

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

The liberal mores of pop song translation : Slicing the source text relation six ways

Franzon, Johan

Frank & Timme
2021

Franzon , J 2021 , The liberal mores of pop song translation : Slicing the source text relation six ways . in J Franzon , A K Greenall , S Kvam & A Parianou (eds) , Song Translation : Lyrics in Contexts . vol. 113 , TransÜD , vol. 113 , Frank & Timme , Berlin , pp. 83-121 .

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/341071>

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

JOHAN FRANZON

The liberal mores of pop song translation: Slicing the source text relation six ways

1. Fidelity issues in pop song translation

Any person who for any reason might look closer at a translated song can react to certain fidelity issues – if compared to the original song. There are many kinds of target language song lyrics made from different-language source songs, and the relationship between the two does not always look like what one may expect of translations. That same person might quickly realise there are other factors involved which must influence things: the music, musical arrangements, elements of orality and artistry, the practical use and – to dig a little deeper – the sociocultural context in which songs function. To these, one must, more crassly, add the commercial and legal conditions, which can dictate both liberty and fidelity. Researchers from popular music studies, and some from translation studies, have rightly emphasised such factors when discussing the international, interlingual circulation of songs. But if the person brings a strict mindset from literary studies or, to put it bluntly, prose reading in general, the reaction might be an exclamation along the lines of: This is not/hardly a translation at all!

Now, fidelity is a vague word – the oldest and vaguest there is in the history of translation. But songs spreading between languages and changing shape and content in the process seem to be even older than that. Before the advent of literary copyright, prose fiction was rewritten more freely in translation. When folk song evolved into the modern genre of popular song, there seems to have been no comparable establishment of a fidelity norm. That is at least the notion that motivates my aim to methodically examine source text relations in the production of target language (TL) song lyrics. As a by-product, an interesting picture of the international popular song exchange of the 20th century emerges. The material consists of American hit tunes published with target lyrics in Swedish.

Based on ethics more than empiricism, Low (2013; 2017) proposed a sharper usage of three terms – *translation*, *adaptation* and *replacement text* – to separate faithful from less faithful TL song lyrics. A categorisation into stepped clines is the general aim of my survey too, but I wish to avoid the polysemous term *adaptation*, which indeed, since Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), may mean ‘translation with changes made’. But in modern times, it is more often used to describe the multimodal totality of reworking a piece of material to suit a certain medium or genre, as for example adapting *Gulliver’s Travels* into a video game or a story for children. That is the basis of the discipline of adaptation studies (see mainly Hutcheon 2013 and Sanders 2015). Another way to treat the issues is to not categorise at all but use the term *interlingual cover versions*, proposed by Susam-Saraeva (2018), to cover all re-recording of songs with lyrics in a new language, which is fine as long as one discusses recordings and performances. Other people have used catch-all metaphors with similar intent: *travelling songs* in Marc (2015) and *migration* of songs in Fochi (2019). A third way is to use Roman Jakobson’s concept *intersemiotic translation* and discuss whatever happens when a text is set to music, or when a piece of music is given lyrics, even with just one verbal language. (This opens up translation studies even more to perspectives beyond a translator’s writing of singable song lyrics, see Desblache 2019.) All this ambiguity can be a conceptual stumbling block. My way to tackle the confusion is to propose a few terms to describe more precisely what TL lyricists do and what becomes of the source language (SL) lyrics. They are the results of the following study.

2. A century of target language lyric writing

The study of song translation needs empirical evidence, basic facts about how target texts in the field have historically looked like. I attempted a method simply to pick a number of composers in popular music genres, covering most of the 20th century, and to collect all that could be found of TL song lyrics to their music in

available archives.¹ That seemed the best way to handle the shifty nature of the field and variable availability of archived material.

In studying popular music, one might try to collect the most popular songs, but criteria for what goes down in history as the most popular have varied a lot. Collecting everything within a limited time period disregards that a song can be translated and published one year and then be recorded, retranslated and popular not once but several times any number of years later. Printed sheet music sometimes carries the original copyright year, not the print year of the TL sheet. Not all TL lyricists are searchable in archives. Original (SL) lyricists are seldom credited on TL recordings. Going by composers proved to be the workable way to achieve a reasonable historic overview. The next step was to compare and categorise TL lyrics, solely based on this question: How have target song lyricists made use of the source song and its lyrics as a source – if they did at all? This resulted in a division into five translation methods, plus a sixth one – all-new lyrics. I name them as follows (and discuss them in detail in the following chapters):

1. *Near-enough* – fairly close, with allowances
2. *Perspective-shift* – quite similar but changed
3. *Lyric hook transposition* – clearly changed but clearly linked
4. *Single-phrase spinoff* – new lyrics, but randomly indebted
5. *Phonetic calque* – a wholly or partly made ‘phonetic translation’ (may combine with any one of 1–4 above)
6. *All-new target lyric* – the TL lyricist has not minded the SL lyrics at all.

As for the composers, they needed to be prolific, influential and recurrently imported and sung in Sweden. Admittedly ultimately subjectively selected, the aim

1 Namely: the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research and The Music and Theatre Library of Sweden, both parts of Swedish Performing Arts Agency (Musikverket); The Swedish Media Database (SMDB) and music collections of the National Library of Sweden (KB); the archives of The Swedish Society of Songwriters, Composers and Authors (SKAP), part of the Swedish Performing Rights Society (Stim); supplemented by publicly available recordings on the Internet (YouTube, Spotify), in public libraries and my own home. None of these archives guarantee complete coverage.

was not a total survey of 20th-century music but a compilation of peepholes spread over as many different decades, genres and styles as practicable (the Tin Pan Alley/Hollywood/Broadway era, rock music, lounge music, country music). I will admit to a preference of ‘stable geniuses’ over huge ones (such as Gershwin or Dylan). The results of all of this are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. TL lyric versions tabulated by composers and methods

Composer	Near-enough translation	Perspective-shift translation	Hook transposition	Single-phrase spinoff	Phonetic calque	All-new target lyrics	
Ray Henderson/B.G. DeSylva	14	6	5	5	4	11	=45
Jerome Kern	19	5	3	4	2	6	=39
Frank Loesser	19	1	2	1		2	=25
Jerry Leiber/Mike Stoller	7	8	6	5	4	6	=36
Burt Bacharach	26	5	4	9	1	4	=49
Dolly Parton	12	5	4	1		2	=24
Prince	2	2	1				= 5
Sting	5	1	5				=11
	=104	=33	=30	=25	=11	=31	
total sum =							234

The source and target languages are restricted to English and Swedish. A major American influence on Swedish popular music has been a fact since at least the 1920s, the significance of which is beyond the aim of this study. There is also an obvious dominance of American male white composers, but these seemed most prolific and popular. Just as obvious is the dominance of (what I call) *near-enough translations*. This may reflect realities, but the choice of composers may have left a trace. One particular caveat may be the very profitable song producer Burt Bacharach. If he was unusually favoured among Swedish music imports in his time, it may have led to an inordinate amount of (Hal David’s) lyrics being treated with unusual respect. Another is Frank Loesser, whose songs were mostly written for

Broadway musicals or used in films – thereby motivating fidelity? Having admitted this, I can only encourage future and different investigations of different language pairs and cultures to complete or challenge the picture.

Of course, all TL lyrics reflect the purposes for which the target songs were intended: *skopos*, as conceived by functional translation theory. A clear majority of the 234 lyrics in the corpus appears in forms that, according to same theory, can be called *equifunctional* (or possibly homologous – see Nord 2005: 81). They were sold as sheet music in the first half of the century and as phonograms – LP vinyl, compact disc or other material (and later, streamed) shape – in the second half of it. But all were aimed at the general TL commercial music market, aiming to please music buyers and audiences and at best make a hit. Other aims can be put under the heading of *repurposed* TL lyrics. There are also more special venues or formats, from which repurposed songs may emanate. Based on my data, a list of examples can be given:

- stage musicals, and ensuing cast recordings²
- revues, cabarets, nightclub acts or special event concerts, often recorded live
- radio or television work, released on record (sometimes much later)
- vocal groups, dance orchestras, jazz ensembles, rock bands, or amateur bands or orchestras, with occasional need of special material
- ‘troubadour’ material (as the Swedish term goes): singer/songwriters in low-tech performances of a self-styled repertoire
- songs designed for specially themed phonogram projects (such as Christmas albums, ‘classic love ballads’ or ‘jazz standards in Swedish’)
- even more special formats: to be quite specific, they are
 - three lyrics as parts of song potpourris for a certain venue (radio/concert/revue)

2 Musical theatre songs can be repurposed for other venues. In my data, 1 song by Bacharach, 9 by Loesser and 6 by Kern were translated for TL stage productions and published commercially besides. Other songs written for stage and film musicals were imported and translated just for sheet music or vinyl or for use in television or club acts (see ex. 21).

- three themed CD productions featuring fictional characters (Smurfs, Barbie and Donald Duck)
- two advertising songs (a 78-rpm recording selling a washing powder and a radio show jingle)
- two drinking songs
- one football fan song
- one old song reused in a stage musical portraying famous singers and the solo album made from it
- one song from an animated Disney film.

