**Translators’ Voices in Norwegian Retranslations of Bob Dylan’s Songs[[1]](#endnote-2)**

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Abstract

This chapter tackles several questions relating to the issue of the translator’s voice in retranslation: how do others’ voices (including other (re)translations) interact with the translator’s voice in the production of a translation? How does the intersubjectively constituted voice of the translator manifest itself in paratexts, in the translated text and, in the case of singer-translators, in the translator’s physical, performing voice? The case discussed is that of Bob Dylan in (re)translation into Norwegian, and it is concluded that different singer-translators involve others in the process in various ways and to varying degrees; that there are great subjective differences in how and to what extent they take other (re)translations of Dylan into account; and that they choose different strategies for displaying their voices in paratexts, texts and performances, differences that can be explained by reference to the singer-translator’s role and status on the cultural scene.

Keywords: Bob Dylan, Jan Erik Vold, Åge Aleksandersen, retranslation, song translation, voice, Bakhtin, Trønder dialect, manifest voice, non-manifest voice.

In Norwegian there exists a synonym for translation, *gjendiktning*, which is not easily translatable into English. The most literal option is “re-poetization,” broadly understood as “re-creation.” The term is mostly used for the translation of poetry and songs. In these genres, linguistic form (e.g., rhyme and metre) is crucial for the identity and overall meaning of the text, and translators therefore often strive to preserve these aspects. The translation may thus drastically depart from the original on the semantic level. And in song translation, the necessity of fitting the lyrics to pre-existing music (Low 2005) frequently heightens this effect. The term *gjendiktning* captures these realities, and its use is possibly a way for translators and audiences alike to positively acknowledge the (co‑)authorship and inevitable presence of the translator’s *voice* in these genres.

This translational presence means that poetry and song translation are forms of translation that lend themselves particularly well to the study of voice. There are, however, other reasons why popular song translation lends itself well to such a study. Unlike many other forms of literary translation, popular song translation nowadays often involves a special desire and need for the translator-artist – when the two coincide – to actively project his or her own voice through the material. In Scandinavia before the 1970s, the song translator was generally an anonymous, hired lyric writer who rarely coincided with the artist (Smith-Sivertsen 2008, 47). When the main source language for translations, English, became better established among the Scandinavian population, thus eliminating the need for local versions to ensure commercial success, a new trend developed. This consisted in local artists translating, performing, and recording songs from the catalogues of leading English-language singer-songwriters such as Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, and Joni Mitchell. These were, and are, typically *con amore* projects, driven not (exclusively) by commercial desires but by a wish to pay tribute to a beloved idol (Smith-Sivertsen 2008, 71-76), a desire to introduce the original artist to new audiences, or even to draw attention to the importance of nurturing a national language or variety (Greenall 2014). Moreover, my studies have shown that artists themselves and their audiences place great stock in what I have termed the artistic function of a popular song translation: translator-artists – or *singer-translators*, as is my preferred term – are to a great extent judged precisely on their ability to make the song their own (ibid.). The reason is most likely the great importance, within this sub-genre of popular music, of coming across as authentic (Barker and Taylor 2007), that is, as someone with a personal stake in what they are performing. Singer-translators perform this authenticity work paratextually, textually, musically, and performatively, involving their actual, physical voices in the translation process as well.

Song translation lends itself well to studying not only voice but also *retranslation*. Because of their popularity and the alleged literary qualities of their lyrics, the aforementioned Anglo-American singer-songwriters have triggered a veritable avalanche of translations and retranslations. Bob Dylan is a case in point. Exact numbers are of course not available, but we are certainly talking about thousands of translations of his songs all around the world, adding up to an enormous corpus of translations and retranslations. At the same time, we are talking about a form of translation that has, to my knowledge, not yet been studied in these terms, meaning that such a study is likely to shed new light on the phenomenon of retranslation.

The focus in this article is on translations of Bob Dylan’s songs into Norwegian. The cases are all situated temporally within the Scandinavian singer-translator era (i.e., from the 1970s on) and include three of Norway’s best-known Dylan translators. First, there is the Oslo-based, high-profile poet and writer Jan Erik Vold’s collection of seventy translations of Dylan’s songs, *Damer i regn* (“Women in the Rain,” 1977), and his album *Stein. Regn* (“Stone. Rain,” 1981, re-released on CD in 2009), where he performs fourteen of these songs together with the musicians Kåre Virud and Telemark Blueslag. Vold introduced the American jazz-and-poetry movement to Norway and is perhaps more of a “poet-translator with accompaniment” than a singer-translator, even though there is enough singing in his performance to make the label at least semi-fitting. Second, there is the poet, writer, and translator Håvard Rem’s versions of fifteen of Dylan’s songs, adapted to the Trønder dialect and performed and recorded by rock star Åge Aleksandersen on the album *Fredløs* (“Outlaw,” 1997). And finally, there is singer-songwriter Tom Roger Aadland’s recent recording *Blod på spora* (2009), which contains a rendering of all of the songs from Dylan’s 1975 album *Blood on the Tracks*. The aim of the present study is to find out how the voices of these three highly dissimilar Dylan translators are manifested and displayed in paratexts, lyrics, and vocal performances. All along, a retranslation perspective will be employed, looking at possible relationships between the translations. I will adopt the following procedure:

* First, I introduce the concept of the translator’s voice, discussing how it is constituted and how it relates to other voices (e.g., those of formal and informal consultants, music publishers, and record company representatives). Here, I present e-mail interviews which reveal how the translators conceive of their own voice in relation to these other voices.
* Second, I single out a specific sub-group of other voices, namely those of other Dylan translators. The e-mail interviews show to what extent the translators consider themselves to be influenced by others’ translations.
* Third, I look at how the translators’ voices manifest themselves in paratexts. The focus is on how the translators are depicted on CD covers and booklets (as someone with a voice or not?).
* Fourth, I look at how the translators’ voices manifest themselves in the lyrics. Here, I discuss microlevel translational choices, looking especially for places where the translators’ voices manifest themselves to a particularly strong degree.
* Finally, I consider “physical voice,” that is, how the singer-translators deploy their voices in actual performance.
1. **The collective nature of the translator’s voice**

According to Loffredo and Perteghella (2006a), Translation Studies is currently going through a “creative turn.” It is indeed true that numerous recent works within the field (e.g., Bassnett and Bush 2006; Gullin 1998; Loffredo and Perteghella 2006b; Munday 2012; Robinson 1991) do seem preoccupied with the role of the translator’s subjectivity or creativity. Douglas Robinson argues that

instead of pretending that the translator constructs a stable one-to-one pattern of correspondence or equivalence between the SL and the TL text (which proves to be ultimately impossible), we should recognize and, contextually, encourage the translator’s poetic creativity. (Robinson 1991, xv)

How should we understand this subjectivity or creativity? Robinson borrows the Bakhtinian view, which I also adopt here. According to the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin, the primary aspect of the human condition is that we share existence with other human beings. Existence is an event that unfolds in time, and sharing existence as an event “means among other things that we are – we cannot choose notto be – in dialogue, not only with other human beings, but also with the natural and cultural configurations we lump together as ‘the world’” (Holquist 1990, 29-30). As human beings, we talk to others, we take in nature through our senses, we read books, we watch television, and so forth. Thus, our subjectivity is dialogically constituted, but it is also unique, insofar as all of us, because of our biographical realities, are exposed to different voices at different times (21), voices that we, being alive and human, cannot choose *not* to respond to (30). It is this dialogically constituted, but also unique, subjectivity that I understand by *voice*.

In order to explore the dialogue between other voices and those of the Dylan translators studied here, I conducted e-mail interviews with the latter, asking to what extent they felt others had helped or been involved in the translation process. Negus (1996, 66–69) talks about a chain of mediation as intermediary action, which is at the core of popular music creation and distribution, which encompasses “all the interventions of institutions and persons (i.e., record companies, video directors, disc jockeys, etc.) that are responsible for the production, distribution and consumption of popular music” (Kaindl 2005, 240–241). Two of the translators studied here, Aadland and Rem, provided extensive information regarding actively involved parties which they felt had contributed to the process and the product. The list included both informal and formal (unpaid/paid) expert consultants, music publishers, and agents, and in Rem’s case, the vocalist – Åge Aleksandersen – whose voice was involved in two ways, both as part of the translator team that shaped the lyrics, and as the one who would perform the songs (making him, out of the two translators, the *singer*-translator). Rem also mentioned writers on Dylan, whose works, Rem pointed out, had been particularly helpful in identifying the multitude of references in the lyrics. All of this neatly scaffolds Loffredo and Perteghella’s insight that “[c]ollaboration [. . .] sits at the heart of ‘creative’ translation, demonstrating how creativity is not an individualistic concept” (2006a, 8). No truth is ever simple, however: Jan Erik Vold’s concise response to the same question was “I did it all by myself.”[[2]](#endnote-3)

1. **The role of first translations and retranslations in constituting the singer-translator’s voice**

