

Practical 4 Tutor notes

An important aim of Chapter 4 is to show how, perhaps more than any other operation, successful compensation exemplifies the blend of analysis and imagination needed for translation. The examples should be discussed at length. There are three main points to underline. (1) Compensation is not a matter of simply pumping stylish English into the TT in the vague hope of outweighing any translation losses that may have crept in. It is a matter of countering a specific, clearly defined loss with an equally specific and clearly defined, but less serious, loss. Chapter 4 is thus a good early opportunity to remind students that translation loss is inevitable at every point in a TT: the translator's job is to minimize it, and, in any but a purely empirical text, compensation can be a major help in doing this. (2) Compensation is a matter of choice; if the TT expression is the canonic rendering of the ST one, or virtually unavoidable in the context, that is a case of constraint, not of compensation, however great the structural differences between the two expressions. (3) Vital factors in deciding whether a loss is important are the purpose and genre of ST and TT.

4.1 Compensation

This text is taken from the same company report that furnished the text in Practical 2.1. Yet it is very different in genre. Comparing the two texts in class, even briefly, is a useful way of introducing Chapter 5. The text also contains features that are relevant on the graphic level of textual variables, and is well worth referring back to when discussing Chapter 6 and Practical 6.2 (which is actually less demanding than this one in every way).

4.2 Compensation

This assignment can be taken on two levels. On the simpler level, the TT can be looked at purely in terms of literal meaning and connotations, in which case it is pretty straightforward and can be done in class, students working in pairs or groups. Even on this level, the exercise offers plenty of material for analysis and discussion, but it does omit a vital aspect of the ST – the fact that it is a song. The need for the TT to match the ST metrically imposes constraints on the translator which themselves engender the need for compensation. Taken on this level, the assignment is more realistic and more satisfying, but more demanding, and needs either to be done at home or prepared at home in readiness for analysis in class. It is also a good introduction to the comparison of oral and written texts in Chapter 5: the possibility of the singer using *prosodic means* (see Chapter 6) in *performance* to compensate for translation loss is implicit in the whole text, and comes right to the surface in line 27 (see page 25 below).

PRACTICAL 4.1 CLASS HANDOUT

(1) AUDI TT AND COMMENTARY

(i) Strategic decisions

There are five main features of the ST that demand strategic attention. (1) Apart from the first one, each ST heading stretches right across the page. The brief requires that the TT of each heading (apart from the first) do the same. Since corresponding German and English expressions are rarely the same number of centimetres long, this may sometimes entail further rearrangement of the ST on top of the usual grammatical transpositions, or even inserting material which would, in another text, be mere padding. Where such solutions avoid a more serious loss by enabling the TT to meet the demands of layout, they are likely to be instances of compensation. (2) One key word in each heading is printed in large type. The brief requires these words to come in much the same position as the corresponding ST word. Here again, then, layout may demand a restructuring – or a departure from literal accuracy – which would be gratuitous in another text. (3) Another feature of layout is the use of suspension points between headings. These have two effects. First, they suggest a voice trailing away in admiration at the qualities of the driver and his car. Second, they sometimes blur the grammatical division between the headings. For example, while ‘mitzufahren’ clearly follows on from ‘vorn’ and completes a sentence which would not make sense without it, the next break is ambiguous: ‘Stets und zu jeder Stunde’ could just as well qualify ‘Die Gewissheit’ as ‘ist seine typische Eigenschaft’; the dream-like indeterminateness helps to convey the impression of awestruck wonderment. Of these two effects, the first is more important, and is easy to imitate in the TT. Where it is possible to preserve the grammatical ambiguity and its effect without serious translation loss, we will do so, but this is not a first priority. (4) A more important grammatical feature of the ST is the use of short, assertive sentences, sometimes verbless but often with an infinitive instead of a finite verb. This style imitates the qualities that occasion such admiration – the brisk, self-confident, no-nonsense authority of the driver, mirroring the power, crisp handling and reliability of the car. We shall if possible use a similar style to similar effect in the TT. This will obviously require grammatical transposition, especially as English cannot usually render a free-standing infinitive verb without narrowing the meaning down – e.g. should ‘Führen’ (l. 6) be translated as ‘To lead’, ‘Leading’ or as (quasi-imperative) ‘Lead’? Where necessary, we shall use compensation to preserve the effect. (5) The ST comes from the annual report of a big firm, which includes technical material like that in Practical 2.1 as well as the uncompromisingly objective financial report for the year. Yet the ST is not remotely technical or objective; on the contrary, it is emotive, its syntax rhetorical rather than smoothly expository, its vocabulary repetitive and emotive, relying on cumulative suggestion rather than analysis or logic – examples are ‘Stets und zu jeder Stunde’, or the unsubtle insistence of ‘Format’, ‘Stil’, ‘Klasse’ and ‘Niveau’. The words in large type and the features of layout set the tone for the whole text. The

