



Translating Nina Simone's Civil Rights Songs into Dutch

"I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free"

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Abstract

This master thesis concerns the translation of Nina Simone's civil rights songs. Seven songs have been translated and analyzed. These are "Ain't Got No/ I Got Life" (1968), "Mississippi Goddam" (1964), "Sinnerman" (1965), "Four Women" (1966), "To Be Young, Gifted and Black" (1969), "I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free" (1967) and "My Baby Just Cares For Me" (1958). The last two songs form an 'encore' following the custom of a setlist. The majority of the first five songs were written by Simone herself, except for "Ain't Got No/ I Got Life." The songs in the encore were written by others, but were made famous by Nina Simone.

Firstly, the Framework is set out: Nina Simone, the artist is introduced, the civil rights era in The United States is set out, and, in comparison, a character of the sixties in the Netherlands is given. What follows is the image of Nina Simone in The United States, compared to her image in The Netherlands. Other than in The United States, in The Netherlands, it is not commonly known that Nina Simone is a civil rights singer.

Secondly, the theoretical framework is set out, and the applied theories in this thesis are introduced. A comparison is made between translating poetry and lyrics. Next, arguments are given to answer the question: 'Why translate Nina Simone's songs into Dutch?'

Thirdly, the song selection is substantiated, and the seven songs are analyzed. This part forms the majority of this thesis. The analyses are divided into translation problems regarding content and form. For the analyses of content, the theory of James S. Holmes for translating poetry is applied, since lyrics are a specific form of poetry. The socio-cultural context of the songs is described each time, as well as the literary intertext, which, in the case of lyrics concerns the music culture of the source and target public. For the analyses regarding form, the third division of Holmes' theory is used, the linguistic context. Furthermore, Peter Low's pentathlon principle is applied. Moreover, for each of the songs Bindervoet and Henkes' advice is taken to heart to try and find the unique quality of the song. This quality should be honored in the translation. What follows are the translations of the seven songs, the source text and target text side by side, so that the reader can compare the texts. Lastly, the conclusion dilates upon the main research aim, explaining which strategies were used in the process of translating Nina Simone's civil rights songs, which problems occurred and it elaborates about the process of translating the lyrics.

Since content is a prime aspect of each song, the sense of Peter Low's pentathlon was important in the writing process, binding the translator. The cultural color of the songs should be maintained, the expressions of these influences had to be translated to Dutch using equivalents that did not color the Dutch with a dialect or with street language. Therefor the AAVE language, for example was mainly translated with colloquial and idiomatic language use. It was concluded that the unique qualities present in the songs, were maintained in the Dutch languages.

About the process of translating lyrics, it is emphasized that with all the theory and tools and golden rules a translator has the disposal of, he still has to come into a creative process and has to come with creative solutions in each song, each stanza, each line.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research aim and overview

In this MA thesis, a selection of Nina Simone's civil rights songs will be translated into Dutch. The reader is invited to join in on a journey from the turbulent sixties in The United States, when the Civil Rights Movement arose, and when Nina Simone found a purpose for her strong voice, to The Netherlands, where we had our own revolution going on, albeit a rather romantic one. Over here, the Dutch read about the violence against blacks in the papers and saw it on television, but they do not share their history. Considering the themes in Nina Simone's songs, this difference in background results in different foreknowledge and different sentiment with the Dutch, as it will with Americans when listening to Simone's music; this is what James S. Holmes dubbed the *socio-cultural situation* that is different for the source text (ST) and target text (TT). A Dutch listener may be familiar with the American history and the politics in the sixties, but will most likely not have personal experience with it. This, and translation problems considering differences in music culture can be classified as translation problems regarding content.

However, apart from cultural differences, there are other factors of importance when one translates songs. Peter Low states that singability must have top priority in translating songs since a song needs to be performable. Also, the meaning, the sense of the song should be properly formulated in Dutch, using the rhythm the music dictates and the rhyme the lyrics contain. Finally, the lyrics should sound natural in Dutch, Peter Low states (see chapter 3.4 Singable Translations of Songs, p. 15-8). The ST cannot be followed strictly at all times, or else the Dutch can sound forced. These translation problems can be classified as problems regarding form.

The public a literary translator generally writes for is an "interested and well-informed public," as Cees Koster describes it. The translated songs in this thesis are also targeted at a well-informed public. However, the public can only be well-informed to a certain extent. One can have knowledge about the civil rights movement, and have heard about dr. Martin Luther King, however, expertise cannot be expected from a non-native audience. If the translated lyrics were performed, the performance could be accompanied with additional background information, and this thesis could serve as a decent basis. The

information could be provided orally, for example in a theater show, or in written word, for example in a special CD booklet, should the songs be recorded. The only thing left to do now, is to find the Dutch Nina Simone, with a voice as strong as hers.

1.2 Main research aim

This thesis concerns the translation of Nina Simone's civil rights songs into Dutch and examines the potential translation strategies regarding content (the socio-cultural and political aspects of the songs) and form (the genre of songs in translation).

1.3 Structure

First, a framework will be provided in Chapter 2: with an introduction of Nina Simone, a character of the era in which her songs originated, compared to the same period in The Netherlands, followed by a comparison of Nina Simone's image in The United States and The Netherlands. What follows is the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, in which the theories used in this thesis will be explained; furthermore, these theories will be applied to the songs in Chapter 4. In this chapter, the translations made will be discussed as well. The songs, accompanied by their translations, can be read as a whole in the following chapter. Finally, in Chapter 6, Conclusion, the findings in this thesis are described.

2. Framework

2.1 Introducing Nina Simone

Nina Simone (1933-2003) was dubbed *The High Priestess of Soul*, she was a child prodigy who grew out to be a black jazz diva, but apart from all the glamour she was a victim of discrimination in her youth and violence from her husband as a grown woman, and she was no perfect mother to her daughter. Nina Simone was a woman of extremes; she suffered from mental illness, but she was also a brilliant artist and performer. The discrimination in her youth and the disadvantages of being black she came across during her life made her very conscious of her skin color and would mark her life. When the singer and pianist died, it did not cause much of a stir (Brun-Lambert), but in recent years two biographies of Simone were published (*The Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone*, Nadine Cohodas 2012 and *Nina Simone, the Biography*, David Brun-Lambert 2009) as well as a critically appraised documentary on Netflix “What Happened, Miss Simone” which was nominated for an Oscar in 2015.

Nina Simone was born in the small town of Tryon, North Carolina, as Eunice Waymon in a poor, religious family. She was a child prodigy; at the age of two and a half she played her first hymn on the family organ and at four she was accompanying her mother, who was a minister. Soon she was playing gospels at her mother’s church. When she was five, she was studying classical music with a white teacher. A local fund was raised for Eunice and “[t]here was a lot of black pride and money invested in me, and a fair amount of white money too” (25) says Nina Simone in her autobiography *I Put a Spell on You* (1991). For five and a half years, she got her lessons from “Miz Mazzy” as Eunice called her. The lessons consisted not merely of learning Bach, Czerny and Liszt, but Eunice also learned how to present herself, “how to bow after a recital, how to walk gracefully on and off stage, and how to sit up straight at the piano and look elegant and composed while [. . .] being introduced” (25). This composure and gracefulness Simone never lost, even when she sang roots or rough music.

Eunice planned to go to Juilliard and from there to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her dream took shape to become the first black concert pianist in America.

In 1950 Eunice was turned down at Curtis because she “wasn’t good enough” (Simone, 41) but later on she realized that the actual reason was her being black.

In need of money, she started to play popular music at an Atlantic City nightclub. To hide this from her highly religious mother, Eunice took on a stage name: Nina Simone. Here, she learned to play pop music and improvise on stage, and for the first time she accompanied her music with singing.

Her first popular hit song in The United States was “I Loves You, Porgy” in 1958, a song by George Gershwin. With that, a critically acclaimed star was born. “I was a sensation. An overnight success, like in the movies. [. . .] Suddenly I was the hot new thing” says Simone in her autobiography (66-7). Nina Simone became part of “the interracial avant-garde in Greenwich Village and Harlem that included [writer and poet] Langston Hughes, [playwright and writer] Lorraine Hansberry, [et cetera]” (Feldstein, “I Don’t Trust You Anymore,” 1352). Press coverage increased. “Simone was the subject of discussion in publications that crossed racial, political, and cultural divides” from jazz journals to the entertainment industry, to black newspapers, and also the *New York Times* (Feldstein, 1354). People found it difficult to label her and define the kind of music that she played. Critics depicted Simone with regard to her musical virtuosity and her racial authenticity, but no one was as expansive in praising Simone as the – black – poet Langston Hughes, as he said in 1962:

She plays piano FLUIDLY well, SIMPLY well, COMPLICATEDLY well, THEATRICALY well, DRAMATICALLY well, INDIVIDUALLY well, and MADLY well. Not just WELL. She is far-out, and at the same time common... She has flair, but no air (as cited by Ruth Feldstein in “I Don’t Trust You Anymore” 1357).

Until 1963 Nina Simone was involved with civil rights merely from the sideline. She had friends from New York, who were black leaders, and she was aware of the concerns of black artists and thinkers, but she herself did not play an active role in the movement (Simone, 86). However, when the news reached her of the death of four black children in a Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama by a bomb attack on 15 September 1963, something changed. The first thing she did was to try and build a gun. Luckily her husband changed her mind, saying she did not know anything about killing, but that her weapon was

music. Nina Simone sat down at her piano, and an hour later she came out with the sheet music of “Mississippi Goddam”. “It was my first civil rights song, and it erupted out of me quicker than I could write it down. I knew then that I would dedicate myself to the struggle for black justice, freedom and equality under the law for as long as it took, until all our battles were won” (90). “[I]he entire direction of my life shifted” Nina Simone said,

My music was dedicated to a purpose more important than classical music’s pursuit of excellence; it was dedicated to the fight for freedom and the historical destiny of my people. I felt a fierce pride when I thought about what we were all doing together. So if the movement gave me nothing else, it gave me self-respect (Nina Simone, *I Put a Spell on You*, 91).

2.2 Character of the era

In 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln, proclaiming the freedom of more than three million slaves in the south of America. However, nearly 100 years after the Proclamation, African-Americans in southern states were still segregated from white people in classrooms, bathrooms, theaters and train cars, oppressed and regular victims of racial violence. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the *separate but equal* doctrine, according to which racial segregation did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, forming the basis for state-sanctioned discrimination. The following decade and half were turbulent. Civil rights activists used nonviolent protest and civil disobedience to bring about change. The federal government reacted with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that prohibits racial discrimination in voting, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which made it a federal crime to “by force or by threat of force, injure, intimidate, or interfere with anyone by reason of their race, color, religion, or national origin” (history.com). Many leaders from within the African-American community and beyond rose to prominence during the civil rights era: Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat in the bus for a white man, the human rights activist Malcolm X, and dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who played a great role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. His “I Have a

Dream” speech he delivered on the March on Washington in 1963 is probably one of the most famous speeches in history and established his reputation as one of the greatest orators in American history.

Ruth Feldstein devotes her book *How It Feels to Be Free* (2013) to black women entertainers and the civil rights movement and points out how important the entertainment industry was in the tumultuous years of the civil rights movement. “Culture was a key battleground in the civil rights movement” (5) she states. Playwright and writer Lorraine Hansberry, author of the award-winning play *A Raisin in the Sun*, who would become an important friend to Nina Simone, called on her fellow black artists in 1962, and declared that “people who worked in the entertainment and culture industries needed to ‘paint,’ ‘sing,’ and ‘write’ about civil rights” (As cited by Ruth Feldstein in *How It Feels to Be Free*, 5). Hansberry stimulated Simone’s political activity; “through her I started thinking about myself as a black person in a country run by white people and a woman in a world run by men” (*I Put a Spell on You*, 87). By becoming a civil rights singer Nina Simone found meaning in her life, it made her feel that she played for a reason.

Important songs in the civil rights movement were “We Shall Overcome,” an anthem many activist singers included in their repertoire, Sam Cooke’s “A Change is Gonna Come,” which describes Cooke’s inner struggle with racism, and Nina Simone’s “To Be Young Gifted and Black,” which was declared as National Anthem of Black America (Simone, 108).

2.3 The Sixties in The Netherlands

Seven and a half thousand kilometers from Birmingham, Alabama, the Dutch read about the horrible incidents of violence against black people in the States in the papers. The news about the bombing of the Baptist church in Birmingham is front page news the next day – although *Algemeen Handelsblad* portrays the African-Americans more like victims and *De Telegraaf* applies a more blaming tone – and the Communist paper *De Waarheid* writes a critical piece about the events in Birmingham, (28 Sep 1963, “Birmingham’s politie extra wapens tegen negers”) that killed four black Sunday school girls and later that day a black boy, Johnny Robinson, who was among a group in a fight with white boys. *De Waarheid* criticizes the police in Birmingham, asking why nothing is done to round up the offenders.

Through the new media of the time, the news of the world; the murder of John F. Kennedy, the Vietnam War, the murder of Martin Luther King and the first man on the moon, rolled into people's living rooms.

Domestically, the times were far less turbulent in The Netherlands. Geert Mak even calls the mid-sixties “an extraordinary romantic era” (Mak, 859; my translation¹). Nevertheless, a great and rapid change in mentality occurred during these years. Geert Mak compares this mentality change to a “perfect storm” where “four, five elements converge from which great forces were freed” (861). Firstly the factor youth; “everyone above the age of forty was considered as the enemy and this ‘we against the others’ attitude was emphasized time and again with music, clothing, hair style [better long haired than short-sighted, (863)], symbols and rituals” (862). The second factor was the international character of the movement. “In all student cities the same shop-windows were to be found:” (863) the books of Karl Marx, the London fashion of Mary Quant's boots, jeans, colored stockings and miniskirts would determine the appearance of youngsters in all of Europe and The United States. The same can be said of music, with the Beatles as the most prominent example. The third factor was sexual freedom (864) and fourthly, the massive increase of prosperity (865), although “the youthful rebels were extremely ambivalent concerning the prosperity increase. On the one hand they benefitted from it, but on the other hand, their rebellion was pervaded with criticism on ‘the addicted consumer’ and his new attainments, like the television [. . .] and above all the car” (866). The fifth force, deeply hidden, and driving on this storm, was fear (867). “There was a permanent fear of war, many people saw the atomic bomb as a realistic danger and many youngsters wanted to ban wars and oppression from the world at all cost” (867). The burning questions of the twentieth century were raised: “the relation between rich and poor, the ethical side of technology, the exploitation of the earth, the boundaries of growth” (867). The war in Vietnam could be followed daily on television and was heavily criticized around the globe. “One demonstration followed the other throughout Western European and American capital cities. Tens of thousands of Americans refused service” (867).

As mentioned, there was a revolution going in The Netherlands, and with that, there were Dutch protest songs that were highly popular. Boudewijn de Groot, among others, wrote social criticism-songs. His “Welterusten, meneer de president” [lyrics by

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from sources in Dutch are mine, MH.

² Salient detail: in in the film the song is performed by a white actor in blackface: Eddie Cantor,

Lennaert Nijgh, music by De Groot] was directed to President Johnson and an indictment against the war in Vietnam and another antiwar song is his “De eeuwige soldaat.” He sang, “Hoe sterk is de eenzame fietser?” which is a rendering of the hippie mentality and anti-capitalism. Armand’s “Ben ik te min” refers to the same theme. “Am I not good enough, because your parents have more money than mine?” asks the best-known protest singer in The Netherlands. We have had a revolution in The Netherlands and we had protest singers, but having said that, “the revolution of the sixties in The Netherlands had a frivolous character to a great extent, [. . .] the student movement was serious business, but the *provo* movement, in particular, was constantly playing games: with public opinion, with television, with image. It was an artistic form of protest,” says Geert Mak (879).

