

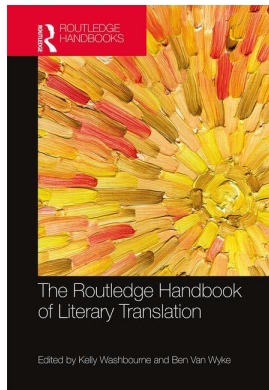
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Literary translation and disciplinary boundaries

Creative writing and interdisciplinarity

Cecilia Rossi

Introduction: considering the 'literary' in literary translation

In "The Task of the Translator" Walter Benjamin reminds us that a 'literary' or 'poetic' work says "very little, to a person who understands it" (Benjamin [1923] 2012, 75). This is a statement I often quote to my literary translation students on the MA programme at the University of East Anglia, especially in the first months of their course, to remind them of what is distinctive about literary translation. For Benjamin "[n]either message nor information is essential to it" (75). As literary translator and scholar Chantal Wright says, quoting Antoine Berman, Benjamin is "questioning the notion of the work of art as a communicative act and positioning himself against contemporaneous views of language as a communicative tool" (Wright 2016, 60). Regardless of whether or not we agree with this position, it is important to acknowledge that when writing a literary translation, we must not only focus on what the text says, but also on *how* the literary text has been made, constructed, put together (and here we can use a number of verbs, or rather, metaphors which point to the process of creation of the literary text), that is, the *poetic*, and aim to 'translate' it as an integral element of the text. Literary translators are the first to admit the complexity of translating literary texts and the fact that this process is not just anchored in a linguistic transfer: "any attempt at being faithful to the original piece of writing should entail making something that lives," says award-winning literary translator Daniel Hahn (Hahn 2014, n.p.) and he hastens to add "it should have the same pulse as the original did". This metaphor of the literary text as a live organism, with its own pulse or live rhythm, is clearly pointing away from an emphasis on the semantic level of the text to focus on what the text *is* as a whole and thus, what it achieves, what it *does* to us as readers. And to look at what the text *does* is precisely to ask the question *how* it does rather than *what* it says.

The distinction between these two aspects of the literary text can be effectively illustrated by a recent 'translation duel' published in *Modern Poetry in Translation* (No. 2, 2016) between literary translators from German Karen Leeder and Iain Galbraith. The two translators were asked to translate a poem by Austrian poet Raoul Schrott. 'Mitad del Mundo',

from his 2004 collection *Weissbuch* (White Book). The first two lines line in their original German read thus:

also schreib ich dir . . . und eine art gestufter pyramide
 [so write I (to) you . . . and a sort of stepped pyramid]
 markiert die mitte einer wohl nie fertig werdenden touristenstadt
 [mark(s) the middle (of) a probably never finished (to be) town/city of tourism]

In Karen Leeder's translation:

greetings from the middle of the world . . . where today
 a teeming tourist town surrounds a pyramid of stone

And in Iain Galbraith's translation:

so here i am writing to you . . . and a kind of stepped stele
 marks the centre of a tourist town whose building will never be done

These two versions vary significantly between each other and also from the gloss. The 'translation duel' booklet – a folded A3 poster spread inviting the reader to read both versions alongside each other – also includes "Notes on the Translations". Leeder reflects on how the rhyme structure of the poem "moving out from the central axis of the poem like a double image" is used to develop the idea of the relativity of scientific truths (Schrott et al. 2016, n.p.). Indeed, the tourist town of the poem is situated near Quito, in Ecuador, where the Monument to the Equator is found. Galbraith delves into the roots and history of the words chosen by Schrott and, as he negotiates polysemy and ambiguity, he admits that "this [poem] seemed more and more difficult with each reading" (Schrott et al. 2016, n.p.). Even its tone was hard to pin down for Galbraith, "as if a hiatus of force fields at the equator had extended its influence to the diction". Both translators thus acknowledge the intricate connections between what the poem is saying, or seems to be saying, and the dynamics of its composition, from how sound patterns emerge, to how ideas find their form on the page giving plenty of evidence for the fact that poems, as highly literary texts, achieve this *literariness* through a complex process.

What is also fascinating about comparisons of this kind is precisely that they draw our attention to the process of reading, which is the starting point of the translation process, and that the reading process can be as open-ended as the source text (ST) itself. Were we to ask other literary translators to render these same lines, we would have yet more versions: each translator will have read the ST differently. The text's open-endedness, its amplitude and opacity, is precisely what allows multiple readings. It is useful at this point to return to Walter Benjamin, though not to "The Task of the Translator" but to another essay in *Illuminations*, "The Storyteller", in which he compares and contrasts two kinds of discourse which could be said to correspond to non-literary and literary texts: information and storytelling. The story (and by extension, the literary text), Benjamin declares, "does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time" (Benjamin [1923] 1999, 90). It is worth considering the first phrase in the German original: "sie verausgabte sich nicht" (Benjamin [1923] 1977, 445–446) [gloss: she overspends herself not]. The verb *verausgaben* introduces a metaphor from the world of finance, to 'overspend' or, 'expend' in English, which is what the English translator Harry Zohn has maintained.

