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Translating Song Texts As Oral Compositions

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Writing about music is like
dancing about architecture.

- Thelonius Monk

¹Music and language are often discussed in terms of each other. Music is sometimes said to be a universal language, or the language of the heart (Merriam 1964:219-22). And both written and spoken language can be described as musical, or melodic. Though music and language are in some ways distinct - as suggested above by Thelonius Monk (quoted in Walser), the commonalities in the physical and mental processes guiding their production and perception, their physical and analyzed structure, their common genesis in experience, and their functions in society warrant the consideration of each as elucidatory of the other.

The two fundamental purposes of this paper are to 1) provide the theoretical groundwork for approaching musical texts in the Bible; and 2) to suggest a method useful in translating these texts - specifically, the Psalms - into another language. To do this, it will be argued that oral music and oral language have common roots in the body and cognition, that they share common universal traits, and that these commonalities are maintained most thoroughly in oral literature which takes the form of songs whose words were written down. The clearest example of this in the Bible is the Psalms. It will be argued further that the primary components which must be communicated when these texts are being translated into a receptor language are not propositional truths, but emotional and social dynamics.

The Common Source of Music and Language: The Body

The Body in Music. Mark Johnson, in The Body in the Mind (1987), has proposed an epistemology which attempts to tie all that we know back to bodily experiences. He argues that abstract meanings, patterns of inference, imagination and cognition all have their roots in "human bodily movement, manipulation of objects, and perceptual interactions involv[ing] recurring patterns" (p. xix). He calls these recurring patterns "image schemata," which form the underlying structure for all thought, emotion, and creative activity, including language and music.

Walser (1990) has applied this philosophical framework to an element of music. The example he presents is the image-schemata of force, something each of us learn as children in manipulating objects around us, learning that things are held together by what we come to know as force. He argues that this pre-linguistic cognitive understanding is manifested metaphorically as distortion in the musical culture of heavy metal guitar players. That is, in the heavy metal genre of music in the United States, distortion - when the wire circuits are actually overloaded - is valued as a signifier of power. Thus, the meaning of distortion in this type of music has its roots in the prelinguistic image-schemata of force, first learned in earliest childhood. This application of image-schemata serves to remind us that language and music are created by humans in a body, and that they rely by metaphor on cognitive abilities and understandings learned by physical and perceptual interaction with the world.

¹ Some ideas in this paper grew out of discussions with two other SIL students, Mary Hendershott and Carole King.

Underlying Cognitive Processes. ²This rootedness in the body leads to the most basic trait which all forms of human creativity share: they all have their genesis in universal human cognitive processes. Though philosophers, anthropologists, and scientists have been sharply divided over whether "nature" or "nurture" is primary in the development of human thought, both are operative (Anastasi 1958). For example, babies have the capacity to differentiate between minute differences in acoustic stimuli (Eimas 1973), which forms the basis of their eventual mastery of a particular culturally shaped language. At a higher level of cognitive functioning, human beings are predisposed to categorize the plethora of sensory stimuli around them in terms of simple, semantic relations, such as agent + action ("the boy fell"), action + object ("hit the ball"), etc. (Snow 1972; Brown 1970:173). All human beings are born with the innate capacity, tools, and cognitive predispositions not only to learn language, but to sing, think, and emote. While not all people use the same language or music, there are certain universal sensory and cognitive processes which underly all human creativity.

Blacking (1973:9) argues for such underlying processes in the realm of music:

...if we take a world view of music, and if we consider social situations in musical traditions that have no notation, it is clear that the creation and performance of most music is generated first and foremost by the human capacity to discover patterns of sound and to identify them on subsequent occasions. Without biological processes of aural perception, and without cultural agreement among at least some human beings on what is perceived, there can be neither music nor musical communication.

Thus, if we can understand these processes of structured listening (Harwood 1976:523) and production sufficiently, we may then be able to derive points of higher level correspondence between music and language.