The Dutch read about the problems throughout the world in the papers and saw it on television, but still, the struggle of black people in the United States was, and still is, something far away.

2.4 Nina Simone in The United States versus The Netherlands

Where Nina Simone is renowned in The United States for being a civil rights singer, the average Dutchman will know nothing of this aspect of her. On the one hand, this has to do with the hits that she had here; “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life,” which is not directly recognizable as a song about racial issues, and “My Baby Just Cares For Me,” a lighthearted, jazzy love song. On the other hand, the civil rights issues in the United States were far away problems for the Dutch, and this kind of music was, therefore, less relevant here. In translating the civil rights songs specifically, the relevance of the songs is shown to the Dutch public; it allows the public to discover this side of the artist.

Since the sixties, a lot has changed, but, unfortunately, everyday people on this planet still are the victim of racism. The songs Nina Simone sang some fifty years ago, such as “Four Women” about four women of color, who all tell about their personal suffering, and “Mississippi Goddam” about racial violence, are still of relevance these days. Even long after her death, Nina Simone herself was the subject of discussion on racism. When film images of the actress in the biography film about Nina Simone, *Nina* (2016), came out, people reacted furiously to the fact that Zoe Saldana’s face was painted a darker color, and her nose was made broader. Ta-Nehisi Coates shares in this discussion in the American

literary and cultural magazine *The Atlantic*, saying: “[t]here is something deeply shameful in the fact that even today a young Nina Simone would have a hard time being cast in her own biopic” (“Nina Simone’s Face”, 9th paragraph).

In 2014 the national trauma of the racial problem in America was regenerated by the death of the eighteen-year-old black boy Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, by a white police officer. Riots and demonstrations broke out. The majority Ferguson’s inhabitants are black, and they accused the police of racism en masse.

The Netherlands do not have a national trauma as The United States have; still, racism and other forms of discrimination take place here as well as everywhere else on earth. Under the influence of streams of asylum-seekers entering Europe, the tolerance for immigrants is put to the test in The Netherlands and the extreme-right political party, the PVV benefits from the growing fear. Subsequently, in the rest of Western Europe, this trend of extreme-right politics growing in popularity is visible. Every day people in The Netherlands and the rest of the world are being discriminated because of the color of their skin, their sexual preference, for being a woman, for having an illness or just the way they look. Songs about discrimination are still relevant and songs about the civil rights period in The United States are worth being acquainted with for their historical relevance.

3. Translating Lyrics

The context of Nina Simone's music has been set out, and a comparison has been made between the sixties in The United States and The Netherlands, the familiarity with Nina Simone as a civil rights artist in her home country and the unfamiliarity with this aspect of the artist in The Netherlands have been pointed out. Moreover, now that it has been signified that Nina Simone's songs are still relevant throughout the world, we can dive into the theory of translating song lyrics. Since lyrics are a form of poetry, the theory of James S. Holmes is useful in the process. In his "Rebuilding the Bridge at Bommel" he sets out three areas of translation problems that occur when translating poetry. In addition to James Holmes, Peter Low's pentathlon theory from "Singable Translations of Songs" will be called forth and finally the practical advice from literary translators Bindervoet and Henkes, who are experienced in translating songs by for example Bob Dylan and The Beatles.

A division will be made between content and form in analyzing the songs. This construction provides structure for the writer in organizing the information and clarity for the reader of this thesis. Under content, we can categorize *music culture* (Holmes: literary intertext) and the *socio-cultural situation* (Holmes). Under form, we can categorize the *linguistic context* (Holmes), the *singability* (Low), *rhythm* (Low) and *rhyme* (Low). Low's *sense*; the meaning of the song, is strictly content related, and *naturalness* can refer to content as well as form, however, the pentathlon is practical in using all five pentameters together. Therefore the pentathlon as a whole will be discussed under form. Bindervoet and Henkes state that a translator should ask himself: what makes this song unique and what is it that stands out? They argue that this should be the starting point of the translator of lyrics. This *unique quality* can either be a content related feature, such as a specific meaning, or a form related feature, such as the frequent use of specific vowels. Therefore, each analysis will end with a short interpretation of the specific unique quality. In the analyses some potential translation strategies will be discussed and the consideration of the choice for the eventual translation strategy.

First, the differences and similarities between poetry and lyrics will be examined in what follows.

3.1 Poetry versus lyrics

“Since the invention of the printing press,” Pat Pattison states, “poetry has been delivered mainly to the eye. Lyrics are delivered mainly to the ear” (122). Where poetry uses words with multiple meanings and depth, a listener of music cannot go back in the text. He hears the words and is not able, as with poetry, to read the words again. Therefore the language in a lyric is usually simpler and more straightforward and the notes that join the words add extra color. When one hears music, “there is no stopping, no looking. No checking the dictionary. [. . .] The pleasure is in the continuous movement forward,” Pattison states (123). The more complicated the language in lyrics becomes, “the more it limits its audience to those who understand complicated language easily” (123). As Pattison argues, some lyrics use more complex language than some poets, and the other way around, but still, “poems must stand on their own ground. Lyrics have extra modifiers to color their words” (124). Far more than poetry, lyrics depend on repeated content, usually refrains or choruses. In repeating them, the lines gain weight. Nina Simone’s “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” is, of course, a fine example of this effect. “A great poem, like a great symphony, stands on its own ground. [. . .] So does a great song. But a great lyric, by itself, doesn’t” (Pattison, 132). It needs the accompanying music to be great. Despite all the differences, lyrics are in fact poetry, a specific form of poetry, sung out loud. “Poetry began as something that went with music, words that were read to the accompaniment of the lyre, thus the word *lyric*” says poet and lyricist Wyn Cooper, “[o]nly very gradually, and only in some cultures such as ours, did a divide grow between the two” (135).

Taking our departure from the idea that lyrics can be treated as poetry, Holmes’ translation theory on poetry can function as a basis for translating the song texts. Holmes indicates three areas of problems in translating poetry. Firstly, he distinguishes the *linguistic context*. The poet, or in this case lyricist, uses the expressivity of a specific language in order to communicate something, and “the words of the poem [or lyric] take on significance for the reader only when interpreted within that context” (47). Secondly, he speaks of the *literary intertext* in which the poem is set; the poem as part of the literary [or music] tradition and interacting with this tradition, “and the rhythm, metre, rhyme, and assonances of the poem, but also its imagery, themes, and *topoi*, are intimately linked with those in that whole array of other texts” (47). Finally, the poem has its position in the *socio-cultural situation*, “in

which objects, symbols, and abstract concepts function in a way that is never exactly the same in any other society or culture” (47).

When Nina Simone’s songs are translated, the lyrics shift from the English to the Dutch linguistic context with its specific grammar rules, as well as different consonant sounds, like the hard g-sound. Furthermore, in Simone’s songs a specific socio-cultural language is used, a sociolect, such as “All along dem day” in “Sinnerman” and “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” in the song with the same name, which are examples of African-American-specific language in America. These aspects need consideration with respect to the possible translation strategies. Secondly, the literary intertext, or in this case rather the music culture, shifts from America to The Netherlands. Nina Simone was for example influenced by the gospel music she played in her youth, and aspects of this come back in her songs, such as in “To Be Young, Gifted and Black.” Lastly, the socio-cultural situation shifts from the United States in the sixties and seventies, with the civil rights movement as a substantial struggle in the country in these years, to a small European country with no experience of this sort. In relation to this we come across a problem in “Mississippi Goddam,” when Simone lets a crowd answer her in a chant: “Go slow,” which were the words of politicians, urging the black community not to expect too much too quickly. Holmes’ three areas will be pointed out with each of the translated Nina Simone-songs.

A tool to decide for a consistent translation strategy is Holmes’ cross; a translation strategy system wherein a translator can position his translation.

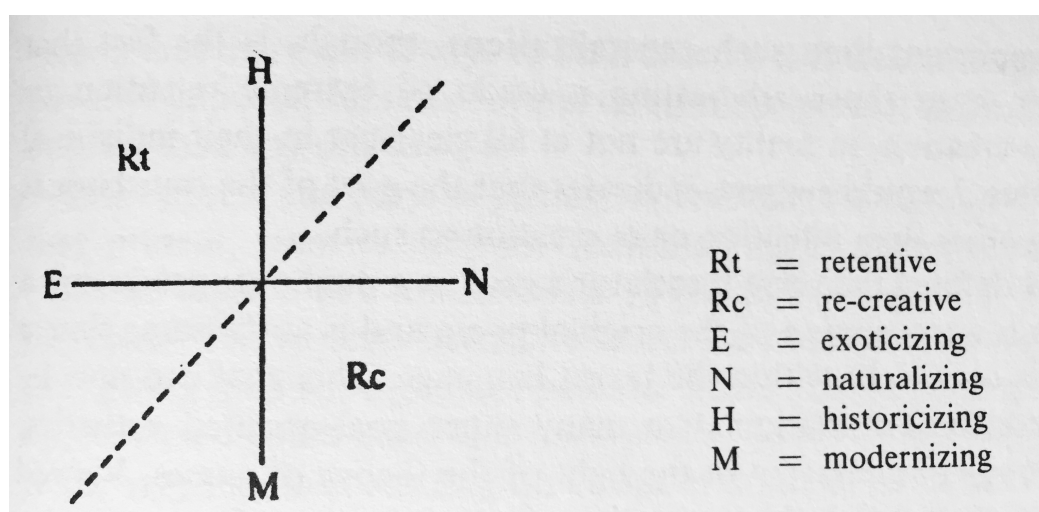


Illustration 1 Holmes’ Cross (From: Holmes, James S. *Translated!* p. 49)

The translator can use this diagram, to make choices on the levels of the linguistic context, the socio-cultural situation and the literary intertext that were mentioned earlier. In the case of the translations of Nina Simone's lyrics, the linguistic context will be re-creative, for the Dutch lyrics have to be rendered for the target public; the English lyrics have to be re-created into Dutch. The socio-cultural situation, on the other hand, will be on the left side of the cross, for an exoticizing strategy. The songs are a culturally loaded product, influenced by Nina Simone's background, and need to stay this way. The music culture (originally literary intertext) shifts from The United States to the Netherlands, however, as with the socio-cultural situation, the jazz, gospel and soul influences are a product of the African-American community in The United States, which cannot be rendered. The translations for the Dutch public are thus culturally colored in music and background, but they are re-created for them to understand in Dutch.

3.2 Why translate Nina Simone's songs into Dutch?

Literary and poetry translator David Connolly asks himself: "Why in general do translators of poetry exhibit such a passion for rewriting the work of others for a different linguistic and cultural leadership?" (1). He argues that we may translate because "we wish to test the capacities of the target language (TL) to express a certain kind of poetry" (1) hereby perhaps enriching and renewing the TL at the same time, or because "we feel affinity with the poet's work and are inspired to want to appropriate the poem in our own language" (1). Connolly states that we may use foreign poetry as a starting point for creating a new poem in our own language and, finally, "our aim may be to want to make the poet known in the TL culture because we are dealing with a major and original poetic voice that is worth the 'thankless efforts' [. . .] involved in translation" (1). His own reason for translating Greek poetry [to English] is to highlight not merely the author, but the whole of his literary tradition. "People don't read my translations because they are translations by Connolly. People read them (if at all) to find out about [. . .] Greek poets" (1).

In the case of Nina Simone's work, the Dutch can no longer hear her voice; would she still be alive, she could not sing in Dutch, but they can hear her voice, figuratively speaking. They can listen to what she had to say in her songs, understand her message, and come into contact with aspects of the singer and her culture with what they were not

familiar. The average Dutchman listens to English lyrics more often than Dutch lyrics. Merely 4,6% of the songs on the national radio broadcasters, Radio 1, 2 and 3 is in the Dutch language. For the rest, the majority is in English.

However, the themes that Nina Simone's songs touch upon; civil rights issues, being black, feeling inferior to white people, but lighter subjects as well, are being brought more to life hearing them in one's mother language. An example of lyrics coming to life in Dutch is an adaption the Dutch band The Kik made of English lyrics by ChefSpecial. The Song "In Your Arms" was a major hit in The Netherlands in 2014 with lyrics about the loss of the lead singer's father. The Kik translated the song to "Schuilen bij jou" in Giel Beelen's popular morning show on *3FM*.

ChefSpecial:

From the day that I met you I stopped feeling afraid
In your arms I feel safe
In your arms I feel safe
From the day that I met you I stopped feeling afraid
In your arms I feel safe
In your arms

I miss you so, I miss you so
And I'll miss you 'till i'm old
I miss you so, I miss you so
But my fears will fade, I know

The Kik:

Als ik huilde of bang was, of stierf van de kou
Kon ik schuilen bij jou, kon ik schuilen bij jou
Als ik huilde of bang was, of stierf van de kou
Kon ik schuilen bij jou, kon ik schuilen

Ik mis je zo, ik mis je zo
Tot het einde van de tijd
Ik mis je zo, ik mis je zo
Ook al weet ik dat het slijt

The theme of loss in the song is unchanged, but The Kik's singer and guitarist Dave Von Raven took the liberty to make it an entirely new lyric, an adaption more than a translation. Von Raven says that in the days he was singing in English, the lyrics he sang were not that important to him. In an interview with magazine *Onze Taal*, he states that since he sings and writes in Dutch: "lyrics matter much more to me now. And I notice this with the public too; in the way they react to our adaptations; take what we did with ChefSpecial's song, the reactions were overwhelming. Giel Beelen said it was the [own] language that did that – it was because people could understand the lyrics word for word" (Van Der Zwan, 201).

3.3 The Practice of Translating Lyrics

Other experienced translators of songs in the Dutch language are literary translators Erik Bindervoet and Robbert-Jan Henkes. In *Filter, tijdschrift over vertalen* they reflect on a radio show in which they called on the listeners to send in translations of songs. In "Haken en ogen van liedjes vertalen" they write down the hints and tips they gave – and should have given – to the public. The advice from the experienced translators will be brought in practice and kept in mind when translating Nina Simone's songs.

The first advice is to always sing along while writing lyrics, for it is the only way to find out if the lyric fits the music (1). Secondly, Bindervoet and Henkes advise to "find the hook" of the song; an entrance, which sometimes has to come to you, and "once you have

found that entrance, discovered the door, you can pull up the entire building with it” (1). If a good translation for an important, repeating sentence is found, for instance, one can use this sentence, to rhyme with and to use it as a theme in the translated song. Bindervoet and Henkes explain: “every song has an extra special line that stands out” (2). This line has to be found and brought to the target public in the right way. “Fear not,” they urged the listeners, their third advice being “do not be too careful,” (2) although the duo slightly regretted this advice, after they took in the average quality of the contributions. Fourthly, Bindervoet and Henkes wished they had given the public the advice to “[B]ear in mind what makes the song special. Find out the reason it was written the way it was written” (2). They too draw the parallel with translating a poem, having lines that should be maintained “in all their strength and unicity” as well as a lyric. “They can be sonore sounds, a successful alliteration, or a rhyme, or a turn, an unusual word, a strange metaphor, but there is always something that stands out” (3). This *unique quality* each song possesses can work as the basis of ones translation (3).

