

Book Reviews

Italian Mobilities.

Edited by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom.

New York: Routledge, 2016.

206 pages.

Travel, migratory movements, and transnational exchanges have been some of the major factors affecting Italy's modern history. Foreign invasions, territorial annexations, population shifts, internal migrations, immigrations, and tourism have all shaped the country's many identities. This volume, comprising eight chapters, places itself within an existing body of interdisciplinary research in such areas as social history, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and migration and diaspora studies that have worked to unhinge Italy's national paradigm from its traditional historiography. Based on the primacy of classical and Renaissance traditions, such historiography has privileged fixity and immutability, often disregarding, if not silencing, the diasporic and transnational aspects of Italy's turbulent history.

In the past two decades, a wealth of research in the above areas has begun to deprovincialize studies of modern Italian history, challenging the notion that Italian statehood and its attendant cultural capital have emanated almost exclusively within the peninsula, a notion certainly encouraged during the Liberal and Fascist periods and reproduced in the second half of the twentieth century by Italian and foreign scholars alike. The methodological value of this volume consists precisely in finding connections between past and present while using the larger umbrella of mobilities studies as a comparative lens through which to study a variety of historical phenomena. In their introduction, co-editors Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom map the development of Italy as a modern nation-state in light of its long history of emigration, the colonial experience, and contemporary Mediterranean immigrations, tracing their "interlinking histories" (8) and intertwining these seemingly separate events. The vantage point of mobilities studies, moreover, serves to emphasize the movements of people and ideas in and out of Italy—movements that created complex social and cultural transnational networks—and to debunk the notion of modern Italy as founded on a stable, insular national identity.

Two chapters in the volume directly address this historical fallacy. These are Pamela Ballinger's chapter on the repatriation of settlers and citizens from the former colonies in East Africa and the Balkans after World War II (chapter 1) and Francesca Locatelli's chapter on Mussolini's efforts to create demo-

graphic settlements in the Horn of Africa after 1936 (chapter 6). In focusing on historical cases of Italian refugee and colonial settler communities, the two chapters—otherwise different in nature and scope—offer examples of Italy’s efforts to reconfigure its national borders in the wake of Fascism, colonialism, and World War II. Both chapters establish meaningful connections between past and present by providing historical correlatives to today’s migrant crises in what Ballinger defines as “a complex and crucial prehistory of contemporary immigration to Italy” (21). This “prehistory” sheds light on today’s refugee and migration crisis in unexpected ways. As Ballinger explains, in the 1940s and 1950s most of the resettled migrants were considered ineligible for refugee status. Legally recognized as Italian citizens yet considered economic migrants, they had claims to international refugee rights that were easily dismissed. Locatelli’s chapter illustrates how the demographic colonization of the African territories was a notable national investment of both private and public capital that contributed to “the circulation of ideas, experiences, and the construction of myths” (146) about Italianness and Africanness. These two chapters eloquently illustrate Italy’s oscillation between mobility and immobility, center and periphery, past and present.

The volume’s array of topics and its methodology make amply clear that mobility is about not just movement but also the lack of movement. This formulation is particularly relevant to the current place of Italy as a southern frontier of Europe and the attendant emboldening of nationalist claims within the European Union, alongside the slow demise of the Schengen Agreement in the midst of the ongoing debate about political claims of national sovereignty. As the editors note in the introduction, “Mobility studies has also brought new attention to mobility’s opposite—immobility—arguing that mobility must be conceived in relation to spatio-temporal fixities, or moorings, as well as experiences of stillness, waiting, and even stuckness” (3). Rather than easily accepting an acritical concept of mobility as a proliferation of hybrid new spaces, cultures, and identities, *Italian Mobilities* provides analytical tools to critically interpret the regulated violence produced today along Italy’s Mediterranean borders. The militarized surveillance and the restriction of migrant movement, with hundreds of thousands of deaths at sea as a result, are central and not peripheral to the past and present role of Italy as a modern nation.

The volume’s deliberate emphasis allows boundaries between disciplines and historical periods to dissolve, connecting movements across centuries and in multiple directions. Nicholas Harney’s and Guido Tintori’s chapters (chapters 2 and 5, respectively) illustrate the advantage of the mobilities studies approach. Both chapters take a political view of the topic with attention to the neoliberal frame of diasporic circulation (Harney) and demographic and citizenship state politics (Tintori). Both chapters productively compare

migrations across time periods and entrance and exit movements, facilitating a dialogue between scholarship of emigration and immigration.

The volume dedicates four of its eight chapters to the differential modalities of inclusion and exclusion of migrant bodies around Italy's southern borders. In chapter 3, Rhiannon Noel Welch analyzes Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* (1994) and considers the film's visual and ideological discourse by expanding on Roberto Esposito's "immunity paradigm," or a concept of community formation based on the notion that circulation is a means of spreading contamination and that borders need to be erected as a protection against disease. Welch's close reading of *Lamerica* illuminates how the film thematizes the 1991 arrival of Albanian migrants in Puglia as an invasion that threatened the biopolitical integrity of the Italian national body, challenging Italy's very idea of self and community, and interrogating the ways in which mobility may be co-opted by invoking biopolitical categories and bounded racialized separateness. Chapter 4, by Stephanie Malia Hom, draws upon her 2013 fieldwork at the Center for Identification and Expulsion of Ponte Galeria, outside Rome. Stuck in a "spatio-temporal mooring," the *ospiti*, or "guests," of the center she interviews offer a glimpse of the power of the Italian state to violently regulate mobilities on its sovereign territory.

Both Áine O'Healy's and David Forgacs's contributions to the volume (chapters 7 and 8, respectively) focus on Mediterranean migratory passages. O'Healy explores the ways in which noncommercial documentary and feature films have responded to the mass-mediated spectacle of migrants' arrivals on the Sicilian islands of Linosa and Lampedusa by the creation of alternative representations. These "self-consciously oppositional texts" (170), O'Healy argues, all attempt to counter the highly spectacularized phenomenon of boat arrivals by reestablishing voice, visibility, and agency among both the islanders and the migrants. By exploring the everyday realities of those who are caught in the network of police, military, and media inspection, the filmmakers "complicate and challenge the politically expedient images of the islands offered by mainstream representations" (171).

Closing the volume with a chapter on Italy's distinctive reaction to increased human mobility in the Mediterranean, Forgacs's chapter argues that the pressure for security and a widely shared anxiety about border vulnerability characterize Italy's response to migrant flows from the global South. He explores the image of the refugee/migrant ship through Foucault's trope of the "prisoner of passage" (184–185) as tragically befitting the situation of undocumented migrants in the Strait of Sicily today. Taking as contemporary examples the case of two ships blocked from disembarking crew and passengers on Italian soil, Forgacs links such blockades in the Mediterranean to other instances of fears, in the history of Italy, of invasions and diseases, connecting

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.

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

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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