Arguably, all these uses are part of the popular music market. They form a spectrum with no sharp line in between. Equifunctional pop market translations can be used and sung in all sorts of venues. Lyrics written for a special purpose can end up in print or get released commercially. Songs from musicals and films get covered by recording artists. The method chosen included everything available. The criterion was that lyrics be published in print or phonogram, excluding private use and theatre manuscripts.

Sorting by decades, the data turn into a chronological graph.

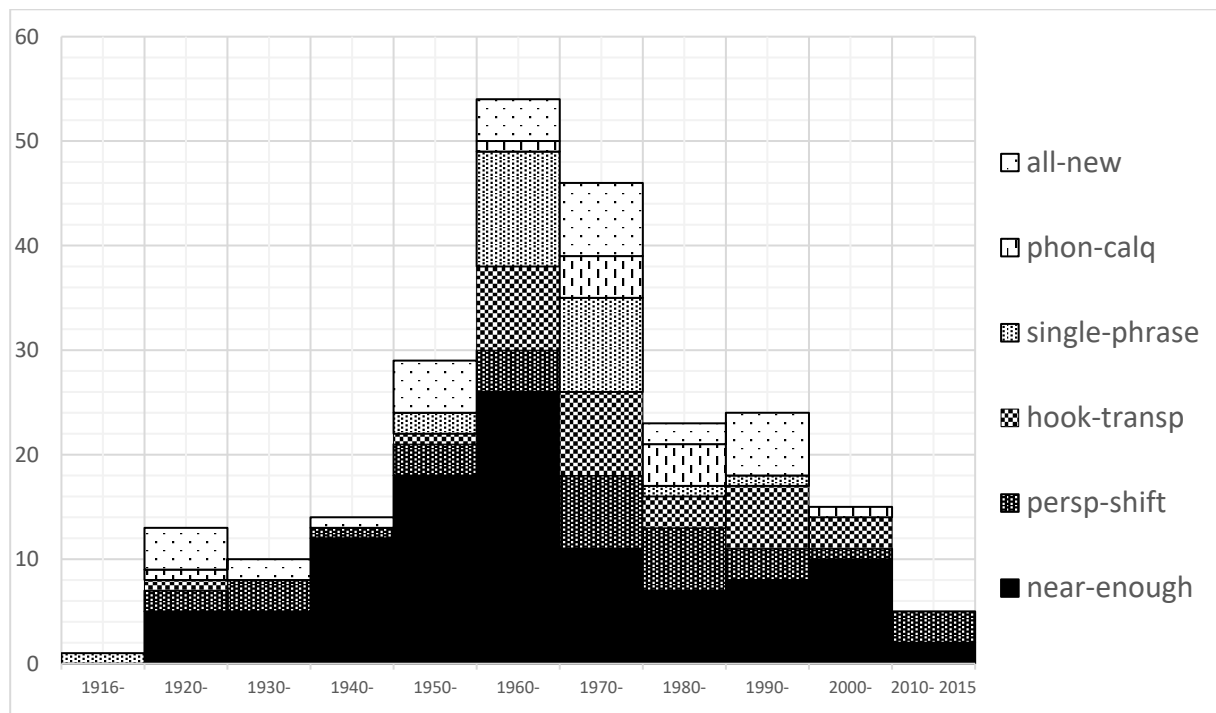


Figure 1. Song translation methods by decades

It can be said again: A historic overview of variation in source text relations was the aim, charting qualitative differences rather than quantitative relations. But differences sorted in a precisely defined taxonomy of TL lyric writing methods generate a pattern of development in nine decades of popular music history. First come the necessary caveats resulting from the chosen method. The two mini-blocks tacked on at both ends are obviously unrepresentative. Also, data from the 1920s and 1930s consist solely of music by Henderson/DeSylva and Jerome Kern. The apparent explosion in the number of pop song translations in the 1960s may be an exaggerated picture – as Henderson, Kern and others continued to be used and translated in later decades. However, given this cumulative effect, the drastic drop in the number of translations in the 1980s seems more significant.

The pattern seems to speak of – or serves to illustrate – the changing conditions of the music business and translation market – at least when American music in Sweden is concerned. I discern three or four different eras which I provisionally name: 1) the sheet music and revue era, 2) the no-holds-barred vinyl era, 3) the translation-phobic anglophone era, perhaps followed by a marginal 4) new-fidelity era. The changing conditions are the establishment of popular music publishers in the early 20th century, the technical advances and international growth in the post-war decades, and post-millennial changes towards mass market commerce as well as more diversity (described by popular music historians such as Frith et al. 2001; Hull 2004; Regev 2013). This historical sketch highlights the factors that seem most decisive for the TL text production.

In the sheet music and revue era, from at least the 1920s to the 1940s, the case appears mostly to be one of either/or (as seen in Fig. 1): Songs were either translated or given altogether different lyrics. As the sheet music market dominated imports, general-purpose translations were favoured. The music was first reprinted, often with both original and Swedish lyrics, and then arranged for dance orchestras and recording companies. At the same time, foreign music was bought and brought to audiences by theatre producers and revue authors who had their own ideas for revue numbers and satiric TL lyrics. The lesser knowledge of English at the time may be another factor; those with English proficiency made use of

it. But there were a lot of changes made, too – mostly in the dark-grey areas of cases I place in the category of *perspective-shift translation*.

The no-holds-barred vinyl era hit its stride in the 1960s and 1970s. The graph shows a boom of growing variation in the handling of source song lyrics. I connect this to artists recording uniquely curated LP albums, songs competing in weekly radio shows and bands touring the country with a partly generic but personally styled repertoire. Most still sang in Swedish, but as original recordings became easier to come by, target lyrics came to be domestic alternatives rather than the only versions ever heard. This apparently favoured freer text experiments, which I call *hook transposition* and *single-phrase spinoff*. Even the 1980s show a prominent use of *phonetic calque*.

Otherwise, the 1980s made a rather swift turn into a ‘translation-phobic’ era, or rather: an internationalised, globalised, anglophone era. Songs by artists like Stevie Wonder, Eurythmics, Billy Idol, Billy Joel, Duran Duran, Michael Jackson, Madonna, and occasional Europeans like Gianna Nannini were enjoyed in their original, canonically recorded versions.³ Very seldom did Swedish artists feel enticed (or get permission) to make covers in Swedish, as had regularly been done with Frank Sinatra’s and Rosemary Clooney’s hits in the 1940s and 1950s, and more than a few of Elvis Presley’s as well. One cause of this may be the growing number of major recording artists wresting control over their own material from music companies, including the licensing of translations. But at the same time, more Swedish artists and bands preferred to write their own songs – in English or Swedish. In the 2000s, Swedish songwriters began to sell their services abroad – doing it all in English.

There is a feeble indication that a new-fidelity trend, seen in the graph’s black blocks, has gained a little relative ground in later decades. This may indicate a larger share of song translations being done in less mainstream situations, as part

3 These were the songwriters with tremendous output in the 1980s I looked at when scouting for my corpus, but there were hardly any Swedish-language covers of their music at all. Of (the artist formerly known as) Prince I found a few.

of special projects, tribute albums or uniquely sought-out personal favourites, therefore carried out with more of a mindset towards fidelity.⁴

3. Six methods of target language lyric writing

The previous chapter presented a mere sketch of a century of international musical commerce, mainly to demonstrate the usefulness of identifying specific methods of TL text production. A corpus consisting of 234 target texts is not precisely a big data set, but it reveals that a variety of approaches have existed in the import of foreign music for domestic performers to sing in various venues and genres. The big picture seems to mirror the cultural history of pop music, but other national markets may show different patterns.⁵ What is more important to me is to make a just account of the textual practices which seem peculiar and somewhat unique to this field. Using traditional terminology of translation studies, they would all go into the general category of adaptation. Can six more precise methods of TL lyric writing be described and defined? How can they be distinguished – or not?

3.1. Near-enough translation

A basic tenet can perhaps be formulated like this: Pop song translators, even when they set out to really translate, generally do not strive to come maximally close, as translators of other kinds of texts do. They seem content with ‘near enough’. Then again, the ‘near enough’ of such TL lyrics is comparable to the nearness of verse translations. Rhymed translation needs certain allowances in order to be done at all. This loose characterisation fits almost half of the target texts in my data. The label ‘near enough’ covers a plethora of changes that are manifold and recurrent, but somehow minor: concerning syntax, exact references, emphases of points, stylistic values and such. Here are two examples, both from the catalogue

4 Such projects and their skopoi are more closely examined in Greenall (2014).

5 As, for example, Kelandrias in this volume does.

of Burt Bacharach, one older, one newer. The first TL lyrics are by a man who, for decades, was a steady workhorse for the music publishers.

