Translating Worlds: Migration, Memory and Culture. **Editor(s). Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson. London: Routledge, 2020. Paperback. £120.00, eBook. £25.89**

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Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson's latest anthology explores the burgeoning field of migration studies in relation to translation and culture. Through a set of interdisciplinary essays, it brings into the ambit of discussion the different geopolitical contexts and ethical debates to put forth the knotted question of linguistic migration from multiple perspectival and theoretical vantage points. The intersections between memory and migration are braided together within the interpretative framework of translation studies to investigate how the process of translation is operative "in domains beyond the textual" (Radstone and Wilson 3). Arranging its arguments around the variegated mnemonic narrations and methodological approaches, the book, thus, draws us into an immersive experience involving migrant lives and practices between their multiple departures and arrivals.

Translation and migration, both involving a series of displacements and emplacements across cultural borders speak to each other in ways more than one. Migration entails a chain of translations across multiple sites that carry disparate implications for the migrant groups: "For a transnational elite it may offer the possibility of a cosmopolitan freedom, but for many migrant workers, refugees, and other persons politically, culturally, and economically displaced by the consequences of global capitalism it can signify isolation, desperation, and restricted opportunity" (Inghilleri 6). These multilayered, or even troubled networks of translation informed by the displacement of language, ideologies and everyday mores through cultures and spaces are deeply imbricated with various forms of conflicting and baffling affects. Polezzi notes in her article 'Translation and Migration' (2016) that "since both terms are connected to the way in which we, as individuals and as groups, mark the boundaries that define who we are, their coupling holds out the promise of change, but also openly exposes us to difference, awakening deep-seated fears echoed in words such as invasion and

contagion" (346). Rita Wilson's essay in this anthology, 'Changing Places' etches out the affective contours of these hybrid, interstitial "contact zones" which she refers to as "trans-spaces". These are sites of transgression, creative reckoning and unmaking where the "established use of space" (Wilson 149) is challenged and any staid notion of identity is altered by the perilous intimacy between divergent populations, bodies and thresholds, engendering a gamut of incongruous emotions from disgust, revulsion, fear of contagion to guilt, curiosity, pity and pain.

Indeed, the question of emotion and embodiment takes a significant space in this volume to encompass the themes in memory "transmission" and "activism". The book urges us to be receptive to the affective repositories and "archives" as the ambulant body of the migrant is in itself a vehicle for the memory to move across territories in exile. In her piece, 'Beyond the Written', Grace Pundyk makes a strong case for the "integration of writing" with the "visual and embodied forms of expression" (62) to open up an "alternative perspective to the written archive" (ibid). Pundyk's chapter extends its investigation of "embodied memories" to artefacts that become "corporeal and sensorial sites" of mnemonic "encounter" (63) when the past recovered is emplotted onto the body of objects through acts of remembrance and mourning. The opening article by Susannah Radstone addresses these aspects of material memory and their embeddings in migrant objects that are dislocated and transferred from the places of origin. They too, like migrant subjects, act as agents of translation when they traverse varied spatial and cultural fields, and gather around them as they move, films of variegated experience. Here, Radstone chooses a vintage clock and a photo frame from her father that travelled with her from London to Melbourne to trace the fraught relationship between roots and routes. The author's thrust on "memory objects" that "illuminate the connections between migrant 'home-building'…and the remembrance and invocation of former homes" (13) reminds me of Aanchal Malhotra's *Remnants of a Separation*, where she relives the memories of the Indian Partition through both mundane and intimate objects tied to her family history, that were carried

across the border during the nation's vivisection. Such texts subtend the field of scholarship which focuses on the objects, specifically in the context of postmemory, to reach out to those past events to which the second or third-generation survivors can have no direct access and yet they form an inalienable part of their cultural inheritance. Here, Radstone's discussion hinges on the interventions of translation through migrant objects which in their multiple dislocations and relocations continually etch out "revised iterations" of time that open up the past to the future in new and complex ways.

