



Adriana ȘERBAN

Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3

Review of:
MALMKJÆR, Kirsten (2019):
Translation and Creativity.
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**Cognition and Hermeneutics:
Convergences in the Study
of Translation**

Douglas Robinson
[ed.]

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Hermeneutics and Creativity, University of Leipzig
Hermeneutik und Kreativität, Universität Leipzig

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On the bottom line, it looks like I owe quite a lot not only to Shakespeare but also and above all to Leal.

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Adriana ŞERBAN
Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3

Review of: MALMKJÆR, Kirsten (2019): *Translation and Creativity*. London / New York: Routledge. 130 pp. ISBN: 9781138123274.

A book authored by Kirsten Malmkjær is a reason to celebrate. That this should be so is obvious to anyone who has familiarised himself or herself with Malmkjær's work in translation over the last three decades or more, and is aware of her contribution to the discipline—a contribution which has often involved showcasing other scholars' work and limiting writing and public speaking to those instances where she felt there was something she absolutely had to say. And this strikes me as the ethical thing to do. Clearly, for Malmkjær, writing is never a contrived exercise signalling conformity to external demands and temptations, but the natural outcome of a process of inquiry which started, in each case, because

the researcher needed to work out for herself the answer to a question, or to a set of questions.

Malmkjær does not belong to a school or ‘turn’; she is a philosopher of language who stands out in Translation Studies for having brought to the endeavour to conceptualise translation and describe translations her understanding of language philosophy, especially analytical (in the tradition of Quine and Davidson). She has written about translation stylistics, research methodology, the role of translation in language teaching, and about translations of Danish literature (especially Hans Christian Andersen). Malmkjær’s readers have learned to expect detailed linguistic analysis as part of the way in which the author thinks translation, with a focus on the question of meaning and on stylistic considerations. At all times, they can count on Malmkjær’s integrity and feel safe in the knowledge that this is one academic who knows exactly what she is talking about when she manipulates sophisticated ideas, and who will not resort to wooden language. In fact, she cannot, because she needs utterances to mean something, rather than nothing or very little.

Translation and Creativity has a thesis. Its author sets out to “argue not only that translating is a valuable art form and that valuable art can be the result of the activity of translating”, but also to “maintain that translating per se is always creative” (p. 3). The monograph includes an Introduction, four chapters, and a very brief Afterword in lieu of conclusions. This reader, at least, felt it is unfinished work, for reasons I will outline in what follows.

Chapter 1 is entitled “Definitions of creativity” and contains a review of literature on creativity and the latter’s association with originality, danger, and with ... translation. Malmkjær begins with Kant’s discussion of artistic creativity in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the *Critique of Judgement* and

compares Kant's position with later views in terms of what creativity is considered to refer to, who can be said to be creative, as well as the question of whether creativity can be taught or not.

In Chapter 2, "Translation in the context of definitions of creativity", the researcher contends with one overarching issue: "Does translating qualify as creative given current theorists' views of creativity?" Many section titles in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are phrased as questions. Malmkjær explains that, just like creativity, translation is many things, and that creativity and translating abilities appear to be omnipresent in humans and that a case can be made for the role of nurturing and training such abilities with a view to developing them. In my opinion, one of the most valuable insights here is that translations are original *and* imitation and copying are part of the way in which they are produced, which is in fact the case with all creative works, according to Rehn (2011). This should go some way towards providing a common-sense answer when confronted with remarks that translations are mere copies of an original. Malmkjær states in no uncertain terms that such views collapse on both philosophical and linguistic grounds.

The third chapter of *Translation and Creativity* gives Malmkjær the opportunity of a brief excursion into the theory of meaning, which then leads her to outline a number of aspects of the translating process (the title of this chapter is "Accounts of the translating process") and to propose a view of translation based on philosophical aesthetics and, more exactly, on the observer's attitude to the object which he or she observes. One can only wish the section in which Malmkjær does this, which she entitles "How to be a translator", should have been longer than the two pages it contains. Having referred to the 'aesthetic attitude' as defined by Roger Scruton

(1974/1988), characterised by the appreciation and enjoyment of an object for its own sake, and having established that this attitude can apply not only to works of art such as, for instance, paintings, but also to texts, it would have been important and, perhaps, necessary, to tell the reader more. The idea of translation as description of an object towards which the observer, in this case a translator, may have an aesthetic attitude is certainly interesting, but it almost seems like the author was not sure what to do with it, once she mentioned it. And if the aesthetic attitude involves affording an object attention for its own sake while relinquishing all concern with, say, objectives and purposes, what are we to make of the fact that a (professional) translator is likely to have translating in mind while contemplating the text as an artwork?

