

**DESBLACHE, Lucile (2019): *Music and Translation: New Mediations in the Digital Age*. London: Macmillan, 407 p.**

Helen Julia Minors

Volume 66, numéro 1, avril 2021

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1079333ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1079333ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (imprimé)

1492-1421 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Minors, H. J. (2021). Compte rendu de [DESBLACHE, Lucile (2019): *Music and Translation: New Mediations in the Digital Age*. London: Macmillan, 407 p.] *Meta*, 66(1), 230–232. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1079333ar>

Chapter 10, by De Marco, is the final chapter in the book. It deals with the “engendering” approach in AVT. De Marco explains that gender can be manipulated through AVT, and that it can even have an impact “on the audience’s perception of portrayed reality” (135). She mentions various authors, e.g., Baumgarten (2005), Toto (2009), Feral (2011), providing a solid theoretical basis. Although she leans slightly towards quoting her own research, it is understandable as there is little work regarding AVT and gender. De Marco’s anger is palpable at times, although it causes her to make biased, unscientific statements such as “[...] Western cinema –which is notoriously at the service of economic interests that fuel patriarchal values–” (136). This is an overgeneralisation, as not all Western cinema fuels patriarchal values, and not *only* western cinema is heteronormative.

This leads me to the one issue I found in the book, which is that it leans heavily on European perspectives on AVT. As mentioned before, this is understandable as most work regarding AVT comes from Europe, but one or two articles dealing by non-European authors would have been appreciated. There is much work coming from countries like Iran and China that should be included in future compilations.

Interestingly, most of the chapters are short (averaging nine pages, less than the usual thirteen to fifteen), which I appreciated. This shows the researchers’ ability to summarise and include as much relevant information in as little space as possible. In that, I believe that this book can also serve as a guide on how to write excellent academic articles. I did miss some further exploration in Guillot’s and Braun’s chapters, but only because I was so gripped by the topic that I wanted to read more about it, not because they lacked information. In conclusion, this is one of the most accessible books on AVT, perfect for both seasoned researchers and newcomers to the area.

DANIEL E. JOSEPHY-HERNÁNDEZ  
Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica,  
Heredia, Costa Rica

## REFERENCES

- DÍAZ-CINTAS, Jorge and NIKOLIĆ Kristijan (2017): *Fast-Forwarding with Audiovisual Translation*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDIES IN SCREEN TRANSLATION (n.d.): *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*. Visited on 17 July 2020, <<http://www.jatjournal.org/index.php/jat>>.
- GAMBIER, Yves and RAMOS-PINTO Sara (2016): *Audiovisual Translation: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges*. Special Issue of *Target*, 28:2. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- PÉREZ-GONZÁLEZ, Luis (2019): *Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation*. Oxford: Routledge.
- DESBLACHE, Lucile (2019): *Music and Translation: New Mediations in the Digital Age*. London: Macmillan, 407 p.

This book represents a milestone development in the combined interdisciplinary fields of Music and Translation Studies. Lucile Desblache presents a text which is engaging and rich in its reach across and through the fields of translation studies, music studies and musicology, multimodal studies and audio-visual translation. Her reach is unique as she is herself both a translation scholar and a musician. She has published much before about music and translation, and she led the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Network Grant, *Translating Music*.<sup>1</sup> As such, Desblache is uniquely placed to meet her aims to take ‘a broad understanding of translation’ (p. 5) to explore how music can ‘convey meaning across boundaries’ (p. 4). As such, this book has many aims, which build on encouraging a wider scholarship to engage with the methods and concerns of translation studies to reflect on their own fields. The core aims are to ‘expand the existing framework’ (p. 9) for bringing music and translation into dialogue, to ‘review’ the ‘intersections’ between the field (p. 9), and to ‘investigate the creative influence of translation on music’ (p. 9).

There has been a flourish of activity in this area in recent years. Ever since Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva edited a special edition of *The Translator* (2008) exploring the connections between music and translation, the field has opened up to question translation in song and opera further (Low 2016, Apter and Herman 2016). But, it has also sparked a wider appeal outside of translation studies. As the translational turn expanded the scope of translation studies more broadly to the humanities and social sciences, as explored by Doris Bachmann-Medick (2009), the meaning of translation has extended to reach all forms of communication and multimodal studies (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001). As the field of intercultural studies expanded into the performing arts, questions concerning how scholars might, can and do form interpretations across media, across cultures and across eras raise significant issues about how such interpretations are formed. In so doing, it has raised critical questions about the choices made by interpreters, and some, including myself, have made a claim that all forms of interpretation might be understood as acts of translation (Minors 2013). Since then though the translational turn has progressed to a medial turn in that our many forms of communication are becoming increasingly digital, mediated via technology, and disseminated globally. As globalisation continues to expand, translation has clearly grown as a field, its methods and approaches providing

ways for scholars to consider their place in the process of interpretation. As Venuti, who once claimed the translator to be invisible, now states that we need to look at 'equivalence, retranslation, and reader reception,' recognising the need to assess the 'impact of translation' not only on those reading it but on those producing it (2013: 1).

