

## TRANSLATION WITHOUT BORDERS: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGING PRACTICES IN TRANSLATION THEORY AND PEDAGOGY

Elizabeth Lowe\*  
New York University

**Abstract:** Translation Studies is a relatively new discipline, formerly at the margins of traditional academic departments, that has not only expanded but has been reinstated into the center of the humanities. In the past half-century the field has become a dynamic inter-discipline, transforming research and teaching in a number of fields, including language studies, linguistics, cultural studies, and social sciences. This paper examines the present state of the field and outlines trending research developments that have implications for translation pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Translation Studies. Humanities. Inter-discipline. Translation Pedagogy. Translation Turn. Translation Theory.

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\*Elizabeth Lowe is an award-winning literary translator of fiction from Portuguese and Spanish into English. As a translation educator she specializes in translation pedagogy, translation theory and terminology. She is the founding director of the M.A. Program in Translation and Interpretation at the University of Illinois and currently Professor of Translation at New York University. Among the Brazilian authors she has translated are Machado de Assis, Euclides da Cunha, Clarice Lispector, Nélide Piñon, Rubem Fonseca and J.P. Cuenca. New York University Center for Applied Liberal Arts, School of Professional Studies. New York, NY, United States. Email: [Elizabeth.Lowe@nyu.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.Lowe@nyu.edu)



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## A TRADUÇÃO SEM FRONTEIRAS: PERSPECTIVAS INTERNACIONAIS SOBRE PRÁTICAS EM TRANSIÇÃO NA TEORIA E PEDAGOGIA DA TRADUÇÃO

**Resumo:** Os Estudos da Tradução consistem em uma disciplina nova, a princípio às margens dos departamentos acadêmicos tradicionais, que foi não apenas expandida como reposicionada no centro das humanidades. Nos últimos cinquenta anos a área se tornou uma interdisciplina dinâmica que tem transformado a pesquisa e o ensino em variados campos, a citar estudos da linguagem, linguística, estudos culturais e ciências sociais. Este artigo examina o estado presente da área e estuda as tendências das distintas pesquisas desenvolvidas e de suas implicações para a pedagogia da tradução.

**Palavras-chave:** Estudos da Tradução. Humanidades. Interdisciplina. Pedagogia da Tradução. Tradução em Transição. Teoria da Tradução.

In a very few years, translation studies, as a relatively new discipline, has experienced exponential growth and has been reinstated into the center of the humanistic enterprise. A young discipline in the 1960s, it survived first on the margins of the humanities and social sciences. Financial and technological “globalization” and the countless linguistic and cultural encounters in the contemporary world have doubtless spurred its development, as have new insights into language and culture from within the academy. In a mere half century, translation studies have become a lively area of academic as well as practical interest for a wide range of fields, and have begun to transform research and curricula throughout the humanities. In 1978 Andre Lefevere proposed “Translation Studies” as the name for the field that concerns itself with “the problems raised by the production and description of translations,” or process and product. In 1992 he presented translation studies as a complex field which marshals in its service many of a culture’s most vital elements.”<sup>1</sup> Susan Bassnett’s

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<sup>1</sup> André, Lefevere. *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*. New York: MLA, 1992, p. 11.

*Translation Studies* begins to outline the discipline, one she describes as “not merely a branch of comparative literary study, nor yet a specific area of linguistics, but a vastly complex field with many far-reaching ramifications.”<sup>2</sup> She was uncannily prescient, and no one could foresee in the 1980s the great range of fields that translation studies affects today. Growing up at the margins of many fields, it has not become a means of renewing them, offering powerful new ways to think about language and culture. There is a rise in popular interest in translation, and this is apparent in the positive reception of books like *Is That a Fish in your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* by David Bellos (2011) and *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World* by Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetsche (2012).