Peter Low states that song-texts pose problems resembling “sometimes those of poetry and sometimes those of drama” (Low, “Singable Translations of Songs,” 87). Making a translation actually suitable for singing is “a very particular purpose,” Low says (87). He compares translating songs to a pentathlon, wherein athletes have to compete in five events, which must result in an optimal score overall, “they must hold some energy in reserve for the 1,500 metres. So they sometimes choose to come second or third in one event, keeping their eyes on the whole day’s challenge” (92). In line of this metaphor, the translator of lyrics has five events he competes in, and he must aim for “the best aggregate” (92). The five criteria singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme are “as dissimilar as a shot put and a 100-metre sprint!” (92).

3.3.1 Singability

Low states that singability must have top priority in translating songs since a song needs to be performable. Where poetry is beautiful to read as well as recite, the lyric is a text that must be put into practice. As a result of this practical aspect, the lyrics must be quickly understandable: “It must function effectively as an oral text delivered at performance speed – whereas the reader of a written text has a chance to pause, reflect and even re-read” (93). Low refers to “highlighted words” (94) in the source text that the composer gave prominence, which should ideally be translated by “adequate equivalents” (94) in the TT.

This is comparable to Bindervoet and Henkes, who state that there are always sentences that stand out. Another aspect of singability is the pattern of stressed and unstressed vowels, says Low, which overlaps with rhythm (see paragraph 3.3.5).

3.3.2 Sense

With sense, Low indicates the meaning of the song. When compared to informative texts, the sense of song lyrics can be stretched: “a precise lexical equivalent may be replaced by a near-synonym, a narrow term by a subordinate term, a particular metaphor by another one which functions in a similar way in the context” (94). Because in a genre where the number of syllables is constrained, the need to stretch sense arises just as naturally, Low states. This view offers gives the translator some latitude and it makes the pentathlon principal a practical tool. Sometimes the translator is convinced that a particular word or term should be translated as exact as possible. However, sometimes rhyme or rhythm prevails over the exact sense. Naturally, when assessing these choices, the translator should always remain critical of one’s work.

3.3.3 Naturalness

By this Low indicates that a song text should sound natural with respect to register and word order. “Abominable language and oddly stilted ‘translationese’ [Bindervoet and Henkes dubbed this *‘Vertaliaans’*] reveal either a failure to express oneself naturally in the target language or an insistence that semantic accuracy is the sole goal” (95). Like Pattison, Low states that a lyric must communicate effectively on the first encounter, “[t]his places a premium on natural language, because unnaturalness demands an additional and superfluous effort from the audience,” (95) a song has to be understood immediately by the audience while being sung. This aspect expects the translator to be keen as well. Sometimes a translation seems perfect because a sentence may convey the meaning of the ST, however, it can be something that just is not idiomatic, burdening the audience with deciphering what is meant.

3.3.4 Rhyme

In Low’s opinion rhyme is something that works well in his pentathlon principle; the translator can allow himself some liberties. When rhyme occurs in the ST, translators either

chooses to maintain some of the rhyme, replace perfect rhyme with imperfect rhyme, or they choose to do without entirely. In other words, the translator can allow himself some poetic license (95-6). These liberties allow the translator to focus on the other aspects of the pentathlon, improving the lyric as a whole.

3.3.5 Rhythm

Some translators are of the opinion that it is essential to maintain the number of syllables of the ST in the TT, says Low (96), who feels this is desirable as well. Still, Low thinks the principle is applied too rigidly in some cases. If a line becomes awkward, a syllable can be added or omitted, but “it should be done judiciously: the best place to add a syllable is on a melisma [different tones on one syllable], and the best place to omit a syllable is on a repeated note, because those methods alter rhythm without destroying melody” (97). Peter Low even thinks adjusting the melody to the translation is sometimes justified (97). Furthermore, he states that the number of syllables is not an accurate measure of rhythm (98). “One must consider not only the stresses but also the length of notes” (98). The best way of finding out if additional or fewer syllables are possible in a line is singing it out loud.

Low’s pentathlon principal is practical, and it gains confidence for the translator to work with a text and feel he can shape the lyric as he sees fit and make it his own.

4. Translating Nina Simone's Songs

4.1 Song Selection / Setlist

Nina Simone left the world an enormous legacy, but not all the songs she played were of her own making. Nina Simone “had a vast and often surprising musical appetite,” says Claudia Roth Pierpont in the *New Yorker*. “By the late sixties, she was so afraid of falling behind the times that she expanded her repertory to include Bob Dylan, Leonard Bernstein, and, covering all bases, the Bee Gees” (Roth Pierpont, 5). It was appropriate for this thesis to make a selection of songs that were chiefly her own. Selecting a whole album to analyze and translate, would take too much space for one thesis –the album *'Nuff Said* as a whole was considered because this is a record of a performance Simone gave in honor of Martin Luther King, a week after his death. The album would have been a good rendering of the civil rights era in the United States in the sixties. However, in the interest of the target public it was desirable for the list to contain her two most famous hits in The Netherlands, despite that they are both covers; “Ain't Got No/ I Got Life” and “My Baby Just Cares For Me.” The Dutch public knows her best for these songs since they were both number one hits. In addition, Nina Simone's most prominent civil rights songs were selected, as well as songs about black identity, so that the target public would be introduced to this aspect of the singer.

The first five songs that were translated and that will be thoroughly analyzed in this thesis are “Ain't Got No/ I Got Life,” from the musical *Hair* (1967), that Nina Simone turned into a freedom song, “Mississippi Goddam” her first civil rights song, “Sinnerman,” an old American gospel song Simone adapted, and “Four Women,” about the struggle in the minds of black women about the way they looked, and “To Be Young, Gifted and Black,” a song Simone made in honor of her friend Lorraine Hansberry.

For each of the songs, the translation strategies regarding content (the socio-cultural and political aspects of the songs) and form (the genre of songs in translation) will be discussed. This is followed by concluding remarks with regards to translation strategies for these civil rights songs.

Following the conduct of music shows of every respectable artist, the set list of this MA thesis closes with an encore. It serves as a reward for the patience and concentration

of the reader, the public, you. The two songs in the encore are lyrics that were not written by Simone herself. The songs show the diversity of the artist and are accompanied by a short analysis. The encore starts with “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free,” which is a famous civil rights song in America, written by Billy Taylor and Richard Carroll Lamb, but more widely known by the public in Nina Simone’s version. This song coincides with the former civil rights songs. The second song in the encore is “My Baby Just Cares For Me.” The analysis of this song mainly concerns translation problems in general, such as solutions for translation problems regarding cultural specific elements. As mentioned, the main reason for selecting this song is because it is recognizable to the Dutch public, since it was a big hit here. Moreover, every setlist needs a good closing song, and by concluding with “My Baby,” the reader finishes reading this MA thesis in a jazzy, lighthearted state of mind.

4.2 Analyses

The principles of Holmes and the practical recommendations of Bindervoet & Henkes, and Low will be deployed with each of the songs to be translated with examples from the lyrics in English and Dutch. Each song analysis is split into the categories content and form, to divide the culture related translation problems and the translation problems regarding the workmanship of translating lyrics. Lastly, the *unique quality* of the song is formulated, which can be categorized under one or both of the categories.

4.2.1 Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life – Ik heb niks/ Ik heb ’t leven

Content

“Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” (1968) featured on Nina Simone’s 1968 album *Nuff Said*. It is a medley of two songs from the musical *Hair*, with lyrics by James Rado and Gerome Ragni and music by Galt MacDermot. The song reached a number two position in the United Kingdom and number one in The Netherlands. The song helped Simone gain popularity amongst a new, younger audience, and became a standard in her repertoire. Claudia Roth Pierpont calls the song “joyously innocuous,” which, in Simone’s hands,

“became a classic freedom song” (Roth Pierpont, 5). The song revived in The Netherlands in 1998 due to a commercial from insurance company *AMEV* [with the slogan “Dare to live”], the song reached the ninth position in the *Top 40* that year. In America, the song was far less popular. In the “Billboard Hot 100,” it reached the 94th position in 1969.

Music Culture

When one translates Nina Simone’s songs, there is not so much a change in the literary intertext as a shift in music culture, shifting from America to The Netherlands. “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” can be placed in the genre of pop music with influences of soul. The Broadway musical where the two songs were extracted from is a product of its time, the sixties. “The musical’s profanity, its depiction of the use of illegal drugs, its treatment of sexuality, its irreverence for the American flag, and its nude scene caused much comment and controversy” (Horn, 87-8). *Hair* became legendary in America; and in Europe as well, through musical adaptations in different countries and a film adaptation. The shift in music culture is not substantial since America and The Netherlands are evenly familiar with pop music. “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life,” is one of the few Simone-songs where the Dutch public is more familiar with than the American public.

Socio-cultural situation

“Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” is a freedom song, and being songs from the musical *Hair*, they were part of the hippie counterculture and sexual revolution in the sixties. This revolution was international. However, when sung by a black woman from America, the song – or songs – get additional overtone and the meaning shifts. When Simone sings about all the parts of her body that she has, they refer to her black body, her hair is frizzy, her skin is black, her nose is broad, and her lips are big. She sings about the aspects of her body with pride, concluding with having her freedom, her freedom as a black woman, “I’ve got life, and I’m gonna keep it.” With Nina Simone singing the freedom, hippie song it obtains another message. Although the Dutch public does not recognize this black struggle, it knows *of* it, through different media, and through culture, the voice of various artists, like this particular Nina Simone-song. In magazine *De Tijd* a critic says about a concert of Simone in The Netherlands in 1969:

“[W]hen Nina disappeared after the last song, the crowd moved forward, to stand close to the place where something magical had happened. ‘Ni-na, Ni-na, Ni-na,’ thousands of people scanted when she came back for an encore, all-alone. She sat behind her piano and the majority of the people in the hall knew: this is what I came for: to be close to the piano and for Nina to kick my white ass, to hear from her that this bad world will not be here forever and that there is hope, as long as there is love: and love is here in abundance. The ‘pushers’ in front of the stage were listening motionlessly” (*De Tijd*, “Op Je Blanke Duivel Krijgen van een Zwarte Zangeres”).

The title of the article “To get your white ass kicked by a black female singer” says that the black and white aspect is relevant to the public and that there is something the white audience can learn from Simone, may it be only to understand the struggle of the black man.

The themes in the song are universal, the body parts alike, and everyone has them. In the description of the content, it became clear that the freedom song in Nina Simone’s hands became a freedom song for the African-American community. When this song is presented in Dutch as a translation of a Nina Simone song and particularly as part of her civil rights oeuvre, this will provide the public with extra context.

Form

Linguistic context

The most striking linguistic element in this lyric is repetition, which is not hard to retain in the TT. The first half of the song is an enumeration of things the singer lacks, each sentence starting with “(I) ain’t got no,” arousing a feeling of pity with the public; *she doesn’t even have a mother, not even a name*, the second half of the song is an enumeration of everything she does have, each sentence starting with “Got my.” They are things everyone has, namely body parts, such as arms, ears, and nose. It expresses that we are all the same: black or white, small or big, old or young. Furthermore, the words express hope. When you have nothing left in the world, you still have your body, your smile, your heart and your soul.

The word “ain’t” is grammatically incorrect; it is a form of colloquial language. The double negation in the line; “ain’t got no” is a sociolect form, also known as African-American Vernacular Language (AAVE). In Marianne Kraai’s Master Thesis she states, “there is no limit to the amount of negations in a sentence” (11) in AAVE, an example in Kraai’s thesis is: “Ah ain’t nowhere near old enough to have no grown daughter” (from Hurston, *Their Eyes*, as cited by Marianne Kraai, 11).

Kraai names the strategies for translators to adapt in translating AAVE. A translator can either use neutralization or preservation when translating AAVE. With neutralization, the non-standard language in the ST is replaced by standard language in the TT, the safest option (39). However, to do this would not be desirable, because thematically, the AAVE is of importance, because a black lady sings about her body. Preservation of the non-standard language can be achieved in different ways, namely replacing it with an existing target language variety, such as replacing AAVE with Surinamese-Dutch (40) or street language (42). A different option is to replace it with a scenic dialect, such as Flemish, which is known in a larger area, and a non-standard variety in the target area. One can opt for a replacement with a supraregional dialect, which means moving to a different language, for instance using German words in the Dutch text, or replacement with an artificial dialect, a new language constructed for this specific text, (40) with no traceable origin and thus no socio-cultural baggage. To replace the AAVE with a dialect or street language, would not be desirable because it would imply too much of a change in socio-cultural connotations. The last strategy is preserving the source text elements, which forces readers to “abandon the text world on occasion, yet it offers them significant information about the verbal routines of the characters” (41). However, this would mean not translating these elements, where translating the songs is the main idea.

In the case of the double negation ‘Ain’t got no’ I chose to use a *dubbele ontkenning* in Dutch, which can be seen as a way of preserving the AAVE in an existing target language variety, with no cultural baggage. In Dutch the use of double negations is used in colloquial language, to emphasize something. For example: ‘*Hij heeft nooit geen geld,*’ means ‘he never *ever* has any money.’ In the song, ‘*niks geen*’ was inserted when the meter allowed it. For example “*ke heb niks geen scholing*’ in line seven. In translating the grammatically incorrect ‘ain’t’ and ‘got no’ abbreviations were used to make the Dutch more colloquial, for ‘*ik*’ the abbreviation ‘*ke*’ was used in many cases and for ‘*mijn*’ ‘*m’n*’.

Low's Pentathlon

I ain't got no home, ain't got no shoes
Ain't got no money, ain't got no class
Ain't got no skirts, ain't got no sweater
Ain't got no perfume, ain't got no bed
Ain't got no mind

Ik heb geen huis, 'k heb geen schoen
'k Heb geen status, 'k heb niks geen poen
Ik heb geen jurk, 'k heb geen tasje
'k Heb geen parfum, ik heb geen bed
'k Heb geen idee

The line “Ain't got no” contains assonance, with first a short and then a long ‘o’. In Dutch, the assonance is copied with e’s: “*Ik heb geen*.” Within the scope of singability and rhythm, there was opted for the same amount of syllables in the TT as in the ST in the lines where possible, especially in the last word of the line. Although the ST contains no rhyme, the sentences sound logical and natural. For the sake of rhythm and a natural sounding lyric, some rhyme was inserted, so that the text has more logic in Dutch and sounds more natural. In the first line, it was desirable to end with one syllable, so ‘*schoenen*’ for ‘shoes’ was not a good option. This was made singular: ‘*schoen*’. In the following line, ‘money’ and ‘class’ were switched, so that it ended with ‘*poen*’ a colloquial Dutch term for money, rhyming with ‘*schoen*’. The third line has two garments in it in English, in Dutch, this became one garment, a ‘*jurk*,’ and for ‘sweater’ with two syllables, ‘*tasje*’ was inserted, which also contains an ‘s’, and combines well with the dress. ‘Perfume’ and ‘bed’ have excellent equivalents in Dutch, with the same amount of syllables. The ‘*niks geen*’ in line two is inspired by Low’s ‘sense’, to make the Dutch colloquial, because of the AAVE language present in the ST, as discussed in the *linguistic context* (p. 19). The word ‘mind’ was hard to translate into an equivalent with one syllable, or one with two syllables, fitting in the meter. The meaning was altered a little in favor of the singability and rhythm ‘*idee*’ was chosen, because this word is easy to stretch. On top of that was, ‘*Ik heb geen idee*’ a good colloquial solution for ‘having no mind.’

