

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

**SUZAN ILCAN, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement*. Westport and London, Praeger. 2002, x + 142 p.**

*Longing in Belonging* frames the problem of the longing in belonging as something peculiar to the immigrant or those who are marginalized in their own society, those who inhabit the margins and those who find themselves at the "crossroads of displacement." According to the author, these are the people "for whom belonging has been superseded by longing" and therefore they are the ones who take the greatest risk in their longing. This formulation is capable of being read as suggesting that those at the mainstream are characterized by smug contentment with no risky longings of their own, be it for the good old days or for ill-gotten gains through corporate scandals. Such an interpretation would be misleading given that globalization is essentially a longing for global domination by those who are at the center of globalized apartheid. While the immigrant longs for more opportunities for self-actualization and communal survival, the leaders of the host societies largely long for air-tight fortification of the borders to exclude the undesirable Other. It is true that the risk of the immigrants who stow away in air-tight containers to almost certain suffocation and death is greater, but the will to dominate the world and at the same time ethnically cleanse your own backyard is not without its own risks.

*Longing in Belonging* attempts to analyze non-migrants when speaking about Turkish women who have to leave their families of birth to settle in the patri-location of the families of their husbands, but this is probably not peculiar to Turkish women given that women have universally tended to give up their maiden names at marriage due to patriarchy. Besides, poor men also experience uncomfortable spatial and social mobility with marriage that should be considered in this context so that it does not come across as if women are the only ones who experience the longing in belonging within marriage, or that gender is something that happens only to women. In other words, when *Longing in Belonging* points out that despite the sacrifices of Algerian women in the war of national liberation, they were marginalized following independence, the book could have added that poor peasant men and poor working-class Algerian men were also marginalized in their neo-colonial society.

The book continues to use the Baumasian analysis when it uses nationalism to illustrate the longing in belonging with specific reference to Turkish nationalism. Bauman is quoted as warning that nationalism unsettles rather

than stabilizes a nation that embraces it. This is a warning against Nazism which Bauman explored as the logical conclusion to the obsession with rationalism by modernity while Frantz Fanon issued a similar broad warning about the pitfalls of nationalism. *Longing in Belonging* does not highlight this aspect of Bauman's theory even when it analyzes Turkish nationalism as the longing for modernity under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the first president of the Republic of Turkey and his Republican People's Party. In such a critique of the rationalism of modernist nationalism, Ilcan might have give more prominence to the plight of Kurdish people in Turkey and the surrounding region instead of a passing mention while emphasizing the liberatory aspects of modernization, especially for women. The Kurdish case deserves to be at the center of such an analysis because it illustrates, not the longing in belonging but the struggle to secede, the longing not to belong or only the longing to belong to a nation state that does not yet exist. The brutal repression of the Kurdish aspirations in the region remind us of the question that Bauman posed for Weber about modernity and the holocaust: Is there anything in the theory of the rational ideal bureaucracy to prevent such nightmares or (by extension) does the theory of the longing in belonging have any promise for people who are not simply longing in belonging but who are actively resisting imperialist foreign domination?

The author indirectly answers the above question by reviewing ethnographic research, but it seems that the road not taken in her own work is the less traveled one in academic writing-her choice not to privilege the voices of the subjects which relatively impoverished the work. According to Ilcan, "\_ it is too presumptuous to make the claim that ethnographers can challenge hegemonic narratives through postcolonial women's voices" (p.53). This choice needs to be re-examined because the privileging of hegemonic written texts over subaltern oral traditions meant that the book reads a lot like literature review for a doctoral dissertation. In other words, ethnographers should not simply ask what their work can do for women's voices but also what women's voices can do for their work. This is evident from chapter four onwards when the book comes alive with the occasional quotations from the migrant experience of Turkish people in Germany. Even here, poetry and works of fiction are given preference over the voices of ordinary people who sweep streets to earn the cash that they send home to Turkey to support their extended families. The reader is left longing for the dialogues that the author claimed that she heard during her "mobile ethnography" but instead the book dishes out generous helpings of often untheorised quotations from her gurus. I have a feeling that the voices of the people themselves could have made this book more original.

**Biko Agozino Indiana University of Pennsylvania**