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Abstract

This paper analyses 'translatedness' – representations of translation and the ways and extent to which the act of translation are made explicit – in the short documentary The Internationale (2000). How is translation represented in a film about one of the world's most widely translated and disseminated songs? Drawing inspiration from film narratology, it first examines the auditive and visual meaning-making resources at work in the documentary, keying in on how these combine in complex ways to render translatedness and give it meaning. Four representation types emerge from the analysis: translation as music; translation as a result (rather than as a prerequisite) of worldwide dissemination; (non)translation and multilingual choruses; and cultural translation. These inform a discussion of the ideological implications of a documentary narrative that acknowledges the pivotal role of translation in the song's international dissemination but ultimately portrays (re)translation into English as the best way to revive its change potential and redeem it from past misuses. This seeming Anglocentrism sits somewhat uneasily alongside the song's long and varied translation history and its past ideological investments.

Keywords: translatedness, documentary film, representation of translation, The Internationale, film narratology

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Representing translation in a documentary about one of the world's most translated songs

‘Translatedness’ in Peter Miller’s *The Internationale* (2000)

This paper analyses ‘translatedness’ – representations of translation and the ways and extent to which the act of translation are made explicit – in the short documentary The Internationale (2000). How is translation represented in a film about one of the world’s most widely translated and disseminated songs? Drawing inspiration from film narratology, it first examines the auditive and visual meaning-making resources at work in the documentary, keying in on how these combine in complex ways to render translatedness and give it meaning. Four representation types emerge from the analysis: translation as music; translation as a result (rather than as a prerequisite) of worldwide dissemination; (non)translation and multilingual choruses; and cultural translation. These inform a discussion of the ideological implications of a documentary narrative that acknowledges the pivotal role of translation in the song’s international dissemination but ultimately portrays (re)translation into English as the best way to revive its change potential and redeem it from past misuses. This seeming Anglocentrism sits somewhat uneasily alongside the song’s long and varied translation history and its past ideological investments.

Introduction

In a public lecture delivered in London on 17 May 2019,¹ Robin D. G. Kelley, the prominent American historian of music and Marxism in the African American diaspora, called “L’Internationale” “the only song to change the world”.² He likens the anthem of international solidarity and revolution to a blues, thereby sounding the argument that, through the song – and particularly through the *music* of the song – a politics of intersectional solidarity becomes possible, connecting racial struggles with those of the international working class. This transpositioning of “L’Internationale” as an expression of the Black American experience is just one example of the song’s specific social uses among many others, including those collected in this focus issue. The song’s complex dissemination history, spanning a century and a half and all corners of the globe, goes hand in hand with its many lives in translation. Indeed, “L’Internationale” was made to be sung in every language. And, as Kelley notes in his remarks on a recent Afrikaans rendition of the song by Liela Groenewald,³ the way the song is performed

¹ See <https://soundcloud.com/lsepodcasts/internationale-blues>.

² Throughout the paper, I use “L’Internationale” to refer to the song and *The Internationale* to refer to the film.

³ See <https://archive.org/details/the-internationale-afrikaans-die-internasionale-afrikaans>.

has as much change potential as the message carried in its lyrics. In his example, the Afrikaans of Groenewald is “translated” (Kelley’s words) to a post-Apartheid reality through the rendition’s bluesy musicality, countering the status of Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor and inscribing it instead within a musical language of shared, open-ended struggle. As we will see, our artifact also seeks to link the song’s musicality with new social uses, ultimately arguing for its revitalisation through a new rendition with revised English lyrics.

All these aspects – the song’s worldwide dissemination, its myriad social uses, its constant musical and lyrical adaptation – point to complex forms of translation and illustrate the challenge that chroniclers of the song’s translation history face: how to tell the story of “L’Internationale”? This paper takes up the specific case of the short documentary *The Internationale* (2000, First Run/Icarus Films, 30 min.), directed and produced by Peter Miller and narrated by the folk singer Pete Seeger. It asks: how is translation represented in a documentary film about a widely translated and disseminated song and what do its representations of translation reveal about the film’s ideological investments vis-à-vis translation?

Conceptual framework

In the age of global media convergence, documentary film has become a dominant form of non-fiction storytelling. ‘Translation’, in the context of documentary filmmaking, is a complex matter because meaning-making (and its referent in this genre, ‘truth-making’, cf. NICHOLS 2016) involves combining written, oral, aural and visual inputs, which are constantly being mixed and remixed to construct a discourse of factuality and truthfulness. In the case of a documentary film about a widely translated song, translation also becomes *part of the story*: it is both a frame for parsing polysemiotic meaning-making resources and something these resources are made to represent. It is from this dual awareness that I attempt an analysis of ‘translatedness’ in the short documentary film *The Internationale*.

Venuti’s lamentations on the invisibility of the translator are well known (Venuti 2018 [1995]), but less is known about how translators, translation and multilingualism are made visible in terms of expressive techniques and narrative motifs. By focusing on translatedness in *The Internationale*, this study contributes to a small but growing body of research on representations of translation in literature and film (see KRIPPER 2023; DRANENKO 2022; KAINDL 2012; CRONIN 2009; DELABASTITA & GRUTMAN 2005), including in documentary film (see VAN HECKE & LANSLOTS 2020). Because the film’s subject is a widely translated song, it also taps into research on song translation (see FRANZON et al. 2021; SUSAM-SARAJEVA 2008). Concretely, it explores how a song’s musicality can be synonymised cinematically with translation (see below).

I define translatedness as representations of translation in a text and the ways and extent to which translation is made explicit, grounding this definition in film narratology. As audiovisual texts rely on polysemiotic meaning-making resources to create representations, film narratology (VERSTRATEN 2009) provides a useful starting point for

analysis. Bringing Mieke Bal's (2009 [1980]) seminal theory of narrative to film studies, Verstraten provides a framework for analysing cinematic techniques as narrative, including external and internal narration, visual and auditive focalization, the narrative force of sound and music, and the ambiguities caused by voice-overs, flashbacks and montages. Narratology has meanwhile been widely applied to analyse filmic representations (see KUHN & SCHMIDT 2013), but has only seldom been used to examine filmic representations of translation.

