

Gentzler, E. (2017). *Translation and rewriting in the age of post-translation studies*. London: Routledge. 260pp.

Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies, authored by Edwin Gentzler, heuristically illustrates the far-reaching implications of literary translation texts, as well as of pre-original and post-translational texts, on cultural formation and change in target-text cultures and, in turn, source-text cultures. In the first issue of *Translation: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, Siri Nergaard and Stephano Arduini (2011) coined the insightful and forward-looking term ‘post-translation studies’ by writing: “We propose the inauguration of a transdisciplinary research field with translation as an interpretive as well as an operative tool. We imagine a sort of new era that could be termed post-translation studies, where translation is viewed as fundamentally transdisciplinary, mobile, and open-ended” (p. 8). Subsequently, the transdisciplinarity and open-endedness of translation studies (TS) have become increasingly prominent, illustrated by the fruitful dialogues between TS and other disciplines in numerous monographs and essay collections (see, for instance, Ferreira & Schwieter, 2015; Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2016; Inghilleri, 2016; Larkosh, 2012; Tyulenev, 2014). Having said that, the research on literary translation is still text-centric and paradigm-restricted, largely neglecting pre- and post-translation conditions and effects. Mindful of this defect, Gentzler ventures to take post-translation studies to a new level by examining the international and intersemiotic circulation of four classic literary works and the influences and repercussions of their translation in literature, cinema, music, theater, ballet, video games, cartoons, blogs, etc. in the target-language countries. His proposal is radical: “Think about translation as one of the most important processes that can lead to revitalizing culture, a proactive force that continually introduces new ideas, forms or expressions, and pathways for change” (p. 8).

The book consists of a three-page foreword by Susan Bassnett, an eighteen-page introduction and four chapters. The author demonstrates and develops the post-translation hypothesis using four case studies, which are symptomatic of four successive centuries: from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. In the following, I will summarize and evaluate the individual chapters before providing an overall assessment.

Chapter 1 focuses on the travels of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Germany, Russia, and other English-speaking countries via textual rewriting and intersemiotic translation in music, ballet, and film. I am most impressed by the author’s ingenious proposal that Shakespeare is a great translator and rewriter who crafts a new work out of multiple sources and adds his own unique insights (p. 39). The translation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has always been the transformation and transmission of literary esthetics, ideologies, and the very modes of representation from England to other European countries. Today, the voyage of the play, just like that of other classic English plays, has not ended. Instead, it has entered “a more international and imaginative phase” (p. 64). The author rightly argues that “Post-translation studies has much to tell us about those re-visioning and re-versioning processes that are reshaping cultures worldwide today” (p. 63).

At its core, Chapter 2 elucidates that Goethe’s *Faust* has gone global through various forms of translations and rewritings. The author begins the chapter by shedding light on the translational culture of eighteenth-century Germany. Next, he examines Goethe’s writing of *Faust*, especially the elaborate integration of a large number of Ur-Germanic tales and of Greek and Roman stories into the play. The English translations and adaptations of *Faust* are numerous. Gentzler strategically chooses four versions for discussion, namely, *Faustus: From the German of Goethe* by an unknown translator, *Faust: A Dramatic Poem by Goethe* by Abraham Hayward, *Faust* by Walter W. Arndt, and *Faust* by David Luke. The author then critically studies *Faust* adaptations in cinema and *Faust* rewritings in music. Finally, the author summarizes the direction and goal of post-translation studies with an inspirational remark: “Post-translation studies looks at the complex movements of texts, not just source to target, but to target and beyond, west to east, north to south, linear to non-linear, texts to images, and forward in time and space through multiple languages, cultures, and genres” (pp. 112–113).

In Chapter 3, Gentzler first reviews the influence of Susan Bassnett’s and André Lefevere’s work on translation, rewriting, and cultural studies. He holds these pioneering scholars in high regard but critically points out the impotency of adaptation and rewriting theories in investigating multifaceted translation practice in the new era. Next, the translational culture in late nineteenth-

century France is briefly analyzed. The author then reflects upon the translational nature of *À la recherche du temps perdu* and discusses the writer Proust as a rewriter who “was rewriting, relativizing, and revitalizing as he wrote, adding new material and subtle innuendos as he thought out aloud” (p. 133). Gentzler concludes this chapter by maintaining that the connection between the original and rewritten texts can sometimes be difficult to discern, thereby complicating the job of post-translation scholar (p. 162). There is much truism in this remark as texts travel widely, both in genre and space, in this global era.