A particularly significant set of surrounding voices are those of translators who have translated the given work before. “The term ‘retranslation,’” according to Tahir Gürçağlar, “most commonly denotes either the act of translating a work that has previously been translated into the same language, or the result of such an act, i.e., the retranslated text itself” (2009, 233). Many of the motives that drive literary retranslation in general – such as the perceived poor quality of previous translations (Venuti 2004, 1), the dated language of older translations, the desire to provide a given source text with a “continued afterlife” (introducing the author to new audiences), the possible financial benefits of translating a canonical text, or simply the translator’s personal appreciation of the source text (Tahir Gürçağlar 2009, 235) – may also lie behind the choice to retranslate the oeuvre of a given songwriter. A particularly important reason why singer-songwriters choose to do so may, however, reside in the following:

Retranslations typically highlight the translator’s intentionality because they are designed to make an appreciable difference. The retranslator’s intention is to select and interpret the foreign text according to a different set of values so as to bring about a new and different reception for that text in the translating culture. (Venuti 2004, 3)

Singer-translators, as we saw earlier, seek precisely to have their intentionalities highlighted; they are especially interested in a new and different reception. If they do not achieve this, they have failed significantly.

In the e-mail interviews, the translators were asked whether or not they had been aware of any previous Norwegian translations of Dylan. Jan Erik Vold responded that he was not aware of any previous translations in book form, “only scattered songs.” Because Vold’s Dylan translations from 1977 first appeared precisely in book form (which has a relatively high status compared to a CD booklet), because of the sheer bulk of these translations (seventy songs), and not least because of Vold’s high visibility on the Norwegian cultural scene, his translations seem to constitute something akin to at least a conceptual “first translation.” His related album, which came four years after the book, also predates both of my other two cases. Vold’s book, *Damer i regn*, is furthermore one that both Rem and Aadland reported that they were aware of and somehow responded to. Interestingly, neither mentioned Vold and Virud’s album *Stein. Regn* as an influence. Rem recalls being inspired by Vold’s choice to transplant entire cultural references into a Norwegian context. Rem’s main point, however, was to distance himself from Vold’s choice of linguistic variety, which he characterizes as an “oral, sociolectal Norwegian” associated with the circle around the (in)famous Club 7 in Oslo, a centre of counterculture in Norway in the 1960s and 1970s which Vold was an important part of (Førland 1998). Rem would, according to himself, choose more standard written forms than Vold in order to “write Dylan into a more serious poetic tradition.” As mentioned above, Rem and Aleksandersen chose to translate Dylan’s lyrics into the rural Trønder dialect, which could be argued to have undermined Rem’s project insofar as this dialect cannot be said to be part of or connote a serious poetic tradition.

Aadland reports having known of and read *Damer i regn*, but says that “my gaze fell more often on Dylan’s original lyrics, which were printed in small letters next to Vold’s re-poetizations [*gjendiktninger*].” Aadland also knew of Aleksandersen’s album *Fredløs* from 1997 but does not seem to regard this album as having particularly influenced his own process or product. Finally, he reports having become aware of many more translations of Dylan *after* the release of his own album *Blod på spora* in 2009.

These findings seem to challenge Pym’s definition of “passive” and “active” retranslations:

“Passive retranslations” are separated by geographical distance or time and do not have a bearing on one another ([Pym] 1998: 82), whereas “active retranslations” share the same cultural and temporal location and are indicative of “disagreements over translation strategies,” challenging the validity of previous translations (ibid.: 82–3). (Tahir Gürçağlar 2009, 235)

The translations considered here cannot be said to be completely separated by geographical distance or time, despite the thirty-year period between Vold and Aadland. Both Rem and Aadland were aware of the relevant previous translations, so their retranslations cannot be characterized as passive. The question then is, are they therefore both active retranslations? Only Rem expressed disagreement over translation strategies; Aadland’s attitude rather seems to be one of indifference, indicating that although translators may be aware of other translations, they may nevertheless choose to remain “passive” in a psychological sense.

1. **Paratextual voices**

According to several scholars (e.g., Barnstone 1993; Pym 2005), translations can be *more or less* subjective, or authored. The idea behind this seems to be that the translator’s relative independence in relation to the source text is indicative of his or her level of subjective involvement in the translated text; in other words, if the translator stays close to the original, there is little subjective involvement (little authoring), whereas if he or she departs from the original, there is a great degree of subjective involvement. This idea does not really hold water, insofar as the decision to stay close to the original is as much a matter of subjective choice as the decision to depart from the original. Nonetheless, some translators will always *sell themselves* as more authoring than others, both through the paratexts surrounding their translations, and through the target texts themselves. Song translators are cases in point, since they are expected to flaunt a discernible translator’s voice.