The next essay by Alison Ribeiro de Menezes situates its nuanced deliberation upon translation and its multiple afterlives by invoking predicament of those who "Disappeared" during the Northern Irish "Troubles". They were killed and covertly buried in the bogland. As their bodies were never found, the process of mourning was left incomplete for those who survived the loss. In the Introduction to *The Body in Pain in Irish Literature and Culture*, the editors raise the concern that "the absence of the body in pain in these instances provokes cultural hauntings driven by the lack of a 'material focus' for mourning" (16). Ribeiro de Menezes underlines in her essay how this spectral past impinges upon the present with memories of massacre and disappearances through the creative corpora of two visual artists, David Farrell and Willie Doherty. They explore through the mediation photographs and filmic outputs, the complex entanglements between death, memory and regeneration "across multiple frontiers" (Menezes 28) by reimagining the slurry wetlands comprising peat bogs to translate "these locations into intimate, empathetic reflections on pain and healing" (Menezes 34). These ecological sites where the deads were dumped not merely impart a gothic charge to the terrain, but more significantly, form transitional spaces where the human melds into the natural through the "boundary dissolving forces of nature" (Fairhill 34, qtd. in Menezes). Here, visual art assumes the mantle of re-envisaging the landscape that wraps the living and dead in Ireland. They translate "the

work of mourning" (33) into enduring cultural "eco-memories" that create intimate and affective networks of solidarity to animate the past for a meaningful resolution.

In the third essay the focus shifts to the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia. Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen brings to the board her personal experience of being a second-generation migrant to speak of the exilic subjects who fled the country after the fall of Saigon (1975), the capital of South Vietnam, marking the end of the protracted Vietnam War. The era of transition and reunification that followed, however, was not necessarily a peaceful one. There were families that were detained and the members were either killed or bundled off to Vietnamese Gulags or re-education camps which became infamous sites of torture. Several thousand victims of political violence who fled under the threat of reprisal carried with them horrific memories of pain and loss that eventually lapsed into stifling silence and historical amnesia. The author draws on the repository of oral testimonies, collected during the interviews with Vietnamese refugees, to translate those troubled silences that are ghosted by the violence of the postwar regime. Nguyen posits that this act of articulating the "communal trauma" across "transgenerational, cross-cultural, and multilingual" (54) sites required a painstaking process "of translation from interviewee to interviewer, transcriber, translator, and finally writer to reader" (Nguyen 52) to contextualise the past in its present and validate those stories that were hidden or cast away.

The translation of silence and vulnerability continues in Grace Pundyk's interdisciplinary work on transgenerational trauma, drawing on what she describes in one of her projects as an "aporetic wound: the inheritance of found letters detailing the deportation and death of my unknown Polish grandmother to a forced labour camp in Siberia in the 1940s" ("Skin, Skinning, Skinned" n. pag). It alludes to Stalin's invasion of Eastern Poland during 1940-1941. The author argues that the abject suffering of those who were arbitrarily branded as the "enemy of the state" by the totalitarian regime was given scant attention in the grand narrative of World War II. It was either ensconced in a

disturbing silence or subjected to prolific misrepresentations by the international media which identified them with Fascist and semi-Fascist forces in Europe. This further jeopardised the survival of post-war Polish immigrants domiciled outside their homeland who were forced to drown their sorrow in a gnawing silence. In the act of recovering this" unspeakable" past, the author embarks upon what she calls a "skin practice" (65) that anchors corporeality in translation to operate beyond the linguistic ecosystem. She focuses on the materiality of the inherited objects to correspond to the body of the sufferer on which pain was inscribed. Pundyk notes that the grandmother's letters and the photographs, in "their materiality can be viewed as a kind of skin and thus a conduit of memory" ("Why Skin?" n.pag). In *Regimes of Memory* (2003), Radstone and Hodgkin observed in relation to the essays on bodily affects that "embodied memories" are those that are "carried in the body and that may be *transmitted between bodies, even across generations*" (23; italics mine). Here the old letters, fragile and frayed, substitute the famished body of the grandmother to pass on the pain and isolation which Pundyk inhabits through her "trauma-driven" art-practices. She exposes herself to afflictions of extreme environments in cold, hunger and darkness. She walks "barefoot through snow" or stands "on top of a mountain in a blizzard, wearing nothing but a thin slip" and then transforms "these acts, via photography and video, into 'sharable', ghostly encounters" (Pundyk 64). While she is aware that even these would not match up to the experience of her grandmother in the labour camp, yet the exposure of the skin in its materiality, as well as vulnerability, speaks of a deeper affective engagement with the visceral trauma of the dead other that could not be translated in words.

