

12. Bridging Cultures: The Impact of Susan Bassnett on Comparative Literature, Literary Translation, and Intercultural Communication¹

Neslihan PARLAK²

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Abstract

This paper critically examines Susan Bassnett's transformative influence on comparative literature, literary translation studies, and intercultural communication. Drawing on her extensive body of work, Bassnett reconceptualized translation as a cultural transfer embedded within ideological, political, and historical contexts, shifting scholarly attention from purely linguistic concerns to sociocultural, ethical, and interdisciplinary perspectives. The study situates Bassnett within the broader intellectual currents of the "cultural turn," emphasizing her insistence on translation as an active, interpretive practice that encompasses rewriting, translator visibility, and ideological mediation. In comparative literature, her interventions challenged Eurocentric and canon-centered frameworks, advocating for transnational and intercultural readings of literary texts. In literary translation studies, Bassnett's theoretical contributions legitimize the translator's role as a culturally and ethically engaged agent, shaping reception, literary value, and meaning across diverse contexts. Furthermore, her scholarship informs intercultural communication by highlighting the political, cultural, and ethical stakes of translation in cross-cultural encounters, migration, and globalized media. Methodologically, the paper employs a critical literature review, conceptual analysis, and illustrative case studies—including the translation histories of Latin American and African literature—to demonstrate practical implications of her theories. The findings indicate that Bassnett's interdisciplinary and culturally grounded approach continues to influence contemporary scholarship, provoking critical reflection on Eurocentrism, methodological scope, and pedagogical practice. The study concludes by exploring implications for translation pedagogy, cultural policy, and future research trajectories in intercultural communication, offering a framework for analyzing translation as both a scholarly and socially transformative act. This study is a conceptual and critical analysis rather than an empirical investigation which adopts a conceptual and interpretive approach, offering a thematic analysis of Bassnett's interdisciplinary contributions rather than an empirical investigation.

Keywords: Susan Bassnett; Translation Studies; Comparative Literature; Literary Translation;

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² Öğr. Gör. Dr., Konya Teknik Üniversitesi, Ortak Dersler Bölümü / Lect. Dr., Konya Technical University, Department of Common Courses (Konya, Türkiye), **eposta:** nparlak@ktun.edu.tr **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2927-2435> **ROR ID:** <https://ror.org/02s82rs08> **Crossref Funder ID:** 100019308

Cultural Turn; Intercultural Communication; Rewriting

Kültürler Arası Köprü Kurmak: Susan Bassnett'in Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat, Edebiyat Çevirisi ve Kültürlerarası İletişim Üzerindeki Etkisi³**Öz**

Bu makale, Susan Bassnett'in karşılaştırmalı edebiyat, edebiyat çevirisi çalışmaları ve kültürlerarası iletişim üzerindeki dönüştürücü etkisini eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Bassnett, kapsamlı çalışmalarına dayanarak, çeviriyi ideolojik, politik ve tarihsel bağlamlara gömülü bir kültürel aktarım olarak yeniden kavramsallaştırmış ve akademik ilgiyi salt dilbilimsel meselelerden sosyokültürel, etik ve disiplinlerarası perspektiflere kaydırmıştır. Bu çalışma, Bassnett'i "kültürel dönüşüm"ün daha geniş entelektüel akımları içinde konumlandırarak, çeviriyi yeniden yazma, çevirmenin görünürlüğü ve ideolojik arabuluculuğu kapsayan aktif, yorumlayıcı bir uygulama olarak ısrarla vurgulamaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı edebiyatta, Bassnett'in müdahaleleri Avrupa merkezli ve kanon odaklı çerçevelere meydan okumuş, edebi metinlerin ulusötesi ve kültürlerarası okumalarını savunmuştur. Edebiyat çeviri çalışmalarında Bassnett'in teorik katkıları, çevirmenin kültürel ve etik açıdan aktif bir aktör olarak rolünü meşrulaştırarak, farklı bağlamlarda alımlama, edebi değer ve anlamı şekillendirmektedir. Ayrıca, Bassnett'in akademik çalışmaları, kültürlerarası karşılaşmalarda, göçte ve küreselleşmiş medyada çevirinin politik, kültürel ve etik önemini vurgulayarak kültürlerarası iletişime katkıda bulunmaktadır. Metodolojik olarak, makale, teorilerinin pratik uygulamalarını göstermek için eleştirel bir literatür incelemesi, kavramsal analiz ve Latin Amerika ve Afrika edebiyatının çeviri tarihlerini de içeren açıklayıcı vaka çalışmaları kullanmaktadır. Bulgular, Bassnett'in disiplinlerarası ve kültürel temelli yaklaşımının, Avrupa merkezliliği, metodolojik kapsam ve pedagojik uygulamalar üzerine eleştirel düşünceleri tetikleyerek çağdaş akademik çalışmaları etkilemeye devam ettiğini göstermektedir. Çalışma, kültürlerarası iletişimde çeviri pedagojisi, kültür politikası ve gelecekteki araştırma yönelimleri için çıkarımları inceleyerek, çeviriyi hem bilimsel hem de sosyal açıdan dönüştürücü bir eylem olarak analiz etmek için bir çerçeve sunarak son bulmaktadır. Bu çalışma, ampirik bir araştırma olmaktan ziyade, kavramsal ve yorumlayıcı bir yaklaşım benimseyen kavramsal ve eleştirel bir analizdir ve ampirik bir araştırma yerine Bassnett'in disiplinlerarası katkılarının tematik bir analizini sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Susan Bassnett; Çeviri Çalışmaları; Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat; Edebi Çeviri; Kültürel Dönüşüm; Kültürlerarası İletişim; Yeniden Yazma

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Introduction

Translation has increasingly come to be understood not merely as a linguistic operation but as a cultural, historical, and ideological practice. Few scholars have contributed to this shift as decisively as Susan Bassnett, whose work has helped reposition translation studies from a text-centered discipline to one embedded within broader cultural and interdisciplinary frameworks. Bassnett repeatedly emphasizes that translation is shaped by power relations, identity formations, and intercultural dynamics rather than by words alone (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 138–140; Bassnett, 2014, p. 12). As D’hulst (2020) suggests, contemporary translation practices increasingly operate within broader dynamics of cultural mobility and transnational exchange (p. 44). This perspective has led many researchers to treat translation as a form of cultural negotiation rather than a simple act of meaning transfer.