Example 1.⁶

Blue on blue, heartache on heartache Blue on blue, now that we are through Blue on blue, heartache on heartache And I find I can't get over losing you	Blått i blått skimrade allting och jag såg allt i rosenrött. Grått i grått tycks mig nu allting sedan du mig sa' att du en annan mött.	Like blue within blue eve- rything shimmered and I saw everything in rosy red. Like grey within grey eve- rything now seems to me since you said you've met someone else.
I walk along the street we used to walk Two by two, lovers pass And as they're passing by I could die 'cause you're not here with me Now the trees are bare, There's sadness in the air, And I'm as blue as I can be [- - -] (Burt Bacharach/Hal David 1963)	Jag går de gator där vi gick, vi två. Jag ser älskande par som går förbi, och då minns jag alltför väl hur det var då. Varje träd står bart. Nu kommer mörkret snart och i mitt hjärta är det höst. [- - -] (Gösta Rybrant 1963)	I walk the streets we walked on, the two of us. I see loving couples who walk past, and then I re- member all too well how it was then. Every tree stands bare. Now the darkness will soon come and it is autumn in my heart.

In 1963, the Swedish language lacked the metaphor of 'feeling blue'. In the choice between the exact word and the correct meaning, Rybrant chose the former, presumably because "Blue on Blue" is also the song's title. The slightly changed message can be paraphrased like this: Everything was bright blue happiness, and I saw *la vie en rose* (because Rybrant quotes the first Swedish TT of that famous French song), but it all turned grey when you left me. There is also a slight heightening in diction of Hal David's colloquialisms ('I'm blue' is rendered as 'autumn in my heart'). Not exact but near enough, and in well-formed Swedish verse, these lyrics were sold as sheet music – but evidently never recorded. In 2007, another Bacharach translation shows slightly different priorities:

6 "Blue on Blue", © Warner/Chappell Music Publishing.

Example 2.⁷

The look of love is in your eyes	Jag ser i dina ögons ljus	I see in the light of your eyes
A look your smile can't disguise	är kärleken som ett rus	that love is like being drunk.
The look of love	Så stark och klar	So strong and clear,
It's saying so much more	lyser den rakt igenom	it glows right through
Than words could ever say	allt du säger nu	everything you are saying
		now.
And what my heart has heard	Och när du tystnar	And when you are quiet,
Well, it takes my breath away	finns här bara jag och du	only I and you exist here.
I can hardly wait to hold you	Jag vill vakna i din värme	I want to wake up in your
Feel my arms around you	komma ännu närmre	warmth,
		come closer still.
How long I have waited	Jag väntade länge	I waited for a long time,
Waited just to love you	visste att du fanns där	knew that you were there
Now that I have found you [- - -]	någonstans i mörkret [- - -]	somewhere in the dark.
(Burt Bacharach/Hal David 1967)	(Karin Klingenstierna 2007)	

In general style, this translation has more of a tint of written poetry. There is more of the semantic meaning but not the hook and title phrase effect of “The Look of Love” (the song’s first words). The imagery of spoken words, silences and embraces is preserved though in different verbal forms. Klingenstierna shows musical sensitivity when the musically marked two-syllable phrases – *hold you, around you, found you* – are set with a pattern of almost-rhyming words – *värme, närmre, länge*; the added ‘darkness’, *mörkret*, is well chosen because the word falls into that euphonious row. (The image is justified later in the source lyrics: “so many nights like this”.) More importantly, the ‘I’ and ‘you’ of the song, their emotions and situation, are the same. But again, a shift of register must be factored in – the tone is less physical, more lyrical. The translation was made by the singer herself for a solo album of intimate, emotional songs, old and new, all with her own lyrics. One might argue that the true connotative value of the American words *blue* and *look*, the slangy passion of David’s lyrics, was not quite conveyed but rather exchanged for something a bit clichéd in 1963 (ex. 1) and a bit more

7 “The Look of Love”, © EMI Music Publishing.

intellectual in 2007 (ex. 2). But generally, these two examples show the normal maximum of closeness in the pop music market of 20th-century Sweden.

To compare with verse translation, certain changes are always to be expected. In his highly critical analysis of rhymed and metric translations, Lefevere (1975) made an inventory: “unwarranted verbosity in diction, clumsy and distorted syntax, betrayal of the sense of both single words and lines” as well as ready-made phrases and clichés, taken from TL verse tradition (1975: 56). Even more, these song translations look like the freer renderings he terms *versions*, where “various features of the source text are compressed, others expanded, [...] facts are described from a different angle, the writers [...] generally range rather freely throughout the source text, moving features and occurrences around as they please” (Lefevere 1975: 78). Also Low (2017: 116), who wants to set a high mark for what is permissible to call translation, acknowledges the fact that details are regularly changed in TL lyric writing. He introduces the concept of “unforced deviation (omission, addition, modification)” to set *adaptations* apart from song *translations*, whose authors only deviate when forced. The translator him- or herself might feel the difference between warranted and unwarranted deviation, but an objective researcher may have difficulties determining the exact degree of force. Who decides? What connects the 104 TL lyrics I see as representative of the ‘normal maximum of closeness’? One could try to draw a line quantitatively: Most TL words have their main source or motivation in the source text, or conversely, at least the central information in the source text appears in the target text in some way or another. This follows Low’s definition of song translation as “a TT where all significant details of meaning have been transferred” (2017: 116).

Forced or unforced, any description of normal practice must factor in a margin for semantic difference. There are examples in my data of manipulations at the micro-level; they can be termed *domestications*, *generalizations* and *explicitations*, following basic terminology of translation studies. Do these three examples (ex. 3–5) constitute less significant details in a whole that remains ‘the same’?

Example 3.⁸

[- - -] I can stretch a greenback dol- lar bill from here to kingdom come I can play the numbers, pay my bills and still end up with some [- - -]	[- - -] Jag kan tänja en tia så att den räcker i fjorton dar Betala alla skulder och ändå ha några ören kvar [- - -]	I can stretch a 10 <i>krona</i> - bill so it lasts for fourteen days, pay all debts and still have a few <i>öres</i> left.
(Mike Stoller/Jerry Leiber 1962)	(Beppe Wolgers 1970)	

Comment: Monetary currency is an obvious case. Though one element, *a greenback dollar*, uniquely current in the SL culture, is exchanged for domestic equivalents, *en tia* and *ören*, all of them serve well to prove the big point the singer makes – “I can [...] make a man out of you / ’cause I’m a woman” (“Jag är kvinna”, the song’s title).

Example 4.⁹

[- - -] This red hot emotion Puts fireworks in motion It looks like the Fourth of July [- - -]	[- - -] Ser solar och stjärnor och tusen lanternor i kärlekens fyrverkeri [- - -]	I see suns and stars and a thousand lanterns in the fireworks of love.
(Dolly Parton 1978)	(Ingela Pling Forsman 1979)	

Comment: One element, *the Fourth of July*, reveals that the songwriter is an American. But the phrase is mainly an expansion on the more general image of fireworks, and fireworks do appear in the TL lyrics along with other general metaphors of passionate love: ‘suns and stars’.

Example 5.¹⁰

[- - -] He goes a-rumble, rumble, rumble on the bottom He goes a-tinkle, tinkle, tinkle on the top	[- - -] Han spelar bompa- bompa-bompa av herr Gershwin Han spelar klinke-linke-linke av herr Strauss	He plays <i>bompa-bompa- bompa</i> by Mr Gershwin. He plays <i>klinke-linke-linke</i> by Mr Strauss.
---	---	--

8 “I’m a Woman”, © SONY/Atv Music Publishing.

9 “Baby I’m Burnin’”, © EMI Music Publishing.

10 “Rumble Rumble Rumble”, “Bompa-bompa-bompa”, © SONY/Atv Harmony (ASCAP), Gehrman’s Musikförlag.

Rumble, rumble, rumble,
tinkle, tinkle, tinkle
Positively won't stop [- - -]
(Frank Loesser 1947)

Bompa-bompa-bompa,
klinke-linke-linke
utan vila och paus [- - -]
(Nils Bie 1948)

Bompa-bompa-bompa,
klinke-linke-linke –
without any rest or pause.

Comment: Given the spatial constraints, additions that make references more explicit (comprehensible for TL audiences) might be less common, but they occur. Loesser's boogie woogie tune is related to George Gershwin's jazz piano, so specifying the piano playing neighbour's composer of choice is not a stretch. His playing the Viennese music of Johann Strauss might be, but both are incidental bits of information supporting the oft-repeated point: being sick of hearing it.

Whatever their significance, such changes cannot always be the direct and exclusive results of dealing with constraints of rhyme or versification. They can be made for any reason – and still be minor. If this category needs a defining question to guard its border, I would have it be this: Do the changes alter the implied bigger context of the story? A conceptualisation I consider workable is to see song lyrics as inherent theatrical texts. If song lyrics are written to be sung before an audience, singing invokes a theatrical situation, in which a sung performance becomes either storytelling or enactment. Even the simplest of song lyrics is a statement which makes you imagine a situation, a bit like a piece of dialogue in an imagined play. The six words that form the lyrics of "Happy Birthday to You" imply that someone (ideally addressed by name) has a birthday, and everyone voicing the words perform the act of congratulating. Every equally useful translation of this song should reproduce that drama; every other possible detail (how to translate 'happy' or 'dear') is minor. Among such minor manipulations I include changes to the level of register or style of language (indicating a voice, mood or personality) or references: bits of information specifying the story, examples proving a point or metaphors illustrating a theme. Such changes regularly occur, at least in my data. The style of the musical arrangement and performance can change more noticeably, of course, just like in same-language cover versions.