Narratology has also on occasion converged with other areas in translation studies, for instance on the topic of audiovisual translation and, more specifically, audio-description (MATAMALA RIPOOL & REMAEL 2015; VERCAUTEREN 2014, 2012; VANDAELE 2012; KRUGER 2010). Within this discourse, film narratology is used as a framework for systematizing available audio-description strategies. Film narratology has also been taken up by researchers in the neighbouring discipline of media studies as part of an ongoing effort to develop a "genuinely transmedial narratology" that "allows for the analysis of *trans-medial strategies of narrative representation* and their realization within the specific mediality of contemporary films" (THON 2016, emphasis in the original). Separately, film studies scholars have looked at how truth is rendered in documentary film, and to what artistic and social effects (e.g., NICHOLS 2016, 1991; NISBET & AUFDERHEIDE 2009). One such effect that I will return to later in the paper is what Alison Landsberg (2004; 2018) calls 'prosthetic memory', which advances from the idea that "memories bridge the temporal chasms that separate individuals from the meaningful and potentially interpellative events of the past" and furthermore that (documentary) films and other memory sites make it "possible to have an intimate relationship to memories of events through which one did not live" (LANDSBERG 2018: 148). In this discourse, documentary films are considered not only "part of a larger effort to spark debate, mold public opinion, shape policy, and build activist networks" (NISBET & AUFDERHEIDE 2009), but also as "a catalyst for [...] progressive politics and collective action" (LANDSBERG 2018: 144), precisely because they instrumentalise prosthetic memory in the service of progressive political alliances and solidarities. This "cinematic technology" (ibid.: 153) relies on techniques that aim to 'translate the real to the reel', including talking-head eyewitness interviews, archival footage, montages, and expert voice-overs (see SANCHEZ 2022 for a translation studies perspective on documentary film). These same conventions can also be used to ironic, humorous, or subversive effect, as the mockumentary subgenre demonstrates (WALLACE 2019).

These conceptual lines – film narratology, transmediality, conventions of documentary film – are called upon in this paper to single out how translatedness contributes to truth-making in *The Internationale*. The question becomes to what extent translation is presented as part of an 'objective' story of the worldwide diffusion of "L'Internationale", and how, and with what evidence, that narrative is constructed. As with any analysis of representation, my focus is not only on how representation is achieved in technical terms, but also on what is represented (and what is not). This opens room to examine the ideological stakes involved in the story told in *The Internationale*, and specifically the ideology that is conveyed through its representations of translation.

Ideology is a notoriously elusive concept to define, including in relation to translation (BAUMGARTEN 2012: 59). However, for the sake of this analysis, ideology is taken to refer to the beliefs, values, and perspectives that shape how *The Internationale's* filmmaker interprets and represents reality. These are assumed to be perceivable in the filmic text and interpretable by the researcher: just as the ideological mediation of a translator can be gleaned from their 'voice' or 'discursive presence' in the translated text (HERMANS 1996), so too can the ideological mediation of the documentary filmmaker be gleaned from how they actively select, arrange, and interpret footage, interviews, and other elements to construct a coherent truth narrative. This narrative is not a neutral recounting of events but a crafted story that reflects an ideological stance. Through narrative choices such as what stories to tell, whose voices to highlight, and how translatedness is achieved (or not), the filmmaker's ideology subtly or overtly influences the audience's perception of the fact of translation. The interplay between ideology and narrative highlights the inherent subjectivity in documentary filmmaking and the power of the filmmaker to shape discourses of truth. This observation invites a connection to broader discussions about translation and ideology and places the (documentary) filmmaker in a mediating role not unlike that of the translator (see MUNDAY 2007).

***The Internationale's* contexts of production and reception**

As Maria Tymoczko (2003: 183) emphasises in her widely cited chapter "Ideology and the Position of the Translator", "the ideology of a translation resides not simply in the text translated, but in the voicing and stance of the translator, and in its relevance to the receiving audience." Likewise, before turning to the documentary film itself, it is helpful to situate *The Internationale* in its "'place' of enunciation" (ibid.) by briefly profiling Peter Miller, the film's producer and director, and by describing its contexts of production and reception.⁴ Miller is an Emmy- and Peabody-award winning documentary filmmaker and had worked as a co-producer with the well-known filmmaker Ken Burns on several documentaries before *The Internationale*, including the acclaimed ten-episode documentary series *Jazz* (2001). Miller's activism is evident in other, earlier work, including as a co-producer for Barbara Kopple's 1990 documentary of the Hormel meat-packer's strike, *The American Dream* (NEKOLA 2003: 150). Since *The Internationale*, Miller has accrued twenty-one credits as a director or producer of documentary films, winning an Emmy in 2018 for his documentary *Man of Many Voices* (2016), on the conductor Robert Shaw, among other awards.

⁴ Another prominent figure implicated in the *The Internationale's* production and reception context is its main narrator, the American folk singer and activist Pete Seeger (1919–2014). Seeger also played a key role in the latest chapter of the song's English-language translation history by encouraging the English singer-songwriter and activist Billy Bragg to revamp the English lyrics and realign the song to new groups and causes (see Christophe Declercq's contribution in this focus issue). Bragg's version receives outsized attention in the film and is pivotal to its overall narrative arc, as discussed below.

At thirty minutes long, the film falls in the ‘documentary short’ category. This signals one of its important social uses: unlike long-form documentaries made for broadcast television or movie theatres, *The Internationale* was meant to be shown at union meetings, political gatherings, and in classrooms. Although a made-for-television or cinematic format could potentially have offered a broader audience, it “[did] not always match the needs of activists, labor educators, and college and high school teachers” (FLETCHER 2002: 190) in the United States, which were the film’s primary intended audience. The film also reached limited television audiences via regional affiliates of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which aired the film regularly throughout the 2000s.

The Internationale was produced and distributed as a VHS tape in 2000 by the Brooklyn, New York-based independent production house First Run/Icarus Films. Attempts to track down information about production budget and distribution figures were unsuccessful, but the film has a high production value and was commercially available. It was screened on the independent film festival circuit in 2001, winning one accolade, the jury prize for Best Documentary Short Film at the 2001 Woodstock Film Festival. A smattering of reviews appeared in specialised academic journals and left-leaning cinephile media outlets in the two years following its release. A few additional reviews appeared when the film was re-released on DVD in 2006–2007. In all, I was able to find eleven English-language reviews of the film, which range in length from one to three pages and were generally favourable and sympathetic to the cause.

