

**Title—Migration Studies and Colonialism**  
**Authors—Lucy Mayblin and Joe Turner**  
**Year—2021**

Categories: Migration, Colonialism, Historiography, Race

Place: The World

Time: 1900-Present

Argument Synopsis:

Mayblin and Turner's book argues that colonialism is fundamental to contemporary migration. They point to a lack of empire as a relevant context to migration studies and emphasize the problem of sanctioned ignorance of histories of colonialism within migration studies. They seek to demonstrate what paying attention to colonialism through the tools offered by postcolonial, decolonial and related scholarship can offer those studying international migration. The focus of the book is on the British context, and the authors acknowledge that any blind spots on the specificity and structures of settler colonialism may be a consequence of that position. They claim that as Wallerstein's world systems theory fell out of favor there has been a loss of focus on global racism and the legacies of colonialism as the structuring axes of inequality and immobility. They define postcolonialism as a critical theoretical perspective which engages with and contests the enduring uneven relations between formerly colonized societies and former colonizing societies. Mayblin and Turner claim there are two ways to understand the role of colonialism today: as a form of knowledge which shapes a Eurocentric understanding of modernity and as an ongoing system of global power, inequality and racism.

The book is organized into seven chapters. The second chapter discusses a central concern for scholars working with postcolonial and decolonial theory: modernity. They discuss the temporal and the spatial and how these aspects are deeply connected to colonial histories. The third chapter demonstrates the relevance of interdisciplinary work on race to central questions of contemporary migration studies. The authors explore the connections between colonial racism and mobility and explain how an analysis of race can help us understand contemporary migration and mobility. Mayblin and Turner focus on the centrality of race to the shaping of the modern world through European colonialism. The next chapter focuses on questions of sovereignty and citizenship, exploring the relationship between ideas of migration, sovereignty, and citizenship when set within the context of colonial histories and presents. Mayblin and Turner identify three key interventions regarding forced migration. They address colonial histories in relation to asylum as a human right in order to draw out some important reflections on the exclusivity and Eurocentrism of the category of 'man' and 'human.' They discuss the concept of 'necropolitics,' seeking to understand the role of violence, suffering and death in migration governance. The sixth chapter examines the relationship between security and borders as part of the colonial present, mapping out how engagement with postcolonial and decolonial scholarship can change how we analyze the rapid expansion of border security. The final chapter aims to expand the burgeoning scholarship in migration studies on the theme of gender and sexuality by arguing that scholars interested in gender and sexuality need to engage more seriously the role of colonial modernity and racism in contemporary systems of oppression.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Colonial histories should be central to migration studies
- Migration and mobility were central to the organization of colonial and imperial rule
- The role of anti-Muslim racism in organizing border security is a continuity of colonial forms of control and dehumanization