The strength of the field is being evidenced in the increasing number of professional journals dedicated to translation studies and pedagogy, the growing number of scholarly publications on translation, and the establishment of new centers for translation studies offering graduate degree programs. Among the teaching and research centers are the Centre d'études sur la traduction at the Université Paris Denis Diderot-Paris 7, created in 2011 in partnership with the University of Illinois Center for Translation Studies, founded in 2008. Belgium's Center for Translation Studies (CETRA), located at KU Leuven, and the University of Vienna's Zentrum für Translationswissenschaft are important members of the European Master of Translation consortium, now comprised of 64 members, including two non-EU programs with observer status. The EMT has sought to standardize translator education in parallel with EU efforts to regularize translation services. The standards include required curriculum for translation and interpreting programs, and specified exit requirements. Canada leads in translation research at Concordia University in Montreal, the University of Montreal and the University of Ottawa. In Brazil, the Universidade Federal de Florianópolis offers M.A. and Ph.D.

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<sup>2</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, Susan. *Translation Studies*. New York: Methuen, 1980, p. 1.

degrees in Translation and publishes a journal titled *Cadernos de Tradução* that features essays on translation research and pedagogy, with particular emphasis on Brazilian translation theory. China is rapidly expanding its leadership role in translator and interpreter education and research, with important programs at the school of Interpreting and Translation Studies at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, the Department of Foreign Languages at Tsinghua University, and the School of Foreign Languages at Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Universities in the United States that had previously shown little interest in the topic have now begun to incorporate it, either through individual courses or focused curricular clusters, while others are increasing their offerings. Kent State University's flagship Ph.D. program has been established to train future translation researchers and educators. The University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and New York University offer online as well as campus based Master of Arts programs in Translation and Interpreting. Princeton University recently inaugurated an undergraduate program in Translation and Intercultural Communications. Other U.S. universities have also developed new courses and programs, particularly in departments of English, modern languages, and comparative literature. Such courses go far to internationalize the university curriculum as they prepare students for the global world that awaits them. There is a great unmet demand for educated translators and interpreters, and translation is an ideal context for developing curriculum. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics of 2014 forecasts 42% growth in language industries, including the freelance market, in-house translation and project management for LSPs, the private sector and government, non-governmental organizations and international organizations.

Today, translation studies have become a large inter-discipline that encompasses the arts, humanities, social sciences and computer science. Important subfields include translation theory and literary translation, translation history, linguistic approaches to translation studies, special domain translation, machine translation,

localization and interpreting studies. Recent research is emerging in the promising field of cognitive translation studies, as well as on the work of translation in education. A recent issue of *Translation and Interpreting Studies* (2015), edited by Sonia Colina and Claudia V Angelelli, has as its focus T&I pedagogy in dialogue with other disciplines and the American Translators Association published a volume on *Rethinking Translation Pedagogy* (2003) edited by Kent State professors Brian Baer and Geoffrey S. Koby.

With this “present state of the field” as background, I will briefly outline trending research developments in major translation fields and then summarize recent discussions on new pedagogical approaches. Mari McLaughlin of the University of California, Berkeley, offers a useful typology of translation fields in her article “État Présent Translation Studies,” which appeared in *French Studies* in 2014<sup>3</sup>. While the emphasis of her article is on subfields of interest to French Studies readers, her summary reflects broader trends. She notes that in the area of translation theory there is a relative separation between the general and the French fields, and therefore a wide variation in the way translation theory is conceptualized. Anthony Pym’s well known book *Exploring Translation Theories* (2010) presents seven different theoretical paradigms: natural equivalence, directional equivalence, purposes, descriptions, uncertainty, localization and cultural translation.<sup>4</sup> McLaughlin points out that while Pym uses paradigmatic shifts to present theory, French scholars distinguish between theories that are prescriptive, descriptive and prospective. Particularly valued are prospective theories, which rise from the process of translation itself which is “une activité ouverte et, pourquoi pas, artistique”<sup>5</sup> (an open activity that is, why not, artistic). Among the influential

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<sup>3</sup> McLaughlin, Mairi. “État présent: Translation Studies”. *French Studies*. Vol. LXVIII. N°3 (2014) 377-385.

