The Translator

Special Issue

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Translation and Music

Guest Editor

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University of Edinburgh, Scotland

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Translation and Music

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Changing Perspectives, Frameworks and Significance

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Abstract. *Until quite recently, research on translation and music has been rather neglected within translation studies, despite the vital role that music plays in the day-to-day lives of individuals and the development, cohesion and organization of societies. The reasons behind this peripheral disciplinary position are explored and a critical examination of recent research on the topic is offered. Translation and music is shown to be a fascinating area to explore, not only for specialized translators/scholars but also for researchers in translation studies, cultural studies, media studies and musicology. By investigating the role played by translation in the context of musical performances, we can enrich our understanding of what forms translation can take and how it may relate to other forms of expression. The article concludes by suggesting future avenues of research and theoretical frameworks, especially favouring the use of a descriptive and systemic approach to both micro- and macro-level investigations in this field.*

Keywords. Genres, Multidisciplinarity, Music, Research themes.

> You can take all the novels in the world and not one of them will make you feel as good as fast as [begins to sing] 'I've got sunshine on a cloudy day…' (Alex Fletcher, in *Music and Lyrics* 2007)

If special issues of journals could be dedicated, I might have dedicated this one to Sezen Aksu. Her *Sen Ağlama* (1984) was the first tape my mother brought home with our very first music set – a vivid scene etched in my teenage memory from the 1980s İzmir. The preceding years were spent in the company of our good old TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) broadcasts over the radio and a sizeable stack of vinyl records – picked up according to colour, goes the family legend, by the present author in her pre-literacy days and thrust into the hands of the adults for help with the listening experience. Songs from those childhood and teenage years still accompany us in our car during school-runs,

adding a little sunshine to our cloudy Edinburgh mornings.[1]

Aksu herself wrote over 400 lyrics between 1975 and 2006; 197 of them were recently brought together in a collection entitled *Eksik Şiir* (Poems To Be, 2006). The blurb notes that "these songs have claimed their place in the lives and memories of three or four consecutive generations in Turkey",[2] and I have to add, abroad. After all, "place, for many migrant communities, is something which is constructed through music with an intensity not found elsewhere in their social lives" (Stokes 2004:115). I would even argue, like the fictitious Alex Fletcher quoted above, that no other non-religious (multimodal) 'text' moves people as deeply as the combination of lyrics and music, becomes an intrinsic part of their lives, acts as a shortcut to their memories (scenes from one's childhood, holidays, previous relationships, close relatives who passed away, etc.) and often bears witness to the various stages of their life.[3] Through this strong impact on individuals (Frith 2004c:46), music also exercises an enormous influence on the way society works, nations are represented, cultures are constructed and passed on from one generation to another. As Simon Frith rightly observes, "music is much more important in the emotional ordering of everyday life than is usually acknowledged in sociology or cultural studies" (2004b:1). After all, music used to be an integral part of community life before it was shut up within the confines of concert halls and commodified through recordings; this heritage is still partially felt in contemporary day-to-day production and consumption of music.

It seems to me that any other 'text' type which exerts such an influence on people's lives would have been among the first and most researched within translation studies – if it were not for the complexities and challenges involved from a methodological and (multi)disciplinary point of view. First of all, as Frith himself acknowledges, "one reason why music is not taken sufficiently seriously is because of the difficulty of explaining *how* it works culturally" (*ibid.*). Frith argues that in order to understand the impact and role of music at the level of society, one should initially study its influence on individuals' lives. From a translation studies point of view, any research into individual

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[1] Another reason for my still-non-existing dedication to Aksu is that the only time I tried my hand at translating lyrics was when I offered my students several versions of her song 'Kalbim Ege'de Kaldı' (My Heart's Left in the Aegean), as part of a classroom exercise in domestication and 'thick translation'. Luckily, none of these versions were intended to be 'singable' and the students were spared the experience. From then on, however, my interest in translation and music has taken new turns, leading me first to examine the role of translation in the travels of *rembetika* music across the Aegean (Susam-Sarajeva 2006) and in the Turkish-Greek rapprochement (Susam-Sarajeva, forthcoming), and then to guest-edit this special issue.

[2] http://www.metiskitap.com/Scripts/Catalog/Book.asp?ID=1965 (last accessed on 14 July 2008).

[3] For an interesting account of the power of music in constructing self-identity, see DeNora (2006).

reception has traditionally proved rather atypical and difficult to conduct.

Another reason behind the limited interest in translation and music so far is that musical material has mostly been considered somewhat outside the borders of translation studies, as traditionally conceived. The mere mention of translation within the context of music opens a huge can of worms for many researchers and practitioners. The fuzzy boundaries between 'translation', 'adaptation', 'version', 'rewriting', etc. and the pervasiveness of covert and unacknowledged translations in music have generally limited research in this area to overt and canonized translation practices, such as those undertaken for the opera. Yet in non-canonized music, such as popular or folk songs, it is often impossible – and in my opinion, undesirable – to pinpoint where translation ends and adaptation begins. Sometimes, as demonstrated by Eirlys Davies and Abdelali Bentahila in this issue, one cannot even establish that translation has been involved at all; or as in Polly McMichael's contribution, such boundaries may become totally irrelevant. Such a flexible view of translation and music might be unacceptable for many scholars in the field, as it seems to be for Low (2005:194):

> This matter of sense still deserves high ranking, however, simply because we are talking about translation – interlingual translation. I note in passing that some people ignore sense altogether: they take a foreign song-tune and devise for it a set of TL words which match the music very well but bear no semantic relation with the ST. While this may at times be good and appropriate, it is not translating, because none of the original verbal meaning is transmitted. Such practices have no place in discussions of translation.

Low's view may be shared by many practitioner/researchers in the field, but as can be seen in several of the articles in this special issue (for example, Öner, McMichael and Yeung), ignoring such practices might mean missing out on very illuminating cases, both in terms of intercultural communication and of the social, cultural and linguistic practices prevalent in a given target system. A broader approach to translation and music might reveal precisely what makes the topic such a fascinating area of research for other scholars.

