

BOOK REVIEW

TRANSLATION IN MUSIC: FROM METAPHOR TO METHOD

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Applying Translation Studies Methodology to Musicological Research, Małgorzata Grajter, Switzerland: Springer Cham, 2024, 153 pp., 102,71€, ISBN 978-3-031-56630-1 (eBook).

Małgorzata Grajter's *Applying Translation Studies Methodology to Musicological Research* is a rich and essential read for all those interested in translation and Translation Studies (TS), especially the processes of meaning-making, mutation and movement. Its substantiated and concrete juxtaposition of TS and musicology opens up an interdisciplinary world of epistemic, hermeneutic and practical possibilities.

Chapter 1 includes a comprehensive introduction to and overview of the history of translation and translation theory—one quite robust on its own that could be used as a pedagogic resource in undergraduate, master's or doctoral courses. This overview is carried in a narrative of an apparent pattern of resonance, in which the perspectives of earlier thinkers, diachronically expanding and merging in the analyses and interpretations of future TS thinkers, create a pattern of interference to be decoded in light of a new context; this gives way to new and more concrete theories—as though ever-expanding three-dimensional ripples, intersecting in a spatial-temporal continuum, manifesting an ongoing theoretical legacy of shared objective interest.

In this chapter, understandably, Herder's music-translation comparison is emphasized, so as to lay a prolegomenal bridge between music and translation. The discussion of this chapter culminates in the introduction of TS as an interdiscipline, transitioning to the next chapter, thus maintaining a historical point-of-view but focussing on more recent approaches and methodologies.

To further open the discussion on the applicability of TS methodology to musicological research, **Chapter 2** draws on Jakobson's seminal essay *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (1959) to provide the broader concepts of a multi-scope perspective on translation (intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic). This broadening of scope shows translation's potential for a more interdisciplinary interaction as a "composite, hybrid configuration", and therefore "not a monolithic work but an interpermeation, a conglomerate of two structures" (Levý *apud* Grajter, 2024, p. 30). It also helps the author portray overlapping areas and interests between translation and musicology. To do so, Grajter draws on important methodologies and topics in TS, such as equivalence, invariance, expressive shifts, and the cultural turn.

The key discussion in **Chapter 3** revolves around musical processes of transference and transformation—*bearbeitung* (adaptation or a kind of reworking), palimpsest, arrangement and transcription—so as to evince their translational nature. This discussion and comparison strives to further legitimize and concretise the use of TS methodology and terminology, beyond the metaphor. Thus, in going “[f]rom metaphor to methodology” (Grajter, 2024, p. 73) to establish the term “musical translation” (*idem*, 2024, p. 59), the author provides a series of musicological theoretical perspectives, as well as attempts by other musicologists to import terminology and methodology from TS (though sometimes unsuccessfully) to provide her own definition:

The discussion on the topic of musical arrangements, transcriptions, and cover versions, taking their similarities and differences into account, analysing terminology, strategies, and experiences of the arrangers, should lead us now to the attempt to formulate an umbrella term: *musical translation*, defined as a rendition of the work in its entirety, which involves necessary changes and transformations resulting from the time, place, and purpose of the new version (*idem*, 2024, p. 76).

The chapter ends by converging both of the semiospheres in focus (TS and Musicology) by combining music and the notion of extra-systemic translation. Realigning with Helen Julia Minors, who considers that, since “music functions as metaphor, the case for translation to extend to music seems logical, on this basis alone” (Minors, 2021, p. 178), the author sheds light onto how the concept of translation is very much applicable to music and its meta-reflection and, therefore, the use of TS methodological approaches in music is not only justifiable but advantageous. One key element in this comparison is the virtual potential for ever-emerging new versions and renditions of source-texts and of target-texts to become new sources:

Since, as Balcerzan wrote, translation is a renewable process that can be repeated without end, various arrangements and performances of the same musical piece can therefore be analysed as series of translations (Grajter, 2024, p. 101).