However, the German verb *versausgaben* also means to ‘overexert’ (oneself), in a physical sense, as well as ‘to burn out’ over a period of time. These two further shades of meaning are very important when considering the nature of the literary text: the text as a live organism exerts itself to continue to mean over a long period of time; or, to turn to the third meaning, ‘to burn out’: the literary text, like a candle with its lingering flame burns gradually and, as it does, continues to resonate over time. Indeed, throughout “The Storyteller” Benjamin uses the metaphor of the flame to refer to the act of creating story: “[t]he storyteller: he is the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story” (Benjamin [1923] 1999, 107). Indeed, this flame can be regarded as one of the “foundational terms” which, according to Berman, “make up the lexical fabric of the text beneath its conceptual fabric” (Berman as quoted in Wright 2016, 61). The fact that it is impossible in English to find a verb that would maintain these three shades of meaning in English is another indication of the difficult choices faced by the translator but also, because our concern in this first section is with literary texts, it serves to illustrate the often blurred nature of texts: what may first appear as ‘non-literary’ (is not, after all, Benjamin’s writing ‘philosophical’, i.e. non-literary?) may well be ‘literary’ when considering the effect the text has on the reader. Furthermore, to approach such a text as this essay as literary in the first instance may help the reader (and translator): it will demand a slower, more engaged reading over a longer period of time and the expectation is that, like a candle, the text will continue to burn away and release further possible meanings over time.

Given the challenges posed by the nature of the literary text and the fact that, as literary translator Daniel Hahn says, “[t]here’s not one single word in any of the languages I translate that can map perfectly onto a word in English” (Hahn 2014, n.p.), we can affirm that translation “is always interpretative, approximate, creative” (Hahn 2014, n.p). Creativity, thus, can be regarded as a central component of literary translation, precisely because, as Jean Boase-Beier affirms, “all translation, and especially literary translation, involves creativity on the part of the translator, because interpretation is itself a creative act” (Boase-Beier 2011, 53). Indeed, Boase-Beier goes on to affirm that “it is impossible to conceive of translation, or any other sort of writing, as merely reproducing or representing without creative interference” (Boase-Beier 2011, 53). But what exactly does this “creative interference” entail? Boase-Beier refers to studies by Turner (1996) and Fauconnier (1994) to highlight the roles played by creativity and imagination in the way we think and make decisions when we write (or translate). But while ‘creativity’ appears as a central concept, both to account for the presence of literariness in a (literary) text, or singularity (following Attridge 2004, 73) in a text, it is a most elusive and difficult concept to define (see for example, Nikolaou 2006, 19). In this chapter both ‘creativity’ and the ‘creative turn’ in translation studies will be explored in an attempt to investigate the relationship between literary translation and other creative writing practices. The key questions to be addressed are precisely to do with the disciplinary boundaries between literary translation and creative writing:

- What, if any, are the differences between creative writing and literary translation?
- In what ways has creative writing as a discipline contributed to translation studies, or, more precisely, to literary translation studies?
- In what ways can the discipline of literary translation studies further the enquiry and research of other disciplines, such as creative writing?

In the next section the first two questions will be explored as we consider the historical roots of the disciplinary borrowings between literary translation and creative writing. We will then move on to examine the ways in which creative writing has played an invaluable role in

helping redefine the nature of literary translation as a creative writing practice thus helping consolidate the creative turn in translation studies.

Historical roots of the relationship between literary translation and creative writing

The border territory between literary translation and creative writing

“What is the relationship between translation and poetry? What makes a translation faithful? What makes a poem original?” The poet, literary translator and classicist Josephine Balmer opens the ‘Preface’ to *Chasing Catullus* (Balmer 2004) with these three questions which could serve as an epigraph for this section. Indeed, this volume, described by Balmer as the “journey into the border territory between poetry and translation” (Balmer 2004, 9), is most apt to begin to explore the differences between different creative writing practices, as Balmer’s work includes versions of classical authors interspersed with original poems, as well as poems which re-imagine, re-contextualise and even subvert the original intent or meaning of the texts used as sources (“transgressions” as Balmer calls them, 9). Even the source texts themselves are “wide-ranging” and include classical texts as well as “other English translations and poems, churchyard inscriptions, newspaper articles, even estate agent’s particulars, fusing strategies of translation and ‘found’ poetry” (Balmer 2004, 9).