Interestingly, among the special features included on the DVD was a Second World War-era television performance of an all-Allies version of *Hymn of the Nations*, which was originally produced for inclusion in a US Office of War Information documentary and features Arturo Toscanini’s arrangement mixing “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “L’Internationale” in the same musical score. (A Russian version of “L’Internationale” was adopted as the official anthem of Russia in 1918 and of the Soviet Union in 1922 and relinquished in 1944, shortly after Toscanini’s filmed performance. See Pieter Boulogne’s contribution to this focus issue for more on “L’Internationale” in Russian.) This is notable because “L’Internationale” had been cut from the film version of *Hymn of the Nations* at the onset of the Cold War. Its inclusion among the DVD’s special features harkens back to a time when the United States and the Soviet Union were allies and performs a rapprochement of sorts between West and East, a decade-and-a-half after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The DVD also included a booklet containing “A Brief History of the ‘The Internationale’” and song lyrics in several different languages. (Although these paratextual materials certainly bear on the ‘translatedness’ of the material object that is the DVD, I leave them out of the analysis below in order to focus on the film itself.)

The narrow diffusion and reception of *The Internationale* in the United States should be seen against the lingering presence of Cold-War antagonisms in the post-Cold War period. Although the film condemns the connotations of state communism that the song acquired when it was adopted as the official anthem of the Soviet Union, its association with ‘the Reds’ in inverted commas and the long-standing (and still-ongoing)

suppression of communist and socialist ideologies in the United States more generally contribute to the song's relative obscurity in the American context. As Anna Nekola notes,

Music and text for "The Internationale" are rarely printed in the many published collections of American folksongs or American work and labor songs produced after 1930. Instead, the song appears to be confined to collections of socialist songs, published most often by small, independent, and often radical presses. (2003: 51)

The Internationale, too, seems to have had a similarly restricted diffusion. Produced by a left-leaning, independent production house for audiences sympathetic to the cause, its reception was largely limited to this specific sub-culture: specialised academic journals, cinephile media outlets, and activist audiences.

How to analyse 'translatedness' in an audiovisual text

As mentioned, I define translatedness as representations of translation in a text and the ways and extent to which translation is made explicit. The text I analyse here is both *multimodal*, in that it combines multiple modes or channels of communication within a single (filmic) medium, including written and spoken language, still and moving images, audio and music, and *multimedial*, in that it uses multiple types of media (archival film footage, archival still images, original interview footage and the music itself in various styles and with lyrics in different languages) to tell a coherent story. Two interconnected questions can help unpack this complex semantic situation. One is keyed into the narrative aspect: what is the film's narrative structure and how is translation narrativized within in? A second is keyed into the technical aspect: how is translatedness rendered cinematically? Answers to these questions can help to address a second-order, interpretive question that is taken up in the concluding section of this paper: what ideological investments are projected in the film with regards to translation?

Proceeding from Verstraten's (2009) film-narratological model, I distinguish between two key tracks in filmic texts: the auditive track and the visual track. The visual track refers to a film's visual resources: still and moving images. Both the auditive and visual tracks may contain verbal resources (spoken word and written word, respectively), and both the auditive and visual tracks may at any time consist of multiple superimposed layers: the auditive track may include voice overlaid with ambient sound overlaid with music, for instance, whereas the visual track may include moving images and a graphic overlay, as when an interviewee appears on screen and their name is displayed in a lower third, for instance, or when English subtitles are shown under footage of "L'Internationale" being sung in other languages. In the filmic medium, the auditive track and the visual track are superimposed on one another in such a way that sound resources and visual resources are constantly co-constructing meaning.

The Internationale depends heavily on auditive resources (especially music), and this calls for particular care in parsing and analysing the auditive track. The auditive track

refers to all sound resources, be it intradiegetic sound (sound that is part of the story itself, or sound that can be assumed to be heard or made by the subjects being visually portrayed) or extradiegetic sound (sound added by the auditive narrator, or sound that can be assumed *not* to be heard or made by the subjects being visually portrayed). Given that the criterion distinguishing intra- and extradiegetic sound is whether the sound corresponds to what is being portrayed visually, it is possible that a single sound resource may shift from intra- to extradiegetic though the course of its duration, depending on the visual track to which it is paired. This happens, for example, when a ‘talking-head’ shot (where the visual resource is the interviewee speaking on camera and the sound resource is the interviewee’s voice) cuts to a shot where the visual resource is something else (such as a montage of archival footage) while the sound resource remains the interviewee’s voice, which now ‘voices over’ the visual resources. Voice-overs are a common technique in documentary films because the visual component helps amplify and illustrate the speaker’s words. At the same time, the speaker’s words add a contextualising layer to the visuals, often serving to authenticate or validate the visuals as being what the speaker says they are. *The Internationale* makes ample use of voice-overs to connect the interviewees’ testimonies to archival materials in this way.

Music, a sound resource that is almost omnipresent in *The Internationale*, may also be either intra- or extra-diegetic. In a shot portraying a group of people singing accompanied by the sound of those people singing, the music is intradiegetic, whereas in a shot of protesters marching overlaid with a soundtrack of “L’Internationale”, the music is extradiegetic. A combination of intradiegetic and extradiegetic music is also possible, as in a shot portraying a group of people singing accompanied by both the sound of those people singing and a soundtrack overlay of the song.

In terms of analysing translatedness, being attuned to the intra- and extradiegetic status of sound resources and their connection to the visuals being shown becomes particularly important in complex sequences, such as those that combine ambient (intradiegetic) sound, multiple versions of the song (music, be it extradiegetic or intradiegetic), archival footage portraying scenes from many different contexts (linked ostensibly to the context of the music), and subtitles (written verbal material linked ostensibly to the spoken/sung words). In such a complex semantic situation, any combination of these different resources can have a bearing on translatedness.