As I note elsewhere, when 'analogies are created to language' as we see in the performing arts (2019: 158) and when we recognise there is a broader 'meaning potential' of texts (Kress and Leeuwen 2001: 10) it is indeed necessary, as Desblache does, to reassess and interrogate the field anew. To do this, she sets out the 'Global Context' in the first part of the book, establishing how music is used in different cultures, identifying traits, tropes and approaches which clarify what she refers to as 'centres' (p. 15) and 'peripheries' (p. 41). Desblache explores how musical texts are effected and influenced by translation in Chapter 3, notably acknowledging the problem and opportunities where the '(un)translatability' (pp. 71-73) of the content is significant to interpretation methods. She refers to a range of institutions in order to consider the ethics and morals of translation, including UNESCO's conventions regarding interculturality (p. 28). Desblache is careful to refine the terms she uses, recognising that the notion of translation would become useless if it expands too far. She refines this by explaining that '[t]he fluidity of translation as a notion is particularly necessary in relation to music, and relates to two notions which differ but do not conflict with each other: transfer [...] and transformation' (p. 71).

The second part of the book looks at how we might translate music: she asks 'what is translated?' and 'how is music translated?' These questions title her chapters which is significant as it shows the critical mind of Desblache in assessing all the evidence as she weaves her narrative spanning such a range of musics. Interesting here is her approach to recognising the 'collective experiences' (p. 108) we have of music in society, and she draws on music-sociological literature as well as music and translation studies to iterate how music communicates. There is much attention to the fact that the majority of newly shared music now is vocal, notably in popular music (p. 113). Though she takes care to include examples from instrumental music as well, to ensure the notion of translation is not limited to lingual contexts but also to a broader audio and visual context.

The third part of the book reframes the focus by looking at music in effect as a translator, as the agent capable of expressing between, through and across cultures. This part is of particular interest to a wider readership in music, performing arts, translation studies and cultural studies. But, why

does Desblache recognise music as a translator? She answers this clearly: 'it is always anchored in the familiar, in known references, but it moves away from these references through the many variations offered by musical language' (p. 266). Ultimately, Desblache proves that within her case studies the impact of music on human life is four-fold, each of which require some form of interpretative translation: 'physiological,' 'psychological,' 'cognitive,' and 'behavioural' (p. 266-267). Of particular significance is the last chapter (Chapter 9). Desblache has written before about translation and animals. It is clear she has a particular unique approach to understanding communication and transfer. She urges the reader to reassess beyond their usual frames of reference. By moving from the human to the natural world, Desblache reasserts her main aims and illustrates just how far translation can go to informing how we understand the world around us.

This book is rich with diverse examples which each draw from different cultures and locations, encouraging the reader to reach beyond a single frame of reference and to expand their perspective, so to challenge presumptions and long held interpretations. The 'transcultural approach' (p. 1) she establishes is to be commended. She navigates K-pop to opera, rap to folk music, and a wide range of other styles and genres. Desblache achieves her aims well and recognises throughout where the field has limitations, raising questions and suggestions for more research and work. As she says in closing: 'Both translation studies and music can and need to trace paths leading to this new era of communication, however unknown the way to success is' (p. 374).

HELEN JULIA MINORS

Kingston University, London, United Kingdom

## NOTES

1. DESBLACHE, Lucile and MINORS, Helen Julia (2013): About the Translating Music project... AHRC Network Grant. *Translating Music*. Consulted on 1 June 2020, <<http://www.translatingmusic.com>>. 'Translating Music' was a Network Grant, under the theme Translating Cultures, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It ran from 2013-2014, led by Lucile Desblache and Helen Julia Minors, with partnerships from Elena Di Giovanni, The Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Deluxe Media, and MTV, among others.

## REFERENCES

- APTER, Ronnie and HERMAN, Mark, eds. (2016): *Translation for Singing*. London: Bloomsbury.
- BACHMANN-MEDICK, Doris (2009): Introduction: the translational turn. (Translated by Kate STURGE) *Translation Studies*. 2(1):2-16.