The most widely operative cognitive process underlying both music and language is the concept of "chunking," taken from the theoretical paradigm of information processing. In general, information processing is "the study of how the human brain perceives and structures information about the world, how such information is represented in memory, and how it is retrieved when needed for behavior" (Harwood 1976:524; see also Klatsky 1980:1-14). In particular, since the human capacity to store information in short and long term memory is finite (Miller 1956), humans have developed the capacity to combine - or chunk - single stimuli into larger units (Klatsky 1980:91). The fact that chunking occurs is clearly demonstrated in speech perception, during which humans decode a continuous stream of sound into meaningful, separable units. The ear and brain take cues from the acoustic stimuli cooccurring with margins and nuclei of phonemes, words, and phrases, and quickly and efficiently make sense of what is being heard (see Pike 1974).

It is through such structured perception that we are able to make sense of our world. And in fact, these basic building blocks may be extended to the description of processes of symbolic structuring universal to cultures at the social level. What follows is a listing and brief description of musical and linguistic universals based on these cognitive building blocks³.

² The following paragraph in slightly varied form was first published in Schrag (1989).

³ The universals described in this section closely follow the structure of Harwood, pp. 25-31.

General Universals in Music and Language

Universal existence. All known cultures in the world have language and music (Sloboda 1985:18; Nettl 1983:39). Though an outsider might not immediately identify a certain phenomenon as being music, every culture has something which all insiders call music. The basic form of this is singing.

Generative Phenomena. Both music and language are generative phenomena. That is, given certain basic units to a system, like words or intervals, an infinite number of utterances or songs is possible (Sloboda 1985:18).

Learned by Exposure to Example. Children have the innate ability to learn both language and music by listening to examples (Sloboda 1985:18; De Villiers 1978:3). In fact, "spontaneous speech and spontaneous singing are first exhibited at around the same age" (Sloboda 1985:18).

Auditory Medium Basic. Both music and language are produced by creating and modifying sound waves - in music the most common form is singing - and perceived aurally (Sloboda 1985:18). Thus, each makes use of many of the same neural mechanisms for both perception and production.

Receptive Skills Precede Productive Skills. In development, children can understand sentences with limited constructions well before they are able to create sentences. In music also, children respond to musical constructions before they are able to sing them (Sloboda 1985:19).

Description by Phonology, Syntax, Semantics, and Discourse. Music can be described in analytical terms similar to those used to describe language. In the following discussion, it will be assumed that the reader is familiar with basic linguistic concepts.

First, music can be described phonologically. Pitches in a melody are perceived categorically. That is, in the context of a series of pitches, those that are slightly above or below the central or prototypical category⁴ are actually perceived as the correct pitch, much as allophones of a single phoneme are perceived as being the same sound (Sloboda 1985:23ff). Chenoweth (1972) has developed an analysis of intervals (the frequency distance between two pitches) which takes advantage of this type of perception, and closely follows the emic analysis of sounds utilized by the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Thus, it is possible to derive emic pitches by determining the emic shape of an interval, regardless of its etic manifestation.

Second, all music systems have structure consisting of constituents and relationships between those constituents, just as language does. Many theoretical linguistic paradigms have been applied to music in an attempt to describe its syntactic structure. Transformational grammars of music, based on the work of Chomsky, have been attempted by numerous

⁴ Rosch (1975) posits the existence of semantic prototypes which define the "goodness" of an instance of, for example, an object. Thus, a robin is a good, or prototypical example of the category "bird." But a penguin is on the edge of this category, and some may not even call it a bird. I believe this concept to be an excellent tool in understanding not only semantic categories, but phonological and grammatical categories as well. In fact, the particle/wave analysis of different levels of the various linguistic hierarchies as posited by Pike (1967:545-49) supports Rosch's views. That is, margins correspond to the categorical edges, and nuclei correspond to the "good" exemplars of semantic categories.

scholars (Nettl 1983:23-24; Boiles 1967; Sloboda 1985:32ff; Schenker 1935; Lerdahl 1977). What makes these analyses somewhat difficult to use or generalize from is that they posit a deep structure that can't be observed.

A method of structural analysis which is more experimentally verifiable is that developed by Chenoweth (1972). In it, the basic unit of grammatical analysis is the interval. Interval sequences must follow rules. For example, in a specific song or phrase type, a major second may be required to follow a major third. Thus, intervals are combined to form phrases, which are combined to form motifs, and eventually a song. Just as language may be described grammatically, so may music.⁵ A third, and more problematic comparison between music and language is in the area of meaning. It has been argued that language and music are fundamentally different in that language encodes propositional meaning, whereas music does not (Walser 1990). An interval is not a symbol of a concept in the same way as a word is a symbolic representation of a concept. Thus, a phrase or song cannot be right or wrong, true or false, as a sentence can be.