translator may not actually like this tone – who, after all, would really want to mix with the kind of self-satisfied go-getter that the juvenile laddishness of the text is designed to appeal to? Assuming that, as translators, we cannot afford to decline the job, our strategy is to produce a TT that has similar semantic, tonal and suggestive effects to the ST, where possible through similar means, but if necessary through compensation.

(ii) *TT*

[18] He is always up front . . .¹

[19] . . . among the leaders.² **Thrust**³ is his defining quality. Unfailingly,⁴ and whatever the hour . . .⁵

[20] . . . Aware he has what it takes:⁶ the **authority** of the born winner.⁷ Shift up

5 into sixth . . .⁸

[21] . . . Determination – proving his **calibre**.⁹ Leadership with class and style.¹⁰
Through and through . . .¹¹

[22] . . . In all things¹² like his A8. Indicate to overtake.¹³ **Safe** lane change, smoothly move ahead . . .¹⁴

10 [23] . . . **Success** to be savoured, with every sense.¹⁵ Every day anew. For now, though, he has arrived.¹⁶

(iii) *Decisions of detail*

1 The first ST heading ends with ‘vorn’, a significant word which sets the tone for the whole text. In the sentence as a whole, German grammar requires ‘vorn’ to come before the verb, but English grammar imposes a different order, as in e.g. ‘He is used/accustomed to travelling among the leaders’. The demands of layout would mean that the first TT heading ended with ‘travelling’ (cutting the sentence at ‘used/accustomed’ would mean too few centimetres used at [18], and too many to fit in at [19]). To preserve the dramatic impact of ST word order in the first heading, we have rendered ‘gewohnt, vorn’ with ‘always up front’. The most notable translation loss is that the TT expression is purely temporal, whereas the ST says that the driver is *accustomed* to being up among the front runners – almost as if this is something he expects by right (an implication strengthened by the rest of the ST). But this loss is deliberately incurred to compensate for the inability of TL grammar to accommodate ‘front’ at the end of the first heading in a literal translation. See also note 2.

2 To some extent, adding ‘among the leaders’ to ‘up front’ is redundant: if he is up

front, he is bound to be a leader. Strictly, 'He is always up among the leaders' is enough. However, 'He is up' on its own is unclear or even misleading – this was another reason for adding 'front' (see note 1). And the ST does have '*mitzufahren*', so some reference to a group is needed. The decisive reason for introducing this redundancy is that it compensates for the loss of an explicit rendering of the 'forwards' component in '*Vorwärtsdrang*'.

3 '*Vorwärtsdrang*' is impossible to translate satisfactorily with a similar TL compound noun. In this context, the '-drang' component clearly does not denote a relatively passive 'urge', but a relatively active 'drive' in which the element of will is important. But no plausible compounds with 'forward' or 'onward' are available. And 'drive' itself is inadvisable here, because it would come across as a facetious pun too blatant even for this text. We therefore let 'among the leaders' supply by compensation the missing reference to '*Vorwärts-*', and opted for 'Thrust', which is suitably active and also has an appropriate connotation of mechanical power (cf. e.g. the thrust of a jet engine).