<sup>4</sup> Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories*. London: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Oseki-Dépré, Inês. *Théories et pratiques de la traduction littéraire*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1999.

French critics who are reflected in Oseki-Dépré's work, is Antoine Berman; he has had broad international exposure in part because of the correspondences between his work and Lawrence Venuti's and the importance Berman places on ethics in translation and foreignizing translation practice.<sup>6</sup> Venuti drew attention to an essay on translation by Jacques Derrida, whose work has been applied to translation in the deconstructionist context, by first translating it and then publishing an article on his translation of the Derrida essay.

Other connections between translation theory and literary translation are found in sub-fields such as retranslation, self-translation and translation at the margins. Berman's "retranslation hypothesis" argues that re-translations improve upon their predecessors and are able to more closely reflect the source text. William Gass's iconic book *Reading Rilke*, is a celebration of multiple translations of a single text illustrating the premise that each translation is a new and unique reading of the original. Self-translation has been examined for its paradoxical nature: Michael Oustinoff argues that this practice undermines previous differentiations between translation and writing.<sup>7</sup> Other borders have also been blurred, such as the concepts of source and target languages, requiring a reexamination of multilingualism and linguistic hybridity. Here, the work on translation in the post-colonial context is of central importance, with important examples from francophone Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Françoise Massadier-Kenney points out that it is crucial for our understanding of translation theory to understand "the struggle of various cultures at various times to occupy a position of power. At the heart of this struggle we find the use of vernacular languages and translations from other, more prestigious cultures to create political, linguistic, and literary resources in the receiving cultures." Similarly, she

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<sup>6</sup> Berman, Antoine. *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*. Paris: Gallimard, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Oustinoff, Michael. *Bilinguisme d'écriture et auto-traduction: Julien Green, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.

continues, “cultures of the periphery (London in the fifteenth century, Germany in the nineteenth century, and Middle Eastern countries today), whose peoples and cultures are not recognized politically and culturally, can aspire to literary and political equality through the transfer of prestigious cultural forms that can be used to expand the possibilities of their own cultures.”<sup>8</sup>

Edwin Gentzler, an American Germanist, comparative literature specialist and translation scholar now at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, has published two important works that inform us of new directions in translation theory. The first, *Contemporary Translation Theories* (2001), examines five new approaches - the translation workshop, the science of translation, translation studies, polysystem theory, and deconstruction - all of which began in the mid-1960s and continue to be influential. The final chapter offers his thoughts on the future of translation studies. Here he states: “Today an argument can be made that a variety of academic and socio-political events occurring internationally have made conditions ripe for a “translation turn” in several fields simultaneously, including linguistics, anthropology, psychology, women’s studies, cultural studies and postcolonial studies. Additionally, translation of recent has enjoyed a renaissance in many parts of the world ...such as Spain, Italy, Canada, Brazil, China, and especially in those nations in which borders have been opened, including countries in central and Eastern Europe. In this age of globalization, “lesser known languages” are particularly threatened, and translation and the study of translation become of increasing importance. New studies on translation in smaller countries and new nations continue to inform theory; I suggest we are just scratching the surface and that in the coming years more studies from a variety of perspectives, cultures, and languages

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<sup>8</sup> Massadier-Kenney, Françoise. “Translation Theory and its Usefulness”. In *Literature in Translation: Teaching Issues and Reading Practices*. Eds. Carol Maier and Françoise Massadier-Kenney. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2010, pp. 22-30.

will emerge.”<sup>9</sup> In *Translation and Identity in the Americas: new Directions in Translation Theory* (2008), he examines the contributions of the periphery to translation theory, in particular the work of Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, who appropriated the Brazilian modernist concept of “antropofagia” or cultural cannibalism, to an innovative new approach to translation.