Leaving Vold’s book aside for the moment, an important, albeit not exclusive, type of paratext for music albums is the CD cover and leaflet (henceforth CD paratext). In the following, I will take a look at what might count as selling oneself as strongly authoring in this kind of context. Paradoxically, two almost completely opposite strategies may seem to be capable of achieving this aim. Vold and Rem/Aleksandersen have opted to explicitly state that their product is a translation: both CD covers prominently announce *Dylan på norsk* (“Dylan in Norwegian”). This is a strategy that is rather common within Scandinavian singer-translator releases after the 1970s. In Vold’s case, it draws unambiguous attention to the translator and his subjective involvement in the created product. In the case of Rem/Aleksandersen, it may at first – by analogy with other singer-translator releases – give the impression that Aleksandersen is the sole translator, and draw attention to his subjective involvement, although Rem’s authorship becomes eminently clear to anyone who opens the CD and has a look inside, as will be seen later.

Interestingly, the front of Aadland’s CD cover gives no explicit clues as to the fact that there exists a “source artist” or a set of source lyrics that formed the point of departure for his versions. Nevertheless, the title of Aadland’s album – *Blod på spora* (“Blood on the Tracks”) – is a literal enough translation of a Dylan classic to provide a crystal clear cue for die-hard Dylan fans. For others, Aadland’s lack of explicit notice will function as a concealment, one that may, if it becomes clear that the songs are translations, strengthen the sense of translator ownership by sending out the message that “the source is irrelevant – this is mostly me.”

Another aspect of CD paratexts is the translator’s notes. Found inside covers or in leaflets, these will obviously draw attention to the translator. The contents of the notes could in turn suppress or further highlight the translator’s voice. Of the three cases discussed here, Rem/Aleksandersen’s CD paratext is the only one that contains translator’s notes. Inside the cover, there is a four-paragraph-long general introduction; in addition, each of the printed lyrics is framed by extensive translator’s comments. These notes contain information about Rem’s personal relationship with Dylan’s songs, and about the cultural, biographical, and literary considerations that informed each translation. This emphasizes the tribute function of Rem’s translation, serving to somewhat understate Rem’s own voice. This is in stark contrast to his e-mail responses, which bear evidence of a strong subjectivity at work in making the choices necessary to satisfy his own literary tastes.

Though Vold’s CD paratext does not contain translator’s notes, it does refer back to his book *Damer i regn*, which does contain such notes. Aadland’s CD paratext is also without notes, and there are indeed very few signs that the songs are in fact translations. The original titles are printed in small letters inside the cover, separately from the translated lyrics, which are printed inside the booklet. The only other references to Dylan in Aadland’s CD paratext occur in the small-print copyright information that appears once inside the cover and once at the back of the booklet. In other words, the fact that this album is a translation is advertised only indirectly. In sum, in the CD paratexts, both Vold and Rem/Aleksandersen seem to make their voices more subservient to that of Dylan than Aadland does, so that the latter emerges as much more authoring.

1. **Textual voices**

How do we identify translators’ voices in actual translated texts? We are now talking about any text, not just song lyrics. Scholars looking for translators’ voices in texts typically see them manifested as shifts, that is, departures from the original (e.g., Gullin 1998, 56; Munday 2012, 35). If what I said in the previous section holds water – that *all* translational choices are manifestations of subjectivity or voice – then the aforementioned research does not in fact concern itself with voice as such but rather with particular forms of *displays* of voice, or what I choose to call *manifest voice*. Starting with *non*-manifest voice, this is a result of the translator’s choice to stay as close as possible to the original. In such cases, the author’s voice is relatively strongly present within the polyphonic (Bakhtin 1981) layering of voices that constitutes any given individual’s written or spoken expression, whether non-translational or translational. However, the translator’s voice is still present. The translator’s voice is also non-manifest when a clear shift is not noticeable to the audience (because they do not have access to the original). The translator’s voice is manifest when there is a clear shift that *is* noticeable to the audience (because they do have access to the original), or because a given element in the target text (a non-shift or shift) has attention-getting properties in and of itself, that is, it somehow presents itself strongly as a figure against a ground, either because it somehow contrasts with its surroundings or because it generates a particularly strong emotional response in the audience.

