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Book review

**Franzon, J., Greenall, A.K., Kvam, S.,
Parianou, A. (Eds.) (2021). *Song translation:
Lyrics in context*. Frank & Timme
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There has been a growing academic interest in the study of song translation in the recent decade. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of such investigation, researching song translation has developed and stemmed from the concepts and notions of various disciplines such as literary studies, music studies, theatre studies, besides translation studies. As a result, the field of song translation seems to be “disparate” and “fragmented” (p. 23). This edited volume of essays in nearly 500 pages is a seminal collection that offers the overview of conceptual theories and the empirical research on song translation from many parts of the world, classifying the studies to systematically offer a clear state of the art as well as to reveal the gaps to be filled by future studies. The editors’ introductory chapter especially provides the theoretical and conceptual framework to study song translation, which is of unprecedented value. As for empirical studies, various chapters are presented under the three categories of Analyses of Popular Songs, Historical Approaches, and Multimodal and Didactic Approaches in English (11 articles) and in German (4 articles). The articles investigate the songs and the translations from the main languages, including English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Swedish, Norwegian, Turkish, and Finnish.

In the introduction, the editors depict the status quo of the research on song translation throughout the world. They aim to put a spotlight on lyrics-focused studies from a descriptive approach involving the historical and sociocultural perspectives. First, the state of the field of song translation is basically defined through the key concepts including song, song lyrics, translation, and context. Then, a hierarchy of the subtypes of audiovisual translation is mapped out in which song

translation and its subcategories are situated. Next, the conceptual and empirical grounds of this field are identified. In the course of conceptual works, the translation of lyrics and singability, semiotic layers, song translators, and cultural issues of song translation are delineated from the perspectives of different scholars. Among the empirical studies, the descriptive approach constitutes the substantial share of the chapters in which researchers examine and focus on single genres, specific composers, historical and sociocultural contexts, reception, pedagogical aspects, and the applied branch of song translation (e.g., translation for the deaf and hard of hearing or the visually impaired). Then, the editors categorize the strategies of song translation under three levels: macrolevel, mezzolevel, and microlevel. Although they specify the strategies of song translation from the conceptually-oriented studies, their classification seems to cover the holistic strategies rather than the detailed ones. Overall, this chapter briefly outlines the trend of studies on song translation, assisting scholars in exploring the directions in academic research. This book, however, is not recommended for researchers seeking theories of song translation, as it only provides an overview of such theories.

The empirical research chapters are categorized into three sections: “the analysis of popular songs, historical approaches, and multimodal and didactic approaches” (p. 33). The first section includes six chapters. The first two are corpus-based studies mostly focusing on the strategies adopted by translators. In Chapter 2, Kelandrias examines eighty translated popular songs from Italian and English into Greek to find out the most frequent strategy and to see whether the usage of the strategies has been period-oriented since the 1970s. The author finds that translational transformation is the most frequent strategy, and the selection of strategies is not dependent on language or historical period. As he claims, the strategies are not selected based on a translator’s personal preferences, but according to “a specific way of approaching their task” (p. 77). In Chapter 3, Franzon analyzes a corpus comprising of 234 American hit songs translated into Swedish in the period 1916-2015. He identifies the six translation methods: near-enough, perspective-shift, lyric hook transposition, single-phrase spinoff, phonetic calque, all-new target lyric. Among the methods, near-enough translation is the most frequent method adopted to translate the lyrics of the said corpus. Moreover, the author discerns four different eras in Swedish song translation: the sheet music and revue era (1920s-1940s), the no-holds-barred vinyl era (1960s-1970s), the translation-phobic era (1980s), the new-fidelity era (1990s-2015).

The following articles are regarded as case-based and they go beyond the linguistic level to examine the extralinguistic and socio-cultural aspects. In Chapter 4, Axelsson analyzes the Norwegian and Swedish translations of *Harper Valley P.T.A.* by Hall (1968), casting light on the theme of hypocrisy localized in the Norwegian and Swedish contexts. The Norwegian version seems to be more controversial, mainly due to “the contextualization of the theme of hypocrisy” in a religious setting (p. 145). In the Swedish version, however, the new narrative is adopted without many controversial themes of the original lyrics. In Chapter 5, Angelsen and Mitchell select the interlingual covers of three of Leonard Cohen’s songs performed by three Norwegian female singers. They investigate how changes in the text, the singer’s gender, and performance can result in the interpretive shifts and recontextualization. In Chapter 6, Susam-Saraeva sheds light on the different layers of the Turkish song cover of a French song, *Dans mon quartier* (2013), in which “lyrics, music, performance, audiovisual representation, and socio-cultural contexts” of the original song interacts with the translated one, and influences it (p. 177). In Chapter 7, Greenall reviews her Norwegian translation of the English pop

song by applying Fillmore's (1985) scenes-and-frames approach to identify and compare the semantic patterns of the original and translated lyrics. By employing the theory, the semiotic layers such as lyrics, music, and visual stimuli of the song can also be analyzed.

