Translation and Performance – Nina Simone sings Aznavour and Brel

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Summary

In this paper changes in the translation process related to cultural and social aspects will be explored by linking Translation Studies to Performance Studies. A strong focus is on shifts that occur due to a change in the performing artist and their individual performance styles, which are likely to have influenced the songs and lyrics. To do this, two songs will be examined that were translated from French to English by different lyricists/translators in the early 1960s and performed in the translated versions by Nina Simone. The songs are Charles Aznavour's "Il faut savoir" (1961) and Jacques Brel's "Les désespérés" (1965). The first was translated as "You've Got to Learn" (1962), the second as "The Desperate Ones" (1968). Through these songs, it is possible to scrutinize different performance styles and artists in the respective original versions and the modifications in the translations.

Introduction

This paper aims to link Translation Studies to Performance Studies, to explore cultural, social, and political aspects and changes thereto caused by the translation process. To do this, the focus will be on shifts due to a change in the performing artist and their individual performance styles and public images, which are likely to have influenced the song and its lyrics.

As an example, the paper centres around two songs that were both translated from French to English by different translators (respectively lyricists) in the early 1960s and performed in the translated version by Nina Simone. The first one is Charles Aznavour's "Il faut savoir" (1961), which became known as "You've Got to Learn" (1962); the second Jacques Brel's "Les désespérés" (1965), translated as "The Desperate Ones" (1968). This choice allows to scrutinize two different performance styles and artists in the respective original versions and how their work was modified to fit a very different artist and genre in the translation. In addition to this, the question arises if the switch from male to female artist caused additional

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shifts, and if so, how this was dealt with. But before delving into this, a closer look should be taken at Translation and Performance Studies and the way those two disciplines can work together.

Translation Studies and Performance Studies

The analysis presented here is based on the principle that Translation Studies have undergone several turns over the past decades and continue to do so. The sociological turn enlarged translation research to include the people behind the translations and their social networks. Taking this as a starting point, the next step is the performative turn, which, as Michaela Wolf points out, "marks a movement away from words, artefacts and textual research towards the understanding of the performative processes of cultural practices" (Wolf 2017, 30). The paper uses this premise to analyse the importance placed on the performing artist and their influence on the translation process and final product.

Over the past years, a change of perspectives has taken place that has raised the awareness of the sociological component within Translation Studies (cf. Simeoni 2007, 14). This is the social turn – a result of the cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s. With the cultural turn Translation Studies go from the text to the persons behind it, thereby opening up a network of relationships that can be explored using sociological theories (cf. Wolf 2010). The descriptive approaches of Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, the norm-related restrictions described there, as well as the manipulation of texts, and most of all André Lefevere's approach of rewriting, all point in this direction.

It is important to keep in mind that "Translation Studies are continuously exposed to various different contextualizations and communications or communicative arrangements" (Wolf 2017, 28). These arrangements can easily be described as performances of various kinds.[2]

Therefore, "performance, as the term is used in anthropology, seems to be especially well suited for Translation Studies analysis" (Wolf 2017, 32). Translation sociology or Socio-Translation Studies can be used as a basis from which to explore the performative elements that are found in the translation process and/or shape or influence it. Norm-related restrictions, for example, are linked to an audience's expectations and subsequently the reception of a performed translation.

Performance Studies explore the cultural, social, and political dimensions of performance as a form of communication. We all 'perform' in our everyday social interactions. The term performance, in this context, can be defined as "a particular behaviour with a communicative purpose and an explicit or implied audience" (Micu 2022, 1). We 'play a role', which can, in some cases, result in being inauthentic. In any case, it can be noted that our lives are filled with performances every single day through which we shape our realities, worldviews, and identities. Consequently, Performance Studies are based on the belief that both the cultural and social world are made up of performances. The field explores cultural events

or practices as performances to gain insight into how they operate, as well as their social, cultural, and political effects. "When we hear the word *performance*, we tend to think about staged or artistic practices, but performance more broadly constitutes an essential part of human behaviour and social dynamics, reaching well beyond the carefully curated events we might see in a theatre or art gallery." (Micu 2022, 1 – emphasis in original) One important and interesting point Andreea Micu highlights, however, is that "the field of performance studies is crucially concerned with what performance *does*, even more than what performance *is*" (Micu 2022, 13 – emphasis in original).