If we take the third question, “what makes a poem original?” the first obvious answer would be ‘the absence of a source text’. But when putting this to the test we soon realise how ineffective this distinction is. For example, Balmer’s poem “Demeter in Winter” (p. 35) is not given a ‘source’ at the end, as is ‘*De Raptu Proserpinae*’ (on p. 28): details of the source text, ‘Claudian, 3. 231–244’ in brackets, follow immediately after the poem, and are complemented by a note on p. 61. Nevertheless, “Demeter in Winter” clearly refers back to the Claudian text, as the corresponding note on p. 62 affirms. While the opening sentence “And my grief is hardening, blade by blade, / with the grass.” (lines 1–2) could be set in ancient times, the inclusion of ‘found poetry’ in the form of the newsagents’ ‘raw white card’ pinned on the for-sale board clearly points to contemporary times. Furthermore, can the inscription on the card ‘GIRL’S BIKE FOR SALE, JUST OUTGROWN’ (line 4) be considered at all *original* when it has been lifted from a shop window?

The translation studies scholar Paschalis Nikolaou reminds us that “[l]iterary translation operates in the shadow of the source text” (Nikolaou 2006, 20) but it can be argued that all literary texts operate thus, in the shadow of the texts that came before them. The French literary critic Gérard Genette dedicated a whole volume to the exploration of the ways in which texts influence each other: transtextuality, or textual transcendence, as Genette defines it, refers to “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (Genette [1982] 1997, 1). In her most recent critical volume, *Piecing Together the Fragments*, Balmer affirms that “classical translation and creative writing have developed a close, almost co-dependent relationship” (Balmer 2013, 171) and she refers to the work of poets/classical translators in the English-language literary tradition from Geoffrey Chaucer to Ben Jonson to John Dryden to Alexander Pope and on to Ezra Pound and Ted Hughes: “classical translations have enriched, and transformed, their source canon” (Balmer 2013, 171). We need only move our attention to another literary tradition, the Spanish-language literary tradition, to find the same pattern of writer–translators whose work not only enriched and transformed the source canon, but shook the very foundations of our understanding of literature: Jorge Luis Borges, who expertly translated Kafka’s short fiction (Sarlo [1993] 2006, 70)

among many other literary works, famously wrote in “The Homeric Versions” that “[n]o problem is as consubstantial to literature and its modest mystery as the one posed by translation” (1999, 69). And this is precisely because translation is not only “a literary practice motivated by aesthetic goals and choices, but it is a facet of reading and writing, the link between and across languages and literatures” (Levine 2013, 43). Indeed, in the last past decades work by scholars in translation studies have shown how the analysis of translations makes visible what normally is ‘out of sight’: the process of recreation that is active in every act of reading, writing and communication, as translation scholar Edwin Gentzler reminds us (Gentzler 2001, 201). In a sense we can affirm that all literary texts are read and written in the wake of other texts – an affirmation that brings to mind Borges’ concluding remarks in his other seminal essay concerned with the question of translation: “The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*”. The very act of reading, followed by successive acts of rewriting/translation, constantly modify the source text: deconstructionists have for decades upheld the notion that source texts are constantly undergoing a process of reconstruction through each translation (Gentzler 2001, 149). Indeed, Michel Foucault’s 1977 *Language, Counter-memory, Practice* opens with an epigraph by Borges: “The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conceptions of the past, as it will modify the future” (Foucault 1977, 5 in Gentzler 2001, 149). The temporal element in this quotation thus highlights the successiveness of the processes of reading and writing, which is a quality that comes across more clearly in Borges’ final conclusions in “The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*” in the Spanish original: ‘después de una literatura’: the metaphor of the ‘wake’ as the ripples left by the act of reading on the surface of this literary sea has been introduced by the translator Esther Allen. Borges’ statement, on the other hand, foregrounds the successiveness of reading and writing: the temporal element suggested by the preposition ‘después’ introducing the phrase clearly indicates that the act of reading precedes the translation (and hence, writing) process. In fact, Borges alludes to a ‘rico proceso anterior’ (Borges [1935] 1999, 108) (‘a rich [prior] process’ in Allen’s rendering). The temporal element in the translation process will be explored further in the section entitled ‘Critical issues and topics: literary creativity and creative reading and writing’.

Another common assumption regarding the difference between a translation and an original text is that literary translators are bound or constrained by a source text, while writers of original texts enjoy complete freedom. Again, this is debatable: according to Jean Boase-Beier and Michael Hunt, it is not necessarily true that “the translator is subject to constraints which do not apply to the original author” (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999, 1) since

original writers do not simply write what they want: they are bound by all manner of constraints: political, social, poetic and linguistic, as well as the constraints of the text itself, which creates a context potentially confining and determining the form and meaning of every utterance.

