lyricists who tend to free themselves completely, or almost completely, from the source texts. For instance, Jacques Plante presented French versions of The Platters' smash hit "Only you"[35] and Ben E. King's "Stand by me",[36] songs that have been billed as all-new target lyrics. Michel Mallory is responsible for the French adaptations of Sheena Easton's "Morning train (nine to five)",[37] "Sweet dreams (are made of this)" by Eurythmics,[38] and Irene Cara's "Flashdance… what a feeling",[39] all of which were recorded by the French singer Sylvie Vartan in the early 1980s. Two of these target texts bear no resemblance to the source lyrics and are thus illustrative of the category all-new target lyrics, and the third text has been classified as a single-phrase spinoff.

The remaining translators show a flexible attitude toward the act of translating popular songs, employing different methods on different occasions. For example, Eddy Marnay made a rather faithful target text of "Killing me softly with his song",[40] classified as a perspective-shift translation, before transforming the Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons' hit "December, 1963 (oh, what a night)" into a semantically completely different French version,[41] classified as all-new target lyrics. The works of Delanoë and Aber, the most prolific translators in the corpus, similarly show them sometimes translating closely, sometimes adding their own ideas to the mix.

31| French title "Toujours un coin qui me rappelle" (performed by Eddy Mitchell). © Barclay. Original music and lyrics Burt Bacharach and Hal David. © Pye Records; Reprise Records.

32| French title "Petites boîtes". © Mercury. Original music and lyrics Malvina Reynolds. © Cassandra; Columbia.

33| See above for copyright details.

34| French title "Suzanne". © Mercury. Original music and lyrics Leonard Cohen. © CBS.

35| French title "Loin de vous" (performed by Anny Gould). © Pathé; Trianon. Original music and lyrics Buck Ram and Ande Rand. © Mercury.

36| See above for copyright details.

37| French title "L'amour c'est comme une cigarette". © RCA Victor. Original music and lyrics Florrie Palmer. © EMI.

38| French title "Déprime". © RCA Victor. Original music and lyrics Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox. © RCA.

39| French title "Danse ta vie". © RCA Victor. Original music and lyrics Giorgio Moroder, Keith Forsley and Irene Cara. © Casablanca.

40| See above for copyright details.

41| French title "Cette année-là" (performed by Claude François). © Disques Flèche. Original music and lyrics Bob Gaudio and Judy Parker. © Warner Bros.

3.5. The composers

The most prominent composers of the original songs in the corpus are the three well-known songwriting duos: Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Burt Bacharach and Hal David, and John Lennon and Paul McCartney – each being responsible for three songs. Other recurring songwriters, represented by two songs each, are Bob Dylan, Irving Berlin, Pete Seeger, Ray Davis from the Kinks, and the Rolling Stones' Glimmer Twins, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. As was the case with the translators, the composers also constitute a masculine hegemony: 57 of 64 (or 89%) of them are men.

Most of the original composers have had their lyrics translated with different translation methods – if, that is, they have more than one song included in the corpus material. Often, these methods range from very faithful to not at all faithful. For instance, Leiber and Stoller had a song transferred in the category of near-enough translation ("Black denim trousers and motorcycle boots")[42] as well as an example of all-new target lyrics ("Stand by me").[43] The other famous songwriting duos Bacharach and David and Lennon and McCartney have also seen faithful as well as not so faithful French versions of their hits. The same goes for single songwriters, such as Pete Seeger and Ray Davis.

However, even if variety and heterogeneity seem to be the *modus operandi* here, the material reveals two exceptions worth noticing. Bob Dylan has two original songs in the corpus ("Blowin' in the wind" and "The times they are a-changin'"),[44] both of which have been very faithfully transferred into French by two different translators, in the tradition of near-enough translations. The opposite is true for the two Jagger and Richards compositions "(I can't get no) Satisfaction" and "Paint it, black".[45] Here, the French target texts are clear examples of the other end of the spectrum, i.e. the all-new target lyrics. This is most likely an illustration of the previously mentioned phenomenon: the socially conscious protest/anti-war songs – such as Dylan's contributions to the corpus – have been more faithfully rendered in the target language than lyrics dealing with other subject matters.

