

BASSNETT, Susan, ed. (2018): *Translation and World Literature*. London/New York: Routledge, 202 p.

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[See table of contents](#)

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ioned, but I still believe that the principal goal of any scientific field—and presumably that includes translation studies—is to push back the limits of our knowledge and increase our understanding of that field, not primarily to put itself at the service of various social causes, regardless of how worthy those may be.

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1. This also includes the detailed overview provided by Seligman and Waibel (in Chapter 12) of all the impressive work done in speech-to-speech translation over the years. Witness the *Google Assistant*, which now offers an interpreter mode on smartphones that can recognize and translate speech between forty-four languages; this, in addition to the well-known *Skype Translator*. Here too, just as in MT, the remarkable progress of late is largely due to the adoption of deep neural nets.
2. No one would deny that even the best NMT systems today occasionally produce incorrect translations. Not infrequently they will omit elements of the source sentence's content and every once in a while generate output that is flat-out bizarre.
3. A total of 450 English environmental terms are employed in the case study described in Chapter 2, a modest number compared to other empirical work in corpus-based linguistics. Their Chinese and Spanish equivalents were extracted from the UN Term Portal; the Portuguese equivalents, from IATE. The case study in chapter 5 does provide a more detailed description of how the Japanese equivalents to the English terms on water safety were derived, through a far more lengthy and elaborate description of structural equation modelling, "a powerful statistical technique used widely in the social sciences" (p. 81).
4. It strikes me as something of a stretch to claim, as the author does on page 18, that "strong multi-sectoral interaction within a society," as gauged by these counts of environmental terms, "may effectively enhance the environmental performance of the country." At best, a correlation may exist between the two; but to assert a causal connection, for instance that the publication of environmental terms can actually bring about lower green house gas emissions, seems highly dubious, to say the least.

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In the era of accelerated globalization and a "multicultural turn" in comparative literature, much attention has been paid to world literature, a field in which translation plays a constructive, complex, and crucial role. Just as Venuti (2013) claims, world literature cannot be conceptualized apart from translation. Although the same thought has been echoed by other scholars (for example, Brodzki 2007; Gentzler 2017), translation has been, until very recently, given an inferior status in the literary field as it has historically been stigmatized as a form of reproduction, imitation, a "second-order representation" (Venuti 1995/2008: 6). Against this backdrop, Susan Bassnett's *Translation and World Literature*, a new volume in the *New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies* series dedicated to translation and interpreting studies, has been timely planned and published since it affirms and legitimizes the value of translation in forging the field of world literature.

This volume under review consists of an introduction and 11 separate chapters, probing into diverse issues and topics pertinent to translation and world literature. Susan Bassnett opens the eleven-chapter collection with an overview of the "rocky" relationship between translation studies and world literature, as well as a concise description of the main content of each chapter, setting the stage for the following chapters. As Susan Bassnett acknowledges in the Introduction, it is a shared belief of the contributors to this volume, regardless of their starting point, that "translation matters" (p. 7) in the dissemination of literatures around the world and that "the time has come for literary and cultural studies to acknowledge the significance of translation" (p. 6). With this common contention, the following chapters were written from a vast and varied range of perspectives.

Placing the issue of translation and world literature in the Anglophone and Francophone contexts, respectively, the authors of Chapters 1 and 2, Harish Trivedi and Charles Forsdick, share a concern about monolingualism in world literature. Based on the investigation of Indian formulations of world literature, which is mainly written in or translated into English, Trivedi argues that the term *world literature* is already "somewhat contaminated" (p. 16) by the global dominance of English, which involves colonial and neocolonial overtones. In Chapter 2, Forsdick first traces the emergence and evolution of the notion of *littérature-monde en français* (*world literature in French*), then reveals the inherent contradiction in juxtaposing *world literature* with *in French*

as it indicates a monolingual and Francocentric agenda, and finally acknowledges the positive role of translation in pursuing “transcultural, transnational and translingual” (p. 41) approaches to literary history.

With Chapter 4 we move from the Anglophone and Francophone worlds to the Portuguese context. In reference to the marginalization of literatures written in Portuguese, a language considered “minor” despite its major role in imperial and colonial history, Paulo de Medeiros probes the correlation between translation and cosmopolitanism. He argues that world literature is inherently cosmopolitan and translation “not only enables such a cosmopolitan perspective, but also ensures that difference, linguistic, contextual, and historical, never is elided” (p. 61), which is then corroborated by two cosmopolitan writers, Fernando Pessoa and Mia Couto.

Taking the discussion of the interrelation between translation and world literature further, Chapters 3 and 10 explore the significant role of community and media in the study of translation and world literature. In Chapter 3, Azucena G. Blanco transforms the totalizing Romantic idea of *Weltliteratur* into contemporary notions of world literature by virtue of the concept of a pluralistic and cooperative community, and examines the role of translation in creating such a community. In Chapter 10, Karin Littau focuses on the constructive role of the media in the worlding of literature by comparing the conceptions of world literature from Goethe’s time with the one of today, noting that both of them are media-dependent, albeit undoubtedly in different ways, namely in print media in the past and in non-print media today.

