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Azade Seyhan. *Writing Outside the Nation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. 189p.

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This beautifully written analysis of transnational poetics is a narrative about narratives. It is an investigation of literary fiction and theory, of stories and histories. Seyhan uses various theoretical approaches to illuminate literary works by some of the best known bicultural writers of the United States and Germany, and she uses literary analysis to illuminate contemporary theories of exile, hybridity, and interlinguality. Her readings of literary texts by, among others, Maxine Hong Kingston, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Rafik Schami, and Emine Sevgi Özdamar are sound and convincing. Above all it is, however, Seyhan's ability to move effortlessly between informed theoretical reflection and concrete literary analysis which makes this book such a treat for anybody interested in transnational literatures and theories.

Seyhan's investigation is based on the observation that some of the most interesting and innovative artists write in a language different from the one they were born into. The United States and Germany are both destinations of choice for large and heterogeneous populations of exiles and immigrants. As such, they host a wide variety of transnational writers whose mastery of their literary languages is not the result of colonial experience, but of migration and resettlement. Especially the German public, however, still does not regard these writings as an integral part of the national culture. Seyhan now investigates the conditions and consequences of nonnative writers occupying the domain of national language.

After an extended introduction that establishes the conceptual framework of her study, Seyhan synthesizes theoretical insights into cultural displacement, memory, and language and reads them against literary texts by Rafik Schami, Edwidge Danticat, and Rosario Ferré. She then discusses autobiographical fictions and cultural autobiographies by Oscar Hijuelos, Maxine Hong Kingston, Eva Hoffman, and Libuse Moníková, once again reading literature through the lens of theory and vice versa.

The second and most thorough part of Seyhan's book is a comparative study of contemporary Chicano/a and Turkish-German literary productions. These literary texts are not analyzed in terms of similarity and contrast; Seyhan rather gives a juxtaposed reading by reflecting one through the other. Seyhan analyses how history and memory, geography, and genealogy inhibit language, and she gives a critical perspective on how and why women's bodies are so intricately linked with text, language, and politics. In her readings of literary texts by Gloria Anzaldúa,

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Ana Castillo, Aysel Özakin, and Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Seyhan draws on theoretical concepts of borderland writing developed by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Angie Chabram Dernerseian, and others. She also employs theories of memory, especially by Jacques Le Goff, and evaluates forms of remembering that extend beyond individual experience.

Seyhan contends that both Turkish-German and Chicano/a authors actively rewrite cultural heritages. Their best and most experimental texts frequently employ code mixing, code selection, and code switching. Seyhan analyzes how language functions as speech and script, as language game and everyday practice. She points out the salient features of select texts, and she gives much needed cultural and historical background information. Instead of critiquing less interesting writers and their work, Seyhan focuses on the most accomplished writers. A common feature of all the literary works discussed is that they are creative, experimental, self-reflexive, and theoretical. All of these writers expect the reader to engage in a more informed way with another discursive practice and, consequently, Seyhan argues for a cultural multilingualism that includes, but also extends beyond the purely linguistic aspects.

In her afterword "Pedagogical Gains," Seyhan considers the implications for teaching. She argues that transnational narratives foster an awareness of power structures and value systems and fill in the gaps of our understanding of a culturally complex world. True to her conviction that literature illuminates theory and vice versa, she suggests reading Foucault next to Anzaldúa or Özdamar, and outlines a study of cultural memory through literary and autobiographical texts. These practical applications, although not yet fully developed, attempt to provide a link between research and teaching which, unfortunately, so often is missing from scholarship.

By investigating transnational literature written in Germany and the United States simultaneously, Seyhan combines areas of scholarship that, despite the opportunities for mutual gain, more often than not remain separate. Even the field of Comparative Literature, for the most part, has been holding on to a narrowly defined concept of national literatures, a concept that implies the correlation of nation, language, and culture. Seyhan's critical investigation of the large field of literary texts and theories outside of this narrow definition of nation should prove beneficial and stimulating to a wide audience, and as such I cannot recommend it with more enthusiasm. ✨