One of the aspects that performances share with Translation Studies is that they "can travel through multiple media channels, and in the process can transform into something very different from their original intent" (Micu 2022, 3). This obviously links to the idea of context as being one of the defining parameters in both Performance and Translation Studies. Andreea Micu expresses this as follows: "From a performance studies perspective, a performance is defined by its *framing*. This means drawing certain spatial and temporal boundaries and looking at what happens within those boundaries as performance." (2022, 5 – emphasis in original) She differentiates between cultural and aesthetic performances. The first are defined as

> framed events with a beginning and an end, audiences and actors or performers, however broadly understood. Examples of cultural performance include plays, concerts, circus acts, storytelling, puppet shows, carnivals, parades and ritual ceremonies […]. Cultural performances are intentionally presented to an audience. (Micu 2022, 6)

Aesthetic performances, on the other hand, are "a step removed from the everyday and are meant to be encountered by audiences as aesthetic experiences, such as going to the theatre, the opera, a concert, or a performance art event" (Micu 2022, 6).

Another aspect both Performance and Translation Studies have to cope with is the idea that their respective subject matters are perceived as somewhat shady and deceptive. In Performance Studies there has been a "longstanding belief, especially in Western culture, [that] equates performance with make-belief, and performing with pretending. The implication here is that something that is performed must necessarily not be entirely real, or respond to duplicitous intention" (Micu 2022, 13). Performance is thus equated with deceit (cf. Micu 2022, 13). This matches the equally long-lived conviction of some that translators are traitors using their skills to promote secret agendas as "testified by the oft-cited Italian dictum *traduttore, traditore* (translator, traitor), any translation necessarily involves a certain slippage from the source text to which it claims loyalty, through distortion, subtraction, or addition" (Morton 2023, 90 – emphasis in original).

On a more positive note, a third common feature of Translation and Performance Studies is the inherent interdisciplinarity of both fields. In the case of Performance Studies, Andreea Micu (2022, 17) states that it is

> an interdisciplinary field of research that combines theory and practice to examine performance as an essential element of human life and society, from performance art, theatrical spectacle, dance, music, circus, carnivals, festivals, parades and expressive movement, to all kinds of sacred and secular rituals and ceremonies, everyday life performances and the performative elements of identity, such as gender, race and sexuality. All forms of human action with communicative purpose, whether conscious or unconscious, could be considered performance and therefore be included as topics to research in performance studies.

It is furthermore pointed out that in Performance Studies one does not only explore

> performances as staged practices and aesthetic objects, but also as expressions of broader cultural and social processes. The field's investment in studying cultural and social phenomena as processes rather than fixed objects entails that the conceptual categories it uses to do so, such as performance and performativity, are bound to perpetually change and expand. (Micu 2022, 17)

While all of these shared traits make it obvious that pairing Translation with Performance Studies can result in exhaustive research, there is one major difference between the two disciplines. While Translation Studies traditionally put the main focus on texts as their object of study, Performance Studies focus "on the body as an agent of knowledge production and transmission" (Micu 2022, 17). However, instead of seeing this as an obstacle to possible cooperation between these two disciplines, it is indeed an advantage since Performance Studies can complement "other academic fields that have traditionally privileged text or media as objects of study" (Micu 2022, 17) such as Translation Studies. Moving on from this brief theoretical overview, it is time to take a look at the performers and their songs. In keeping with the theoretical approach presented thus far, the analysis first focuses on the songs and the people behind them as well as parts of their social networks before moving on to translation shifts and performative elements.