Ain't got no mother, ain't got no culture	Ik heb geen moeder, 'k heb geen cultuur
Ain't got no friends, ain't got no schooling	'k Heb geen vriend, 'k heb geen scholing
Ain't got no love, ain't got no name	Ik heb geen lief, ik heb geen leed
Ain't got no ticket, ain't got no token	Ik heb geen kaartje en niks geen munten
Ain't got no God	'k Heb geen God

'*Liefde*' for 'love' was found too long to be rhythmic in the second stanza. Therefore '*Ik heb geen lief, ik heb geen leed*' was chosen.' '*Lief*' has a double meaning here, because '*lief*' can also a name to call your partner: '*mijn lief*,' followed by '*ik heb geen leed*' makes a small pun and '*leed*' has an e-sound as well as 'name.' Imitating the e-sound of the original makes the well-known song recognizable and natural sounding for the Dutch public. The choice for the '*lief & leed*' pun was made to enforce the naturalness in Dutch as well, pulling the text into the Dutch linguistic context.

And what have I got?	En wat heb ik dan?
Why am I alive anyway?	Waarom doe ik op aarde mee?
Yeah, what have I got	Ja, wat heb ik dan?
Nobody can take away?	En het is van mij alleen?
Got my hair, got my head	Ik heb m'n haar, heb m'n hoofd
Got my brains, got my ears	Heb m'n brein, heb m'n oren
Got my eyes, got my nose	Heb m'n ogen, heb m'n neus
Got my mouth, I got my smile	Heb m'n mond, ik heb mijn lach
I got my tongue, got my chin	Ik heb m'n tong, heb m'n kin
Got my neck, got my boobs	Heb m'n rug, heb m'n tieten
Got my heart, got my soul	Heb m'n hart, heb m'n ziel
Got my back, I got my sex	Heb m'n nek, ik heb mijn seks

In the third stanza, a translation was to be created for 'Why am I alive anyway.' In favor of singability and rhythm, the choice was made for '*Waarom doe ik op aarde mee*' however, it was unfortunate that the English version is a bit stronger and more dramatic. An advantage of this choice is the '*ee*' sound at the end of the line, imitating the source text, which evokes naturalness, and the listener can discern the ST. In the rest of the lines, sense could get priority because all the characteristics could get a proper Dutch equivalent. It is a shame

that *'oren'* and *'ogen'* have two syllables where the English words in the original have only one: 'ears' and 'eyes', however, for the singability it did not generate a problem.

In the fourth stanza, it was managed to make almost a one on one translation, although 'neck' and 'back' were switched in Dutch because 'back' and 'sex' has rhyme in the line itself, where 'neck' and 'boobs' do not rhyme. Following the rhythm and rhyme of the ST, it was more convenient to switch: *'nek, seks'*. The word 'sex' is multi-interpretable. It can mean 'gender,' but also 'having sex,' 'having a sex life,' and it can refer to 'sexuality,' be it in abbreviation. The choice was made to take departure from the idea of 'sexuality.' However, in translation one arrives at the multi-interpretable Dutch word *'seks'* of which the public is free to give his interpretation.

For the Dutch version, *'tieten'* was chosen for 'boobs', because Nina Simone sings it as 'boobies' in all the versions that were heard, thus two syllables. Furthermore, *'tieten'* is equally colloquial as 'boobies'.

I got my arms, got my hands	Ik heb m'n romp, m'n gestel
Got my fingers, got my legs	Heb m'n longen, heb m'n vel
Got my feet, got my toes	Heb m'n lijf, heb m'n leden
Got my liver, got my blood	Heb m'n lever, 'k heb mijn bloed

In the fifth stanza, meter and rhythm were the most important aspects of the pentathlon, because musically, this stanza is striking for its changes in tone and tempo, with 'fingers,' going up in tone and the last line going down in tempo. Therefore, it was of importance to find singable body parts that fit the rhythm. The most important aspects of the body parts are that they are body parts; the fact that they are arms, hands and fingers specific is subordinate. What did have to be taken into account was that in the song, the body parts are summed up top down. From hair and head, down to the toes. Therefore, in the translation, body parts were chosen, that count for the whole body, such as *'romp'* and *'gestel.'* Furthermore, rhyme was inserted with *'gestel'* and *'vel'* where the ST contains half rhyme. Wordplay was added with *'lijf en leden,'* which literally means 'one's body and all its parts.' But *'leden'* can also be interpreted as *'ledematen'* meaning 'arms and legs'. Using Dutch sayings in the lyric is a way to improve the naturalness of a song. The rhythm of the stanza above worked out well, as well as the added rhyme and naturalness; the sense comes across with new body parts, forming a singable whole.

I've got the life	Ik heb het leven
And I'm gonna keep it	En ik wil het houden
I've got the life	Ik heb het leven
And nobody's gonna take it away	En het is van mij
I've got the life	Ik heb het leven

Where 'life' has one syllable in the sixth stanza, '*leven*' has two. However, this is such an essential word in the lyric that sense got preference over rhythm. Also, the end of the song is somewhat free and has a jamming kind of style. Making some slight shifts with syllables did not harm the singability. Also, the word 'life' is sung on a melisma; it has two tones on one syllable: 'la-ife'.

The Unique Quality

What is, what Bindervoet and Henkes call the 'unique quality' of the song? And is it still present in the TT? In this case, the unique quality involves content *and* form. The most noticeable in the lyric is the concision of the lines, the feeling going from sadness in the beginning, to elation and freedom at the end and the power in the concise lines. The concise, powerful lines have to equal the effect of the original in Dutch. The words fit the music, which is strong in its simplicity as well. The choice for idiomatic sentences that follow the rhythm "*Ik / 'k heb geen*" and "*Ik / 'k heb m'n*" is strong. The elation in the fifth stanza comes across in Dutch due to the idiomatic translation that succeeded to equal the original concerning rhythm.

4.2.2 Mississippi Goddam – Mississippi godverdomme

Content

"Mississippi Goddam" (1964) was the song of the moment: bold and urgent and easy to sing, it was adopted by embattled protesters in the cursed state itself" (Roth Pierpont, 3). "Mississippi Goddam" was Nina Simone's first civil right song. In the bombing of a Baptist Church in Birmingham in September 1963, four young African-American girls were killed. Immediately after hearing about the events in Birmingham, Nina Simone wrote this song,

“and it erupted out of me quicker than I could write it down” (Simone, 90). Singing for the movement “shifted the entire direction of [Nina Simone’s] life” (Simone, 91).

“To listen to Nina Simone sing ‘Mississippi Goddam’ is to hear talent, self-control, and emotion; to feel power and rage; and to sense politics in motion,” says Ruth Feldstein (Feldstein, *How It Feels to Be Free*, 9). The song text is bursting with aggression and anger; it almost scares the listener. What makes the song especially cruel is that the music sounds light and frivolous, as Simone says so in the song herself: “This is a show tune, but the show hasn’t been written yet”. The music stands in stark contrast to the words and makes what Simone sings even more intense and painful. In Dutch, this same effect can be realized when the tone of the song will be evenly aggressive and raw.

Music culture & socio-cultural situation

Claudia Roth Pierpont says that the injustices listed in “Mississippi Goddam” are “so familiar they hardly needed to be stated,” (2) but “Simone spelled them out. She mocked stereotypical insults (“Too damn lazy!”), government promises (“Desegregation / Mass participation”) and above all, the continuing admonition of public leaders to ‘Go slow,’” (2,3). Her backup musicians shouted out this line repeatedly: “Too slow!” Roth Pierpont states that the song was nothing like the uplifting anthems of the era such as “We Shall Overcome” and “Blowin’ in the Wind:” “Simone had little feeling for the Biblically inflicted uplift that defined the anthems of the era. It’s a song about a movement nearly out of patience by a woman who never had very much [patience] to begin with, and who had little hope for the American future” (3).

The states that are named in the song all stand for violence against African-Americans. In Birmingham, Alabama, the four girls got killed in an attack, forming the immediate cause for the song. In Nashville, Tennessee protests against segregation from the African-American community, so-called sit-ins were answered with violence and mass arrests. In Jackson, Mississippi civil rights activist Medgar Evers was assassinated on his driveway, he was one of many victims in Mississippi of violence towards African-Americans (Staggs, “Memoir in a Melody”).

The song is very political and speaks to the enemy directly, threatening him: “You’re all gonna die and die like flies.” In The Netherlands, we have examples of political protest songs, and Boudewijn De Groot speaks to the American president directly as well: “*Welterusten meneer de president, slaap maar lekker in uw mooie witte huis, denk vooral niet aan de 46*

doden, [etc.].” However, although De Groot is cynical, his tone is not aggressive. What Boudewijn De Groot’s song does have in common with Nina Simone’s is that the tune is sweeter than the words; De Groot uses irony as well as Simone.

Because the socio-cultural overtone is so strong and unique for the specific situation in America, the translating strategy should be an exoticizing one. When singing a song, there is no time for explaining the words; therefore the performer can, perhaps should, frame the music with information about the immediate cause of the song.

Form

Linguistic context

“Mississippi Goddam” is very emotional and so is the language use. We find swearing; ‘Goddam,’ ‘too damn lazy,’ and colloquial language; ‘gonna,’ ‘kiddin’ varying and contrasting with stately government-language: ‘desegregation,’ ‘mass-participation.’ Where “Ain’t Got No” hardly contains any rhyme, this song has a fairly strict aabb rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme in the ST has been maintained to a large extent in the TT.

‘Goddam’ is a rather harsh curse word and it made the song controversial. In Dutch, ‘*Godverdomme*’ has the same connotation and, whereas people may feel offended by it, it is an important word in this aggressive song. Attempts have been made to make the Dutch colloquial language fitting with and appropriate for the song. For example ‘You’re too damn lazy’ became ‘*Je bent veels te lui*’ where ‘*veels te*’ is grammatically incorrect and an example of colloquial language.

Low’s Pentathlon

Alabama’s gotten me so upset	Alabama heeft me zo ontzet
Tennessee made me lose my rest	Tennessee was een grote smet
And everybody knows about Mississippi	En iedereen weet van Mississippi
Goddam	Godverdomme

For the first two lines of the first stanza, the choice was made to rhyme with identical sounds as the original, ending with ‘*et*’. The rhythm in these lines is maintained and the first line contains the same sense. The second line differs in sense from the ST. Instead of taking it personally, as in the ST, in the TT this becomes open criticism. This solution

works, because of the anger and criticism the song should contain in the translation. In the third line ‘Goddam’ got the Dutch literal translation ‘*Godverdomme*.’ The sense got priority in the pentathlon over rhythm. ‘Goddam’ contains two syllables where ‘*Godverdomme*’ has double. However, the ‘Goddam’ is an exclamation in the song, and the ‘dam’ part is stretched out long. Therefore, the Dutch ‘*verdomme*’ fits fine in this stretch. Because ‘*Godverdomme*’ is a popular curse word, with much anger in it, it is a good word for shouting out in this lyric. Better than ‘*godsamme*’ or ‘*verdorie*’.

Can't you see it	Kijk dan goed
Can't you feel it	Het voelt niet goed
It's all in the air	Er dreigt vast zwaar weer
I can't stand the pressure much longer	Ik kan er niet langer meer tegen
Somebody say a prayer	Zeg je gebedje nog een keer

‘Can’t you see it’ and ‘Can’t you feel it’ in the second stanza are two almost identical consecutive sentences, ending in *identical rhyme*. Simone actively involves the audience and asks them if they do not feel the same as her? In Dutch, the identical rhyme: a line that ends with the exact same word, is maintained; however, the sentences are less similar. The first sentence summons the audience to ‘look close,’ notice what is happening and the second is an expression of the feeling that something bad is going to happen, which is distracted from the ST in the following sentences. ‘It’s all in the air’ is a forebode of something about to happen, in the TT this sentence is interpreted as something heavy that is going to happen: ‘*Er dreigt vast zwaar weer,*’ somewhat more explicit than the ST. ‘Somebody say a prayer’ became more direct in Dutch: ‘*Zeg je gebedje nog een keer,*’ although it is equally ironic. The aabcb rhyme scheme is maintained in the TT and rhyme and sense have been given priority.

Hound dogs on my trail	Jachthonden achter me aan
School children sitting in jail	Schoolkinderen die naar de gevangenis gaan
Black cat cross my path	Zwarte kat schiet voor me langs
I think every day's gonna be my last	Elke dag leef ik in angst

The first two lines in the third stanza contain significantly more syllables in Dutch than the source text does. However, the meter does allow these extra syllables and the singability is not affected by it. Furthermore, the sense in the lines remains, and the naturalness of the Dutch is adequate. The two succeeding lines differ in syllables as well. Likewise, the meter allows these extra syllables and the sense and naturalness profit. The assonance in the second line with i's was maintained with aa's in Dutch as well as the assonance in the third line: 'black, cat, path': '*zwarte, kat, langs*'. The rhyme in the third stanza is maintained, whereas the half rhyme of the two last lines get more rhyme in the Dutch version, enforcing the naturalness of the Dutch.

Lord have mercy on this land of mine	O God, heb meelij met dit land van mij
We all gonna get it in due time	We zullen het heus snappen over 'n tijd
I don't belong here	Hier is mijn plek niet meer
I don't belong there	Daar is mijn plek niet meer
I've even stopped believing in prayer	Zelfs bidden heeft geen zin meer

The 'Lord' from the first line in the fourth stanza is translated as '*God*' in Dutch, where '*Heer*' seems a more justified translation at first sight. However, the word 'Lord' can be seen as part of the AAVE sociolect. Marianne Kraai points this out in her MA Thesis: "Some words tend to appear in all the [four] source texts [that she discusses], such as 'Lord [. . .]'" (48). It is often used in emotional language use and exclamations such as 'Lord no!' The first concern in translating the word was, therefore, to make it colloquial. Using '*Heer*' in an emotional exclaiming way, is not something the average Dutchman would be quick to do. However, "*God*": "*O God*," "*Goddegod*" or "*God nee!*" is used much more in an emotional way by the Dutch. The '*O*' was inserted for colloquial purposes. '*meelij met dit land van mij*' with all the m's and l's copies the assonance in the ST. The rhyme scheme in this stanza was maintained. However, the last three lines contain identical rhyme in Dutch, where the English does not contain rhyme. The sense of the lines in this stanza comes across this way

and the identical rhyme can be defended by its presence in the song in the ST ('Can't you see it, Can't you feel it').

Don't tell me	Nee, zeg niks
I tell you	Ik zeg jou
Me and my people just about due	Ik en mijn mensen, wij komen eraan
I've been there so I know	Geloof me, 'k heb er zelf tussen gestaan
They keep on saying "Go slow!"	Ze blijven roepen 'Kalmte!'
But that's just the trouble	Maar dat is juist het probleem
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Washing the windows	't Lappen van ramen
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Picking the cotton	Plukken van katoen
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
You're just plain rotten	Je deugt van geen kanten
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
You're too damn lazy	Je bent veels te lui
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
The thinking's crazy	Je kraamt onzin uit
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Where am I going	Waar ga 'k toch naartoe
What am I doing	Wat ben ik aan 't doen
I don't know	Ik weet 't niet
I don't know	Ik weet niet

In the sixth stanza above, rhyme was included where the original had none, to make the text sound natural: *'Ik en mijn mensen, wij komen eraan/ Geloof me, ik heb er zelf tussen gestaan.'* The line "They keep on saying 'Go slow!'" refers to the government's plead with activists: "The White House pleaded with activist to adopt a 'go slow' approach, refraining the civil rights movement from asking for too much too fast" (Lehman, 3). Simone fiercely rejects this request and names work like picking cotton, which is often a black man's work as a reply to the 'go slow' slogan. Her musical accompaniment scants back. In all the lyrics found, the scanting in the background was written down as: "do it slow," although there

are multiple sources (for example: thestrugglecontinues.org) where it said “too slow” and, listening carefully, this could be what is actually sung. ‘Go slow’ was translated as ‘*Kalmte*,’ derived from my mother’s stately teacher in the sixties, who told the class: “*Kalmte. Enkel kalmte kan ons redden,*” this line has its origins in Latin: “*Aequo modo nos salvos fieri.*” It came up, because this stately, patronizing way of shushing the youngsters in class is similar to how the government treated the black community in the sixties of The United. The ‘do it slow,’ or ‘too slow,’ is translated consequently as ‘*kalmte*.’ Where in the ST the ‘too slow’ is yelled by the backing vocals, it imitates the white man who spurs the black man, in the TT ‘*kalmte*’ is meant ironically: ‘*t lappen van ramen: kalmte!*’ It can be interpreted as the black man saying: ‘O, you want me to do it slow; calm down? Well, then I will do it slow when I wash the windows too.’