- BORIA, Monica, CARRERES, Ángeles, NORIEGA-SÁNCHEZ, María, et al. (2019): *Translation and Multimodality: beyond words*. London/New York: Routledge.
- DESBLACHE, Lucile (2020): Tradition and transgression: W. H. Auden's musical poetics of translation. In: Adriana ŞERBAN and Kelly Kar Yue CHAN, eds. *Opera in Translation: Unity and diversity*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 53-72.
- KRESS, Gunther and VAN LEEUWEN, Theo (2001): *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. New York: Hodder and Arnold.
- Low, Peter (2016): *Translating Song: lyrics and song*. London/New York: Routledge.
- MINORS, Helen Julia, ed. (2013): *Music, Text and Translation*. London: Bloomsbury.
- MINORS, Helen Julia (2019): Translations Between Music and Dance: analysing the choreomusical gestural interplay in twentieth- and twenty-first-century dance works. In: Monica BORIA, CARRERES, Ángeles, NORIEGA-SÁNCHEZ, María, et al. *Translation and Multimodality: beyond words*. London/New York: Routledge, 158-178.
- MINORS, Helen Julia (2020): Opera and intercultural musicology as modes of translation. In: Adriana ŞERBAN and Kelly Kar Yue CHAN, eds. *Opera in Translation: Unity and diversity*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 13-33.
- ŞEBNEM Susam-Sarajeva, ed. (2008): Translation and Music. *The Translator*. 14(2):187-462.
- ŞERBAN, Adriana and CHAN, Kelly Kar Yue, eds. (2020): *Opera in Translation: Unity and diversity*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- VENUTI, Lawrence (2013): *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice*. London/New York: Routledge.

SIMON, Sherry (2019): *Translating Sites. A Field Guide*. Londres/New York: Routledge, 282 p.

Le plus récent ouvrage de Sherry Simon, *Translating Sites* (dorénavant *TS*), s'insère harmonieusement dans la poursuite d'un domaine de recherche dans lequel l'insigne traductologue canadienne excelle depuis bon nombre d'années. En effet, *TS* prolonge et oriente favorablement vers de nouveaux horizons une réflexion à la fois captivante, méthodique et originale. Cet apport théorique prometteur repose essentiellement sur la reconnaissance de diverses propriétés épistémiques d'une interface, ou plutôt d'une interrelation tripartite, entre « traduction », « villes » et « mémoire ». *TS* foisonne d'analyses étoffées et, partant, bien documentées qui sont autant de rappels à une « invitation au voyage » conviant les traductologues ou les lecteurs avisés

à se diriger d'un pas assuré sur des territoires précis, bien circonscrits et configurés par une notion heuristique qualifiée par l'auteure de « sites de traduction ».

Toutefois, si l'appel paradigmatique à une « invitation au voyage », lancé initialement par Charles Baudelaire, annonçait qu'un des lieux dépeint dans le célèbre poème *L'Invitation au voyage*, à savoir une chambre décorée à l'orientale dans laquelle « Tout y parlerait / à l'âme en secret / Sa douce langue natale » (Baudelaire 1857: 116<sup>1</sup>), il importe en revanche de souligner que les sites de traductions auxquels fait référence Simon sont d'un tout autre genre. En effet, tandis que pour Baudelaire « Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, / luxe calme et volupté » (Baudelaire 1857: 116), les « sites de traduction » évoqués dans *TS* sont plutôt de véritables *loci* sur lesquels circulent en s'entrecroisant, parfois harmonieusement, parfois en s'entrechoquant de manière agonistique, des mots, des langues, des histoires, des symboles chargés d'une incessible charge identitaire qu'il importe d'exhumer afin de rendre justice aux voix, aux paroles, aux discours qui ont été bâillonnés et effacés. Sans l'indispensable viatique de la notion de *translation site*, les parcours, suggérés dans le *vade-mecum* proposé par la traductologue montréalaise ne seraient que vaine errance et vagabondage capricieux.

Le bref rappel à une « invitation au voyage », que nous introduisons en guise de « fil d'Ariane » pour guider notre lecture critique, n'a d'ailleurs rien de fortuit. Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de mentionner que la phrase d'amorce de *TS* qualifie le présent ouvrage de guide touristique: « This is a guidebook. In its pages you will find a hotel in Sarajevo, an opera house in Prague, a memorial in Lviv, a bridge in Mostar, a museum in Ottawa, a garden in Ireland, a market in Hong Kong, a church in Toledo, among others » (p. 1). De surcroît, toujours dans l'introduction, une série de termes viennent d'ailleurs sciemment renforcer l'inflexion pérégrine ou apodémique que désire imposer Simon à son approche: « itinerary » (p. 1); « journey » (p. 1); « routes » (p. 2); « visit places » (p. 2); « border zones » (p. 3); « wander the streets of cities » (p. 4); « This guided tour of translation sites... » (p. 251). En clair, Simon rédige et organise cette fascinante visite guidée de sites foncièrement polyglottes et de zones de tensions porteuses d'histoires et de mémoires refoulées ou oubliées, comme une sorte de carnet de route dans lequel la figure traditionnelle du traducteur se transmute en cicérone hautement qualifié à activer et catalyser « la circulation des langues et l'affrontement des mémoires » (p. 2): « Translators are often imagined as figures in motion » (p. 5).

Le rôle de « figures en mouvement » confié par Simon aux traducteurs nous fait immédiatement