Another challenge involved in studying translation and music is the fact that such studies call for a multidisciplinary approach; otherwise, the immediate disciplinary background of the researcher would inevitably determine and even limit the perspective adopted and arguably the value of the study. If the researcher comes from musicology, for instance, he or she will not necessarily be familiar with the concepts, tools and models available in translation studies; the research then tends to focus on aspects other than interlingual translation. Translation scholars on the other hand feel more comfortable dealing with written texts. We often have difficulty in comprehensively discussing other mediums together with the verbal one; we then end up sliding into a

predominantly textual analysis. Few of us with a background in translation studies can effectively deal with meanings derived not only from text, but also from melody, pitch, duration, loudness, timbre, dynamics, rhythm, tempo, expression, harmony, pause, stress or articulation in music. If we consider that research in translation and music may also require a background in media studies, cultural studies and/or semiotics, we can begin to appreciate the difficulties encountered by anyone who ventures into this field.

At this point in time, audiovisual translation (AVT) may appear as the obvious branch of translation studies where translation and music should be researched (as in the case of Bosseaux in this issue). After all, music goes hand in hand with evocative associations, settings and visual imagery, not to mention dance and ubiquitous video-clips.[4] Furthermore, film musicals and stage musicals offer fertile ground for studying the relationships "between spoken and sung words, between sung words and music, [and] between spoken words and music, dance and spectacle".[5] Yet not all AVT researchers necessarily have adequate training in music; they may also find the topic irrelevant to their field unless it includes a visual component.

Apart from the requirement of a rigorous multidisciplinarity, there are additional challenges in working on translation and music. Elaborating on a particular genre of music for the benefit of outsiders to the field requires a substantial amount of 'frontloading'.[6] In discussing the Saami *yoik* and its English translations, Myrdene Anderson observes: "I can imagine the yoik, in its fusion of sound and setting and experience, to have deeper chords than verbal language. Emotion resists verbalization in the first place, magnifying the challenge of translation" (2005:228). If translators experience difficulties in dealing with and transferring these 'deeper chords', translation scholars will certainly need new frameworks and tools beyond a text-based approach in order to be able to *explain* how music and translation work together.

As a result of the above-mentioned difficulties, the topic of translation and music has remained on the periphery of translation studies – despite the 'cultural turn', the increased interest in audiovisual translation and the expansion of the discipline to include research on non-canonized genres and media. Work on the topic has traditionally focused on advocating practical strategies, on loss and compensation and on general translation criticism. The main question has been 'how' the translation should be done, not 'why' it has been done in a certain way. This focus is a result of the fact that the majority of publications in this area are written by practitioners who comment on their own and others' works – hence the often prescriptive comments, as well as a

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[4] Some recent research has begun to take video-clips into account in discussions of music and translation (for example, Kaindl 2005).

[5] Richard Dyer, personal correspondence, September 2007.

[6] For example, Anderson's work on the Saami *yoik* (2005) and my own work on *rembetika* (2006).

certain strength in terms of an abundance of examples and practical tips. The annotated bibliography by Matamala and Orero at the end of this special issue reflects this state of affairs.

In attempting to address the multiple constraints involved, more and more researchers of translation and music seem to find functional approaches to translation helpful, especially if they view the field from a practitioner's perspective. Functional approaches offer more flexibility and draw one's attention to the variety of options available to translators, because they emphasize the importance of different *skopoi* (as in Low 2005; Franzon 2005 and this issue). Thus, while earlier works tended to be more normative, more recent studies have attempted to address a variety of questions, such as: Who will sing the musical product? Who will listen to it? Where will it appear: on a CD, TV or radio, or will it be a live performance? How many times will the audience have the chance to listen to the song, i.e. how transitory will the reception be? Are the songs initially to be performed only once (as in a stage musical) and then incorporated into CDs? Is the final product intended for participatory and shared enjoyment or for individual consumption? Is the song going to be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual? What will be the mode of translation: a written text (e.g. a CD insert or opera surtitle) or a 'singable' target version? Will the lyrics be presented on their own or will they be accompanied by visuals, reflecting the performers' virtuosity, mimics and gestures? Is the melody going to be exactly the same as that which accompanied the source text? Is the audience already familiar with the original version of the song? The questions one needs to ask in order to understand the process and the final product are seemingly endless, and recent research on translation and music has begun to account for the diversity and complexity of the practices involved.

Avenues for future research

The intersection of translation and music can be a fascinating field to explore. It can enrich our understanding of what translation might entail, how far its boundaries can be extended and how it relates to other forms of expression. Research into this area can thus help us locate translation-related activities in a broader context, undermining more conservative notions of translation and mediation. It can also offer us a new perspective on who may act as a 'translator' under different circumstances.

First of all, I should emphasize the wide range of topics available for research in this area. For the uninitiated, who might associate translation and music mainly with translating, subtitling and surtitling for canonized genres such as opera, operetta or *lieder*, here is a non-exhaustive list of genres where translation and music might come together: translation and appropriation of folk songs; translating for the local productions of international stage musicals; translating/subtitling/dubbing/voiceover for musical films (Hollywood,

Bollywood, etc.); translating contemporary popular songs (for singable versions, for fan web sites, etc.); translating/subtitling/dubbing/voiceover for musical (mainly Disney) cartoons; multilingualism and translation in rap songs; translations for J-cards (album inserts), liner notes, track listings and programme notes; translation of children's songs, lullabies and nursery rhymes; translations carried out as part of research in enthnomusicology; interpreting music and sign-singing by and for the deaf and hard of hearing; and last but not least, the way in which music travels *without* being accompanied by translation, an issue of great significance in its own right.