Chapter 4 takes on the responsibility of bringing together all the previous overlapping considerations on translation theory and musicological theory/perspectives. This is done through concrete examples, wherein TS methodology is applied in instances of what the author defines as ‘musical translation’. This concept encompasses processes and products of arrangements, cover songs, transduction and *ekphrasis*. Chapter 4 is the book’s longest and most exploratory one; its structure contemplates Marai’s (2019) distinction of semiotic division and interaction (intra-, inter- and extra-). A relevant distinction pertains to the different relation between syntax and semantics (form and content) that exists in music (in comparison to verbal language), and how they are somewhat more indissociable. This distinction is important for differentiating music from language within Marai’s division (the elements differ, as does their articulation on different layers of analysis).

According to Grajter, ‘intra-musical’ comprehends translations between the same instruments, style or genre of music. One of the translational methodologies the author uses is that of invariance and variability. The example provided is a comparative analysis of Liszt, Thalberg and Maylath piano transcriptions of Beethoven’s *Adelaide* op. 46 (Grajter, 2024, p. 94). This overlap can reveal what each transcriber deemed to be the core of the ST. In addition, the ‘invariant’ core changes in line with style, period, author, etc.—as one could see, for example, by comparing de la Motte’s 16th century translations of the *Iliad* into French (Lefevre, 1992) with more contemporary French translations of the same classic.

In inter-musical translation—translation across different instruments, style or genre of music—Grajter presents TS methods like Popovič’s categories of adaptation modernization/archaization, and localization, or Venuti’s concept of domestication vs. foreignization, with the added notion of micro and macro scales. At the micro-scale, for example, a comparison is established between Busoni’s arrangement of the “*Chaconne* from the *Partita for Solo violin in D minor*” (Grajter, 2024, p. 114) for piano—two-handed and accommodating idiomatic additions (domestication)—as opposed to Brahms’ piano version, using the left hand only—thus closer to “a violinist’s experience” (foreignization) (*idem, ibidem*). At the macro-scale, Debussy’s import of the uncommonly used castanets and tambourine in *Iberia* is seen as a foreignization in that period and style—as opposed to using only instruments that are common in one temporal and cultural/stylistic context (*idem, ibidem*). This is comparable, in interlingual translation, to either replacing all the references (names of places, people, and cultural-bound elements) or maintaining the references but domesticating on the syntactic or lexical level. All interactions between these two scales can also lean towards the foreign manifestation.

Extra-musical is established by the author as translation between music and other semiotic expressions/systems—e.g. the visual arts in general, or literature. A lot of these instances accommodate moments of multimodality, which render translational activities all the more complex. Grajter then draws on Calabrese (2000) to evince how different semiotic systems may establish specific interactions—a sort of translational particularism. In this case, Grajter gives the example of Schubert’s *Erkönig* piano translations by Liszt.

At the end of this chapter, the author discusses possible “future directions”, thereby proposing practice as an experiential research model into the intersemiotic aspects of musical performance (Grajter, 2024, p. 136). This culminates in the importance of the gestural and visual dimensions of musical performativity—especially considering the multimodal nature of opera or ballet—and the advantages of applying translational methodology to this analysis. Grajter here gives the example of Claudia Fischer’s translation of Debussy’s *Iberia* into a poem, during *Sound-scapes: translating from music*—a project held by CETAPS at Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

In a final comment, the book is permeated by a recurring problem pertaining to the broadness of the concept of translation—and of which the author makes successful use. This problem concerns the division or distinction of the following transdisciplinary duality:

either translation goes beyond its established linguistic nature—but encompassing other areas of human expression and knowledge, such as painting, the theatre, chess, or music, by lending its methodologies as metaphors—or everything is language, and translation is an all-encompassing analysis, practice and mediator of the processes of meaning making, mutation and movement.

Lastly, the book is, in itself, a successful translation exercise: Grajter continuously translates the concepts therein into words and terms that may be more comprehensible to those with a looser command of TS theory, while doing the same for the musicological part. Małgorzata Grajter puts one more robust and well-grounded foot in the door of the cutting-edge interdisciplinary perspective of modern-day Translation Studies.

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