

BOOK REVIEWS

Writing Outside the Nation

By Azade Seyhan

Translation/Transnation Series

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Pages 189

Azade Seyhan's diverse intellectual pursuits are reflected in the book *Writing Outside the Nation*. She seeks to highlight the complexities attending the notion of culture and identity in the contemporary world through the lens of transnational literature, which she in consonance with Arjun Appadurai's usage of the term, defines as writing operating outside the national canon to engage with issues confronting "deterritorialized cultures" seeking to articulate the concerns of "paranational communities". In the book under review Azade Seyhan focuses in particular on the diasporic writing by women. She undertakes a comparative study of contemporary Chicano/a and Turkish-German writing as examples of the dominant 'minor literatures' in the U.S.A and Germany, not with the purpose of highlighting the similarities and differences in the writing of marginalized peoples writing in the language of their host country, viz. the major language as 'outsiders' but rather with the objective of generating a dialogue and discourse on the politics of emergent identities that challenges the hitherto accepted notion of the monopoly of monolingual writing and celebrates the heterogeneity of community, beyond language and homogenous culture.

The remarkable feature of all such writing is said to be the straddling of two cultures and languages with memory and representation as the focal points. The writing is distinctive also in that it is "creative and experimental, self-reflexive and theoretical" transcending the confines of the conventional categories of defining the nation as bounded by territory, language, ethnicity, history and religion. Consequently the markers of identity also become mutable

and malleable, and democratic and egalitarian participation is seen as the key in the forging of an emergent identity.

This entails translation both at the metaphorical and linguistic levels. The two levels are closely interlinked and enmeshed because even the abstract notions of history, culture, community and self are ultimately articulated through language that facilitates the translation of these concepts into the materiality of texts. The translation of the past involves the recall of myths, legends and rituals which are then rendered in the acquired language, and resituated in a "hyphenated culture" because, as Seyhan succinctly puts it, this process reflects the transformation of a complex semiotic map of a given culture into another. At another level it is the translation of memory and representation, and again this process is really a reconstruction of the past, enabling omissions and silences of officially documented history and chronology to be questioned and an alternate script to be fashioned which also addresses issues of gender and suppression. Closely connected with this is the issue of translating silences into 'voice' for, as Seyhan points out, "mastery over language is the passport to visibility, presence and power". This voice is a powerful vehicle to not only restructure the inherited cultural legacy of fragmented consciousness and history of the transnational but to also challenge the dominance and hegemony of both the major language and the myths woven by it of the marginalized existing on its peripheries. It is thus an instrument to contest the representational validity of the stereotypical 'Other' created by dominant voices in the major language. It provides a platform for projecting a critical public identity of the self and community.

Finally at the linguistic level translation is reflected in the experimental use of language, typical of which is code switching and code mixing, resulting in innovative aesthetics and poetics, renewing and enriching the repertoire and inventory of the linguistic and literary tradition of the host country. Concretely this is achieved by the redefinition of existing genres, where for example as in the case of autobiographies, these no longer are centred on the life

testimonies of one individual but reflect multiple voices across generations, geographies and time, chronicling the life of a community in transit. Intertextuality is an inherent feature of such texts. Typical stylistic devices of such writing are the use of forgotten idioms and grammar, metaphor, allegory, irony often a deliberate mismatch of language, the literal translation of proverbs and culturally loaded phrases, and the use of bilingualism/multilingualism inscribing the major language with the accents and inflections of transnationals. The resulting hybridity calls for a knowledge of two or more cultures for the text to be appropriately understood.

The book is extremely useful from a translator's perspective since the stylistic devices it describes as typical of transnational writing are precisely the tools used by the translator to ply his/her trade. Moreover the challenge of facilitating the border crossing of complex semiotic maps without effacing the cultural particularity of the original while at the same time ensuring that the original is not appropriated by the receiving culture is precisely the central issue in Translation Studies today. The book offers valuable insights in addressing this challenge. The book, which is divided into two parts, (the first offering a theoretical framework that is applied to the writings of amongst others Ana Castillo, Gloria Anzaldúa, Aysel Özakin and Emine Sevgi Özdamar), concludes with an 'Afterword' entitled *Pedagogical Gains*, where Seyhan engages at length with Walter Benjamin's essay *The Task of the Translator* to convincingly present a case for the resonance of the original in translation, that it might be granted a meaningful and significant 'afterlife'.

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Teaching and Researching Translation

By Basil Hatim

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Teaching and Researching Translation by Basil Hatim is part of the *Applied Linguistics in Action Series*, which has Christopher N Candlin and David R Hall as General Editors and aims to focus on the issues and challenges that practitioners and researchers face in the broad field of Applied Linguistics and provide them with useful tools to undertake practice-related research.

Translation Studies has come of age and has burgeoned into an academic discipline which, as has been realized, is yet dependent on and feeds on praxis. An awareness of the importance of translation praxis is valuable, as one understands its role in carrying cultures across borders, making pervious the boundaries between nations, languages, cultures and texts. In the last few decades translation theory has also made tremendous headway, travelling as it has from clichéd reflections and general formulations to a large corpus of scholarly writing that has elevated it to an interdisciplinary discipline. The very eclectic nature of translation theory, with roots branching out and drawing sustenance from varied sources, coupled with the fact that it goes hand in hand with translation methodology, again an applied and interrelated discipline, make it impossible for any one theory to gain ground and hold sway. Although of course the borders of Translation Studies seem to be undefined, the place of translation in the history of ideas is beyond debate.