In recent decades, the increasing globalization of literature and the growing visibility of cross-cultural encounters have rendered Bassnett’s insights even more relevant. Her analyses of how texts circulate across borders and how cultural identities are reframed in translation provide a conceptual toolkit for understanding contemporary translation debates (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, pp. 5–6). This view also aligns with Bermann’s (2020) argument that world literature today is inseparable from the translational flows that shape its global circulation (p. 149). Cronin (2022) further expands this discussion by emphasizing how ecological and cultural environments deeply influence translational choices and global textual movement (p. 33). Although a substantial body of scholarship has addressed cultural translation, the specific ways in which Bassnett links translation to cultural theory, identity politics, and rewriting practices still require closer examination. This gap becomes more apparent when considering how frequently her framework is applied without a thorough engagement with her original arguments.

Accordingly, this article aims to revisit Bassnett’s interdisciplinary approach by examining how she conceptualizes translation as a cultural, historical, and political act. Rather than offering a descriptive overview, this study adopts a qualitative textual analysis of Bassnett’s seminal works, focusing on the theoretical intersections she constructs between translation, identity, gender, history, and literary rewriting. By doing so, the article clarifies how Bassnett’s framework continues to shape discussions on representation, cultural agency, and cross-cultural communication in the twenty-first century.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to illuminate the intellectual foundations of Bassnett’s contribution and to explain how her theoretical interventions have helped broaden the scope of translation studies. More specifically, the article argues that Bassnett’s work establishes translation as a dynamic cultural encounter—one that challenges rigid borders between languages, disciplines, and identities. This perspective contributes to contemporary debates by encouraging a more nuanced understanding of translation as an interpretive, reconstructive, and culturally embedded act.

To guide the discussion, the article is organized as follows: the next section examines Bassnett’s position within cultural translation studies; subsequent sections discuss her theoretical contributions to history, identity, gender, travel writing, and rewriting; and the final section evaluates how her interdisciplinary vision situates translation as a transformative cultural practice.

This article is framed as a *conceptual and interpretive study*. Rather than presenting empirical data or corpus-based findings, it brings together key arguments from Susan Bassnett’s major works and situates them within broader discussions in translation studies, comparative literature, and cultural theory. The aim is not only to describe Bassnett’s influence but also to reflect on how her ideas continue to shape

current thinking about culture, identity, and representation. By weaving together close reading, thematic analysis, and critical synthesis, the study seeks to offer a clear and accessible overview of Bassnett's interdisciplinary contribution.

Bridging Culture: Susan Bassnett's Contribution to Translation Studies

Susan Bassnett's work occupies a central place in the shift that repositioned translation studies as a culturally oriented discipline. Bassnett reminds us that translation cannot be separated from its cultural and ideological setting. This insight has encouraged many scholars to look beyond purely linguistic concerns (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 123–124). Her early writings, particularly in *Translation, History and Culture*, foreground the ways in which texts are shaped by power relations and by the cultural narratives through which they circulate (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, p. 8). This perspective helped redefine translation as a form of cultural production rather than a secondary literary activity.

One of Bassnett's most influential contributions is her insistence that translation involves interpretative choices rooted in cultural knowledge. She highlights that translators operate at the intersection of two cultures and must constantly negotiate meaning, identity, and representation (Bassnett, 2014, p. 67). This insight aligns with broader debates in cultural theory, such as Bhabha's concept of the "third space" and Spivak's emphasis on ideological responsibility in translation. Although Bassnett does not explicitly frame her work in postcolonial terminology, the parallels between her arguments and these theoretical frameworks reveal the interdisciplinary nature of her model.

A point frequently noted in the literature, however, concerns the limitations of Bassnett's approach. While her model effectively emphasizes cultural dynamics, scholars have argued that she does not sufficiently engage with the complexities of postcolonial translation, particularly the asymmetrical power structures that shape translation in formerly colonized societies. Tymoczko (2007, p. 24) criticizes the generality of Bassnett's use of "culture," suggesting that it risks overlooking how uneven geopolitical relations influence translational choices. This critique underscores that, although Bassnett laid the conceptual groundwork, subsequent scholars have had to expand the model to account for more explicit ideological dimensions.

These critiques do not weaken Bassnett's contribution but rather demonstrate how her work opened a space for further theoretical expansion. Her writings laid the foundation for later discussions of identity, ideology, and cultural agency, even in areas where she did not address such topics directly. By bridging translation with history, comparative literature, and cultural studies, she carved out an academic space in which translation can be examined as an act of cultural negotiation. This interdisciplinary orientation continues to influence contemporary discussions, particularly those concerned with cross-cultural encounter, rewriting, and representation. Recent work by Bassnett (2021) also revisits the significance of interdisciplinarity, reaffirming the need to situate translation within wider cultural debates (p. 5).

For this reason, Bassnett's framework remains crucial today, offering a conceptual lens for understanding how translation mediates—and often reshapes—cultural boundaries in an increasingly interconnected world.