Aesthetic attention to a text to be translated does not by and of itself guarantee creative translating, according to Malmkjær (p. 68). However, as she reminds the reader (p. 79) by quoting Boase-Beier, “translation which is stylistically aware can make a more reasonable case for its interpretation of the source text than any other sort of translation can” (2006: 110), and is more likely to predispose the reader to adopt, in turn, an aesthetic attitude towards the target text (p. 93).

Would anything be lost, in terms of meaning, if ‘aesthetic’ were deleted from ‘aesthetic attention’ and only ‘attention’ were conserved, or if ‘aesthetic’ were replaced with ‘stylistically aware’? The answer, I think, is yes, of course. But I am left wanting to know why exactly.

In the fourth chapter, “Creativity in translating and translations”, Malmkjær discusses several translators’ accounts of their translation processes which demonstrate keen attention to detail in the source texts, and examines excerpts

from these texts and their translations. She also offers a case study of her own experience of producing a translation into English of Andersen's "The Princess on the Pea" (usually known under the title "The Princess and the Pea"). Towards the end of the chapter, the author illustrates what she considers non-creative, an-aesthetic translating. While not disagreeing with Malmkjær's assessment that the translation choices she decided to present in this section are less than felicitous, a question sprang to mind: could it be that some of them were, in fact, motivated by the translator's particular type of (aesthetic) attitude?

The Afterword sums up the book and does not offer further elaboration, leaving this reader in two minds about whether this is a bad thing or a good one. As I realised I was finishing reading *Translation and Creativity*, I saw two options to choose from: a sense of frustration that there isn't one more fully-fledged chapter to wrap up the discussion, and appreciation for Malmkjær's ability to stop writing exactly where she has to, which means once she has shared what she had to say, at a given moment in time. I walk away with a number of insights, among which: originality and imitation simultaneously characterise processes and outcomes; it is not possible to conceptualise translation "as a form of creative writing influenced by a pre-existing text" (p. 69) because translation is not reading and then writing, or writing interwoven with reading, but its own process, which is creative in nature; "[a]esthetic attention to a text does not require a further theory, but nor does it preclude it" (p. 79).

References

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Larisa CERCEL
Universität La Sapienza, Rom & Universität Leipzig

Review of: OKULSKA, Inez (2018): *Wer hat's geschrieben, wer übersetzt? Autor- und Übersetzerschaft als kontingente Rollen*. Wissenschaftliche Reihe des Collegium Polonicum. Berlin: Logos Verlag. 139 S. ISBN: 978-3-8325-4524-6.

Ein schmales, aber provokatives Buch hat die polnische Forscherin Inez Okulska mit ihrer Doktorarbeit vorgelegt. Glaubte man bislang zuverlässig oder zumindest intuitiv zu wissen, wer der Autor und wer der Übersetzer eines Werks ist („Der Autor ist doch derjenige, der den Text geschrieben hat, und der Übersetzer ist der, der ihn übersetzt hat“, S. 15), gerät man nach der Lektüre von Okulskas Untersuchung dann doch in Unsicherheit über diese landläufige Annahme bzw. Funktionszuweisung. Hinterfragt wird sie mithilfe von zwei Hauptthesen: (1) Die Autor-Übersetzer-Relation sei wesentlich unstabil. Okulska argumentiert und präsentiert aussagekräftige Exempel gegen die für fest gehaltene und hierarchisch strukturierte Beziehung von Autoren und Übersetzern in mehrfacher Hinsicht: temporal (erst verfasst der Autor den Originaltext, dann wird er übersetzt), auf der Achse der Macht (der Übersetzer ist schon immer dem Autor unterworfen) und in der Rollenzuweisung (man hält die Kategorien