

Bassnett, Susan (2014). *Translation Studies*. Fourth edition. London/New York: Routledge, pp. 190, £20.99/€22.88. ISBN 978 0415506731.

Susan Bassnett first published *Translation Studies* in 1980, at a time when there was little appreciation of the scholarship linking translation theory and the real-world manifestations of translation. Her timely introduction to theoretical approaches to literary translation, told through the illuminating framework of close textual analysis of artistic works in translation, alongside an extensive list of recommendations for further reading, made Bassnett's text essential reading, as much for students as for established researchers. Her introduction to this fourth edition (2014) states that the book is shaped as an attempt to outline the scope of the discipline, to give an indication of the kind of work that has been done so far and to suggest directions for future research. "More importantly", she writes, "it is an attempt to demonstrate that Translation Studies is indeed a discipline in its own right: not merely a minor branch of comparative literary study, nor yet a specific area of linguistics, but a vastly complex field with many far-reaching ramifications" (14).

To this end, and as with the previous edition, the text is structured around three chapters. The first deals with "central issues" of translation and covers a broad range of topics ranging from Jakobson's translation typology to problems of equivalence, loss and gain, and untranslatability. A new addition to this chapter tackles the question of visibility, the elision of the foreign, translatorial recognition and the status-position of a translation vis-à-vis the source text. A second chapter offers a detailed history of translation theory and covers a period ranging from the Romans to the Victorians, and touches on Biblical translation, the Renaissance, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Romanticism and post-Romanticism. Two new topic areas have been added to this chapter, the first of which tackles translation theory in the twentieth century up to the 1970s and the second, entitled "The coming of age of Translation Studies", tracks the emergence of the discipline in the last two decades of the twentieth century. A third and final chapter considers specific problems of literary translation and focuses on major concerns across the poetry, theatre and prose translation modes.

Given Bassnett's assertion early on that the emphasis throughout the text is on literary translation, it is not surprising that this last chapter is the most detailed, and undergraduate students and postgraduates at the beginning of their research will find much to encourage the necessary critical and investigatory departures that form the basis of incipient student research in Translation Studies. It offers insightful commentary on hermeneutic approaches to the overall structural significance of individual source text elements and places an emphasis on a more holistic appreciation of texts as signifying ecologies rather than as mere

collections of words and sentences for translation. However, what is missing in this chapter is a sense of how it reflects the latest debates and critical thinking in the Translation Studies literature with regard to literary translation. Here, as in other chapters, a survey of relevant current research trends across the raft of humanities journals devoted to questions of translation would have enabled readers to better gauge both the richness and critical acuity that now accompany translation research in the various areas Bassnett addresses. The section on the translation of dramatic texts, for example, does not describe the critical distinction between the translation of historical theatre texts and the translation of works by living authors, a topic of particular concern in contemporary theatre translation research.

Overall, *Translation Studies* is a short read, which means, in turn, that these problems are echoed on a broader level across the text as a whole. Twenty-five years after its first publication, the landscape of translation research to which this fourth edition of Bassnett's text speaks is now markedly different. Translation Studies is no longer viewed as an emerging discipline, and the study of translation - as both a concrete professional practice and critical means for reflection in a globalised, interconnected and multicultural world - is neither a tentative nor a marginalised endeavour within humanities research. For this reader, too much scope is given over to debates that are by now well-covered in the pedagogical literature associated with Translation Studies, and while Bassnett recognises that the development of the field has now become so rapid that no single text can do justice to the growth of the field, there is little exposition here of current scholarly trends or their reflection in the accompanying bibliography. Given the already large volume in publication of introductory readers and comprehensive overviews, an engagement of this brevity is unable to distinguish itself from the in-depth analysis these lengthier contributions offer.

Where future editions of *Translation Studies* could most usefully be oriented, therefore, would be to focus specifically on the aspects on which Bassnett elaborates in the preface to the fourth edition and in her conclusion entitled "Translation in the Twenty-first Century", namely: the comprehensive study of theatre translation, with particular attention to the performance dimension, and the onto-political motivations for the growing number of translations of Classical texts; the centrality of translation in global communication and its role in the project of social analysis; and the utility of translation as a critical lens through which to examine the erosion of political, geographical and cultural boundaries.

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