In Chapter 4, the author turns to the circulation of the story of Hamlet in China. The influences of the intrinsically progressive and universally enlightening Hamlet on Chinese society in all aspects, from the dawn of the twentieth century to the present, cannot be overestimated. Today, the play is still widely applauded among theatergoers, especially the young. The commencing section centers on the expanded definitions of translation, including tradaptation, transfiguration, creative interference, followed by a brief introduction to translational culture of China in the early twentieth century. The author resonates with Chinese TS scholar Lin Kenan’s argument that translation in China served as a catalyst for social change (2002). Lin Shu’s translation version *A Ghost’s Summons (Guizhao)* based on Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*, Liang Shiqiu’s *Hamlet*, and Tian Han’s *Hamletgleite* are subsequently studied. Finally, the author probes into the contemporary tradaptations of Hamlet in China such as *Shamlet*, a comedy/parody of Hamlet first staged in Taiwan and the blockbuster film *The Banquet (Yeyan)* directed by Feng Xiaogang. It is clearly demonstrated that “Hamlet arrived in China in an abridged form and was adapted to the local Chinese culture from the beginning, a rewriting process that has continued to the present” (p. 216). Eastern esthetics, theatrical traditions, and local innovations are all incorporated in the ‘Chinese Hamlet’. Those translational revisionings are, in the author’s mind, “more influential than a strict linguistic equivalent for Chinese as well as international audiences” (p. 217).

The book as a whole is the result of considerable effort to understand the nature and implications of translation and rewriting in a new era when they are increasingly pervasive in many forms of communication: literature, cinema, music, theater, ballet, video games, cartoons, blogs, etc. The greatest contribution of the book lies in its innovative perspectives on seeing translation as a revolutionary, experimental, and avant-garde act, by which social institutions can be changed or established and cultural boundaries can be expanded. Secondly, the book demonstrates great systematism and criticalness in theoretical elaboration which draws widely from the works of excellent TS scholars such as Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, Siri Nergaard, Stephano Arduini, Linda Hutcheon, and Sherry Simon as well as some sociological ideas such as cannibalism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. The endeavor to reinvent TS, which brings with it “more inclusive parameters, more fluid theories, and more incisive socio-psychological analysis” (p. 231) is highly admirable. The book is also characterized by its rigorous and meticulous examination of large quantities of primary sources of all kinds that are not easily accessible to many researchers in TS. To give an example: the experimental production of *Hamlet*, directed by Lin Zhaohua and Ren Ming, translated by Li Jianming, and staged in 1989 in Beijing, is thoroughly analyzed even though it is politically sensitive and its material is relatively scarce. Without arduous exploration and research, the analysis is completely impossible. The rich new information that the book offers should prompt further discussion on various issues. Moreover, the book is well-structured. It is a harmonious combination of case studies of literary masterpieces originated from England, Germany and France traveling to other countries in different centuries. The arguments are all adequately supported by abundant and engaging references and bibliographical data. Finally, the analysis is rendered more vivid with those exquisite illustrations.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the book has some weaker points as well. To begin with, while *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies* bases its discussion on numerous theories, the book does not articulate its own theoretical framework. In particular, the research paradigm in the age of post-translation studies has not been systematically and cogently dealt with. The author calls for expanding the boundaries of TS, but how? I worry that TS will run the danger of being dissolved and thus losing its unique identity if its transdisciplinary expansion is not prudent and selective. Secondly, some key concepts which the author frequently refers to, such

as “transculturation”, “transparaization”, “transluciferation”, and “transillumination” are not delineated and thus deserve better clarification.

By way of conclusion, I would say that as a highly informative and illuminating study, *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies* is a very welcome addition to TS. Its innovative perspective, comprehensive overview, elaborate theoretical elucidation, critical evaluation, and authentic references make it a truly valuable book for teachers, researchers, and students majoring in TS. Gentzler’s considerable experience in studies of translation and comparative literature as well as his working background make his analyses profound, both in depth and breadth, and provide insightful directions for future study.

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