

THE MATERIALITY OF MUSIC: INTERPLAY OF LYRICS AND MELODY IN SONG TRANSLATION

Riku Haapaniemi and Emma Laakkonen*
Tampere University

ABSTRACT: In this study, we use the concept of materiality to re-evaluate traditional approaches to song translation. Materiality conceptualises a text as a complex unity of matter, form, and meaning, and songs provide an example of the interconnectedness of a material text and its verbal content. In our analysis of Hank Williams' song *Ramblin' Man* and its Finnish translation, we utilise notation to illuminate the intricate relationship between the original melody and the translated lyrics. By showing how the Finnish song's lyrics and melody have been shaped to support one another, we demonstrate how different translation solutions are not just attempts to replicate the source text's meanings but factors in the interplay of language and its material medium. We argue that materiality enables an all-encompassing view on how different levels of meaning interact in a text and thereby allows translation studies to move beyond juxtapositions of semantic fidelity and interpretative adaptation.

KEYWORDS: Materiality, Material Text, Song Translation, Singability, Musical Notation

1. Introduction

The translation of song lyrics presents the translator with a situation where, in a sense, their hands are simultaneously free and tied. On the one hand, the subjective nature of the lyric source text allows the translator to interpret and recreate its meanings according to their own personal view of the text; on the other, the target text will inevitably be constrained by the rhythm, length, and melody of the original music. This juxtaposition of subjective interpretation and formal replication has raised questions about what exactly the translator's role is in the process of creating new song lyrics for an existing song in a different language. Should the translator aim to preserve as much of the semantic content of the original song's lyric expressions as possible, or should the focus be on adapting its thematic content? Or, if the translator is fundamentally unable to do both, is "translation" even an appropriate term for this process?

Certain theoretical approaches in translation studies indicate that these questions are wrong-footed to begin with. For instance, Karin Littau (2016) uses the concept of *materiality* to challenge the dichotomic principles underpinning much translation theory and proposes that the source text's semantic content and subjective meaning are not disparate elements that require different approaches, but rather two of many interconnected factors that make up a *material text* (Littau, 2016, p. 83). Songs provide an illuminating example of a complex material text: the verbal lyrics are the most immediate source of meaning, but they only exist in service of the entirety of the piece (Frith, 1996, pp. 159-160). The vocal performance of the lyrics and the accompanying music all interact together with the contents of the lyrics to create the overall meaning of the song. Seeing songs as material texts therefore allows for the strategies employed by the translator to be considered not just as attempts to

* riku.haapaniemi@tuni.fi, emma.j.laakkonen@outlook.com

replicate the semantic or thematic meanings of the original song, but as factors in the intricate interplay of matter, form, and meaning within a multifaceted material text.

In this study, we analyse how different material elements of the song – such as music and performance – manifest as formal structures in the lyrics. We concentrate on two songs, *Ramblin' Man* (1951), by Hank Williams, and its Finnish version *Kulkuri* (2002), performed by Marko Haavisto ja Poutahaukat. We analyse how these songs have been performed, how the translated lyrics have been shaped to fit the form provided by the original music, and how the melody and metre of the original song have been adjusted to support the translated lyrics. The melodic form of the music is illustrated by notation, showcasing how the material medium shapes the text's verbal content and interacts with it. Our analysis reveals how the strategies utilised in the target text take different levels of meaning into account and how the different aspects of the text interact to create a coherent, functional whole. This way, we demonstrate how the concept of materiality can enable translation studies to move beyond juxtapositions of semantic fidelity and interpretative adaptation.

2. Principles of materiality

The dilemmas faced by the translator of a song harken back to one of translation studies' most fundamental questions: is the primary purpose of a translation to replicate the original content as expressed in the source text as faithfully as possible, or is it to create a target text that functions independently in terms of the target language and culture? The terminology to describe the disagreements between these two points of view has changed many times over the years, from Jerome's concepts of "word-for-word" translation and "sense-for-sense" translation (Robinson, 1997, p. 25) to foreignisation vs domestication, formal vs dynamic equivalence, semantic vs communicative translation – the list goes on (Pym, 2010, pp. 31-32). However, the basic source of the issue remains the same: the "word" of the original text is seen to be fundamentally separate from the "sense" interpreted from it, and the translator must therefore assign priority either to replicating linguistic form or recreating interpretative meaning.