Charles Aznavour and "Il faut savoir"

"Il faut savoir" was published in 1961. When analysing popular music there are a few technical details to take into account for each song as these commonly undergo some changes in the translation process, especially when this includes a change of performer. These details are the duration of the respective song, its tempo and tonality as well as the instrumentation. "Il faut savoir" in its original version has a duration of 03:13 minutes and was recorded in C major and Moderato. The singer was accompanied by a big band which emphasises the song's crooning style. "Il faut savoir" can be categorised as a *chanson de variété*, which is a form of popular music aimed at a large audience. It originated in the music halls of the late

19th century. *Variété* is commercially oriented and can sometimes be seen as a rapidly shifting product. In the compositions, this is visible in the simple melodies and catchy lyrics, which are structured so as to stay in the audience's memory.

This kind of chanson was seen as the counterpart to the *chanson à texte* or *chanson rive gauche*. Accordingly, the *chanson de variété* was linked to the venues of the right (conservative) bank of the Seine River. At the time, *variété* had a central position within the chanson field, but it was challenged by the new developments. While the *chanson rive gauche* stood for a certain awakening and subversion, the *chanson de variété* can be seen as conservative.

In addition to the technical side of things, the people involved are, of course, of particular importance. In this case, Charles Aznavour acted as an A-C-I (*auteur-compositeur-interprète*) in the truest sense of the term since he composed the music for this song, wrote the lyrics and performed it himself. The song was released by Barclay Records, the label Charles Aznavour had been signed to since 1957 and which was founded and led by Eddie Barclay who also produced "Il faut savoir". In addition to the record label, there was also a music publisher, in this case, Édition Musicale Djanik. The song was arranged by Paul Mauriat.[3]

Charles Aznavour (1924-2018) had his first experiences in the entertainment business as a child and teenager. Following World War II he was able to build on that and have a long-lasting career. From 1946 to 1952 he was part of the duo Roche et Aznavour, which allowed him to establish numerous useful contacts in the field of French chanson before embarking on his solo career.

Charles Aznavour was also an esteemed lyricist and over time worked with many of the key players of the field. At the same time, the income thus generated made it possible for him to sustain his life as an artist. While Aznavour the lyrist was already well established within the field, Aznavour the singer was still on the periphery. It was not until the mid-1950s and the song "Sur ma vie" that he was equally recognised as a singer and composer.

Charles Aznavour is one of the few truly internationally known stars of French chanson. His first world tour took place in 1960 already (cf. Aznavour 2010, 208). One of the secrets of his success may well be that he always sang in the language of the country he performed in. When asked why he did not just perform in French no matter where he was, Aznavour replied:

> Ça, c'est un choix. Bien sûr, je pourrais chanter en français, mais alors je m'adresserais à un public beaucoup plus restreint. Parce que je crois que pour véhiculer un art, il faut être compris de beaucoup de gens. Vous savez, avec la meilleure volonté du monde, la plus grande vedette anglaise peut faire un spectacle à Paris, mais si elle va à Clermont-Ferrand c'est déjà différent. Les groupes font quelques villes, mais vous imaginez Sinatra ou Streisand à Limoges ? Trois cents personnes… (Calvet 1988)

It was important to him to accommodate his audience in this way and meet the audience's expectations.

In his songs, Aznavour often explored the boundaries of what could or could not be said. Another of his unique characteristics was his dramatic "style aznavourien" (Marc 2014, 55) and his voice – "its distinctiveness was in the end its great strength: it had an inimitable and instantly recognisable sound. Its throaty, hoarse quality added an extra dimension of Gallic passion to the already strong sensual and emotional content of the lyrics" (Hawkins 2000, 95) – as well as his singing style.

Aznavour's singing is described as crooning in the manner of Bing Crosby, Dean Martin or Frank Sinatra. This vocal style saw its prime in the 1950s but emerged with the development of the floor-standing microphone in the 1920s. It allowed the singer to use softer tones and still be audible to the entire audience of a music hall. At the same time, the performer had to articulate very clearly due to the sensitivity of the microphone. This meant that the audience could focus more on song lyrics than before. Crooners are characterised by their warm voice, soft vocals, and a certain intimacy with the audience. Peter Hawkins (2000, 95) describes crooning as one of the secrets of Charles Aznavour's success:

> What has been the secret of this sustained success? What are the characteristics that have ensured his continuing popularity? He is first and foremost a 'crooner' in the 1950s American mould, singing perennial love-songs in a romantic way for a largely feminine audience […]. The orchestrations of these are usually characterised by soaring strings and dramatic climaxes, in a manner reminiscent of Nat 'King' Cole or the Sinatra of "Strangers in the Night".