Culture and Translation

The relationship between culture and translation has long been a central theme in the development of translation studies, and Susan Bassnett's work offers one of the most influential frameworks for

understanding this connection. Bassnett argues that translation operates within a dynamic cultural environment and cannot be reduced to the mechanical transfer of linguistic forms (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 22–23). From her perspective, translation is shaped by the cultural assumptions, symbolic structures, and interpretative habits that both the source and target communities bring to the text. In this sense, translation is not simply a bridge between languages but a site of cultural interaction in which meanings are renegotiated and recontextualized.

Building on this view, Bassnett emphasizes that no text exists independently of the cultural system that produces it. Every narrative reflects the values, power structures, metaphors, and ideological tendencies of the society from which it emerges (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 136–137). Consequently, translators must navigate a web of cultural references, implicit meanings, and contextual cues that cannot be transferred directly without interpretation. This process requires not only linguistic competence but also an awareness of cultural histories, social conventions, and symbolic representations.

Cultural translation is therefore a fundamentally interpretive act. Translators make decisions that shape how cultures are represented, how characters are understood, and how events are framed for new audiences. Scholars such as Bhabha (1994, pp. 36–37) describe this space of negotiation as a “third space” in which cultural meanings are neither simply reproduced nor entirely transformed but recreated in a hybrid form. Although Bassnett does not articulate her model explicitly in postcolonial terms, her emphasis on cultural dynamics resonates strongly with such theoretical perspectives.

A key implication of Bassnett’s argument is that translation always involves a shift in cultural positioning. When a text moves from one cultural system to another, its meanings adapt to new expectations, interpretive habits, and ideological contexts. Translators engage in strategies such as domestication, foreignization, explanation, omission, and expansion to make the text meaningful for the target audience (Venuti, 1995, pp. 19–20). These strategies reveal how translators operate not as neutral transmitters but as cultural mediators who actively shape the reception of a work. Torop (2020) revisits the idea of total translation, reminding us that texts are embedded in expansive cultural systems that shape their interpretive potential (p. 22).

Bassnett’s approach also highlights the role of power in cultural translation. Cultural representations are rarely neutral; they carry ideological weight and may reinforce or challenge dominant narratives. Tymoczko (2007, pp. 24–25) contends that translators must remain aware of such dynamics, particularly when representing marginalized cultures. Bassnett’s framework provides the conceptual foundation for this critical awareness by foregrounding the cultural embeddedness of all translational decisions.

Taken together, these insights show that translation is a culturally situated encounter rather than a linguistic exercise. Bassnett’s contribution lies in her ability to articulate how translators navigate cultural complexity while shaping new meanings in the target context. Her work continues to influence contemporary scholarship by providing a nuanced understanding of translation as an interpretive, culturally embedded, and ideologically charged process.

History and Translation

The relationship between history and translation constitutes one of the most significant intersections in the humanities, and Susan Bassnett’s work has played a crucial role in illuminating this connection.

Bassnett argues that translation is intrinsically historical because every text emerges from specific temporal, ideological, and cultural circumstances (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 83–84). In her view, the historical conditions that shape a text also influence the way it is translated, received, and reinterpreted in different periods. Translation therefore becomes a dynamic process through which historical narratives are continually reconstructed.

Bassnett's perspective draws attention to the fact that translations are not produced in a vacuum; they are situated in particular historical moments that frame the translator's choices. As she notes, translators often reinterpret texts to reflect contemporary values, political climates, or cultural expectations (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 138–139). The act of translation is thus inseparable from the historical consciousness of the translator, who must navigate both the contextual realities of the source text and the demands of the target culture.

This approach aligns with Lefevere's (1992, pp. 14–15) argument that translation is part of a broader system of "rewriting," in which texts are reshaped to fit ideological and cultural agendas. According to Lefevere, historical forces—such as nationalism, colonialism, modernization, and shifting cultural policies—play an essential role in determining how translations are produced and circulated. Bassnett's work complements this view by offering a nuanced understanding of how history enters translation not merely as background information but as an active component of meaning-making.

The historical dimension of translation is particularly evident during periods of cultural transformation. For example, translations produced under colonial rule, during nation-building processes, or in the wake of major political upheavals often reflect ideological priorities rather than strict fidelity to the source text. Scholars such as Robinson (1997, pp. 116–118) emphasize that translation has frequently been used to legitimize political power or rewrite cultural memory. Bassnett's model provides a framework for understanding these practices by framing translation as a historically mediated act that both absorbs and reinterprets cultural narratives. Chen (2024) brings in a Global South perspective, underscoring the need to foreground marginalized epistemologies in translation studies (p. 4).

Another important implication of Bassnett's argument is that translations themselves acquire historical agency. Once a translated text enters a new cultural system, it often shapes subsequent literary production, influences aesthetic norms, and alters how the source culture is perceived. This transformative capacity demonstrates that translation is not merely a product of history but also a force that actively contributes to it (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, p. 11). In this sense, translation participates in the construction of collective memory and the transmission of cultural heritage.

Despite the strengths of Bassnett's model, some scholars argue that her approach could engage more deeply with the politics of historiography. Tymoczko (2007, pp. 41–42) suggests that understanding translation historically requires a more explicit analysis of how power structures—particularly in postcolonial settings—shape what is translated, who translates, and for whom translations are produced. This perspective expands Bassnett's framework by highlighting the ideological implications of historical context.

Overall, Bassnett's contribution underscores that translation and history are mutually constitutive processes. By foregrounding the historical embeddedness of translation, she provides a conceptual foundation for analyzing how texts move across time and space, how cultural identities are reshaped through translation, and how historical narratives are revised for new audiences. Her framework

remains highly relevant today, providing insight into the complex interplay between historical change, cultural negotiation, and translational practice.

