

Francesca Scrinzi, *Genre, migrations et emplois domestiques en France et en Italie. Construction de la non qualification et production de l'altérité ethnique* (Gender, migrations and domestic employment in France and in Italy. Construction of non-qualification and production of ethnic otherness), Petra: Paris, 2013; 214 pp.: 978-2-84743-081-3

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A rich body of literature on migration is devoted to the experiences of women migrant domestic workers in many developed economies. However, few publications explore the role played by intermediaries or “gate keepers” in the incorporation of women into the service sector as non-qualified workers. Scrinzi's book is one of the few studies to do so. Drawing from the results of her fieldwork in France and in Italy where she conducted interviews and observations, the author examines the training, recruitment, placement and management practices of migrant home helpers caring for elderly Europeans. The originality of her book lies in its comparative approach, its analysis spanning the micro, meso and macro levels, and its specific attention to the structuring power of state policies and of intermediary institutions and actors. By considering the intersection of factors such as gender, class and 'race', *Genre, migrations et emplois domestiques* successfully identifies the mechanisms that underlie the (re)production of ethnic otherness of migrant women and men.

The book starts by presenting the context for domestic employment in Europe, including the reasons behind its growth. It explains several notions and concepts used throughout the chapters, such as the ‘international division of domestic work’. It also provides detailed information about the author's data-gathering methods, field sites and fieldwork experiences. The main hypothesis presented is that the ‘social practices at work in the training of domestic employees and in the interplay between labour supply and demand’ are central in the construction process of the ‘non-qualification’ of migrant domestic workers, because these practices ‘re-produce essentialist representations’ that reinforce the ‘feminisation and racialisation of labour relations’ (p. 15).

In the first chapter, Scrinzi refers to existing studies in order to describe how differential racism and contemporary perspectives have fashioned the way migrants are currently considered and treated in Europe. She also examines the evolution of domestic employment in the region: from the inclusion of women in paid work to the feminisation of domestic employment leading to its construction as unskilled and from the personalisation of employee-client relations to the invisibilisation of the work performed in employers' homes. This chapter sheds light on the link between the ‘private’ (family) and ‘public’ realms (including the job market and state institutions).

Chapter 2 examines the structure of the domestic employment markets in France and in Italy, to find out how public policies in these countries influence immigrants' insertion into the labour market. Scrinzi demonstrates how immigrants are incorporated differently into the domestic employment sector in France and Italy: in France, it happens via home-care associations recruiting, placing and managing domestic employees as well as offering them State-funded vocational training, whereas in Italy it takes place via direct hiring that often leads to undeclared work in the informal economy. What is clear is that the immigration and work policies in these two countries contribute to the social marginality and juridical insecurity of migrant domestic workers. For example, live-in domestic workers in Italy are dependent on their employers to obtain residence permits. In addition, Scrinzi observes that delegating home aid for the elderly work to migrants and putting them into ‘competition’ with ‘native workers’ in feminine jobs (p. 73) concretises the ‘international division of domestic work’ in the French and Italian contexts. This chapter leads readers to reflect on ‘global care chains’ (Hochschild, 2000; Yeates, 2004) in the two national contexts and highlights the interconnections between women of different national, ethnic and class backgrounds in the field of paid domestic work in France and Italy.

Chapter 3 focuses on the training and placement of immigrant home helps for the elderly in Italy and on the perspectives of ‘gate keepers’. Here, the author analyses how ‘gate keepers’ in Catholic parishes and associations draw on gender and ethnic categories during the training they offer to immigrants of South American origin. These intermediaries associate domestic

employment with the 'feminine qualities' of South American immigrant women, who are seen as faithful to their traditions but 'at risk of falling into immorality' (p. 93). In contrast, they train South American men (regarded as 'deviants', 'lazy' or 'irresponsible' fathers) in ways that produce a 'domesticated masculinity' that is 'associated with domestic employment and work in the private sphere' (p. 95). When it comes to the placement process of these immigrants as home helps for the elderly, Scrinzi finds a striking difference in attitudes between migrant and non-migrant 'gate keepers'. In particular, migrants challenge racialising stereotypes about their fellow migrants, whereas non-migrants draw on racist stereotypes and manipulate their presentation of 'ethnic attributions' based on the demands of their clients.

Chapter 4 focuses on the situation in France, where the training given by public and private associations to unemployed people (including immigrants) are carried out with the aim of professionalising the home service sector. However, despite their emphasis on the paid nature of this activity, the training incorporates stigma such as representing immigrant women as a 'problem', 'in difficulty' and 'unemployable' due to their 'cultural and social shortcomings' (p. 127). The few voices of immigrant women presented in this chapter shed light on how they perceive these training courses. The paternalist way in which public and private associations deal with the women they train produces contradictions such as the simultaneous 'recognition and denial of the racism that structures domestic jobs' (p. 145).

In Chapter 5, Scrinzi takes a comparative perspective to synthesise her observations conducted in France and Italy. She elucidates the ideologies that fashion the racialisation of domestic employment and its social construction as unqualified in these countries: a republican universalist ideology in France, and a differentialist ideology in Italy. The former encourages migrants to wipe away their 'cultural specificities' in order to privilege social integration, whereas the latter values their 'cultural difference while highlighting its radical otherness' (p. 147). In addition, Scrinzi succinctly specifies the role played by 'gate keepers' in the construction of domestic labour as unskilled. For instance, these intermediaries use 'common sense' knowledge and field-based information about 'cultural differences' and 'feminine qualities'. They protect employees against abuse and problems such as psychological violence from their employers, but tend to favour the interests of employers, which leads to the denial of workers' 'emotional work and the demanding family responsibilities' placed on them (p. 159). They also 'mobilise the notion of cultural difference that naturalises the flexibility of workers and represents employer-employee relations as an opportunity for integration' (p. 160).

To conclude, Scrinzi lays out the scholarly contributions of her study and emphasises its main findings: the 'naturalisation and de-naturalisation' mechanisms of 'social relations and the ways these attach to the private/public divide' (p. 163), as well as the 'ambiguities and limits of the enterprise of professionalising domestic employment' (p.166). She stresses the importance of revisiting the 'international division of domestic work' by considering the points of view and practices of intermediary actors in different social settings (p. 169). Finally, she suggests possible research directions in the field of migration and domestic employment studies: the study of the 'masculinities' and 'practices of men' in the international division of domestic work (p. 171), and the question of whether the 'individual resistances' of migrant domestic employees and of the 'critiques and the workaround of essentialist constructions' (p. 172) may evolve in the future towards some sort of collective action.

Overall, the book achieves its main objective of analysing the processes that lead to the lack of qualifications for migrant domestic workers and how this interplays with racism. It provides important insights into the complex mechanisms at work in those who provide care in the homes of elderly people. Her analyses leave readers wondering about the concrete measures that might be adopted to prevent the stereotypic categorisation and racialisation of domestic employees and their work. Readers may regret that other factors such as religion are only slightly touched on, since they also intersect with gender, 'race' and class in the social construction of 'otherness'. Given its focus and its use of technical terms, this book appears mainly suited to scholars and students working in the fields of migration, gender, interethnic relations and domestic employment for whom

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it will serve as an eye-opener to the unequal power dynamics in the gendered, racialised and ethnicised social relations of domestic labour.

References

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