The attention to new genres is also an important expansion of translation activity. Roger Baines has studied stage translation and its two phases: textual translation and adaptation for the stage. There are important advances in interdisciplinary research on audio-visual translation, now being examined from multiple perspectives, including the sociocultural. The world of digital humanities has opened the door to new kinds of translation including user-generated translation (fansubbing and fandubbing), translation for videogames and for virtual spaces. Aline Remael has said that the next “turn in translation will be the ‘audiovisual turn.’”<sup>10</sup> As sociocultural theory has been applied to translation it has opened the way for a wide range of themes to be examined in the context of translation. There is important work on translation and power, translation and identity, and translation and post-colonialism. Eduardo J. Vior has published “Visions of the Americas and Policies of Translation” in which policies of translation between the US and Latin America have been a reflection of power politics and construction of identities in the region. Sherry Simon of Canada is known for her work on translation and the city. Research on censorship, power and ideology is being explored in the context of translation, particularly the kinds of censorship that are hidden, such as self-censorship by the translator and other types of disguised censorship in the

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<sup>9</sup> Gentzler, Edwin. *Contemporary Translation Theories*. 2ed. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto, Sydney: Multilingual Matters: 2001, p. 187.

<sup>10</sup> Ramael, Aline. “Audiovisual Translation”. In *Handbook of Translation Studies*, eds. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer. Amsterdam: John Benjamins 1.0 (2010): 12-17.

West today. The pioneering work done on gender and translation by Gayatri Spivak will undoubtedly be continued in the future.

The criticism of linguistic approaches to translation now seem outdated as the fields of translation studies and linguistics merge closer together with the rise of computational linguistics. Linguistic approaches no longer serve a purely descriptive function. Sara Laviosa discusses recent work based on linguistic approaches but transcend description, including a new subfield of translation stylistics and a growing interest in ideological questions. Corpus based studies is one of the most prolific areas of growth. In corpus analysis, large electronic corpora are employed to test hypotheses about features of translated language. Since Mona Baker first proposed this approach twenty years ago, most of the research has been directed at understanding “translation universals.” Now the concept has been reframed so that the translation universal is now seen as an “open-ended working hypothesis about similarities, regularities, patterns that are shared between particular cases or groups of cases.”<sup>11</sup> Some of these features include source language influence, underrepresentation of TL features, explicitation and a reduction in linguistic variation.

With a view toward examining how translation educators approach teaching these new fields of translation theory and practice, Baer and Koby group pedagogical approaches into Translation as Process, Translation as Product and Translation-Related Technologies. They posit that “while there have been many significant attempts to think beyond the opposition of theory vs. practice, the real loser in this debate—which is essentially a debate about curricular content—continues to be the whole question of how to teach translation.”<sup>12</sup> They argue that if teaching methodology remains traditional, such as the *performance magistrale* described by Jean-René Ladmiraal (1977) in which the

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<sup>11</sup> McLaughlin, Mairi. p. 384.

<sup>12</sup> Baer, Brian J. and G. S. Koby. *Translation Pedagogy: The other Theory*. American Translators Association Scholarly Monograph Series, Vol. XII, 2003, vii.

master passes on his/her knowledge to a passive apprentice—then we will not produce translators who are “capable of the flexibility, teamwork, and problem-solving that are essential for success in the contemporary language industry, not to mention the creativity and independent thinking that have always been the hallmark of the finest translators.”<sup>13</sup> The HOW to teach translation is possibly more important than WHAT we teach, according to Maria-Luisa Arias-Moreno. The number of Ph.D. programs in translation studies in the United States, and the professional orientation of most M.A. programs imply that many who go into teaching translation have no formal training in translation pedagogy and must learn how to teach while they are instructing students.