Music can, however, encode images or feelings. Music elicits emotional responses that are generally consistent within a given cultural environment (Dowling 1989:207). Suzanne Langer suggests the following:

The tonal structure we call music has a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling-forms of growth and attenuation, flowing and slowing, conflict and resolution, speed and arrest, excitement and calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses - not joy or sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either or both - the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience: the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure measured sound and silence. Music is the tonal analogue of emotive life (McLaughlin 1970: 87).

Thus, music facilitates the communication of emotions, but only within given cultural contexts⁶.

Finally, music may be described under the rubric of discourse theory. The structure of a song or any musical creation shares much in common with a story or other piece of literature. Both songs and stories have introductory sections, both develop themes, and both have climaxes that are marked by features which contrast with the rest of the song or story. In music, for example, the peak may be marked by tonal or harmonic complexity, high pitches, rapid rhythmic figures, loudness, or - if the rest of the piece can be described as light, quick, and airy - the peak could be marked by long, low notes; the essential component of the peak is its dramatic contrast with the rest of the song. The analogous markings in the peak of discourse include fast moving series of actions, a change to more direct tense (e.g., from past

⁵ It has even been demonstrated that the melodic contour of phrases is what is stored in memory, rather than individual intervals or pitches (Harwood 1976:527). This type of chunking is analogous to someone remembering words rather than phonemes from a linguistic utterance.

⁶ Nketia relates that the Ashanti of Africa have a saying which "is applied to the person who hears what goes on and seems to give it polite attention, but he is not moved because he does not really understand it" (King 1982:3). It says, "It is like singing to the White man" (Nketia 1974:153). The tie between music and emotions is indeed culturally specific. See Budd (1985) for a full discussion of music and the emotions.

tense to present), or a shift from dialogue to non-dialogue (or vice versa) (Longacre and Chenoweth 1986). The common elements of peaks in both music and language could be described as immediacy and vividness.

Music and language, then, can be analogously analyzed at all levels of musical and linguistic hierarchies⁷. Analogies also exist between the functions of music and language in society.

Cultural Universals in Music and Language

There are aspects of musical performance that are universal to all cultures. First, the meaning of any given performance is dependent on cultural conventions. "Just as a verbal utterance can be truly understood only by recourse to the language conventions of the community, so too the comprehension of musical meaning depends on knowing the community's range of acceptable musical behaviors" (Harwood 1976:530). These conventions guide not only how the music should sound in a given culture, but also who should perform, when a piece should be performed, what should be worn during performance, who should listen, and many other considerations which help weave the music into the culture.

Second, the structure of the music itself and the milieu in which it is created may reflect the worldview of the culture. Thus, for example, Western art music is most clearly exemplified by the symphony orchestra, a large group of technically complex instruments being played by musicians who are clearly ranked in terms of ability. The whole symphony is directed by one person, who holds absolute sway. This technological, hierarchically structured musical environment is in sharp contrast to that of the Javanese Gamelan. The Gamelan is an orchestra of simple gongs, xylophones, and stringed instruments, where all of the musicians sit at the same level on the floor, and each is encouraged to improvise; no single person is in charge. The music itself is also cyclical, repeating for a long period of time. Thus, the symphony reflects the hierarchical, technological, linearly oriented culture of western Europe, whereas the Gamelan reflects the egalitarian, non-technological, cyclically oriented society of Indonesia.

Oral and Written Communication

One of the theses of this paper is that there are texts in the Bible which are primarily oral in nature. Since both music and language are in their basic forms oral phenomena - i.e. singing and instrument playing in music, and speech in language - passages which are verbal transcriptions of sung texts can be characterized by features common to oral communication. What follows is a discussion of the characteristics of oral communication, with occasional contrast to the characteristics of written communication.