As for possible areas of research, I think one has to start with the crucial question: What can be the motivation behind translating music-related texts in the first place? After all, in order to appreciate a piece of music, understanding the intended meaning (of either the music or the accompanying text) is not vital (see, for example, Davies and Bentahila in this issue) and people equally enjoy music with foreign lyrics and music in their own mother tongues. As John Blacking explains (2004:10):

> In music, satisfaction may be derived without absolute agreement about the meaning of the code; that is, the creator's intention to mean can be offset by a performer's or listener's intention to make sense, without any of the absence of communication that would occur if a listener misunderstood a speaker's intention to mean. In music, it is not essential for listeners or performers to understand the creator's intended syntax or even the intended meaning, as long as they can find *a* syntax and their own meanings in the music.

Furthermore, both the musicians and audiences may indicate a preference for remaining ignorant of the meaning of original lyrics (see McMichael in this issue and Susam-Sarajeva 2006:275). Non-translation in the case of music may allow the imagination more leeway. Foreign sounds might enhance the experience and make it more pleasurable to try to sing, even if one only manages a couple of lines. It is not uncommon for people to be disappointed and feel alienated from 'the song as they had known it' once they find out the meaning of the lyrics of a favourite foreign song.

Nonetheless, music-related texts do get translated: in order to make their content accessible, to enrich the listening experience, to make the audience feel included, to boost album sales, etc. Singable versions of lyrics are aimed at when it becomes necessary to express oneself in a new genre but nevertheless in one's own language. Being able to sing in one's mother tongue seems to be equated with being true to oneself and with authenticity, despite the fact that this might be no more than an illusion (see McMichael in this issue). As in the case of literature, translated music may help introduce new genres into a system. These genres may then become part of the national repertoire through translations and consequent autochthonous productions. Such translations provide opportunities for reworking one's own language to make it

malleable for the purposes of the imported genre. Like writers and poets who pursue inspiration through translating literature, lyricists and musicians may expand their own repertoire by translating foreign songs. Translation, after all, *is* experimentation (see McMichael and Yeung in this issue). Research into this area will therefore be especially enlightening in terms of enhancing our understanding of the role played by translation in shaping the history of a musical system.

A related and significant topic of investigation in this context is creativity through translation. Along with the constraints it imposes, the whole medium encourages translators to seek more imaginative and resourceful solutions. As Jessica Yeung notes in this issue, "there is something in these translations that the conventional concept of a 'faithful' translation fails to illuminate". Researchers might find the transformation involved in these works more challenging and interesting to deal with than 'conventional' translations. Intertextuality in translation and music is another intriguing topic for research. One finds that melodies are freely borrowed from one piece of music to another, and the lyrics can sometimes draw on these earlier songs. In other cases, lines can be taken from existing well-known songs, translated and inserted into lyrics for new ones. Such acts of homage or cross-reference present interesting examples for study.

Further research is also necessary to understand the reception of translation and music (as in Mateo and Di Giovanni, this issue). In terms of research on reception, one needs to look beyond individual works and composers[7] and place them in a wider context, ultimately studying whole genres.[8] Why do certain genres gain acceptance while others fail to do so? Why at a certain time? How do changing audience tastes, needs, expectations and ideologies impact on the translations produced? Why are some genres met with curiosity and enthusiasm, filling in perceived 'gaps' in the musical culture and giving way to autochthonous music, while others are not? In what ways do imported genres clash, compete with, complement or enhance the local music production? What is the role of translation in all this? How do socio-economic conditions influence this reception? What kind of selection process is there? Why certain songs are translated and not others? Why are translations undertaken from certain languages and cultures, and not others? Is there any institutional patronage offered for producing translated musical pieces? Are the translations mainly the result of 'underground' endeavours or are they at times acknowledged by means of national prizes? And so on.

Comparative studies of translation and music would certainly yield interesting results. Needless to say, different genres have their own specific translational norms and approaches – beginning with the choice of whether to translate or not; to subtitle, surtitle or dub; or whether or not to aim for

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[7] For a valuable collection of such research, see Marschall (2004).
[8] For a noteworthy example of such an approach, see Kukkonen (2003).

a 'singable' version. What is considered to be permissible or desirable for one genre may simply be out-of-question for another. The perceived prestige associated with a particular genre, the intended audiences, the medium of transmission, long-standing conventions, and various social, historical, ideological and economic factors all have a bearing on these decisions. For instance, why is it that stage musicals are always fully translated (Mateo, this issue), but their predecessors, the musical films, are often dubbed and/or subtitled, with the musical numbers left in the original language (Di Giovanni, this issue), even where the script and music in question are identical (for example, *My Fair Lady* or *West Side Story*)?

Similarly, comparative studies involving different language pairs would illuminate the different practices prevalent in given systems: For example, how do Turkish and Russian systems relate to music produced in Anglophone countries? How do they introduce new genres: through (non)translation, partial translation, full translation, etc.? More importantly, though less visibly, how do these two systems translate songs from each other?

The distribution of music, economic aspects of the global and local music markets and the relevant role played by translation in these contexts are other promising avenues of research. First of all, how is 'translated music' marketed? What is the impact of changing technology, widespread use of the internet and recent copyright laws on translation and music? Is there a correlation between investments in a project and the importance given to the translation process (as in the case of most stage musicals; see Mateo in this issue) or is translation generally undertaken as a more amateur endeavour, irrespective of possible returns (as in the case of many popular song translations)? How much involvement is there from the source culture and producers? Do they have any say in the final target product? Bearing in mind the big industry that music has become, it is difficult to avoid looking at the financial aspects involved.

Opening up the field further, future research might be oriented towards issues of identity in translation and music. Music goes hand in hand with ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gendered and national identities and representations (see Öner and McMichael in this issue). Accordingly, certain forms of music may be totally suppressed or be allowed to exist in public only in a state-recognized language and/or form. Translation accompanying such music on album inserts, especially into English as a presumed and prestigious 'lingua franca', may then emerge as a means of reaching out to an international audience, supporting the ethnic group's efforts for recognition or a nation's struggle for autonomy. In such cases, the use of a particular language or dialect may in itself act as an affirmation of validity and existence.