In this way, Charles Aznavour introduced new stylistic elements to French chanson. Therefore, his music had an innovative function. Peter Hawkins elaborates on this and also explains the connection to the tradition of chanson in the form of Edith Piaf's music:

> In general terms, Aznavour contributed to the genre of chanson over a twenty-year period from 1946 onwards a new realism in the depiction of sentiments, and a musical sophistication based on the image of the worldly-wise American crooner of which Sinatra is probably the best-known example. Aznavour broadened the range of sentiments and situations that chanson could express […], and leaving behind the modesty and discretion typical of the generation of Charles Trenet. It is perhaps no surprise that his début was under the auspices of Edith Piaf, for whom he wrote some songs: this influence probably oriented him towards a kind of emotional directness for which she was famous […], where love for an impoverished couple is very close to despair and suicide. Aznavour deals with similar extremes of sentiment, but in a more middle-class environment, but with a similar undertow of despair and anguish. In this respect he becomes a disenchanted chronicler of the sexual mores of his times, opening up the genre of chanson to deeper and less conventional attitudes and feelings and paving the way for his more adventurous and innovative contemporaries. (Hawkins 2000, 101f)

Hawkins thereby positions Aznavour as a connecting link between traditional chanson and the new tendencies of the post-war era as well as that between light popular music (or easy listening) such as the *chanson populaire* and more 'sophisticated' pieces containing social statements that were typical of the A-C-Is of that time. The main topics found in his songs are "the unsatisfied quest for happiness, the human suffering of estranged immigrants, lovers and artists in a ruthless world" (Poulet 1993, 196). They mirror the range that makes Charles Aznavour accessible to a large audience. This too is a trademark of his music.

Charles Aznavour saw the key to a good song in the first lines, which have to catch the audience's attention. The lyrics play the leading role and always take preference over the music. With this, he aimed to address the audience's emotions and minds.

"You've Got to Learn"

"Il faut savoir" was translated into English under the title "You've Got to Learn" in 1962 and first presented in this new version by Charles Aznavour himself. In 1965, then, Nina Simone took on the song and made it part of her repertoire. The person behind "You've Got to Learn" is Marcel Stellman who also translated German and French hit songs such as Billy Mo's "I'd Rather Buy Myself a Tyrolean Hat" (1963), Drafi Deutscher's "Marble Breaks and Iron Bends" (1966), or Françoise Hardy's "Find Me a Boy" (1964). From the mid-1950s to 1989 Marcel Stellman (1925-2021) was a record producer with Decca and in that capacity worked with artists such as Cilla Black, Petula Clark, and Tony Bennett amongst many others. Besides this, Stellman was an esteemed songwriter, lyricist, and translator of lyrics. He did not always use his real name but also worked under the pseudonyms Gene Martyn and Leo Johns. "In 1962 he [Marcel Stellman] told Decca that Charles Aznavour would be a major star in the UK if he would record in English." (Leigh 2021) Following this, Stellman went on to translate a total of ten Aznavour songs into English, including the iconic "You've Let Yourself Go" (1962). In 1960 Marcel Stellman received the Ivors Award from the Society of Distinguished Songwriters.

In the English version sung by Charles Aznavour, "You've Got to Learn" has a duration of 02:43 minutes. It was first released in 1962 on the album *The Time is Now*. Nina Simone's version of "You've Got to learn" from 1965, produced by Hal Mooney, had a duration of 02:36. So both English versions were shorter than the French original. "You've Got to Learn" in Nina Simone's rendition was first released by Philips as a single along with "Ne me quitte pas". Following this, they released it as part of the album *I Put a Spell on You* (the song then has a duration of 02:40 minutes). On the same album, Nina Simone also sings another Aznavour piece: "Tomorrow Is My Turn". This song, too, was translated by Marcel Stellman from the French original "L'amour c'est comme un jour" (1962).