Since the 1990’s more translation educators have been focusing on issues of pedagogy and have used as models the methodologies being used for teaching foreign languages to go beyond what they feel are antiquated methods of teaching translation. The shift has gone from behaviorist models (Skinner) to cognitive models (Bloom, Piaget, Vygotsky) of language acquisition. These models work with cognitive processing, involving “the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning, both in and out of the classroom.”<sup>14</sup> This correlates with the creation of the learner-centered classroom, in which teachers are facilitators, leading the students through tasks that simulate the real “interlanguage industry.” The new methods stress cultural competence as well as matters of developing stylistic skills for different genres and types of texts. Scholars including Jean Delisle, Daniel Gile, Donald Kiraly, among others, advocate a process-oriented, learner-centered focus for translation education and training. They believe that the theory-practice debate is outdated and not relevant to the work of translator trainers, and that furthermore creating a binary opposition between traditional academics and applied teaching is unproductive. The rapid rise of translation technologies is creating pressure on programs to include

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, viii.

<sup>14</sup> Baer and Koby. viii.

computer-assisted translation, machine translation, and a variety of software skills into the curriculum. Rising translators today must have a wide range of skills outside the traditional subject mastery of special domain fields and language pair skills. Today they must master skills in project management, terminology management with computer assisted databases, localization software, and corpus analysis. All of this must be mastered, Durban et al. remind us, without forgetting the fundamental skills such as “learning how to read a text closely, writing, editing, and researching.”<sup>15</sup>

Current approaches to teaching literary translation are focusing more on Durban’s fundamental skills. Gregory Rabassa’s mantra is that the translator is the closest reader of the text, and must be an excellent writer. Those with “tin ears” cannot be turned into master translators. For Rabassa, teaching literary translation was to model good reading and writing practices. His point of departure and arrival has always been the text. He objects strenuously to the use of the term “target text” and remarks dryly “I am an old infantryman, and we dogfaces were taught to shoot at a target and, ideally, kill it.”<sup>16</sup> Being a student of Professor Rabassa’s was very much like an apprenticeship. The spirit of apprenticeship is carried on by the Dalkey Archive Press, whose founder, John O’Brien, has instituted a series of applied literary translation internships first in collaboration with the University of Illinois, and now with the University of Houston-Victoria. The certificate is offered in conjunction with UHV’s master’s degree programs in Creative Writing and Publishing, and is primarily conducted online, with the bulk of training taking place during weekly one-on-one Skype sessions. The program is designed for translators at an early stage in their career that will greatly benefit from working closely with an editor, as well as gaining experience in several areas of publishing and translation. The final project for the certificate program is a

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Rabassa, *If This be Treason, Translation and its Dyscontents: A Memoir*. New York: New Directions, 2005, p. 4.

book-length translation that Dalkey Archive Press will publish. Two books that approach the teaching of literary translation from the applied perspective are Cliff Landers's *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide* and Gill Paul's *Translation in Practice*. Here the approach is to not only teach the fundamentals of literary translation but also to prepare the aspiring literary translator to get his or her work published, which means learning how to approach agents and publishers, how to write a sample translation and a proposal, and how to negotiate contracts. One important aspect of this training is teaching the student how to assess the marketability of a literary work, which requires developing a sense for cultural gaps and how they might be bridged. Along a similar line, Caixia Yang of Renmin University of China points to the issue of cultural association for her Chinese students of literary translation. She notes that cultural association is problematic for many Chinese students because of the great differences between English and Chinese in terms of metaphor, style, and language structure. The translation of poetry is particularly difficult. Her research and teaching focuses on how to balance and transfer cultural content.

The rapid rise of online programs in Translation and Interpreting has also required a close look at translation pedagogy in the context of the instructional design principles applicable to online learning. The guiding principle is the learner-centered virtual classroom, in which the instructor facilitates and provides intensive feedback and also encourages the students to participate in a class-based learning community. In a way, the virtual classroom simulates real-world practice, where translators must work primarily online with colleagues and clients. The online classroom encourages independent thinking, time management, the development of sophisticated Internet research skills, and good communications practices. Students do most of the work asynchronously but in some programs, such as the NYU Online M.S. in Translation, a live synchronous class is conducted weekly.

Online programs have had to learn how to teach CAT and localization software online by using a variety of multimedia tools.