To identify the narrative structure of the film, I first separated the documentary into its constitutive segments, taking fade-in and fade-out markers as start and stop points for each segment. This not only produced an overview of the film’s structure (see table 1), but it also made it possible to infer some of the segmenting criteria used by the filmmaker. Much of the film proceeds chronologically, for instance, and many of its segments present self-enclosed vignettes of the song in discrete spatio-temporal contexts. Each vignette features one or two ‘talking heads’ speaking retrospectively about their personal experience with the song in relation to that particular context, interspersed with music and other auditive resources. The visual track switches between talking-head shots and archival footage. Some talking heads were involved in multiple

vignettes. For example, Bill Susman appears in the vignette on the first May Day demonstrations in the United States (because he attended them) as well as in the vignette on the Spanish Civil War (because he participated in it). At the beginning, middle and end of the film are segments of people actually singing the song: the opening segment is an English-subtitled montage of footage of people singing the song in different languages, times, and places; a middle segment has the various talking heads singing the song in their respective mother tongues; the closing segment has a women's choir singing Billy Bragg's English remake. I will argue that this structure is not random and demonstrates a clear narrative progression in service of clear ideological investments in relation to translation.

For each segment, I furthermore identified the auditive and visual resources used, paying special attention to how resources were combined, and which forms of media content were used. A schematic reconstruction of all story segments and their auditive and visual meaning-making resources was made and analysed in light of the research questions: how is translatedness rendered in technical terms? What meanings are ascribed to translation in the narrative? These questions were applied at two levels of analysis: the film's narrative structure as a whole (comprising all story segments) and select translation-relevant segments. The results generated by this methodology inform the discussion of 'translatedness' below, as well as the concluding remarks.

Translatedness in *The Internationale*

Throughout the film, representations of translation are omnipresent, but the film's complexity as a multimodal text make the task of extracting these representations complex as well. Representations of translation ranged from the explicit, as when Seeger narrates in segment 2 that the song "spread throughout France, it spread throughout Europe. They translated it in dozens of languages, maybe hundreds for all I know," to complex representations, as in the opening segment, where Miller creates a visual and auditive montage blending renditions of the song in different languages with a sequence of historical and contemporary film clips from diverse settings. In the following sections, I analyse examples of translatedness in *The Internationale*, first in relation to the film's overall narrative structure, taking into account the content and arrangement of its constituent story segments, and then in relation to four distinct types of representations of translation that emerge in the film: translation as music; translation as a result (rather than as a prerequisite) of worldwide dissemination; (non)translation and multilingual choruses; and cultural translation.

The Internationale's narrative structure

In eighteen segments separated by fade-in and fade-out transitions, *The Internationale* tells the story of the song by recounting the associations that various activists have with it and connecting these individual experiences to larger societal shifts and shared themes, including through the act of communal singing of the song itself. By linking the individual to the collective in this way, the song becomes a vehicle for scrutinizing

the uncertain prospects of the leftist movements around the world that embraced it, culminating in a forward-looking expression of hope that the revised British English version by Billy Bragg, stripped of past “baggage that we need to get rid of”, in Bragg’s words, would revitalize the song and appeal to new generations and contexts.

Three segment types characterise the narrative and build its structure: episodic segments (segments 2–9, 16), which are ordered more or less chronologically and focus on the song in a specific time and place; thematic segments (segments 10–12, 14 and 15), which draw on different historical and geographic contexts to criticise or advocate a particular aspect of the song’s perceived uses and misuses; and musical segments (segments 1, 13 and 18), which feature the singing of the song in various languages and which bookend the two main components of the film’s narrative arc: retrospective reflections (segments 2–12), and forward-looking projections (segments 14–17).

After the opening musical segment (see the section on ‘Translation as music’ below), the film’s narrative begins in earnest with a segment narrated by Pete Seeger chronicling the emergence and early dissemination of the French original, starting in 1871 with Eugène Pottier’s penning of the poem at the fall of the Paris Commune, Pierre Degeyter’s addition of a melody seventeen years later, and the song’s subsequent spread throughout France, the rest of Europe, and eventually other parts of the world. The segment finishes with Seeger playing the melody on his acoustic guitar and singing the closing lines of the song in his heavily accented French, the only time the song is heard in the film with its original French lyrics.

Through a combination of archival footage interspersed with talking-head testimonies and song overlays, the eight segments that follow trace the social uses of the song in discrete times, places, and languages, narrated (in English) by activists connected to them: as a rallying cry sung by labour organisers at early May Day demonstrations across the United States (segment 3) and at the 1912 Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts (segment 4), narrated by the socialist literary critic Annette Rubenstein and activist Bill Susman; as the national anthem of Russia following the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power in the October Revolution of 1917 and the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, narrated by the Russian music historian Vladimir Zak (segment 5); as a protest song of the socialist kibbutzim of the 1940s, in what is today Israel, narrated by kibbutznik Yehoshua Zamir (segment 6); as a childhood lullaby sung to Marina-Feleo Gonzalez, the daughter of the peasant leader and politician Juan Feleo, whose assassination in 1946 sparked the Huk Rebellion during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines; as a song sung by the American labour organiser Dorothy Ray Healy in a San Jose county jail after being arrested with striking Mexican migrant workers in 1931 (segment 8); as a martial song sung by foreign volunteers supporting the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), narrated by Bill Susman, who returns to the narrative in his capacity as an Abraham Lincoln Brigade veteran (segment 9).

Following these episodic segments, several thematic segments draw on events from different historical and geographic contexts to advocate or criticise a particular aspect of the song. Segment 10, narrated by the American labourer Archie Green and folk

singer Pete Seeger, laments the transition of “L’Internationale” from a general protest song that could be used by anarchists, socialists, communists and trade unionists alike to one that became predominantly and pejoratively linked to the Soviet Union and state communism – a link, the film points out, that was exploited by motion picture newsreels and television broadcasters in the United States during the Red Scare. The short segment on reggae renditions of the song in Jamaica, narrated by the Jamaican activist Maurice Jackson, focuses on how “older comrades couldn’t understand how the song could be bastardized” (segment 11). In segment 12, Archie Green and Dorothy Ray Healy return to comment on an internal tension in the English lyrics of the song, particularly the line “No more tradition’s chains shall bind us”, which harkens a post-capitalist and post-church clean slate but naively fails to imagine what might come after. Here, the filmmaker offers an answer through clever editing: the usual talking-head and archival materials are present in this segment but are overlaid with in-colour audiovisuals of an all-male Soviet military choir full-throatedly singing “L’Internationale” in Russian, reiterating the lament expressed in segment 10 that the song’s idealism had been co-opted by state communism.