Mary Snell-Hornby (1988, p. 9) names this "age-old dichotomy of word and sense" as a major hindrance that "traditional translation theory" never quite managed to overcome, as it placed the primary focus of the study of translation on determining linguistic equivalence between source and target texts. Indeed, as a reaction to this theoretical overemphasis on the "word", translation studies experienced a cultural turn and shifted its focus to the "sense" of the text arising from its cultural context (Bassnett, 2007, pp. 13, 23). In much of contemporary translation theory, then, the primary object of study is not the linguistic aspects of a text, but a text's position within specific cultural frameworks (p. 13).

The *material approach* builds on the basic idea that a text and its meaning are inseparable from their cultural context, by adding that any meaning perceived by the text's recipient will be not only based on the surrounding cultural context but also inseparable from the materiality of the text itself (Littau, 2016, pp. 82-83). Hence, the material nature

of the text is intrinsic to the meanings it conveys. Language cannot be transmitted and received unless it is conveyed by a material medium, such as voice or print (Littau, 2016). Material media are what make the production of meaning possible in the first place: they give form to meaning, provide and shape the conditions that allow for meaning to be conveyed, and – as pointed out by literature scholars Guyda Armstrong (2016, pp. 102-103) and Anne Coldiron (2016, p. 97) – contribute to the overall meaning of the text by being meaningful in themselves. From the material point of view, written, spoken, or otherwise expressed language is just one part of the text, and it is far from the only element to affect or contribute to the text's overall meaning. Translation, then, cannot focus on language and its semantic or cultural meanings alone, since the overall meaning interpreted by the text's recipient is affected and added to by the medium through which the translation is conveyed and the form in which it is presented. It follows that translation studies must widen its theoretical scope to encompass the whole of the material text and its different elements: meaning, form, and matter.

These founding ideas of materiality can be utilised further to redefine the translation process and its basic elements as they appear from the material point of view. Anthony Pym (2004, p. 5), for example, frames the original text and its translation as the two ends of a *material distribution process*. The original text in its original material *locale* is brought in as the *input* of this process, and the translated text is distributed as the *output* into a new locale (pp. 11-12). The locale is the material, linguistic, and cultural environment in which the text is received, and it sets certain material and linguo-cultural conditions that the texts must adhere to (pp. 11-12).

To emphasise the importance of these aspects of the material locale and the material distribution process, which are not a part of the text's distributed content but still shape and define it, Pym (2004, p. 4) considers "translation" to be a smaller-scale process, subordinate to the larger process of cross-cultural material distribution. As part of this distribution process, translation can be defined as just "the replacing of natural-language strings" (p. 57). This indicates that, as there is a smaller translation process included within the larger material distribution process, the natural language – or *verbal content* – upon which the translation process operates is likewise a distinct element within the larger material text, but still inseparable from the overall whole.

This point of view reveals an asymmetry between the input and output of the translation process. As per the principles of the material approach defined by Littau, the input of the translation process must be a material text, a unity of meaning, form, and matter. However, Pym's view of translation as part of material distribution indicates that the output of the translation process is verbal content substituting the natural-language strings of the original text. From the material point of view, then, the input *source text* (ST) is a material text located in its linguo-cultural context, and the output *target text* (TT) is verbal content that is produced into a new material text and within a new linguo-cultural context, as the end result of the material distribution process.

The new material text into which the TT is produced is comparable with the locale: a material environment that sets certain conditions that the TT must adhere to for the entire text to be receivable. However, Pym's perspective on the material distribution process and the locale is different from that of this study. Pym examines cross-cultural communication from outside the distribution process itself, while we analyse it inside the text being distributed. In order to ascertain and define the conditions that affect the song and its lyrics during the translation process, it is therefore more appropriate to use the term *material output environment* rather than locale to refer to the material text and linguo-cultural context surrounding the verbal output of the translation process.

3. Songs as material texts

The verbal content of a song is not a complete text by itself. Alongside melody, rhythm, harmony, and performance, the lyrics exist as part of a complex whole in which the musical elements are often considered more dominant in creating meaning than the verbal content (Salo, 2014, p. 45). In other words, the lyrics of a song are interpreted in relation to music, and all verbal and musical elements support one another in creating the overall meaning of the song. According to Simon Frith (1996, p. 160), this is further illustrated by the fact that song lyrics are usually only remembered together with melody and rhythm. At the same time, however, lyrics are often the primary element through which the meaning of a song is consciously recognised and verbally described, demonstrating that the verbal content is still significant to listeners (p. 159).