(Boase-Beier and Holman 1999, 6)

What we can conclude from this discussion so far is that the dividing line between a translation and an original is indeed quite blurred and that referring to the “border territory” as Balmer does, is helpful to begin to understand the nature of the disciplinary borrowings between literary translation and creative writing. Josephine Balmer’s *Chasing Catullus* volume dates from 2004 – two years prior to the publication of a couple of volumes which signposted the start of the ‘creative turn’ in translation studies. While one may argue that Balmer’s volume is quite clearly at home in the tradition of poet-translators devoted to

writing practices which blur the line between translating and writing – from John Dryden with his three translation ‘types’ or approaches ‘metaphrase’, ‘paraphrase’ and ‘imitation’ ([1680] in Jones 2006, 2011, 33–34) to Don Paterson’s volumes of ‘versions’, *The Eyes*, based on Antonio Machado’s poetry, and *Orpheus*, based on Rilke’s sonnets – it is also evident that her work has made an important contribution to literary translation studies. Indeed, Paterson’s insistence on his writing not translations but “versions”, and an overall “commitment to a *process*” (Paterson 1999, 56; emphasis in the original), which led at times to the writing of entirely new poems, foregrounds, like Balmer’s work, the kind of creative input which gives a text that originates from another text the clear imprint of the translator’s (or poet’s) subjectivity. Thus, perhaps the distinction between ‘version’ and ‘translation’ is less useful than it might at first appear. Are not all translations – even the most literal – versions? Paterson refers to the translations of Antonio Machado by Alan Trueblood as offering a “reliable reflection of the surface of Machado’s verse” (Paterson 1999, 56) and that “[l]iteral translation can be useful in providing us with a black-and-white snapshot of the original” (Paterson 1999, 357–358) but, what is a literal translation conceived of as a black-and-white photograph if not already a manifestation of the translator’s creative subjectivity? Indeed, literary translator Peter Bush is sceptical at the possibility of the existence of a literal translation, which is always a first “stab” at translation and hence the first ‘creative interference’ on the part of the translator’s subjectivity. In Peter Bush’s words:

There can be no such thing as a literal translation in a drafting process. The first draft is the first stab at the rewriting, at an imaginative transformation in which the translator is reconnoitring the territory for the new literary language.

(Bush 2006, 30)

The 2006 volume *The Translator as Writer* edited by Bush and Bassnett, from which this quotation comes, has played a pivotal role in redefining the practice of literary translation as an art. Around the year 2006 the shift in focus in translation studies towards an emphasis on translator subjectivity, creativity and thus creative rewriting was already well underway. Both Eugenia Loffredo and Manuela Peteghella’s *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation Studies*, also from 2006, and *The Translator as Writer* have been instrumental in determining the ‘creative turn’ in the discipline. In “Translation as a Creative Force” (*The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*, 2018), a chapter that can be read as a companion to the present one, the use of the term ‘wave’ is argued for, so as to better describe the prolonged effect of a turn or shift in translation studies and thus suggest that we are still continuing to experience the effects of the recent ‘creative turn’ in our discipline. A further point made in this chapter is that foregrounding the role played by creativity in the translation process and the particular nature of the literary text, can only lead to a ‘process turn’ in the discipline. And it is this process – this process of how a literary translation comes about – that can prove most useful for other disciplines such as literary studies or critical theory, as well as creative writing, as we shall see in the coming sections.

Institutional housing of the two fields

While it is undeniable that creative writing as a discipline made a significant contribution to translation studies and the development of the creative turn in the discipline, it has also paved

the way for the introduction of literary translation into academia. Edwin Gentzler explores this process in his chapter “The North American Translation Workshop” and says that:

[f]or a while in the late seventies and early eighties, it looked as if the translation workshop would follow the path of creative writing, also considered at one time a non-academic field, and soon be offered at as many schools as had writing workshops. (Gentzler 2001, 6)

However, though the literary translation landscape was growing in the 1960s and 1970s, “this process of growth plateaued” with many assumptions about the secondary status of the field being maintained (6). Gentzler explains the lack of steady growth in the decades prior to the year 2000 by referring to the often “atheoretical” premises of those practising and teaching translation “as revealed in the numerous prefaces and introductions to texts containing translations” (Gentzler 2001, 7). But since the shift in translation studies towards creativity and the increased visibility of the translator, undeniably a result of the publication in 1995 of Lawrence Venuti’s *The Translator’s Invisibility*, literary translation has continued to grow both as an academic discipline and a profession. In the field of Anglophone literary translation, recent years have brought with them many positive developments: the continued success of the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT)’s International Literary Translation Summer School, the founding of the Emerging Translators Network (ETN), as well as the “increasing numbers of theoretically schooled practitioners” who have graduated from translation programmes (see Wright 2016, 2) have all made important contributions and led to the growth of the discipline and a revaluation of the figure of the translator, who is now seen as “an intellectual figure empowered with agency and sensibility who produces knowledge by curating cultural encounters” (Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky in Wright 2016, 3).