Redundancy and Mnemonics. A feature of all forms of expression - but oral forms especially - is that much of the information included in an utterance or song is redundant (Ong 1982:38ff). Music is replete with repetition of intervals, phrases, motifs, sections, verses, and even whole songs (Nettl 1983:40). Spoken language is also phonologically quite redundant (Jakobson 1952:4). One purpose of redundancy in oral language is probably to aid the memory; one is not at liberty to "flip back" through the pages to recall a forgotten point

⁷ The commonalities at the discourse level will be especially helpful for the discussion of the translation of the Psalms below. For another discussion of music and discourse, see Chenoweth (1986).

as one might when language is in written form. When used in conjunction with language, music aids in memory (see Deuteronomy 31:19-21).

The need to remember things is not only aided by the use of redundant information in oral language, but by the very syntactic structure of the communication. Chunking of information is necessary, so that it may be easily recalled. Ong posits that "[y]our thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions..." (1982:34). Oral communication requires stylization if only for the purpose of maintaining access to the message being communicated.

Immediacy. Oral communication is stylized not only because of mnemonic requirements, but also for emotional effect. Oral communication occurs face to face, without time, distance, printed paper, or the ability to rewrite and rethink words before they are heard separating the communicator from the one receiving the communication. It "works through the assumption of immediacy, or spontaneity; writing, on the other hand, is planned, organized, and non-spontaneous" (Lakoff 1984:239).

With no distancing mechanisms, oral cultures "conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld" (Ong 1982:42ff). This leads to an existence which is empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced, situational rather than abstract. "The oral word ... never exists in a simply verbal context, as a written word does. Spoken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation, which always engages the body" (Ong 1982:67). Because of the immanence of oral communication, it easily draws on emotion, community values and fears.

Formulaic Language and Truth. Oral cultures rely on formulaic language, such as proverbs, adages, fixed ways of referring to concepts which are known in the community (Tannen 1982:5; Ong 1982:38, 60-67) for communication. This is in part to aid the memory. But the use of formulas also points to a significant difference between oral and literate cultures in how knowledge is viewed. Truth, in oral tradition, "resides in common-sense reference to experience, whereas in literate tradition it resides in logical or coherent argument" (Tannen 1982:2). Formulaic expressions are the collection of all of the wisdom which the culture holds important. Thus, these sorts of expressions (adages, clichés, etc.) are referred to even in the highly literate U.S. culture as common-sense⁸.

The Tenacity of Orality in Written Communication. Tannen states that "...literate tradition does not replace oral. Rather, when literacy is introduced, the two are superimposed upon and intertwined with each other. Similarly, no individual is either 'oral' or 'literate.' Rather, people use devices associated with both traditions in various settings." (1982:3). Written texts which maintain a close connection to their oral roots will be vivid, sensorial, and clearly communicate the emotions and feelings of life. Characteristics of language such as metaphor, alliteration and assonance, personification, doublets, rhyme and meter are all evidence of the primary oral nature of language.

The Cultural Specificity of Music and Language

Since this paper is an attempt to exploit the common characteristics of music and language in translation, it has been necessary to underscore and identify those areas of commonality; without providing a solid theoretical base of universality of traits of these

⁸ Olson (1977) states that this oral, or common-sense, truth is what comes naturally. Thus, most people find it difficult to distinguish between a conclusion which is logical and one with which they agree.

phenomena between cultures, such an endeavor is suspect. However, it is just as important here to emphasize what about music and language are **not** universal across cultures. It is the processes underlying and governing the creation and perception of music and language which are universal, not the creations themselves. In short, just as language is not a universal language - that is, a single language is not universally understood across cultures - neither is music a universal language.

Music draws on emotions, but each culturally-specific musical system will draw on different emotions using different forms. Music may be analyzed in terms of its grammatical structure, but the structure of each music system is unique from all others. Thus, using the form of the music system of one culture in another culture will have the same effect as using the form of one language in the culture of another language: no communication. Just as great care is taken in the process of translation of words to avoid foreign forms, the same care should be given not to introduce the forms of foreign music. Again, music is not a universal language.

