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Book forum

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On Kirsten Malmkjær, *Translation and creativity*

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Précis of the book

In February 2015, the British Broadcasting Corporation launched its Get Creative campaign, and a number of arts-oriented organizations in the UK joined in to celebrate and promote creativity among the population in general. In March 2018, the World Economic Forum's report on the future of jobs included creativity among skills that are likely to become increasingly highly valued by employers and organizations.

Events like these seem to me to evidence an enhancement of interest in creativity in modern societies; it seems that many people have come to share the view, attributed to Picasso, that art can clean the dust of the every day away from the human soul. Perhaps this is why creativity has come to be so highly valued among us.

For me, translating has always seemed to be a creative pursuit. I have used it in my teaching and just for personal pleasure, as well as doing some occasional commercial translating. I found it creative, no matter the text type, and admired translators and their work. Therefore, I have been surprised by scholars (even some translation scholars) and non-scholars alike who have expressed the view that translation is of lesser value than original writing; not only because of the extremely difficult issue of the assignment of different values (and consequently remunerations – let us clap for the nurses!) to different human endeavors, but because I think that translating is as difficult/pleasurable to do as so-called original writing, and that its outcomes are as valuable. I felt that in this era of creativity celebration, translation was being deprived of the share of admiration that should be rightfully its. I started to talk about this issue when oppor-

tunities to do so arose, and finally, with some prompting by Louisa Semlyen of Routledge, I wrote *Translation and Creativity*, which is the topic of this Book Forum.

I reasoned that before I could discuss whether translating was creative, I needed to explore the nature of creativity, what it might mean to be creative, and what kinds of outcomes might result from human creativity. I explored the source of much of western thinking on numerous topics, the German philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose views on creativity, which is named "genius" in the English translations, are set out in his works, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, revised 1787) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790).

I compared Kant's views with contemporary views, and found that Kant's understanding of creativity still meets with a good deal of agreement, although of course there are also disagreements, especially with regard to Kant's rather exclusive view of creativity as an attribute of people with special talents who create artefacts of particular value. This view tends to be superseded, now, by an understanding of creativity as a human characteristic that everyone has to a degree, but which some people, often called artists, possess to extraordinary levels. Whereas Kant believed that creativity was innate and could not be taught, contemporary theorists tend argue that creativity can be nurtured and trained. Therefore, while Kant did not think there could be rules for creativity, those contemporary theorists who believe that creativity can be nurtured through teaching also believe, perforce, that guidelines for enhancing creativity can be provided. Again, while contemporary theorists agree that creativity is often exercised by lone individuals, they also draw on evidence that collaborative team efforts can be highly effective. Indeed, among the best known translations in the British context is the King James Bible which, it is said, was made on the basis of an earlier Bible version by at least forty four translators, at least seven revisers of the first edition and further revisers of subsequent editions (Campbell 2010). Further, it is now generally considered that a wide variety of artefacts qualify as artistic outputs, and not Fine Art alone; and although creativity remains high on the list of perceived characteristics of art, artists and artistry, imitation and copying are considered important features of the background against which originality is fostered and profiled (Rehn 2011).

Chapter 1 having explored current understandings of creativity, in Chapter 2 I show that translating fulfils all the criteria which that understanding assigns to creative activities:

1. Translating ability is one identifiable human characteristic.
2. All bilinguals have translation ability to a degree, but some bilinguals possess it to extraordinary levels.
3. Translating moments occur in the individual mind, although many translating projects are group efforts.
4.Given 8 below (see 8 below), translators can be classified as artists.
5. Translations are clearly original works, although imitation and copying remain characteristic of the manner in which they bring something new to the world.
6. Bilinguals often engage in translating spontaneously, but the ability to translate can be nurtured and trained.
7. Guidelines can be provided for enhancing translating ability.
8. In the context of the wide variety of artifacts that qualify as artistic, translations fall squarely within that classification.
9. Scholarly research shows that translating occurs spontaneously among bilinguals.
10. Since language is innate in humans, and since all language use is translational, and so, clearly, is the kind of translation that involves two languages.

Given 10 above, though, it is necessary to explore what sets translating off from other writing processes, and in Chapter 3, I explore accounts of the translating process, both experimental and speculative. I do so against the background of the theory of meaning developed within analytical philosophy of language, where translation is a central notion, because, as Davidson (1973/1984: 125) puts it:

> The problem of interpretation is domestic as well as foreign: it surfaces for speakers of the same language in the form of the question, how can it be determined that the language is the same? Speakers of the same language can go on the assumption that for them the same expressions are to be interpreted in the same way, but this does not indicate what justifies the assumption.