The incorporation of literary translation into academic programmes in postgraduate taught courses at Masters level and PhD programmes in literary translation has also seen in recent years a shift from more theoretical approaches to more ‘creative’ ones. Once the goal of cementing the reputation of the discipline of literary translation by allowing its theorisation in an academic setting was achieved – a goal regarded by translation studies scholar Kelly Washbourne as “aid[ing] in creating legitimacy for the field – professionalization – in the market and beyond it” (Washbourne 2013, 53), universities seem to have felt more willing to admit PhD candidates wishing to work on translation with commentary MA dissertations and PhD theses. For example, students at the University of East Anglia are offered the choice between a critical or theoretical dissertation or thesis and a practice-oriented thesis, which entails the writing of a literary translation (see recent articles on Translation and Commentary PhD programmes in the journal for literary translators, *In Other Words*, Kelly 2016, Rossi 2016). Indeed, the PhD programme in literary translation at the University of East Anglia was set up by Peter Bush with weekly seminars, informed by the idea that literary translation constitutes academic research, and using as a model the PhD in Creative and Critical Writing, which had been founded by Malcolm Bradbury in 1986. Bush remembers that such a programme “was simply taken on board as an extension of the Creative Writing PhD” (quoted in Rossi 2016, 63). Moreover, it is worth highlighting that the debate on translation as research (see Charles Forsdick’s article in *In Other Words*, 47 and visit www.modernlanguagesopen.org to access the text of the “Translation as Research Manifesto”) is still ongoing.

Admitting a discipline to academia has the added benefit of furthering research and setting new boundaries for a discipline and this is precisely what has happened with literary

translation studies. The biannual postgraduate symposium in translation studies organised by students enrolled on the PhD programme at the University of East Anglia has played such a role over the years. For example, the international symposium organised by Eugenia Loffredo and Manuela Perteghella in 2003, with a focus on “Theory, Practice and Creativity: New Frontiers for Translation Studies”, led to the publication in 2006 of *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation Studies*, a volume which, as mentioned above, has been instrumental in heralding the ‘creative’ turn in translation studies. Symposia of this kind generate academic debate as well as allow for the development of new methodologies and frameworks. In her paper entitled “Why We Should Bother with Literary Translation”, given at the 2003 symposium, translation scholar Kirsten Malkmjør argues that studying literary translations alongside their source texts is an invaluable tool not just for those interested in literary translation studies, but for all translation studies scholars. When she discusses ‘translational variation’ she quotes thirteen versions of the last line of Hans Christian Andersen’s story of 1835, *Prindsessen paa Ærten*, known in English as “The Princess and the Pea”, and adds that “not two are identical, not even those that are mutually contemporary and not even the two which bear the name of the same translator (Corrin 1978; Corrin and Corrin 1988)” (Malkmjør 2006, 7). It can be argued that translational variations are the result of the different readings carried out by different translators and that translator subjectivity, especially his or her creative mind at work, plays an important role in creating this difference. Thus, comparing translations can be an invaluable tool when trying to access the elusive role played by creativity in the production of a translation. It is this paper that translation studies scholar and poetry translator Francis Jones, who was also at the 2003 UEA symposium, acknowledges as an influence on his pioneering research into poetry translation processes aimed at “unlocking the black box” (Jones 2006, 62).

Critical issues and topics: literary creativity and creative reading and writing

In the previous section we explored the interdependency between the disciplines of creative writing and literary translation and the often-blurred boundary between the writing practices they advocate. Over the decades the figure of the poet/writer-translator has played a pivotal role in allowing this interdisciplinarity to develop. When the institutional housing of the disciplines is considered, the question of whether creative writing can be taught has led to the formulation of a parallel question: can literary translation be taught and if so, how? In this section we will first consider the concept of creativity and how it surfaces in debates about disciplinary frameworks and methodologies, especially in connection with the ‘workshop model’.

Creativity is precisely what makes literary translation such a distinctive writing practice. Though an elusive term, over the years countless attempts have been made to define creativity and to study it, thus foregrounding the importance of process-oriented translation studies (Munday [2001] 2016). Jean Boase-Beier cites the work of theorists Pope (2005) and Carter (2004) to seek out a definition of creativity that draws on Chomsky’s ‘linguistic creativity’: “as both point out, according to Chomsky (e.g. Chomsky 1972, 100), linguistic creativity could be said to be a natural result of the ‘infinite productivity’ of language” (Boase-Beier 2011, 54). In “Translation as a Creative Force” (Rossi 2018) I point to Loffredo and Perteghella’s work and the fact that for them “it is impossible to talk about subjectivity without invoking creativity” (Loffredo and Perteghella 2006, 8). Like Boase-Beier, I also refer to Chomsky’s ‘linguistic creativity’ to argue for the existence of ‘literary creativity’ as part of the transfer competence of literary translators. When discussing the transfer competence of literary translators (the first competence listed on the PETRA-E Framework for the

Education and Training of Literary Translators (PETRA-E 2016)) at the second of the PETRA-E conferences held in Misano, Italy, March 2015, I was tasked with researching ‘literary creativity’ and evaluating its place in the framework. Thus, at the third PETRA-E conference in Budapest (October 2015), I presented a paper in which I defined literary creativity as a competence in the following terms: “the literary translator’s ability to find adequate solutions for the translation of a highly literary text” (Rossi 2015).¹ I also preferred the more generic term ‘literary texts’ rather than distinguishing between genres as these distinctions can be difficult to establish. Thus, I argued that:

Creative Writing is the means through which students in literary translation can develop their literary creativity, that is, the ways in which they are made aware of the need to work on, practise, and develop their ability to respond to the translation of a literary text in a creative manner, whenever a particular ST requires it.

