

Translating the Field: Music, Power, Praxis

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Call for Chapter Proposals



Objective

We invite scholars working at the multilingual intersections of music, sound, performance, and/or ethnography, to submit chapter proposals exploring translation, whether in theoretical or practical terms, especially concerning the politics, impact, and/or the potential of translation in our work.

We recognize translation as a complex process that risks altering, deforming, or distorting the living cultures, artistic products, and textual histories that we study. We thus take translation seriously, not only in calling attention to the often invisibilized process of its creation and the methodologies wrapped up in it, but also in questioning why we translate at all and what the potential ramifications of our translations might be.

Description

In the fields of ethnomusicology, sound studies, and performance studies, translation is often central to the work that we do. Translation impacts the scholarship we consume, the human interactions that envoice our experiences in the field, and—critically—the output of our research. The monolingual and Anglocentric nature of U.S. academic publishing flattens the polyglot texture of our ethnographic experience into a singular linguistic and epistemological thread. Yet the methodological and theoretical dimensions of translational practice are rarely objects of reflection among music scholars, even as neighboring fields in the social sciences and literary criticism are increasingly treating the topic with interest and care. Despite critical advances in literary translation studies and even anthropology, within ethnomusicology and other music-adjacent disciplines translation is still implicitly treated as if it were a neutral act of carrying words, ideas, and representations from one linguistic shore to another. While the field of ethnomusicology has long critiqued the concept of intellectual neutrality and has demanded greater awareness of the way that power is exerted and imposed across ethnographic inquiry, it has been problematically uncritical of the multiple and unequal ways that power moves and shapes meaning via the linguistic hegemony wrought by translation.

We ask: When, how, and why do music scholars translate? Are there qualitative differences in the ways that translation shapes research and writing in music and sound studies compared to other fields? What are the broader implications of our translation work? How might rethinking translation and our use of it transform the field in profound ways?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Translation as decolonial praxis/practice
- Translation in the history of ethnomusicology
- Translation theory and sound studies/ethnomusicology/performance studies
- Negotiating linguistic encounters in the field and on the page
- Translation's role in disseminating research/pedagogy
- Comparing translations/critical readings of past translations
- Visual aspects of publishing translation (i.e., ideogram, sign language systems, etc.)
- Real time translation: the role of interpreting in the field
- Choosing not to translate

Timeline

Interested scholars should submit a 150-200 word statement of interest along with a 250 word abstract for a proposed chapter. Submissions, as well as any inquiries, can be sent to the editorial team at translatingthefield@gmail.com **The deadline for abstract submissions is May 15, 2024.**

Notifications of acceptance will be made by July 1, 2024.

Accepted scholars will be invited to attend an in-person “**Translating the Field**” Symposium at the University of Texas at Austin (with travel and lodging covered) to present abbreviated versions of their chapters-in-progress and workshop with other authors. **The event will take place Sept. 6-7, 2024.**

Submission of completed chapters: Jan. 15, 2025

Expected publication: Jan. 2026