A translator’s voice may *become* manifest in the translation process, whether the translator would like it to or not, or the translator may *choose* to make it manifest. The translator’s voice may become manifest when there exist difficult or “critical” points in the source text, elements which require special interpretation (Munday 2012). It may also become manifest when the source text’s formal properties are essential to its functioning, such as in the case of songs. In order to ensure a song’s singability (Low 2005, 185), the translator needs to recreate the metric pattern (the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables) of the original, alternatively create a new one that will also somehow fit the lyrics. This may lead to involuntary shifts on the semantic level. Semantic accuracy is, however, often the priority of rights owners who check back-translations before issuing permissions to perform and record translated songs, which means that these agents frequently cause the reverse problem: difficulties in devising a rhythm that will work. Voluntary shifts also occur, of course. These happen when a translator considers there to be good reason – whether functionally, ideologically, or aesthetically – for a given departure from the original. In song translation, shifts and other subjective and attention-getting choices are “good for business,” and so we should expect to find them.

The easiest way to identify non-manifest and manifest voice in a translation is by comparing (re)translations, insofar as non-manifest voice will show itself in a greater correspondence in translational choices across different translations, while potential manifest voice is seen in a greater discrepancy across translations (cf. Munday 2012); as stated above, *actual* manifest voice depends in some cases on whether the original is accessible to the audience. In the following I look at the first stanzas from the translations of two of Dylan’s songs, “Mr. Tambourine Man” and “Shelter from the Storm.” Dylan’s catalogue being so vast, it was actually not possible to find one song that had been translated by all three translators/translator teams, and I will therefore look at Rem/Aleksandersen’s and Vold’s translations of the former song and Rem/Aleksandersen’s and Aadland’s translations of the latter. I will discuss similarities and differences between the translations and try to identify when and how voices became or were voluntarily made manifest.

4.1 “Mr. Tambourine Man”

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| --- |
| Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,I’m not sleepy and there is no place I’m going to.Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,In the jingle jangle morning I’ll come followin’ you. |
| **Vold:** **“Hei, Mr. Tamburin-mann”(“Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man”)** | **Rem/Aleksandersen: “Hei, spellemann”(“Hey, Musician”)** |
| 1 *Hei, Mr. Tamburin-mann, slå et slag  for meg,*2 *Jeg er lysvåken og yr og ingen henter  meg.*3 *Hei, Mr. Tamburin-mann, slå et slag  for meg,*4 *Denne tingel-tangel morning skal jeg  vente på deg.[[3]](#endnote-4)**1* Hey, Mr. Tambourine man, strike a  blow for me,*2* I am wide awake and excited and  nobody is coming for me.*3* Hey, Mr. Tambourine man, strike a  blow for me,*4* This tingle-tangle morning I shall be  waiting for you. | *Hei, spellemann, spell en tryllesang for  mæ,**Æ e våken, æ har ikke tenkt å fer nå’  sted.**Hei, spellemann, spell en tryllesang for  mæ,**Som den gyldne sol frembryte, slår æ  følge med dæ.[[4]](#endnote-5)*Hey, musician, play me a magic song,I am awake, I have no intention of going  anywhere.Hey, musician, play me a magic song,As the golden sun bursts through, I will  accompany you. |

Figure 1. Original and Norwegian translations of “Mr. Tambourine Man,” first stanza

Similarities between the two translations exist both on the level of linguistic form (signifier) and content (signified), such as when “Hey” in lines 1 and 3 is translated as *Hei* by both Vold and Rem/Aleksandersen. It may also exist only on the level of content, such as when “I’m not sleepy” in line 2 is translated as *Jeg er lysvåken* (“I am wide awake”) in Vold’s version and as *Æ e våken* (“I am awake”) in Rem/Aleksandersen’s version: here, the linguistic forms are different (standard Norwegian *Jeg* and *er* vs. Trønder dialect *Æ* and *e*; *lysvåken* vs. *våken*), while the core meaning “I am awake” is rendered in both versions, albeit with slight differences in emphasis (one is wide awake, while the other is merely awake). These similarities indicate non-manifest voice in both translations.

Potential manifest voice is found where the translations differ considerably both in terms of form and content, such as when the name “Mr. Tambourine Man” in lines 1 and 3 is translated as *Mr. Tamburin-mann* by Vold, and *spellemann* (lit. “playing man,” i.e., musician) by Rem/Aleksandersen. Vold borrows the source expression with a slight naturalization in the form of an inserted hyphen and a replacement of the English “man” by the Norwegian equivalent *mann*. Since it is close to the source, it would be easy to mistake this example for one of non-manifest voice. Extremely literal choices such as this one, however, fall into the category of attention-getting choices, and hence this is an example of manifest voice. Rem/Aleksandersen’s *spellemann* is simply an example of a shift, more specifically, a generalization. As “Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man” is one the best-known opening lines of any song in the history of rock and pop, it is likely that a large part of the audience has the original line available for comparison, so that the shift will be detected as manifest voice.

