

Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. By Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. x + 324 p., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 0-8223-2791-0 pbk.)

A. Jade Albuero

Volume 24, numéro 1, 2002

Espace
Space

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/006546ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/006546ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Albuero, A. J. (2002). Compte rendu de [*Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home.* By Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. x + 324 p., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 0-8223-2791-0 pbk.)]. *Ethnologies*, 24(1), 306–308. <https://doi.org/10.7202/006546ar>

Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. By Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. x + 324 p., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 0-8223-2791-0 pbk.)

“Georges woke up laughing”, begins this book. It continues with Fouron’s (one of the authors) recollection of his “wonderful” dream about Haiti, which first brings joyous emotions but is eventually replaced with sadness, as he realizes that he “had been dreaming of a Haiti that never was” (1). This introductory anecdote tersely but poignantly evinces the nostalgia that is at the core of this subject matter; it conveys the homesickness that many immigrants feel, which often transforms their memories of their native lands into idealizations. However, this story is not simply about the nocturnal workings of Georges’s subconscious but, as is made clearer in the rest of the book, of a collective dream, in which both immigrants and non-immigrants yearn for better futures for their home countries and for equality among all nations of the world. With a beginning such as this, I am intrigued and immediately hooked.

Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home is an exploration into the way many contemporary immigrants “live their lives across borders” (2), simultaneously building new lives in their adopted countries while continuing to participate in and maintaining their ties to their homelands. Specifically, it is “a book about long-distance nationalism, and how and why Georges and many other Haitians living abroad and in Haiti have become long-distance nationalists” (4). It is autobiographical, driven by Fouron’s recollections and experiences as a Haitian, an immigrant to the United States, and a staunch nationalist, and tempered by Glick Schiller’s stories of her Russian Jewish grandparents’ experiences in the early 1900s and her own indifference to nationalism. It is also ethnographic, incorporating the responses and remarks of over a hundred Haitians in Haiti and the U.S., who come from different social and economic situations, and providing descriptions of these people and their lifestyles.

After setting the stage in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 proceeds by providing a definition of long-distance nationalism, or the transborder “identification with a particular, existing state or the desire to create a new state” (23). The Haitian discussion begins in Chapter 3 with descriptions of the homecoming process, especially the delivering of “commissions” or presents. While the giving of commissions and

remittances reconnects those abroad with those who remain in Haiti and elevates the status of transmigrants and their kin, it can also create conflict when people get envious or are angry when their financial expectations are not met. Both this chapter and Chapter 4 give the reader an understanding of the obligations and dependencies that face Haitian transmigrants. In particular, the obligation to help kin, and even non-kin, is depicted by interviewees in terms of “morality of knowledge”, meaning that those abroad are obliged to help because they know how awful the situation is in Haiti.

The following three chapters examine the forces that shape various forms of long-distance nationalisms. In Chapter 5, the belief that the “blood remains Haitian”, regardless of citizenship, comes up often. While this notion allows those in Haiti to expand the “nation” and links them to lands of greater opportunity, it is especially significant to Haitian immigrants in the U.S., who often experience racism on a daily basis, as it gives them a location in which they can be proud of their race and to which they will always belong. Chapter 6 discusses multiple meanings of nationalism through the gender lens: “[b]y exploring why Nanie [Fouron’s mother] expressed her anger at a difficult marriage and oppressive system of gender by rejecting her nationality, we [come] to understand the different ways in which Haitian women and men, Haitians of different classes, and Haitians in Haiti and the diaspora, come to identify with and understand the nation” (132). Chapter 7 looks at the nationalism of the second generation, both those who have grown up in the U.S. and those who have come of age in Haiti.

The last chapters consider the relationship between long-distance nationalism, the state, and a sociopolitical agenda. Chapters 8 and 9 highlight the paradox of expectations within long-distance nationalism. While homeland association projects and protests in the U.S. regarding Haitian issues indicate that transmigrants have an impact on Haiti and point to the fact that Haiti is a powerless apparent state, with the U.S. and U.S.-led organizations pulling the strings, Haitians at home and abroad continue to view the state as autonomous and to hold it responsible for the well-being of the country and its citizens. Finally, Chapters 10 and 11 explain that, within the shared language of nationalism and love for Haiti, multiple meanings and voices surface, with both hegemonic and subaltern groups working towards different visions.

Though this work is repetitive in a few places and its conclusion predictable, it was a fascinating read. I liked the way each chapter opened with one of Fournon's narratives, as these compellingly set the stage for the discussion of each particular aspect of long-distance nationalism. These and other narratives and quotations, along with the emphasis on several folk sayings and the overall conversational tone, made the book easy to read, something a non-academic could readily understand and enjoy. Personally, I very much related to the contents of this book, as I have been doing comparable research on Filipino-Americans, Filipinos, and the Philippines and have come up with strikingly similar analyses. That bias aside, I still highly recommend this work to anyone working on or interested in immigrant/globalization/transnational/diaspora issues. For folklorists especially, this is a great example of how the use of ethnography and folklore can make a complicated topic so much more engaging.

A. Jade Alburo
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland

Searching for a Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons, Canada, and the Migration of Memory. By Lubomyr Luciuk. (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2000. xxviii + 576 p., photographs, notes, sources, index, \$70.00, ISBN 0-8020-4245-7 cloth, \$29.95, ISBN 0-8020-8088X pbk.)

Searching for a Place is about many things. It is about history, both general and very personal; it is about places, old and new, rather real and dreamed of; it is about the continuity and changes within a construct known as the "Ukrainian identity", influenced by memories and new realities, support and disregard, affection and resentment. This book by Lubomyr Luciuk represents the latest among his major works, dealing with the Ukrainian settlement of North America. It provides an intriguing journey into the history of Ukrainian Displaced Persons (DPs) in Canada after World War II, prehistory and circumstances of their arrival, relations with Ukrainian "old-comers", their own children, and Canadian society as whole. From the first pages of this book right to the *Epilogue* there is a strong feeling that the story told by the author is a very personal reflection on what it meant to be Ukrainian on the other side of the Atlantic. Such a personal reflection completes this