Reproducing much the same story with mostly the same story details in the same situation and setting is the case with this song, apart from one line that affects the message and the singer's character.

Example 6.¹¹

[- - -] I know	[- - -] Jag vet	I know
That you're going with another guy	att du kysser någon annans kind	that you are kissing some-
I don't care	Gör det	one else's cheek.
Cause I love you, baby, that's no lie	Jag mår bättre nu än någonsin	Do that.
I love you more than I did when	Jag älskar dig mer än när du var	I feel better now than ever
you were mine [- - -]	min [- - -]	before.
		I love you more than
		when you were mine.
(Prince 1980)	(Niklas Strömstedt 1985)	

The song “When You Were Mine” can be called a cry or complaint from someone who invested much (“all of my money” – “allt jag ägde”) in a lover, who is now seeing another guy (“sleeping in between the two of us” – “en man där emellan oss”). To his fairly close translation (recorded by girl duo Lili & Sussie in 1985) Strömstedt nevertheless adds the line, ‘I feel better now than ever before’, which has no source in Prince’s lyrics. It seems to steer the song in a new direction, which can be paraphrased like this: I feel better and love you more, since I happily realised you are happier with him. There is no demand that song lyrics must always make sense; incongruities in a theatrical text can play out as signs of confusion, irony or a stream of consciousness. But this line does seem to want to introduce another perspective (another view of what love is), making a change of attitude in the persons portrayed in this fragment of a drama. It seems to place itself right on the border to my next category.

3.2. Perspective-shift song translation

So what if changes alter the implied bigger context of the story? I bear no grudge against them, but they seem to constitute a translating method of itself. Though many details are preserved in the TL lyrics, several significant new details are also

11 “When You Were Mine”, © Universal/MCA Music.

added, and it seems this must be for some reason. The word I find that may connect all such various reasons, kinds and effects of changes is *perspective*. A list of cases will exemplify:

Table 2. Examples of perspective-shift translations, with comments

SL song	TL lyrics	Change in perspective
“I Won’t Dance” (Kern/Hammerstein & Harbach & Fields 1935)	“En dans med dej” (Herr Dardanell 1936)	The same activity, dancing with a charming partner, but the negative viewpoint, so humorously pursued by Dorothy Fields, is exchanged for a simpler, positive one – imagine the person asking for a dance, not the one answering no.
“California, Here I Come” (DeSylva & Meyer & Jolson 1921)	“California här är jag” (Hans Alfredson 1960)	The singer is not returning to dear old California (“back where I started from”) but wants to arrive in the style of a movie star – red carpet, flags, champagne and autograph signing.
“Kansas City” (Stoller/Leiber 1952)	“Kansas City” (Eric Sandström 1966)	Instead of describing one’s own plans to grab some wine and a Kansas City baby, the singer encourages someone else to return ‘home’ there and befriend both him and a nice girl he knows.
“I Say A Little Prayer for You” (Bacharach/David 1967)	“Sen drömmar jag en stund om dej” (Sven Olof Bagge 1968)	It is still a daydreaming love song to an absent person, but instead of getting dressed and going to work, the Swedish woman stays home in bed, watches out the window and waits to be proposed to.
“Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue” (Henderson/Lewis & Young 1925)	“Har någon av er sett min tjej?” (Jazz i baljan 1976)	A girl’s physical characteristics are described, but the added joke is that it was the words of a personal ad for a partner.
“Do u lie?” (Prince 1986)	“Ljuger du?” (Makadam 1998)	The cheated-upon person waiting at home is now a wife with plans of murdering the man or at least putting needles in his underwear.

Though doubtlessly derived from source songs, upon close inspection, one finds manipulations of perspective; “facts are described from a different angle” (Lefevre 1975: 78). Target lyricists can be lauded for such efforts. The lyricist Björn Barlach wrote a Swedish version of Harry Chapin’s “A Better Place to Be” (1972), a lengthy narrative about an unusual love affair. Pop music historians called it ‘a cover version that tops the original. Barlach lets the waitress tell the story [instead of the man], giving the events a perspective shift, which is superbly managed by Lill [Lindfors, the singer]’ (Lahger/Ermalm 2010: 205). A term used for precisely this is “gender transposition” (Plasketes 2013: 28). It happens to original song lyrics as well, when cover versions are tailored to fit new performers, but as exemplified above, there are other kinds of perspective shifts besides gender shifts.

To achieve a more precise definition, one can compare *perspective* with the concept of *focalization* in narrative theory (Genette 1980; 1988). This refers to the fact that every story has a teller (regardless of first or third person) who chooses what to include in it or leave unsaid, “an information-conveying pipe that allows passage only of information that is authorized by the situation” (1988: 74). I find this to be a workable definition: If the same story, situation or activity is described, with essentially the same participants in the same setting or place, but filtered through another character or seen from another angle, the result is a perspective-shift translation. Seeing all translating as rewriting, one must imagine a rewrite of the story with another focaliser allowing passage to different bits of information about largely the same ‘reality’.

Sometimes it seems like the situation was viewed out of focus, through a blurrier lens. This source song, with lyrics by Dorothy Fields, has many strophes, amusing and acerbic. In Swedish, there is only one sentimental strophe.

Example 7.¹²

A fine romance! With no kisses!	Sån skön saga du nu ger oss	Such a lovely fairytale you
A fine romance, my friend, this is!	En skön saga, var är Eros?	now give us.
We should be like a couple of hot	När månen lampan tände på	A lovely fairytale. Where is
tomatoes,	himlapällen	Cupid?
But you're as cold as yesterday's	du hade dina tankar på andra	When the moon lit the lamp
mashed potatoes.	ställen	in the heavens
A fine romance! You won't nes-	Vi här vandra så mol tysta	your thoughts were in other
tle,	Det finns andra som blir kyssta	places.
A fine romance, you won't wres-	Jag drömt om svärmeri i	We wander here in stark si-
tle!	månskenet's glans	lence.
I might as well play bridge with	Men var är det nånstans?	There are others who get
my old maid aunts!	Nej jag får ej nån chans	kissed. I dreamt of romanc-
I haven't got a chance.		ing in the shining moonlight.
This is a fine romance! [- - -]		But where is it?
		No, I don't get any chance.
(Jerome Kern/Dorothy Fields	(Sven Paddock 1937)	
1936)		

The two lovers portrayed in it, the 'you' and 'I', are similarly positioned. No detail in the TL lacks basis in the SL. But many vital points are missing; there are no quips about boring things like playing bridge and (later in the song) Jell-O and the news film *March of Time*. Were those references and their jokey connotations untranslatable? These TL lyrics were recorded on 78-rpm several times around 1937, so the solution evidently worked. There are a few TL song lyrics (in my data) that can be accused of being dilutions or banalisations (cf. Lefevere 1975: 50: "the relatively frequent use of ready-made utterance in rhymed translation"), but they also fit under the heading of perspective-shift.

The defining question would thus be: Do the added details point in a similarly differing direction though the song treats the same subject matter? That is the case with this song, apart from one line that seems to place the story in a different place:

12 "A Fine Romance", "En skön saga", © Warner/Chappell Music Publishing, Universal Music Publishing, Edition Wilhelm Hansen.

Example 8.¹³

[- - -] There is a rose in Spanish Harlem	[- - -] Det finns en ros nånstans i Spanien	There is a rose somewhere in Spain,
A red rose up in Spanish Harlem	en mörkröd ros nånstans i Spanien	A dark red rose somewhere in Spain.
With eyes as black as coal that look down in my soul	Jag tappat vett och sans,	I lost my senses and control.
And starts a fire there and then I lose control	har inte någon chans	I have no chance.
I have to beg your pardon	En sådan skönhet har jag inte sett nånstans,	Such a beauty I have not seen anywhere, not anything which attracts me more.
I'm going to pick that rose	nånting som mera lockar	
And watch her as she grows in my garden	Jag tänker plocka den för det är kärleken jag plockar	I am going to pick it, because it is love I am picking.
(Phil Spector & Mike Stoller/ Jerry Leiber 1960)	(Olle Bergman 1985)	

By most accounts, *Spanish Harlem* refers to a part of Manhattan which, at least in the 1950s, housed many Puerto Rican immigrants. One suspects the TL lyricist did not know this or care to research it. He took it as referring to Spain – an obvious relocation. Puzzling choices and peculiar songs will be found, or simply mistakes made in haste. To categorise, one perhaps must appraise what the main intent seems to be. Here, the love for the rose of a girl who grows up in a (possibly rough and shabby) city of cement becomes more like a (banal) song about a holiday romance; the girl is not brought to Sweden to ‘grow in my garden’. Same kind of girl, different kind of male gaze: hence perspective-shift.

