

Plenary Address 2:

Translation as a Shaping Force in English

Susan Bassnett (The University of Warwick)

Abstract:

This paper will consider the role played by translation in shaping both the English language and its literature. English is a language that absorbs elements from outside lexically and structurally, hence the size of its vocabulary and the transformations it has undergone over the centuries. In terms of writing, English has borrowed forms, themes and concepts from many sources, ancient and modern. It will be argued that in the key years when the vernacular language was being used by writers to challenge the supremacy of Latin, that is, during the English Renaissance, translation played a vital role. Later, as the language became more established and writing in English flourished, translation had a less visible role, and became increasingly devalued. Now, in the 21st century, we are experiencing a new age of international writing in English and the role of translation is once again, albeit differently, proving to be of great significance.

Biodata:

Susan Bassnett is a writer and scholar of comparative literature at the University of Warwick. She served as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for ten years and taught in its Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies, which she founded in the 1980s. She was educated in several European countries, and began her academic career in Italy, and lectures in universities around the world.

Author of over 20 books, her *Translation Studies*, which first appeared in 1980, has remained in print ever since and has become an important international textbook in this field. The fourth edition will appear in 2013. Her *Comparative Literature* (1993) has also become internationally renowned and has been translated into several languages. In 1996 she co-edited *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* with André Lefevere, and together with Harish Trivedi she is the editor of *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1998). Other books include works on Latin American women's writing, women's theatre history, Sylvia Plath (2006) Ted Hughes (2010). *The Translator as Writer* (2006) was co-edited with Peter Bush. Recent books are *Translation in Global News* (2008) written with Esperanca Bielsa and *Reflections on Translation* (2011). Her latest book on translation in the Routledge New Critical Idiom series will appear in 2013. In addition to her scholarly works, Bassnett is a well-known journalist and also writes poetry. She is an elected Fellow of the Institute of Linguists and also of the Royal Society of Literature.