Based on a case study of 109 works by Walter Scott, including translations, reprints, a couple of forgeries and a wrongly attributed work, César Domínguez, in Chapter 5, focuses on the mechanics and politics of text circulation in world literature. He comes to an unexpected conclusion: the global capitals of postcolonial Spanish-speaking communities in the early 19th century were London and Paris rather than Madrid and Barcelona, as the former provided publishers with better international distribution network. Also, he highlights the need to jump out of the dichotomy separating national literature and world literature. Following the same pattern in César Domínguez’s chapter, Chapters 8 and 9 are also based on case studies of outstanding figures in world literature. In Chapter 8, Svetlana Page delves into Maxim Gorky’s World Literature Project and concludes by pointing out that it is a logical evolution of pre-revolutionary traditions rather than a Soviet experiment closely aligned with dominant ideology, and thus it should

be seen as an enterprise within a continuum. With a systematic analysis of the various translations and often irreconcilable interpretations of Jorge Luis Borges’ *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*,¹ Cecilia Alvstad, in Chapter 9, underlines the need to retranslate key literary texts since interpretations of texts can become dated. Yet, different translations produced by different translators can provide various novel interpretations of the same author and even of the same text.

Chapter 7 shifts attention to the minor translations and world literature of the masses in Latin America. Martin Gaspar finds that conventional literature aimed at a mass audience, like Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild*,² or their minor translation, has often been “left outside the purview of both world literature and translation studies” (p. 108) since too much attention has been paid to aesthetically innovative or politically subversive literature.

Embedded in different multilingual and multicultural spaces (Czernowitz and Cyprus, respectively), Chapter 6 and the last chapter, Chapter 11, are both concerned with the literary worlds of the 20th century. In Chapter 6, Sherry Simon proposes that multilingual cities, like Czernowitz, are translational spaces where translational writings involve interactions among different languages and can complicate the definition of world literature as “non-national” (p. 94). In Chapter 11, Stephanos Stephanides offers an exploration of the transcultural and translational interactions from both an autobiographical and theoretical perspective, namely, the autobiographic account of his experience as a poet and translator and the theoretical discussion of issues like close and distant reading, etc.

Throughout the collection, all the contributors have made concerted efforts to redefine the status and function of translation in world literature. One of the merits of this volume thus lies in its attempt to narrow the gap between translation studies and world literature and finally achieve a complementation and win-win for these two areas. On the one hand, examining literature from the perspective of translation is conducive to the relocation of national literatures into world literature and the reconstruction of world literature. On the other hand, locating translation in a transcultural and transdisciplinary context frees translation from “language centralism,” adding a much-needed cultural dimension to translation and further improving the status of translation and translation studies.

Another significant aspect of the book is its well-organized structure and wide-ranging coverage of topics touched upon and discussed in the various contributions. In this volume, 11 scholars

working across and in between translation studies and comparative or world literature address interdisciplinary issues under both the context of the East (such as India) and the West (for example, France, Spain, German) and then present readers with a composite and coherent picture of the complicated relationship between two disciplines.

Moreover, the volume is characterized by its devotion to challenging the hegemony of English in world literature. Drawing from multilingual scholars' studies on non-English literature or translation, such as French, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Russian, and Swedish (Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9, respectively), the reviewed collection moves beyond the Anglocentric world, enabling other voices rather than one single dominant voice to be heard (Bassnett 2006).

For all the strengths of the collection, three minor inadequacies should be mentioned. First, the volume remains predominantly caught within the Western, even Euro-centric (namely English, French, Spanish, and German), discourse on literature and translation. As such, the inclusion of non-Western literatures, for example, Asian, African or Arabic literature, would have enriched and delimited translation studies and comparative or world literature to a larger degree. Second, for readers who are novices in translation or literary studies, it would be preferable to rearrange the terms in the Index into a Subject Index and Name Index, in accordance with their domains, from which the readers could have a clearer and quicker comprehension and grasp of the relevant areas. Third, some typographical errors merit our attention, for instance, "worldin" (p. 92) and "(Bermann 2012; Bermann 2012)" (p. 94), which may indicate a lack of proofreading time. Hopefully, such typographical errors will be corrected in later, revised editions.

Overall, this volume has proved itself a pioneering and laudable attempt to arouse academic attention to translation's significance in world literature studies, and thus casts new light onto both disciplines in the era of multilingualism, multiculturalism and interdisciplinarity. Informative, illuminating and stimulating, this volume is an essential read for anyone actively working or simply interested in the domains of translation studies, world literature, and comparative literature.

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2. LONDON, Jack (1903): *The Call of the Wild*. New York: Macmillan.

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