The next chapter shifts its focus to museum archives and exhibits to capture the interiority of migrant experiences as they negotiate with the changes in their "inner and outer worlds" (73). Maria Tumarkin writes about her project for the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, 'The Unending Absence' in which she collaborated with the sound artist Thembi Sodell to create a series of "audio

interventions" (73) that immerse the audience into the psychological and affective processes, shaping the arduous journey of the migrants—their experiences of loss, the period of waiting, and "suspension" between arrival and departure, trauma and legacies et all. The narration moves into the domain of the affective to register a layered response to the multiple sensory stimuli as a way of grappling with the unexplored facets of the migrant odyssey. At the same time, the work consciously retains certain rough edges that may occasionally leave the audience bewildered— "unsettled, grappling…wondering what precisely they have just seen and heard" (79)—to resist the strategies of overt "domestication" of foreignness that may flatten the irreducible singularity of the experience and slip into what Tumarkin powerfully terms as the "re-colonization of migrant subjectivities and inner worlds" (79).

In the segment on "languages, ideologies, and identities" Mridula Nath Chakraborty engages with the literary corpus of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri to trace her transition from writing in English to Italian, despite her acclaim in her former language. Lahiri speaks of her journey fraught with moments of isolation, self-doubt and introspection in her first major work in the Italian *Altre Parole* (translated as *In Other Words*) after she moved to Rome in 2011. Subsequently, she pens her first novel, *Dove mi trovo* (2018), which is published in 2021 as *Whereabouts* in English with Lahiri undertaking the task of writing back into the language in which she has been trained since childhood from the other language that she chose to pursue as a labour of love. In a recent interview on the self-translation of her novel, the author is, however, conscious of not calling it an act of homecoming:

> When an author migrates into another language, the subsequent crossing into the former language might be regarded, by some, as a crossing back, an act of return, a coming home. This idea is false, and it was also not my objective. Even before I decided to translate *Dove mi trovo* myself, I knew that the idea of "coming home" was no longer an option. I had gone too deep into Italian, and so English no longer represented the reassuring, essential act of

> coming up for air. My center of gravity had shifted; or at least, it had begun to shift back and forth. (Lahiri, 2021: n. pag)

To be torn between multiple "centres of gravity" is the predicament of the modern, itinerant global subject, and more so with children born and raised in the diasporas (as with Lahiri), who constantly travel and never arrive. Lahiri's decision to break the opacity of foreign language and "forge a tongue of her own" (Chakraborty 2020, 86) issues from a desire to emerge from the shadows of two cultures to which she never fully belonged in her hyphenated Indo-Americanness. Thus, despite the knowledge of the fragility of her new shelter and the "insuperable" distance between the linguistic worlds (*In Other Words*), she chooses to push forth. In this deeply engaged reading of Lahiri's experiences of linguistic exile and discoveries that she shares with many of the memorable characters from her fiction, Chakraborty finds resonance with her own journey as a postcolonial Bengali academic into the first world. It speaks to her preoccupation with "what constitutes the 'home' of Bengaliness" (Chakraborty; *Being Bengali* 2014, 2) in the "liminal spaces of *probash* (inhabitation outside the natal or original land)" (2014, 2) where one's identity is always defined by "an asterisk of otherness" (Chakraborty 2020, 90). The choice that Lahiri makes, and explains so cogently in *In Other Words*— "I write on the margins, just as I've always lived on the margins of countries, of cultures. A peripheral zone where it's impossible for me to feel rooted, but where I'm comfortable. The only zone where I think that, in some way, I belong." (n.pag)—is perhaps the best way we can understand home, belonging and identity in a fleet-footed world governed by accelerated movements and ceaseless bouts of migration.

Moving to the piece on language and acculturation, 'Translating Australia' by Harvey and Darian-Smith, deliberates upon the role of technological interventions in consolidating national identity through adult education. The arrival of television in the mid-1950s coincided with the large

influx of immigrants as workforce, responding to Australia's energetic modernisation drive. A sizeable number among them were non-native speakers of English, alien to the Australian ways of life. The government undertook several official measures to integrate this motley population into the Australian ethos. The article discusses the highs and lows of state-funded English language education programmes on TV such as *You Say the Word* in the 1970s in "translating" Australia to the migrants by explaining cultural values and codes, salutations, the munificence of the government to create grounds for "social participation and productive citizenship" (118).