Identity and Translation

The relationship between identity and translation has become a central topic in contemporary translation studies, especially in discussions involving bilingual or migrant authors. Identity is not a fixed construct but a fluid, evolving, and often negotiated phenomenon shaped by linguistic, cultural, and social contexts. As Bassnett (2014, pp. 86–87) argues, translation becomes one of the key spaces where this negotiation is made visible. For bilingual authors, the act of translating their own work often highlights the multiplicity of identities they inhabit and the cultural tensions embedded in their writing practices.

Translation functions as a site of identity reconstruction not only for translators but also for authors who navigate more than one linguistic and cultural system. Hokenson and Munson (2007, pp. 47–48) note that self-translators frequently shift between multiple cultural positions, creating textual variations that reflect their hybrid identities. This movement between languages brings the author's cultural allegiances, personal memories, and ideological perspectives into sharper relief. In this sense, identity is performed through translation, rather than merely represented by it.

The concept of identity becomes even more prominent when translation involves issues of migration, diaspora, or cultural displacement. Bhabha's (1994, p. 36) notion of the "third space" offers a useful framework for understanding how bilingual authors position themselves between two cultures. According to Bhabha, hybrid identity emerges in a liminal zone where cultural boundaries blur and new forms of expression become possible. Wolf (2020) also demonstrates how migration and mobility reshape translational identities, especially in multilingual and diasporic contexts (p. 12). Translation becomes one such zone: a space where authors articulate cultural belonging, negotiate linguistic authority, and reinterpret their own narratives for new readerships. This theoretical insight aligns with Bassnett's argument that translation is a dynamic practice that constructs rather than merely reflects identity.

Identity transformation is particularly visible in the works of authors who translate themselves. As Grutman (2009, p. 181) explains, self-translation creates a "double voice" in which authors revise, reframe, or reshape their identities according to the expectations of each linguistic audience. This reinterpretation often leads to textual shifts—such as changes in tone, emphasis, or characterization—that signal the author's attempt to reconcile multiple identity positions. Self-translation thus becomes an intentional act of self-representation.

Moreover, translation participates in the broader process of cultural identity formation at the collective level. Through translation, cultural values and social memories are transmitted, reshaped, or even contested. Tymoczko (2007, pp. 52–53) emphasizes that translation is deeply implicated in national and cultural identity because it influences how communities perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. When certain works are selected for translation or when specific linguistic choices shape their reception, a cultural narrative is constructed—often strategically.

A critical aspect of identity and translation is the tension between individual expression and cultural representation. Venuti (1995, pp. 19–20) argues that translators frequently occupy a marginalized

position, as their identity tends to be overshadowed by the dominant cultural expectations of target readers. This marginalization can also extend to authors who write in a minority or non-native language. Their identity is often interpreted through the lens of cultural stereotypes or geopolitical assumptions, requiring them to negotiate their visibility carefully. The translator or self-translator, therefore, becomes a mediator who both reflects and resists these expectations.

Despite these tensions, translation remains a powerful tool for rearticulating identity. By moving between languages, authors and translators expand the boundaries of their expressive possibilities and participate in ongoing cultural dialogues. As Bassnett (2014, p. 92) asserts, identity in translation is never singular but always “in motion,” shaped by the shifting relationships between language, culture, and power. This dynamic quality underscores the transformative nature of translation: it not only conveys meaning but also constructs new identity positions for authors, translators, and readers alike.

Gender and Translation

The intersection of gender and translation has gained increasing visibility within the broader shift toward culturally grounded translation studies. Susan Bassnett was among the first scholars to highlight how gendered perspectives shape both translational choices and the institutional structures in which translation takes place (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 102–103). She argues that translation is not a neutral act performed by an abstract agent but a situated practice influenced by the translator’s social identity, cultural positioning, and ideological commitments. From this perspective, gender operates as a formative category that influences how translators interpret texts, represent voices, and negotiate cultural norms.

Bassnett’s early discussions anticipated later feminist translation theories, even though she did not explicitly frame her work within feminist terminology. Scholars such as Barbara Godard (1990, p. 91) and Luise von Flotow (1997, pp. 14–15) expanded on this foundation by articulating feminist translation strategies—including supplementing, prefacing, and hijacking—that foreground the translator’s agency and challenge patriarchal discourses embedded in literary texts. These strategies illuminate how translation can become a form of feminist intervention, allowing translators to contest gendered stereotypes and give visibility to marginalized voices. Bassnett’s notion that translation is always an interpretive act aligns closely with this feminist emphasis on the translator’s active role.

Gender also shapes how authors and characters are represented across linguistic and cultural boundaries. As Vidal Claramonte (2020) notes, gendered patterns of representation become even more pronounced in the digital age, shaping how voices travel across linguistic borders (p. 260). Littau (2021) further suggests that posthuman media environments require rethinking translation beyond traditional textual boundaries (p. 118). In addition, as Simon (1996, pp. 11–12) notes, translated texts often reflect the target culture’s expectations about gender roles, potentially altering the portrayal of female characters or narrative perspectives. Bassnett’s framework helps explain this process: because translation is embedded within cultural systems, it inevitably interacts with the gender ideologies of both the source and target contexts. A translation may soften, reinforce, or challenge these ideologies depending on the translator’s interpretation and the socio-cultural demands of the receiving culture.