3.3. Lyric hook transposition

With this category, we are right in the middle between opposites: a song clearly based on a source song (its idea and overall form), but just as clearly changed into something different. What is changed is not just a number of details but the setting, subject matter or premises of the story. What is kept can be described as the logical links or rhetorical thrust of the SL song. These seem to be potent factors that fire many TL lyricists’ inspiration. In that, I see a relation to what is normally

13 “Spanish Harlem”, © SONY/Atv Music Publishing, EMI Music Publishing, ABKCO Music International.

called a pop song's *hook*: its title phrase or most distinctive feature. It is a fuzzy concept because there are so many variants to the recipe. It is most obvious when songs are built to present an argument or depict a movement from A to B (A hook to B hook in certain parlance) – a proposition followed by an evaluation, elaboration or conclusion. A *hook transposition* would be when the TL lyricist keeps the movement but moves the story. Again, I hope a row of examples (ex. 9–13) can elucidate. To simplify maximally, we see the almost opposite of perspective-shift; the point is the same but the place is different.

Example 9.¹⁴

[- - -] You can bring Pearl, She's a darn nice girl, but don't bring Lulu. You can bring Rose with the turned up nose, but don't bring Lulu.	[- - -] Bjud fröken Rut, som ser ingenting ut men aldrig Lulu. Bjud du Charlott' för då får du nå' flott men aldrig Lulu.	Invite Miss Rut, who has no looks but never Lulu. Please invite Charlott' because then you get a swell one but never Lulu.
Lulu always wants to do, what we boys don't want her to, [- - -] (Ray Henderson/Lew Brown & Billy Rose 1925)	Lulu kommer bråk åstad om hon ej blir påkostad [- - -] (Ernst Rolf & Berco & Nils Gustaf Granath 1925)	Lulu will create a ruckus if she is not treated grandly.

Comment: The core idea of this song is a continuous listing of girls' names. A hidden idea may lie in the fact that the nice girls, Pearl and Rose, have American-Jewish names, and Lulu is jazz-crazed, possibly dark-skinned ("wild as any Zulu"). In Swedish, all names but one are exchanged for Swedish girls, and Lulu's antics are somewhat nudged towards Swedish manners, even more so in two extra refrains that seem to be the TL lyricists' own elaboration on the theme.

14 "Don't Bring Lulu", © EMI Music Publishing.

Example 10.¹⁵

[- - -] Ol' man river, Dat ol' man river He mus' know sumpin' But don't say nuthin', He jes' keeps rollin' He keeps on rollin' along. [- - -] (Jerome Kern/Oscar Hammerstein II 1927)	[- - -] Hisingsippi ett avloppsdikey, som ej i Västsverige har sin like, en massa dynga, som bara flyter till havs. [- - -] (Ivar Dahlberg 1972)	<i>Hisingsippi</i> , a sewage ditch, with no equal in Western Sweden, loads of dung just floating out to sea.
--	--	--

Comment: The translator cobbles together the name *Hisingsippi* from the Mississippi River and the island Hisingen which is situated where the Göta älv flows into the sea in the city of Gothenburg. The satiric song comments on the communal sewage systems, but something of the pathos and pain of “Ol’ Man River” gets relocated too, parodically.

Example 11.

There is a rose in Spanish Harlem A red rose up in Spanish Harlem It is a special one, it's never seen the sun It only comes out when the moon is on the run [- - -] (Phil Spector & Mike Stoller/ Jerry Leiber 1960)	I dunklet på en gård på Söder, där finns en ros vars färger glöder. Den skjuter upp ur grus i gårdens bleka ljus i skuggan av ett gammalt rivningsfärdigt hus, [- - -] (Seth Inge 1961)	In the gloom of a backyard in Södermalm there is a rose whose colours glow. It springs from the gravel in the dim light of the backyard in the shadow of an old house fit for demolition.
--	--	---

Comment: The story is moved from Spanish Harlem to Södermalm, which was, at least until the 1960s, known as a poorer part of Stockholm and a site for derelict houses and tenements.

15 “Ol’ Man River”, © Universal Music Publishing.

Example 12.¹⁶

I'll be home with bells on	Jag kommer hem på söndag	I am coming home this Sunday.
I'll be home with bells on	Jag kommer hem på söndag	I am coming home this Sunday.
Trim the tree and wrap the presents,	Sätt på kaffe, gör en kaka	Put coffee on, make a cake.
turn the Christmas music on	Det var länge sen vi sågs	It was a long time since we met.
This Christmas I'll be home	Jag kommer hem på söndag	I am coming home this Sunday.
with bells on [- - -]	[- - -]	
(Dolly Parton 1984)	(Alf Robertson 2002)	

Comment: There is no geographic transposition of Dolly Parton's Christmas message, but the theme of a family gathering is transposed from Christmas to any fine Sunday.

Example 13.¹⁷

[- - -] It's just another manic Monday	[- - -] En härligt vanlig ledig fredag	A gloriously ordinary Friday off,
I wish it were Sunday	Min nära till att le-dag	my close-to-a-smile day,
Cause that's my fun day	Bra idé-dag	a good-idea day,
My I don't have to run day	Min bjuda nån på te-dag	my invite-someone-to-tea day.
It's just another manic Monday	Så går en härligt ledig fredag	So goes a glorious Friday off.
[- - -]	[- - -]	
(Prince 1986)	(Mats Wärnblad? 1998)	

Comment: The CD production *Barbie Hits* took Prince's song "Manic Monday" (and 14 other existing hit tunes) and put it in the mouth of Barbie, the plastic doll, to describe another and much nicer day of the week. The Swedish rhymes are not the best, but they recognisably follow the pattern of the SL song.

In translation studies, *transposition* was first coined as a term by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) to designate a special kind of paraphrase. But it has been used in other ways; notably, Hervey and Higgins (1992: 28) makes it "a cover-term for the various degrees of departure from literal translation that one may resort to in

16 "With Bells On", © EMI Music Publishing.

17 "Manic Monday", © Universal/MCA Music.

the process of transferring the contents of a ST into the context of a target culture”. A subclass under that is *transplantation*, by which “SL names are replaced by indigenous TL names” (ibid.: 29). As for *hook*, I draw support from Swedish music producer and hit song publisher Stikkan Anderson who describes a similar process when (cavalierly) commenting on his practice as TL lyricist:

You don't ponder deeply what pop song lyrics really say. You perceive a few key words, which help you to remember the melody. If anything, you absorb the idea the song expressed. The textual content is not important. What matters is the idea, the 'hook' [- - -] In my lyrics, I did not follow the original lyrics to the melodies I bought. I took the car body and put a new chassis on it, so to speak (Quoted in Hedlund 1983: 80, my translation).

The jargon of a Swedish tradesman is certainly not a formal definition. Most attempts at definitions highlight musical properties and must tackle wide-ranging, diverse examples. From a lyricist's point of view, the sum of those properties might be perceived as a vehicle that can help the lyrics make a point, telegraph an idea or connect some key words. As seen in the examples above, how a previous lyricist made use of that vehicle may also be a major influence (though Stikkan denied it).¹⁸ If not realised in the form of a refrain or chorus, most song lyrics would create some structure or pattern on the regularities of the music, through repetition or symmetry, or at least starting or ending the song with some pointed phrase. I thus see *lyric hook transposition* as a method where the point made in the SL lyrics, embedded in the musico-rhetorical structure, is not copied, just imitated and moved to another place, character or frame of reference.¹⁹

Seeing the examples above, other terms might come to mind; some can be called *domestications* or *parodies* – if domestication is understood as an adaptation to TL cultural norms or specificities and parody as an aping of form or content for

18 Anderson's view is examined by Axelsson in this volume, using an Anderson TL lyric which makes exactly this sort of half-translation of a SL song, transposing the skeleton of the story to a different setting.

19 Comparable but unrelated uses of the term *transposition* appear in the study of drama staging and translation (Törnqvist's book *Transposing Drama*, 1991), adaptation studies (Hutcheon 2013) and translational semiotics (Gorlée 2015), and of course music studies. It seems to be a term that can and must be precisely defined whenever it is used.

mocking purposes. Even better, the word *travesty* would serve if used in its pure sense: ‘in different clothes’. The songs in my data are ‘redressed’, but not all involve differences in SL/TL norms or cultural items, nor are they all comic or presuppose knowing the original song. The following is a rather earnest transposition of Sting’s song, “Fields of Gold”, in which the lovers do not watch fields of yellow crops but a horizon where the heavens meet the sea. Neither is necessarily more Northern English or Scandinavian than the other.

Example 14.²⁰

You’ll remember me when the west wind moves	Jag ska finna dig i en västanvind där himlen har sin början	I will find you in a west wind where the heaven’s beginning
Upon the fields of barley	Du ska få dom ord som fanns i-	is.
You’ll forget the sun in his jealous sky	nom mig där havet har sitt slut	You will have the words that were within me
As we walk in fields of gold		where the sea’s end is.
[- - -]	[- - -]	
I never made promises lightly	Har aldrig nånsin svikit dom	[I] have never ever betrayed
And there have been some that	löften	the promises,
I’ve broken	dom drömmar som vi byggde	the dreams we built together.
But I swear in the days still left	tillsammans	A last one may come true
We’ll walk in fields of gold	En sista kanske kan bli sann	where the sea’s end is,
We’ll walk in fields of gold	där havet har sitt slut	where the sea’s end is.
[- - -]	där havet har sitt slut	
	[- - -]	
(Sting 1993)	(Johan Thorsell 2007)	

Sting’s lyrical set-up becomes a platform for the TL lyricist’s own poetic pursuit. The act of moving some gist of a song – “the idea the song expressed”, transferring it “into the context of a target culture” or any frame of reference that a TL lyricist may choose – is most aptly described as an act of transposition. Perhaps the metaphor of musical transposition is telling: When a melody is moved to a different key or pitch or arranged for a different musical instrument, the impression it all makes is inevitably (at least slightly) different, but the internal links would be (largely) the same.

