



Les frontières de l'identité nationale. L'injonction à l'assimilation en France Métropolitaine et coloniale

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little headway two generations after national Independence became a West Indian norm in the 1960s. Seeking to root out black power ideologues from the national political discourse the Prime Minister of Barbados, Errol Barrow, asked parliament to pass a Public Order Act in 1971 that gave police the power to arrest 'racist' blacks; all elected members of parliament are black, he said, hence the irrelevance of such a movement. The quality of this study, furthermore, lies in its narrative spread across the region, highlighting as it does the peculiarities of each space. It treats with the discussions relevant to building public institutions in the areas of education, health, agriculture, industry and political governance. Divided to the vein many West Indians were culturally torn as they believed it was theirs to choose between a vibrant British legacy and the emerging national paradigm. Loyalty to royalty remained strong, so too was the notion that a British education was superior to anything the native could receive within the nation.

At the heart of the divide, in the belly of the beast, as black anti-imperialist did say, were West Indians living in Britain. They did not find the golden opportunities expected as migrant workers. Fleeing the sugar fields for the industrial factories, they found the footprints of a familiar racism that sought to deny them the cultural entitlements expected. Informally denied Britishness as a legitimate identity element, they looked to 'back home' as an anchor in their turbulent journey. Factory hands, nurses, journalists, artists and writers, all traveled along this road. Rush has established herself as the latest scribe of the migration of the West Indian mind in flight from slavery and colonization but laden with the heavy baggage of the colonizers' culture.

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Abdellai Hajjat, **LES FRONTIÈRES DE L'IDENTITÉ NATIONALE. L'INJONCTION À L'ASSIMILATION EN FRANCE MÉTROPOLITAINE ET COLONIALE**, Paris: La Découverte, 2012, 344 pp., €25 (paper)

Our knowledge about ethnic and racial relations in Europe has been enriched by a contribution from Paris that should be made more widely available by translation into English. It opens with a quotation from an Algerian sociologist, Abdelmalek Sayad, who has concluded that the French cannot accept that a stranger should live within the nation without seeking naturalization. Neither can naturalization be accorded to the unworthy. So, if national pride is to be satisfied, the ideal is that naturalization should be sought and should then be refused! To seek it is to pay homage to France, while a refusal proves that the status of French citizen is no trifle. Abdellai Hajjat develops Sayad's view that the study of immigration casts a special light on the sociology of the French state.

The state has necessarily adapted to changes in its political environment. In 1789, it declared that 'men are born and remain free and equal in rights'. In metropolitan France, the notion of assimilation to the nation acquired a connotation of equality that was not easily applied in French territories overseas. It inspired an uprising in the richest of the European colonies, Saint-Domingue (which after 1844 was divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic). In other colonies the French concluded that conversion to Christianity was insufficient to make the natives French. In the French Caribbean, a series of sumptuary laws directed against people of mixed descent led to a ministerial decision in 1807 to ban mixed marriages and to prohibit the residence in France of *hommes de couleur*.

In 1889, the law on nationality established the principle of *jus soli* and conferred citizenship on the children born in France to non-national parents. This law was succeeded in 1927 by another designed to make it easier for non-national residents to obtain French nationality. It responded to fears occasioned by the decline in the birth rate. A leading

politician insisted on the national need to naturalize families with children and proposed the formula: *pas d'enfants, pas d'intérêt*. The demographic priority was to outweigh the insistence of others (including the officials in the prefectures who took the initial decisions) that an applicant must demonstrate that he or she had assimilated into French society. Competence in speaking French was a crucial indicator. Italians, Belgians and Spaniards were described as 'sister races'. Single men were also favoured if they were approaching the age for military service.

As demographic anxieties persisted after the Second World War, in 1945 a Ministry of Population was created, and the criteria for assimilation were modified; in the administrative vocabulary socio-cultural categories replaced racial and ethnic ones, but language remained vital. The rate of naturalization increased until 1952, when the minister warned against naturalizing persons who, because of their origin, were not easily assimilated. The numbers dropped.

Organs of the French state had to balance competing considerations. In the central government fears of population decline weighed heavily in the scales, but there was also apprehension about the growth of ethnic islands populated by persons speaking another language (Italian in the South-East, Polish in the North-West). In the prefectures, officials took account of the local employment market and of reports from the police. In the centre, officials were concerned about a lack of consistency. Figures detailing the reasons for refusing naturalization in the years 1968–73 recorded that around 30 per cent of refusals were on grounds of 'morality', around 13 per cent on grounds of insufficient 'loyalty', a little fewer because of 'insufficient assimilation', followed by 'insufficient period of residence', 'dodging military service', etc. Figures for refusals 1987–2006 were classified differently and display some curious variations from year to year; the percentages for insufficient assimilation varied between 5 and 38 per cent, whereas refusals on ground of insufficient residence were higher, followed by 'health'; there were very few for insufficient 'loyalty'.