The topic of translation and music can almost always be related to issues of allegiance, self-identification, inclusion/exclusion, heritage, exoticism and representation. One only has to remember the debates surrounding the Eurovision Song Contest in recent years and the hegemony of the English language. In other, less institutionalized and internationalized cases, the use of a certain

language as opposed to others in lyrics might carry symbolic meanings (Davies and Bentahila and Öner in this issue). As Tony Mitchell observes, "ethnicity and ideology are important aspects of contemporary popular music, giving it a sense of defining local identity, particularly when it is confronted with broader narratives of globalization and nationalism" (1996:1). Music may also serve or clash with certain political and ideological purposes.[9] Translation scholars are experienced in dealing with these issues in literature and film; music is certainly not exempt from similar social influences.

For instance, in the future there might be more research into multilingual rap and the role of translation, where relevant, in sustaining this multilingualism. Another interesting area for research could be the music produced by diasporic communities. As in the case of diasporic literature, one could study the extent to which 'self-translation' is involved in the music of the diasporas. Likewise, the phenomenon of 'world music' is a noteworthy area of research for those interested in translation-related activities. As musicians rework indigenous sounds to make them (more) appealing and accessible for international audiences, 'translating them' in Louise Meintjes' terms (2004:151), a certain amount of interlingual translation is also involved in the process, in lyrics as well as in the accompanying written material, such as album inserts. For widely disparate audiences to be able to appreciate local music without feeling alienated, the music and the surrounding media are rendered more 'approachable'. Researchers investigating 'world music' might well find curious and paradoxical instances of 'domesticated importations' through translation.

As for the theoretical frameworks that might be adopted in future research, I expect to see more studies drawing on functional approaches and on audiovisual translation, as well as more give and take between translation studies and musicology, semiotics, film studies and theatre studies. I also hope to see more descriptive and systemic studies, focusing on questions such as: Who translates material that involves music? Where do they disseminate their translations? What is translated in the first place? For whom? What kind of translation strategies, choices and decisions are adopted? And most importantly, why? Given that most descriptive work within translation studies aims at investigating the formative and indicative roles of translation in any given system, studying translation and music makes perfect sense, because music is an area where a system's values are formed and reflected with a particular intensity.

This special issue

This issue is an attempt to open the field of translation and music to a wider audience within translation studies, and to some extent, musicology, media

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[9] See, for example, Davies and Bentahila, McMichael and Öner in this issue, Meintjes (2004), Mitchell (1996), and Susam-Sarajeva (2006, forthcoming).

and cultural studies. Far from being of interest only to specialists, the study of music-related translation can offer invaluable insights to all scholars in these fields. The contributions to the issue present a dizzying array of genres and languages. Their strength comes as much from the enthusiasm and expertise of the authors as from the novel perspectives and frameworks they introduce. The first three articles focus on language and music only; the next four examine genres where visuals are also involved; and the final article draws on examples from a variety of genres.

Polly McMichael's article focuses on the way Soviet musicians regarded rock music as a genre which had to be transferred and translated correctly (i.e. through unofficial channels) in order to retain its authenticity. The article takes up the way the Leningrad rock community responded to the hegemony of Anglophone rock, first by lamenting the fact that the local rock scene was not up to (Western) standards and then by means of various creative solutions intended to boost the autochthonous rock production and to theorize the genre's possible meanings in its new context. Here translation emerges as a phase in the development of a local genre. In their efforts to make an 'essentially foreign' musical form intelligible and meaningful for both the audiences and themselves, the Soviet musicians both looked up to the perceived authority of Western rock singers and groups and, at the same time, went beyond a simple emulation of their work. McMichael's work demonstrates the extent to which issues of national and linguistic identities are intertwined with translation and music and is an excellent example of the insights we can gain by approaching the area with as few preconceptions about faithfulness, adequacy and normativity as possible.

The significance of translation and music in relation to identity once again emerges in **Senem Öner**'s article, which focuses on Kurdish and Turkish folk songs. Öner examines the possible reasons behind a controversy which began in Turkey in the 1990s. The controversy revolved around the origins of certain folk songs that are widely known in their Turkish versions. Öner argues that the textual-linguistic make-up of the Turkish lyrics in fact does not justify the criticisms targeted at these versions – criticisms revolving around the cultural assimilation policies of the Turkish state, the allegedly non-ethical stance of singers/compilers/translators and charges of economic exploitation. She suggests that the main reason behind the controversy was the way the Turkish versions were presented as originals rather than how they were actually translated. Öner's contribution foregrounds a rather neglected genre in translation and music and convincingly presents the wider socio-political context in which folk songs are often embedded. Far from being 'outdated examples of cultural heritage', folk songs fulfil important functions; one such function is to act as symbols that define ethnic, national and linguistic boundaries. Any translation involved in the process therefore has far-reaching repercussions in terms of local (identity) politics.

Issues of language choice and music are also taken up in the contribution by **Eirlys E. Davies** and **Abdelali Bentahila**, which focuses on translation and code switching as two distinct but closely related strategies of constructing bilingual lyrics. The article highlights the various functions that code-switching and translation fulfil in the production of song lyrics. The discussion is based on a wealth of illuminating examples, ranging from Western pop to North African *rai* music, but always within the boundary of songs intended primarily for mass entertainment and commercial gain. Davies and Bentahila identify several communicative strategies in the use of translation and code-switching and various effects achieved through these strategies. Their article serves as a sound example of interdisciplinary research, inviting both translation theorists and sociolinguists to work on a rather neglected area of study – that of linguistically heterogeneous lyrics. It also draws attention to the role of code-switching in constructing such lyrics, a role that is quite distinct from those it assumes elsewhere.