It is in this context that one looks at Basil Hatim's *Teaching and Researching Translation*. The book attempts to create geography of translation studies and thus analyse how the field is mapped and landscaped. It is written in pursuance of the objectives of this innovative series as to what research in this area tells us, what

it does tell us, doesn't tell us and what it should tell us. It also seeks to analyse how research has been carried out, applied, and the interesting research possibilities the practice raises, as also the issues that need further exploration.

The book is divided into four major sections. Section-I deals with the history, basic concepts and key issues in translation research. It provides some knowledge of the various paradigms that inform research and researches into some of these paradigms. Key issues like the dichotomy of 'literal' vs. 'free', the problematics of equivalence and relevance, translator's invisibility, and linkages to other disciplines are all touched upon cursorily. Though the concept maps prove helpful and some models like Polysystem and Skopos are dealt with in a student-friendly manner, this attempt to cover the conceptual framework of translation studies falls far short of a comprehensive overview of the discipline.

Section II deals with research models in Translation Studies and seeks to study how the perspectives outlined in the first section have yielded operational frameworks for research. Hatim looks at current practical applications of theory in terms of three major aspects of research into translation strategy - a register, language use/user perspective, an approach to the study of intentionality within the discipline of pragmatics, and a model of language as a social semiotic informed by text linguistics, genre theory and discourse analysis. The chapter on 'Translation and Ideology', especially the section on feminist perspectives, leaves much to be desired since what is covered is evidently only the tip of the iceberg. Hatim has managed to touch upon most of the models and approaches to the study of translation, however perfunctorily. That he has attempted a systematisation where there was none is a laudable task in itself. But a lack of sustained examination creates a rather superficial representation. One of the problems of Hatim's organization of these models is an apparent lack of chronology and historical background. Thus for example why a translation strategy

came up when it did is not analysed, nor its significance in the historical context given much importance. A vague sense of chronology, which seems paradoxical and a lack of attempt to historicise the 'why' of a theory make this diachronic study partly skewed. However the chapter on 'Translation of Genre vs. Translation as Genre' would be a useful one for researchers as it describes research models which have addressed the theme of genre in translation as well as the genre of translation from the perspectives both of Applied Linguistics and Culture Studies. It places under scrutiny research into the issue of translation 'norms' which has underpinned approaches to translation as a genre. The subsequent chapter on 'Empirical research in translation study' describes models of empirical research undertaken with corpus translation. 'Theory and Practice in Translation Teaching' would prove particularly useful to teachers of Translation Studies as it outlines models of research into translation pedagogy, assesses research relating to pedagogical issues, but most important of all, attempts a detailed analysis of curriculum design in translator training, making an elaborate examination of a number of syllabi.

Section III deals with 'Emphasis on Practitioner Research', wherein the first two sections become a set of reference for the third. Hatim's own insights into the practice and teaching of translation are perspicuous and precise, but presuming as it does that all readers have advanced knowledge in linguistic theory and terminology it might dampen the enthusiasm of the novice in Translation Studies. If intended for the advanced reader, then again the section does not have the necessary depth for that readership. However the chapter on 'Researching text, discourse and genre' listing different research contexts within which frameworks are envisaged and suggesting appropriate research projects detailing aims, procedures and evaluation, would provide an invaluable exercise for the student. The lengthy glossary is excellent and does indeed facilitate comprehension. Certain important and upcoming areas of study like machine translation and audio visual translation have not found any

mention, though on the whole Hatim has managed to present the variety that is part of the charm of translation study.

This book will be of use to many who have opted into Translation Studies but are confused and frustrated by the innumerable writings in this area, all of which seek to evolve solutions in diverse ways to the same problems. It takes the readers unfamiliar with Translation Studies through a series of conceptual frameworks that orient them to the field. With admirable simplicity Hatim has managed to unfold the infinite connections and the intertwining mesh of concepts and theories in Translation Studies without approaching it from any narrow position. Given the huge canvas of works in this area, he has done some rigorous sifting and exercised discrete choices. He has attempted to map the links and relationships between what would often appear to be disparate congeries of highly individual theories and concepts of translation. In a way the book is an attempt at a historiography of Translation Studies, which in being concise makes it a reductionistic exercise. This does not quite afford the reader the feel of the original meaning and intentions of the theories. In its conciseness it assumes prior knowledge which the student might not have, but in guiding him/her to a new reading it would, I hope, be successful. In the light of the changes that are taking place in our curricula in the direction of interdisciplinarity, this book offers a good understanding of the complexity and responsibility involved in the multifarious tasks a translator performs and which a theoretician should be aware of.

Except for the last section on 'further reading', there is nothing excitingly new about the book as far as a Translation Studies scholar is concerned, to add to the already existing fare of writings in this area. There is of course the range desired by the beginner but sans the depth required by the scholar. It exposes the reader to a vast spectrum of ideas, facts, theories and strategies of translation but is lacking in a strong conceptual introduction that could help launch the reader into a new critical pedagogical framework of translation

theory. The book does a fairly good job of meeting the criteria of breadth and coverage that would suit any graduate program. Though some entries and sections are brief to the point of being hardly useful, for the most part the book is cogent, interesting and complemented by all crucial bibliographic references. Well researched and referenced, with a remarkable resource of secondary literature for future researchers, *Teaching and Researching Translation* is a handy and pedagogically useful book.

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