Jacques Brel and "Les désespérés"

In his 2016 book on Jacques Brel (1929-1978), Jens Rosteck (2016, 46) sees the Belgian chansonnier as inspired by folk music and the post-war cabarets of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In the early days of his career, Brel attracts the attention of Angèle Guller, a Belgian radio host and chanson expert, who consequently arranges for the young artist to record a demo tape for Philips (cf. Rosteck 2016, 54). This was helped by the fact that Guller's husband, Clément Dailly, was the label's artistic director at the time. Angèle Guller is said to have been attracted by the expressiveness of Brel's music, as well as the urgency and dark tints in his voice (cf. Rosteck 2016, 54). Guller said of Jacques Brel that he "a fait entrer, dans la chanson d'expression française, une tonalité qui lui manquait" (Guller 1978, 136).

From Philips, the demo tape made its way to the hands of Parisian music executive Jacques Canetti who consequently signed Brel to his record label. Canetti was known to have a particular talent for finding hit songs. He was also called "Monsieur Chanson" (cf. Rosteck 2016, 59) and was a central figure in the field of French chanson. Another important figure in the field was impresario Charles Marouani, who worked with most of the great names in French chanson, including Jacques Brel.

At first sight, Jacques Brel and his singing and performance style may not have been an obvious choice for a new, successful chanson artist in 1950s France. At the time, audiences often preferred crooners such as Yves Montand or Gilbert Bécaud, wordsmiths such as Boris Vian, or serious, poetic artists such as Georges Brassens (cf. Rosteck 2016, 60). However, over time Jacques Brel managed to captivate audiences with his unique style and the content of his songs. In 1961 he played Paris' iconic Olympia as the main act for the first time – an absolute highlight at that stage of Jacques Brel's career. It would, however, go beyond the scope of this paper to retell the entire trajectory of this career. Instead, it is essential to take a closer look at the song to be analysed here: "Les désespérés".

The 1965 song was written by Jacques Brel himself and composed by renowned pianist Gérard Jouannest, who accompanied and worked with Brel for many years. It was first released by Barclay as the B side of a single featuring the song "Fernand". Jens Rosteck (2016, 73) points out that "Les désespérés" is dominated by a piano solo that is very similar to the *adagio assai* from the second movement of Ravel's piano concerto in G-major. Perhaps it is this aspect of the song that particularly appealed to Nina Simone and her passion for classical piano music.

Jacques Brel is attributed with a somewhat intense performance style. He would often be so engrossed in his songs and seemed to invest such a severe amount of energy into getting his feelings and messages across to the audience that he would be on stage running with sweat – even though he had hardly moved due to the restrictions of the floor-standing microphone. The main movements accompanying the songs were facial expressions and hand gestures. The first would, in Brel's case, often result in a grotesquely distorted, grimacing face while the second consisted mainly of fluttering, trembling, somewhat shaky hands. But a bit more on that later.

"The Desperate Ones"

Before "The Desperate Ones" found its way into the repertoire of Nina Simone, it was originally translated as part of the musical revue *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*. For this Off-Broadway production that started in 1968 and ran for over four years, Eric Blau and Mort Shuman translated 25 of Brel's songs into English, among them "Les désespérés".

> [In] the early 1960's, Mort Shuman, who had been enjoying enormous success as a composer of popular music, principally of the rhythm-and-blues genre, met Brel in Paris and became not only a disciple, but a friend of the singer-composer as well. Disenchanted with some of the adaptations of his songs that had been begun [sic] appearing on American records, Brel entrusted Shuman with a number of his most important works. (Nat Shapiro in the liner notes to Blau/Shuman 1968)

As Nat Shapiro points out, Mort Shuman was already a well-established figure in his field by the time he and Eric Blau began to work on *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*. Just a few examples of the many successful songs written by Mort Shuman: "I Can't Say No to Your Kiss" (1962) performed by Helen Shapiro, Elvis Presley's famous "Viva Las Vegas" (1964), or "Bring Him Back" (1967) performed by Dusty Springfield.

