

FROM TRANSLATING CULTURES TO CULTURAL TRANSLATION

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Although it is known that the practice of translating dates back to the very first century B.C., it was not until the 1950s when the discipline of translation, which would be named *Translation Studies* by James S. Holmes, gained ground and underwent several paradigm shifts. Following the discussions on prominent approaches to translation such as word-for-word and sense-for-sense or linguistic theories that have long occupied a place in the field of translation, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere put a new complexion on translation in 1990.

At the same time, the practicalities of teaching in the field have raised awareness on more subtle issues regarding the connection between *translation* and *culture*. It soon became evident that the two cannot and must not be divorced from one another; on the contrary, culture determines, or even conditions the translator and his work. In this perspective, specialists recognized that texts were indeed constituted of language, but language as a cultural carrier. Bearing in mind that translation is

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a type of communication, it can be suggested that translation does not infer solely a linguistic but also cross-cultural communication, which is also manifested in the comparisons of source and target texts, specifically of literary texts (Eriş, 2019, 546). As stated by Christina Schäffner, “[...] *learning about cultures takes place in a process of a conscious, reflective comparison, comparing the foreign target culture to one's own culture, comparing behavior and products of behavior*” (2003, 94). It is obvious that we learn a lot from, for example, movies produced by foreign producers and/or historical books and novels written by foreign authors. In doing so, we also grasp another characteristic of the setting or the people narrated or fictionalized in such works and this characteristic is the cultural one. The translation should be given credit for its mediating role in communicating the content in such works as without translation that would not be so easy to reach information about foreigners or a foreign culture from any parts of the world.

Consequently, the traditional approach in translation studies (the culture-specific approach, whereby the source text would be “substituted” linguistically, rather mechanically, by the text in the target language) was to be abandoned in favor of a more complex approach to the act of translation: a culturally negotiated one. And it should be noted that the *Cultural Turn in Translation Studies* by Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) brilliantly manages to identify this new approach to translation, formulating and acknowledging the revitalization and liberation of the field from the abstract and somewhat rigid linguistic traditional approach. Bassnett and Lefevere argued that the study of the practice of translation had moved from its formalist phase and was beginning to consider broader issues of context, history, and convention. They mainly focused on all kinds of textual and extratextual constraints upon translators in a translation, which

takes place in a continuum and never in a void. Furthermore, complaining about the position that translation occupied in applied linguistics and literary studies as well as in cultural studies, they attempted to draw attention to the position of translation and bring translation into the next level with Lefevere suggesting that theory and practice were to be intertwined, the theory was not to exist in the abstract and it was to be dynamic and involved a study of the specifics of translation practice. This shift of emphasis, called *the cultural turn* by Bassnett and Lefevere, was suggested to offer a way of understanding manipulative textual processes, the selection of texts, the role of the translator, an editor, publisher, or patron in the relevant selection, the criteria that determine the strategies to be employed by the translator, and the reception of a text in the target system. As pointed out by Jeremy Munday, in *Translation, History, and Culture*, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere dismiss the kinds of linguistic theories of translation, which, they say, “[...] *have moved from word to text as a unit, but not beyond*” and go beyond language and focus on the interaction between translation and culture, on the way in which culture impacts and constrains translation and on “[...] *the larger issues of context, history, and convention*” (2008, 124-125). As summarized by Munday (2008), *the cultural turn* or cultural studies influenced translation studies in the 1990s in terms of translation as rewriting, translation and gender, and translation and postcolonialism. The cultural and political approach to translation has led many scholars to raise such important issues under the umbrella of translation.

The influence of the notion of '*cultural turn*' has become prominent in the works of scholars working in the field and made Translation Studies a rather privileged field in academia in the past decades. Thus, it seems that translation acquired a different

dimension in which theory and practice would be handled together and old debates about translation such as word-for-word or sense-for-sense and faithfulness would be laid aside. Such a shift was also expressed in the works of Lawrence Venuti, who introduced concepts such as the *invisibility of translators* and approaches such as *foreignization* and *domestication*. These all represent the role and status of the translator in a sense. Venuti insisted on transformation in translation. Whether it is about *domestication* or *foreignization*, the source text became more of a pretext for creativity or for the enticement of a new readership, be it with the help of fashionable ideologies. In his book from 1995, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, revised in 2008, he pleaded for foreignization as the ethical approach for translators. In later books, for instance *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998), the translator will become surprisingly visible.

Initially, Venuti prompted translators to treat with deference the foreign cultural norms of the source text. The domesticating strategy would colonize the original text and its cultural context. Consequently, the adequate translation should underpin the foreignness of the original message. At a later date, Venuti criticized instrumentalism in translation, which meant that he guaranteed almost godly powers to translators. At this stage of his research, translators would have the freedom to negotiate the form and the content in order to appeal to a new readership for the translated text in the target culture. This implies openness towards the fashion and ideology-in-use in the target cultural milieu. Thus, the translator reigns almost supreme and can influence dramatically the configuration of the canons specific to various fields of knowledge and creation.

More recently, Sean Cotter wrote that he has towards literary translation the feelings of a married man. In marriage, the