The experimental and speculative studies examined illustrate the uniqueness of the translating process, and belie any conceptualization of translating as a form of creative writing influenced by a pre-existing test. Translating brings something new into the world at the same time as having, like all creative endeavors, “some form of copying at its very heart” (Rehn 2011: 137). A translator is a “writer of sentences on the close basis of others”, as Briggs points out (2017: 45), but translating is not the same as

reading and then writing, or reading interspersed with writing (creatively or not). Translating is its own process, and it is creative. The evidence for this, derived from empirical research, includes the finding that reading for translation takes longer than reading for other purposes (Shreve *et al*. 1993; Macizo and Bajo 2004; Jakobsen and Jensen 2008; Schaeffer *et al*. 2017) as well as the obvious fact that translators work with two texts, and their gaze moves between the two (Jakobsen 2017: 34). In addition, individual translators' testimony illustrates that "A translator's readings are not those of a casual reader, however well informed and engaged" (Bush 2006: 25).

In chapter 4, I refer to a number of translators' account of the work that they undertake prior to and while translating. I argue, that the kind of reading that most of these translator's undertake, as illustrated by their own testimonies, is a careful, aesthetic reading which clearly shows that translators adopt to their texts an attitude that Scruton (1974, Ch 10) calls the aesthetic attitude. The aesthetic attitude to an object is enjoyment of or interest in the object for its own sake. Interest in an object, *X*, for its own sake is (Scruton 1974: 148)

> a desire to go on hearing, looking at, or in some other way having experience of *X*, where there is no reason for this desire in terms of any other desire or appetite that the experience of *X* may fulfill, and where the desire arises out of, and is accompanied by, the thought of *X*. […] If I am interested in *X* for its own sake, then I shall respond to the question 'Why are you interested in *X*?' with the expression of the thought that provides the reason for my continued interest – in other words, I shall respond with a description of *X*.

I argue that a translation can be considered such a description, but one that is motivated by the very need to translate. When the aesthetic attitude is adopted to a work to be translated, which inevitably imbues the aesthetic attitude (which is supposed to be disinterested except in the object of the attitude) with a hint of functionality, then it may engender translational creativity. I argue that the way in which translators approach their source texts are prime examples of adoption of the aesthetic attitude. For example, Balmer's (2013: 87-8) comments on her translation of Sappho's fragment 16

> I wanted to foreground […] the balanced list of the military in stanza 1, the rhetorical flourishes and emphatic repetitions in stanza 2, the sense of movement and decisiveness of Helen's final action in stanza 3, the present/absent Anactoria in the fragmented stanza 4, and the circular progression which sees us back with the glinting armour of the foot-soldiers, out-sparkled by Anactoria's face, in

stanza 5. I also wanted to capture the poem's almost dreamlike shifts between present time, a distant, mythic past and the more recent past when Anactoria had been with the speaker. Another important factor was its change in register between the genderless generalization of "whatever one desires" to the preciseness of its rhetorical exemplum "it is perfectly possible to make this clear/to all", before ending with both a general and specific description; the preciseness of the armies of Lydia and the imagined vision of the lost Anactoria.

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Translation creativity in the era of translation technology

1. *Translation as RE-creativity in both literary and non-literary texts*

The debate on whether translation is a science or an art has reigned the discipline of translation studies for ages. Translation scholars in both camps have put forward their arguments vehemently but unfortunately have not been able to resolve the issue. So a third view has emerged: translation is both an art and a science, and therefore is an activity imbued with creativity but also governed by rules and methods. Personally, I am inclined to see art and science representing two ends of a continuum of the nature of translation. Translating never ceases to be an art but it is sometimes more an art than a science; similarly, there are always rules and methods to guide the translating practice, so it can also be more a science than an art at other times. The nature of translation may vary, in many instances, as per the genres being translated and the client's requirements in regards to the quality of translation and the related terms and conditions. As many would agree, more creativity is usually demanded of a translator when translating a literary text as opposed to a technical one. And the more literary a text is, the more creative the translating has to be, and the more artistic the translating and the translation will be. On the other hand, when a technical text is being translated, the translating will be less creative and hence less artistic but more scientific. In other words, translation can be more creative sometimes than other times.

Notwithstanding, Malmkjaer (2020) very cleverly argued for the creativity of translation by referring to Kant's definition of creativity. After a careful and convincing examination of the 10 traits of translation, she concluded squarely that translation is indeed creative and 'that translating is an art form'(3) both as the product and the activity. Of particular interest is her elucidation of the originality in translation: translation is, by default and necessity, a reproduction based on a priori text. And also her argument that creativity, and by inference, creativity in translation, is teachable although Kant asserted the opposite. While she recognized the mechanical and routine aspects of translating, she demonstrated with vigor that 'creativity can be predicated of translation and translations' (*Ibid:* 3), with examples drawn from varied sources, mostly literary writings. This may give the impression that creativity is predicated only of translation of literary texts, which is perhaps the long-standing understanding held by many teachers.