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris turned out more successful than originally anticipated as shown by the length of time it ran and the international adaptations in, for example, South Africa, The Netherlands or Denmark. In 1975 the revue was also made into a film. All of this shows that the song translations and their performance worked in the target culture and were acceptable to the target audience. Nat Shapiro touches on this when he writes that "Brel, unlike certain delicate French wines, can travel. When handled with passion and intelligence, his message can be distinctly heard in English. His songs, in the Blau-Shuman versions, maintain their power, their ability to shock, amuse, penetrate, wound and arouse" (Nat Shapiro in the liner notes to Blau/Shuman 1968).

Nina Simone

Nina Simone's (1933-2003) musical roots are to be found in gospel and the classical piano training she received from a very early age. In her autobiography, she cites both as influencing her career, music and performance style. Of gospel she says that it taught her "about improvisation, how to shape music in response to an audience and then how to shape the mood of the audience in response to my music" (Simone 1993, 19). Her classical training also shaped how Nina Simone saw and interacted with her audience:

> My attitude to performing was that of a classically trained musician: when you play you give all your concentration to the music because it deserves total respect, and an audience should sit still and be quiet. […] If an audience disrespects me it is insulting the music I play and I will not continue, because if they don't want to listen then I don't want to play. An audience chooses to come and see me perform; I don't choose the audience. (Simone 1993, 52)

This inbetweenness Nina Simone found herself in was both an asset and a setback. It allowed her great musical freedom due to her talent and extensive training in classical music paired with the above-mentioned ability to improvise she derived from gospel. This made it somewhat easy for her to venture into popular music. The setback, however, is that Nina Simone is hard to place as she described in her autobiography:

> [C]ritics started to talk about what sort of music I was playing and tried to find a neat slot to file it away in. It was difficult for them because I was playing popular songs in a classical style with a classical piano technique influenced by cocktail jazz. On top of that I included spirituals and children's songs in my performances, and those sorts of songs were automatically identified with the folk movement. So saying what sort of music I played gave the critics problems because there was something from everything in there, but it also meant I was appreciated across the board – by jazz, folk, pop and blues fans as well as admirers of classical music. They finally ended up describing me as a 'jazz-and-something-else-singer'. (Simone 1993, 68)

A rather clumsy and inelegant description for such a talented musician. Nina Simone goes on to say that if she had "to be called something it should have been a folk singer, because there was more folk and blues than jazz in my playing" (Simone 1993, 69). Perhaps classifying her as a folk musician, especially in the early 1960s, would not only have solved the critics' genre question but also allowed to place Simone amongst those artists active in the Civil Rights Movement, which she was very passionate about and spoke about in her music.

> After the murder of Medgar Evers, the Alabama bombing and 'Mississippi Goddam' the entire direction of my life shifted, and for the next seven years I was driven by civil rights and the hope of black revolution. I was proud of what I was doing and proud to be part of a movement that was changing history. It made what I did for a living something much more worthwhile. I had started singing because it was a way of earning more money; then fame came along and I began to enjoy the trappings of success, but after a while even they weren't enough, and I got my fulfilment outside of music […]. That changed when I started singing for the movement because I justified what I was doing to myself and to the world outside. (Simone 1993, 91)

This blurring between the private life of an artist and their performances can be seen as a form of boundary crossing that Andreea Micu places in a long tradition. She states: "[P]recisely because of this ability to cross boundaries, performance has become deeply intertwined with various forms of political protest and activism […]. The relationship between performance and political protest has a long and rich history." (Micu 2022, 5) It is also this relationship that may allow fans and audiences to get a glimpse of the real person behind the stage persona and what they stand for and believe in. "The audience's reception of the performance is […] deeply marked by their understanding of the performer's identity." (Micu 2022, 23)

Shifts

In the following paragraphs, some of the shifts that took place between the original songs and their translated versions are highlighted. First off, those on a textual and musical level and then shifts pertaining to the performing styles of the individual artists.