Since song lyrics exist primarily as part of a larger whole, they serve as an excellent example of why an all-encompassing material approach to translation is necessary. They must adhere in form and content to the requirements of music and performance; therefore, they are, by nature, defined by the constraints of a specific medium and certain material conditions. Indeed, the relationship between a song's lyrics and its music is that between the translated verbal content and its material output environment. Song lyrics must fit the melody, rhythm, and other formal conditions of the music, while music and vocal performance provide further levels of meaning to the entirety of the text. In addition, the subjective interpretation of the lyrics is highly dependent on these other levels of meaning – for example, the same lyrics about an ended love affair may be interpreted as either sad or light-hearted depending on the chosen chords and the tone of the singer's voice. The material point of view, thus, further emphasises the juxtaposition of formal conditions set by the music and the freedom of interpretation allowed by the poetic nature of the song's language. As a lyric text, the original song can be interpreted by the translator in a variety of different ways, but in order for the verbal TT to exist as a functional song, it must observe the formal requirements set by the music.

The translator of a popular song is often driven by the TT's purpose to create a *singable* text (Low, 2003, p. 93) which is intended for performance and recording. In practice, observing this function means that the translator considers such formal factors as order, length, and number of vowels, consonants, and syllables in order to produce a

translation that can be sung to the rhythm and melody of the original song. Singability can also be seen to include the function of *performability*. A performable TT is a set of lyrics which fits the tone and mood of the music and creates appropriate meaning with it. Singability also includes the notion of *naturalness*: a natural song seems as if it was created originally in the target language (Low, 2017, p. 65) and sounds convincing when performed in the target culture. The ultimate aim of a singable TT, then, is to merge with the song's music and performance in every relevant way.

In terms of materiality, singability and other such functional requirements that shape the space in which the lyrics are produced can be defined as conditions that restrict the *quantity* of the verbal output of the translation process (Pym, 2004, pp. 11, 87-88). Quantity is defined by Pym as the conditions and phenomena that affect the length, layout, rhythm, and other formal or structural elements of the TT, and restrictions to it arise from material conditions of the output environment, such as available space and time (pp. 87-88). Therefore, the formal and functional conditions set to the translation process by the song's music can be defined as a restriction of the TT's quantity.

Singable song lyrics are supposed to fit the song's music, and the quantity of translated lyrics is therefore determined by the music. The translator who aims to create a singable TT considers the number of notes and syllables and, even more importantly, the downbeats onto which stressed syllables are placed to ensure a natural-sounding rhythm as the rhythm of the music determines which syllables the singer can stress (Salo, 2014, pp. 161-162). In the Finnish language, for example, primary stress always falls onto the first syllable of the word, and in words with four or more syllables, secondary stress usually falls onto the third or fifth syllable. In addition, the tempo and note lengths determine the length of the syllables the translator can use. The translator may also find it necessary to follow the rhyming scheme of the ST (Low, 2003, pp. 95-96), providing even further restrictions to the quantity of the TT.

A singable translation is fitted into a pre-existing melody (Low, 2003, p. 87), but sometimes the translator has the possibility to make small alterations to the rhythm in order to better accommodate the translated lyrics. According to Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman (2012, p. 28), there are six different strategies through which the original melody can be slightly adapted to meet the demands of the verbal content: the translator can *split*, *combine*, *add* or *delete notes*, *add syllables*, or *spread syllables* on several notes. These small-scale rhythmic alteration strategies are not, of course, exclusive to translation, as they are a part of normal songwriting processes (Low, 2017, p. 101). The genre of popular music may even allow for more large-scale rhythmic changes (Franzon, 2008, p. 384), as it is often more common to play "by ear" rather than by using sheet music, but usually the objective is to keep the original melody recognisable. In fact, it is often the content of the original lyrics that is altered the most. According to Johan Franzon (2008, p. 386), the translator can modify the lyrics by additions, deletions, and paraphrase to make the new lyrics match the original melody. The translator can also choose among three different substitution strategies (Franzon, 2001, pp. 33, 36-39): *reverent translation* aims to transfer as much of

the meaning of the ST as possible while allowing some alterations due to rhythm, metre, and cultural differences; *hook adaptation* draws inspiration from the ST and preserves its verbal hooks, meaning that the central themes and recurring key concepts are transferred; and *re-creation* substitutes an entirely new set of lyrics to the pre-existing melody. These strategies show how the translator of song lyrics is given a wide variety of different approaches to enable singable lyrics that require as few changes to the pre-existing melody as possible. However, it is important to acknowledge that the translator can also push against the restrictions of quantity set by the original music to a certain extent.