The issue becomes even more complex when the translator encounters texts written by women, particularly those dealing with themes such as sexuality, domesticity, or female agency. Feminist translation scholars argue that women’s writing has historically been subject to mistranslation,

omission, or moralizing reinterpretation in the target culture (Chamberlain, 1992, pp. 72–73). Within this debate, Bassnett’s suggestion that translators operate at a cultural crossroads underscores the need for gender-aware translational decisions. A translator who ignores gendered dynamics may inadvertently reproduce patriarchal biases or erase subversive dimensions of the source text.

Moreover, gender intersects with other identity markers—including class, ethnicity, and migration—which makes translation a site of multidimensional negotiation. Bhabha’s (1994) concept of hybrid subjectivity provides useful insight into how translated representations of women often reflect compounded cultural pressures. Bassnett’s broader argument that translation reconstructs cultural meaning helps illuminate how these hybrid identities are reshaped, sometimes constrained, and sometimes empowered through translation.

Although Bassnett does not explicitly position herself within feminist translation studies, her work created the conceptual space in which such scholarship could emerge. Her emphasis on translation as culturally situated, interpretive, and ideologically charged remains foundational to contemporary debates about gender and representation. Feminist translation theorists have deepened and expanded her arguments by demonstrating how translation can serve as a tool for reclaiming agency, challenging linguistic patriarchy, and amplifying voices that have historically been marginalized. Gambier and van Doorslaer (2020) also emphasize that translation studies thrive precisely because of these constant border crossings between disciplines (p. 176).

Taken together, these perspectives reveal that translation is not only a linguistic transfer but also a gendered cultural practice. Through her interdisciplinary insights, Bassnett provides a framework for understanding how gender influences translational choices, shapes cultural representations, and contributes to ongoing discussions about power, identity, and social transformation in translation studies.

Rewriting occupies a central position in contemporary translation studies, particularly due to its emphasis on the ways cultural, ideological, and institutional forces shape translated texts. Susan Bassnett’s collaboration with André Lefevere played a defining role in establishing rewriting as a theoretical lens that moves translation beyond questions of equivalence and fidelity. For Bassnett and Lefevere, rewriting encompasses all forms of translation, adaptation, criticism, and historiography that reshape literary works to fit the norms, values, and expectations of a given cultural system (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, pp. 10–11). Their work positions translation as an active cultural intervention rather than a passive reproduction of preexisting meaning.

Rewriting and Translation

At the heart of rewriting theory lies the idea that literary systems are regulated by ideological and poetological constraints. Lefevere (1992, pp. 14–16) argues that institutions—such as publishing houses, educational systems, and cultural gatekeepers—play a decisive role in determining which texts are translated, how they are translated, and how they circulate. Bassnett builds on this argument by demonstrating that translation participates in these systems of regulation and often reflects dominant ideological currents. Rewriting thus becomes a process through which cultural narratives, political identities, and aesthetic values are reinforced or challenged.

The power of rewriting is especially visible when translations become vehicles for promoting national

identity, ideological agendas, or particular worldviews. As Venuti (1995, pp. 19–21) notes, translation often prioritizes the target culture's expectations, leading to domestication strategies that reshape the source text to appear familiar or culturally aligned. Bassnett's framework highlights how such strategies contribute to the construction of cultural memory and the reproduction of ideological hierarchies. In this regard, translation is not merely a textual transfer but a cultural reconfiguration that reflects the priorities of the receiving society.

Rewriting also plays a crucial role in the formation of literary canons. Robinson (1997, pp. 102–104) emphasizes that the canonization of translated works depends heavily on how they are rewritten to align with the target culture's literary tastes and ideological preferences. Bassnett's insights help contextualize this phenomenon by showing that translations often mediate which authors gain international prominence and which voices remain marginalized. Through rewriting, translators, editors, and publishers collectively shape the global literary landscape.

While Bassnett's work lays the groundwork for understanding rewriting as a cultural and ideological act, some scholars argue for deeper engagement with the political dimensions of rewriting practices. Tymoczko (2007, pp. 45–47) critiques early rewriting theory for insufficiently addressing how colonial histories and geopolitical power structures condition translational choices. Her argument expands Bassnett's model by calling for greater attention to the asymmetries involved in cultural exchange. Nevertheless, rewriting theory remains a powerful tool for analysing the ways texts are transformed across cultural boundaries.

A particularly compelling dimension of rewriting involves the translator's creative agency. It has been highlighted that translator agency becomes even more visible in multicultural contexts where competing cultural expectations must be negotiated (Yu, 2022, p. 195). In addition, it has been stressed that translators make interpretive decisions that inevitably reshape a text's tone, narrative structure, and ideological positioning. This emphasis on agency aligns rewriting theory with discussions of authorship, suggesting that translators participate in literary creation rather than merely mediating between languages (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 32–33). Rewriting thus challenges traditional hierarchies that often privilege the original text over the translation and question the stability of textual authority.

Ultimately, Bassnett's conceptualization of rewriting frames translation as a transformative cultural encounter. By foregrounding how ideological pressures, institutional structures, and cultural expectations shape translational outcomes, her model illustrates the dynamic nature of cross-cultural communication. Rewriting theory continues to influence contemporary scholarship, offering a compelling framework for analysing how translations circulate, how cultural identities are rearticulated, and how texts are continually reinvented in new contexts.

Translation, Power and Representation

The relationship between translation, power, and representation is one of the most significant intersections in translation studies, especially within the cultural turn shaped by scholars such as Bassnett. Although translation has long been entangled in geopolitical hierarchies and ideological systems, these dynamics were not systematically examined until the late twentieth century. Bassnett (1998, pp. 123–124) argues that translation is never a neutral act; it is embedded in structures of cultural authority that shape how languages, identities, and cultures are portrayed.