Backed by teams of instructional designers and technical support, the instructors in the programs have been required to juggle not only issues of translation pedagogy per se, but how that pedagogy must be adapted to the online environment and its various teaching tools, such as use of multimedia, virtual meeting software, and the like. Class preparation must be complete before even opening the course, and this includes assembling and doing copyright clearance for any materials that are made available to the class.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of translation pedagogy in the polylingual classroom. Some programs, such as the University of Illinois M.A. in Translation and Interpreting, by virtue of their small size and interdisciplinary orientation, cannot organize the curriculum around language pairs, although individual language pair classes are available. The pedagogical challenges to teaching translation to classes with multiple language pairs have taken a great deal of thought and preparation. The polylingual pedagogy encourages independent research and learning. Independent work allows for differentiation in what students bring to the classroom. In a recent issue of *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, Anastasia Lakhtikova reviews three new translator-training textbooks for Russian to English and Spanish to English translation. She highlights the importance of “differentiated instruction” in the language pair specific translation classroom as well as the polylingual classroom.<sup>17</sup> Self-training occurs when these students perform research and translation tasks in their respective language pairs without instructor intervention. This student-centered approach has its advantages: students learn techniques for finding appropriate materials on their own, using instructor prompts. They also gain confidence and skill in locating and utilizing the tools and resources they need to succeed in the professional translation environment. Students become practiced in explaining their translation problems

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<sup>17</sup> Lakhtikova, Anastasia. “Differentiated Instruction and Language-Specific Translator Training Textbooks.” *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 10.1 (2015): 153-160.

and solutions to their peers, just as they will have to do to future clients. In the polylingual classroom, the instructor should not “suppress the differentiating tendencies of the students, or limit or homogenize individual inclinations and energies, but focus those energies.”<sup>18</sup> Thus the learning process becomes an apprenticeship, centered on guided, independent learning. Lakhitkova recommends that “Differentiation naturally occurs in translator training; consequently our next main task as translator educators should be the development of a teaching methodology for a differentiated classroom that would be based on practical knowledge and focused on managing classrooms and evaluating student work.”<sup>19</sup>

By way of conclusion, I’d like to return to the metaphor of translation beyond borders. The space in which we work is expanding at warp speed and demanding of us as practitioners and educators that we adapt to change and complexity. Don Kiraly uses a quote from Steven Hawking as an epigraph to his essay on “Occasioning Translator Competence”: “I believe the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the century of Complexity.”<sup>20</sup> He concludes his essay with thoughts on teaching from a post-modern perspective. “A post-positivist epistemology must by its very nature, look askance at teaching seen as the transmission of knowledge from one person to another—at least when what is to be learned are complex competences rather than simple facts or complicated skills.”<sup>21</sup> While remaining alert to the expansion, fluidity, and complexity of our still emerging discipline, I believe it serves the greater good to stay grounded in what calls us to the profession. We can summon up voices from the past in facing the future. George Steiner’s statement in *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* still resonates today: “All acts

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Kiraly, Don. “Occasioning Translator Competence: Moving Beyond Social Constructivism Toward a Postmodern Alternative to Instructionism.” *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 10:1 (2015), pp. 8-32.

<sup>21</sup> Kiraly, p. 27.

of communication are acts of translation.” The question “What is translation?” immediately connects to the other question “Why does translation matter?” A brief quote from Edith Grossman’s book by this title gives us an immediate sense for how important translation is to any civilization: “Translation expands our ability to explore through literature the thoughts and feelings of people from another society or another time. It permits us to savor the transformation of the foreign into the familiar and for a brief time to live outside of our own skins, our own preconceptions and misconceptions. It expands and deepens our world, our consciousness, in countless, indescribable ways.”<sup>22</sup> As we anchor ourselves in these principles, our borders will become bridges, not barriers, to the vitality of our field.

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<sup>22</sup> Grossman, Edith. *Why Translation Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, p, 14.

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