

Gorlée, Dinda L. (2005). *Song and Significance. Virtues and Vices of Vocal Translation*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi pp. 311 €62/ US \$ 74 ISBN 90-420-1687-6

This book fills an important gap in Translation Studies. So far, any scholar or student researching music and translation has had to gather scattered articles in what was an under-explored area. The recent expansion of publications in Translation Studies, particularly in audiovisual translation, has allowed the topic of music and text transfer to come to the fore. Articles on surtitling, audiodescription for the theatre, and song/libretto adaptations have emerged in a number of translation journals and books. In the last two decades, Ronnie Apter, Dinda Gorlée and Peter Low, in particular, have been pioneers in gathering bibliographical references, sharing their experience and discussing a range of issues present in musical text transfers. In this book, as far as I know, for the first time, key bibliographical references are offered to the reader interested in vocal translation. In this sense, *Song and Significance* is a landmark in its field.

The volume is a collection of eight articles (and a prelude!) selected from papers submitted to the International Summer Institute for Semiotic and Structural Studies held at the University of Helsinki in 2003. Both the editor and the publisher of the book must be congratulated for issuing the volume within a relatively short time of the event. In a field which is as fast moving as Translation Studies, the publication of papers years after their presentation often impacts on their relevance. As is expected in this type of book and from such multifaceted areas emphasising the interdependence of text and music, chapters are focussed on extremely varied topics: hymn translation, the adaptation of Mozart's and Donizetti's librettos, aspects of song and musical comedy translation and the transfer of chanting in Lapp communities.

One of the strongest features of the book (aside from the gathering of references mentioned above) consists in attempting to offer a theoretical framework to these essays. In her prelude', Gorlée outlines the two tendencies which have been present in analyses of vocal translations: logocentrism on the one hand and musicocentrism on the other. She also discusses semiotic views of text and music as Jakobson and Benveniste first introduced them. No claim is made to be exhaustive and Gorlée states from the start that the book aims to "give some down-to-earth practical advice on the constraints of vocal translation, but [...that] the theory [which] is in many articles [is] linked to a semiotic school or tradition (the Prague and Moscow-Tartu schools, Peircian scholarship, French structuralism, deconstructionism, etc...)" (12). Ethnomusicology is also present as a framework in Myrdene Anderson's attempt to introduce challenges of circumpolar artic chant transfer.

The scope of the essays varies immensely, in length and purpose. Gorlée's study of hymn translation is a solid eighty-page essay analyzing the

revision and transmutations of old and new hymns through the principles of Pierce's semiotics. At the other end of the spectrum, a short paper on the Catholic interpretation of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* discusses historical distortions in librettos within a much narrower perspective. Peter Low's essay on translating Brel and lieder composers proposes useful guiding principles substantiated by relevant and plentiful examples issued from first hand experience. Other articles, such as Klaus Kaind's exploration of pop song translation as transfer of an interdependent word, music and image product, is more theoretical in its socio-semiological approach.

The book is pleasantly presented and the many examples given laid out in a clear manner. A few staves in Marianne Tråvén's article were faulty in their reproduction (108-118), but in spite of this (an errata sheet is provided) and a few other minor errors, this is a very welcome publication, which we can only hope will be followed by more on the rich, hybrid topic of vocal translation.

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