Music and Orality in the Psalms

Approximately one third of the Old Testament was written as Hebrew poetry (Wonderly 1987:206). The Psalms, prototypical of this large collection, were originally sung to implore, admonish, reflect, and to celebrate (hence the Hebrew title, *mizmorei tehillim*, "songs of praise") (Alter 1985:133). As such, the Psalms are primarily oral literature, first existing as poems sung by human voices, and accompanied by the lyre and other instruments. C.S. Lewis affirms the oral base of the Psalms by stating that they "must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry" (1953:3). If the Psalms are to be translated correctly, an understanding of the meaning and dynamic of their forms is necessary. A discussion of these forms follows.

The Psalms as Lyric Poems. Poetry, like music, gains much of its effect from the facile manipulation of sounds and rhythm (Nida 1982:435). Because the Psalms were originally short songs, which express the thoughts and feelings of an individual, Ryken (1974) defines the Psalms as a collection of lyric poems. Lyric poems are characterized by their musicality, subjectiveness, emotionality, and brevity (p. 122).

Formal Features. The most obvious poetic feature of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. Wonderly (1987) suggests the following sub-categories of parallelism: synonomous parallelism or "thought rhyme," antithetic or contrastive parallelism, and synthetic or formal parallelism. Thought rhymes are passages - usually doublets - in which the idea of the first line is repeated in the second, with slight variation. Two examples of this are found in Psalm 49:1 and 2 (NIV):

¹Hear this, all you peoples;
listen, all who live in this world,

²Both low and high,
rich and poor alike

The second line of each doublet is a modified restatement of the information in the first.

Antithetic parallelism is where the second line of a doublet expresses the antithesis of the first. Thus, Psalm 1:6 (NIV) reads:

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Finally, synthetic parallelism is characterized by the second line of a doublet extending the idea of the first. Psalm 23:5 (NIV) is exemplary:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

The Psalms also make use of figurative language, such as metaphor ("The Lord is my shepherd"), synecdoche ("Your right hand upholds me") and many other figures. The effect that figurative language has on the reader or hearer is an emotional response. These means of conveying emotion "include the use of an exclamatory idiom, the use of hyperbole (conscious exaggeration for the sake of communicating strong feeling), the use of emotive words, and the vivid description of the stimulus to the emotion (thereby evoking a similar feeling in the reader)" (Ryken 1974:123). Figurative language is mind-expanding and its "calculated lack of precision" (Nida 1982:438) appeals to the emotions as well as the mind. This appeal to emotion through vividness and artfully designed form holds a clear connection to the oral roots of the Psalms; immediacy and closeness to body experience are communicated through the form.

Further Oral Characteristics. In addition to the forms described above, the Psalms reflect many other features of oral literature. They make use of formulaic language, conventional rather than innovative imagery, and appeals to individually expressed but communally felt ideas. It is this close linkage with the immanence of life that results in communication of what appears in this life to be sometimes contradictory feelings and ideas. Thus, "...poetry, working through a system of complex linkages of sound, image, word, rhythm, syntax, theme, idea, is an instrument for conveying densely patterned meanings, and sometimes contradictory meanings, that are not readily conveyable through other kinds of discourse" (Alter 1985:113). The following quote from Alter beautifully expresses the true communicational intent of the Psalmists.

Psalms, more than any other group of biblical poems, brings to the fore this consciousness of the linguistic medium of religious experience. These ancient makers of devotional and celebratory poems were keenly aware that poetry is the most complex ordering of language, and perhaps also the most demanding. Within the formal limits of a poem the poet can take advantage of the emphatic repetitions dictated by the particular prosodic system, the symmetries and antitheses and internal echoes intensified by a closed verbal structure, the fine intertwinings of sound and image and reported act, the modulated shifts in grammatical voice and object of address, to give coherence and authority to his perceptions of the world. The psalmist's delight in the suppleness and serendipities of poetic form is not a distraction from the spiritual seriousness of the poems but his chief means of realizing his spiritual vision, and it is one source of the power these poems continue to have not only to excite our imaginations but also to engage our lives (p. 136).

When the Psalms are recognized not only as poetry, but as poems which carry the dynamics of music, the reasons for their ability to "excite our imaginations ...[and] engage our lives" are even more clear.

Form, Meaning, Dynamics and the Psalms

One of most difficult questions a translator must answer, especially when dealing with poetic, figurative, or story texts, is, "How far may I justifiably depart from the linguistic form of the original?" (Kingston p. 13) The example of the Psalms may here be used to partially answer this question, and to place the question in its broader context.