It is, in fact, logical that protest/anti-war songs are translated in a more respectful manner than songs exploring other lyrical themes. Reiß and Vermeer

42| French title "L'homme à la moto" (performed by Édith Piaf), target lyrics Jean Dréjac. © Columbia. Original version © Capitol Records (performed by The Cheers).

43| See above for copyright details.

44| French titles "Ecoute dans le vent" (performed by Richard Anthony), target lyrics Pierre Dorsey, © Columbia, and "Les temps changent" (performed by Hugues Aufray), target lyrics Hugues Aufray, © Barclay. Original versions © Columbia.

45| French titles "Rien qu'un seul mot" (performed by Eddy Mitchell), target lyrics Claude Moine, © Barclay, and "Marie douceur – Marie colère" (performed by Marie Laforêt), target lyrics Michel Jourdan, © Disques Festival; Select. Original versions © Decca; London Records.

(2014: 89–90) point out, when formulating the *skopos* rule of translation, that "any action is determined by its purpose" and therefore "the purpose determines whether, how and what is done". In the case of the target lyrics analyzed in this study, we may presume that the translational *skopos* varies significantly from one genre of text to the other. The main *raison d'être* of protest and anti-war songs is their socio-political message, and, in most cases, it clearly makes sense to transfer this message as unaltered as possible into the target language. The lyrics of other kinds of popular songs tend to have less importance for the average listener, and it may therefore be sufficient for the translator to transfer the gist of the original lyrics.

4. Concluding remarks

The corpus material seems to reveal that the 1960s were the golden age of pop song translation from English into French, at least quantitatively. This can be explained by the fact that at the dawn of the decade, American pop and youth culture had invaded most parts of western Europe, France included, and the domestic stars of the era adopted personas that closely imitated their transatlantic idols. An American-sounding stage name was a *sine qua non* for the likes of Johnny Hallyday (born Jean-Philippe Smet), Eddy Mitchell (Claude Moine), Dick Rivers (Hervé Forneri), and Richard Anthony (Ricardo Anthony Btesh). Those young performers looked like American rockers in their blue jeans and black leather jackets, but their lyrics were in French. The habit of translating foreign hits remained very much alive during the British Invasion of the mid-1960s (when the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Animals, the Who, et al. dominated the airwaves) and through the 1970s.

The corpus material shows that some French translators of Anglo-American pop songs stay close to the intentions of the original lyricists, whereas other translators free themselves almost completely from the source texts. The material reveals no significant development over time regarding the use of faithful and less faithful translation methods, but the results do indicate that protest/-anti-war lyrics have been more respectfully transferred into the target language than other kinds of song lyrics. Moreover, the writing, composition, and translation of popular songs were clearly male-dominated activities. The songs may in some (or even many) cases be performed by female artists, but the individuals working behind the scenes were often men.

After the 1970s, there is a definite decrease in translation activity around imported Anglo-American pop music, perhaps related to what Franzon (2021: 90) describes as a "translation-phobic era" and an "internationalized, globalized, anglophone era" in the 1980s. True, Franzon's study focuses on Swedish translations of English pop songs, but his conclusions seem to be just

as pertinent to the English-French context. Since the 1980s, the consumption of popular music by the general public has become increasingly dominated by original versions of anglophone hits. Translated cover versions performed by domestic artists are no longer in fashion the way they were in France in the 1960s (as shown in Table 2, p. 81). According to Francfort (2020: 41), the gradual phase-out of domestic versions of Anglo-American hits shows that the American cultural hegemony and its *soft power* has reached its goal. In a globalized and English-speaking world, there is no need for national adaptations of imported cultural products, and as such, there is no longer any widespread need for translated pop songs.

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