But is it true? What about translation of non-literary texts? Is it also creative as the act and the product? This is an important question to ask as today the translation market is dominated by non-literary translation. As early as in 1990s, Venuti (1995) and Kingscott (1995) observed that technical translation far exceeded the translation of literary texts in sheer volume and financial worth. Is translating of technical and business texts creative?
Hewson (2016) argues that creativity in translation is different from that in creative writing. The latter may be understood as 'creation' out of 'nothing' while the former 'creation' out of 'something', i.e. an existing text. The creativity of translation happens in the process of re-creating a second text and the re-creation occurs within the constraints of an existing text. In order to solve the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural problems, the translator will have to identify translation problems first and then devise creative strategies to solve them. It is hard to decide which activity, writing or translation, is more creative and therefore which one demands more creativity on the agent. Some argue creative writing is more demanding as it is creation out of nothing and translation less demanding as it is a reproduction based on an earlier text. Others argue translation is more demanding because the translator cannot be completely free in his re-expressions – he has to have the original text always in sight and negotiate within the boundaries of the original text. Nevertheless, one thing is certain – writing and translation are both creative, but in different ways. Translation is creation, or RE-creation after the creation of the original text. In that sense, translation is a RE-creative process.

Some translation teachers believe that the creative process in translation starts with the identification of translation problems, followed by creative manipulation of the target language and translational choices in order to solve these problems. However, Newson points out that such a view presupposes that there can be no creative translating per se, and argues that any text can generate a creative translation.

> [A]lmost any source-text fragment can (potentially) be used to produce a creative translation. This can perhaps best be envisaged by considering the late revision stages of translating. (Hewson 2016: 13)

So the repeated revisions make the translating per se a creative process without necessarily being limited to problem identification and solution. This means that creativity in translation is not at all limited to the translation of literary texts only. Actually, creativity is inherent in translation *per se* and therefore is in the translation of all types of genres.

However, the intensity may vary, even considerably, between literary and non-literary texts, and it may be strongly affected by the requirements and conditions set by commissioner in the translation brief (Nord 1997). In other words, translation of technical texts will certainly involve creativity, not only in terms of the identification of translation problems and creative solutions, but also the repeated revisions of the earlier drafts to make the produced text better. However, the creative efforts may be modulated by the translation conditions, and perhaps the adoption of translation technology today.

2. *Translation RE-creativity in the context of translation technology*

Translation technology has undergone a rapid and tremendous growth in the past decade, with the stunning development of and increasing accessibility to technologies in Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Cloud Computing. According to European Language Industry Survey, both CAT and machine translation (MT) are going strong and "78% of all responding LSCs plan to start or increase using machine translation or post editing" (2020: 44). The World Interpreter and Translator Training Association (WITTA) established a society to research the development and training of translation technology in 2018. Today, "[t]ranslators play a key role in the growing market for intercultural technical communication and translation technologies can assist them in several areas of their work" (Risku 2004). So if we take Malmkjær's argument of creativity a step further to look at translation in the context of translation technology, we may wonder whether and how translation technology might have affected our perception and understanding of translation as an art form. There are a number of questions we may ask, for instance:

1. As an activity, is translating still a creative process when the translating is assisted by powerful computer-aided translation (CAT) tools or even when most or all of the translating is performed by automatic translation machines?

2. Since machine translation necessarily involve post-editing by humans, does it involve creativity on the part of the translator?

3. As a product, is the outcome of translating, i.e. the translated text produced by machine while post-edited by humans or produced by humans while heavily assisted by CAT tools, still an art form?

All these questions actually boil down to one question, that is, whether technology changes the nature of translating. Alternatively, does technolo-

gy hinder or facilitate creativity? My students once raised the question whether translation technology might make them increasingly more dependent on it and they might become less creative as they learned to translate with the assistance of translation technology or post-edit machine translated texts. However, in general translation teachers believe that technology does not suppress our creativity but on the contrary enables us to become more productive and forces us to become even more creative. On the one hand, it has replaced humans in much of the routine work in translation and has kept on driving the fees down over the years. This has made it necessary for translators to consider their survival. To stay competitive and useful, the route is not to resist translation technology but rather to embrace it and manage it to the best of its potentials. It is important translators understand technology, master it and stay ahead of it. On the other hand, technology has also made it possible for translators to focus much more on the creative aspect of translation than before. As much of the tedious routine translation is carried out by machines and the productivity increased with the assistance of translation technology, translators are relieved or released from much of the mundane work but to focus on what machines cannot do or cannot outperform humans, for instance in literary translation. So we can say that in this era of translation technology, creativity is the defining feature of a translator.