20 “Fields of Gold”, © EMI Music Publishing.

3.4. Single-phrase spinoff

This is the category where it really gets dicey. Is it translation or not? I will have to push that question to a later stage – or direct it towards the actual evidence. There is an assortment of cases where TL lyrics seem partly source-inspired, and partly (the greater part) derived from somewhere other than the SL lyrics. So naturally, in these new TL songs, there may be an even greater variety of content or authorial intention. The best phrase I can find to describe this relation is ‘random fidelity’. A workable way to get a hold on the method may be to focus on the actual words in a somewhat pedantic, prosaic comparison. In a *single-phrase spinoff*, the TL lyricist has taken only fragments from the source lyrics and has spun her/his own lyrics around them, as in this case:

Example 15.²¹

[- - -] I'm just outside of town	[- - -] I ovisshet jag går	In uncertainty I go.
And I'll soon be at your door	Du säger ingenting	You say nothing.
But maybe I'd be wrong to hurry	Hur kan det ha förändrat sej	How can things have changed
there	så här	like this?
I'd best keep out of town	En gång var lyckan vår	Once happiness was ours,
And worry you no more	bekräftad med en ring	sealed with a ring.
Maybe someone else has made	Jag undrar om en annan du	I wonder if you love another
you care	har kär	person.
Have all of my dreams gone	En gång när jag var din vän	At one time when I was your
wrong	du sa kom tillbaks igen	friend
My beautiful dreams gone wrong	Nu står jag vid din dörr	you said: come back again.
If I came home tonight	och jag vet att du är hemma	Now I am standing at your
Would you still be my darling?	Men jag får inget svar från	door,
Or have I stayed away too long?	dej	and I know you are home.
		But I get no answer from you.
(Frank Loesser 1943)	(Dan Ryde 1965)	

Inferring from the few facts given, Loesser's man is a travelling man gravely hesitating to contact someone he has not spoken to for years, asking himself, "Have I Stayed Away Too Long?" In the Swedish song, the man repeatedly tried to reach

21 "Have I Stayed Away Too Long", © Kobalt Music Publishing.

the woman, who may be his fiancée, and laments or reprimands her: ‘I get no answer from you’. Specifically, one sees that the suggestive phrase *out of town* is left out, and the words ‘happiness’, ‘ring’, ‘you said: come back’ lack a source in the source text. The target text adopts two phrases from Loesser: “at your door” and “someone else has made you care”. Indubitably, the last word of the bridge (the B section of the AABA song, usually a very focused spot) makes a phonetic calque of “made you care” (“du har kär”). Beyond these phrases, the TL lyricist invents a different situation, relation, backstory and plan of action – a different drama.

On a deeper (or very general) level, one may argue that both songs portray a man in love who is unsure of the other person’s feelings. But there are cases where the almost opposite happens: The underlying notion or story is from somewhere quite else, and the only links to the source song are on the surface.

Example 16.²²

Raindrops are fallin’ on my head	Regnet det bara öser ner	The rain just pours down,
And just like the guy whose feet are	och jag är så blöt om både skor	and I have gotten so wet in
too big for his bed	och strumpor. Du	my shoes and stockings. You
Nothing seems to fit	kanske inte trodde	may not have believed I was
Those raindrops are fallin’ on my	att det var allvar när jag sa’	serious in saying I was com-
head, they keep fallin’	att jag kommer.	ing.
So I just did me some talkin’ to the	Men var är du och var har du	But where are you, and
sun	våran sol	where have you put that sun
And I said I didn’t like the way he	som jämt skulle lysa på den	of ours,
got things done [- - -]	väg vi vandra? Du [- - -]	which always was to shine
		on the road we would wan-
		der? You ...

(Burt Bacharach/Hal David 1969)

(Sven Olof Bagge 1970)

The girl singing the Swedish song is altogether different from the unbothered guy who is “never gonna stop the rain by complainin’”. The girl complains. I strongly suspect that her story was inspired from another source: the German *Schlager* “Ich steh im Regen” (Ralph Benatzky 1937), often sung in Swedish by Zarah Leander.

22 “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ On My Head”, © Warner/Chappell Music Publishing.

In it, a girl waits for an untrustworthy man, the rain hiding or symbolising her tears. In specific terms, this TL lyricist picked up the notions of *rain*, *sun* and *tears* (later in the song) and pieced them together in a story of his own.

Certainly, there can be a closer translation made of “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ on My Head” than “Regnet det bara öser ner”. In some other cases, one might raise an argument of untranslatable cultural connotation. Long-distance travelling men in Sweden are fewer or different. “Mexican Divorce” (Bacharach/David) deplures the typically American (?), easy way for people to divorce in the 1970s; in the Swedish song “Skilsmässa” (lyrics by Britt Lindeborg), we are instead asked to pity a man whose wife left him because of feminist ideas. “D.W. Washburn” (Stoller/Leiber) tells about a drunkard resisting calls from Salvation Army preachers; “D.W. Persson” (lyrics by Stikkan Anderson) is a con-man who got rich by marrying widows but got himself conned and killed in the end. Romance scam scoundrels may seem funnier to Swedes than the Salvation Army. Be that as it may, the TL method applied is one in which a few words from just about anywhere in the SL song gave just a kernel of inspiration – or decoration – to the TL song.²³

Spin-off is the normal word for an artistic product, book, film or TV series (or service or enterprise) which is new but inspired by an existing work or enterprise – or rather some aspect of it. The term *spin-off song* is used sometimes for similar inspirations: new songs based on old ones. Song translation theorists Apter and Herman (2016: 57) use the term to distinguish between adaptation: “a work rooted in another work, and a spin-off, a work merely suggested by another work”. Some cases here are repurposed songs, but most are regular commercial target market products, indebted to their source in music, mood and intended function, but lyrically source-derived only in certain – sometimes random, sometimes perhaps strategic – spots.

23 In cases where the likeness is in the title and nowhere else, one is tempted to hypothesise that it was reassuring for original rights-owners or administrators, if their acquaintance with foreign lyrics largely stayed on the level of the song title. But that is another investigation.

3.5. Phonetic calque

The sound of words in popular song lyrics being as important as (or more important than) sense is an oft-stated tenet. Also, in translation studies, *phonetic* or *phonemic translation* is recognised as a translation method in itself (see Lefevere 1975; Hervey/Higgins 1992: 78; Susam-Saraeva 2015: 122, as “sound imitation” in song covers; cf. Smith-Sivertsen 2016). To avoid ambiguity, I adopt the term *calque* from Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), who use it for bit-by-bit translations of SL phrases or compound words. Correspondingly, a *phonetic calque* is a bit-by-bit TL construction based on the phonetic properties of a source text. How consistently or precisely done must be judged very liberally. The method differs from all others above in that it can be combined with any one of the above. Also, for a phonetic calque to register, it seems it has to be in the exact same spot as its source in the SL song.

There are cases of exclusively phonetic inspirations, such as when the sound of one line in the song “Button Up Your Overcoat”, namely “you belong to me”, must have given the idea for the comic ditty “Du e för lång för mej” (‘You’re too tall for me’). Phonetic likeness provides eternal inspiration for repurposed songs and parodies, for instance a jokey song in a revue: “Ål man river” (‘Eels that people tear apart’) and a well-known drinking song: “O.P. river” (‘The O.P. Anderson Aquavit has some bite’), both obviously derived from “Ol’ Man River”. But the method can also be seen in normal commercial use – *near-enough translation* can be enriched with phonetic calque wherever circumstance allows.

Example 17.²⁴

[- - -] <u>Long</u> ago and far away,	[- - -] <u>Långt</u> , långt bort för	Far, far away long ago,
	länge sen,	
I <u>dreame</u> d a <u>dream</u> one day	en <u>dröm</u> kom <u>jämt</u> igen.	a dream always returned.
And now that <u>dream</u> is here be- <u>side</u> me.	Och nu står <u>drömmen</u> vid min <u>sida</u> .	And now the dream stands at my side.

24 “Long Ago (and Far Away)”, “För länge sen”, © T B Harms Company (ASCAP), Universal Music Publishing, Nils-Georgs Musikförlag.

<u>Long</u> the skies <u>were</u> overcast, But now the clouds have passed: You're <u>here</u> at last!	<u>Länge</u> nog <u>var</u> himlen skymd. En fri och öppen rymd vi <u>ser</u> igen.	All too long heaven was ob- scured. A free and open space we look at again.
Chills run up and down my spine, <u>Aladdin's</u> lamp is mine, The <u>dream</u> I <u>dreamed</u> was not de- nied me. [- - -]	Det jag hetast drömt av allt <u>här</u> <u>tagit</u> din gestalt, ty <u>det</u> var <u>dig</u> jag skulle bida. [- - -]	What I dreamt of, more heat- edly than anything, is embodied in you, because you were the one I was meant to wait for.
(Jerome Kern/Ira Gershwin 1944)	(Gösta Rybrant 1946)	

From English to Swedish, there are historically cognate words one can look out for, but there is more than that. The underlining (ex. 17) marks calques that involve singular vowels and consonants – alliterations or assonances – as well as words with a or no similar meaning.