An even clearer example of (potential) manifest voice in these translations can be found in Vold’s *slå et slag for meg* (“strike a blow for me”) as compared with Rem/Aleksandersen’s *spill en tryllesang for meg* (“play me a magic song”) in lines 1 and 3. Both constitute shifts: however, while Vold’s translation is only remotely connected to the original (via the notion that the main character is soliciting some form of support from the Tambourine Man), Rem/Aleksandersen’s translation is quite closely connected to it – the main character asks the musician to play him a song, except, in the translation, it must be a *magic* song (possibly pointing towards the line “your magic swirling ship” later on in the lyrics). Hence, to those who know the original lyrics well, Vold’s voice is more clearly discernible than Rem/Aleksandersen’s, although both are examples of manifest voice. Shifts are generally more profuse in Vold than in Rem/Aleksandersen. While Dylan sings about there being no place he is *going* to and about *following* the Tambourine Man, Vold complains in lines 2 and 4, respectively, that there is no one that is *coming* for him and about *waiting for* the Tambourine man (an interesting reversal of directionality, placing the singer or poet-translator in the centre). By contrast, Rem/Aleksandersen stay quite close to the original lyrics both generally and in terms of directionality: the narrator here has no intention of *going* anywhere (line 2), and talks about *accompanying* the Tambourine Man (line 4).

Vold’s version also features more attention-getting choices as a way of achieving manifest voice. We have already seen one example of direct borrowing and calque (*Mr. Tamburin-mann*). There are others, such as *morning* in line 4, which is a direct borrowing, and *tingel-tangel*, which is a partial phonological calque of the onomatopoeic “jingle jangle.” Rem/Aleksandersen’s version contains a single example of something that is both a considerable shift and an attention-getting translational choice, namely their own treatment of “jingle jangle.” Referring to the sound made by the tambourine when played, “jingle jangle” carries connotations of brightness and sharpness, and Rem/Aleksandersen seem to have tapped into these connotations when making their choice, as *Som den gyldne sol frembryte* (“As the golden sun bursts through”) offers a description of a sudden, sharply lit dawn. The departure from the original is considerable: the notion of brightness is transferred from the domain of sound to the domain of vision; the original idea of morning is represented by one of its parts, namely the sunrise. What really makes the translator’s voice stand out in this example, however, is the phrase’s strongly archaic form: *Som den gyldne sol frembryte* contains a subjunctive (*frembryte*) not currently in use in Norwegian except in a few fixed expressions. The fact that this old-fashioned, high-register construction is performed in Aleksandersen’s robust, down-to-earth regional dialect creates a contrast that makes these translators’ voices even more manifest.

As mentioned earlier, semantic considerations can also cause metrical shifts, and these too can play a part in making the translator’s voice manifest. In the extract from Vold’s translation, the syllable count and metre in all of the lines exactly match those of the original. The same cannot be said for the first and third lines of the extract from Rem/Aleksandersen’s translation, where both syllable count and metre differ from the original (Rem/Aleksandersen’s version has 11 syllables, where Dylan’s has 12; Rem/Aleksandersen’s version consists of the metrical pattern dactyl + unfinished foot + anapaest + iamb + iamb, Dylan’s of the pattern dactyl + primus paeon + trochee + unfinished foot). This means that the rhythm of the sung line in Rem/Aleksandersen’s version necessarily differs from the original, which has important consequences, especially considering the status and recognizability of this particular line – any shift here will be a rather strong expression of the translator’s voice. All in all, however, Vold’s voice comes out as the strongest in this comparison, especially since the metrical similarities to the original in this extract do not last throughout the whole song.

4.2 “Shelter from the Storm”

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| --- |
| I was in another lifetime, one of toil and blood,When blackness was a virtue and the road was full of mud.I came in from the wilderness a creature void of form.“Come in,” she said,“I'll give you shelter from the storm.” |
| **Rem/Aleksandersen: “Æ skal gi dæ fred” (“I Will Give You Peace”)** | **Aadland:** “**Til stormen dreg forbi”(“Till the Storm Passes”)** |
| 1 *Det var i gamle daga, alt var blod og  søl.*2 *Svartsyn var en dyd og veien var en  pøl.*3 *Æ rava som et udyr gjennom kratt og  blomsterbed.*4 *Kom inn, sa ho, det storme, æ skal gi  dæ fred.[[5]](#endnote-6)*5*1* It was in the old days, everything was  blood and mess.*2* Pessimism was a virtue, and the road  was a puddle.*3* I stumbled like a beast through  undergrowth and flowerbeds.*4* “Come inside,” she said, “it is  storming, I will give you peace.”*5* | *Det var i ei anna tid, ei med slit og  blod.**Alt svart det var ein dyd og det var  gjørme der eg stod.**Eg kom inn ifrå villmarka, ein skapnad  i ei sky.**“Kom inn,” sa ho,**“Og bli her til stormen dreg forbi.”[[6]](#endnote-7)*It was in a different time, one of toil and  blood.Everything black was a virtue, and there  was mud where I was standing.I came in from the wilderness, a creature  in a cloud.“Come inside,” she said, “And stay here till the storm passes.” |