4 A more accurate literal translation of '*Stets*' would be 'Constantly', which would be attractive for two reasons: it is closer in register than 'Always' (cf. '*immer*'), and it is also longer – a serious consideration when the heading threatens to be too short. We rejected it because it is likely to have negative connotations (cf. e.g. 'you're constantly complaining about your headaches') which would clash with the positive tone of the text as a whole. In avoiding this connotative loss, we have introduced one in literal meaning: 'Unfailingly' does convey the idea of continuity, but also an element of tirelessness or even reliability, which are not part of the literal meaning of '*Stets*'. However, these very implications compensate for the loss in literal meaning, inasmuch as '*Stets*' has these connotations in this context. And, of course, 'Unfailingly' is long enough to help prevent the heading being too short.

5 A more faithful translation of '*zu jeder Stunde*' would be 'at any hour/at every moment', etc. Our more emphatic 'whatever the hour' therefore incurs avoidable translation loss. The reason we chose it is that it is long enough to prevent the heading being too short for the page. Given the translation brief, that would have been a bigger loss: what, in another TT, would have been a translation chosen for trivial reasons is in this TT an instance of successful compensation. Our rendering also accords with the ST image of the resourceful professional, never fazed by unexpected demands. An alternative way of getting the length right would be to lengthen the 'Thrust' sentence, e.g. 'Thrust is the quality that defines him'; but the focus of this sentence is less clear – it almost reads like an answer to the question 'What is thrust?'

6 The TT loses explicit reference to certainty, and possibly also significant connotations of 'gut' ('gut' reads somewhat oddly in this SL context, however). But a more literal translation would be either obscure (e.g. 'The certainty of being good') or ambiguous (e.g. 'He is certain he is good' – does he know? is he just expressing a hopeful opinion? or is he priggishly asserting that he's a good boy?). TT 'Aware' is less emphatic than '*Gewissheit*', implying knowledge rather than certainty, but this is compensated for by the bullish connotations of 'he has what it takes': the self-confidence of someone who is aware he has what it takes virtually amounts to 'certainty'.

7 Of the many possible meanings of '*Anspruch*', two are operative here: 'claim/demand' and 'entitlement'. In addition, the syntax of the sentence is stripped down to a minimum – the only link between the two halves of the sentence is a colon, suggestive rather than carrying semantic content, which allows the emergence of a

connotation of *conviction* that he is entitled to claim or demand; this connotation is of course triggered partly by ‘Gewissheit’, which we have only rendered through compensation. We could not find a TL word that would convey in itself what ST ‘Anspruch’ conveys. TT ‘authority of the born winner’ suggests the quality of someone who not only makes demands, but also has a firm conviction that he is entitled to make them, and a natural authority that convinces other people as well. Adding ‘born’ restores by compensation the notion of ‘innate conviction’ which is conveyed in the ST by the combination of ‘Gewissheit’ and ‘Anspruch’ but is lost in ‘authority’. Adding ‘the’ before ‘authority’ incurs only slight translation loss, and compensates for it by making the heading long enough.

8 In the UK, the obvious translation is ‘Change up into sixth’, but in North America drivers ‘shift up’. Therefore neither ‘change’ nor ‘shift’ fully meets the brief, which specifies a TT for the whole English-speaking world. An all-purpose alternative is ‘Engage/Select sixth gear’, but that is more technical and less dynamic, and lacks the connotations (‘speed’ and ‘ambition’) of ST ‘hoch-’ and TT ‘up’. ‘Move up into sixth’ is another possibility, but in this context it may acquire an uncomfortable suggestion of moving up into sixth place in a race – not a flattering position for a ‘born winner’. Given the increasing predominance of American English worldwide, we have opted for ‘shift up’, which is perhaps less likely to cause surprise in the UK than ‘change up’ would be in North America. In terms of the brief, the translation loss is significant, but not serious enough to warrant an attempt at compensation, which would almost certainly lengthen the text and impede its momentum. (Later in the text, however, a culture-specific translation *would* be a serious weakness; see note 13.)