The rhyme in the ST in this stanza has substitutes in the TT with half rhyme: ‘cotton, rotten’ – ‘*katoen, kanten,*’ ‘lazy, crazy’ – ‘*lui, uit,*’ ‘going, doing’ – ‘*naartoe, doen.*’ Here, sense, content, got priority over form.

Just try to do your very best	Doe gewoon je allerbest
Stand up be counted with all the rest	Sta op, dan word je geteld met de rest
For everybody knows about Mississippi	Want iedereen weet van Mississippi
Goddam	Godverdomme
Picket lines	Protestmarsen
School boycotts	Schoolboycots
They try to say it’s a communist plot	Ze beweren steeds een communistisch plot
All I want is equality	Gelijkheid is genoeg voor mij,
for my sister my brother my people and me	voor mijn zuster, m’n broeder, m’n mensen en mij
Yes you lied to me all these years	Je loog tegen mij al die jaren
You told me to wash and clean my ears	Je zei me m’n kleren te wassen en m’n haren
And talk real fine just like a lady	En netjes te praten als een dame
And you’d stop calling me Sister Sadie	Dan riep je geen scheldwoorden meer naar me

In the three stanzas above, the sense in the lines could be maintained punctilious, fitting in the meter and doing the rhythm justice. In the second stanza, the rhyme is replaced with identical rhyme in the last two lines. ‘Ears’ became ‘*haren,*’ because it rhymes with ‘*jaren.*’

For the sense it was presumed not essential which body parts should be properly washed. In reality, it did not matter either, because the white man did not keep his promise. Simone here complains about the white man who thinks the negroes should be better behaved and have better hygiene. However, when they actually changed it, it did not make the white man see him differently. *‘En netjes te praten als een dame’* contains rhyme within the line itself. ‘Sister Sadie’ can be seen as the average hard-working black woman, cleaning houses, taking care of white children, but getting no respect. In the last line this ‘calling me Sister Sadie’ was replaced by ‘not calling me names,’ in Dutch, being a slight shift in difference in favor of the rhyme, but still containing the lack of respect and suppression.

Oh but this whole country is full of lies	O maar in dit land zit iedereen te liegen
You're all gonna die and die like flies	En jullie gaan allemaal dood als vliegen
I don't trust you any more	Ik vertrouw je echt niet meer
You keep on saying "Go slow!"	Je blijft maar zeggen: 'Kalmte!'
"Go slow!"	'Kalmte!'
But that's just the trouble	Maar dat is het probleem
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Desegregation	Desegregatie
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Mass participation	Massale participatie
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Reunification	Familiehereniging
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Do things gradually	Langzaam aan komt de remedie
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
But bring more tragedy	Maar het brengt alleen tragedie
"do it slow"	'kalmte'
Why don't you see it	Kijk dan goed
Why don't you feel it	Zie je niet wat het doet
I don't know	Ik weet niet
I don't know	waar het heengaat
You don't have to live next to me	Je hoeft niet naast mij te leven
Just give me my equality	Je hoeft me alleen gelijkheid te geven
Everybody knows about Mississippi	Iedereen weet van Mississippi

Everybody knows about Alabama	Iedereen weet van Alabama
Everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam	Iedereen weet van Mississippi Godverdomme
That's it!	En zo is het!

The first stanza above is a charge against the go-slow policy of the government, saying that going slow; to 'do things gradually' only 'brings more tragedy.' This was translated as '*Langzaam aan komt de remedie/ Maar het brengt alleen tragedie.*' The official terms sound dissonant in this emotional song because they sound out of place; aversion against the terms is aroused with the public. The official terms have official equivalents in Dutch. Most fit in the meter (rhythm): '*desegregatie,*' '*massale participatie,*' '*familiehereniging.*' In the last case, '*familie*' was added for the sake of clarity, for this inflicts the reunification of immigrant families, with '*familiehereniging*' the Dutch get a clearer picture of what is meant. The shouting of '*kalmte*' in this stanza in Dutch can be seen as an accusation of the government taking things 'too slow.' The repetition of '*je hoeft*' in Dutch in the two succeeding lines, improves the naturalness of the lines.

For the spoken words in the song, the meter could be abandoned and the main concern was to translate it naturally: 'This is a show tune/ But the show hasn't been written for it, yet' – '*Dit is een deuntje voor de show/ Maar de show moet er nog omheen geschreven worden.*' And in the following line it was important the sound would be colloquial: 'I made you thought I was kiddin' – '*Jullie dachten zeker dat ik maar zat te dollen.*'

The Unique Quality

The unique quality involves content as well as form. The aggression in the song is the most important factor. The chorus of short lines, such as "Alabama's gotten me so upset," should sound easy and natural in Dutch. The cursing; 'Goddam,' 'You're just plain rotten' got colloquial solutions in Dutch: '*Godverdomme*' and '*Je deugt van geen kanten.*' The overall tone of the lyrics should not be more kind or refined than the original. This 'rawness' was achieved in Dutch by choosing words like '*Godverdomme,*' and directness and aggression in for example: '*Nee, zeg niks/ Ik zeg jou.*'

4.2.3 “Sinnerman” – “Zondaarman”

Content

Nina Simone puts much womanly strength in all of her songs, and this strength can be found in “Sinnerman” (1965) as well. A “ten-minute gospel tour de force” is how Claudia Roth-Pierpont depicts this song (5). “The womanly strength is there when she cries out ‘Power!’ like a Southern preacher and her musicians shout back ‘Power to the Lord!’” (5) and it is there especially when “she takes the disapproving voice of the Lord upon herself: ‘Where were you, when you oughta been praying?’ If you’d never before thought of the Lord as a black woman, you did now” (Roth-Pierpont, 5).

When Barack Obama was a presidential candidate, a list of his musical preferences appeared, as well as those of John McCain. On Obama’s list, “Sinnerman” in Nina Simone’s version was his fifth choice. In an article in British paper *The Guardian*, Nina Simone’s most important songs were listed by Jeremy Allen, with “Sinnerman” among them. This song is still valuable and of importance for many people. Allen states that the original of “Sinnerman” is hard to trace, but the first known recorded version is from Les Baxter in 1956. He suggests Nina Simone must have picked it up in her church.

Music culture & Socio-cultural situation

“Sinnerman” is a dramatized retelling of Exodus that also refers to Psalm 78 (Songfacts). In the Psalm, sinners run to God, the rock, to plead for redemption. Psalm 78 is a retelling of the story of Exodus: a story of people sinning and acting against God’s will. They are punished and afterward some of the sinners go back to God, the “rock,” and ask forgiveness. However, their pleas are merely words, and they continue sinning. God has further punishments for the sinners, such as rivers of blood and swarms of flies, based on the Ten Plagues in Exodus. The line “Where you gonna run to?” becomes more of a mocking than an actual question: even the Lord has refused to protect the song’s sinner.

Nina Simone’s version of “Sinnerman” was recorded live in New York in 1964 for her album *Pastel Blues* (1965), it became the most significant version of the song, used as film music and sampled and remixed by contemporary artists like Kanye West (Allen, 4th paragraph). The lyrics describe a sinner attempting to hide from divine justice on Judgment Day, but ending up with the devil. It was used in church to make people confess their sins.

Simone's biographer Nadine Cohodas described Simone's version of the song as a "frantic plea for absolution" (174). In an interview with *Record World* Nina told the interviewer about the intensity of the song: "I feel emotion is dying, what we feel is dying, everything is so orderly. Raising your voice has become a crime! I want to evoke joy, sadness and pain" (as cited by Cohodas, 174).

As mentioned, "Sinnerman" is a gospel song and this sort of Christian music is deeply rooted in the traditions of the African-American church. During the late 1800s, African-American churches in the southern United States started fusing various styles of music into their worship services, including African-American spirituals, hymns, and sacred songs. This gospel music was primarily sung at church and accompanied by hand clapping and foot stomping. At the heart of the gospel music tradition was the use of a choir that followed the illustrious call-and-response format (study.com, "What is gospel music"). Nina Simone was raised with gospel music, therefore, for her, this song meant going back to her roots:

Gospel music was mostly improvisation within a fixed framework and it never occurred to me to analyse it. Gospel was part of church, which was part of normal life, and you don't sit around wondering exactly how it is to walk, or breathe or do any other everyday thing. [. . .] At that time I learned valuable lessons in musical technique that had nothing to do with the classical training that was to come. Over the years those lessons slipped into my blood and became part of me. A time would come when I would start to look for my own musical voice, and the lessons I learned from gospel music would help me find it (Simone, 19).

Naturally, The Netherlands has their tradition of church music with corresponding choirs. However, Dutch church music is much stiffer, our culture in church is less outgoing, less emotional and less dramatic, and, in comparison to African-American gospel choirs, the average Dutch church music is soporific. The Dutch are familiar with gospel music through media, for example films like *Sister Act* (1992). They are acquainted with the gospel choirs with their colored robes, and also the call-and-response format is familiar, however, where gospel music is in the blood of many African-Americans, the average Dutchman has no live experience with the phenomenon.

In an exoticizing translation strategy, these powerful gospel influences should ideally be brought to the Dutch public. The original function of deterring sinners should be implied in the lyrics.

Form

Linguistic context

Firstly, “Sinnerman;” originally, the song’s title was spelled as two words, but when Nina Simone made it her version, she put the two together, making it a neologism. In Dutch, therefore, the choice was made for “*Zondaarman*” as title, which has the same strangeness in it as the English.

“Sinnerman” contains language that is part of the African-American Christian gospel music, such as ‘Lord,’ ‘Power,’ and ‘Bring down.’ Because of the strong cultural overtone, specific for the African-American culture, the language can be categorized as AAVE. The examples above can be classified as AAVE lexicon. Furthermore, there are other forms of AAVE to be found in this lyric: ‘bleedin’, ‘boilin’, ‘prayin’ and ‘waitin’ are forms of AAVE’s custom of spelling phonetically, portraying how to pronounce the words (Kraai, 12). Other examples are ‘dem day,’ ‘da lord,’ ‘gonna,’ and ‘what’s a matter.’

Since gospel and other AAVE influences are such prominent features in this song, and essential for the meaning, they should get a good translation in Dutch. The solutions in the TT can be found in colloquial language and church language, but since the solutions in Dutch are limited, because of the difference in background, efforts have been made to emphasize the emotional and dramatic aspects of gospel and the story told in language use, for example, the begging by the protagonist: *‘toe verberg me, heer.’*

Low's Pentathlon

Oh sinnerman, where you gonna run to?	O zondaarman, waar kun je schuilen?
Sinnerman, where you gonna run to?	Zondaarman, waar ku-j schuilen?
Where you gonna run to?	Waar ku-j schuilen?
All along dem day	Heeldedagmaardoor
Well I run to the rock, please hide me	Nou, ik ren naar de rots, toe verberg me
I run to the rock, please hide me	Dus ik ren naar de rots, toe verberg me
I run to the rock, please hide me, lord	Ik ren naar de rots, toe verberg me, heer
All along dem day	Heeldedagmaardoor
But the rock cried out, I can't hide you	Maar de rots hij schreeuwde, 'k kan je niet verbergen,
The rock cried out, I can't hide you	De rots hij schreeuwde, 'k kan je niet verbergen
The rock cried out, I ain't gonna hide you guy	De rots hij schreeuwde, 'k ga je mooi niet verbergen man
All along dem day	Heeldedagmaardoor
I said, rock, what's a matter with you rock?	Ik zei rots, wat maak je me nu dan?
Don't you see I need you, rock?	Help me dan, toe help nou rots
Lord, lord, lord	O heer, heer, heer
All along dem day	Heeldedagmaardoor

Because of the repetition occurring throughout the whole song, the first part of the lyric will be discussed and subsequently the most prominent parts of the song and translation will get attention. Firstly, the question 'where you gonna run to?' was translated as '*waar kun je schuilen?*' because the sinner is in need of shelter. Here the sense is slightly more specific in Dutch.

The grammatical structure typical for AAVE, 'where you gonna,' is imitated with colloquial language, by abbreviating '*kun je*' to '*ku-j*'. 'All along dem day' was translated as '*Heeldedagmaardoor*', these are five words pasted together, to create a phonetic effect. In the ST the line is pronounced as fused to a whole: 'Olongdemday'. Furthermore, '*Heel de dag maar door*' has a depressing monotonous repetition in it; the repetition of this particular line emphasizes this. The assonance and alliteration in this line in English was maintained in Dutch. Additionally, the line is suitable for adjusting to the different situations in the song, which is the case in the ST: 'Along dem day' – '*Heeldedagdoor*,' 'All on that day' – '*Heeldiedagmaardoor*,' 'Along dem day' – '*Dezedagdoor*,' 'All on that day' – '*Heeldezedagdoor*'. The

Dutch line has four varieties; however, it ends with *'door'* each time, and the lines are more adjusted to react differently to the different 'characters' in the song (the rock, the river, the sea, the devil), which benefits the naturalness in Dutch.

Some rhyme has been added to the TT to enforce the naturalness in Dutch, for example with *'man – dan'* and *'wachtte – krachten'*. Obtaining colloquial language was achieved with words and sentences such as *'mooi niet,' 'man,' 'benee,'* and *'wat maak je me nu dan'*. Where 'Lord' was translated as *'God'* in "Mississippi Goddam," here, the choice fell on *'Heer,'* because the protagonist speaks to the Lord 'in person' and because the word is not used in an exclamation, like in "Mississippi Goddam," but as a character in a biblical song. The choice for *'Heer'* is thus more logical; furthermore, it is, for the attentive listener, a more recognizable translation for 'Lord;' a prominent AAVE-word.

The idiom 'Go to the devil' was replaced by the Dutch idiom *'Loop naar de duivel'*. The strong and phonetically smooth word 'power' was translated to the less singable *'kracht'* and *'krachten'* in Dutch. It was considered to maintain the English word 'power' unchanged in the Dutch lyric because this word is so strongly connected to gospel and AAVE. However, it was decided that it was better to strive for a full Dutch text that aims at imitating the effects the ST achieves, with all the opportunities the own language offers. Since The Netherlands do not have a gospel culture, the effect of the song is different either way, the public in The Netherlands gets in contact with a Dutch gospel song, a new cultural phenomenon.

The Unique Quality

"Sinnerman's" and "Zondaarman's" music is compelling, and the combination with its lyrics, containing repetition and emotional charge, together, make it a strong experience. For repeating words and sentences, such as 'All along dem day' and 'where you gonna run to' it was important that they should get a colloquial and natural sounding Dutch equivalent, in which the translation did succeed with *'Heelededagmaardoor'* and *'waar ku-j schuilen.'*

4.2.4 “Four Women” – “Vier vrouwen”

Content

After “Mississippi Goddam,” “Four Women” (1966) was a song that was again controversial in The United States. The song is about “Four Women” of different, but all a dark color. They speak about the effect that their appearance has on them. Some radio stations found the song insulting and banned it. Nina Simone says in her autobiography that it did not insult black women, but that she wrote about feelings of insecurity many black women have. Simone stated that men, especially black men “simply weren’t ready to acknowledge” (117) the truth that was sung in the song.