4. Data and method

The material approach allows for all of these different points of view around song translation to be brought together. With Littau's concepts of materiality and Pym's view of the translation process, songs can be analysed as multifaceted material texts. The relationship between the translated lyrics and the new song they are part of can be viewed as the interplay of verbal content and the restrictions on its quantity set by its material output environment. This provides a new stance on how singable song translations and their melodies interact and how the matter, form, and meaning of a text affect one another.

In the following analysis, we examine the choices and strategies visible in a TT written by a target-culture songwriter and seek to identify the ways in which the songwriter and the performers have taken the material elements of both texts into account. We compare country music singer Hank Williams' original English-language song *Ramblin' Man* (1951) with its Finnish version *Kulkuri* (2002), translated by songwriter Marko Haavisto and performed by Marko Haavisto ja Poutahaukat. First, we discuss similarities and differences in the instrumentation, performance, and recording of the two songs. Second, we look at the ways in which the lyrics of *Kulkuri* have been made to fit the formal constraints imposed by the music of *Ramblin' Man*. Third, we analyse how the melody and metre of the original song have been adapted to accommodate the translated lyrics.

The formal structures imposed on the verbal lyrics by melody and rhythm are illustrated by creating musical notations of the vocal melodies with the help of MuseScore, an open-source notation software. We compare the vocal melodies of the songs in detail to determine whether notes have been split, combined, added or deleted, or if syllables have been added or spread over several notes. Other prevalent structural elements, such as rhyme and metre, are likewise analysed. In addition to similarities in form, we highlight the connections between the semantic and thematic contents of the two texts and categorise the different strategies employed by the translator as either reverent translation, hook adaptation, or re-creation. By comparing the music and lyrics of the ST and the TT, we make it apparent how a translated song's melodic form and lyric content both support and give way to one another in order for the whole to function as a coherent material text.

5. Comparative analysis of the interplay of lyrics, melodic form, and overall meaning

Both *Ramblin' Man (RM)*¹ and *Kulkuri (K)*² present the listener with a haunting minor-key tale of a drifter whose life is an endless series of travels from one town to another. The main character prefers to spend his days on the train tracks or on the road, but while he rejects the idea of settling down, he still begs his loved one to understand his restless nature. The songs also feature a religious undertone, a common feature of country music, and the drifter feels that it is impossible to escape his fate and the potentially untimely death that has already been dictated to him beforehand.

Although similar themes and characters exist in the musical traditions of both the source and the target cultures, there are apparent musical differences between *RM* and *K*, as the original was recorded and performed in a drastically different context and with less-advanced recording technologies. Williams originally recorded *RM* under the pseudonym Luke the Drifter. The songs released under it were not typical country songs, but recitations about the tragic side of life with sentimental, biblical, and moralistic undertones (Ching, 2001, p. 55), *RM* being an exception due to its completely sung performance. The song's instrumentation is fairly austere, with an acoustic guitar, fiddle, bass, and steel guitar, which contributes to the emphasis given to the lyrics, the singer's performance, and the simplicity of the melody. It is known that Williams encouraged his backing group, the Drifting Cowboys, to play as blandly as they could to provide a background that would emphasise the intensity of his sung performance (Ching, 2001, p. 51).

Keeping the different recording contexts and target-culture listeners' expectations in mind, it should be noted that the original arrangement of *RM* would be difficult to replicate as such by the target culture performers. While the TT's performance still underlines and draws inspiration from the eerie atmosphere of the original song, the Finnish version adds tones of blues rock and melancholic Finnish popular music to the country base. In contrast to *RM*, the Finnish song features a richer instrumentation to meet the requirements of the performers. By adding acoustic and electric guitar, resonator guitar, electric bass, and drums, its performance has been brought to a more modern yet timeless environment. As the instruments have not been pushed to the background, such elements as guitars are able to convey more emotion to support Haavisto's vocal performance.