These vignettes culminate with a second musical montage (segment 13) of the above interviewees singing “L’Internationale” in different languages, echoing the opening sequence in its sounding of multilingualism and in its featuring the singing of the song; however, where the opening segment relied on historical visual and auditive materials and provided English subtitles, segment 13 uses ‘native’ materials of the interviewees singing themselves, this time without subtitles. This technique simultaneously connects the collective to the individual and the extradiegetic to the intradiegetic and insinuates the narrative’s denouement: the need for a new English version.

In terms of its order in the overall narrative structure of the film, the second musical segment serves to segue from the episodic and thematic segments discussed above, which are retrospective, to the remaining segments of the film, which are forward-looking: segments 14 and 15 introspectively revive a youthful vitality for the song by linking it to student activists in the United States and China after Tiananmen, setting up two final segments presenting Billy Bragg’s English adaptation as a new riff on a familiar tune: by retaining the melody of the song but grafting on new lyrics, the Bragg rendition is presented as fit for future generations and new uses (segments 16 and 17).

Segment #	Segment type	Segment perspective	Segment topic	Segment timecode	Segment time elapsed
1	Musical		Opening montage	0:00–1:01	1:01
2	Episodic	Retrospective	Paris Commune	1:02–3:01	1:59
3	Episodic	Retrospective	May Day demonstrations in the US	3:02–4:02	1:00
4	Episodic	Retrospective	Workers’ strike in Lawrence, MA	4:03–4:37	0:34
5	Episodic	Retrospective	Bolsheviks embrace song	4:37–5:36	0:59

6	Episodic	Retrospective	Israeli kibbutz	5:36–6:28	0:52
7	Episodic	Retrospective	Assassination of Filipino organizer Juan Feleo	6:29–8:32	2:03
8	Episodic	Retrospective	The San Jose pickers' strike	8:33–9:46	1:13
9	Episodic	Retrospective	The rise of fascism and the Spanish Civil War	9:47–12:26	2:39
10	Thematic	Retrospective	From general radical song to Soviet song	12:26–13:47	1:21
11	Thematic	Retrospective	Jamaican reggae rendition	13:47–14:27	0:40
12	Thematic	Retrospective	"No more traditions' chain shall bind us"?	14:27–16:26	1:59
13	Musical		Interviewees singing in different languages	16:27–17:21	0:54
14	Thematic	Forward-looking	The tragedy of idealism	17:22–21:19	3:54
15	Thematic	Forward-looking	Students from Texas to Tiananmen	21:20–23:30	2:10
16	Episodic	Forward-looking	Billy Bragg's rendition	23:31–26:00	2:29
17	Thematic	Forward-looking	Reviving and reliving the dream?	26:00–27:08	1:08
18	Musical		Closing sequence (women's choir singing Bragg's rendition)	27:08–28:47	1:39
19	Musical		Credits	28:48–30:00	1:12

Table 1: story segments in *The Internationale* by type, perspective, topic, chronology, and elapsed time. The documentary is viewable on YouTube

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmx3D2n5IU>). Readers can use the timecodes provided to navigate through the segments.

Representations of translation in The Internationale

While space constraints prohibit an exhaustive explication of translatedness in every segment of *The Internationale*, I consolidate translation-relevant components of different segments into four main types of representations that emerged in the film: translation as music, translation as a result (rather than as a prerequisite) of worldwide dissemination, (non)translation and multilingual choruses, and cultural translation.

Translation as music

The documentary opens with an entreaty spoken in a tinny voice fit for a 1930's American newsreel: "Now let's all sing the International!" This sets up a striking visual montage that stitches together archival footage from rallies, strikes, marching troops, and singing masses in different decades and places, set against a synchronous audio montage of the opening verse of "L'Internationale" in different languages, tempos and musical styles. Each line of the song introduces a different historical context and language

version – we hear Chinese, Russian, Filipino, Spanish and English and are shown images of Tiananmen, euphoric Bolsheviks, striking peasants, Spanish Republican soldiers on the march, and May Day protesters. (These are also the contexts covered in the specific vignettes that follow later in the film.) Notably, the archival footage is overlaid with a second visual track: English subtitles. The text displayed is Charles Hope Kerr's 1900 American English translation, very slightly adapted (the *ye*'s are changed to *you*'s). The montage finishes with Pete Seeger singing the closing lines of the refrain in French: "L'Internationale / Sera le genre humain." This visual and auditive montage combines to become more than the sum of its parts: by building one spatial-temporal context on top of another, and sounding these with one language after another, the montage has the effect of compounding, swelling and expanding until its common denominator – the melody of the song – seems to encompass all the world, and all its languages.

Translatedness is signaled here by the song itself, in that it enables a common mode of communication and shared experience across linguistic and spatio-temporal boundaries. Such a representation of translation keys into the truism attributed to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that 'music is the universal language of mankind' (a truism that has also recently become a topic of serious scientific investigation, e.g., MEHR et al. 2019): even if one cannot understand the lyrics, one can 'feel' the rhythm and hear the melody to understand the message conveyed by the song, a message that resonates similarly in different social contexts, and for different audiences, all over the world. Indeed, this is a sentiment that is reiterated in the testimonies of several of the interviewees later in the film. For example, Li Lu, a student leader of the Tiananmen Square protests, states, "I never paid much attention to [the] words of '[the] Internationale'. But the melody of the song always [brought] me into a very special mood." Marina Feleo Gonzales, daughter of Juan Feleo, reminisces about her response to the song as an infant: "It was [sung] to me, actually, like a lullaby. And, you know, I was a baby. I didn't know the difference between Brahms' 'Lullaby' and 'The Internationale' and somehow, I loved 'The Internationale' better." Dorothy Ray Heely, referring to the experience of singing the song in a multilingual chorus with her Spanish-speaking cellmates, says, "It was just kind of an immediate means of communication, of identification, across language barriers, across country barriers. The song bridged all the countries of the world."

