Global Subjects. A Political Critique of Globalization

Description: Taking the plane or sending an e-mail: globalization has become part of the fabric of our daily lives. And yet it is often seen as an impersonal force that is threatening to destroy identities and undermine nation-states. In this major new book, Jean-François Bayart offers a radically new account of globalization which challenges the way it is interpreted both by neo-liberals and by the anti-globalization movement.

Bayart argues that globalization is something that we ourselves have created, and the nation-state is actually a product, and not of a victim, of this process. Far from being synonymous with alienation and social disintegration, globalization establishes transnational solidarities and networks which overlap with nation-states without necessarily undermining them. Globalization has also refashioned sexual identities, transforming, through the representation of female and male bodies in the media, in advertising and in the Internet, the way individuals in different parts of the world have learnt to recognize themselves as sexual subjects. It has created new cultures of consumption which stimulate new desires, new techniques and technologies of the body and new forms of tension and conflict.

Drawing on Foucault’s notions of governmentality and subjectivation, Bayart develops a rich and illuminating account of how the social relations constitutive of globalization produce new forms of subjectivity, new lifestyles and new moral subjects, from the colonisers and colonised subjects of nineteenth-century India and Africa to the spread of new kinds of transnational and ethnicized subjectivities and lifestyles today.

Spanning two centuries and drawing on his deep knowledge of Africa and the Middle East, Bayart shows that, if globalization is our handiwork, its development and thus our history will be decided on the contested terrains where new ways of life, new modes of consumption and new types of struggle are being invented.

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