Both *RM* and *K* use a strophic form, meaning that they are built on three similar verses. As is typical of songs written in this form, the song's title is repeated in the short refrain at the end of each verse (Example 1). The translator has acknowledged the importance of this repeated element, adopting hook adaptation as a general approach to the translation process. While straightforward semantic replication may sometimes be unnecessary, the translator has reproduced certain crucial parts and verbal hooks by following the meaning and the structure of the source lyrics almost exactly.

¹ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a1GCLdPvbE> (Accessed: 9 August 2019).

² Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70kZeCL7Bas> (Accessed: 9 August 2019).

The image displays a musical score for the refrain of the song 'Kulkuri'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words connected by lines to indicate syllables. The first system shows the English lyrics: 'I love you ba-by, but you got-ta un-der-stand, when the lord made me, he made a ra-mblin' man.' The second system shows the Finnish lyrics: 'Sua kai-paan bei-bi, mut min-kä mah-tai-sin, kun luo-ja loi mun se loi kul-ku-rin.' The number '20' is written above the first measure of each system.

Example 1. Strategies in the refrain of *Kulkuri* (Marko Haavisto ja Poutahaukat, 2002) (back translation of the TT: “I miss you baby but what could I do/ when the lord created me, he created a vagabond”).

This excerpt of the melody indicates that the selected strategy has led to subtle rhythmic adjustments: the target song’s refrain includes some deviations, such as combined notes at the ends of measures, which can be virtually unnoticeable to the listener. Instead of being compelled to make large-scale rhythmic adaptations to fit the melody to the lyrics, the translator has mostly adjusted the target-language lyrics to the pre-existing melody, rhythm, and metre: for example, the verb *to love* has been substituted with the two-syllable Finnish verb *kaipaan* (first-person singular of the verb *kaivata*, “to miss”), which fits the rhythm and is more singable than the three-syllable Finnish equivalent *rakastaa*. In the refrain of *K*, the drifter begs for his lover’s understanding indirectly by insisting that he is powerless to do anything about his ways. This type of paraphrase has been utilised to introduce a word that rhymes with the most crucial keyword, *kulkurin*.

In general, the TT follows the rhyming schemes of *RM* quite closely, providing the TT’s material output environment with another set of formal conditions. Figure 1 shows the rhyming schemes and syllable counts in the last verses of the two songs.

RM (third verse)	Rhyming scheme	Syllable count
I love to see the towns passin' by,	A	10
And to ride these rails 'neath God's blue sky.	A	10
Let me travel this land from the mountains to the sea,	B	14
'Cause that's the life I believe he meant for me.	B	12
And when I'm gone and at my grave you stand,	C	11
Just say God's called home your ramblin' man.	C	10
K (third verse)	Rhyming scheme	Syllable count
Ei oo kaupungilla välii, ei rahallakaan,	A	13
kunhan maisema vaihtuu, kunhan liikkua saan.	A	13
Siis anna mennä mun beibi, koska tunnen niin,	B	13
että siinä on se työ, johon mut muovattiin.	B	14
Ja kun mun aika on täys ja käyt haudalleni,	C	14
niin tiedät luoja vei jo kotiin sun kulkurin.	D	13

Figure 1. Rhyming schemes in the third verses of *Kulkuri* and *Ramblin' Man* (back translation of the TT: “The town doesn’t matter, neither does the money/ as long as the scenery changes, as long as I can move around./ So let me go, my baby, because this is how I feel/ this is the work that I was made for./ And when my time is full and you come to my grave/ you’ll know that God has taken home your vagabond.”).

These syllable counts have been determined based on sung performance, which is why a syllable that has been spread over two notes has been counted as two syllables. It is worth noting that the ST does not attempt to use perfect rhymes, but often utilises near rhymes instead (such as “understand”/ “ramblin’ man”). Moreover, the lyrics of *RM* have not been written following a strict metre, resulting in fluctuating syllable counts within as well as between verses. Interestingly, the TT’s metre is more stable as there is less variation of syllable counts. The syllable counts of each line in the TT are identical, with the exception of one-syllable words *työ* (“work”) and *täys* (“full”), where the diphthongs have been spread over two notes. Moreover, the third verse of the TT largely consists of re-created verbal elements, but it still echoes the overall theme and atmosphere of the song and the lyrics. While such words and images as mountains, seas, and blue sky have been deleted, keywords (e.g. “town”) as well as the feeling of the changing surroundings are reproduced.