Jessica Yeung's article is a very interesting example of how text, music, visual elements and dance can be studied together. Yeung traces a complex chain of interlingual and intersemiotic translations/adaptations: Chinese Tang poetry → two collections of poetry in French and one in German → another poetry collection in German → a song symphony in German → a modern spectacle in Hong Kong incorporating Chinese dance set to the symphony, stage setting influenced by modern abstract ink painting movement and the translation of the symphony's texts into Chinese by a poet. The article explores the intertextuality embedded in the symphony and its text and argues that the composer, the choreographer and the poet put aside any concerns about 'authenticity' and took their lead and inspiration from the fact that the 'source text' in question was already a translation. Yeung's article demonstrates the rigour and versatility that can be gained when a researcher engages with a wide-range of complementary media. It also highlights the importance of conducting a micro-level study on the text, the music and the visuals all at the same time.

Elena Di Giovanni examines the reception of the Italian versions of fifteen popular American film musicals produced between the 1950s and the late 1970s. Despite the widespread appeal of these films for the Italian audience, the genre did not receive an immediate welcome. Di Giovanni argues that this lukewarm reception may be due to the unsystematic and partial translation strategies employed, such as dubbing the dialogue but leaving the song numbers untranslated. Di Giovanni's contribution clearly demonstrates the importance of looking at the macro-level and examining the importation of a new genre through non-translation, partial translation and finally full translation.

Marta Mateo's article similarly presents a case of a new genre (Anglo-American stage musicals), this time successfully introduced into the Spanish

musical-theatrical system through translations, in turn fostering autochthonous production. Offering a comprehensive historical overview of stage musical production and reception in Spain since the 1970s, the article aims to chart new territory and encourage further micro-level research in this area. It also demonstrates how a macro-level approach to translation and music can be fruitfully located within a descriptive and systemic framework, illuminating issues of perceived cultural 'gaps', audience needs and expectations, production processes, selection criteria and commercial and economic constraints. Drawing on concepts such as 'reverence', 'productive reception' and 'social relevance', Mateo convincingly explains how the local theatre scene has responded to Anglo-American cultural hegemony and its more recent reincarnation in the form of stage musicals.

The focus of **Charlotte Bosseaux**'s contribution is on characterization through songs. Bosseaux examines the dubbed French version of a musical episode of the popular American TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Combining an audiovisual translation framework with linguistic analysis and concepts from film studies, her analysis reveals a range of linguistic and other shifts that impact on the way Buffy, the main character, is perceived in French. The analysis focuses on linguistic elements, as well as on parameters from cinematic modalities such as shot composition, performance and voice quality. Bosseaux's article clearly demonstrates the need to establish a multidisciplinary and multimodal approach to translation and music. It also exemplifies the challenges involved in such an approach, as a detailed and simultaneous analysis of the various components and modalities is a formidable task.

Johan Franzon's article serves as a fitting conclusion to this special issue, because it adopts a global approach to translation and music and examines the various options available to 'translators' in dealing with song translation in general. The article examines a number of examples from different musical genres (popular songs, hymns, fictitious songs and songs from musical plays) and translations undertaken for different purposes (for sung performance, for subtitles or to be printed in books). Franzon focuses in particular on the concept of 'singability', which he approaches from a functional point of view, and suggests a definition of the term which emphasizes the musico-verbal fit of a text to music and which consists of several optional layers. He presents clearly defined categories of translation strategies and poignant multilingual examples, with a welcome emphasis on flexibility of approach to song translation.

The issue ends with an annotated bibliography on opera translation, compiled by **Anna Matamala** and **Pilar Orero**, and a general bibliography on translation and music. I do hope that this special issue will act as a catalyst for future research in this rather marginalized area and will *also* encourage those who have not necessarily worked as practitioners but have relevant research expertise to investigate and learn from translation and music.

<div align="center">***</div>

As I write this article, 35,000 participants have gathered in Riga for the XXIV Song and XIV Dance Celebration, a 135-year old tradition recorded in the UNESCO list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The Latvian capital is a sea of colourful folk costumes, garlands of fresh flowers and beautiful voices singing *dainas* (traditional four-line verses). As the information brochures proclaim, the tradition "has a deep symbolic meaning as a representative [*sic*] of national identity creation and development" – especially significant in a country which regained its independence only in 1991. Being preoccupied with music *and* translation at the moment, I cannot help but wonder whether any of the 217,996 *dainas* concerned might share their roots with other languages and cultures. Bearing in mind the various ethnic groups who have lived on this land and the strong links Latvia has with the two other Baltic countries, this may indeed be possible. Yet such a possibility is of no concern to the generations of singers and dancers filling the streets, stadiums and concert halls, of course. Music is what unites them and translation, where it is involved, would better remain invisible in this instance.

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Translation, Authorship and Authenticity in Soviet Rock Songwriting[1]

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Abstract. *Soviet rock songwriters were deeply concerned with the difficulties involved in adapting rock music – a form they perceived to be 'foreign' in its very essence – to the demands of their own culture. Soviet rock fans had a certain limited access to Western cultural products and they often found fault with what they regarded as misreadings and distortions in the criticism, rewriting and appropriation of rock music by the official Soviet media and cultural institutions. The idea that rock music had to be transferred and translated correctly in order to retain its authenticity was central in the unofficial rock journalism during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Russian musicians and songwriters called upon a 'canon' of Western rock authors when making claims about the meaning of the genre. This article discusses the forays of Leningrad's rock community into theorizing and thematizing the relationship between Soviet and Anglophone rock music and investigates 'translation' as it appears in songs by Boris Grebenshchikov (Akvarium) and Maik Naumenko (Zoopark). The article thus reveals the ways in which referring to or reworking a prior text could constitute a creative strategy, either as a satirical tool, or as a means of entry into a tradition of rock authorship.*

Keywords. Translation, Authorship, Authenticity, Soviet rock music, Anglophone rock music, Boris Grebenshchikov, Mikhail '*Maik*' Naumenko

The effects of Anglophone popular music on non-English music scenes are well-known and widely acknowledged. However, these effects are by no means limited to an encroaching homogenization and the consequent annihilation of

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local music scenes, as local musicians are quick in adapting themselves to hegemonic forces and global marketplaces. There is plenty of creative cross-fertilization which enables national, local and individual agency of expression (Mitchell 1996, Berger and Carroll 2003). As Mark Slobin describes it, "even where mediated musics predominate, locals can choose from a wide variety of transregional styles and subtly modulate their preferences" (1992:9). In studies of popular music the practice of translating songs (usually from English) has been noted as a phase in the transformation and development of nationally or locally specific styles of musical expression (Ollivier 2006:99-100, Larkey 2003:137-39). The emergence of Soviet rock music can be seen to fit this pattern. The local version appropriated and adapted the imported genre, taking what was necessary in order to be authentic, and performing the requisite linguistic move in order to be intelligible and meaningful to its audiences within the local context.