However, we must remember even the most powerful MT system cannot fare without human intervention in the form of post-editing in order to ensure the translation meets the level of quality negotiated between the client and the translator. While light post-editing aims at minimal intervention by the translator just to make sure the translated text makes sense, full post-editing involves semantic as well as stylistic editing to ensure the translation is of high quality. Therefore, the post-editing is indeed a process of identifying linguistic, semantic and stylistic problems and solving them. Today translation technology plays a pivotal role in the translating of pragmatic texts in particular, so the argument that translation is creative in both literary and non-literary rendering still holds true in the age of translation technology. And this understanding has serious implications for translation training.

3. *Translation RE-creativity in translation teaching*

Despite Kant's argument, Malmkjær contends that creativity is teachable, which is a position many translation teachers share. The problem is *how*

to teach creativity in translation classrooms and how to renovate current curriculums to enhance the training of translation creativity in the context of fast developing translation technology.

Translation creativity "is the ability to exploit the resources of both source and target languages in order to produce unpredictable micro-level translation solutions that are coherent with the macro-level interpretation given to the text and compatible with external parameters" (Hewson 2016: 20). As discussed earlier, creativity in translation may begin with identification of translation problems and coming up with innovative strategies to solve them. It is found or needed in the translation of both literary and non-literary texts, although probably to a greater extent in the rendering of literary texts. Different from creative writing, translation is a form of RE-creativity because it creates a new text within the constraints of an existing one. Besides, technology intensifies the demand on translators to become more creative in order to stay competitive and to excel in what machines cannot replace or outperform human translators today. It also makes it imperative for translators to be creative in the post-editing of machine translated texts. With all this in mind, Kiraly's social constructivist approach to translation curriculum design and teaching methods will be definitely relevant (2000). Students do not *learn* to be creative translators; they must *become* creative translators. Hence, authentic translation tasks and projects must be given to students to work on in and outside the classroom, and in so doing, they will identify difficulties and problems, devise solutions by relating translation theories to practice, and attend to the process of translation by adopting a reflective approach to translation. The constraint of space precludes a detailed discussion of the teaching of creativity in translation classrooms, so it may suffice to say that of all these propositions, the tenets are:

1. Learners and learning should be placed at the center of all translation teaching and learning activities.

2. Translation students should be provided with abundant hands-on translation practice, in which authenticity in translation scenarios and materials should be stressed.

3. Students' attention should be drawn to the process of translating, where they will identify problems and come up with solutions.

4. They should also be encouraged to adopt a reflective approach, via which the learners will become more sensitive to translation problems and better at critically analyzing and solving them with reference to translation theories.

5. In terms of curriculum, literary translation should be emphasized because it is more challenging – it generally presents more problems for translators and allows greater flexibility in solutions.

6. Translation theories are to be stressed because that is where translation students will find inspiration and guidance when they are en route to becoming creative translators.

7. While translation technology should be stressed in general, more emphasis should be placed on the post-editing strategies to enable translation students to come up with creative solutions for problems in post-editing.

3. *Concluding remarks*

Creativity is not so much a process of learning or acquisition but rather a matter of becoming and growing. And this goal can be most effectively achieved by engaging students in authentic translation tasks with literary nature while adopting process-oriented (Gile 1994), project-based (Li *et. al* 2015), task-based (Li 2013), and reflective approaches (Li 1998), to help students analyze their practices from theoretical perspectives. When students' general abilities in critical thinking and problem solving are nurtured and enhanced, their creativity in identifying translation problems and devising solutions will be strengthened. And only with that kind of curriculum and methods will we place our students in a powerful position to meet the challenges ahead with creativity in this era of translation technology.

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On Kirsten Malmkjær's *Translation and creativity*

Malmkjær's point of departure in this book is Kant's notion of creativity, which is defined according to ten standards or criteria. Kant's rather strict application of those criteria yields the foreseeable result of excluding from the field of creativity all human endeavours except the highest art forms. Things have changed since the Enlightenment, though, and creativity has become a much more democratic notion, encompassing nowadays a greater number of activities and processes. Just to briefly illustrate this point, standard 2 presents creativity as part and parcel of everybody's mental constitution, a claim that is rounded off in standard 10 when *homo sapiens* is equated with *homo aestheticus*. Moreover, in standard 5 imitation is upgraded to a stage in the creative process, thus ceasing to

be the opposite of creativity to become a prerequisite for it. Perhaps perversely, I am reminded of Catalan writer Eugeni d'Ors' famous *dictum* that what is not tradition is plagiarism. In other words: you cannot escape tradition.

