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Review of Balkan, O. (2024) Dying abroad: the political afterlives of migration in Europe

Twigt, M.A.

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pathways for legalization; and eliminate detention, deportation, and the need for immigration court altogether. I did find myself wishing Barak would have developed this abolitionist vision a bit more or put her suggestions into dialogue with current detention or border abolitionist scholarship. Yet Barak has led us to see such dismantling as the necessary work ahead and this itself is a vital intervention.

The Slow Violence of Immigration Court, with its unique focus on procedural justice, is an essential contribution to the growing body of work that exposes immigration regimes as sites of everyday violence — a literature that Barak, however, could have more actively engaged in the book. Beyond the important substantive findings and arguments of the book, Barak's centering of immigrants' narratives and epistemologies as sites of critique and knowledge production is especially noteworthy. Well-written and cogently structured, this book deserves wide readership. It would also be an ideal teaching text for undergraduate or graduate courses within immigration studies or sociolegal studies, particularly given how deftly Barak handles theoretical concepts, offering clear explanations grounded in her narrative data. Barak's thoughtful, nuanced critique of procedural justice within the context of immigration would also be immensely valuable to immigration attorneys, officials, and advocates. Finally, I hope that this book finds its way into the hands of policy makers who may heed this book's urging to confront the violence of the US immigration system and think radically about solutions for change.

Book Review: Dying Abroad

Balkan, Osman. 2023. *Dying Abroad. The Political Afterlives of Migration in Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. xviii + 235 pp., € 99,20 hardcover.

Reviewed by: Mirjam Twigt, *Institute of History, Leiden University, The Netherlands*
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“Where does a dead body belong? And what might dead bodies teach us about belonging?” (p. 204). These questions are central to Osman Balkan's *Dying Abroad*, a wonderful and thought-provoking book on burial practices by Muslims of Turkish and Kurdish descent in Germany. The end-of-life of a loved one inevitably comes with navigating legal and bureaucratic procedures that states institutionalize to govern death and the dead (Stepputat 2014). But anyone who has personal or familial experience with migration is likely to recognize that death in migratory settings often brings about additional bureaucratic complexities and reverberates spatial, cultural, and temporal tensions, often already present in life.

The author draws on multisited ethnographic fieldwork in Berlin and Istanbul, which included working as an undertaker and has allowed a rich, situated understanding of “death out of place” (p. 1). This term speaks to the ambivalent nature of home, the homeland and belonging, and the difficult decisions migrant families can face. In Islam, Judaism, and several other religious or cultural traditions cremation is prohibited, meaning that one location needs to be selected to serve as the final resting place, either through posthumous repatriation or local burial. Balkan builds on Edward Said’s phrase “out of place” which simultaneously conveys a geographical reality and an existential condition (p. 3). Burial decisions are political acts, not least in a Europe that continues to frame people belonging to ethnic and/or religious minorities as perpetual newcomers—*notwithstanding* how long they have lived there and what citizenship they hold. What follows are four empirical chapters, and a conclusion.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the material and logistical aspects of end-of-life care in migratory settings. Chapter 1 examines the role of two of the largest Islamic funeral funds in Europe. Formally guided by religious duty and charity, the logistical and financial support provided steers much toward posthumous repatriation. Their actions can be understood as forms of necropatriotism (p. 71) which conveys that Turkish migrants belong in Turkey, rather than in German soil. Chapter 2 will be of great interest to anyone working on bureaucracies and the (re)production of racial inequalities. It considers the central role that Muslim undertakers play in mediating between the German state and bereaved families. Their mediating role is twofold: guiding families through the legal, bureaucratic and religious procedures needed to ensure end-of-life care through facilitating repatriation or local burial and teaching lessons to the state about its own citizenry. For the Muslim undertakers in this study, stigma is a problem, but not because of their profession as is often the case for deathcare workers. Rather it is the result of being Muslim and/or migrant, and much of their work involves countering negative stereotypes about Islam.

The second part of the book takes a closer look at how burial practices by Muslims in Germany relate to processes of identity construction and place-making. Chapter 3 is a visual ethnographic recording of tombstones of Muslim graves in Europe. The cemetery serves as a specific site of struggle over the boundaries of a nation and the body politic. Despite the longstanding and sizable presence of Muslims in Europe and the increase in demand, there is a severe shortage of Islamic burial sites in Germany. Balkan shows convincingly how Muslim graves and tombstones are speaking to the living. The depiction of Islamic symbols, references to one’s place of birth, etc., can serve to assert parts of one’s identity, trajectory, and community and can normalize symbols that signify contemporary Europe’s diversity. Meanwhile, their presence on German soil shows that they and their descendants are there to stay. Chapter 4 builds on the narratives on burial preferences of Muslims of Turkish and Kurdish descent in Germany. Next to the limited availability of Islamic cemeteries, local legislation impedes the practical feasibility of Islamic funerary rites, such as burial in perpetuity. But family ties, experiences of social

exclusion in Germany and meanings attributed to soil seem to play a greater role in opting for burial in Germany or Turkey. Different affinities and allegiances can simultaneously act as a “push” or “pull factor” when it comes to deciding on one’s final resting place.

This book is a must-read for migration and diversity scholars alike, especially for those working in European contexts. Studying and writing about the difficult parts of the human experience in a respectful and dignified manner, as the author has done, is no small feat. By studying the burial decisions among migrants in Germany, Balkan provides a well-layered and powerful account of how ambivalent state policies, bureaucratic practices, religious communities and transnational connections, family ties, economic considerations, and sustained experiences of racial and cultural stigmatization interact and play out the end-of-life decisions of migrants and their families. This contributes to valuable insights into the workings of everyday necropolitics and how dead bodies — through their materiality and symbolic power — can serve as critical terrain of statecraft. Legislation and institutionalized procedures to govern the dead are still largely designed with (some) sedentary citizens in mind, further pointing us to the importance of culturally conscious end-of-life care in (post)migration settings (Gunaratnam 2013), also after the death of a person.

References

- Gunaratnam, Yasmin. 2013. *Death and the Migrant: Bodies, Borders and Care*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Stepputat, Finn. 2014. “Governing the Dead? Theoretical Approaches.” In *Governing the Dead: Sovereignty and the Politics of Dead Bodies*, edited by Finn Stepputat, 11–34. New York: Manchester University Press.

Book Review: Algerian Women and Diasporic Experience

Guemar, Latefa Narriman. 2023. *Algerian Women and Diasporic Experience: From the Black Decade to the Hirak*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 251 pp., 95,95€.

Reviewed by: Sofia Aouani, Department of Sociology, Université Grenoble-Alpes (Pacte)
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In *Algerian Women and Diasporic Experience*, Latefa Narriman Guemar combines interviews, surveys, and her own experience to provide a subjective approach to social ties