Between "Il faut savoir" and "You've Got to Learn" some shifts related to the poetic and prosodic match can be found. Johan Franzon (2008) identified three areas essential to translating songs and ensuring the translated versions are still singable in the target language. The first is the poetic match, which refers to a song's structure, such as rhyme scheme, stanza segmentation and keywords used in the lyrics. The second is the prosodic match, which refers to a song's melody, including rhythm, intonation and stress, as well as the syllable count. The third area is the semantic match, which refers to the story being told in the song including the mood, characters or people mentioned in the lyrics, descriptions, metaphors, and word painting. "Il faut savoir" and "You've Got to Learn" differ as far as rhyme scheme and keywords are concerned, as well as in the syllable count. This becomes already apparent in the first four lines of the songs. "Il faut savoir" starts as follows: "Il faut savoir encor' sourire / Quand le meilleur s'est retiré / Et qu'il ne reste que le pire / Dans une vie bête à pleurer." The first lines of "You've Got to Learn", on the other hand, were translated as: "You've got to learn to show a happy face / Although you're full of misery / You mustn't show a trace of sadness / Never look for sympathy." This example shows that in the translation process shifts took place on the poetic and prosodic level. The story of the song thus remained intact for the target audience, but the translator tweaked the structure and melody to ensure the singability of the song.

The same is true for "Les désespérés" and "The Desperate Ones". Here, too, shifts can be found as far as the poetic and prosodic matches are concerned. This means that there are differences between the French and English versions in the stanza segmentation and syllable count. An example of these shifts is the translation of the second stanza. In the French original Jacques Brel sings "Ils ont brûlé leurs ailes / Ils ont perdu leurs branches / Tellement naufragés / Que la mort paraît blanche / Ils reviennent d'amour / Ils se sont réveillés / Ils marchent en silence / Les désespérés." This was translated into English as: "Just like the

tiptoe moth [sic] / That dance before the flame / They burn their hearts so much / That death is just a name / And if love calls again / So foolishly they run / They run without a sound / The desperate ones." As in the example of "Il faut savoir", here too, the lyrics had to fit not only a certain story and emotional level, but, most of all, they had to be singable.

Even though the translations were done by different people, they seemed to use the same approach. Their main goal was to come up with a singable version of the respective song in English. This means that they only changed the songs as much as was necessary to achieve their target. The singability can also be described as the performability of a song, which means that the translation's function, in this case, is to be performed on stage. After this brief look at the shifts on the textual and musical level, it is time to scrutinise the performance styles of the individual artists involved with these songs, starting with Charles Aznavour and "Il faut savoir".

To get a clear picture of the way Aznavour performed his song at the time, a video recording of him performing it live in 1962 was used.[4] In it, Charles Aznavour stands in front of the microphone. One hand is free to gesture throughout the song. The singer has a solemn facial expression and wears a dark suit and tie as was customary for most performers of this genre at the time. The voice is, of course, the main medium here that is used to transport emotions. It is supported only by gestures and facial expressions – especially in the eye area. There are hardly any other body movements.

Next, the question arose whether there would be shifts in Aznavour's performance style when changing from the French to the English version of the song. For this, a video of him performing "You've Got to Learn" live in 1977 was used.[5] Apart from changes in the song's instrumentation, the other very obvious difference is the switch from a floor-standing microphone to a hand-held one. Charles Aznavour again wears a suit, but no tie. The microphone is now held in one hand, which allows for some rhythmic bodily movement. However, again, it is the facial expressions, particularly the eyes, that are used to convey emotions.

Jacques Brel performed "Les désespérés" in a sort of rhythmic talking with very clear enunciation. His voice is forceful but never rushed, creating a symbiosis with the piano. Since no video of Jacques Brel performing "Les désespérés" could be found, another song from the album is used as an example of Brel's performance style: "Fernand".[6] In this video Brel performs "Fernand" live in Lyon in 1966. It is striking that the camera focuses almost exclusively on the facial gestures, eyes and hand movements of the singer, who stands in front of the microphone wearing a dark turtleneck and trousers. There are hardly any other body movements to speak of.