To me, the main stronghold of the book's overall argument lies in the second chapter, where creativity in the context of translation is put to the test of Kant's criteria. This is a feat of systematic thinking, not least because it is performed in the teeth of the commonly held assumption that translating is little more than copying. How can translation, of all things, aspire to the high heaven of originality and creativity which has traditionally been set apart for the work of genius? That is the daunting challenge faced and met by translation. Several considerations come to the author's aid. The first one is the idea of gradation. Even if membership of the species *homo aestheticus* has endowed us all with the gift of creativity, that gift is far from evenly distributed – otherwise it would be impossible to account for a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Mozart. The same applies to translators and translations. The second consideration is that the idea of translating as copying is untenable and in fact eligible for a full-on attack. The ammunition gathered by the author to that end is perhaps not original but beautifully arranged thanks to compression (2020: 38-9). There are differences across languages that can be negotiated in a number of ways; there is context, which is always unique; there are all kinds of sociocultural factors. (Of course there is much more, and some attempts at exhaustiveness in the field come to mind, such as Chesterman's (2000) causal model of translation; but exhaustiveness is not here of the essence.) There is ultimately the stubborn fact that several different translations of a source text are always possible, and indeed extant in many cases. This basic fact has fascinated many translation scholars, whose testimony might have lent considerable weight to Malmkjær's argument at this point. Munday (2008), for instance, places differences across translations of the same source text at the very basis of his rich research into Latin American writing and its English translation. Even prior to considering several translations of the same source text, a single translation and its source may evoke different images of the fictional world and thus give rise to different reading experiences – as argued by Van Leuven-Zwart (1989) with respect to the original *Don Quijote* and a Dutch translation she had previously read. In fact, according to Malmkjær, the whole point about the retranslation of classics is originality – which might sound paradoxical to the *copying* faction, for, if translation tends to be imitation at the best of times, there can be little margin for originality when a source

text has already been translated several times into a given target language. The idea that originality is almost a prerequisite for retranslation serves the author's argumentative purposes well, but one may legitimately wonder if that is always the case. Retranslations may meet book market demands or fulfil a publisher's wishes just as they can embody a new reading of the source text or hit upon new solutions for old problems. Again, this is a matter of context – of the receiving literary or sociocultural context. But the point that translation is not at all like copying is eloquently made.

Apart from these two aspects, which have been singled out because of their prominence, the author's discussion of the different standards of creativity as applied to translating is full of little gems that shine for an instant and then are seen no more, as one of the defining features of the book is concision. Of course, agreement with the author on some points may be less than whole-hearted, but that should come as no surprise. For example, discussion on whether there are rules in translating (standard 7) is a bit confusing because it mixes up contributions where prescription is uppermost with others that are generalisations on observed practice. In spite of Malmkjær's (2020: 42) caveat that "accounts of observed phenomena are of course not prescriptive rules", Lefevere is left to stand side by side with Newmark and even Dryden. In my opinion, translation strategies or techniques as seen from a descriptive viewpoint provide a map of the problem or genre under scrutiny (say, poetry translation) and are value-free, but can become the object of praise or criticism in a prescriptive setting. A single classification can serve both purposes, but not at the same time – it is quite possible to be descriptive in research and prescriptive, or at least judgmental, in translator training. And then there is the issue of (un)translatability, which is brought to bear on the question whether translation can produce fine art or not. Malmkjær engages with Jakobson's well-known claim that poetry is by definition untranslatable and argues convincingly against it. However, the argument might have been more encompassing if it had included other extremely challenging textual features such as wordplay, dialect, cultural distance or temporal background. Issues of (un)translatability are equally applicable to them all. And, as far as formal features are concerned, again the idea of gradation might have helped. Of course everything is translatable (the idea would run), including fine verbal art, but some texts are more translatable than others, the main complicating feature being, perhaps, a high degree of interdependence between sound and sense. The more dependent

sense is on sound (i.e., on the material or physical side of language), the more difficulties for the translator.

The third chapter deals with accounts of the translating process, both experimental and speculative. Process-based research is understandably given precedence over other approaches to translation because creative acts ultimately take place in the translator's mind; but this justification ought perhaps to have been made more explicit in the book's (otherwise so closely knit) chain of reasoning. Anyway, before presenting those accounts, Malmkjær devotes some space to the theory of meaning that, in her opinion, is best suited to translation – Davidson's, a possibilistic theory in stark contrast to other, much more pessimistic approaches to meaning, such as Quine's. Davidson's approach is summarised as follows: "linguistic communication is a function from a set of values including the speaker(s), the hearer(s), a time, a place, and a more extensive set of circumstances, to a meaning; or we can say that meaning is a relationship that exists between all of these" (Malmkjær 2020: 56). The author calls this approach "liberating" in that it regards meaning not as something immanent in words but as a function or a relationship. In short, meaning is negotiated by participants in a given setting. This is akin to functional approaches to language, and the many followers of, say, systemic-functional or cognitive linguistics can only acquiesce. As to the overview proper of accounts of the translating process, it is necessarily compressed but covers a lot of conceptual ground. The most relevant finding for the issue of creativity and the aesthetic attitude is perhaps that reading for translating takes longer, and is therefore assumed to involve more cognitive effort, than reading for comprehension or other purposes.