9 The standard translation of ‘heißt’ would be ‘means’, but this is too restrictive, and a little ambiguous, suggesting either that determination is synonymous with proving calibre, or that proving calibre is inevitably entailed by determination. ST ‘heißt’ is looser, having more the sense of ‘involves’ or ‘amounts to’; but these would be evasive or even deprecatory in the TT. The TT dash incurs a loss in syntactic cohesion, but compensates for this by implying a similar link between determination and proving calibre to the one denoted by ‘heißt’ in the ST. ‘Format’ here denotes ‘(strong) personality’, ‘stature (deriving from personality or abilities)’. TT ‘his calibre’ loses the element of ‘stature’, and even something of ‘personality’, but it compensates for this to some extent, in two ways: (1) by making explicit the quality that earns the stature; (2) by adding ‘his’, which restores the personal dimension of his qualities.

10 The most accurate literal translation of ‘Führen’ in context would be ‘Leading’, which would parallel ‘proving’ as a manifestation of ‘Determination’. However, standing on its own, it would be peculiar, even misleading: ‘Leading with class and style’ sounds like e.g. ‘leading with a left/leading with immigration policy’ etc. ‘Leadership’ compensates for the loss of literal accuracy by avoiding this awkwardness, and parallels ‘calibre’ as a manifestation of ‘Determination’; it also, like ‘authority’ and ‘calibre’, belongs in the appropriate semantic area for this text.

11 Coming after ‘Stil und Klasse’, ‘Niveau’ does not add much semantically – it is little more than another bit of suggestive advertising blarney, denoting ‘quality’, ‘class’, etc. ‘Im Detail’ is hard to render convincingly – ‘in detail’ suggests (pedantic?) exhaustiveness. The ST implies rather that his leadership is authoritative in every detail, but of course also prepares for the comparison to the A8, thoroughly engineered in every detail. The emphatic repetition in ‘Through and through’ compensates for the lack of yet another suitable TL word corresponding to ‘Stil/Klasse/Niveau’, and, in its sense

of 'thoroughness', partly also for the lack of a persuasive way of rendering 'Im Detail'.

12 We chose 'In all things' instead of the more literally accurate 'Exactly' in order to complete the compensation for the loss of explicit reference to 'detail'.

13 To a German or North American reader, 'Blinker links' prepares the way for 'Überholspur': driving on the right, one indicates left before pulling out to overtake. In the UK, where we drive on the left, it is the other way round. 'Indicate to overtake' is an exegetic translation which will be clear to any anglophone reader. It is more long-winded and explicit than the ST expression, but clarity here is a higher priority than concision. Note that our exegetic translation is not in itself a case of compensation, but rather a solution to a cultural constraint imposed by the translation brief. There is, however, an element of compensation embedded *within* the TT expression: phonically and prosodically (see Chapter 6), the plosives, assonance and brisk rhythm compensate to some extent for losing the snappy, verbless dynamism and assonance of 'Blinker links'.

14 The straightforward literal translation of this sentence is 'He pulls safely out into the overtaking lane'. This has a double disadvantage in terms of layout: 'safely' is too far to the right in the heading, and the heading is too long. Another drawback is that, after 'Indicate to overtake', 'into the overtaking lane' is an anti-climactic statement of the obvious. Our grammatical transpositions incur avoidable translation loss, but compensate for this loss by conveying the message in a form that respects the demands of layout – failure to respect these would have been a more serious loss. Although not synonymous with 'overtake', 'smoothly move ahead' implies it in context, and also accords with the dominant emotive vocabulary of 'thrust', 'authority', 'leadership', etc. We have added 'smoothly' to compensate for not translating 'Sanfte Beschleunigung': even the shortest literal translation of this expression, 'Smooth acceleration', would have made the TT heading too long (given the unavoidable length of 'indicate to overtake').

15 Once again, there is avoidable grammatical transposition. A more literally exact translation would be 'Enjoying success with all senses/every sense'. Our reorganization brings 'Success' to the start of the sentence, in conformity with the constraints of layout; this compensates for the grammatical translation loss. It does, however, have a weakness. 'Success to be savoured with every sense' places most of the emphasis on 'with every sense': 'to be savoured' is glossed over somewhat, almost as if it is taken as read in answer to a question like 'How is success to be savoured?'. This is different from the ST, where the word order places more equal emphasis on 'mit allen Sinnen' and 'genießen'. Hence, in our TT, the comma after 'savoured', which redresses the balance and avoids an even greater loss than the one the compensation was designed to mitigate.