Hook transposition is a natural combination with phonetic calque. It very much looks like sound likeness gave the idea to sing a paean not to Bill but to one's own first car:

Example 18.²⁵

[- - -] But along came Bill, Who's not the type at all. You'd meet him on the street and never notice him; [- - -] (Kern/Wodehouse & Hammer- stein 1927)	[- - -] Så kom min bil, min allra första bil Den hade redan gått en tiotu- sen mil [- - -] (Sven Gunnar Larsson 1975)	Then came my car, my very first car. It had already run some 100.000 km.
---	---	---

The following *single-phrase spinoff* of the Bacharach hit song, “The Look of Love”, has a new story: The boy addressed is prompted to live a tidier, thriftier life. The two /l/ sounds in the title phrase become /v/ sounds in Swedish, and there are further signs that the TL lyricist absorbed the sound pattern of the original song:

25 “Bill”, © T B Harms Company (ASCAP), Universal Music Publishing.

Example 19.

[- - -] The <u>l</u> ook of <u>l</u> ove It's saying so much more Than <u>w</u> ords could ever <u>s</u> ay And <u>w</u> hat my heart has <u>h</u> ear <u>d</u> Well, it <u>t</u> akes my <u>b</u> reath awa <u>y</u> I can <u>h</u> ardly wait to hold you	[- - -] Du <u>y</u> et så <u>v</u> äl att det du helst vill ha är <u>v</u> ärmen här hos <u>m</u> e <u>j</u> den <u>v</u> ärme som jag <u>h</u> ar och jag <u>g</u> ärna skänker <u>d</u> e <u>j</u> Så lägg <u>a</u> v den gamla stilen	You know very well that what you most want is the warmth here with me, the warmth I possess and gladly give to you. So lay off those old man- ners.
Feel my arms around you How long I have waited Waited just to love you [- - -] (Burt Bacharach/Hal David 1967)	Sälj den nya bilen Glöm bort dina brudar Sluta gå på krogen [- - -] (Mats Hallgren 1968)	Sell the new car. Forget your broads. Stop going to bars.

The earliest example in my data is from the 1920s. It is an *all-new target song*, whose lyricist jettisoned the nonsensical content of the source song but got inspired by the thrice-repeated title phrase:

Example 20.²⁶

[- - -] I wonder, I wonder, I won- der, I wonder how I look when I'm asleep! I wonder, I wonder, I wonder, How do I look when I am counting sheep? [- - -]	[- - -] Den kommer, den kom- mer, den kommer, den kommer nog en vacker dag till mej, då glädjens och kärlekens blommer, dom spirar opp liksom förgät- migej. [- - -]	It comes, it comes, it comes, it surely comes to me some bright day when the flowers of happi- ness and love will sprout like forget-me-nots.
(Ray Henderson & B.G. DeSylva & Lew Brown 1926)	(Herr Dardanell & Ernst Rolf 1927)	

The phonetic likeness (and repetition) of *wonder* and *kommer* is the only link between these two songs. As always, one wonders where to draw the line. Is the borderline case one single, prominent vowel? The song “Spanish Harlem” was used (yet another time) as the melody source for a paean to the indigenous people

26 “I Wonder How I Look When I’m Asleep”, © Warner/Chappell Music Publishing.

of Guatemala (written by Ingela Pling Forsman for an LP starring Arja Saijonmaa, 1989). Phonetically, just the /arl/ sound connects “A red rose up in Spanish Harlem” to “en hoppets väg i Guatemala”, but the thrust towards the place name in the oral flow of the song is so like the original that it surely must have inspired it – phonetically more than by some tenuous Latin American linkage.

3.6. All-new target lyrics

Writing new lyrics to old music is eternal. Technically and intuitively, that is not a translation method, but aspects of translational action can be involved even so. Terminologically, the music business groups together all lyrics but the original ones (the ones first copyrighted with the music) under the term *lyric adaptation* – because all fall under similar legal provisions. That subclass has another subclass, lyric adaptations in foreign languages, which are easily grouped as *translations* regardless of fidelity. One can compare with musicology and literary studies, in which the term *contrafactum* stands for all secondary lyric writing, reuse and repurposing of music: “the substitution of one text for another without substantial change to the music”, one example being the “textual adaptation of secular melodies for sacred use”, to and from Latin as well as within one single language (Falck/Picker 2001). The varying uses of the terms adaptation and translation seem eternal as well.

A repurposed song will naturally require a different set of lyrics. The clearest examples – in my Swedish data – are from the first part of the 20th century, when a big share of all-new target lyrics stems from the then-current tradition of revues and cabarets, whose producers used foreign hit tunes as mere melody vehicles. They got altogether different and topical lyrics, such as these:

Table 3. Examples of repurposed revue songs, with comments

SL song	TL lyrics	All-new content
“Raggedy Ann” (Kern/Caldwell 1923)	“Författarevisan (Poeter och potäter)” (Karl Gerhard, <i>Karl Gerhards revy</i> 1925)	‘The author song (poets and potatoes)’: a name-dropping cavalcade around Swedish literary figures and their dining habits
“Bye Bye Blackbird” (Henderson/Dixon 1926)	“Min lilla mascot” (Karl-Ewert, <i>Folkets hus revy</i> 1927)	‘My little mascot’: about the popularity of carrying good luck charms
“I’m A Dreamer Aren’t We All?” (Henderson, DeSylva & Brown 1929)	“Om och om igen” (Gösta Stevens, <i>Ernst Rolfs revy</i> 1930)	‘Again and again and again’: a satiric song about stars and movie-making in Hollywood

But all-new lyrics have been written for songs in the general market as well, for instance “I’ve Told Every Little Star” (Kern/Hammerstein 1932), which resurfaced in a dance band’s repertoire with quite different words: “Har bara mej till dej” (1973, ‘I have only myself to give you’), or the Christmas song “Christmas Without You” (Parton/Goldstein 1984) which became a paean to music as shared joy, “Sången och glädjen” (1992). The links between these lyrics, source and target, are neither lexical nor phonetic. The TL lyricist needs not even have read the original lyrics.

But even so, an original song can exert some influence. To be in this category, the influence must be below the level of sense and sound, which means pure shape. One final example will demonstrate. A near-enough translation – of a song from the Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls* (published as sheet music) – is contrasted with all-new lyrics written for the Swedish star Lill Lindfors and her nightclub act.

Example 21.²⁷

[- - -]	[- - -]	[- - -]
And if I were a watch I'd start popping my spring	Hela rymden är full av ljus, färger och sång	Fyra kvinnor har ringt efter bil i svenska hem,
Or if I were a bell I'd go ding dong, ding dong ding!	och av dånande klockors "Ding dong ding ding dong".	för att öka vår folkmängd med en, två, tre, fyr...Fem!
[- - -]	[- - -]	[- - -]
Ask me how do I feel, ask me now that we're fondly caressing	Fråga mig hur det känns.... När jag står här med dig vid min sida	Medan fru Björk av sin man får bevis för att han tycker om'na,
Well, if I were a salad I know I'd be splashing my dressing	ser jag himmelens portar som öppnar sig breda och vida.	så under presenningen ner i Stadsgårn har en svårt att somna.
Ask me how to describe this whole beautiful thing	När jag vandrar dit bort på månstrimmornas spång	Livet fortgår, men toner tar slut. Räknar vi dem
Well, if I were a bell I'd go ding dong, ding dong ding!	hör jag dånande klockors "Ding dong ding ding dong". ²⁸	blir det trehundraåtti plus en, två, tre, fyr, fem. ²⁹
(Frank Loesser 1950)	(Gösta Rybrant 1953)	(Björn Barlach 1975)

The theatrical translation is as faithful as song translations normally are – near but not exact. The translator Rybrant discards the quirkiest of the source text's metaphors (the watch run by springs, the salad dressing) and inserts other things: the gates of heaven and moonbeams. Those religious or cosmic metaphors look like perspective-shifters, but when the character in the musical is a Salvation Army sergeant, it feels wrong to say he changed her character. Easier to preserve is the bell metaphor, by just copying the onomatopoeic "ding dong, ding dong ding" in a slightly changed order to make the rhyme.

27 "If I Were a Bell", © Kobalt Music Publishing.

28 The whole universe is full of light, colour and song, / and of the *ding dong ding ding dong* of booming bells. / Ask me how does it feel. / When I stand here with you by my side / I see the gates of heaven opening, broad and wide. / When I walk to them on the footbridge of moonbeams / I hear the *ding dong ding ding dong* of booming bells.