(Rossi 2015, also quoted in Rossi 2018)

In the context of my paper I used the term ‘creative writing’ to refer to the ‘writing practice’ and argued that the creative writing workshop can be a tool to train literary translators (compare Ann Pattison’s work in Loffredo and Perteghella 2006). My research into literary creativity was practice-led, in the sense that prior to the PETRA-E conference held in Budapest at which I presented my paper, I had tested the premise that the most effective kind of creative writing workshop to aid the development of the literary translator’s literary creativity, would task participants with an exercise based on a text (a kind of ‘source text’) and aimed at developing the problem-solving skill of the translators:

For the BCLT Literary Translation and Creative Writing Summer School [July 2015] I specifically designed a workshop around the idea of the ‘Creative Constraint’ in order to offer the students (all literary translators attending the summer school) specific problems to attempt to solve creatively.

(Rossi 2015)

I drew on the idea that a constraint, for example, a formal constraint, can help trigger off the writer’s (and translator’s) creativity (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999). Working with texts in the context of a creative writing workshop for literary translators aids the practice and development of the translator’s literary creativity as it replicates the two stages of the translation process: reading and writing. As literary translator Daniel Hahn reminds us, “translation is two things: it’s very close and careful and thoughtful reading. Then, it’s precise and careful and thoughtful writing” (Hahn 2014, n.p). It is important to distinguish these two stages in translation process because creativity plays an important role in both: the literary translator both reads and writes creatively.

In fact, creativity begins to play a pivotal role in the reading phase of the literary translation process. For literary translator and scholar Sreedevi K. Nair, “reading for translation is also an exercise in creation” (Nair 2013, xxiv). She elaborates on this idea further: what is created is a meta-text, which, in turn, serves as the *attaprakaram* or performance text, for the translation: “[t]he translator’s evocation of this meta-text is prompted by her active interaction with the original in the initial phase of translation, when she acts as an empathetic and resourceful reader” (xxiv). I would like to highlight here the emphasis put on the reading or ‘initial phase’ of translation, and on how the translator is prompted by empathy and her own resources (her imagination, her past experiences, her readings of literature) in her first encounters with the literary text.

Thus, whether the activity of reading is considered cognitive, with a focus on the engagement of the mind in the process, following what Boase-Beier does (see, for example, Boase-Beier 2011), or as an “ongoing psycho-physiological, psycho-perceptual relationship” with the source text, according to Clive Scott (Scott 2006, 34), who sees the task of translation as that of “capturing the phenomenology of reading” (2012 and Scott 2014), or whether we go further back to the roots of poststructuralism and understand reading as an activity, as a production (see Roland Barthes: *‘the Text is experienced only in an activity, in a production’* [Barthes [1971] 1989, 58, emphasis in the original]), creativity plays an important role from early on in the translation process: in the initial or reading phase.

However, though translation studies scholars have tended to distinguish between two stages in the translation process, namely, reading and translating (Diaz-Diocaretz 1985, Barnstone 1993, Bassnett and Lefevere 1998), literary translators tend to see these stages as concomitant and not temporally sequenced (Boase-Beier 2006, 31) and therefore seem to agree with Clive Scott, who sees reading as “the process of activating the text” (Scott 2000, 184). Scott rejects the notion that we interpret a text first (Scott 2000, 183) and even claims that “the experience of language fully lived makes interpretation superfluous” (Scott 2000, 184). More recently Scott has argued that his approach is different from the approach of cognitive poetics since the latter is an “interpretative mode” (Scott 2012, 199). But the important thing here is that even for those following a cognitive stylistics approach, as Boase-Beier, “it is impossible to conceive of translation, or any other sort of writing, as merely reproducing or representing without creative interference” (Boase-Beier 2011, 53), as we have seen in the introductory section to this chapter.

Current contributions and research

The new status enjoyed by literary translation as a creative writing practice and its introduction into academic programmes indicate that the time has come to consider literary translation as a discipline in its own right with its established practice and theory and its capacity to incorporate the methodologies and conceptual frameworks of other disciplines, such as literary theory and creative writing. Indeed, the recent volume *Literary Translation* by Chantal Wright is presented as “an introduction to literary translation both as a practice and as the academic practice that it has now become” (Wright 2016, 1). Wright also hopes that as literary translation further links up with programmes in literary studies and creative writing, which is already happening at both the University of Warwick and the University of East Anglia, this will also result in “literary translation being incorporated into the methodologies of other disciplines” (4). As we shall see in this section, these developments are already underway.