During its formative stages, Soviet rock was undoubtedly dependent upon Anglo-American sources. In the critical literature on the topic, the relationship is often characterized as one based on 'naivety'. In the words of one Soviet rock critic, bands "copied shamelessly, often without understanding what they were singing about" (Troitsky 1987:35; see also Ramet 1994:182, Dobrotvorskaja 1992:149-50, Smirnov 1994:12, Kormil'tsev and Surova 1998:6-7). Western stars, singing predominantly in English, provided the models according to which Soviet rock singer-songwriters constructed their own authorial voices. It was in response to the music of Western luminaries such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Marc Bolan and David Bowie that Soviet musicians formulated their own styles of music-making and of verbal text and developed ways of discussing creativity in rock. This indebtedness to the West is freely acknowledged in the memoirs and journalistic writing originating from the Soviet rock scene.

Nevertheless, during the emergence of rock in the Soviet context, its prac-titioners also drew on the Russian literary tradition, privileging the verbal text and insisting on a sense of Russianness that was conveyed chiefly through the heritage and poetic possibilities of the Russian language (Friedman and Weiner 1999:111-13, passim). Soviet musicians sought to fit rock into a specific national, cultural and linguistic context. They set about this task deliberately and self-consciously, negotiating processes of importation through the use (and active discussion) of imitation, adaptation and rewriting. As it developed as a form in the years before glasnost, Soviet rock revealed itself to be fascinated by verbal texts, by ideas of authorship and authority, and by readings of what rock music could or should mean in this new context. This fascination was particularly marked in Leningrad, the home of important developments in recording and concert-giving practices during the pre-glasnost period.

The aim of this article is to examine this particular reception of rock music in terms of the rock authors' response to the linguistically and culturally foreign

texts, and to uncover the strategies used in making this otherness intelligible for the Russian-speaking audiences. For this purpose, I examine songs by two figures who were active and popular on the Leningrad rock scene in the 1970s and early 1980s, and who became widely known in the Soviet Union in the wake of Gorbachev's reforms. Boris Grebenshchikov founded a group called *Akvarium* (Aquarium) in 1972 and acquired fame in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia chiefly as the creator of poetic, often mystical, verbal texts set to an acoustically driven sound. Mikhail Naumenko (known usually by the anglicized short form of his name, *Maik* – Mike) came to prominence on the Leningrad scene slightly later, initially championed by Grebenshchikov as a collaborator and band-mate. In 1981 he formed his own group, *Zoopark* (Zoo) and gained a reputation as a performer who remained faithful to the roots of rock and roll despite the twists and turns of fashions in popular music.[2]

Whether it was a matter of remaining faithful to a canon of source texts or formulating a unique and worthy language for rock music with roots in Russian literary culture, rock musicians in Leningrad engaged actively with the verbal and musical texts of their Western counterparts. Grebenshchikov and Naumenko, like others around them, were avid listeners of British and American rock, and they used it to hone their own songwriting skills. They also, on occasion, made overt references to Anglophone rock in songs, using translated quotations and borrowed melodies. Such references, I argue, are not merely acts of homage to Western rock; nor are they naive borrowings. Rather, by inscribing the traces of importation in their texts and performances, both singer-songwriters interrogated the meaning of rock in its Soviet incarnation and its authenticity in relation both to Western rock and to its new setting. As texts, popular songs bring with them layer upon layer of associated meanings, acquired over the course of multiple repetitions, reiterations and appropriations (Plasketes 2005:157-59). Writing about the translation of such texts, Kaindl opts to characterize the translator as *bricoleur*, describing the way in which "a number of elements, including music, language, vocal style, instrumentation, but also values, ideology, culture, etc., are appropriated from the source culture and mixed with elements from the target culture" (2005:242). In the Soviet context, as I will explain shortly, the rock singer became a particularly self-conscious mediator between the two cultures, drawing on the contrasts he saw between the West and the Soviet Union and a set of readings, re-readings and 'misreadings' taking place in official and unofficial culture. As Grebenshchikov put it somewhat wearily in his 1981 song 'Heroes of Rock and Roll' (*Geroi rok-n-rolla*), one could grow "tired of being an ambassador for rock and roll / In a country without rhythm" (Grebenshchikov 2002a:51).

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[2] On the texts and literary reputations of Grebenshchikov and Naumenko, see Pond (1987:83-87), Troitsky (1987:51-52, 63-67) and Kormil'tsev and Surova (1998:12, 16-19).

1.   Initiation, importation and appropriation

In the introduction to her edited volume on rock music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Sabrina Petra Ramet gives the following generalized account of the way in which rock music arrived in the societies of the Eastern bloc between the 1960s and the 1980s (1994:3):

> The earliest phase was imitative, as the bedazzled local youngsters struggled to master the new idiom. This was followed by a second phase, in which emergent rock'n'roll bands wrote their own material but always sang in English – the supposed obligatory language of rock'n'roll. Eventually, a third phase ensued, in which local rock groups began to sing in their own languages and to develop their own musical styles.