16 'Ziel' here denotes 'destination'. In context, it also has a connotation of 'objective'. We rejected 'destination', however, because it risks anti-climax, as if all this has been a humdrum bus journey rather than a consciously relished experience of power and control. With 'arrived', we (1) avoid this loss, (2) compensate for the loss in literal meaning by preserving the essential message content, and even (3) salvage something of the connotation – once again the whizz-kid's got where he wanted, as he always does . . .

(2) AUDI TT

Compare your TT with the published one:

[18] He is accustomed to . . .

[19] . . . being in the leading pack. The **urge** to get ahead is his defining trait. Always and everywhere . . .

[20] . . . The conviction of being good: the natural **ambition** of a winner. Shifting up
5 to sixth gear . . .

[21] . . . The resolve to show true **stature**. Leading with style and on merit. Meticulous and cultured . . .

[22] . . . Just like his A8. Indicating to pull out to overtake. Accelerating. **Safely** moving into the fast lane . . .

10 [23] . . . Savouring **SUCCESS** with all the senses. Every day anew. He's now reached today's destination.

(Audi 2004b: 18–23)

PRACTICAL 4.2 CLASS HANDOUT

COMPENSATION IN 'KUNSTSTÜCK' TT

In assessing compensation in this TT, an overriding strategic consideration needs to be kept in mind: the ST combines folksy and homely elements with Biermann's well-known message of political resistance (very much a product of the Iron Curtain culture he lived in). The ST is in a folk-song idiom, with the regular metre of a popular ballad, a form which the translator has decided to follow closely. The regularity is especially marked because, in every stanza but the last, the third line ends with 'runter'. This is much harder to imitate. If the translator judges that the stress on downward movement is important, as it surely is, the effect will probably have to be achieved partly through compensation. These two forms of regularity are reinforced by two forms of repetition. (1) The first line of every stanza is repeated in the second, a common feature in folk ballads; in principle, it is fortunately not hard to imitate in a TT. (2) In the case of 'lang ich mir [. . .] runter' (ll. 3, 9, 21), it is significant *what* is reached down – a cloud and the sun from the sky, God from His Heaven. There is great irony in the contrast between these titanic gestures and the reality of life amidst the grey concrete of the DDR. This important effect should surely be preserved, if necessary through compensation. (3) The fivefold repetition of 'Kunststück' at the refrain is important, partly because refrains are characteristic of folk songs, partly because of the contrast with 'Nebbich' in stanza 5, but mostly because of the mixture of sarcasm and resignation in the shoulder-shrugging anti-climax.

Line 1

The function of the casual short form 'mal' (representing 'einmal') at the start of each stanza is to establish a familiar, colloquial register. The absence of a similar English word is compensated for in the TT with 'son', a familiar, colloquial form of address, and a typical marker of matey solidarity. It does have a drawback, however: 'son' implies that the text is addressed to a male audience, as if the kind of bittersweet political comment expressed by the song is only likely among men. (Later, in line 25, 'When I get pissed, son' is positively blokeish.) Perhaps it really was the case that in the DDR of the 1970s women did not engage in this sort of comment. At all events, the strategic decision to match the ST metre in the TT imposes a severe constraint. A more obvious folk-song counterpart to 'son' is 'good people', but that does not fit the metre – only a monosyllable will do. 'Mate/lads/me lads' are open to the same objection as 'son', while 'folk(s)' is affected and unconvincing here. One monosyllabic solution might be 'like', as in 'Like, when I get hot'; but this contemporary import from America might carry associations of modern rock or rap which clashed with the ballad form of the ST as a whole. However, 'like' could be put at the end of the line: 'When I get hot, like.' In this usage, 'like' is a long-established sentence filler in non-standard English, suitably colloquial, but not laddish. This solution does not belong in the idiom

of folk song, but it does not clash with it either; it certainly compensates more fully than 'son' for the lack of a suitable TL word.