Figure 2. Original and Norwegian translations of “Shelter from the Storm,” first stanza

Compared to the example in 4.1, Rem/Aleksandersen’s and Aadland’s translations of “Shelter from the Storm”emerge as more subtly different from each other. In terms of shifts, Rem/Aleksandersen’s voice is by far the strongest. Dylan’s “toil and blood” in line 1 turns into *blod og søl* (“blood and mess”), which is even more evocative of violence than the corresponding source element (where “blood” could potentially also mean “relatives”). The shocking effect of *blod og søl* – which conjures up images of death, dismemberment, decomposing bodies, all depending on the vivacity of one’s imagination – furthermore gives this choice an attention-getting quality in and of itself. By contrast, Aadland stays close to the original, capturing both the toil and the blood relatively neutrally in the phrase *slit og blod*. Another case in point is “I came in from the wilderness a creature void of form” in line 3, translated by Rem/Aleksandersen as *Æ rava som et udyr gjennom kratt og blomsterbed* (“I stumbled like a beast through undergrowth and flowerbeds”). Here, too, there are substantial shifts (from the neutral “came” to the loaded “stumbled,” from the neutral “creature” to the loaded “beast,” and from “wilderness” to the conjoined phrase “undergrowth” [which connotes wilderness] and “flowerbeds” [which connotes the opposite]), as well as drama and unusualness (the juxtaposition of undergrowth and flowerbeds). Aadland’s version stays much closer to the source text. The first part of *Eg kom inn fra villmarka, ein skapnad i ei sky* (“I came in from the wilderness, a creature in a cloud”) in line 3 replicates the source exactly, and in the second part, “creature” is translated more or less directly as *skapnad*. In the source text, the creature is *void of form*; Aadland’s creature by contrast probably has a form, but we do not know which, because it is shrouded by a cloud. This does constitute a shift and hence increases the manifestness of the translator’s voice for those who have access to the original lyrics. Unlike the choice made by Rem/Aleksandersen, however, the choice of target language replacement here has no particular attention-getting effects that would have further strengthened the translator’s voice. Generally, Aadland stays remarkably – and indeed impressively – close to the source text both semantically and metrically. In both translations there are slight metrical shifts (differences in syllable count and metre vis-à-vis the original), but unlike the excerpts from “Mr. Tambourine Man,” where the shift, in Rem/Aleksandersen’s version, occurred in a particularly prominent place, the shifts in the present extracts cannot be characterized as contributing in any strong way to making the translators’ voices manifest.

1. **Physical voice**

Songs are polysemiotic wholes where all of the parts are intricately woven together (Kaindl 2005; see also Bosseaux 2011). Thus, in some respects, it can be difficult to distinguish, for example, textual voice from physical voice. This is the case, among other things, when it comes to the translators’ choice of target variety (dialect), which, in the examples we have seen, is partly represented in the written lyrics printed in Vold’s book *Damer i regn* and in the CD paratexts, but only reveals itself in all of its aspects in actual performance. Choice of target variety is of special importance in a study of the singer-translator’s voice, entangled as it is with notions of personal identity and authenticity. Allan Moore traces the idea that singing in one’s native language should be a prerequisite for authenticity back to the second English folk revival in the 1950s (2002, 211; see also McMichael 2008, 212). In Norway, the same idea seems to apply currently, but here the emphasis tends to be on the Norwegian dialects. There are two forms of standard written Norwegian, the majority Bokmål and the minority Nynorsk, as well as hundreds of regional variations, and a performance is generally seen as most authentic if the artist sings in his or her spoken variety.[[7]](#endnote-8)

All of the (singer-)translators studied here have chosen varieties that are very close to, if not identical with, their spoken variety. Vold writes and sings/speaks in what he himself characterizes, in the e-mail interview, as “rough Oslo.” Rem writes in a more conservative Norwegian Bokmål, while the printed lyrics represent an approximation to Aleksandersen’s Trønder dialect (in performance, Aleksandersen’s accent is fully Trønder). Aadland writes in standard Nynorsk because, as he explains in the interview, it evokes a literary tradition of writing in Nynorsk, and also because writing in a standard language (rather than in dialect) provides him with needed distance in the creative process. In performance, however, he adds dialect features from his native Sunnhordaland/Nord-Rogaland dialect, such as the uvular /r/. Using the Norwegian variety closest to them, the singer-translators naturally draw attention to their subjectivities.