In chapter 4, Malmkjær, among other things, looks at statements by translators on their own practice for clues of the aesthetic attitude, which consists in paying attention to an object (in our case, the source text) for its own sake. There is no shortage of such statements, and the author presents thirty of them. Taken together, they constitute a substantial part of her argument. One could go beyond that argument and add that this kind of invaluable testimony is also important as a vindication of particular national traditions. A number of them are alluded to in Malmkjær's chapter, even if English is involved in most examples either as source or target language. But it is made abundantly clear at any rate that the aesthetic attitude is not language (or language pair) specific.

However, the scope of the aesthetic attitude may have been overstretched, as it is made to cover so much ground that it blends with the ethical and the ideological. On pages 77-8, for instance, the author men-

tions Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin's translation of a Gianni Rodari story in an educational setting, where the translator introduces a deliberate shift because unemployed parents might feel insulted by an expression in the source text if translated literally. And on pages 79-80 the feminist approach to translation is alluded to with regard to Lina Fisher's German rendering of a poem by Carol Ann Duffy. I would argue that what is at stake in these two examples is not aesthetic in nature, even if it demands, of course, a close reading of the text and careful consideration of ethical and ideological issues. It would not detract from the centrality of the aesthetic attitude to tease aesthetic matters (amply illustrated in the book) apart from others that are not strictly aesthetic.

A second problem with the overall argument stems from the claim that all translating is creative, since all examples are taken from literary sources. This might of course be put down to ease of access: literary texts, whether translated or not, are publicly available, whereas other types of texts belong to the private sphere and are difficult to come by. But it is possible to draw the alternative inference that only the translation of texts collectively regarded as creative can be creative as well. If the latter is the case, does the aesthetic attitude apply to 'non-creative' texts? And would such a huge area of professional practice (i.e. the translation of non-creative texts) pass the test of the ten standards of creativity considered in the first two chapters? Some space might perhaps have been devoted to the elucidation of these questions, even if the choice of literary texts for the argumentative purposes of the book is of course amply justified.

Be that as it may, Malmkjær's book never loses track of its ultimate goal, whatever its minor shortcomings. I think the author strikes the right note when she presents translation as a matter of compromise between the aesthetic attitude, which plays a crucial role in fostering creativity, and the translational imperative, "the demand or want or wish for a translation" (2020: 30). Producing art, "bringing something new into the world", as Malmkjær refers to the not-so-rare occurrence of creative translation, is just part of the picture – although in many cases it is the defining part. But the translator cannot fail to have "both feet planted on the side of praxis" (Polizzotti 2018: 41). An analogy could be drawn between Malmkjær's dichotomy and Argentinian writer and translator Marcelo Cohen's (2014) distinction between music and designation in language. Cohen starts from the assumption that the literary artist yearns for the music of language at the expense of what he calls *designation* – perhaps another name for the referential function of language. This

yearning is most visible in poetry – "for the poet, freeing thought means going back to rhythm" (2014: 12) – but is also felt in prose. The music of literature is a particular kind of music, though: its raw material is the common prosody of a language (2014: 15), and it builds on that. But those attempts and efforts are all in vain. The (foundational) yearning remains a yearning because "willingly or not, fiction must take the referential nature of language upon its shoulders and bear its instrumental uses" (2014: 16). However, the argument can be reversed and, translated into Malmkjær's terms, it would read thus: even if designation (i.e. the translational imperative) is never in abeyance in translation, music (i.e. the aesthetic attitude) makes all the difference and accounts for the added value found in particular translations.

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Kirsten Malmkjær

Response to Defeng Li

Defeng Li raises several important issues in his reaction to my book. First, he discusses the distinction between art and science. Secondly, he maintains that there is a distinction to be drawn between creativity and re-creativity. Thirdly, he refers to the propensity of translation teachers, and, I would add, scholars, to understand translating as a problem solving activity.