In another way, translatedness is also signaled in this segment by the English subtitles that are overlaid on the visual track and that portend to offer an interlingual translation of the various language versions heard in the primary audio track. In light of the discussion above, it is notable that the verbal resources used in the subtitles are not Billy Bragg's lyrics but rather those of Kerr's English translation, made a century earlier. This is consistent with how the overall narrative of the film proceeds, with chronologically ordered, retrospective vignettes leading to a *dénouement* offered by Bragg's new version. Both ways of representing translation – as something achieved by a common melody that transcends languages, and as a multilingual artifact that requires translation to be understood by an Anglophone audience – seem to be at odds but nonetheless

exist together in this segment, a good illustration of the complex, multimodal rendering of translatedness in the film.

Translation as a result (rather than as a prerequisite) of worldwide diffusion

The musical montage is followed by a second segment in which the main narrator, Pete Seeger, provides information about the early provenance of the song and the poem-cum-lyrics while playing the melody on his acoustic guitar. He has just finished singing the French version. His manner is folksy, colloquial, understated. He reports the following information as if it were relayed to him by a friend, feigning ignorance when confronted with foreign-sounding names and factual information, and even at times adding a layer of comedic irony:

This is the original French of a famous socialist song, a famous revolutionary song. The words were written in May 1871. The Paris Commune had fallen. A man, I think he was in his forties at the time, had been elected mayor of one of the districts of Paris but now he was fleeing for his life. He was in hiding. Eugène Potier — I think that's how he pronounced his name — and that very month of May 1871 he writes six long verses and a chorus, calling on all hard-working people of the entire world to overthrow their masters, and he was quite confident that they would, soon. A few years later, the book happens into the hands of a younger man, Pierre De Geyter. He led a chorus in his factory, and, I'm told, in a basement apartment, on his pump organ, he made up a melody. Uh, this young musician had a hit song, at least in certain circles.

The visual resources switch back and forth between a full body shot of a guitar-slinging Seeger speaking and a Ken Burns montage of black-and-white images of the Paris Commune, Potier and De Geyter. The auditive resources, alongside Seeger's voice and guitar, blend historical recordings of the song being played on a pump organ, cued to the verbal resources stating that De Geyter composed the melody on a similar instrument.

The first overt mention of (interlingual) translation in the film follows this origin story. Seeger recounts: "It spread throughout France, it spread throughout Europe. They translated it in dozens of languages. Maybe hundreds for all I know. It was sung all around the world, still is, by socialists, communists, anarchists. All sorts of people sing this song." This auditive material is accompanied by visuals showing a pan shot of old sheet music with trilingual lyrics in French, German and Polish. The meaning-making behind this first explicit mention of translation is notable for various reasons. One is Seeger's imprecision – is it dozens or hundreds of translations? Cross-referencing with the visual materials, one is shown only two translations alongside the original French. It is enough, apparently, to signal translation by showing verbal material from a handful of foreign languages in the same shot while at the same time stating that a great many translations exist. This imprecise accounting for the fact of translation, I argue, is calculated: it lets translation stand as an indicator of the song's widespread diffusion without bothering with the specifics of each language version's and each rendition's

genesis and uses.⁵ Translation is taken for granted here; it is not represented as the means through which the song's dissemination was made possible, but rather as a logical by-product of the song's broad appeal among 'all sorts of people'. It is a motif for expressing worldwide dissemination and not much more.

(Non)translation and multilingual choruses

Other segments echo the notion of translatedness as it appeared in the opening montage – that the song's common melody transcends languages, time and space and therefore is itself a form of translation in its own right. In such an act of musical translation, each singer contributes their own language to the multilingual chorus. Segment 4, for example, recalls the singing of "L'Internationale" in 1912 at the "Bread and Roses" strike, a pivotal event in the history of the American labour movement involving primarily immigrant textile workers. We hear a voice-over by Seegers and see visuals showing a photo montage of black-and-white images from labour rallies across the United States, fading into a folk painting of Big Bill Hayward on his horse. Seegers recounts:

In 1912 it was sung in many different languages simultaneously by the strikers in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The famous strike led by the wildling Big Bill Hayward. [He] came up there to speak. Nobody thought they could stick together. They had Irish and German and Italian and Polish and all. And they all sang, in their own language, this song.

A similar experience and sense of translatedness is recounted by Dorothy Healy in segment 8 on the San Jose pickers' strike. Healy shares how she was arrested with migratory lettuce pickers in the Imperial Valley and held in jail for 180 days. We see footage of police breaking up strikes and meetings, and images of the jailhouse. The background music from Seeger's guitar returns and Healy recounts:

One of the ways in which I passed the time was teaching my fellow prisoners how to sing radical songs. The strikers were part of that generation of Mexicans who had grown up with the Mexican revolution so that both the strikers and the women prisoners also knew "The International" in Spanish. [The visual track shows a slow pan over a document with the Spanish lyrics.] It was just kind of an immediate means of communication, of identification, across language barriers, across country barriers. The song bridged all the countries of the world.

Bill Susman, who was wounded in action while fighting with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, recounts how he and the other patients recovering at a military hospital sang the song to keep morale high:

⁵ A Wikidata page on the song counts translations in no less than 100 languages. (See <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q49617>)

One day when they ran out of entertainers and we had to fall back on our own resources, the chief of entertainment called on us all to come up on the stage one at a time and sing “The Internationale” in whatever language was our own language. And well over forty languages were represented on the stage. Each one would sing a few words in their own language and then go on to the next one – or we would have been there all night. And then finally everybody sang the song together in their own languages, so that we heard it sung in Javanese, and we heard it sung in Tamil, and we heard it sung in Hindi and English and French and German and Russian and Spanish and every which language you could think of and more, and many, many more.

These examples contribute an additional component to the music-as-translation representation: not only do they underwrite the idea that the music is what achieves mutual understanding regardless of the lyrics; the singing of one’s own language version, in chorus with others, actually enhanced the bridging aspect of the song (“nobody thought they could stick together”) and made it more enjoyable to sing (“we had to fall back on our own resources”). In this way, the representation of translation-as-music actually celebrates multilingualism and what might be called non-translation in the conventional sense, attributing translational power to the music and to the act of communal singing, the more languages the better.