Singer-translators can also affirm their subjectivities and identities in performance in other ways. One is through voice quality. Although there will always be some physical parameters determining how an individual’s voice will sound, singers have at least some freedom to influence this sound. Most singers indeed cultivate a vocal sound in order to provide an easily recognizable identity for themselves. None of the singer-translators studied here try to sound like Dylan. This in and of itself accentuates their translational voices. In addition, all three sound different from one another. Vold’s voice is powerful but flat and rather sharp, Aleksandersen’s is rough and sharp, while Aadland’s is soft and smooth. As regards singing style, Vold is the most idiosyncratic performer. In “Mr. Tamburin-mann,” Vold opts for a staccato delivery, often mid-way between singing and reciting, a characteristic which has brought him to the attention of large audiences. The singing style of Aleksandersen and Aadland – both of whom are music artists rather than poets – is more conventional, although both possess a clear identity. Where Aleksandersen is gritty rock n’ roll, Aadland chooses the classical, unobtrusive singer-songwriter style. Aleksandersen’s unique sound and style attracted a great deal of attention from the start and has earned him a lifelong career and a strong degree of recognizability. Aadland, while very pleasant to listen to, has a style which has not yet secured him the attention of the nation as a whole. It has, however, earned him a small but steadily growing fan base around the country.

1. **Concluding remarks**

Among the Dylan translators studied here, Vold – the poet-singer-translator – is the one who emerges as most successful at making his voice heard. He does this successfully in his CD paratext and in his actual translations, and his physical voice is extremely noticeable. The question in the Rem/Aleksandersen partnership is *whose* voice is highlighted. Rem certainly comes across with the strongest voice in the CD paratext, through his copious translator’s notes. Aleksandersen, however, performs the lyrics, and it is his actual voice which is audible live and in recordings. He is the team’s representative in these arenas, and it is his voice that will be listened to. Aadland’s voice, despite some paratextual evidence to the contrary, comes across as the weakest, as defined here. His textual renderings, though beautiful, are also dutiful, emphasizing the tribute function of his translations, rather than their artistic function. His vocal renderings are also less attention-getting.

The so-called re-translation hypothesis states that first translations will tend to be more domesticating and subsequent translations more foreignizing (Paloposki and Koskinen 2004). This hypothesis so far lacks sufficient empirical backing (Dastjerdi and Mohammadi 2013; Paloposki and Koskinen 2004), and the present study unfortunately does not help much in furthering the discussion, insofar as the notions of non-manifest and manifest voice do not easily map onto the notions of domestication (understood as target-orientedness) and foreignization (understood as source-orientedness). The data presented have shown that both non-manifest and manifest voice can be achieved by being both source- *and* target-oriented. Non-manifest voice most often occurs when the translator is being source-oriented (i.e., when he or she does not introduce shifts), but voice may also stay non-manifest even when there are target-oriented shifts, for instance if the audience is unaware that a shift has been introduced. Manifest voice, on the other hand, can for example be achieved by borrowing (a source-oriented move), or by introducing shifts (which can be domesticating). In other words, all three translations are both domesticating and foreignizing, and which one is *more* domesticating is difficult, if not impossible to ascertain. What the present material does testify to, however, is Paloposki and Koskinen’s conclusion that “many different factors, not just the order of appearance, affect the profiles of these translations” (27). These factors relate to “publishers, intended readers, accompanying illustrations and – not least – the translators themselves” (34). What we have seen in the present study is that the translators have taken into account advice from others, whether professionals or non-professionals. We could also hazard a guess that audience expectations have played a role – for example, the strength of Vold’s voice may well stem from the fact that translators who are writers and/or poets are expected to take more liberties, and hence tend to do so (ibid.). The point here, however, is that although such varying dialogues between the translator and the world take part in shaping subjective decisions, they never uniquely determine these decisions, because translators respond to them differently, from the unique places they occupy in existence (Holquist 1998, 30). While outside voices sometimes manage to exert enough influence to cause patterns to emerge, such as that formulated in the retranslation hypothesis, the existence of the translator’s voice causes unpredictability which means that such patterns will always remain elusive.

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2. This and all subsequent translations of the interview data are mine. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
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7. Although there also exists a growing countercurrent of people who do *not* value the Norwegian dialects (see Vangsnes 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)