

Apter, Ronnie and Herman, Mark (2016). *Translating for Singing. The Theory, Art and Craft of Translating Lyrics*. London/New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 282, paperback, \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-4725-7188-5.

Susam-Saraeva, Şebnem (2015). *Transcultural Intimacy in Turkish-Greek Relations*. London/New York/Vienna: Peter Lang, pp. 180, paperback, £40.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-3-03911-887-8.

Interest in the topic of music and translation has been growing in the last decade. Primarily limited to articles on opera translation until a few years ago, it now spans a much broader spectrum: film translation (Bosseaux 2015), musicals (Di Giovanni 2008; Mateo 2008), popular songs (2015) and other areas. It is also being investigated much more widely as an interdisciplinary field of studies (Susam-Sarajeva 2008; Julia Minors 2013; www.translatingmusic.com). The two contrasting volumes considered here reflect both this growing interest and the wide scope that this field now encompasses.

Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman are amongst the most experienced and established opera translators today, with 22 singable opera translations to their names. They have aimed to share their knowledge and expertise and this shines through their book. They write about what they know best, which is the translation into English of standard operatic repertoire intended to be performed on stage. At a time when academic pressures require fast publications in novel areas, it is refreshing and quite rare to read a book based on the compilation of fifty years of experience. They are also passionate about opera in translation, and hope that their book will lead “to more and better [...] performances in English translation, leading to more and better original English librettos, leading to more... so that finally the English-speaking world can claim all musical-stage genres as its own” (243). This is a controversial plea of course, at a time when the traditional operatic repertoire is one of the few to give visibility to multilingualism in the English-speaking world. However, their enthusiasm for English adaptation is understandable in the context of their work.

The volume is structured in twelve main chapters, foreword, bibliography, index, and other paratexts excluded. The first two set the context of sung operatic translation, particularly in relation to subtitled translation. The third considers how the two main translation methods of foreignisation and domestication may apply to recurrent challenges in opera libretti, from repetition to rhyme and humour. It concludes that decisions have to be made on a case by case basis, depending on “the particular work being translated, the specific source and target languages, the audience for which the translation is made, and the abilities and proclivities of the translators” (56). The authors then define translation in relation to adaptation and

examine the importance of “re-translation” in the operatic context, where new productions and conventions lead to a necessary update of original texts. Chapters 5 to 11 delve into the crunch of opera translation: operas performed today were primarily written in the past. How can translations deal with forgotten conventions, historical allusions and irrelevant sensitivities (chapter 5)? How can they highlight political references and cultural assumptions no longer significant to contemporary audiences; deal with gender or racial stereotypes which will be perceived as offensive in the 21st century? How can individual characters’ speech patterns be recreated in translation? These challenges are dealt with in chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 9 is a surprise and sits slightly uneasily in the midst of the book. While the translation of classical song is touched on, particularly with regards to poetic rhyming (in chapter 11 with Rachmaninov’s *Six Choral Songs for Treble Voices and Piano* for instance), on the whole, the book deals with translation for live performance on stage. Chapter 9, on multiple translations, discusses how a singable translation may need the complement of a more explicit, literal translation, chiefly in the context of old poetic language. The example of the songs of the medieval Occitan poet Bernart de Ventadorn shows that more obscure texts may require a literal translation which includes a range of possible meanings associated with the original words, in addition to a translation intended to be performed. However, this sudden change of skopos without explanation somewhat breaks the coherence of the book a little. The next two chapters (10, 11) discuss two issues very specific to operatic and musical repertoires: what to do when music is missing from a score, and how to translate rhythm, stress and rhyme. They are key chapters, which list in detail what it takes to find solutions regarding prosody and poetic forms. They also stress the importance of translations that can take a distance from original forms. For instance, the standard operatic repertoire is primarily in French, German, Italian and Russian, all strong rhyming languages which English is not. The authors skilfully show that the rhymes of the original texts, in many cases, should not be kept in English. The final chapter gives a practical overview of how music can express meaning. Many scholars have discussed this issue (Small 1998; Cook 2007; and Robinson 1997/2015 between others), and this chapter does not attempt to be theoretical, but it alerts the reader to the importance of being aware of different ways of deciphering the music before translating the words associated with it. This allows the production of a text that maintains the intended interaction between music and words: the sound of musical instruments can create associations: horns and hunting for instance; musical conventions may have specific meanings in a specific cultural context; a phrase can be used to introduce a character with a pompous or frivolous vocalise, to take but a few examples.

In brief, this book is an invaluable guide to anyone who wishes to translate opera or musicals for performances. One of its strengths is the numerous examples taken from the authors’ rich repertoire, which might be a little

daunting to non-musicians, but which show in detail the painstaking process of mediating songs from an established repertoire into the 21st century.

The second book reviewed here could not be more of a contrast to the practical manual above. It intends to examine the transcultural role which popular music can play in contemporary society. Taking as a case study the tense background of Greek-Turk relationships, it considers different ways in which music can break down barriers across cultures and bring “transcultural intimacy” (1). Most of the musical examples given to illustrate these mediations will be unknown to readers who are neither Greek or Turk, but the sociocultural background given on *rembetiko* as a genre of common heritage between the two cultures from which musical expressions of the Self and the Other can be created, translated and/or rewritten is very clear.

The first chapter examines how popular music can foster connections between nations: first through common ground (for instance, Greek and Turkish songs may use similar rhythms, melodies etc.), second through discovery and the appreciation of the foreign, and finally, through various mediations from one culture and language to another. This book thus contributes to stretching the boundaries of translation (and translation studies) from linguistic and cultural territories to socio-political ones. It demonstrates “how music is enlisted within international and intercultural relations, and more often than not, through translation” (9). It also considers how the non-translation of lyrics in popular songs can be a factor for rapprochement between cultures as an instrument of openness to difference. The author sets out to explore “translations taking place in the distribution and promotion (chapters 2 and 3), composition (chapter 4) and consumption stages (chapter 5)” (36). The different roles of translation are shown to depend on the formats of text production offered to audiences (exclusively audio music, paper inserts etc.). Most prominent perhaps in this respect is the role that the internet and social media can play in fostering exchanges, and cultural and linguistic competence between fans belonging to two different cultures, as they are based on individual interactions and can lead to a very engaged personal activism.

Perhaps, the most original take of this book concerns questions regarding how emotion is translated (or not). Not translating popular songs and choosing to sing or listen to a song in Turkish for a Greek or in Greek for a Turk can be a powerful way of “positively affirming the existence of the Other, both within and outside their national borders, as minorities and as neighbours” (42), while translating them can come later, as the need to understand the other culture gets deeper. These popular songs which to and fro across Greece and Turkey keep a common background and an ideal of common understanding alive through various forms of translation. Following Boym (2001)’s idea that nostalgia is a yearning for a different time rather than for a place, the author shows how variations on *rembetiko*

can bring Greek and Turkish people together in cultural memory or in imagining a better future.

This rich, intelligently articulated, small volume opens a door to ways of understanding that in a global world, translation is intrinsically part of the production, dissemination and consumption of music and that this goes much beyond the translation of song lyrics. Lévi-Strauss (1962: 132), considering the role of animals in human society, famously wrote that they were not only good to eat but good to think. Şebnem Susam-Saraeva shows us here that translation in the widest sense of the word is not only good for the production and consumption of culture but good for thinking of ways of interacting across cultures.

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