The women in the song are black, but their skin tones range from light to dark and their ideas of beauty and their own importance are deeply influenced by that. All the song did was to tell what entered the minds of most black women in America when they thought about themselves: their complexions, their hair – straight, kinky, natural, which? – and what other women thought of them. Black women didn’t know what the hell they wanted because they were defined by things they didn’t control, and until they had the confidence to define themselves they’d be stuck in the same mess forever – that was the point in the song made (Simone, 117).

Music culture & Socio-cultural situation

“Four Women” is a jazz song, slow and lingering, with a repetitive loop, that evokes a trance. The song has no refrain and consists of four similar parts. The plainness of the music pulls attention to the lyrics, and because the song is emotionally charged, the public tends to listen carefully. The heavy lyrics contrast with the airiness of the music, the words are from the heart, but moreover, the song is a form of protest. This combination is fascinating. The evoking of a trance with the music is enforced by the lyrics that consist of four stanzas similarly structured.

Simone tended to vary the ways in which she played her music; with “Four Women” she did the same. Claudia Roth Pierpont describes a performance of the song in

the Netherlands where Simone gave the four women all an individual, “sharply dramatized voice;” to the old and strong Aunt Sarah, the woman of two worlds, Saffronia, the prostitute Sweet Thing had “a smiling bravado that seduced at least some of the eager Dutch listeners into the mistake of smiling, too. And then Simone hit them with the last and most resolutely up to date of the women, improbably named Peaches” (1). She gave the crowd hell with this last character. “If Simone’s song suggests a history of black women in America, it is also a history of long-suppressed and finally uncontrollable anger” (Roth Pierpont, 1).

The song is in music genre; jazz, as well as in themes very culturally charged. Jazz music is rooted in The United States, and the public in The Netherlands is familiar with it because it flew over from The United States to here at the beginning of the 20th century. Since then the music became popular here, mostly by artists from America. However, Dutch artists adopted the music style as well. The theme of discrimination is something familiar in The Netherlands; however, the topic of racial segregation is not and a ‘southern mammy’ like Aunt Sarah is a cultural specific element from the southern states of America. Many people of the Dutch interested and attentive public will be familiar with the phenomenon, for example through movies. The lyrics provide the public with information. The fact that Aunt Sarah is abused and is strong from working, as well as the form of address with ‘Aunt,’ ‘Tante,’ discussed under form, may in many cases ring a bell. What it meant to be a mulatto in the sixties of America, like Saffronia, The Dutch may be not as familiar with as the American public (to be multiracial was often felt like something to be ashamed of and something to be discriminated for). However, that the way she was conceived is painful for Saffronia does come across in the lyrics. The strategy is to maintain the exotic character of these elements as much as possible.

Form

Linguistic context

Each verse starts with the woman in question naming her skin color. Most of the lines in the song start with the word ‘My’ and for the most part, the women describe to the public the way they look and also why they look the way they look. As was explained, the context is very culturally colored, but the language in itself is less colored. There are, for instance, not much AAVE examples, except the word ‘mother,’ which was interpreted as a ‘motherfucker,’ translated as ‘*klootzak*.’

The names of the women were translation problems. First off, in ‘Aunt Sarah,’ Sarah is a proper name, which requires no specific altered translation, and ‘Aunt’ is usually the sister of one of your parents. However, in this context, ‘Aunt Sarah’ being a ‘southern mammy,’ the ‘Aunt’ is more of a form of address to such a mammy, not a family relation. However, maintaining the English term is not necessarily desirable. In Dutch, the word ‘*tante*’ can be a form of address as well. The word can have the connotation of a common woman, like in ‘*Tante Truus*.’ The fact that she is a black ‘*tante*’ becomes clear in the lyrics. For Dutch children, it could be customary to address a neighbor or an older woman they were acquainted with as ‘*tante*.’ This, and the fact that Nina Simone translated the ‘aunt’ for her French public to ‘*tante Sarah*’ (YouTube, Four Women, Live in Antibes, 1969) was the reason to translate ‘Aunt’ to Dutch: ‘*tante Sarah*.’ ‘Saffronia’ is a proper name, referring to the yellow spice saffron, and was maintained in Dutch. The reference to saffron can be recognizable for the Dutch audience since the Dutch term is ‘*saffraan*.’ ‘Sweet Thing’ is a nickname, which is common to translate. As a translation, first ‘*stoeipoes*’ came up, but this name was found too sexy in relation to ‘Sweet Thing.’ ‘*Snoepje*’ then, is much more innocent and can be a sweet nickname for a woman or girl in Dutch. It also has a connection to ‘sweet.’ ‘Peaches’ traditionally is a nickname, but nowadays it is a proper name as well, for example, Peaches Geldof, Bob Geldof’s daughter, who is also known in The Netherlands, and a mammoth girl in the animation film *Ice Age*, which is popular in The Netherlands, carry this name. In the exoticizing translation strategy, maintaining ‘Peaches’ can be defended.

Aunt Sarah’s skin is black, and Saffronia’s father was white. The question rises how ‘black’ and ‘white’ should be translated into Dutch. It used to be socially acceptable to call someone with light skin color ‘*blank*’ and someone with dark skin color ‘*zwart*,’ in Dutch, however, there has been a discussion in the Netherlands about the word ‘*blank*.’ Gradually this word use became less acceptable, because of the positive connotations that come with ‘*blank*’ such as ‘pure,’ ‘clean’ and ‘chaste’. It is considered far more equal and honest nowadays, to speak of ‘*wit*’ and ‘*zwart*,’ for, ‘*wit*’ is a far more objective term to use (Clarice Gargaard, “Waarom witte mensen niet meer blank zijn”). As a translation of ‘white’ for Saffronia’s father, ‘*blank*’ could also serve as an arguable option, precisely because of the discussion above and to emphasize the superiority her father must have felt. However, the choice was made for ‘*wit*’ because it is an exact translation of ‘white’ and because it is a more sensible choice to make nowadays.

Low's Pentathlon

My skin is black	Mijn huid is zwart
My arms are long	Mijn armen pezig
My hair is wooly	Mijn haar is wollig
My back is strong	Mijn rug is stevig
Strong enough to take the pain inflicted again and again	Hij kan de pijn wel aan van wat me steeds wordt aangedaan
What do they call me	Hoe ze me noemen?
My name is AUNT SARAH	Mijn naam is tante Sarah
My name is Aunt Sarah	Mijn naam is tante Sarah

In the first stanza, the rhyme scheme was maintained, however in this pentathlon, there had to be a bit of interference in the sense, where the strong back became a sturdy, ‘*stevige*’ rug in favor of rhyme. For the same reason, the long arms became ‘*pezig*’. Both terms were fitting for the strong working lady Aunt Sarah. ‘Again and again’ is a repetition in the ST, which was not maintained in the TT, however, this was replaced by the word ‘*aangedaan*’ containing assonance and rhyme in the word itself.

My skin is yellow	Mijn huid is geel
My hair is long	Mijn haar is sluike
Between two worlds	Tussen twee werelden
I do belong	hoor ik thuis
My father was rich and white	Rijk en wit dat was mijn vader
He forced my mother late one night	M'n moeder misbruikt en hij de dader
What do they call me	Hoe ze me noemen?
My name is SAFFRONIA	Mijn naam is Saffronia
My name is Saffronia	Mijn naam is Saffronia

The abcb rhyme scheme in the first part of the second stanza has been maintained, with the remark that ‘*sluik*’ and ‘*thuis*’ is half-rhyming. The ‘long’ hair of Saffronia became ‘*sluik*’ in Dutch, because of the ‘*u*’-sound, corresponding with ‘*thuis*’. Some poetic liberty was taken here, as it was interpreted that the Mulatto Saffronia could also have straight hair, and that ‘*sluik*’ hair matches with the character. The Dutch version has more syllables in a

few lines, but because the song has a jazzy, free style of singing, it is easily singable with a few extra syllables, and they do not harm the slow rhythm in any way.

My skin is tan	Mijn huid is beige
My hair is fine	Mijn haar is fijn
My hips invite you	Mijn heupen wenken je
My mouth like wine	Mijn mond als wijn
Whose little girl am I?	Wiens kleine meisje ben ik dan?
Anyone who has money to buy	Wie z'n geld laat rollen, is de man
What do they call me	Hoe ze me noemen?
My name is SWEET THING	Ze noemen me Snoepje
My name is Sweet Thing	Ze noemen me Snoepje

The abcb, aabcc rhyme scheme has been maintained in the third stanza and the sense in the lines have been given proper Dutch equivalents in natural language use. The choice was made for the color '*beige*' instead of '*getint*' for 'tan.' This was inspired by the fact that all the four women have a specific color; their complexion is not described.

My skin is brown	Mijn huid is bruin
My manner is tough	Nagels scherp als wat
I'll kill the first mother I see	De eerste beste klootzak maak ik af
My life has been too rough	Mijn leven was te hard
I'm awfully bitter these days	Ik ben zo verbitterd de laatste dagen
because my parents were slaves	omdat mijn ouders slaven waren
What do they call me	Hoe ze me noemen?
My name is PEACHES	Mijn naam is Peaches

In the last stanza, the rhyme scheme could be maintained as well, and the sense of the song comes across in Dutch. Also, for the sake of natural language use, some syllables had to be added in the Dutch lyric. The song remains singable.

The Unique Quality

The majority of the lines start with 'My,' this repetition provides harmony, enforcing the trance-state the music evokes. This repetition could be easily adopted in Dutch with the

use of *'Mijn.'* Furthermore, the four stanzas all resemble each other; maintaining this harmony is essential in this song.

4.2.5 “To be Young, Gifted and Black” – “Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart”

Content

Nina Simone’s “To be Young, Gifted and Black” (1969) is a hymn written in honor of her dear friend, playwright Lorraine Hansberry. “Before she died Lorraine had been working on a new play, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*. I took the title and wrote a song around it in memory of Lorraine, and of so many others” (Simone, 88). However, she did not mention in her autobiography that Weldon Irvine actually wrote the lyrics.

In 1969 Nina Simone became more radical. In the Netflix documentary about her, we see Simone stirring up her audience, asking the people if they are “ready to kill?!” (*What Happened, Miss Simone?*) Contrastingly, her biggest hit that year was a hymn of hope, love and peace. In the words of Claudia Roth Pierpont, Simone had asked Weldon Irvine to come up with lyrics for this song that “will make black children all over the world feel good about themselves forever” (as cited by Roth Pierpont, 5).

Music culture & Socio-cultural situation

Whereas “Mississippi Goddam” and “Four Women” contain much aggression, “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” is entirely free of it, it does, however, express the same power. “TBYGAB” can be considered as one big pep talk for America’s youth of color. “I try to make my songs as powerful as possible,” says Nina Simone in reaction to this song,

We don’t have the pride and the definition of African people. We can’t even talk about where we came from. We don’t know. It’s like a lost race, and my songs are deliberately to provoke this feeling of who am I, where do I come from, you know? Do I really like me, and why do I like me? If I

am black and beautiful, I really am, and I don't care who says what (as cited by Nadine Cohodas, 230).

That the song is indeed powerful and succeeds in delivering its message is clear when one watches the first live performance of the song on a school in June 1969, and see how, in the words of Nadine Cohodas, “the music enraptured both performer and audience” (229). Cohodas describes this song as not being too sophisticated nor in its lyrics nor its melody, “but it communicated purpose” (228).

The song can be placed under soul music with gospel influences and the vocal backings make the music rather religious-sounding. The music form and the lyrics make this song culturally colored, and an African-American product, and although a shift will be made to the Dutch language, it has to stay that way.

To evoke the same effect with the Dutch audience as with the African-American school children in 1969, would be too much to ask. What can be striven for is that the powerful pep talk comes across.

Form

Linguistic context

The lyrics of “To be Young, Gifted and Black” are very lyrical; with this is meant that more than with other lyrics, when reading this text as poetry, the words would be completely ‘over the top’. The text contains cliché sentences such as “Open your heart to what I mean” and “Your soul’s intact.” The text serves its purpose; namely to motivate, dare to dream, be proud of oneself and gain self-confidence. Therefore it has to be over-positive and soothing. The text is written for youngsters, African-American youngsters, who are on the brink of adult life and whose parents have lived in a segregated society. They need reassuring words saying that they are black and young and gifted, that they have opportunities like any other person; the world is at their feet. It says ‘you are OK and everything will be OK.’ The specific cliché, but inspiring, tone of voice should be maintained in the Dutch TT.

The most important sentence to translate is the line that stands out, the words “(To be) young, gifted and black.” These had to be singable and natural in Dutch; otherwise, there would be no reason to translate the rest of the song. In Dutch these words became “*jong, talentvol en zwart.*” “*Talentvol*” has a syllable more, however, the meter allows this. More

important was that the first and last word should be one syllable, which obviously did not generate any problems. The sentence is easier to vary in English. In the lyric, there are three versions of this ‘main sentence’: “To be ygab,” “Who are ygab” and “When you’re ygab.” Literal translations of these sentences are undoable in Dutch because the Dutch grammar does not allow this. In a literal translation all the versions would have to end with a verb, such as: “*Om jong, talentvol en zwart te zijn*”. Therefore, bringing in variety in the sentences was not an option and other translation strategies had to be picked.

As is the case in many lyrics, “TBYGAB” contains many repetitions. Wyn Cooper explains: “music provides a context of patterning that gives the repetition of words a different meaning and a different value than if the music were absent” (139). The repetition in this particular song makes the line stronger. People say: “If you only hear something often enough, you will believe it.” Since the purpose of this song is to inspire and hearten youngsters, the assumption could be made that this is the aim of the repetition.

Low’s Pentathlon

To be young, gifted and black,	Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart,
Oh what a lovely precious dream	Het lijkt een heerlijk mooie droom
To be young, gifted and black,	Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart,
Open your heart to what I mean	Stel het je voor en voel geen schroom

In the whole world you know	In de hele wijde wereld
There are billion boys and girls	Zijn miljoenen jongelui
Who are young, gifted and black,	Die zijn jong, talentvol en zwart,
And that’s a fact!	En zo is dat!

The first two sentences in Dutch have a slight difference in meaning to the ST, having to do with the change in grammar in Dutch. Now it says in Dutch: ‘*Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart,*’ instead of ‘To be’ in the source text. Therefore, afterward, the TT says: ‘*Het lijkt een droom,*’ to maintain the imagining, the dreaming in the ST. In addition, this tallies with the fourth line of the last stanza, ‘Open your heart to what I mean,’ ‘*Stel het je voor en voel geen schroom.*’ The ‘opening of the heart’ is rather vague, but can be interpreted as ‘being receptive’. The Dutch sentence is vague on purpose, inspired by the ST.

In the second stanza, ‘boys and girls’ both have two syllables in Dutch: ‘*jongens en meisjes*’ and have therefore been replaced by ‘*jongelui*’. The rhyme scheme and rhythm has been maintained in both stanzas, as well as the sense. For the sake of natural Dutch language use, the sense has been slightly adapted. The result is an agreeable pentathlon.

