

Book Review

Peruvian Lives Across Borders: Power, Exclusion, and Home

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Peruvian Lives Across Borders by M. Cristina Alcalde is an empirically rich study of migration and belonging that is particularly well placed for current debates occurring across gender, migration, and Latin American studies. At its core, this book is about the connection that Peruvian migrants feel, foster, and renegotiate, with Peru. The migrants who feature in Alcalde's research are transnational, cosmopolitan middle- and upper-class Peruvians who are living or have lived in the United States, Canada, and Germany. Alcalde examines how home is constructed by these migrants abroad and how they create and negotiate a sense of belonging in relation to Peru and their 'Peruvianness'. Through interviews with 48 Peruvians, half of whom are living abroad and half in Lima as return migrants, Alcalde makes a strong case for the study of middle- and upper-class migrants. She uses intersectionality throughout the book to provide important analyses of class, race, gender, and sexual identity and to show how these identities can shift as migrants travel, resulting in vastly different migratory experiences. Exclusion, however, is a persistent theme.

Alcalde determines that the migrants she worked with experience both privilege and discrimination when abroad. While predominantly enjoying the opportunities and comfort of being privileged in Lima, migrants often find themselves facing exclusion in the US, Canada, and Germany. Her interlocutors relate how, despite having never faced marginalisation before, they find themselves 'othered' due to their accent, and de-skilled, with their qualifications and work experience seen as lacking; they are thus prevented from accessing the same opportunities that were available to them back in Lima. Many describe how the pan-ethnic identity of 'Latino' is imposed upon them, even though they had not previously identified with the term. Participants explained that they never felt Latino until they were treated as Latino outside of the continent. However, this exclusion is circumstantial. Alcalde shows how class is a slippery concept to define, particularly in a transnational context, yet it is also remarkably sticky. Even migrants who were forced to take 'lower-status' jobs abroad still identified as middle-class despite not being able to achieve the middle-class lifestyle that they had been accustomed to in Lima. Outside of Peru, migrants face systems of exclusion that they had not previously experienced, but class privilege allows them to experience a sense of security, informed by their class status.

Importantly, Alcalde also explores persistent exclusion *within* Peru. One of the most interesting aspects of this book is how migrants' perspectives of racism and homophobia change when they move abroad and require renegotiation when they return home. Those who had been used to the exploitation of predominantly indigenous, *mestiza*, and Afro-Peruvian women as domestic labour in Peruvian homes began to question these normalised practices. Female middle-class migrants are forced to renegotiate 'home' when they migrate and cannot afford

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domestic labour, and so take on a greater share of household duties and mediate this with their partner and family. Peruvian men, for example, are more likely to take on chores in the home when abroad. Through this renegotiation of the domestic sphere, these migrants are compelled to reconsider the racialised and classed treatment of the nannies and cleaners who had been part of their lives in Lima. Moreover, lesbian, gay and bisexual migrants who return to Lima have to negotiate their sexual orientation in order to 'belong'. While many had become used to the higher levels of acceptance in the USA, Canada, and Germany (although notably not in Peruvian migrant communities), they found Peru to be intolerant and discriminatory. These LGB migrants reported that they felt forced to put up with homophobia in order to be part of Peruvian life and families, both in Lima and abroad. Even if their class and racial privileges could protect LGB migrants from some discrimination, they still face prejudice, violence, and a lack of recognition in both the public and private spheres.

Despite all the clear positives to this book, there were three ideas that I felt lacked further development: technology, translocalism, and border regimes. Firstly, Alcalde alludes to the role that technology plays in keeping migrants' connection with Peru alive. Whether video-calling family or utilising social media, technology has undoubtedly changed migratory experiences. I was left wanting to know more about how such technology mediates belonging and maintains that migrant connection with 'home'. Secondly, Alcalde uses the concept of transnationalism effectively throughout the book but at times it seemed that *translocalism* would be a more useful concept. While 'transnationalism' points to 68 results in the index, *translocalism* does not appear once. *Translocalism* focuses more on the connections between two specific locations, and these local-to-local relationships would be useful in unpacking those particular connections between Lima and Munich, or Lima and Toronto. Thirdly and finally, the title of the book *Peruvian Lives Across Borders* made me want to hear more about that last word, borders. The visa regimes, paperwork, and travel that migration necessitates are curiously absent here.

I was keen to hear more about the wealthier Peruvians who were able to pay international student fees in order to obtain student visas, the privilege of speaking English in navigating bureaucracy, and the cost of travelling (often with families) across continents as return migrants or holidaymakers visiting their families. Alcalde's key themes of belonging, exclusion, and home are all present in technology, translocalism, and border regimes.

This book will appeal to feminist scholars who are interested in the nuanced experiences of migrants through an intersectional approach. Class here provides a particularly important lens on how social and economic capitals shape migrants' experiences of marginalisation whilst also excluding others. This book also contributes important empirical work to migration studies particularly in the way that Alcalde centres migration as a dynamic process, rather than a one-off event. She shows how returnee migrants should not be viewed as static, as some go through a continual calculation about whether to stay in Lima or leave once again. Migration is also shown here to be a transformative experience, where migrants are forced to reconsider their class and race, and their attitudes towards others. Whether being racialised and labelled as a 'Latino' for the first time, or realising the exploitative nature of domestic labour in Peru, migrants experience deep psychological and emotional impacts.

In *Peruvian Lives Across Borders*, Alcalde impressively uses intersectional analyses to trace the simultaneous privilege and discrimination that middle-class Peruvian migrants experience when abroad but also upon their return to Peru. Yet the ways in which middle and upper-class Peruvians draw boundaries around 'Peruvianness' and belonging necessitates exclusionary practices. Alcalde uses the term 'exclusionary cosmopolitanism' here to illustrate how the opportunities that are open to these migrants due to their class privileges are only made possible by the exclusion of others. Social hierarchies are sticky: even in a transnational context, power can be and is wielded through privileges of class, race, gender, and sexuality. The unique situations that Alcalde's migrants find themselves in, due to their own intersecting identities, dictate their sense of belonging, security, and home. This book therefore deserves a wide readership across gender, migration, and Latin American studies.

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