1. *The distinction between art and science and whether translation is one or the other*

In this regard, Defeng Li recognizes the importance of stressing that (human) translation in connection with all types of text can be, and almost always is, creative. He is right to point out that there is far more translating being done of non-literary than of literary texts; and this implies, of course, that if we are to raise the status of translation per se, no matter which qualities we wish to ascribe to it in support of this goal, then we must be sure to be talking about *all* forms of translating, and not literary translating alone. I could not agree more, and it is a weakness of my work that I was unable to present testimonies to their working practices provided by translators of text beyond the literary. I hope to be able to do so in the not too distant future. It is worth mentioning, though, that more and more scientists themselves, as well as more and more artists want to break down the strict division between art and science. The University of the Arts in London, for example, offers an MA in Arts and Science, which, the course overview claims "explores the creative relationship between art and science", a relationship that "expands the boundaries of understanding and invention" (see https://www.arts.ac.uk/subjects/fine-art/postgraduate/ma-art-and-science-csm#course-overview).

3. *The distinction between creativity and re-creativity*

Defeng Li elegantly draws upon the work of other scholars who have argued that all translating is creative, although he personally (along with some of these scholars) wishes to draw a line between creativity and re-creativity: "One thing is certain", he says, "writing and translation are both creative, but in different ways. Translation is creation, or RE-creation after the creation of the original text. In that sense, translation is a RE-creative process". Of course, he is right that translating occurs after the writing of the original text; it would be foolish to argue otherwise; but that alone says nothing about the creativity or otherwise of translation. The Mona Lisa was painted after lots of other painting, but that makes it no less a creative endeavor than the earlier works. But the distinction between creation and re-creation, with translating situated on the re-creative side of that fence, is one that has been drawn by many eminent scholars (e.g. Richards 1979; Neubert 1997, Kussmaul 1995), and it must be respected even though I am not sure that it holds water because it seems,

at least to me, to be impossible to find clear criteria for drawing the distinction. Order of succession will not do, as we have just seen. Another argument for the distinction is made in terms of dependency.

Li quotes Hewson's argument (2016) that creative writing is "'creation' out of 'nothing'" whereas translating is "'creation' out of 'something'". This is, however, a distinction that I find it difficult to make sense of. In what sense is there ever creation out of nothing? As *The Sound of Music* (Wise 1965) rather banally has is, "Nothing comes of nothing". If there is a distinction to be made in terms of dependency, it must be between *what* the two activities come from rather than between coming from something and not coming from anything. I will accept that translating is based on another text; anything else would be churlish, and being based on another text is in any case fundamental to translations, as Li also mentions. But I will not accept that "original" writing is based on nothing; I might in fact argue that it is indeed often based on other texts, perhaps even on just one other text that has inspired it. Take for instance *The Hours* (Cunningham 1998) in relation to *Mrs Dalloway* (Woolf 1925). Or "original" writing may take the form of memoirs which are based on the writer's experience, part of their life history, and that is not nothing. One might argue that a translation is more closely based on its source text than for example a ballet is based on a book that it might be inspired by, but that is not necessarily so. Best let these particular sleeping dogs lie, in my view, and accept, instead, that where it is so fiendishly difficult to draw a distinction it is perhaps because there isn't really one to draw. Or the distinction to draw is not the one one is trying to draw, but another one. In this case perhaps the most helpful distinction to draw is between being a story or account of something in only one language and/or medium, and being a story or account of something in more than one language and/or medium. The distinction, in other words, should not be drawn between more or less creativity but rather between having only one iteration and having several iterations and/or media of iteration. As Li says,

> Some argue creative writing is more demanding as it is creation out of nothing and translation less demanding as it is a reproduction based on an earlier text. Others argue translation is more demanding because the translator cannot be completely free in his re-expressions – he has to have the original text always in sight and negotiate within the boundaries of the original text.

Exactly. We can argue both ways, and it is impossible to adjudicate in that argument, not least because it is fiendishly difficult to measure difficulty level. I maintain, therefore, that the distinction between translation and original writing is not one of difficulty. But, in any case, it is unclear that creativity is to be equated with difficulty, an equation that is not unrelated to the view of translation as problem solving.

3. *Translation as problem solving*

As Li has it, "some translation teachers believe that the creative process in translation starts with the identification of translation problems, followed by creative manipulation of the target language and translational choices in order to solve these problems". This is a strategy that I have always eschewed in favour of encouraging a view of the translation task as one that poses opportunities for creativity throughout, and not only in selected parts of the movement between texts and of the connection that translating identifies between them. This is not a minor matter, nor a mere matter of semantics, but rather an alternative approach which is more likely to foster a holistic approach to the translating task, than the approach which implies that automation of part of the translation, punctuated with moments of special attention is the desired work flow; I know that this is a controversial view, and that many teachers want to aim for automation of the task, something that takes me to Li's very interesting remarks on his fourth topic.

4. *Translation as RE-creativity in the context of translation technology*

In that context, a large part of the translating process is indeed automated, and I wholly share Li's obvious admiration of the progress that has been made in this respect in recent decades. He asks three pertinent questions here which, as he points out, boil down to the question "whether technology changes the nature of translating". This is indeed an important and theoretically very interesting question, which may be addressed partly by way of answering the three more specific questions that Li asks (I summarise):

1. Is translating still creative when some or even the majority of it is done by machine?
2. Given the need to post-edit, is creativity still involved?