The new elements have been tied to the verbal hooks and other transferred key elements, so that the ST is used as a basis for the new verbal content.

Alterations and adjustments to both the verbal content and the rhythm and metre have been made to produce a functional song in the target language. Tying melody and words together can be seen as an underlying strategy used throughout the process. Taking into consideration the differences in average syllable counts between the source and target languages, the original song's simple melody with its long notes has required certain adjustments to create space for the longer Finnish words, especially since the possibilities of using one-syllable words in Finnish are fairly limited. During the translation process, Haavisto has utilised most of the strategies of rhythmic adaptation listed by Apter and Herman (2012, p. 28): all in all, he has added sixteen notes, split fifteen notes, divided eight, and deleted five notes, as well as added syllables on frequent two-note melismas. It should be noted, however, that the writers of original songs do not necessarily repeat melodies in a rhythmically identical form from one verse to another. This is also the case with *RM*: there is a certain looseness to the simple melody, which already allows the translator to produce small rhythmic adaptations and adjust the quantity allowed for the lyrics.

Some of these rhythmic adjustments, such as split or added notes, are hardly noticeable in the TT, whereas others can be more large-scale: the translator has even been able to complement the simple melody with small alterations, demonstrating that the translator can sometimes break free from certain formal restrictions (Example 2). While the main purpose has been to retain the original melody, it has not been kept entirely intact, meaning that there are even some indications of melodic rewriting in *K*. In the following example, the ST's main character asks his loved one to let him travel "from the mountains to the sea", as he believes that this is his fate. The translation has required added syllables and notes to be able to transmit the original meaning through a paraphrase.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff has the English lyrics: "sea, 'cause that's the life I believe he meant for me." The second staff has the Finnish lyrics: "niin, et-tä sii - nä on se ty - ö, jo-honmut muo - vat - tin". The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes being repeated to accommodate the longer Finnish words.

Example 2. Altering melody in the third verse of *Kulkuri* (Marko Haavisto ja Poutahaukat, 2002) (back translation of the TT: "This is the work that I was made for").

Since repeating the same note on the added syllables would create a monotonous result, the melody has been complemented to make it more singable and appealing to the listener. This shows that song translators sometimes have the possibility to reinterpret the melody to some extent, pushing back against the material form to fit the verbal content.

However, in spite of these choices, the overall purpose has been to maintain the original melody as a clearly recognisable basis for the TT.

At times, the translator may even be pressured to refuse certain formal restrictions set by the ST or prioritise certain conditions over others in order to be able to include an essential keyword or phrase. In terms of the narrative, one of the strongest points in both *RM* and *K* occurs at the end, which predicts the death of the rambling man (Figure 2). In addition to the refrain, this is where the ST’s semantic meaning has been considered particularly vital to the narrative.

<i>RM</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>K</i> (prose back translation)
And when I’m gone and at my grave you stand	Ja kun mun aika on täys ja käyt haudalleni	And when my time is full and you come to my grave
Just say God’s called home your ramblin’ man.	Niin tiedät luoja vei jo kotiin sun kulkurin.	You’ll know that God has taken home your vagabond.

Figure 2. Strategies at the end of the third verse in *K*.

In this case, the translator has rejected the use of rhyme (*haudalleni/kulkurin*) to replicate the original semantic meaning and provide a logical ending to the narrative. Including the Finnish equivalent of the keyword “grave” (*hauta*) has forced the translator to divide a note in two. Interestingly, the song’s rhythm has forced the translator to place the last, unstressed syllable of the inflected four-syllable noun *haudalleni* (*hau-dal-le-ni*, “to my grave”) on a stressed note, i.e. on the first note of the measure, meaning that fitting the keyword into the melody and observing the music’s overall rhythm have been prioritised over the general principles of stress otherwise followed by the translator. However, it should be noted that the principles of Finnish grammar are a significant reason for this decision: as Finnish uses suffixes, the translator has not had the advantage of placing prepositions and possessive pronouns at the end of the previous measure.