The stages described here are worth elaborating further. Beginning in the 1960s, rock music gained currency and meaning among Soviet listeners via foreign radio stations and contraband LPs, in a mode of listening that was later to become a potent cultural myth – hearing this music and never looking back, as we shall see in Grebenshchikov's account below. Rock's appeal, however, cannot be attributed solely to the thrill of the forbidden, because some of the importation was actually happening through official channels. In the 1970s there were different attitudes in the press towards the developments in Western popular music, with some publications and individual authors adopting a sympathetic stance (McMichael 2007:47-57). The particular strains of North American and Western European popular music which foregrounded their links with folk songs or promoted a socially-engaged content tended to receive a cautious welcome. At the same time, the state record company *Melodiia* was releasing recordings of Western popular artists, favouring those who performed their own compositions, as well as genres such as the blues. *Melodiia* thus reinforced the prevailing trend of valorizing 'authenticity' in music and mode of performance, as something that grew out of personal experience. In the blues, protest song and 'beat music', Soviet musicologists found an admirable challenge to bourgeois value systems (Sokhor 1980:14-16). Lexically, 'beat music' (*bit-muzyka*) was the most commonly used Russian term during the 1960s and 1970s to describe the kind of music being played by groups like the Beatles, with cognates such as 'beat group' (*bit-gruppa*). In non-official parlance this would commonly be substituted by terms based on 'rock' (*rok*).

Studies of Soviet rock have often been tainted by perceptions formed during the Cold War, placing particular emphasis on the confrontation between rock and roll – a genre usually associated with youth, energy, and noise – and the world of late Socialism, with its succession of failing elderly leaders and its economic and cultural morbidity. This is an opposition that has come to

be questioned in recent work on the period; Alexei Yurchak, for example, has shown that the last generation of Soviet citizens could be enthusiastic participants in both the official and the unoffical discourses simultaneously (2005:233-37). Nonetheless, the idea of rock and roll as a global countercultural force, smuggling alternative ideas and beliefs into the Soviet world, remains seductive, and it contributes an over-arching narrative to rock musicians' own memoirs. When recalling their first encounter with rock music, Russian musicians tend to speak in terms of particular English-language songs that acted as 'revelations'. In an interview in 1985, Grebenshchikov, for example, recalled hearing the Beatles' music for the first time – some twenty years earlier and on the radio station 'Voice of America' (Matveev 2002:89):

> I was simply thirsting to hear, at last, this music that was going around, but reaching me in a very distorted form. Before that I'd caught a few snatches on my radio receiver, so I knew at what time it was broadcast. I turned on the receiver, placed the tape recorder in front of it – I had such a terrible tape recorder, falling apart, made at the end of the 1950s. I turned it on and heard it. And so, from that moment, from the time that bolt clicked into place, everything became clear, everything came into focus, and I never came out of that focus again. What came next was a question of how to use my own body and my own possibilities in order to catalyse this thing around me.[3]

In this account, Grebenshchikov's moment of revelation was a broadcast of the song 'Help!' – not, apparently, the Beatles' original but a Ray Charles cover. The music made its impact on him despite a poor shortwave signal and a decrepit tape recorder. In fact, the account gives the impression that these distortions and privations made the moment all the more charged with meaning: in spite of (or maybe *because* of) the uninspiring setting and the poor equipment – runs the subtext of Grebenshchikov's recollection – the Beatles worked their magic on his receptive mind, changing his life forever.

The arrival of rock music in the Soviet Union was accompanied by an array of other imports – aural, visual, verbal and material – exemplifying the appropriation of elements of Western contemporary culture. Sometimes this appropriation occurred as a private revelation, enabled by a foreign radio broadcast, or a high-status unofficial product, with their taint of the illicit and associations with esoteric and hard-won knowledge; at other times the appropriation took place in official consumer culture under the patronage of *Melodiia* or the press. En masse, these Soviet appropriations came to constitute a notional space that Alexei Yurchak has called the "Imaginary West" (2005:161). This was "both internal and external to the Soviet reality"; its constituent parts were "a diverse array of discourses, statements, products,

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[3] All translations from Russian into English are mine.

objects, visual images, musical expressions, and linguistic constructions that were linked to the West by theme or by virtue of their origin or reference" (*ibid*.). Musical forms like jazz and rock not only lent their soundscapes to this imagined place, but also helped shape its visual, verbal and material culture, its clothing and style, and the behaviour of its creators. As Yurchak notes, this was a way of thinking that did not denote an alternative to a Soviet identity and worldview, let alone constitute a politically oppositional discourse. On the contrary, both the cultural products made available via official Soviet representations of the West and the venerated Western objects appropriated by non-official Soviet culture contributed to the creation of this imaginary space. The music, language, images and objects that signified the West were given a meaning that was inherently Soviet, undergoing what Yurchak calls "processes of cultural translation and appropriation" (2005:192). This might also be described as the way in which Soviet individuals *read* Western cultural products and gave them meaning from within their own frames of reference. The creative processes initiated by this "cultural translation and appropriation" carried certain implications for ways of thinking about the language and authenticity of the texts thus translated and appropriated.

Distortion in the reception of Western cultural products was an inherent part of the "Imaginary West" constructed by Leningrad's rock fans. If we return to Grebenshchikov's recollection of listening to the Beatles' song, we can see that the "terrible tape-recorder" is given a prominent place, along with the complications over the time of broadcast, the poor signal and so on. Such accounts of obstacles often paralleled the idea that officially published information on Western texts and products somehow became deformed during the 'translation' process and that the authenticity of the revered Western music was thus threatened. The earliest widely-noted article on the Beatles in the official press passed into legend among Soviet fans as just such an occurrence. In March 1964, the popular magazine *Krokodil* published an article that poked fun at the group and especially at the fanatical reaction its members had provoked during their recent tour of the United States. The satirical point of the report was to denigrate the Beatles and suggest that their popularity was a transient fad characteristic of bourgeois culture. Among rock fans, however, the article came to be celebrated for the creative language in which it referred to the Beatles' musicians (Safonov 2003:49, Troitsky 1987:27, Vasin 1990:31).

