

were distinguished by their willingness to venture outside of the disciplines, or write across their boundaries or fossilized grains. Consequently they would not have been out of place in other and better collections on autobiography and the process of *education* (e.g., Michael Erben (1998) *Biography and education*) – rather than prioritizing the subject disciplines and thereby encouraging the tendency for some academics to indulge in the kind of self-narrative posturing to which they sometimes aspire and which is undoubtedly a presence in this book. But then again, there are signs of progress even on this front: at least in this collection, the contributors managed to restrain themselves and leave the baby photos at home.

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TRAUMA AND THE RECAPTURING EXPERIENCE

Lost in translation: a life in a new language. Eva Hoffman, 1991. London: Minerva; ISBN 0749390700, pbk, 288 pp., £7.99.

Lost in translation is the story of Eva Hoffman's shift between worlds, from her birth in Cracow, Poland, to her family's emigration to Canada when she was thirteen. It evokes the struggles of them all, but Eva in particular, to integrate themselves into the ways of a new continent. A tale of linguistic dispossession, it is Eva's attempt to recapture her experience of losing personal voice and identity through emigration.

In writing this, Eva is both blessed and cursed by the strength of her talents – especially the quality of her mind and ability to remember or recreate in riveting terms the life she left behind. She has an almost Proustian motivation (with less volubility) to locate real meaning in a moment or tiny action. It suffuses the scope and detail of her imagination/memory to fix the reader in different episodes or moments – contentment experienced through sunshine, the impact and sufficiency of memories at four years old, the customs, rituals and traditions of agricultural and urban Poland.

Above all she is driven by a need to pin down the truth or reality of things, in relation to the limitations or blessings of language. She understands and reveals how 'moving languages' traumatizes our sense of self and our world; the impossibility of words from one language to fully replace similar words in another; displacement and loss of reference points in emigration; and the most fundamental need for adequate language: 'I want my peace of mind back' (p. 128). Her truth-seeking determination permeates her questioning of time, reality and mortality, as she shifts gear linguistically through academic analysis, clear unadorned prose, lyrical evocation and quasi-poetry. Her duty to the truth is paralleled

by her sense of responsibility with the legacy of other people's remembered pain. She is also supremely aware of the ephemeral nature of being and the fragility of human existence.

She takes her mission seriously. In doing it justice she is both capable of producing stunning observations about the human condition while, on occasion, not being able to escape the Sisyphean nature of her search for truth – the harder you try to define something, the more elusive it becomes. Once in a while these convolutions of thought are ones not easily followed. Ultimately, however, the satisfaction is Eva's; her recreation in new surroundings is deep enough for her to finally regain the self she had lost for many years.

Other citations for *Lost in translation* praise it as 'deep and lovely', 'tender and memorable', '... capturing the very essence of exile experience'. Indeed it is and does, and also has the power to humble. Even (especially?) readers who have lived abroad and speak more than one language will find her response to her challenges awe inspiring. More than any other book I have read she made me understand the extent to which loss of language and transplantation from one culture to another control and shape the self that is constantly in formation.

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ANIMATING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Biographical methods and professional practice: an international perspective. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Ursula Apitzsch editors. 2004. Bristol: Policy Press; ISBN 1861344929 pbk, 352 pp., £24.99.

This book is a collection of 21 essays comparing the biographical work of a wide variety of social researchers in Germany, Britain, France, Israel, New Zealand, Poland, Denmark, Finland and Russia. Their intention is to 'demonstrate how comparative work can generate new understandings of welfare contexts and welfare processes, social relations and resources, and processes of social change', and that, given the right conditions, biographical methods can 'animate relationships between research, policy and practice' (Chamberlayne, p. 21). These papers highlight the capacity of biographical methods to illuminate discrepancies between the realities of lived experience, the related but often disconnected social policies, and pertinent current research. It is encouraging that, as Chamberlayne notes, this potential is recognized and valued by agencies in all seven countries