The question of linguistic equivalence and untranslatability in cultural translation thickens around the term *Foiba* in Lazzarich's article by the same name. *Foiba*, derived from Friulian *foibe* and Latin *fovea*, originally referred to as a natural pit or a sinkhole, commonly seen in the Karst region of Italy and Slovenia. However, over time these geographical formations came to be associated with mass graves where bodies of imprisoned, abducted and deported Italian victims in Dalmatia, Istria and Kvarner were thrown during the military operations by the Yugoslav Partisans against the Fascist regime. The article meticulously locates how *foiba* gradually becomes a term impossible to translate because of the shift from its geographical provenance to a political event—Foibe Massacre—incorporated into the nationalist discourse as something that is ideologically charged and singularly associated with the Italian identity and history.

The last two chapters fittingly sum up the discussion on translation practices with incisive reflections on the questions of negotiated identity, affective economy across multifarious borders, global migration and the concomitant forms of cosmopolitanism versus localism and its attendant expressions. The penultimate article by Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams and Jacqueline Lo analyse how intergenerational trauma, and deep-seated memories of genocide, violence and deracination cut across time and space specifically in the case of Polish Holocaust survivors and their second and third-generation descendants in the Australian diaspora. The unsettling relationship between what

may be the former home and the expatriate families with their inherited identities is evocatively explored through the exhibits of 'Can We Talk About Poland?' (2016), featuring the photographs of Lindsay Goldberg and Arnold Zable at the Jewish Museum in Victoria.

In 'Changing Places', Rita Wilson, on the other hand, goes on to elaborate through literary readings how increased mobility and trans-spatial migration have fundamentally reconfigured the character of "more homogenous" (Wilson 148) localities in the Italian cities by infusing a new linguistic and cultural vibrancy. This mélange in turn has reciprocally impacted the quotidian behaviour of the immigrants and their hosts in these quarters that have become important "contact zones" where diversity is enacted and debated. These sites "in translation" (Wilson 148) typically belong to "no single, discrete language or cultural/ethnic group" (148). The transcultural memories of migration and settlement that illuminate the forgotten stories, discarded or peripheral narratives of the "other world" in these neighbourhoods are constitutive in shaping their spatial history that is attuned to life in the contemporary, globalised urban conurbations. The intersection of the private and public in such sites of differential experience and radical unmooring have imperceptibly altered the canonised geography of Italian cities with a new cultural grammar, evoking questions about the rounded or fixed perceptions of identity in these fluid "trans-spaces" that are characterised by the intermingling of heterogenous practices and lifeworlds.

This volume particularly attends to the modalities of trauma to assess migration's negotiation with translation as a political exercise against widespread amnesia and quietism. The collection's engagement with topics ranges from memories in the adapted cultures to disquieting reminiscences of the lost habitation that often stand in the way of forging new homes. The clash between the present and the prior self decidedly brings us to the concern of traumatic histories and their troubled transmission to interpret the ways in which they not only regulate the association between individuals and groups but also impact the relationship between humans and their surroundings. In this

participatory and interconnected nexus, the mediating role of translation can never be undermined. However, code-switching happens not only when words cross over boundaries, but also when people migrate to new linguistic and cultural waters. The book, then, raises the question: What is it to belong to a language in a globe that is chequered by unprecedented trans-border movements? What is it to feel perpetually like "a complete foreigner" (Lahiri, *In Other Words*, 83), or to be "lost, in flight" (ibid)?

The essays in this collection are largely inspired by personal circumstances and affective encounters with intimate objects, photographs, letters and aural experiences which are reimagined to activate the memories in new and creative ways. This imparts a certain immediacy to the migrant experience. But, despite the intellectual energy, there remains a small contention. Much of the essays, with few exceptions, that are framed around genocides or politically orchestrated violence focus on the touted left regimes. I would have desired a more equitable distribution in the representation, especially at a time when the violence of the far-right is exponentially on the rise. However, that does not diminish the contribution of this robust collection of interdisciplinary scholarship whose significance extends beyond the fields of migration and translation studies. It is an important work of our times as it grapples with the multifarious and often non-linear modes of movement and memories that operate when words and worlds travel, even with a certain awkwardness, in the travellers' backpack and migrant suitcases.

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