The Psalms are written renditions of songs. They represent the confluence of music and language; they are orality in written form. And as such, much of the meaning intended to be communicated by the Psalmist is contained in the form itself (Wonderly 1987:206). Thus, the Psalms represent one end of a continuum of literature of the Bible, with the relevant variables being the kind of meaning which is encoded, and what carries that meaning. This continuum may be graphically presented as follows:

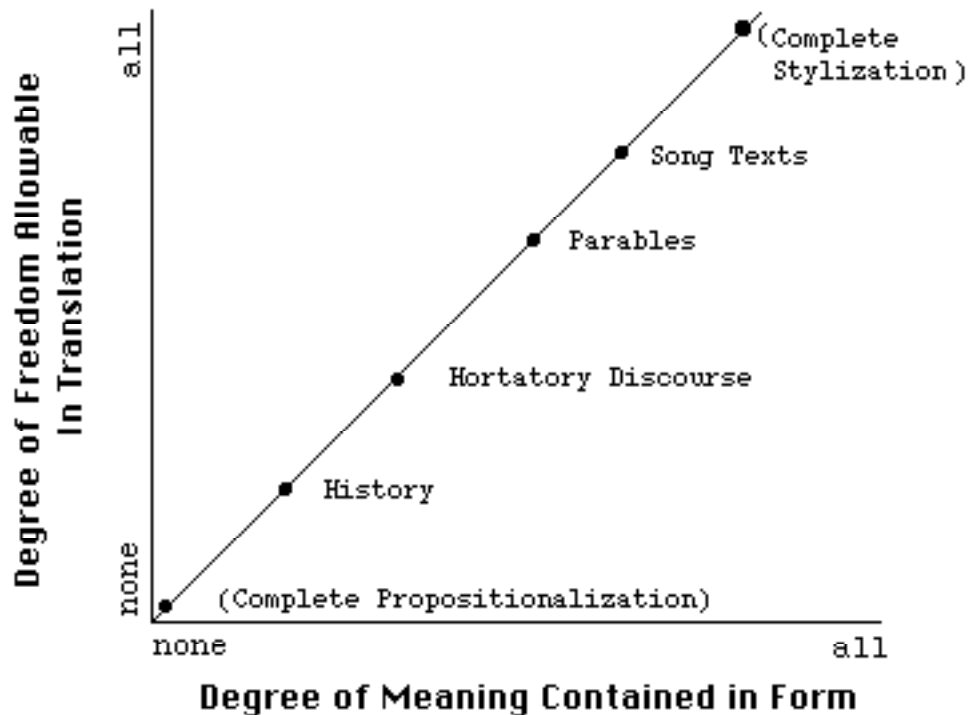


Figure: Placement of Meaning in Texts of Different Biblical Genres

This figure⁹ is a preliminary attempt to present the literary genres in the Bible in terms of the degree of meaning contained in them which is propositional at the deep structure level and encoded semantically, and that which is affective or dynamic at the deep structure level and encoded stylistically in the form of the text itself. No texts are completely form independent (i.e. completely propositional) or completely form dependent (i.e. completely stylized); these extremes are shown in the figure in parentheses to reflect their hypothetical nature. Thus, though in all cases attention must be paid to both meaning and form in translation, those genres whose primary content is dynamic may be translated with a great deal more freedom than those whose primary content is semantic. Historical passages should be translated most literally, and songs and poems should be translated most freely.

⁹ The placement of genres other than song texts upon this continuum is **very** preliminary, and serves here mainly to put the characteristics of song texts in a broader context. For genre placement, Larson (1984), pp. 365ff and Ryken (1974) were consulted.

This may at first appear to be paradoxical, as the implication is that the more the content is encoded in the form itself, the less the form itself needs to be transferred. The solution to this paradox lies in the nature of translation. Translation has been described as taking the "message out of its original packaging and carefully putting it into new and different packaging" (Headland 1990). But if the message is primarily a part of the packaging, and only partly in the package, then the package itself must be translated. As Marshall MacLuhan has said, "the medium is the message." Thus, in the case of translating a Psalm, the propositional content adds to the overall effect, but the form of the Psalm is what is in focus. And it is the form which creates the desired emotion, sense of immediacy, or mnemonic dynamic. This dynamic is what must primarily be transferred, with the propositional content in secondary focus.

