

BORDERLESS DEFINED

Newsletter of Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC



♪ "Mistranslated" Song Titles

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I hope this finds you doing well!

Today, I am excited to share [this article](#) published just over a week ago on the Tshon site.

The author and American literary researcher, Zetsu Tomoyuki, takes a close look at select song titles between Japanese and English and analyzes the rationale behind "mistranslations." He calls them mistranslations facetiously as they are done intentionally rather than unintentionally. (I'm using quotation marks here in place of the original Japanese brackets.)

With the first example, *As Time Goes By*, he examines the actual translated title, "時の過ぎゆくままに" (toki no sugiyuku mamani) against another translation that would have been considered technically faithful, "時が過ぎても" (toki ga sugitemo).

His justification for the former is compelling. At first glance, "時の過ぎゆくままに" seems to imply that one's love can shift, contradicting the central theme of universal and unwavering love. But given that the song is also about being unafraid of what happens and the notion of resigning yourself to love, he claims that this version of the title reflects the sentiment of the song more accurately.

He also adds that "時が過ぎても" perhaps would've been overly optimistic for a song that doesn't necessarily promise a happy ending and unalterable value in the world. As he's demonstrated, whatever downside exists with the actual translation ("時の過ぎゆくままに") is more than justified by its reserved tone, especially when contrasted against "時が過ぎても."

When You Wish upon a Star, another example in the article, is just as intriguing. Zettsu argues that the actual Japanese title "星に願いを" (hoshi ni negai o) is limited to the act of making a wish without the egalitarian and democratic message of the original song. It is true that the Japanese version is generally more distant and less involved in painting what he calls the quintessential "American dream."

I suppose his rationale for "星に願いを" vs. "星に願えば" (hoshi ni negaeba) is similar to the example of *As Time Goes By* in that both cases suggest a deliberate effort to avoid overstatement or excessive optimism for cultural relevance in the target language.

I'd appreciate any feedback you might be able to share! Please

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Thanks for reading!

Noriko Rogers

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Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC

Plain City, Ohio, USA

+1 (614) 705-5068

URL: www.borderlessinterpreting.com

Contact: noriko@borderlessinterpreting.com

mailer lite