Young, gifted and black	Jong, talentvol en zwart
We must begin to tell our young	Je moet wel weten lieve kind
There’s a world waiting for you	Er is een schone toekomst voor jou
This is a quest that’s just begun	Dit is per slot nog maar ‘t begin
When you feel really low	Als je het even niet ziet zitten
Yeah, there’s a great truth you should know	Hou je dan hier (maar) goed aan vast
When you’re young, gifted and black	Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart
Your soul’s intact	En je ziel is intact

The second line of the third stanza has been adapted to fit in the meter; it was made singular, for there were too many vowels, making the sentence too long for the meter. Now, this stanza is focused on one single child. A solution was found in using ‘*Kind*.’ ‘*Kind*’ and ‘*begin*’ in the fourth line are half rhyming, as are the end words of these sentences in the ST. The ‘quest’ in the ST was not maintained. Instead it says that ‘this is only the beginning’ which has connotations alike.

The fourth stanza has an altered rhyme scheme in the translation. Where the ST has an aabb rhyme scheme, in the TT this became abbb. The rhythm was changed as well; the first sentence has more syllables, in favor of naturalness and sense. The singability is not at stake.

Young, gifted and black	Jong, talentvol en zwart
How I long to know the truth	O ja de waarheid is een deugd
There are times when I look back	Soms kijk ik terug naar onze start
And I am haunted by my youth	En dan beangstigt me mijn jeugd
Oh but my joy of today	Maar vandaag ben ik tevree
Is that we can all be proud to say	Want we delen de wereld mee
To be young, gifted and black	We zijn jong, talentvol en zwart
Is where it’s at	En dat is heel wat

The rhyme scheme of the ST has been maintained in the TT, although in the last stanza 'tevreden' and 'weten' is half rhyming. The sense of the song has been maintained in Dutch. The sentence "How I long to know the truth" is ambiguous, it is not decipherable to what truth is referred to. The TT stays evenly vague with "*de waarheid is een deugd.*" In the sixth stanza, the first sentence ends with a contraction of 'tevreden:' 'tevre,' serving rhythm, rhyme, sense and singability with a minor intervention. The second last sentence in the TT can be seen as a kind of conclusion. The "To be young gifted and black/ Is where it's at' is a conclusion too, 'where it's at' meaning: "a situation that is very good, exciting, or fashionable," (Macmillan Dictionary). In Dutch the first stanza expresses dreaming about being young, gifted and black, in the last stanza, being young, gifted and black is stated as a conclusion, it expresses that it is of importance and the whole world is informed of it. In Dutch Nina Simone is a spokesman for the youngsters in the last stanza, which is different from the TT, however, bearing in mind the aim of the song, to be strengthening for the young, this is a contribution to that ambition.

The Unique Quality

The lines containing, 'young, gifted and black,' as well as the ones that rhyme with these sentences are particularly powerful. They are scanted by Simone and her backing vocals, inviting the public to sing along. These lines follow the rhythm punctilious. The unique quality of the song lies in these powerful lines, of which it is of great importance that the translations are equally powerful and equally precise in following the rhythm for creating the same effect, this was strived for in the translation.

5. Lyrics

1. Ain't Got No / I Got Life

I ain't got no home, ain't got no shoes
Ain't got no money, ain't got no class
Ain't got no skirts, ain't got no sweater
Ain't got no perfume, ain't got no bed
Ain't got no mind

Ain't got no mother, ain't got no culture
Ain't got no friends, ain't got no schooling
Ain't got no love, ain't got no name
Ain't got no ticket, ain't got no token
Ain't got no God

And what have I got?
Why am I alive anyway?
Yeah, what have I got
Nobody can take away?

Got my hair, got my head
Got my brains, got my ears
Got my eyes, got my nose
Got my mouth, I got my smile
I got my tongue, got my chin
Got my neck, got my boobs
Got my heart, got my soul
Got my back, I got my sex

I got my arms, got my hands
Got my fingers, got my legs
Got my feet, got my toes
Got my liver, got my blood

I've got life, I've got my freedom
I've got the life

I've got the life
And I'm gonna keep it
I've got the life
And nobody's gonna take it away
I've got the life

1. Ik heb niks / Ik heb het leven

Ik heb geen huis, 'k heb geen schoen
'k Heb geen status, 'k heb niks geen poen
Ik heb geen jurk, 'k heb geen tasje
'k Heb geen parfum, ik heb geen bed
'k Heb geen idee

Ik heb geen moeder, 'k heb geen cultuur
'k Heb geen vriend, 'k heb geen scholing
Ik heb geen lief, ik heb geen leed
Ik heb geen kaartje en niks geen munten
Ik heb geen God

En wat heb ik dan?
Waarom doe ik op aarde mee?
Ja, wat heb ik dan?
En het is van mij alleen?

Heb m'n haar, heb m'n hoofd
Heb m'n brein, heb m'n oren
Heb m'n ogen, heb m'n neus
Heb m'n mond, ik heb mijn lach
Ik heb m'n tong, heb m'n kin
Heb m'n rug, heb m'n tieten
Heb m'n hart, heb m'n ziel
Heb m'n nek, ik heb mijn seks

Ik heb m'n romp, m'n gestel
Heb m'n longen, heb m'n vel
Heb m'n lijf, heb m'n leden
Heb m'n lever, 'k heb mijn bloed

Ik heb het leven, ik heb m'n vrijheid
Ik heb het leven

Ik heb het leven
En ik wil het houden
Ik heb het leven
En het is van mij
Ik heb het leven

2. Mississippi Goddam

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi
Goddam
Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi
Goddam

Can't you see it
Can't you feel it
It's all in the air
I can't stand the pressure much longer
Somebody say a prayer

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi
Goddam

This is a show tune
But the show hasn't been written for it, yet

Hound dogs on my trail
School children sitting in jail
Black cat cross my path
I think every day's gonna be my last

Lord have mercy on this land of mine
We all gonna get it in due time
I don't belong here
I don't belong there
I've even stopped believing in prayer

Don't tell me
I tell you

Me and my people just about due
I've been there so I know
They keep on saying "Go slow!"

2. Mississippi Godverdomme

Alabama heeft me zo ontzet
Tennessee was een grote smet
En iedereen weet van Mississippi
Godverdomme
Alabama heeft me zo ontzet
Tennessee was een grote smet
En iedereen weet van Mississippi
Godverdomme

Kijk dan goed
Het voelt niet goed
Er dreigt vast zwaar weer
Ik kan er niet langer meer tegen
Zeg je gebedje nog een keer

Alabama heeft me zo ontzet
Tennessee was een grote smet
En iedereen weet van Mississippi
Godverdomme

Dit is een deuntje voor de show
Maar de show moet er nog omheen
geschreven worden. (*gesproken woord*)

Jachthonden achter me aan
Schoolkinderen die naar de gevangenis gaan
Zwarte kat schiet voor me langs
Elke dag leef ik in angst

O God, heb meelij met dit land van mij
We zullen het heus snappen over 'n tijd
Hier is mijn plek niet meer
Daar is mijn plek niet meer
Zelfs bidden heeft geen zin meer

Nee, zeg niks
Ik zeg jou

Ik en mijn mensen, wij komen eraan
Geloof me, 'k heb er zelf tussen gestaan
Ze blijven roepen om 'Kalmte!'

But that's just the trouble
"do it slow"
Washing the windows
"do it slow"
Picking the cotton
"do it slow"
You're just plain rotten
"do it slow"
You're too damn lazy
"do it slow"
The thinking's crazy
"do it slow"
Where am I going
What am I doing
I don't know
I don't know

Just try to do your very best
Stand up be counted with all the rest
For everybody knows about Mississippi
Goddam

I made you thought I was kiddin'

Picket lines
School boycotts
They try to say it's a communist plot
All I want is equality
for my sister my brother my people and me

Yes you lied to me all these years
You told me to wash and clean my ears
And talk real fine just like a lady
And you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie

Oh but this whole country is full of lies
You're all gonna die and die like flies
I don't trust you any more
You keep on saying "Go slow!"
"Go slow!"
But that's just the trouble
"do it slow"
Desegregation
"do it slow"
Mass participation

Maar dat is juist het probleem
'kalmte'
't Lappen van ramen
'kalmte'
Plukken van katoen
'kalmte'
Je deugt van geen kanten
'kalmte'
Je bent veels te lui
'kalmte'
Je kraamt onzin uit
'kalmte'
Waar ga 'k toch naartoe
Wat ben ik aan 't doen
Ik weet 't niet
Ik weet niet

Doe gewoon je allerbest
Sta op, dan word je geteld met de rest
Want iedereen weet van Mississippi
Godverdomme

Jullie dachten zeker dat ik maar zat te dollen
(gesproken woord)

Protestmarsen
Schoolboycots
Ze beweren steeds een communistisch plot
Gelijkheid is genoeg voor mij, voor mijn
zuster, m'n broeder, m'n mensen en mij

Je loog tegen mij al die jaren
Je zei me m'n kleren te wassen en m'n haren
En netjes te praten als een dame
Dan riep je geen scheldwoorden meer naar
me

O maar in dit land zit iedereen te liegen
En jullie gaan allemaal dood als vliegen
Ik vertrouw je echt niet meer
Je blijft maar zeggen: 'Kalmte!'
'Kalmte!'
Maar dat is het probleem
'kalmte'
Desegregatie
'kalmte'
Massale participatie

“do it slow”

Reunification

“do it slow”

Do things gradually

“do it slow”

But bring more tragedy

“do it slow”

Why don't you see it

Why don't you feel it

I don't know

I don't know

You don't have to live next to me

Just give me my equality

Everybody knows about Mississippi

Everybody knows about Alabama

Everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

That's it!

'kalmte'

Familiehereniging

'kalmte'

Langzaam aan komt de remedie

'kalmte'

Maar het brengt alleen tragedie

'kalmte'

Kijk dan goed

Zie je niet wat het doet

Ik weet niet

waar het heengaat

Je hoeft niet naast mij te leven

Je hoeft me alleen gelijkheid te geven

Iedereen weet van Mississippi

Iedereen weet van Alabama

Iedereen weet van Mississippi

Godverdomme

En zo is het!

3. Sinnerman

Oh sinnerman, where you gonna run to?
Sinnerman, where you gonna run to?
Where you gonna run to?
All along dem day
Well I run to the rock, please hide me
I run to the rock, please hide me
I run to the rock, please hide me, lord
All along dem day
But the rock cried out, I can't hide you
The rock cried out, I can't hide you
The rock cried out, I ain't gonna hide
you guy

All along dem day
I said, rock, what's a matter with you rock?
Don't you see I need you, rock?
Lord, lord, lord
All along dem day
So I run to the river, it was bleedin'
I run to the sea, it was bleedin'
I run to the sea, it was bleedin'
All along dem day
So I run to the river, it was boilin'
I run to the sea, it was boilin'
I run to the sea, it was boilin'
Along dem day
So I run to the lord, please hide me lord
Don't you see me prayin'?
Don't you see me down here prayin'?
But the lord said, go to the devil
The lord said, go to the devil
He said, go to the devil
All along dem day
So I ran to the devil, he was waitin'
I ran to the devil, he was waitin'
Ran to the devil, he was waitin'
All on that day
I cried -
Power!
(Power to da lord)
Bring down
Go down [8X]
(Power to da lord) [4X]

3. Zondaarman

O zondaarman, waar kun je schuilen?
Zondaarman, waar ku-j schuilen?
Waar ku-j schuilen?
Heelledagmaardoor
Nou, ik ren naar de rots, toe verberg me
Dus ik ren naar de rots, toe verberg me
Ik ren naar de rots, toe verberg me, heer
Heelledagmaardoor
Maar de rots hij schreeuwde, 'k kan je niet
verbergen,
De rots hij schreeuwde, 'k kan je niet
verbergen
De rots hij schreeuwde, 'k ga je mooi niet
verbergen man
Heelledagmaardoor
Ik zei rots, wat maak je me nu dan?
Help me dan, toe help nou rots
O heer, heer, heer
Heelledagmaardoor
Dus ik ren naar de rivier, maar hij bloedde
Ik ren naar de zee, maar hij bloedde
Ik ren naar de zee, maar hij bloedde
Heelledagmaardoor
Dus ik ren naar de rivier, maar hij kookte
Ik ren naar de zee, maar hij kookte
Ik ren naar de zee, maar hij kookte
Heelledagdoor
Dus ik ren naar de heer, toe verberg me heer
Ziet u me niet bidden?
Ziet u me niet bidden hier benee?
Maar de heer zei, loop naar de duivel
De heer zei, loop naar de duivel
Hij zei, loop naar de duivel
Heelledagmaardoor
Dus ik rende naar de duivel, waar hij wachtte
Ik rende naar de duivel, waar hij wachtte
Rende naar de duivel, waar hij wachtte
Heeldiedagmaardoor
Ik schreeuwde -
Krachten!
(Kracht aan de heer)
Haal neer
Daal neer [8X]
(Kracht aan de heer) [4X]

Power!
(Power to da lord)
[12X]

[*Instrumental*]
[*band clapping*]

Oh yeah, woh yeah, woh yeah
Well I run to the river, it was boilin'
I run to the sea, it was boilin'
I run to the sea, it was boilin'
All along dem day
So I ran to the lord
I said, lord hide me, please hide me
Please help me
Along dem day
He said, child, where were you
When you oughta been prayin'
I said, lord, lord, hear me prayin'
Lord, lord, hear me prayin'
Lord, lord, hear me prayin'
All along dem day
Sinnerman you oughta be prayin'
Oughta be prayin', sinnerman
Oughta be prayin'
All on that day
I cried -
Power!
Power!
(Power to da lord)
[3X]
[3X]
Power, power, lord (Power to da lord)
[12X]
Don't you know I need you lord
Don't you know that I need you
Don't you know that I need you
Power, lord!

Krachten!
(Kracht aan de heer)
[12X]

[*Instrumenteel*]
[*handgeklap*]

O ja, wo-ja, wo-ja
Nou ik ren naar de rivier, maar hij kookte
Ik ren naar de zee, maar hij kookte
Ik ren naar de zee, maar hij kookte
Heeledagmaardoor
Dus ik ren naar de heer
Ik zei, heer, toe verberg me heer
Toe, help me
Dezedagdoor
Hij zei, kind waar was je
Toen je zou moeten bidden
Ik zei heer, heer, hoor me dan bidden
Heer, heer, hoor me bidden
Heer, heer, hoor me bidden
Heeledagmaardoor
Zondaarmaan, je zou moeten bidden
Zou moeten bidden, zondaarman
Zou moeten bidden
Heelzedagdoor
Ik schreeuwde -
Geef kracht!
Geef kracht!
(Kracht aan de heer)
[3X]
[3X]
Geef kracht, geef kracht, (Kracht aan de heer)
[12X]
Ik heb u nodig, weet u heer
Ik heb u nodig, weet u dat heer
Ik heb u nodig, weet u dat heer
Kracht aan de heer!

