

From the editors

While preparing this new issue of *Counterpoint*, a fascinating book came to mind: the facsimile of a 12th-century manuscript, written in the region that used to be called Upper Mesopotamia. In this text the author, İsmail al-Jazari, who some believe was a source of inspiration for Da Vinci, describes and draws a large number of mechanical devices he invented for daily use – a hand-washing automaton with flush mechanism for ritual ablutions, a boat with machines that look like musicians playing the saz, a servant filling your cup whenever your drink is about to run out.

Machines doing work for human beings have stimulated human imagination for a very long time. And just as much as machines have been the subject of desire, they have also invariably been approached with caution. What if their effects turn out differently to what had been envisaged?

As literary translators, we might be confronted with a game-changing machine sooner than we thought. Colleagues who (also) work as commercial translators have already

for quite a while experienced the radical changes machine translation entails. When it comes to the translation of literary texts, the question of how useful machines could be has for a long time been met with cynicism. But recent developments show that machine translation could very well become part of a literary translator's life in the not too distant future.

What would that be like, what would it entail? Would it be 'game over' for literary translators? Will they be turned into high-end editors, correcting machine-produced errors? Will translators still be able to engage with the author's voice in a text in the same way as before, when there's also the machine's voice to be dealt with? What about the copyright of translators when a machine does part of the job?

Five contributors raise these and other intriguing questions in the special feature of our fourth issue: machine translation and literature.

James Hadley, researcher at Trinity College, Dublin, describes the

developments in machine translation that have taken place since the 1940s, and he clarifies the different principles that guide programmes such as Trados and Memo-Q on the one hand, and programmes working with neural systems like Google Translate and DeepL on the other. Two translators, Hans-Christian Oeser and Katja Zakrajšek, who have actually used different types of machine translation to translate literary texts, share their experiences. Researcher Waltraud Kolb is conducting an experimental study on decision-making in literary translation, and here in Counterpoint, she discusses her first results on differences in the cognitive processes involved in translating literature and in post-editing a machine-produced translation. And finally, Morten Visby, president of CEATL, reflects on the attitude among literary publishers towards machine translation and, among other things, the effects it might have in the domain of authors' rights.

But there is more. In addition to our special feature you'll find other stimulating contributions concerning developments within CEATL, and the world of translators at large – from the benefits of a dictionary of variants in German, to the political backdrop of the career of a Polish translator.

We hope you enjoy reading *Counterpoint's* latest issue and, as always, welcome your comments and suggestions at editors@ceatl.eu

*Hanneke van der Heijden,
Anne Larchet and Juliane Wammen*



Hanneke van der Heijden is a literary translator and interpreter from Turkish into Dutch, and writes about *literature from Turkey*.

Photo: Private Archive



Anne Larchet is a freelance interpreter and translator from Spanish to English.

Photo: Martin de Haan



Juliane Wammen is an award-winning literary translator from English, Norwegian and Swedish into Danish.

Photo: Tim Flohr Sørensen