What follows is the preliminary presentation of a specific method of translation of the Psalms which flows out of the discussion of orality, meaning, dynamics and song texts above. Since it is not possible to test the method, it is necessarily tentative and subject to theoretical and practical scrutiny.

Translating a Psalm

Since the communicational content of the Psalms is primarily dynamic (based on oral immediacy), and they were originally created as musical entities, the most authentic way to transfer the dynamic of a Psalm is to replicate as closely as possible the process of its original creation; that is, someone must compose a new song. There need be no worry of maintaining the same formal features of the original Psalm (e.g. parallelism), because the same dynamic will probably be communicated with a different form natural to the receptor culture. The method may be described as containing the following steps (some overlap will ordinarily occur)¹⁰.

Step One: Learn the Music System of the Receptor Culture or Enlist the Help of an Indigenous Musical Expert. It is essential that any song composed in the receptor culture be as entirely within the musical system of that culture as possible. Otherwise, what is eventually translated will be merely a substitution of one foreign form for another. This necessity of using emically understood music in translating the Psalms could be seen as a major hindrance to actually implementing such a strategy. Translators are seldom trained ethnomusicologists, and they don't have the time to gain the necessary skills for a musical analysis. This problem may be overcome in several ways.

First, the translation team can request the aid of an ethnomusicologist. Second, they can enlist the aid of a local composer. If this musician has high prestige within his or her community (which, unfortunately, is not always the case), this option has the added benefit of adding to the prestige of the project itself. Third, the translation team may use existing songs or parts of songs already in the culture's repertoire. This option would probably also require the help of a local musician, and would almost certainly cause the resultant text to sound stilted and unmusical; the music would require the text to conform to its already existing contours, rhythms, and melodic structures. The composition of new songs is vastly preferable to using extant ones.

¹⁰ An interesting sidelight which illuminates the ability of all languages to hold musical texts is the case of American Sign Language (ASL). Klima and Bellugi (1976) propose that poetic forms of ASL actually may be described as musical because of the rhythmic and visual patterns that are used. It would be interesting to study a Psalm translated into sign language.

Step Two: Determine the Dynamic and Semantic Content of a Psalm. Using exegetical helps, devotional interpretations of the Psalms¹¹, and literary treatments of the Psalms, determine the dynamic and semantic content of a Psalm. Much scholarship must be undertaken directly applied to the task of translation before this step will be straightforward. One important result of such scholarship should be a standardized formal presentation - akin to a propositional display - which will clearly show both emotional and semantic content and which can be used to communicate the content of the song to the composer (see Step Four).

Step Three: Elicit Song Types. The appendix contains a list of categories of songs which may prove useful in eliciting types of songs. This list must be expanded, however, to include classification of songs by emotional dynamics and social functions. It is essential that the genre of song into which the Psalm is to be re-composed avoids certain negative traits, and has certain positive traits. Negatively, the genre chosen must on the one hand not carry the primary association of anti-Christian rituals, and on the other hand not be associated too strongly with banal or frivolous activities (such as children's games). Emotional or religious associations with certain types of music may be altered, but the stronger the associations are, the harder they are to mitigate. Positively, the song genre must be capable of carrying as much of the dynamic emotional range and complexity of the original Psalm as possible.

There almost certainly will not be a song genre in the receptor culture which fits exactly the requirements of Hebrew songs, but there hopefully will be one that fits adequately¹². If there is no adequately analogous form, it may be necessary to help a new genre of Biblical music to evolve. This might occur in conjunction with the development of a new indigenous hymnody as local composers become Christians. Unfortunately, a full discussion of such a process is beyond the scope of this paper.

Step Four: Work With Local Composer(s) in Creating an Indigenous Psalm. Whether the expatriate co-translator is an ethnomusicologist, has enlisted the help of an ethnomusicologist, or is on his or her own, it is essential to have the help of a local musician. The semantic and emotional content of the Psalm to be composed should be discussed with the indigenous composer/musician. He or she should then be encouraged to compose a song in the genre chosen which communicates the essential semantic information and the dynamic effect. Since it may not be culturally common to compose songs on demand, the expatriate or ethnomusicologist may need to model the process by making an admittedly feeble attempt at composition. Hopefully, the local composer will step in to do it right.