29 Four women have called for a taxi in Swedish homes / to increase our population by one, two three, four – five persons! / While Mrs. Björk from her husband gets proof that he loves her / someone under the tarpaulin in the Stadsgården harbour has a hard time getting to sleep. / Life goes on, but musical notes will end. If we count them / we get three hundred and eighty, plus one, two, three, four, five.

Barlach's nightclub lyrics run on a wholly new idea: to tell, in song, what is happening in the world while the song itself is sung. The chords on the *ding dong* refrain draw attention; they form an even, falling movement, like chimes – Fmaj7, Dm7, Bbmaj7, C9, F6/9. For a successful musical approximation, placing on them an equally even string of one-syllable words seems natural. Barlach uses counting: four women giving birth to 'one, two, three, four – five' babies. Next, in a metatheatrical turn, the song lyric counts its own musical notes as the song ends: '380 plus one, two, three, four, five'. Was this idea inspired by Loesser's five *ding dongs* – were they the source text? Or is the idea lodged in the musical phrase, impossible to miss, mandatory to use? In any case, we have gone from 'translating from source lyrics' to 'writing an independent text' without finding any sharp limits in between.

4. A six-step fidelity spectrum of song translation

A narrative in a song lyric may consist of just some fifty or so words. Though generically formatted, every new song may strive to be unique in its own small way, and any one single word may contribute lots to the overall impression or connotative value – more evident from a sung performance than the printed text. If generalisations are to be made about translation strategies of such short, sundry songs, they are best done bottom-up, inductively, by gathering evidence and trying to organise it. Especially so since TL lyric writing seems to offer plenty of room for individual TL lyricists to follow personal whims or aspirations, to develop idiosyncratic styles – like any rhymers do – or to infer cultural context in making points – like any theatre writer does. Once established in the music or entertainment business, TL lyricists often seem entrusted to design target lyrics at their own discretion, certainly so if they are also music publishers or singers with clout initiating projects for themselves. On occasion, specific rights agreements or performance situations may dictate certain solutions, which good TL craftsmen will readily provide. All in all, a lot of variability has characterised the liberal mores of pop song translation in the 20th century. To conclude with a list, the results

indicate six basic things a TL lyricist might choose to do whenever circumstance allows:

1. Try to get as near as possible to the source song's content, but be free to change specific references or incidental facts in pursuit of an overall verse scheme or well-crafted target song (*near-enough translation*).
2. Stay reasonably near to the subject matter or story of the source song, but be free to fiddle around with the 'information-conveying pipe' to attain some more workable point of view (*perspective-shift translation*).
3. Adopt the 'point-making vehicle', the rhetorical structure or general thrust of the source song, but redress it with another setting, set of characters or frame of reference (*lyric hook transposition*).
4. Take a hint or two from the source song, but essentially write your own song and story to its melody (*single-phrase spinoff*).
5. Do one of the four things just mentioned and also try to imitate the source song phonetically, especially in rhetorically effective spots. Alternately, take inspiration only from the sound, not the sense, of the source song's language (*phonetic calque*).
6. Do none of the above; write your own lyrics. But the mere way they cling to the music may approximate the original song regardless (*all-new target lyrics*).

To solve the problem of drawing a line between translation and non-translation, I suggest drawing five lines instead. It does not make it much easier; borderline cases indicate that TL lyric strategies form a spectrum, or prototype schemas, rather than clearly distinct methods. At one end, one should be safe to call both process and product translation – *equifunctional* also in the sense of preserving a textual content. Going towards the other end, this conservative, strict or full sense of translation would gradually thin out. However, as shown above, there are no sharp limits. The existence of such a spectrum, of a variety of professional habits, individual idiosyncrasies and particular purposes, must be included in a nuanced picture of the practice of the field of popular music exports and imports.

If the original music is to be used and sung, any target lyric will necessarily be adapted in the sense of words being fitted to a particular piece of music. No matter how much of the source content they preserve, singable TL lyrics will make a musical approximation of the vocal line (or verse shape) inherent in the original song – informed at some stage by whether TL performers have gotten or have taken the right to make musical changes. Textually, TL lyricists can approximate loosely or closely as much as they are able. We cannot stop anyone from calling all of this *translation*, just as we cannot force everyone to start calling everything *contrafacti* instead, but it can be useful to have a more precise terminology if an exact description is needed. The picture I paint is based on American hit songs in Sweden, but the definitions and distinctions are conceived so they may be universally applicable.

I think the liberal mixture of translation and non-translation in song translation is a universal tendency, somehow part of the essence of song tradition itself. A more specific reason may be found in the concept of copyright, which in 19th-century music publishing applied to the music in printed notation, with no extra provision for lyrics. This allowed the practice (which must have existed for as long as songs have existed) of changing, misremembering, re-versifying and generally appropriating the songs you learn, sing or use for any purpose, to continue through the whole of the 20th century. It would partly be restricted by the new landscape of legality but also partly escape the fidelity norm established in other aesthetic and literary fields a century before. Verbal fidelity has remained a very optional thing in song translation and interlingual cover performances. I have provided an evidence-based taxonomy and an exploratory study of song translation behaviour. Both are somewhat sketchy, restricted to two languages, one target-culture and to just the textual content of the lyrics. Hopefully, an overview and compendium of cases can support and inspire broader and deeper investigations and discussions.

Bibliography

Apter, Ronnie / Herman, Mark (2016): *Translating for Singing: The Theory, Art and Craft of Translating Lyrics*. Bloomsbury Advances in Translation. London etc.: Bloomsbury.

Desblache, Lucile (2019): *Music and Translation: New Meditations in the Digital Age*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Falck, Robert / Picker, Martin (2001): “Contrafactum.” In: *Grove Music Online*. <<https://doi-org.libproxy.helsinki.fi/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06361>> [20.07.2020].

Fochi, Anna (2019): “A Translational Continuum: The Multiform Migration of the Iconic Song ‘O sole mio.’” In: *InTRAlinea* 21. <http://www.intralea.org/current/article/a_translational_continuum> [20.07.2020].

Frith, Simon / Straw, Will / Street, John [eds.] (2001): *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Genette, Gérard (1980[1972]): *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Levin. New York: Cornell University Press.

Genette, Gérard (1988[1983]): *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Translated by Jane E. Levin. New York: Cornell University Press.

Gorlee, Dinda L. (2015): *From Translation to Transduction: The Glassy Essence of Intersemiosis*. Tartu: University of Tartu Press. (= Tartu Semiotics Library. 15).

Greenall, Annjo K. (2014): “Scandinavian popular song translations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and their skopoi.” In: Epstein, Brett J. [ed.] (2014): *True North: Literary Translation in the Nordic Countries*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 191–209.

Hervey, Sándor / Higgins, Ian (1992): *Thinking Translation: A Course in Translation Method: French to English*. London / New York: Routledge.

Hull, Geoffrey P. (2004[1998]): *The Recording Industry*. 2nd edition. London / New York: Routledge.

Hutcheon, Linda (2013[2006]): *A Theory of Adaptation*. With Siobhan O’Flynn. 2nd edition. London / New York: Routledge.

Lahger, Håkan / Ermalm, Lasse (2010): *De legendariska åren – Metronome Records*. Stockholm: Premium publishing.

Lefevere, André (1975): *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint*. Assen / Amsterdam: Van Gorcum.

Low, Peter (2013): “When Songs Cross Language Borders: Translations, Adaptations and ‘Replacement Texts’.” In: *The Translator* 19(2), 229–244.

Low, Peter (2017): *Translating Song: Lyrics and Texts*. Translation Practices Explained. London / New York: Routledge.

Marc, Isabelle (2015): “Travelling Songs: On Popular Music Transfer and Translation.” In: *IASPM@journal* 5(2), 3–21. <https://iaspmjournal.net/index.php/IASPM_Journal/article/view/738> [20.07.2020].

Nord, Christiane (2005[1988]): *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. 2nd edition. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Plasketes, George (2010): “Further Re-flexions on ‘The Cover Age’: A Collage and Chronicle.” In: Plasketes, George [ed.] (2013): *Play it Again: Cover Songs in Popular Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate publishing. 11–42.

Regev, Motti (2013): *Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in Late Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Sanders, Julie (2015[2005]): *Adaptation and Appropriation*. 2nd edition. London / New York: Routledge.

Smith-Sivertsen, Henrik (2016): “Pop- og rockteksten som klang/musik.” In: Hellström, Viveka / Strand, Karin [eds.] (2016): *Det sjungna ordet: forskningsperspektiv på mötet mellan text, musik och framförande*. Stockholm: Musikverket. 112–114. <<https://musikverket.se/svensktvisarkiv/files/2016/08/Det-sjungna-ordet-konferensrapport.pdf>> [20.07.2020].

Susam-Saraeva, Şebnem (2015): *Translation and Popular Music: Transacultural Intimacy in Turkish–Greek Relations*. New Trends in Translation Studies. Oxford etc.: Peter Lang.

Susam-Saraeva, Şebnem (2018): “Interlingual Cover Versions: How Popular Songs Travel Round the World.” In: *The Translator* 25(1), 42–59.

Törnqvist, Egil (1991): *Transposing Drama: Studies in Representation*. London: Macmillan.

Vinay, Jean Paul / Darbelnet, Jean (1958): *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais*. Paris: Didier.