

these instances to “specific anxieties in Italy about the peculiar vulnerability of its borders, and above all its sea borders, to intrusion from outside” (193).

Although the volume takes a balanced approach to mobility, most of its chapters discuss migration movements around and outside of Italy. Other trajectories, such as Italy’s internal migrations from the South to the North, and mobility practices, such as tourism, remain outside its intended scope. Moreover, its exclusive interest in Italy’s national identity limits its global appeal and contradicts its programmatic emphasis on mobility crisis and inequalities more generally. The volume explores at great length the formation of Italianness through mobility, yet readers who are interested in how mobilities affect non-Italian migrants and impact other geopolitical scenarios globally will have to look elsewhere for a broader comparative perspective. While the volume reminds us that movement and mobility have profoundly shaped the peninsula, at present the notion that all people, regardless of their place of origin, should be entitled to the right to freely circulate across borders remains an elusive concept not only for Italy but also for Europe.

—CRISTINA LOMBARDI-DIOP
Loyola University Chicago

The Cultural Politics of U.S. Immigration: Gender, Race, and Media.

By Leah Perry.

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290 pages.

One of Leah Perry’s central concerns in this book is how media discourses around the political reform of immigration to the United States in the 1980s, spurred by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), fostered neoliberal ideology. Her research is broadly based and meticulous. While she takes a cultural studies approach to discuss immigration debates about and representations of Latino/as, she also includes historical accounts and theoretical frames that examine white ethnic groups such as Irish and Italian Americans, as well as Asian American and African American discourses and racial narratives about American citizenship.

Drawing on American social histories of women’s labor and citizenship, family reunification, popular representations of good and bad ethnic mothers, and media coverage of Madonna and Jennifer Lopez, Perry utilizes primary sources from immigration law and policy to media studies to discuss changes

to U.S. immigration. Her wide scope includes discussions of the 1980 Mariel Boatlift of Cuban refugees; the stories of family reunification and immigration, women, mothers, and welfare discourse in the 1980s; the criminality of immigration or use of “illegal alien”; and the commodification of branding and immigration with *Latinidad* and popular culture.

Opening with a close analysis of Madonna’s 1984 video and single “Borderline,” Perry starts an analysis of the song and video and then contextualizes the gender politics, race relations, and media representation that characterize the contentious debates around the IRCA, which was designed to address undocumented immigrant status in the United States by providing a path to citizenship and by tightening border protections and employment regulations. She effectively illustrates the ways in which this story of social policy change is also one about the politics of difference as represented in the popular culture of the 1980s. She asserts that, whereas current neoliberal discourses about gender, race, and media emerged from the rise of the multinational discourses of the 1990s, they can in fact be traced back to the immigration reform debates in 1980s Reagan-era discussions, which in turn affected portrayals of immigration—and cultural difference—in popular culture. The chapter on Cuban refugees and the Mariel Boatlift as an example of the development of “emergency immigration” stories is enlightening because of how Perry moves back and forth between the policy debates about early immigration reform and how local discourses were codified through the TV show *Miami Vice* and the film *Scarface*. In her chapters dealing with family reunification and mothers in exile, she compares examples of ethnic motherhood such as the sage Sicilian immigrant mother Sophia Petrillo in *The Golden Girls* to depictions of Latina mothers in *Mi Familia* and *Real Women Have Curves* and Asian American motherhood in *The Joy Luck Club*.

The book traces the origins of neoliberalism from policies in the Ronald Reagan administration. Perry argues that the political message of the 1980s conservative movement was to characterize “free market liberties” and “limited government” and to link the two, ensuring that “individual liberty and state power” would become the central tenets of American nationalism and patriotism (13). She ties together this emerging narrative of individual liberty with media representations of the self-reliant ethnic immigrant or the “nation of immigrants” story that arises from the IRCA. For example, in her chapter on popular constructions of immigrant criminality, Perry points out how media depictions of Italian and Irish criminals in mobster films such as *The Godfather* or TV series such as *The Sopranos* romanticize and humanize these varieties of lawless behavior. The Irish or Italian mob is typically depicted as a type of business organization that is a basic part of free-market enterprise and the American dream. These organizations are controlled not simply by one-dimen-

sional mobsters but by a broad range of recognizable individuals driven by complex motivations. In contrast, in stories of other racialized minorities such as Latino/as, they are usually depicted as fundamentally disorganized criminal street gangs with unpredictable, impulsive, and destructive figures posing permanent threats to the values of the United States.

Deftly weaving together social and cultural trends and debates, Perry begins her account with Madonna and ends with a comparative study of Jennifer Lopez in the 1990s. Along the way, she develops an in-depth and deeply researched comparative ethnic analysis of the ways in which evolving immigration law and policy and a changing immigrant population were connected to media depictions of racial and ethnic groups in popular television and film. The pairing of the free market and immigration emphasizes economic success and material goods that are delinked from human labor conditions; therefore, social change and social marketing are linked to economic power. Thus, the mainstream “story of American immigration” emphasizes the branding of white ethnicity in the 1990s that is linked specifically to an Ellis Island history of entry to the United States, excluding alternative paths of immigration and migration from the northern, western, and southern geographies and borders of the United States. To finesse this, the media marketing of Jennifer Lopez, Perry argues, represents a “not quite white but rarely black brown-ness” (187) or a flexible ethnicity. This type of racialized branding is an example of a neoliberal discourse that privileges economic status and monetary success over labor rights and human conditions. The cultural markers of ethnicity such as body types, dance moves, and music in the 1990s become advertising and marketable commodities of the American dream that can be bought and sold, but this type of marketing also can objectify stars such as Jennifer Lopez and thereby limit the representations and opportunities to stereotypical roles in mainstream media.

The malleability and immediacy of media messages and the increasing presence of media technologies and global outlets in our daily life cross borders of race, religion, gender, class, and geography and influence existing and new portrayals of immigration and citizenship. Leah Perry’s book is a wonderful example of how comparative ethnic studies combines with media studies to expose competing and contradictory narratives among different racial and ethnic groups and highlight the powerful impact of media on social policy.

—SHILPA DAVÉ
University of Virginia