After the song is composed, it should undergo a thorough Uninitiated Native Speaker (UNS) check. This check will consist of the answering of questions regarding the semantic content and emotional impact of the song, as well as detailed ethnographic observation of the physical reaction of the UNS when he or she first hears the song. If she laughs at what is supposed to be a Psalm of mourning, modifications may need to be made¹³.

Step Five: Polish the final version of the Psalm. The newly composed song, its words, structure and content fitting all requirements of the indigenous music, is now ready for any

¹¹ A good example of such a devotional work is Eugene Peterson's A long obedience in the same direction (IVP).

¹² Definitions of adequacy will have to be developed through experience with application of this method.

¹³ Laughter may also be the result of uneasiness at the novel social situation surrounding the performance. Steps should be taken to make the UNS checking session as natural as possible, and time should be allotted to allow the idea of composing songs requested by the translator to become more acceptable.

further adaptation to the biblical text. The referential content of the song must be checked to make certain that it does not contradict the content of the biblical text. Any changes should be made with the help of the composer. Then explanatory notes - similar to the musical directions contained in the Hebrew Psalms - will probably need to be included as a title or footnote, or even as a marking within the text itself. This form should then be checked with another UNS for comprehensibility and emotional reaction. One immediate benefit to translating the Psalms this way is that a sizable corpus of Biblical songs will come into being directly through the process of translation.

Conclusion

In summary, with texts that have a strong oral component, it will almost always be necessary to depart to a significant degree from the form of the original. To maintain the dynamics of the source text - which in these oral-rich passages is at the core of what was intended to be communicated - genres in the receptor language which communicate the same dynamics must be used, regardless of their dissimilarity in form to the original text. The propositional content of such a text may be less strictly adhered to so that the dynamic content is maintained.

The recognition of texts in terms of their basic roots in cognition and orality should provide many benefits to those interested in translating the Bible as a whole as faithfully as possible. It is hoped that the application of these ideas to musical texts as outlined in this paper will result in attempts to implement such a strategy, which will in turn result in dialogue and further development of the theory. The interpretational grid presented here may also prove helpful in developing guidelines for the translation of texts according to their discourse features, which contain a strong oral component (for three such treatments of the relationship between indigenous discourse forms and translation see Powlison, Kingston, and Duff).

The use of music in translating song and poetry texts is a relatively untapped, potentially rich area to be considered. It behooves those interested in communicating the original dynamic message of the Psalms and other song-based passages - to paraphrase Thelonius Monk - to sing about writing.

Appendix: Song Types

The following are elements of cultures which may have music associated with them. It is not an exhaustive list, but may be used to elicit song types (Chenoweth 1972:24-25).

1. Events

- 1.1 Human
 - 1.1.1 Birth (birth announcement, lullaby)
 - 1.1.2 Childhood (funny or nonsense songs, games, teasing or taung songs)
 - 1.1.3 Puberty (girls' songs, boys' songs, initiation)
 - 1.1.4 Courting (love songs, courting songs, proposal of marriage)
 - 1.1.5 Marriage (wedding, men's songs, women's songs)
 - 1.1.6 Death (funeral, mourning)
- 1.2 Historical
 - 1.2.1 Commemorative (disasters, honours, first outsiders, changes in leadership or government, first road, first vehicles, wars)
 - 1.2.2 Legend (creation, mythology)
 - 1.2.3 Local news

2. Activities

- 2.1 Work (cutting timber, hunting, fishing, road making)
- 2.2 Fighting (preparation for battle, battle, victory, defeat)
- 2.3 Dancing (male, mixed, social, ceremonial, solo)

3. Ceremonies

- 3.1 Magic (planting, harvesting, fertility, power, prophecy)
- 3.2 Social (greeting, farewell, wedding, funeral, completion of an endeavor such as making of a warrior or communal clearing of the land)

4. Nature

- 4.1 Animals (pets, wild animals including birds, fish and reptiles)
- 4.2 Places and things (mountains, rivers, forests, trees, plants, the heavens including clouds, sun, moon, stars and sky)

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