In the ‘Institutional housing of the two fields’ section we looked at the ways in which creative writing as a discipline has had a major impact in helping establish literary translation as an academic discipline. In this section we will shift our attention to the mutual borrowings from the pedagogies and conceptual frameworks and explore the differences and convergences in workshop models. In “Teaching Literary Translation: Objectives, Epistemologies, and Methods for the Workshop” Kelly Washbourne affirms that “the workshop is creative writing’s and literary translation’s *signature pedagogy*” (Washbourne 2013, 54, emphasis in the original) and draws on Shulman’s definition of the workshop as how disciplinary “knowledge is analysed, criticised, accepted, or discarded” (Shulman 2005, 54, as quoted in Washbourne 2013, 54). Washbourne sees in the manual arts training roots of the workshop method its inherent strong sense, even today, of its “progressive inheritance” (54) and the goal

that “each and every person’s contribution will be part of the learning experience for everybody else” (Gross 2010, as quoted in Washbourne 2013, 54). While the creative writing workshop has its origin in the late 19th century, the literary translation workshop was introduced in the 1960s and flourished for a couple of decades (as we have seen in the ‘Institutional housing of the two fields’ section) (also in Washbourne 2013, 54).

However, the creative writing and literary translation workshops are not identical. In “Translation vs. Creative Writing Workshops: Structural Differences”, Roger Sedarat acknowledges that the borrowing of the pedagogical models of creative writing in poetry, fiction and drama for the teaching of literary translation operates “on the principle that better writers become better translators, [so] we require translation students to take writing courses in other genres” (Sedarat 2015, 1). The same general approach is followed in literary translation workshops, but there is an important divergence that Sedarat hastens to point out: “interrogating the process of rendering another’s literary work into English at times challenges, even opposes, assumptions of the traditional writing workshop” (Sedarat 2015, 1). Further pedagogical differences relate to the fact that while both creative writers and literary translators are encouraged to read extensively, required to take literature classes (or modules), and modules in theory and criticism, translators are also required to “study and apply translation theory and criticism” (Sedarat 2015, 2). This results in an ongoing discussion of the nature of translation precisely facilitated by the metatextual nature of translation. Students, says Sedarat, “benefit from commanding a discourse that can articulate the work they do” (2). Further differences include:

Creative Writing Workshop	Literary Translation Workshop
• Writer stays silent; • Writers are encouraged to identify problems; • Peers need to be careful about ‘editing’ problem areas in a text.	• Ongoing dialogue; • Collaborative process; • Suggestions and edits are made and accepted.

The table above clearly foregrounds the process-oriented nature of the literary translation workshop with its emphasis placed on the dialogue and collaborative spirit that rules over discussions. As Sedarat says, “[t]he most productive moments in translation workshops have been when we collectively join in the translator in brainstorming alternatives for a particularly difficult word, phrase or the idea for the target text” (Sedarat 2015, 2). As a translation workshop leader myself I cannot agree more with this statement.

In the UK context, the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT) based at the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing of the University of East Anglia, has been running the International Literary Translation Summer School since the year 2000. The summer school was first introduced by the former director of the BCLT, award-winning literary translator Peter Bush, and its trademark since has consisted in offering language-specific literary translation workshops in which the participants work alongside the writer of the text to be translated and a workshop leader who is an established literary translator. In early sessions of the summer school it was often the case that poet-translators were invited to offer workshops open to all participants. For example, poet-translators Josephine Balmer and George Szirtes led poetry translation workshops in the July 2004 and 2005 sessions which brought together all summer school participants working from and into different languages. Such workshops allow for playfulness and experimentation, as Balmer recalls (Balmer 2013, 113).

In July 2014 the BCLT Summer School summit ‘Training the Trainer’ saw the incorporation of creative writing workshops in which participants (all literary translators at different stages of their career, early career and advanced professionals, as well as experts – PETRA-E Framework 2016) were offered a prompt and asked to write on the spot. A feedback session followed the writing exercise. Given the success of the workshops, and the recommendation from participants that we take this forward to future sessions of the summer school, from July 2015 the BCLT International Literary Translation Summer School became the ‘BCLT International Creative Writing and Literary Translation’ Summer School, now run in collaboration with Writers’ Centre Norwich, and the programme offers creative writing workshops at the start of each day. The rationale behind these workshops is precisely the acknowledgement of the effectiveness of the pedagogical tool of the creative writing workshop to help develop translators’ writing skills and literary creativity as well as increase their awareness of the dynamics of text-making since, as Boase-Beier affirms, the translator needs to “enter the making of the poem [so as] to re-make it” (Boase-Beier 2014, 225).

In “Translation Plus: On Literary Translation and Creative Writing” the Australian writer and literary translator Nicholas Jose asks “what creative writers, in particular, can get from literary translation. Which aspects of translation are relevant to the workshop where writers develop their craft and vision?” (Jose 2015, 7). I had the opportunity to address Jose’s questions through the literary translation workshops organised jointly by the AATI (Argentine Association of Translators and Interpreters)/Instituto Lenguas Vivas, Buenos Aires, and the BCLT within the AHRC Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) project “Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Communities” and the subproject concerned with ‘literary translation and cultural memory’ which I lead. The project aims to facilitate the debate around the question of the creative and translation processes of literary works which focus on cultural memory. In the literary translation workshops of the third literary translation autumn school we worked on a novel-in-progress by British novelist Giles Foden, provisionally entitled *Belgrano*. What emerged from the week-long discussions held was how a shift from a focus on character/plot to language, through the process of translation, proved, at the stage of composition of a novel, to be extremely useful for the writer. The reason for this can be found in the close reading practised by the literary translators (their “reading as translators” – Washbourne 2013, 55) and what their insights brought to the surface for the writer. In one instance we were discussing the following section in the text:

So I tell ghost stories for a living. Camila Fiori, the fake, tells fake ghost stories [...] I suppose that’s a kind of double-negative, the fake who retells fake tales, and inferentially there must be a positive.