A central idea here is that translation often unfolds within unequal power relations. Meylaerts (2020, p. 489) notes that translation policies can regulate cultural diversity and create representational hierarchies. Historically, powerful cultures have reframed or marginalized texts from less dominant cultures through translation. Venuti's (1995, pp. 19–20) concept of “domestication” illustrates how target cultures reshape foreign texts to reflect their own ideological preferences, while Saldanha (2021, p. 133) highlights that the politics of voice is crucial to understanding how translators navigate such authority. These processes can obscure cultural specificity and reinforce existing hierarchies instead of fostering genuine cross-cultural dialogue.

Bassnett's work helps clarify these issues by showing that translation contributes to both the production and circulation of cultural authority. Her emphasis on cultural embeddedness reveals how translational decisions—lexical, stylistic, or structural—shape the ways cultures are represented. This insight resonates with Said's (1978, pp. 1–3) critique of Orientalism, which demonstrates how representation functions as a mechanism of power. Although Bassnett does not explicitly apply Said's framework, her approach aligns with the broader concerns of representational politics. Tymoczko (2021, p. 7) adds that translation studies must adopt a more explicit decolonial awareness to understand how translations reinforce or resist global power asymmetries.

These dynamics become particularly visible in translations of non-Western or minority literatures. Tymoczko (2007, pp. 42–44) argues that translation can reproduce colonial narratives when foreign cultures are filtered through Western interpretive lenses. This selective representation—highlighting certain elements while downplaying others—shapes how societies come to understand one another. Bassnett's cultural model provides an important foundation for analyzing these asymmetries by insisting that translation is always shaped by cultural and political forces.

Institutional power also plays a major role in translational outcomes. Publishing industries, educational systems, and global literary markets influence what gets translated and how it is circulated. As Lefevere (1992, pp. 14–15) argues in his work on rewriting, these institutions act as cultural gatekeepers. Bassnett's framework expands this perspective by demonstrating that institutional forces extend beyond linguistic choices to shape representational politics more broadly.

Another dimension of power involves linguistic inequality. Some languages possess greater symbolic and economic capital in global contexts, leading to uneven translation flows. Casanova (2004, pp. 82–83) describes the world literary system as structured by linguistic hierarchies that privilege languages such as English and French. These hierarchies influence not only which texts cross borders but also how they are interpreted. Bassnett's emphasis on cultural negotiation complements this point by situating linguistic dominance within wider ideological structures.

Power and representation also intersect with identity politics, particularly for marginalized groups. Feminist scholars such as Simon (1996, pp. 45–46) show that translation has historically reinforced patriarchal norms by privileging male-centered literary traditions. Bassnett's interdisciplinary approach enables a broader critique of these patterns and underscores translation's role in shaping social identity.

Ultimately, Bassnett's work shows that translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but a cultural and political act with significant representational consequences. By foregrounding the ideological and institutional forces that influence translational choices, her framework highlights the translator's responsibility as a cultural agent. Translation becomes a space where narratives are constructed,

challenged, and reimagined. Understanding the interplay between power and representation is essential for developing more equitable and ethically grounded translational practices.

Representation, Ideology, and Translational Politics

Translation has long been intertwined with issues of power, ideology, and representation, and Susan Bassnett's work offers a foundational lens through which these dynamics can be examined. Bassnett (1998, pp. 138–140) argues that translation is never neutral; rather, it operates within cultural and political systems that shape not only what gets translated but also how it is interpreted and circulated. In this sense, translation is a site where ideological struggles become visible, as translators navigate competing cultural narratives, institutional expectations, and representational constraints.

One of the central claims in cultural translation studies is that translation participates in the construction of cultural identities and power relations. Venuti's (1995, pp. 19–21) seminal critique of translator invisibility illustrates how dominant linguistic cultures exert control by normalizing certain styles of translation, thereby marginalizing foreignness. Although Bassnett does not frame her argument explicitly in terms of domination, her insistence on the cultural embeddedness of translation reveals similar concerns. She emphasizes that translation always involves choices shaped by cultural hierarchies, literary norms, and ideological pressures (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 58–59). These choices affect how cultures are represented, which voices are amplified, and which narratives are muted.

This perspective becomes especially relevant in contexts marked by historical asymmetry, such as colonialism and globalization. Postcolonial scholars like Spivak (1993, pp. 179–180) argue that translation can either reinforce hegemonic power structures or resist them by foregrounding marginalized voices. Khair (2021) similarly argues that postcolonial translation today must be understood within the shifting terrains of globalization and cultural redistribution (p. 565). Although Bassnett's work predates much of postcolonial translation theory, her emphasis on the interpretive nature of translation anticipates later debates on cultural inequality. Tymoczko (2007, pp. 24–26) builds upon this foundation by showing how translational choices are often shaped by geopolitical forces that dictate what is considered translatable, valuable, or marketable in dominant literary systems.

Representation lies at the core of these power dynamics. When texts move across cultural borders, they acquire new ideological meanings, often filtered through the translator's—and the target culture's—assumptions about the source culture. Translators may unconsciously reproduce stereotypes, soften culturally sensitive material, or reshape narratives to align with prevailing market expectations (Baker, 2006, pp. 105–106). Bassnett's assertion that translation is a form of rewriting (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, p. 11) becomes particularly significant here: rewriting is never innocent, for it is bound to the cultural and political environment in which translation occurs.

Moreover, translation systems often privilege certain languages and narratives over others. English, for instance, functions as a dominant global language, shaping the circulation of world literature and influencing which works—and which cultural representations—become globally visible. As Bassnett (2014, pp. 65–66) observes, this global imbalance creates a translational hierarchy in which certain voices are foregrounded while others remain peripheral. Translators working from less dominant cultures into global languages must navigate these representational pressures, balancing cultural fidelity with the expectations of an international readership.