Lines 3, 9, 21

The most accurate rendering of 'lang' in these lines is 'reach (for)'. The translator may have found it impossible to end the line with 'down' – an important loss, given the insistent repetition of 'runter'. The loss is compensated for by inserting 'up' each time 'lang' is used; this ensures at least that the notion of high and low is preserved. Another addition in all three cases is 'and grab'; this perhaps conveys 'lang ich *mir*' more idiomatically than e.g. 'I reach and pull me down a cloud' etc., and it certainly gives a TT line that is closer in rhythm to the ST line. Using the energetic and relatively informal verb 'grab' also compensates to some extent for losing the colloquialism of 'ne' and 'runter'. It could be argued that, compensation or no compensation, not having the 'downness' of 'runter' is too big a loss; in that case, an alternative would be 'I reach up and pull a cloud down/I reach up and pull the sun down/I reach up and pull the good Lord down'. This has the advantage of replicating the ST rhythm exactly (except in the third case, where the ST is in any case rhythmically anomalous); but it does lose the compensatory value of 'grab'. If losing that compensation is unacceptable, 'grab' could perhaps be used instead of 'pull' – 'I reach up and grab a cloud down' etc.

Line 5

Translating 'kalte' as 'ice-cold' rather than 'cold' preserves the ST rhythm. The extra emphasis perhaps also joins up with 'grab' to compensate for losing the colloquial vigour of 'ne' and 'runter'. (In performance, of course, a good singer could produce this effect without 'ice-cold', spreading 'co-old' expressively over two beats.)

Lines 6, 12, 18, 24, 36

In the refrain and the title, the TT seems to miss the irony of the colloquial observation 'Kunststück', which means something like 'that's no great achievement', 'what (else) did you expect?', etc. This is less a question of compensation than of communicative translation. A closer rendering – and preserving the ST rhythm better – would be 'Brilliant', or possibly 'Big deal'.

Lines 10–12

Taken separately, each of these lines is open to criticism. We have already discussed line 12 in the previous note. Line 10 has a completely different tone from the ST line; in itself, 'pop it under my coat' sounds like a patronizing boss ('just pop a letter in the post') or cook ('just pop it in the oven'). Another weakness is that, compared with the ST line, it falters rhythmically. These losses could be avoided with e.g. 'and stick it in me jacket'. In line 11, 'oven' is in itself a mistranslation of 'Ofen', which means 'heater/stove/furnace' in the ST. A more accurate rendering which fits the rhythm would be 'Little heater/Little gas-fire'.

On the other hand, 'to pop [something] in the oven' is such a well-established collocation that line 11 can be said to make explicit a virtually inescapable implication

of 'pop [. . .] in', an example of collocative meaning (for discussion of collocative meaning, see Chapter 10). Taken together, lines 10–12 constitute an extended metaphor ('pop [. . .] oven [. . .] cake') which contrasts deflatingly with the image of grabbing the sun; as such, it enables 'Piece a cake' to convey the true impact of the ST refrain better than it does anywhere else in the TT, and restores by compensation the chippy, ironic tone.

Reading the three lines together as a successful piece of compensation means that 'stick it in me jacket' is no longer a necessary revision in line 10. But the line could still be revised to preserve the ST rhythm, without weakening the compensation at all, as follows: 'and pop it in me jacket.'

Line 15

Adding 'son' here is perhaps another attempt to compensate for losing the colloquial tone of 'runter'. As previously (see note to line 1), 'like' may be preferable. The position of 'son' is also rhythmically awkward, compared with the ST line, because it invites more voice stress than 'like'. Tonally and metrically, a better rendering would be 'clouds come floating down, like, with us'.

Line 21

The expression 'der liebe Gott' is so standard that the adjective just signals (normally) a pious standpoint. As with the French 'le bon Dieu', the most accurate rendering is simply 'God'. But 'I reach up and grab God', which follows the TT structure of lines 3 and 9, is rhythmically wrong. This may be why the translator has opted for the two syllables of 'dear Lord'. However, in a sung text, it might not be perfectly clear that 'dear Lord' denotes God, because the capital L cannot be heard. The more idiomatic 'the good Lord' would probably be clearer. In terms of literal meaning, 'good' incurs greater translation loss than 'dear', but it compensates for this by avoiding the (more serious) loss of clarity that would be incurred by 'dear'. 'God almighty' or 'almighty God' would be still clearer, but would introduce connotations (imprecation, rebellious challenge to God's might, etc.) that are not in the ST; this loss would outweigh the compensation. Perhaps the most faithful translation would be to use 'God' and to vary the pattern set in our revised TT lines 3 and 9: 'I reach up and pull down God from heaven'.