In 2004, 9.6 per cent of the population over the age of 18 consisted of persons born outside France; 41 per cent of them had acquired French nationality. In 2006–07, at the time of the author's research, the decision-making process started in the bureaux des naturalizations in the prefectures (of which there are 101, one for each département). There a low-ranking official (most of them women, some of them of minority origin) prepared reports for a supervisor who sent them to the central government division where the final decision was taken. The author interviewed seventeen of these officials in three prefectures.

They occupied a low place in the administrative hierarchy, interviewing applicants, reporting on whether they met the criteria, and (not always) making recommendations. Could the applicant speak French? Read? Write? Who had filled out the form? Applicants might be asked 'Do you live among French people?' 'How often do you go back to your country of birth?' A female applicant might appear accompanied by a man who, as her husband, thought he should answer on her behalf.

In 1993, the Minister of the Interior had ordered that an applicant's dossier should include a photograph; this would show if a female applicant wore a *hijab*. Then in 1994 the Council of State ruled that naturalization could not be refused on this ground. In 2000, the Ministers of Employment and of the Interior ordered that when an applicant wore one, the official should inquire into its significance. Some of them therefore differentiated between the scarf and the veil. A scarf might not set them apart from French women (it could be 'blue-white-red', as one official said). A veil could signify identification with the community of another nation. If such an applicant appeared veiled for the ceremony at which naturalization was to be solemnized, she would not be allowed entry and would have to return her certificate.

The last interview question (disliked by some of those who had to ask it) was 'why do you want to be French?' One official (who had to record the answer given, in this case 'because I do want to have to produce my identity papers') commented with frustration 'this has nothing to do with being French ... so I recommended refusal'.

Since 2008, the decision to grant naturalization has been taken in the prefectures, although a disappointed applicant can appeal to the national level and may be able to initiate an action in the courts. The criteria for evidence of 'assimilation' have been tightened, enforcing a 1945 law that requires applicants for naturalization to possess a residence permit, the issue of which is conditional on the applicant's integration into French society, with particular reference to knowledge of the French language and the principles governing the French Republic. In 2011, the Ministry of the Interior also circulated, for guidance, a booklet on the rights and duties of the citizen. Although it contains nothing exceptionable, Abdellali Hajjat pictures its references to the rights of women as part of a wider tendency to 'consider that the forms of masculine dominance among Muslim populations are more violent than those among other populations'. He associates himself with the opinion that 'the real conflict of civilisations is sexual, founded on an irreducible gulf between Western and Muslim cultures evident in disputes about the Islamic veil, forced marriage, polygamy, genital mutilation and the status of women.' From this standpoint it is no surprise that the devolution of decision-making to the prefectures has affected the number of naturalizations granted; from 143,275 naturalizations in 2010, there was a 30 per cent fall in 2011.

The alternative interpretation (and one for which the Abdellali Hajjat would probably have some sympathy) is that state institutions and their officials, both in Paris and in the prefectures, were adapting to changes in their political environment, balancing conflicting objectives and struggling with confusions sometimes of their own making. The Constitution separates state and church, declaring France a lay republic that respects all faiths. Does this mean that the *hijab* is a religious symbol? Can state and faith be so simply separated? The difficulties have been aggravated by confusions in the use of the expression *Islamisme* to denote both the practice of Islam and the ideology and political programme of the Muslim Brotherhood. Accounts of proceedings in court when applicants have challenged the refusal of naturalization show that the authorities were slow to appreciate that the *Union des organisations islamiques de France* might not be a dangerous organization.

The politicians have to adapt also, but they need periodically to be re-elected by their constituents, some of whom take a narrow, short-term view of what is important. The sociology of the French state has to be as complex as the object it studies.

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Derek Hook, **A CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE POSTCOLONIAL: THE MIND OF APARTHEID**, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, 251 pp., £15.00 (paper)

Against a background of an often quite deliberate de-emphasis of the psychic dimensions of racism and oppression in much post-colonial critique, psychologist, psychoanalyst and post-colonial theorist Derek Hook's latest book provides an innovative and productive account of the role of the sexual, bodily and visceral realms of desire, fantasy and affect underpinning the dynamics of post-colonial racism.

His work provides a framework for reinvigorating both post-colonial studies and critical psychology in two ground-breaking ways. Firstly through his re-reading of a variety of anti- and post-colonial authors (including Fanon, Biko, Manganyi and Bhabha) alongside the work of writers such as Žižek, Kristeva and Butler – which provide a framework for a 'psycho-political' account of racism rooted in concerns with power, social structure and historical location. Secondly, his positioning of post-apartheid South Africa as a 'problem space' against this new conceptual frame opens exciting opportunities for new perspectives on the dynamics of wider global oppression and anti-colonial struggles.