The name of the group is the most marked instance of translation in the article: "the English *estrada* quartet 'the Beatles', which, in translation, roughly means little beetle-drummers" – *Angliiskii estradnyi kvartet 'Bitlz', chto v perevode znachit primerno zhuchki-udarniki* ('Zhuchki-udarniki' 1964:n.p.). *Krokodil*'s anonymous writer first gives the group a generic definition that places it within a Soviet conceptualization of popular culture. The adjective he uses is *estradnyi*, from the noun *estrada*. To a Russian speaker, this term would denote a group that played and sang songs in a popular vein. It would

also connote a variety of genres (like the English 'variety'), including comic theatre, satirical or comic songs, dance and circus (MacFadyen 2001:10-12). The *Krokodil* satirist is therefore placing the group within a more diffuse category of entertainment than might be expected. He then turns to its name, which first of all he transliterates as *Bitlz* – this, incidentally, remains the standard spelling of the group's name in Russian. He then translates it and, deliberately or not, hits upon a derivation widely given credence in the West: that the group was first of all named 'the Beetles' but that the 'a' was added to the first syllable to evoke the idea of a beat group (Davies 2002:43). The gloss given here, *zhuchki-udarniki*, unpacks the pun, drawing the reader's attention to the generic specificity of the Beatles as a group. The writer conveys this first by making reference to the group's rhythm section, which metonymically comes to stand for the instrumentation as a whole. Second, the Russian word for 'beetle' has a decidedly negative connotation, lent in part by its use in criminal slang: *zhuchok* (plural *zhuchki*: a diminutive of *zhuk*, meaning 'beetle' or 'bug') means pickpocket or hooligan, and may also refer to a middleman or a businessman engaged in dubious activities. By calling the members of the group *zhuchki* throughout the article, the author extends the metaphor deriving from the group's name, suggesting that these are showmen of a flashy, insubstantial nature. The tone throughout is of mocking superiority. A scene in which the Beatles travel to Washington by train, retold from a segment of Albert and David Maysles' 1964 film *What's Happening! The Beatles in the USA*, presents the group's members as behaving like boisterous animals ('*Zhuchki-udarniki*' 1964:n.p.):

> All of a sudden one of the artists, Ringo Starr, let out a Tarzan cry and started to jump from seat to seat like a monkey. John Lennon and George Harrison swapped trousers – the ones they were wearing – in front of the public. And then Ringo began to make a buzzing noise, pretending to use a film camera, and George lay down on the baggage rack.

The author of the *Krokodil* article was capable of making the coinage *zhuchki-udarniki* gain layers of meaning appropriate to the intended reader, underlining the idea of short-lived, scandal-generating fame. In this particular instance of officially-disseminated cultural transfer, the individual members of the group were foregrounded as unruly young men and objects of media fascination. Four years later, however, the reverse was the case. In 1968, when *Melodiia* issued a compilation of foreign songs, featuring 'Girl' – the first official release of a song recorded by the Beatles for a Soviet audience – notions of individual authorship were skirted by categorizing the song as an "English folk song" (*Angl. nar. pesnia*) (Makarevich 2002:54, Yurchak 2005:191). Later, though, *Melodiia* presentations of Western rock groups tended to recognize authorship, attributing songs to the groups that performed them and crediting individual

author-composers. These products were nonetheless subjected to a process of repackaging that was highly visible. The illustration in Figure 1 is one such example, showing the sleeve of an EP featuring four songs by the Rolling Stones – 'Paint it Black', 'As Tears Go By', 'Ruby Tuesday', and 'Lady Jane' – produced by *Melodiia* in 1981. The reverse side of the record translates the titles of these songs for the Soviet consumer, more or less accurately – 'Paint it Black' becomes 'Paint It In Black' (*Narisui eto chernym*); 'As Tears Go By' gains an idiomatic feel, becoming 'While Tears Flow' (*Poka l'iutsia slezy*). There is also a note informing the audience that these are songs "in the English language". The front of the sleeve, pictured, shows a stylized image of a musician holding an electric guitar. The figure is androgynous, long-haired and lithe. The image reimagines the guitarist as a timeless troubadour, swathed in the primary-coloured noise emitted from his instrument. Next to the figure, in extravagant lettering, appears the categorization "foreign pop" (*zarubezhnaia estrada*); beneath it, in a more workaday typeface, is the name of the group, transliterated phonetically as "ROLLING STOUNZ", and under this appears a further designation, "vocal-instrumental ensemble" (*vokal'no-instrumental'nyi ansambl'*, often abbreviated to "VIA"), a term used from the late 1960s onward to refer to an officially-approved electric guitar group.

As in this example of the Rolling Stones EP, the meanings, intended or not, that were inscribed on products of Western rock music by their official Soviet reception were not lost on the unofficial music scene's rock practitioners. In their opinion, cultural products imported by *Melodiia* or discussed in the Soviet media were presented in a way that their creators would not have sanctioned: new images were created to accompany vinyl releases, and *Melodiia* made its own selection of songs rather than following the track lists of albums released in the West. Furthermore, in many cases these products reached Soviet consumers with a considerable time-lag, sometimes up to two decades, and the generic definition of the music was tampered with, by classifying the music under the heading of *estrada*. Finally, such products were categorized as inherently 'other', as imports exemplifying a foreign form. These decisions stripped the originals of their connection to their authors and their original form, and also ignored the fact that rock music was also being played by Soviet musicians themselves.

The release of this Rolling Stones EP exemplifies processes of appropriation that had already been taking place in the Soviet Union for more than a decade. From the late 1960s onwards, the Soviet music-making establishment encouraged the foundation of VIA, in essence pop groups run from within official entertainment and leisure organizations. VIA played electric guitar-based songs, most of which were composed by members of the Union of Composers, but in some cases also borrowed directly from the repertoire of Western groups (Levchenko 2005:n.p.; on VIA as rock groups in all but name see Smirnov 1994:12, Steinholt 2005:21-22, 25). Many musicians, however,