

## BOOK REVIEWS

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Abdelmalek Sayad, 2004: *The Suffering of the Immigrant*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Initially I thought this book's title might signal the growing trend to victimize migrants, but I was wrong. On the contrary, *The Suffering of the Immigrant* presents the strongest possible arguments for recognizing migrants' agency in the face of inherent, structural conditions that are all against them and whose consequences they must, undoubtedly, 'suffer'.

Whereas many contemporary commentators refer to migration as a phenomenon of 'globalization', Abdelmalek Sayad makes no bones about which stage of globalization we should be looking at: the north's imperialist colonization of the south. Most commentators agree that current migratory flows are related to free-market capitalism's need for flexibility, moving its workplaces around the world while workers move to find them. And probably few would deny that 'earlier' colonial relations were implicated, especially where migrants move to their former 'mother countries'. But Sayad obliges us to consider a more serious proposition, that migrations are a structural element of colonial power relationships that have never ended. His case study is the Algerian migration to France in the second half of the twentieth century, during which time many migrants passed from being French (citizens of the colony) to Algerian (citizens of an independent Algeria) and back to French (as legal workers and residents in France), with the complication that the majority were Berber peasants. The colonial relationship is seen in the subordination of the economic and social life of rural colonies to the industrial activity of the country in which peasants become 'workers'.

Sayad's arguments, however, go much further than this particular case. First, he demonstrates how discourses of migration focus on the situation of 'immigrants' — meaning, on how receiving countries view immigration as their own social problem. With this move, the dominant member of the migration relationship firmly maintains control over knowledge and management of this 'problem', according to which immigrants are always 'lacking' necessary skills and culture. Sayad insists that research must begin at an earlier stage, a demand that has begun to be met by a trend towards studies of 'transnational' migrations. But Sayad points to a more intransigent problem here, in which countries of origin participate in the negative construction of their own citizens abroad, construing them as simply absent, treating them as martyrs to the country's economic good and considering them traitors who lose their original culture and become contaminated by another. If they do manage to return, they are pathologized as being difficult to 'reinsert' into society. Sayad shows how individual migrants reproduce this colonialist view of themselves as subaltern misfits only useful in an accountant's version of migration that selectively calculates 'costs' and 'benefits'.

Sayad debunks categories of migration imagined to be separate, in which 'settler migrants' supposedly value families and domestic morality more than 'labour migrants', as well as the idea that labour migrations are transitory and without a political dimension. Rather, he suggests that all migrants are united by a distancing from their original home, wracked by guilt that they should never have left and, having done so, that they will not perform well enough. Though they may achieve legal status, they are always treated as foreign by their second country and referred to via 'digestive' metaphors about their capacity to be assimilated, integrated or inserted into society. They fail to perceive the social, medical and other 'helping' sectors as being on their side.

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Their loyalties are divided, they don't know which *patrie* is really theirs and they experience an alienation from their own children, who may have no interest in their 'homeland'. They are doubly excluded from real political participation in both countries of origin and reception, thus being deprived of even:

the right to have rights, to be a subject by right . . . to belong to a body politic in which [they have] a place of residence, or the right to be actively involved — in other words the right to give a sense and a meaning to [their] action, words and existence (p. 227).

While some of this may seem familiar to migration scholars, its presentation renders it new. Sayad belonged to the group he studied: emigrant from Kabylia, immigrant in France. He gives significant space to migrants' own words, sometimes in the form of long, repetitive and even confusing testimonies. Although one can imagine his anger over the many injustices he recounts, he recognizes their cultural logic.

Sayad makes an important contribution to migration study in his development of Bourdieu's analysis of 'state thought', which he considers one of our most intractable cultural givens. Slurring migrants as 'hybrids' and 'bad' social products, society manifests its fear of those who 'blur the borders of the national order and therefore the symbolic value and pertinence of the criteria' used to establish differences between nationals and foreigners (p. 291). For Sayad, nothing less than the delegitimizing of the state is necessary, the denaturalizing of what we consider passionately real — our national being.

This is a book about men. The Algerian case that Sayad details was initially about single males, who are pictured as alienated from a natural cycle of courtship and marriage. Sayad reproduces one man's speculation on a potential woman migrant's fate: 'whilst she might gain something by coming here . . . she'd pay a high price for it . . . she would be imprisoned in one room . . . she would miss the sky' (p. 156). Given the current protagonism of so many women in migration, their absence here is notable, and in this sense Sayad's case study imposes a restriction. Given the wealth of ideas here that go far beyond any single case, this restriction can be forgiven.

Before Sayad died he asked his friend and colleague, Pierre Bourdieu, to make a book of the disparate manuscripts he had produced over the years. The result is intellectually rigorous, anthropologically perceptive, moving and poetic.

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Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait (eds.) 2003: *Urbanism: Imported or Exported? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans*. Chichester: Wiley-Academy.

The complexity of power relations and flows in the shaping of modern cities, particularly in developing countries, is underrepresented in much of the recent literature, as is the role played by local stakeholders in the fabrication of urban spaces. This was the belief of a group of researchers who organized a seminar in December 1998 to address their concern. The participants included both young and established scholars.

*Urbanism: Imported or Exported?* is an edited collection of some of the papers from that seminar, and three additional ones. It 'seeks to explore the complex nature of modern urbanism (broadly understood)' (p. xi). The editors, who were also the organizers of the seminar, do not provide a definition of either 'modern' or 'urbanism', which some readers may have found helpful. Rather, they expect that their usage will become clear in reading the introduction, which also serves to articulate the hypothesis of the book and some of the claims that it seeks to evaluate. This is followed by a chapter on translational planning histories by Anthony King which 'helps ground the book within the broader literature' (p. xv). The subsequent chapters, each by a different author, are grouped into four parts.