
Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush. *The Translator as Writer*. London and New York: Continuum, 2006, 221 p.

According to the editors, *The Translator as Writer* focuses "... on the art of literary translation of drama, fiction and poetry and the central interpretive role of the translator." The book is divided into four parts entitled "The politics of writing translations," "Rediscovery and Reinvention," "Body, blood and mind," and "Translation and creativity." Contributors include Laskshmi Holmstrom, Clive Scott, Jacob J. Kenda, Alberto Mira, Rob Schwartz, Nicholas Rutherford, Jiri Josek, Juan Gabriel López Guix, John Balcom, Carol Mairer, Anna Paterson, Josephine Balmer, Michael Hanne and the editors themselves, Peter Bush and Susan Bassnett. As these two editors explain in their introduction, "We would like those who read translated works to recognize translation as an art to be celebrated, not concealed."

Chapter one is called "A dialogue: on a translator's interven-

tions". In this conversation between Ros Schwartz, a translator of Francophone North- African writers, and Nicholas de Lange, who translates Hebrew fiction, the two translators explain their approach to the translation process. Schwartz states, "I call the translation process 'finding a voice'- there's a point in the translation where I suddenly feel very confident and I know what the mood should be, I know what the characters should say and I know what the register of language should be." Nicholas de Lange, explaining the translator's relationship to the author, says, "Translation is a process of negotiation with an author, which I find very helpful, because the translator is in some ways an intermediary between the original author and the new public."

"The politics of writing translations" begins with a contribution by Bush himself. The author, who was the Director of the British Centre for Literary Translation, speaks about the importance of rewriting, or multiple drafts in the process of translation. He believes that "a translator's readings are not those of the casual reader, however well informed, and engaged. They develop in the

context of a rewriting of the text: hovering between what is there on the published page and many drafts of new writing.” There are also other essays in this section such as “Let the Poetry Win: the Translator as Writer- an Indian Perspective” by Lakshmi Holmstrom, “Motivation in a surrogate translation of Goldoni” by Bill Findlay and “Translation: Walking the Tightrope of Illusion” by Anthea Bell.

The second section of this book, “Rediscovery and Reinvention”, focuses on the translation of texts such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Don Quixote*, and the works of Shakespeare. The authors in this section, (John Rutherford, Jiri Josek, Juan Gabriel López Guix, Clive Scott, and John Balcom) believe that it is important for the translator to take into account what the authors hoped to provoke in their readers without losing the initial force of the original text. Rutherford explains that what motivated him to retranslate an existing version of *El Quijote* was precisely its shortcomings: “This *Don Quixote* was indeed a boring book, because all the fun was missing; the wit, the sparkle, the exhilarating adventurousness of Cervantes’ prose

had been reduced to stolid, lifeless, conventionally literary language.” The translators in this section believe in taking culture into consideration and adjusting the translation of the original text so that it fits the culture of the new audience better.

Section three of *The Translator as Writer* “Body, Blood and Mind,” which includes essays by Carol Maier, Anna Paterson and Jakob J. Kenda, focuses on the idea of the translator and subjectivity. These three authors describe their experiences as translators and the difficulties they faced while attempting to create translated texts by authors to whom they felt immensely close. Maier explains how hard it is to detach one’s personal self from the translation, saying that translators “...(have a) tendency to project [themselves] into the text of another and assume that the projection [gives] rise to accurate, authentic, and truly shared feelings that erase or [transcend] mediation.” Maier wants to recognize the importance of the *body* of the translator in the translation process. She states, “...ever since I began to translate literature I have sensed that many of the texts which I worked found

their way into my blood and became an integral element of my organism...”

The fourth section of the book, “Translation and creativity,” includes contributors such as Susan Bassnett, Josephine Balmer, Alberto Mira and Michael Hanne. In the essays, they explain how translation is a creative literary activity, how it needs to take into account the process and importance of creating new versions of classics, and how it also should highlight the importance of style. Bassnett, who is a professor at the University of Warwick, explains how she was influenced by so many different writers and patterns of writing, all of which helped her evolve as a translator. According to Bassnett, “Translation, like imitation, can be a means of learning the craft of writing, for if writers can recognize and learn to speak in different voices it becomes more probable that they will identify a distinctive voice of their own.”

Sussan Bassnett and Peter

Bush leave the contribution of Michael Hanne as a way to bring the book together. In the epilogue, Hanne points out the connection between metaphors and translations, saying: “A consequence of the partial and imperfect nature of both translation and metaphor is the fact that we never suppose that any single translation, or any single metaphor is exhaustive or final.” In this way, Hanne summarizes the points that all the other contributors have spoken about in the book, namely, the creativity, engagement, flexibility, and attachment that translators have to the works they translate. He brings back the main purpose of the book, which is to recognize and celebrate the works of translators: “...indeed communication between people of different cultures would be even more fraught with difficulty... if we did not undertake translations.” Thus, he reminds the reader of the great task a translator performs.

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