Within the historical approaches under the second category of chapters, five articles are presented in which the song translations are examined in the various socio-historical contexts, and the mutual impact of translation and socio-historical context are explored. In Chapter 8, Lundberg goes into depth about the translations of Latin liturgical texts into Swedish vernacular in the 16th century. Due to the limited literacy of 16th-century Sweden, the liturgical texts have been rendered into Spoken Swedish, which casts light on the historical context of that century. Moreover, with the application of functional translation theory, four translation problems and the solutions adopted by translators are distinguished in this study. The following three chapters are written in German. In Chapter 9, in the analysis of a German translation of a Norwegian song and the rendition of that German version back into Norwegian, Kvam indicates that in song translation, the intertextual constraints are determined by the translation purpose formed in the particular historical context. In Chapter 10, Schopp suggests how a change in the function and process in the historical context led Finland's Swedish student song to evolve into the Finnish national anthem in the 20th century. In Chapter 11, by examining the interlingual and intralingual translations of the traditional children's songs, Parianou reveals how the modification of the lyrics and music changed the function of the songs. In Chapter 12, Fryer investigates the lexicogrammatical and semantic choices in the transformation of a hymn into a parody, and the relation of these choices to the socio-historical context.

In the last section of chapters, through the lens of the multimodal and didactic approaches, the research scope of song translation is shown to be evidently expanded. The first two chapters broaden the horizon of song translation to the field of sign language, semiotics, and adaptation studies. In Chapter 13, Viljanmaa investigates Finnish sign language interpreters' standpoint on the translation of songs into the sign language, finding two perspectives: solely the translation of lyrics or representation of the whole song performance. The majority opinion, however, is recreating "the general feeling or spirit of the song" (p. 36). The next chapter integrates the studies of song translation, adaptation, and semiotics by analyzing the adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's Norwegian mythopoetic troll in the music, *Peer Gynt* by Edvard Grieg, and in the animated musical film, *Trolls* (Shay and Mitchell, 2016). Although the concept of the troll in the adaptations is associated with Ibsen's, the new interpretation, presented in *Peer Gynt* and *Trolls*, reconstructs Ibsen's first image of troll.

The book closes with two chapters focusing on the pedagogical applications of song translation. In Chapter 15, Grønn shines the spotlight on the contribution of students' song translation from Spanish into Norwegian towards the improvement of reading comprehension, and linguistic and cultural awareness. Moreover, she identifies the students' translation procedures and adopted strategies. To understand the lyrics, she concludes, students integrate the bottom-up and top-down approaches to find out the details of the original lyrics and to explore the main idea and the effect of textual and contextual factors on meaning. In the last chapter, Salvarani presents a study of the translations of classic Western music theater into Italian to be learned and performed by 11-to 13-year-old children as non-professional singers. She suggests that every translation can be didactic, as it should be adapted to both the audience and the situation.

The seminal contribution of this book is the presentation of the state of the art of song translation research in the world, paving the way for scholars to access the vast and varied literature on the trends and the areas of studies conducted on song translation. Moreover, the edited book broadens the reader's vision and attitude towards the interdisciplinary nature of research on song translation. By selecting these 15 chapters, the editors seem to implicitly encourage readers to go beyond the linguistic aspects of lyrics, to interrelate the linguistic domain with the social, cultural, and historical aspects, and to apply song translation for other purposes, such as didactic applications.

Like *Translating Song Lyrics and Texts* (Low, 2016), the volume is a valuable source for those researching song translation in specific, besides other scholars in translation and interpreting studies, as well as other disciplines such as musicology and creative studies. Future volumes would be helpful to systematically collect and edit growing research on song translation (e.g., Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2016) within the context of languages of more limited diffusion, such as Persian.

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