

Bassnett, Susan (ed.) (2018). *Translation and World Literature. [New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies]*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 202, £23.99 (paperback)/£88 (hardback)/£23.99 (eBook). ISBN 978 1138641754.

Edited by one of the foremost scholars in the field, this title weaves together Translation Studies and World Literature, thus conceptually returning to the roots of Translation Studies and the field's formative interest in the role of translation in literary history. An oft-cited excerpt from David Damrosch's seminal work defines world literature as literature encompassing "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (Damrosch 2003: 4), while translation theorists – including Bassnett herself (2014: 238) – have long been interested in the significance of translation in literary transactions and the transcultural and interlingual movements of texts across the boundaries of time, space and imagination. Thus, for both sides of the coin, this volume is a natural melding.

A relatively small, yet comprehensive volume, the book consists of an introductory essay by the editor and eleven chapters on various topics within the scope of translation and World Literature. The collection is varied and diverse in its geographic and thematic distribution, encompassing several interesting and pertinent topics, many of them evolving out of extant strands in world literature research. The notion of a dominant language in the contemporary interpretations of what ought to be deemed "world" literature is a concern for the authors of chapters 1 and 2, Trivedi and Forsdick, who explore the hazards of Anglophone and Francophone monolingualism, as well as the flow of translations between the former colonisers and the colonised – noting for instance the paucity of translations of foreign literature into Indian languages and the works of post-colonial authors who use several languages or language varieties simultaneously with French, such as Wolof in Senegal or Tahitian in Polynesia.

Chapter 4 examines the market mechanisms and capital flows that shape the way texts are appropriated and transferred across temporalities and spatial domains in acts of translation. Echoing D'haen's (2013: 8-9) concerns regarding the potential effect of a globalised world literature on smaller European literatures, resulting in their marginalisation, Medeiros focuses on the interrelations between translation and cosmopolitanism viewed through the lens of Portuguese, as both a language of empire and a minor European language.

While none of the essays in this volume devote an excess of attention to the fraught relationship between the concepts of world literature and national literature, a few turn their gaze to the history of national literatures. Delving into the publishers' archives, in chapter 5, Dominguez explores the popularity of Walter Scott's novels and their incorporation into the debates on national identity in Latin American states gaining

independence from the Spanish Empire in the early 19th century. In chapter 8, Page examines the World Literature Publishing House project and its long-lasting influence on the Russian cultural and literary domain, seeing it as a logical evolution of the pre-revolutionary “educational” publishers’ traditions rather than a movement grown out of Soviet cultural ideology. Page’s chapter is accompanied by two other chapters dealing with 20th century literary scenes. Thus, while embedded in highly different cultural spaces and traditions (Mitteleuropean and Mediterranean, respectively), in chapters 6 and 11, Simon and Stephanides both focus on the exploration of a multilingual space with a spectrum of languages and transcultural relations shaped by the imperial past, contemporary ethnic divisions and translational encounters occurring due to forcible displacement and exile.

Translations of popular fiction and what may be gleaned from them regarding the movement of literature and the functioning of translation have been a subject of interest for some world literature scholars (cf. Nilsson *et al.* 2017), and Gaspar’s contribution in chapter 7 — looking at the mass-produced translations of Jack London’s works in Latin America — supports the view that not only literary masterpieces deserve scholarly attention.

Finally, three essays discuss theoretical issues inherent in the interplay of translation and literature. In chapter 3, Blanco reconceptualises the totalising notion of world literature through the concept of a pluriversal community and ponders the position of translation in the formation of such a community. In chapter 9, Alvstad discusses several translations of Borges’ literary prose and the potential proliferation of an author’s work in which one translation may contradict another, thus preventing new retranslations from modernising its interpretations. In chapter 10, Littau explores how media play a constitutive role in the worlding of literature, illustrating her point by expounding on the rise of the printing press and the novel as a genre and juxtaposing it with contemporary electronic literature easily available online.

Overall, the collection is a well-rounded and timely volume, characterised by versatility and depth in its approach to the themes examined. Each of the studies included is a valuable contribution to the study of literary translation, which enables the dissemination of individual works in new cultural spheres while being a key factor in the push and pull of power relations and imbalances between the major and minor languages. The volume is highly readable, with the arguments presented in a logical manner and illustrated by compelling examples and is not overly burdened by complex jargon so dear to many literary theorists. This allows the volume to be accessible to both experts and students of translation. Its scope and range of themes do presuppose at least some acquaintance with World Literature as a field of study, but even those unfamiliar with those concepts might find it useful as a guide to expanding their knowledge due to detailed reference lists after each essay.

References

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