Just like Jacques Brel, Nina Simone also opted for a recitative approach in her rendition of "The Desperate Ones". However, her voice is less forceful and turns into a whisper several times. The piano is also less of an independent voice in this version but really just a means of background support for the singer. Nina Simone's performance style can be explained using a video of a live performance of "Tomorrow Is My Turn", another translated version of a Charles Aznavour song – "L'amour c'est comme un jour" (1962)[7] – that is also part of

the album *I Put a Spell on You*.[8] Simone is shown sitting at a piano accompanying herself. All feelings are expressed using voice, facial expressions, and movements of the upper body. This restriction is due to the sitting position and placement of the microphone on top of the piano.

Conclusion

In the liner notes to *I Put a Spell on You* Roger Short said about the two Aznavour songs chosen for the album that both "You've Got to Learn" and "Tomorrow Is My Turn" "have the kind of explicit, meaningful lyrics that Miss Simone particularly relishes". This statement suggests that even though the shifts mentioned above took place in the translation of the song lyrics, the performers had more in common than might be expected. Even regarding their respective performance styles. While Jacques Brel often exhausted himself on stage, Charles Aznavour and Nina Simone gave the limelight to the songs themselves and kept the performance to a minimum. The music is the real star, while the performer is the transporting medium.

Building on this, it is important to remember that songs are multimodal entities made up of various parts, one being the performance style. As an artist's performance changes, so does the way a song may be perceived. The same is true for the performers themselves and their public images or what they stand for. Nina Simone, for example, stands for one of the voices of the Civil Rights Movement. This means that her performance of these two French chansons links the songs to a political tendency that they were not originally thought to be a part of. But Nina Simone's image is an umbrella that envelops her entire repertoire, including the songs mentioned here and makes them available to an entirely new audience that views the songs in this context.

In the translation process shifts often occur when there is a change from male to female performer as is the case in the present examples. However, in this specific case, the differences between the French and English versions cannot be linked to gender. As explained above, Nina Simone's political involvement and public image shape the songs rather than her gender.

In conclusion, it can be said that Performance Studies can offer valuable insights into research in Translation Studies, particularly regarding multimodal research topics. The two disciplines complement one another and it would be desirable to see more joint work in this area as it could enrich both fields.

Endnotes

1 Stefanie Barschdorf is an independent researcher, with a PhD in Translation Studies, focusing on the translation of popular music. She is a member of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) and Association for Translation Studies in Africa (ATSA).

2 The "cultural technique of translation: social and cultural contexts, in which translation activities are entrenched, make translation appear to be a process in which performativity is intrinsically inscribed. The agents partaking – symbolically or really – in the entire translation process 'make,' 'build,' or 'create' the translation and finally 'finish it off'. The translation process is therefore conceived of as a performative process, a process that on the basis of social action constitutes meaning, transcends borders and creates representation by deliberately exploring differences during the process." (Wolf 2017, 32)

3 Paul Mauriat (1925-2006) – pseudonym Del Roma – was an orchestra leader, conductor and arranger characterised by his big band sound. The Paul Mauriat Orchester was already active during the Second World War. In 1950 Mauriat started working with Charles Aznavour; he was with Barclay since 1957. One of his greatest achievements was the 1962 collaboration with Frank Pourcel and Jacques Plante on the song "Chariot". It was performed by Peggy March, won the Grand Prix Eurovision and became an international hit under the title "I will follow him".

4 The video can be found here: Charles Aznavour – Il Faut Savoir (1962) – YouTube (last access 14.06.2024).

5 The video can be found here: Charles Aznavour – You've got to learn (1977) (youtube.com) (last access 14.06.2024).

6 The video can be found here: Jacques Brel interprète à Lyon – FERNAND (1966) – exclusif – YouTube (last access 14.06.2024).

7 This, too, was translated into English by Marcel Stellman in 1962 and first performed in that version by Charles Aznavour himself.

8 The video can be found here: Nina Simone – Tomorrow Is My Turn (live) – YouTube (last access 14.06.2024).

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