(Foden 2017, n.p. By permission of the author)

What immediately emerged from the discussion was that the character, a thirty-two-year-old *porteña* (from the port of Buenos Aires) and thus Spanish speaker, would never use a simile of this kind, drawing on inference laws, the realm of propositional logic, simply because such thinking is foreign to the metaphorical universe of Spanish. In other words, Spanish is an ‘illogical’ language compared to English, in which the ‘double negative’ is quite at home. The fascinating aspect of discussions of this kind is that we soon turned to the metaphorical world the character would inhabit, linguistically speaking (as revealed in the used of proverbs and similes, for example) which in turn provided the writer with a door to the “hidden dimension, [the] ‘underlying’ text, where certain signifiers correspond and link up, forming all sorts of networks beneath the ‘surface’ of the text itself” (Berman [1985, 2000] 2012 in Venuti [2000] 2012, 248).

In the context of a monolingual, English-only, creative writing workshop this discussion would probably not have taken place.

Future directions

It is clear from the discussions in this chapter that the “relevant frameworks and discourses” that Nikolaou says “are not that far away” in relation to the onset of the ‘creative turn’ in translation studies (Nikolaou 2006, 19) are here already and that we are witnessing a repositioning of literary translation studies within the cognate fields of literary studies, creative writing and translation studies (Wilson and Gerber 2012). Recent conferences such as “The Translator Made Corporeal” (May 2017), organised in partnership between the British Library, University College London and the University of Essex, and the last session of UEA’s biannual postgraduate symposium, “Innovation & Experimentalism in Translation and Translation Theory” (November 2017) point to a foregrounding of process-oriented studies with a focus on what has been termed ‘literary translator studies’ as well as experimentation in creative writing practices ushering in the production of hybrid texts. Recent publications such as the anthology of experimental translations *Currently & Emotion* (Collins 2016), edited by the poet Sophie Collins, as well as Irish poet Edwin Kelly’s *And After This I Saw. Selections from the Work of Julian of Norwich* (Kelly 2014), occurring in the wake of the “Process and Product in Translation” MA module at UEA, introduced by Clive Scott, are further proof of the growing number of literary translation practitioners for whom writing translation is indeed a creative writing practice and a space in which to be innovative, experimental, creative.

Note

- 1 The PETRA-E Framework is a competence model. It defines ‘competence’ as referring to “the proven ability to apply knowledge and skills” (Cf. CEN (2006). EN 15038. Translation Services – Service Requirements, p. 5 (In “Introduction”, PETRA-E 2016)).

Further reading

Loffredo, Eugenia and Manuela Perteghella, eds. 2006. *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation Studies*. London and New York: Continuum.

A seminal volume when it comes to understanding the origins of the ‘creative turn’ in translation studies. It discusses the links between translation and creative writing from linguistic, cultural and critical perspectives and introduces many questions that have proved pivotal in our understanding of literary translation as a creative writing practice.

Bassnett, Susan and Peter Bush, eds. 2006. *The Translator as Writer*. London and New York: Continuum. Another seminal volume that has made an immense contribution to the way we see literary translation now, i.e. as a distinctive creative literary practice. The volume comprises a series of essays written by well-known literary translators.

Scott, Clive. 2012. *Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This volume, originally born from the 2010 Clark Lectures at the University of Cambridge, invites us to consider translation from the point of view of a phenomenology of reading. Scott explores different ways in which the literary translation can become the vehicle for expression of the reading consciousness.

Wilson, Rita and Leah Gerber, eds. 2012. *Creative Constraints: Translation and Authorship*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing.

This is a significant collection of essays which further illustrates the “parallel and overlapping discourses within the cognate areas of literary studies, creative writing and translation studies, which have come together to propose a view of translation as (a form of) creative writing and creative writing as being shaped by translation processes” (Wilson and Gerber).

Balmer, Josephine. 2013. *Piecing Together the Fragments: Translating Classical Verse, Creating Contemporary Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book is both a scholarly study of the classical texts explored, from Sappho to Catullus and Ovid, as well as an account of the translatorly and creative journeys undertaken over the years. For translation scholars interested in critical-creative practices.

Related topics

The Limits and Forms of Translation; Writers as Translators; The Translator as Subject: Literary Translator Biographies, Memoirs and Paratexts; Teaching Literary Translation.

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