4. Four Women

My skin is black
My arms are long
My hair is wooly
My back is strong
Strong enough to take the pain
inflicted again and again
What do they call me
My name is AUNT SARAH
My name is Aunt Sarah

My skin is yellow
My hair is long
Between two worlds
I do belong
My father was rich and white
He forced my mother late one night
What do they call me
My name is SAFFRONIA
My name is Saffronia

My skin is tan
My hair is fine
My hips invite you
my mouth like wine
Whose little girl am I?
Anyone who has money to buy
What do they call me
My name is SWEET THING
My name is Sweet Thing

My skin is brown
My manner is tough
I'll kill the first mother I see
my life has been too rough
I'm awfully bitter these days
because my parents were slaves
What do they call me
My name is PEACHES

4. Vier vrouwen

Mijn huid is zwart
Mijn armen pezig
Mijn haar is wollig
Mijn rug is stevig
Hij kan de pijn wel aan
van wat me steeds wordt aangedaan
Hoe ze me noemen?
Mijn naam is tante Sarah
Mijn naam is tante Sarah

Mijn huid is geel
Mijn haar is sluis
Tussen twee werelden
hoor ik thuis
Rijk en wit dat was mijn vader
M'n moeder misbruikt en hij de dader
Hoe ze me noemen?
Mijn naam is Saffronia
Mijn naam is Saffronia

Mijn huid is beige
Mijn haar is fijn
Mijn heupen wenken je
Mijn mond als wijn
Wiens kleine meisje ben ik dan?
Wie z'n geld laat rollen, is de man
Hoe ze me noemen?
Ze noemen me Snoepje
Ze noemen me Snoepje

Mijn huid is bruin
Nagels scherp als wat
De eerste beste klootzak maak ik af
Mijn leven was te hard
Ik ben zo verbitterd de laatste dagen
omdat mijn ouders slaven waren
Hoe ze me noemen?
Mijn naam is Peaches

5. To Be Young, Gifted And Black

To be young, gifted and black,
Oh what a lovely precious dream
To be young, gifted and black,
Open your heart to what I mean

In the whole world you know
There are billion boys and girls
Who are young, gifted and black,
And that's a fact!

Young, gifted and black
We must begin to tell our young
There's a world waiting for you
This is a quest that's just begun

When you feel really low
Yeah, there's a great truth you should know
When you're young, gifted and black
Your soul's intact

Young, gifted and black
How I long to know the truth
There are times when I look back
And I am haunted by my youth

Oh but my joy of today
Is that we can all be proud to say
To be young, gifted and black
Is where it's at

5. Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart

Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart,
Het lijkt een heerlijk mooie droom
Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart,
Stel het je voor en voel geen schroom

In de hele wijde wereld
Zijn miljoenen jongelui
Die zijn jong, talentvol en zwart,
En zo is dat!

Jong, talentvol en zwart
Je moet wel weten lieve kind
Er is een schone toekomst voor jou
Dit is per slot nog maar 't begin

Als je het even niet ziet zitten
Hou je dan hier (maar) goed aan vast
Je bent jong, talentvol en zwart
En je ziel is intact

Jong, talentvol en zwart
O ja de waarheid is een deugd
Soms kijk ik terug naar onze start
En dan beangstigt me mijn jeugd

Maar vandaag ben ik tevree
Want we delen de wereld mee
We zijn jong, talentvol en zwart
En dat is heel wat

Encore

1. I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free – Ik wou dat ik wist hoe het was om vrij te zijn

Content

“I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free” is a song written by Billie Taylor and Richard Carroll Lamb. Nina Simone’s version is the best-known version of this song, which appeared on her 1967 album *Silk and Soul*. The song is considered a civil rights anthem and knows influences of gospel and jazz. The title expresses one of the fundamental themes of the civil rights movement: the wish to live free in America with dignity (American Treasures of the Library of Congress). Seeing the song separately, not specifically as a civil rights anthem, it refers to the feelings of every man, feeling the urge to be free, and the feelings many people had as a child, wishing one was a bird. The fact that this song is a civil rights song, and moreover its content speaks to a broader public, is a strength of the song, because referring to one’s feelings as a child, makes that everyone can imagine the feelings of the black man and his wish to live free, with dignity.

Form

The lyrics are expressive, due to the use of metaphors of breaking bars and flying as a bird. However, because of the use of metaphors the lyrics are not very explicit and free to interpret. The civil rights theme is only readable between the lines. The lines specifically interpretable as belonging to this theme are: “I wish you could know/ What it means to be me/ Then you’d see and agree/ That every man should be free.” These lines can be interpreted as the black man addressing the white man, asking him to look at things from his point of view. In translating the lyrics, the use of metaphors has been conducted. The song has been translated with the civil rights theme as guidance. However, the Dutch text should not be more explicit in being a civil rights anthem, for the ambiguity of the song is where lies its strength.

I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free

I wish I knew how
It would feel to be free
I wish I could break
All the chains holdin' me
I wish I could say
All the things that I should say
Say 'em loud say 'em clear
For the whole 'round world to hear
I wish I could share
All the love that's in my heart
Remove all the bars
That keep us apart
I wish you could know
What it means to be me
Then you'd see and agree
That every man should be free
I wish I could give
All I'm longin' to give
I wish I could live like I'm longing to live
I wish I could do all the things that I can do
And though I'm way over due
I'd be startin' a new
Well I wish I could be
Like a bird in the sky
How sweet it would be
If I found I could fly
Oh I'd soar to the sun
And look down at the sea
Then I'd sing 'cause I'd know yeah
And I'd sing 'cause I'd know yeah
And I'd sing 'cause I'd know
I'd know how it feels
I'd know how it feels to be free
Yeah, yeah I'd know how it feels
Yes, I'd know
I'd know how it feels, how it feels
To be free, oh lord

Ik wou dat ik wist hoe het was om vrij te zijn

Ik wou dat ik wist
hoe het was om vrij te zijn
Ik wou dat ik vrij
kon breken uit mijn cel
Ik wou dat ik vrij
kon zeggen wat ik maar wou
Dan zei 'k 't klip en zei 'k 't klaar
Voor de wereld openbaar
Ik wou dat ik de vrije
onbepaalde liefde had
Ik haal neer die muur
die ons gescheiden had
Ik wou dat jij wist
hoe het was om mij te zijn
Dan was jij het eens met mij
dat ieder mens vrij moet zijn
Ik wou dat ik vrij
rond kon delen mijn bezit
Ik wou dat ik vrij kon leven naast jou
Ik wou dat ik vrij kon doen en laten wat ik wou
En al ben ik lang volgroeid
Ik begin overnieuw
En ik wou dat ik kon vliegen
Als een vogel zo vrij
Hoe fijn zou het zijn
Als ik mijn vleugels spreid
Ik zou scheren naar de zon
En turen naar de zee
Dan zou ik zingen, omdat ik wist, ja
En ik zou zingen, omda'k wist, ja
En ik zou zingen omda'k wist
Omdat ik wist hoe het was
Omdat ik wist hoe het was om vrij te zijn
Ja, ja, ik zou weten hoe het was
Ja, ik zou weten
Ik zou weten hoe het was, hoe het was
Om vrij te zijn

2. My Baby Just Cares for Me – Mijn liefje geeft puur om mij

Content

“My Baby Just Cares For Me” is a song written by Walter Donaldson, the lyrics are from the hand of Gus Kahn. The song was written for the film version of the musical comedy *Whoopie!*² (1930). Nina Simone’s jazz adaptation of the song appeared on her debut album *Little Girl Blue* (1958). From this album, it was the song “I Loves You Porgy” that gave Nina Simone her fame. “My Baby Just Cares For Me” became a hit in Europe, especially in the Netherlands, in 1987, when the song accompanied a commercial for Chanel No. 5 perfume. The music is lighthearted, jazzy and relaxed. It is a very short song with Simone playing a piano interlude between the second and third stanza. The lyrics are lighthearted as well, together forming a light and charming love song.

Form

This song almost entirely consists of an list of things the singer’s loved one does not care for, each time concluding that ‘My baby just cares for me’. In the first stanza, every line starts with ‘My baby’. In Dutch, this was not maintained, because of wordplay with the word ‘*niks*’ rhyming with ‘*gigs*’ from the first line. Some of the things ‘baby does not care for’ were maintained in the TT; ‘cars and races’ became ‘*racewedstrijden*,’ ‘clothes’ ‘*kleren*’ and Liz Taylor is famous enough in The Netherlands to appear in the Dutch version, however, of Lana Turner this was not concluded. Therefore, she was replaced by Marilyn Monroe. This is an example of “limited universalization” (Aixéla, 202) where the translator replaces a cultural specific element the target public is not familiar with, with a similar element the target public does know. Liberace became a problem, because he is a man. The smiles of the actresses, and Liberace, were something that baby could not see. In Dutch however, he literally turned them down and told them no. With Liberace, this felt strange, and in addition, the Dutch public may not be as familiar with the singer as the Americans are. Therefore, it was opted for ‘*de koningin*.’ For the sake of rhyme, ‘high-tone places’ became ‘*mooie meiden*,’ so that it rhymed with ‘*racewedstrijden*.’

² Salient detail: in in the film the song is performed by a white actor in blackface: Eddie Cantor, “My Baby Just Cares For Me” (1930) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BXRGTBLVuA>

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to translate Nina Simone's civil rights songs into Dutch and to examine the potential translation strategies regarding content (the socio-cultural and political aspects of the songs) and form (the genre of songs in translation). What statements can be made after having done this?

Content & Form

The division between content and form was particularly convenient for sorting the information while analyzing the lyrics. In working with this division all the conceivable influences of the song were taken into account to form a well-grounded analysis where the translations could be based upon.

To do Nina Simone's civil rights songs right in translation, the socio-cultural qualities in each song had to be respected, because the context of these songs is crucial. Would the translator naturalize the songs and adapt them to the Dutch target culture, they could not be called civil rights songs anymore. The songs should maintain a product of the African-American singer from the south of America, written in the turbulent sixties. How was this achieved?

The translator has to be aware of what it is in the lyrics that expresses cultural color and find equivalents in Dutch that do not make the texts too Dutch. For example in the translation of "Ain't Got No/ I Got Life" in the first line, the word '*fiets*' came up while translating, as a thing the protagonist lacks: '*Ik heb geen huis, ik heb geen fiets.*' The second line could then end with '*niets*' forming two correct idiomatic sentences that rhyme in Dutch and fitting in the meter. However, this choice would color the context far too Dutch; it would naturalize Nina Simone's song, and consequently lose some of its identity as a civil rights song.

To do justice to the content of the song, the translator can use the tools, the form aspects, to retain this content. Different expressions of the socio-cultural situation in the songs were African-American language use: AAVE and language as part of gospel music, which can also be seen as AAVE. Furthermore, the emotions in the songs having to do with the civil rights themes, discrimination, black pride, and the African-American identity

had to be recognized and expressed in Dutch. For translating AAVE language, different strategies were available. In most of the lyrics, it was preferred to choose colloquial Dutch language without the cultural color of a specific Dutch dialect or street language, which would change the setting of the song. For example, abbreviations were used, double negations, and natural ways of saying, such as *‘Je bent veels te lui’* and the use of idioms, such as *‘Je kraamt onzin uit,’* both from “Mississippi Goddam.”

The analyzed and translated songs varied strongly, and with all of the songs a different approach had to be applied. In “Four Women” the CSE’s had to be considered such as which form of address should be chosen in Dutch for the ‘southern mammy’ Aunt Sarah. In this lyric AAVE language was present, sometimes harsh. Furthermore, for the words ‘black’ and ‘white’ regarding skin color, the discussion about *‘blank’* versus the recent plead for the use of *‘wit’* in The Netherlands, had to be taken into consideration.

In “Sinnerman” and “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” the gospel influences prevailed, which were translated into Dutch biblical and colloquial language to create an equal effect. Both songs are emotionally charged, which had to come across in Dutch. “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” is culturally colored, mainly because it is ‘hippie freedom song’ sung by an African-American woman. The lyrics in themselves are not very culturally charged; the translator just has to be careful not to put in too many bicycles, tulips, and wooden shoes.

Translation problems regarding form frequently had to do with the boundaries due to the rhythm and meter. One can have a perfect translation of a sentence, however, when it does not fit the rhythm, it is of no use. By copying the rhyme scheme, assonance, alliteration and other poetic devices of the original and coming up with idiomatic Dutch words and phrases, the naturalness of the lyrics was realized. Moreover, because the content had to prevail in each civil rights song, the *sense* of Low’s pentathlon had a main priority each time, which bounded the translator.

Unique Qualities

Every song has its unique quality, something that stands out. What this unique quality is should stand out in the translation as well, if possible. What were the unique qualities of the songs and are they still present in the translations?

In “Ain’t Got No/ I Got Life” the unique quality lies in the concise, powerful sentences and the rising from sadness to elation. In *‘Ik heb niks/ Ik heb ‘t leven’* the

concision and power are still present, due to well-chosen equivalents that fit the rhythm. The sadness in the beginning and elation at the end are still present because the sense of the original has been followed; good equivalents were found for what is lacking in the beginning and of what one does have at the end.

In “Mississippi Goddam” the unique quality was described as the aggression, with its chorus with short lines. The song is raw, contains cursing and radiates anger. The concise lines of the chorus have been replaced in the Dutch translation with evenly concise aggressive lines, which follow the sense in it: “*Alabama heeft me zo ontzet/ Tennessee was een grote smet/ En iedereen weet van Mississippi Godverdomme*”. Furthermore, colloquial and idiomatic language was used for the AAVE language present. By using raw language, the translation did not become more decent than the original.

“Sinnerman’s” unique quality is how compelling it is by the use of repetition and emotional charge. The repeating lines ‘All along dem day’ and ‘where you gonna run to’ got equivalents in Dutch that were colloquial, idiomatic, and were fitting in the rhythm: ‘*Heel dedagmaardoor*’ and ‘*waar ku-j schuilen*’.

For “Four Women” the harmony and similarities of the stanzas and repetition of word use, ‘My’ is what stands out. In Dutch, the stanzas are still similar. Due to this similarity, the choice for the same rhyme scheme, and the repetition of ‘*Mijn,*’ it achieved the desired harmonious effect.

“To Be Young, Gifted and Black” contains powerful lines, standing out. These are the repetition of ‘Young, gifted and black’ and the rhyming lines. The lines are scanted and have a very clear rhythm. In Dutch the rhythm was followed and for the line from the title “*Jong, talentvol en zwart*” was chosen, being very singable and following the sense of the song punctilious.

The ‘unique qualities’ of the song have been given priority in the translation process. To focus on these qualities was a good point of departure and something to keep in vision.

The Process

Analyses and strategies are a formidable basis, but when it comes to translating, creativity is just as important. I remember saying in my first research proposal that when I would translate the song texts, I would like to get my inspiration from The Kik, Willem Wilmink, and Bindervoet and Henkes, whom I admire for their creativity. But although you can read

their lyrics, listen to the songs, and perhaps admire them, you cannot lay the texts next to your computer and get inspired by it, or do it as they did. It does not work that way. Dave von Raven, singer and lyricist of The Kik, is an admirer of Lennaert Nijgh's pop lyrics, and agrees on this: "it would be nice if you could use the inspiration practically, however, this is impossible, and perhaps this is a good thing, otherwise you will repeat each other" (interview 21 June 2016).

One can have the aim to do right to Nina Simone's work and still write idiomatic Dutch lyrics that are singable, using theory and strategies and golden rules, but after aiming it, one has to do it and get into the creative writing process oneself. I asked Dave Von Raven, whom I admire for his idiomatic Dutch lyrics: "Do you have some good advice for me?" "No," he said. "You have to do it yourself. You have to make it your own." Von Raven does not see the difference in the process of writing lyrics between translating, and writing original lyrics. "You have to come in a flow, and get a sudden inspiration for a line" (interview 21 June). Be it a sudden inspiration for a new line or a translated line, the latter is newly created as well. Von Raven feels that the writing process is very tough, but the fulfilling afterward is all the better because of this. I agree with him entirely. The reason I chose to write my thesis about translating lyrics was because it is hard to do, a constant struggle, and because of the creative process. What I can say is that I loved translating Nina Simone's lyrics, I hope reading them and reading about them has been pleasant as well.

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Photo on title page:

Jack Robinson, Nina Simone pictured in 1969, Getty Images