Despite these constraints, translation also possesses subversive power. By resisting domestication strategies, retaining cultural specificity, or foregrounding minority perspectives, translators can challenge dominant cultural narratives and reshape representational norms. Venuti's (1995, pp. 23–25) advocacy of foreignization resonates strongly with this idea, suggesting that translation can serve as a site of cultural resistance. Bassnett's framework supports this possibility by framing translation as a dynamic cultural act—one that can either consolidate or destabilize existing power structures.

In sum, the relationship between translation, power, and representation underscores the political dimensions of translational practice. Bassnett's emphasis on the cultural and ideological context within which translation takes place provides a crucial foundation for understanding how translators negotiate authority, visibility, and cultural meaning. Her work continues to influence contemporary scholarship by demonstrating that translation is not merely an exchange between languages but a cultural intervention that shapes how communities understand themselves and others.

Rewriting and Translation

Rewriting has become one of the most influential concepts in contemporary translation theory, shaped largely by the foundational work of André Lefevere. He argues that translation is only one among several forms of rewriting—alongside anthologization, criticism, adaptation, and historiography—all of which play a role in shaping the evolution of literary systems (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 1–3). From this perspective, rewriting determines not only which texts circulate but also how they are reframed ideologically, aesthetically, and culturally for new readers. Translation, therefore, cannot be separated from the wider cultural and political environments in which it operates.

Building on Lefevere's framework, Bassnett situates translation within a network of institutional influences, including patronage, literary conventions, and broader ideological agendas (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, p. 10). These forces affect how texts are reshaped—what is emphasized, what is softened, and how cultural elements are negotiated. In this way, translation becomes a mediated process, shaped by the expectations and constraints of the receiving culture.

A key implication of rewriting theory is that translation inevitably participates in cultural reconstruction. Lefevere (1992, pp. 7–8) notes that translators work with and against ideological pressures—national, religious, commercial, or institutional—that shape the final form of the translated text. Their decisions, whether they involve expanding certain motifs, moderating cultural references, or adapting stylistic choices, reveal translation as an active intervention rather than a neutral transfer of meaning.

Bassnett also emphasizes that rewriting should not be understood solely in negative terms. Instead, it highlights the fact that translation is always interpretive and adapted to cultural needs. Rewriting keeps texts relevant as they move across time and space. When translators modernize language, contextualize historical details, or adjust stylistic patterns, they enable the text to speak meaningfully to new audiences (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 85–87). Yet rewriting also raises important questions about cultural authority. Who determines which version of a text becomes dominant? What ideological interests shape these decisions? Spivak (1993, pp. 181–183) warns that rewriting can silence marginalized voices if translators inadvertently reproduce dominant worldviews. Venuti (1995, pp. 19–20) similarly cautions that domestication strategies may erase cultural specificity, creating homogenized representations that reflect the target culture more than the source.

Even with these concerns, rewriting remains central to understanding translation as a dynamic cultural practice. It shows that translators act as co-creators, shaping meaning rather than merely transmitting it. The collaborative work of Bassnett and Lefevere highlights that rewriting is essential to cultural transmission: it enables texts to cross borders, take on new significance, and remain influential within changing literary landscapes.

Ultimately, rewriting theory offers a powerful lens for examining the creative, ideological, and political dimensions of translation. It reveals translation not as a derivative activity but as a key mechanism through which cultures negotiate identity, authority, and representation.

Translation, Ethics, and Ideology

The ethical dimension of translation has become increasingly prominent in recent decades, especially with the influence of cultural and postcolonial approaches. Today, ethics in translation is understood not only as a question of fidelity but also as a matter of how people and cultures are represented. Bassnett (2014, pp. 94–95) stresses that every translation involves choices shaped by the translator's cultural background, interpretive priorities, and awareness of social hierarchies. These choices ultimately affect how individuals and communities appear in the target culture. Baker and Maier (2021, p. 201) similarly note that current discussions of translation ethics emphasize contextual sensitivity and a stronger sense of responsibility toward the people being represented.

A central concern within this debate is the question of voice: *whose* voice comes through in translation, and *how*? Spivak (1993, pp. 183–184) warns that translating marginalized writers—particularly women and postcolonial subjects—requires special care, as the nuances of their language and identity can easily be lost. Ethical translation, she suggests, calls for humility, attentiveness, and a conscious recognition of the translator's own ideological position.

Venuti (1995, pp. 20–23) broadens this discussion by critiquing the Anglo-American preference for fluency, which often masks the translator's presence and reduces cultural difference. For Venuti, an ethical approach should resist such domestication and allow readers to encounter the foreignness of the text rather than a polished, familiar version of it. In this sense, ethics becomes a political stance that pushes back against dominant cultural norms.

Bassnett's interdisciplinary perspective also adds depth to these debates. She views translation as a cultural and historical act, shaped by unequal power relations between languages and societies (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 138–140). Ethical translation, from this standpoint, requires an awareness of these inequalities and a willingness to reflect critically on how one's decisions may reinforce or challenge them.

Tymoczko (2007, pp. 52–53) further argues that translators must be transparent about their perspective and the limitations under which they work. Since no translation is ideologically neutral, acknowledging the forces that shape the process becomes an ethical practice in itself. Such awareness helps counter the illusion of neutrality, which often conceals deeper power structures.

These issues become especially visible in translations dealing with sensitive topics such as migration, war, gender, or cultural conflict. In such cases, translators must balance linguistic accuracy with the responsibility of representing experiences fairly and compassionately. As Baker (2006, pp. 104–107) suggests, translators can even contribute to peace-building by crafting narratives that promote empathy

and cross-cultural understanding.