Cultural translation

A final grouping of representations of translation can be related to what Homi K. Bhabha expounded as ‘cultural translation’ (1994). Bhabha writes that “translation is the performative nature of cultural communication” (228). This meaning of translation, which stems from a postcolonial and postmodernist discourse (and yet accommodates post-Marxist ideologies, as we will see), differs from the others signalled in the film in that it understands translation not strictly in a textual, linguistic or even musical sense but rather as a requisite form of expression imposed on all itinerant people – particularly migrants and others who live between cultures. Bhabha and others who discuss translation in this vein roughly equate translation with migrancy and the translation event with any and all expressions of multicultural, transnational life. Often, this brings with it an emphasis on hybrid and fragmented expressions of self, and always it carries with it an awareness that the structures of culture are subject to hegemonic power. This condition, for Bhabha, is what informs Salman Rushdie’s remark that he and other diasporic postcolonial writers “are translated men” (1991: 16). The hegemon, for Bhabha and Rushdie, was the British empire and its constituent Western cultural forms. However, transposed to the lives and contexts chronicled in *The Internationale*, the hegemon can better be understood in the Gramscian sense to refer to the cultural, ideological and moral leadership exercised by the Marxist social order.

Cultural translation, as something intimately linked to itineracy and to hybridised personal expression emerging in between unequal cultures, seems to especially undergird the four forward-looking segments that conclude the film, which create personal, historical and ideological separation from the retrospective segments while also holding

fast to a collective past vested in the “spirit” of the song. Filling the space in between are imaginings of post-Marxist futures, grafted onto the song through acts of cultural translation.

Segment 14, the first forward-looking segment, is the film's longest, running nearly four minutes. It recounts the internal conflict felt by two of the film's previous interviewees, Zamir and Zak, when reconciling their own youthful idealism towards Marxist orthodoxy with the tragic history of “L'Internationale” in the twentieth century. The segment opens with Zamir stating,

Many times when I sang this song, I really hoped, I really believed, that there would be a time that there would be no wars. That's something maybe when we were young we could sing without thinking twice. [...] The words that this would be the last battle, the last war, something so many people have wished, has not come to life yet.

Zamir's words are voiced over a second, extradiegetic audio track of a particularly melancholic instrumental version of “L'Internationale”. The accompanying visual track shows a slow pan of the sheet music and lyrics of Charles Hope Kerr's 1900 English version, fading into a black-and-white image of a younger Zamir, and then to colour footage of an older Zamir speaking to the camera. Notwithstanding Zamir's multilingual, Hebrew-English background, the effect achieved by this audiovisual arrangement is to attach earlier English versions of the song to his disillusionment. Zak, the Russian musicologist, does something similar with the Russian when he talks about how, for him, “L'Internationale” has come to represent the disillusionment of his father after the fall of the Soviet Union.

This sets up a transition to segment 15, which moves us to 1989 and juxtaposes the use of the song by student groups in the United States and China immediately following the Tiananmen Square protests. In a first shot, a small gathering of American students sing “L'Internationale” unsteadily from songbooks, many presumably for the first time. Some hold limp fists in the air. Student activist Jeff Lacher narrates,

The first time I heard it, I was thinking to myself, 'This is kinda corny. We have a group song', you know? [...] The second time I heard it, I heard the words and understood what was going on and what the thoughts were. And now when I hear it, I have fifty different images that run through my mind. I may be thinking about the Abraham Lincoln Brigades fighting fascists in Spain; I may be thinking about the people in Chiapas; I may be thinking about people in Virginia and elsewhere that are fighting for justice. That song gave them strength. It gave them a feeling of being connected with generations before them and with their brothers and sisters in other countries.

The visuals alternate between a talking-head of Lacher and black-and-white archival footage of the various historical flashpoints he mentions. By his own description, his experience of “L'Internationale” is iterative – the more he hears the song, the more strongly he identifies with the people, places and events he attaches to it – but it is also

indirect; his own attachment to these histories is mediated through the song itself and through his perceptions of the experiences of others. Although this involves a certain kind of itinerancy – the “fifty different images” that run through his mind ‘transport’ him mentally –, those people and places are not him or his and are accessible only through a postmodern litany of historical references and the exercise of empathy. In Bhaba’s terms, Lacher is itinerant-by-imagination; his experience of the past is abstract and prompted by the song rather than lived and immediate.

A similarly mediated itinerancy is offered to the viewer, who is given virtual access to the places Lacher mentions through savvy editing. Cultural translation is represented here as something conjured through a vicarious but artificial experience of a collective past, a technique captured well by Alison Landsberg’s term ‘prosthetic memory’, which, fittingly, she initially discussed in the context of cinematic representations. “This new form of memory,” she writes, “emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past” and is mediated “through an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum,” or, in our case, (a film about) a song. “In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history [...]. The person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live” (LANDSBERG 2004: 2).

The segment continues with a hard cut to video footage of Chinese students singing “L’Internationale” in Tiananmen Square, seemingly juxtaposing the abstract Marxist engagement of Lacher and the North American students for which he is the stand-in with the direct, pro-democracy activism of their Chinese counterparts. We see a talking-head of Li Lu, one of the student leaders pictured in the immediately preceding footage, reflecting on his experience a decade after the Tiananmen events. He describes how he has come to a new appreciation of the song, now recognising the Confucian ideal of ethical engagement and self-sacrifice where an erstwhile socialist message once was. His words are overlayed on top of student activists singing the song in Chinese:

I don’t think any students who were singing “The Internationale” in Tiananmen Square were thinking about communism or socialism. I think we’re singing “The Internationale” to reassure ourselves to feel that we’re a part of a greater, larger, perpetual human movement towards perfection. I never paid much attention to words of “[The] Internationale”. But the melody of the song always [brought] me into a very special mood. And for a long time, I was thinking what it is. And I think I sort of know it now. I think it captures the essence of traditional Chinese thought, which is Confucianism, and their convictions of fighting for what you believed in, and, if necessary, they also need to sacrifice themselves, and their sacrifice will be rewarded in history.