3. Is a machine produced text, with human post-editing, still art?

I have no difficulty at all in answering each of these questions positively, which is also Li's own position. The aesthetic attitude, which I discuss in section 3.5 of the book in particular, will be involved in the process of deciding which parts of the translation task can be machine produced and in planning and executing the post-editing; that being so, the post-editing will be creative and the resulting text will consequently still be art. But does technology change the nature of translating? Yes and no, and it depends. For a translator who has in the past worked as part of a team of only humans, translations may often have come to him or her for reactions and post-editing, and the fact that one now comes via a machine is probably not so very different; in fact the machine is less likely to be hurt and upset by editing suggestions than a human translator. For a sole, lone translator, having the machine's suggestions may either be a great help or, I am told, a source of great irritation, or a combination of both (Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, personal communication).

Li also agrees with me that translating can be taught, and he is of course absolutely right to add that "the problem is *how* to teach creativity in translation classrooms" and how to use translation technology in this endeavor. I have no argument with his recommendation of Kiraly's approach, and I am grateful to Li for having taken the time to respond to my book in this constructive manner.

Response to Josep Marco Borillo

Equally, I thank Josep Marco very much for his mainly positive reactions. He is less enthusiastic about the following issues.

1. *Paying homage*

Marco is right to remind me of my omissions of mentions of scholarly work that might have supported and strengthened my arguments.

2. *Re-translations*

Marco is also completely right to point out that whereas I use the fact of re-translation to support a theoretical issue, in fact retranslations may

simply be a reflection of publishers' planning and market demands. I would also add that in the case of some works, for example, translations of texts for young children, new editions often differ mainly from earlier ones in having new illustrations. Still, some translations, surely, are instigated by translators themselves and focus on the text.

3. *Sound and sense*

Marco is completely correct when he points out that sound and sense are interdependent in many contexts, and in some texts more than in others. But I do not think that this need disturb my argument against untranslatability, so long as we can adopt a relaxed attitude to the issue of equivalence, and that has become increasingly acceptable in recent decades. And yet, of course, like many others, I have a little store of favourite untranslatable poems (some of them rather long) that I take out and play with from time to time. I cannot produce translations of these that make me feel like the original poems do; but that is not to say that someone else might not be able to; so these examples do not defeat me theoretically, I maintain, optimistically. I could never paint the Mona Lisa, but Leonardo da Vinci could.

4. *The aesthetic attitude*

Marco argues that I am affording the aesthetic attitude unreasonably wide scope which causes it to blend with the ethical and the ideological, and he selects two examples to illustrate this. The first is a line from a poem by Gianni Rodari which a school teacher translates less than accurately because he wants to avoid causing offence to some of his pupils' parents. But I am not convinced that the admixture of this consideration by the translator is a stretching of the aesthetic attitude at all; the translator adopted the aesthetic attitude to the poem, noticed the potential to offend and therefore sought to employ lexis that he considered would not realize the potential to offend. The second example Marco selects is a feminist translation into German of a poem by Carol Ann Duffy, and this is a better example than the first of other considerations mixing in with the aesthetic. The translator knows that German demands that she selects a gender for a character in her translation, and she selects the feminine. If you are a translator into German, you do not need to consult your

aesthetic attitude to realize that you need to select a gender for nouns, something which is not the case in English. The English term to be translated is "the stranger", and German has to indicate in the term that corresponds to the article (the) which gender the stranger is, masculine (*der*), or feminine (*die*).

5. *The use of literary texts as examples*

Like Li, Marco takes me to task for selecting all of my examples from literary texts. This is, indeed, as he suspects, because translations of literary texts are much easier to find than translations of other text types, and it does indeed invite the question of whether the aesthetic attitude is also routinely adopted by translators to non-literary texts. Unfortunately, the translators' testimonies that I was able to access were also all by literary translators. Marco is right that I should have given more space in my book to addressing this issue.

Conclusion

In light of the clear weaknesses that my critics have identified, I am all the more gratified that both Marco's and Li's overall reaction to my work is favourable. To have the approval of two such eminent translation studies scholars is very gratifying, and I thank them both for their attention to my work.

One feature of the book that I was especially happy with was a point of philosophy. I argue that a translation can be considered the kind of description of a work that the aesthetic attitude to it would engender, but one that is motivated by the need to translate. Since the aesthetic attitude is supposed to be focused solely on its object, I was pleased to have identified an instance where it seems to make sense to allow it to have a further focus, namely a translation and which therefore imbues the aesthetic attitude with a hint of functionality.

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