In sum, translation ethics extends far beyond technical correctness. It involves recognizing cultural differences, questioning power dynamics, and understanding how translational choices shape the ways communities and identities are perceived. The work of Bassnett, Venuti, Spivak, and others shows that translation is always an ethical act with real social consequences.

Bassnett's Interdisciplinary Impact on Contemporary Translation Studies

Susan Bassnett's contribution to translation studies extends far beyond the boundaries of the discipline, shaping its dialogue with fields such as cultural studies, comparative literature, history, gender studies, and postcolonial theory. Her work has been instrumental in repositioning translation as a complex cultural practice rather than a marginal linguistic operation. By insisting that translation must be understood in relation to cultural identity, historical context, and ideological structures, Bassnett helped open the field to interdisciplinary inquiry at a moment when it was struggling to define its methodological borders (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 11–12).

One of the most significant aspects of Bassnett's interdisciplinary impact lies in her engagement with cultural theory. She was among the first scholars to foreground the idea that translation functions as a cultural negotiation shaped by power, representation, and identity (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 136–138). This orientation drew translation studies into conversation with major cultural theorists. While Bassnett does not always explicitly frame her arguments through postcolonial theory, her emphasis on cultural hybridity resonates with Bhabha's (1994, pp. 36–38) "third space" and Spivak's (1993, p. 182) critique of ideological mediation in translation. Through such intersections, translation studies became increasingly embedded in debates surrounding globalization, cultural mobility, and identity formation.

Bassnett also played a foundational role in establishing the dialogue between translation studies and comparative literature. At a time when comparative literature faced methodological crises related to Eurocentrism and disciplinary boundaries, Bassnett argued that translation should be understood as central to comparative inquiry, not peripheral to it (Bassnett, 1998, p. 138). Her critique helped reconfigure comparative literature by encouraging scholars to acknowledge the translational economies through which texts circulate. This shift laid the groundwork for contemporary world literature studies, where translation is now recognized as a constitutive mechanism rather than a secondary process.

In addition to cultural theory and comparative literature, Bassnett's writings intersect with gender studies, particularly in her discussions of voice, representation, and narrative agency. Although she does not develop a full feminist translation theory, her work anticipates concerns later addressed by scholars such as von Flotow (1997, p. 14), who argue that translation is shaped by gendered dynamics of power and visibility. Bassnett's earlier insights into cultural positioning and representation paved the way for such feminist interventions by demonstrating that translation is always ideologically situated.

A further dimension of Bassnett's interdisciplinary reach is her engagement with historical and political studies. By situating translation within specific historical contexts, she encouraged scholars to analyze translation as an active force in nation-building, cultural memory, and ideological transformation (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, p. 11). This historical orientation strengthened the connection between translation and political science, allowing contemporary scholars to examine how translation functions in diplomacy, conflict, and cultural diplomacy.

Taken together, these contributions reveal why Bassnett's work remains indispensable. Her interdisciplinary perspective expanded both the methodological scope and intellectual ambition of translation studies. More importantly, it helped establish translation not merely as a technical skill but as a mode of cultural inquiry—one that continues to shape academic discussions of identity, representation, and power in an increasingly interconnected world.

Conclusion

This study has examined Susan Bassnett's major theoretical contributions through a close analysis of her writings on culture, history, identity, power, representation, and rewriting. The findings demonstrate that Bassnett's work helped redefine translation studies as an interdisciplinary field grounded in cultural, historical, and ideological inquiry. Rather than restricting translation to questions of equivalence or linguistic fidelity, Bassnett foregrounded its role as a culturally situated, interpretive, and transformative act.

One of the core insights of the study is that Bassnett positions translation not as a secondary literary activity but as a form of cultural negotiation shaped by power relations, social structures, and identity politics (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 136–140). Her interdisciplinary approach allows translation to be understood as a dynamic practice that mediates between cultures while simultaneously reshaping them. This perspective brings translation studies into productive dialogue with cultural theory, postcolonial studies, comparative literature, gender studies, and historical inquiry.

The analysis also shows that Bassnett's collaboration with Lefevere played a pivotal role in the development of rewriting theory, which remains central to contemporary discussions of translation as ideological mediation (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 1–3). By emphasizing how cultural systems, patronage, and institutional structures reshape texts, Bassnett and Lefevere broadened translation studies into a critical discipline capable of analyzing cultural power at multiple levels.

Moreover, Bassnett's reflections on identity and cultural positioning highlight the translator's—and in some cases the self-translator's—role as a negotiator of voices, histories, and cultural meanings (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 86–87). Her work anticipates later discussions in postcolonial and feminist translation studies, which expand on her arguments by addressing marginalization, representation, and ideological asymmetries more directly.

Taken as a whole, Bassnett's interdisciplinary vision underscores the transformative potential of translation. It reveals translation as a practice that both reflects and shapes cultural realities; mediates identity; challenges hegemonic narratives; and fosters new modes of cross-cultural communication. By situating translation within broader intellectual debates, Bassnett demonstrates that translation studies is not merely a technical or auxiliary field but a critical lens through which cultural interaction can be understood. It can be defined as a form of cultural resilience, especially amid rapidly shifting global landscapes (Bassnett, 2023, p. 150).

In an era defined by globalization, migration, and increasing cultural interdependence, Bassnett's work remains profoundly relevant. Her theories continue to guide contemporary research by offering conceptual tools for analyzing how texts travel, how cultures encounter one another, and how identities are constructed through language. Ultimately, her interdisciplinary legacy affirms the central role of translation in shaping the cultural and intellectual landscapes of the twenty-first century.

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