The act of cultural translation effected here, embodied by Li Lu, lies in Lu's connecting the song not to communism or socialism but to Confucianism. (For more, see the documentary film on Lu's life, *Moving the Mountain*,⁶ which appeared six years before *The International* and potentially prompted Peter Miller to cast Lu as an interviewee. Lu went on to become a hedge fund billionaire in the United States, another act of cultural translation along a remarkable personal trajectory spanning the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen and Wall Street.)

It was purportedly also the Tiananmen events that prompted Billy Bragg to imbue the song with an ideological signature of his own. Analogous to Li Lu's efforts to link the song to Confucianism, Bragg's new English lyrics are an attempt to "translate" (his words) the song into a post-Marxist socialist project, with the important difference that whereas Lu's act of cultural translation was constrained to his own life as a 'translated man' straddling Chinese and western worlds, Bragg, himself straddling Marxist and post-Marxist perspectives, undertook to actually rewrite the English lyrics:

I came to write a new version of "The International" after being encouraged by Pete Seeger at the Vancouver Folk Festival. This was in 1989, just after the Tiananmen Square episode. And we were all aware that the Chinese students had sang "The International" in Tiananmen Square and that's why we wanted to sing it at the folk festival. So I said, well I'd love to come and sing with the people. I know the British lyrics, which are different. And also they're very archaic to sing. I mean it is an old song, it's a very old song, but it has picked up a lot of baggage on the way. You know, the baggage of state communism. But I have argued with people that it's the baggage that we need to get rid of and not the actual spirit of the song itself. So with this idea I wrote a few more verses: "Stand up all victims of oppression, for the tyrants fear your might. Don't cling so hard to your possessions, for you have nothing if you have no rights. Let racist ignorance be ended." I think we're at a time now in our politics where we're in an interesting position where it's down to this generation to redefine what socialism and what communism means in a post-Marxist sense. And I think re-evaluating the old culture is important. And when we find something that still has meaning as an icon, "The Internationale", I think it's a good time to perhaps take it away from being an icon and put some new lyrics on it and see if it can translate into the twenty-first century.

These statements seem at face value to harken back to the idea that the song was made to accommodate as many contexts and languages as possible, so long as its urtext remained a message of international solidarity. Both men insist that their reinterpretations can be traced back to the 'core' of the song. Li Lu speaks of its "very special mood" and Bragg of its "actual spirit". However, the viewer accepts Li Lu's transposition from Marxism to Confucianism and Bragg's proposition to strip the song of its baggage and iconicity – two acts of cultural translation – at their own peril. As the film historian Anna Nekola critiques:

⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6kQmoAke2A>.

When Billy Bragg speaks of changing the lyrics to make the song more relevant for the twenty-first century, I would have found it both helpful and interesting to have both the new and the old texts laid out together with the changes highlighted and explained. An analysis of the text and its permutations across time and place would also have contributed to a more complex understanding of the differences, as well as the similarities, among the many groups of people who have sung this song. (2003: 150–151)

Concluding remarks

The question that has concerned us thus far has been how these differences and similarities were represented in *The Internationale*. While my approach is different from the careful comparative analysis of various language versions and adaptations Nekola calls for (and the other contributors to this focus issue heed), the emphasis on cinematic techniques of representation and on the representations of translation themselves does allow to highlight and explain what the possible *effects*, particularly the ideological effects, of those representations could be. Nekola criticises the film’s treatment of Bragg’s adaptation for blanketing over the many changes he introduced (his revised lyrics drop any mention of class conflict, for instance, instead condemning all forms of oppression and exploitation and introducing racism, environmental degradation, and preservation of human rights as common struggles). This turns out to be in line with how the film portrays translation overall. As we saw, the four main types of representations that emerged in the film – translation as music, translation as a result (rather than as a prerequisite) of worldwide dissemination, (non)translation and multilingual choruses, and cultural translation – all deemphasise the specificities of the great many translation events that constitute the worldwide dissemination of “L’Internationale”, each event subject to their own unique set of situational, contextual, linguistic, etc., constraints. Instead, translation in the film is made to foreground the communicative power of music and its ability to transcend linguistic, political and generational boundaries. In other words, the film ostensibly assigns translational power to the song’s melody, rhythm and emotive potential, rendering interlingual translation unproblematic (and easy to overcome with English subtitles) and implicitly underwriting an instrumentalist view of translation in Venuti’s sense – that is, translation as “the reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text” (2019: 1), something presumed by the film to be achieved through instantly recognisable and universally felt music. This is carried through to the extent that translation in the context of multilingual choruses is seen as unnecessary or, in some cases, even unhelpful.

The film’s representations of cultural translation furthermore serve to advance an underlying narrative of revival and an openness to new uses in a post-Marxist imagined future. As the analysis of the narrative structure of the film shows, the filmmaker assigns an especially important role to English, and specifically to Bragg’s revised English lyrics, in bringing this future about. The song’s English lifecycles are highlighted in five of the eleven retrospective segments and English is the central concern in all of the

forward-looking segments (with a minor role for Chinese). All testimonials are in English, a second language for several of the interviewees. When the song is sung in other languages by these same interviewees (segment 13), the Spanish and French versions are sung by Anglophones. When other languages are treated in the narrative, they fit in a clear story arch, with English playing a prominent role in the innocent early years as a language of diffusion, other language versions (especially the Russian) being implicated in failures and co-opting by the state, and English returning in the end as a source of rebirth. I argue that this seeming Anglocentrism is obscured by the way the film represents translation. Stated more strongly, the particular representations of translation discussed above serve to render the film's Anglocentrism largely invisible, at least on a surface level.

One technique that is implicated in this is the film's episodic segmentation; that is, its treatment of the song in specific spatio-temporal contexts, and the montaging of personal reflections with archival footage. Landsburg's notion of prosthetic memory helps to identify the potential effect this technique has on the viewer. Not only are each of the various episodes "a privately felt public memory" (LANDSBURG 2004: 2), they are also *portrayed* as such by the filmmaker. This underwrites the idea that film, and particularly documentary film, can itself be an important tool for prosthetic memory-making. In this light, the entire narrative structure of *The Internationale*, with its retrospective vignettes, forward-looking segments and musical bookends, can be seen as an entreaty to the viewer to form their own prosthetic memories of the song and thereby to internalise its message.

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