After comparing the rhyming schemes and the melody of *K* with those of its ST, it becomes evident that the formal constraints imposed on the TT by its material output environment can indeed be analysed in this way. The conditions of singability, performability, naturalness, and other formal factors of the material distribution process restrict the quantity of the TT, and in song lyrics these restrictions manifest as melodic, rhythmic, and other formal structures. All in all, *K* aims to achieve the purpose of a singable and performable song text, and that purpose can be seen as the driving force behind the choice of strategies.

By opting for hook adaptation as the general approach, the translator has selected the ST elements which constitute the core of the text. The new verbal and musical material has then been built around this core, so that the theme and the haunting atmosphere are retained. Both songs tell the tragic story of a vagabond with similar undertones, but while Williams’ original is an austere, undecorated country song, the translated version leans

towards more guitar-driven and uptempo melancholic Finnish music. The comparative analysis of the lyric content, melodic form, and musical performance of these songs makes it apparent how intricate the interplay of meaning and form between the lyrics and the music is, and utilising the concepts of materiality allows for these aspects to be considered together as factors in the translation process.

6. Conclusion

The concept of materiality clearly provides new points of view into the study of translation. By recognising the materiality of texts and the conditions affecting their material distribution, it is possible to view the ST as a unity of matter, form, and meaning situated within a certain linguo-cultural context, while also viewing the TT as verbal content produced as part of a new material text in a new linguo-cultural context. The material approach posits that meaning is not born out of language or culture alone, but out of the interplay of the text's material medium, linguistic form, and context-bound interpretation – matter, form, and meaning.

Utilising the material approach in the analysis of translated song lyrics casts new light on the conditions that affect song translation. The principles of material distribution allow for the formal constraints set by the ST's music, exhibited as functional singability, to be seen and analysed as restrictions to the verbal TT's quantity set by its material output environment. Verbal content must always be conveyed by a material medium and fit within the material boundaries of that medium to be conveyed; similarly, a song text must follow the formal structures of its music in order to be singable and performable. Singable translated lyrics serve as just one element in a complex whole of lyrics, music, and performance, each contributing to the overall meaning of the song.

However, it must be noted that the melodic form of the original song can be adjusted to some degree. It may also be that noticeable alterations to the melody affect the song's overall meaning as much as changes to the contents of the lyrics, and the musical arrangement and performance of the song contribute to the interpretation of the lyrics and the meaning of the song as a whole. A song's musical elements provide the formal boundaries for the TT, but they also inspire and encourage the translator to make subjective reinterpretations. Music and performance alter and add to the text's overall meaning in subtle and subjective ways. After all, a song is a lyric text written in context-sensitive poetic language open to individual interpretation, and the strategies employed by the translator – from semantically faithful replication to reinterpretation and rewriting – can arise from personal interpretation as well as from any restrictions or requirements set by the target language or culture. The rejection of the ST's semantic or thematic content is therefore not necessarily born from cultural differences but from the translator's subjective interpretation and personal motives. This is only highlighted when the translator is a songwriter and the performer of the new song, even if writing a singable translation differs from writing original songs in that the melody, theme, and verbal hooks have already been determined by another songwriter in another culture.

The material approach takes into consideration how elements outside the verbal content shape and contribute to the meaning of the overall text and allows for all of these aspects to be discussed in relation to the text's verbal content. Hence, in addition to the study of song translation, the concept of materiality has much to offer to translation studies in general. Recognising the materiality of texts allows translation studies scholars to simultaneously analyse all the facets of a multimodal material text while also viewing the TT as verbal content, and reframing the different requirements placed on it as formal conditions set by the material text. Most importantly, the material approach challenges the age-old dichotomy of "word" and "sense" by shedding light on their fundamental unity, both in relation to one another and to the matter that brings them into being in the first place. As demonstrated in this study, the basic principle of the unity of matter, form, and meaning at the heart of the concept of materiality is just as applicable to practical analysis as it is to theoretical discussion. This shows the versatility of the material approach, promising a multitude of new points of view to the study of translation.

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About the authors: Riku Haapaniemi is a doctoral researcher in Translation Studies at Tampere University, Finland. His research efforts have focused on the different structural and formal constraints imposed on the target text, the adaptation of cultural content, and the interplay of these two forces.

Emma Laakkonen has worked in the field of translation after completing her MA in Multilingual Communication and Translation. In her research, she has explored multimodality and its effects on translation, as well as the concept of translation as a strategic process.