Line 22

In terms of literal meaning, there is some loss in 'sing me *a song*' (cf. 'sing me something'), but losing the rhythm would be a bigger loss. So the TT is idiomatic, scans and successfully compensates for the minor loss in literal meaning. However, there is much greater loss in literal meaning in '*So he'll sing*' (cf. 'And he sings'). If any will or intention is expressed at this point in the ST, it is at most implicit. But 'so he'll sing' is bound to be read, in this informal register, as meaning 'so that he'll sing', i.e. as expressing intention: the phrasing used suggests an attempt to persuade or coerce the Lord. Perhaps the translator was trying to compensate for the relative weakness of 'the dear Lord' by introducing a more energetic image. In so doing, however, he has unnecessarily committed the TT reader to a single interpretation, where the ST allows

two. There is no reason for not translating this phrase more faithfully, while keeping the future tense (since this is a habitual action – cf. ‘mal’) and the metrical compensation of ‘a song’: ‘and he’ll sing me a song’.

Line 25

‘Voll’ is halfway between ‘drunk’ and ‘pissed’. ‘When I get pissed, son’ is presumably an attempt to compensate for the loss elsewhere in the TT of the matey tone. But the combination of ‘pissed’ and ‘son’ is blokeishly crude (see note to line 1), whereas the ST is not. Using ‘like’ instead of ‘son’ takes the edge off this. An alternative would be to drop the ‘son/like’ and use a two-syllable adjective, e.g. ‘guttered’ or ‘rat-arsed’; but this is just as crude (though not laddish), and weakens the repetition which is so important in both ST and TT. It may be that the most faithful rendering would after all be something more pallid, such as ‘When I’ve had a few, like’.

Line 27

‘I nip down’ skilfully preserves both the colloquial tone and the metre in translating ‘geh ich kurz [. . .] runter’. Unfortunately, the figurative meaning of ‘zum Teufel gehen’ (‘to go to hell’) is lost. It is hard to see how to convey this other than by mentioning hell explicitly, as well as the devil, as in ‘I nip down to hell to see the devil’. But this is too long for the line, which presumably accounts for the TT. The only way of compensating for this would be for the singer to treat ‘I nip’ as grace notes, singing them very lightly and quickly before attacking the line at ‘down’, i.e. ‘(I nip) *down* to *hell* to *see* the *devil*’. This example raises the important question of the difference between oral and written texts (see Chapter 5): in an oral text, the way it is spoken or sung is a legitimate way of introducing compensation.

Lines 28–9

‘Buy’ loses the colloquial tone of ‘spendier’. This is compensated for partly by ‘*old Stalin*’ and partly by ‘old bugger’.

Lines 33–5

‘Keeping an eye on the border’ trivializes the oppressive image of the East German border guard, and a passport inspection is innocuous compared with the – in this context – sinister connotations of ‘Ausweis’. Consequently, the ST’s reference to ‘Grenzer’, thematically so important in the DDR cultural context, is only partially compensated for with ‘Passports ready!’. ‘(Your) papers, please!’ chills the spine a bit more. In any case, line 33 is rhythmically wrong. ‘I’ll be a border guard and watch / the border of heaven and hell’ incurs less translation loss in respect of literal meaning, connotations and metre. One objection to this rendering is that ‘border between’ is more idiomatic than the rather odd ‘border of’, which could be taken to imply that heaven and hell are somehow the same thing. The ST clearly requires ‘between’, but this does not fit rhythmically. An alternative is ‘the strip between heaven and hell’, which is apt in this context, alluding as it does to the deadly strip of land between East and West Berlin; it loses the repetition of ‘Grenzer/Grenze’, but compensates for this with the

appropriate connotations of 'strip' and by avoiding the rhythmic loss in 'border between'.