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Genre, migrations et emplois domestiques en France et en Italie. Construction de la non-qualification et de l'altérité ethnique

Francesca Scrinzi, Editions Pétra, Paris, 2013, 214 pp., ISBN: 978-2-84743-081-3, €25.00 (Pbk)

In this book, via a cross-national comparative analysis of domestic work in France and Italy, Francesca Scrinzi provides a theoretically grounded and ethnographically rich analysis of two relevant themes in contemporary studies of European societies and international migration. The first addresses the organisation of care in a context of weakening welfare systems and ageing societies. Drawing from existing feminist work, Scrinzi begins by noting that care provision in contemporary European states is characterised by a persistent gendered division of work, with women performing most of the organisational, managerial and emotional tasks necessary to provide care to elderly people. The second interrelated theme addresses the impact of the feminisation of international migration and of the resulting flow of flexible and 'unskilled' women into the domestic/care sector, on the restructuring of family and gendered relations. Engaging with the classical feminist work on the 'international division of labour', Scrinzi develops further the concept to illustrate how the household has become the theatre of an increasing outsourcing of care labour, which is transferred from middle- and upper-class women to 'inferiorised' and dependent migrants. Scrinzi suggests that the resulting polarisation between women employers and women employees can be better understood by considering the intersectional functioning of class, gender and ethnicity, as well as of racialised identities. The originality of her analysis lies in the connection it makes between the gendered social construction of paid domestic and care work as non-skilled feminised labour and processes of gendered racialisation. Via ethnographic analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews with different actors (individual employers, recruitment agencies, training experts, migrant employees and migrant associations), the book unpacks the processes through which the migrant worker becomes the object of a progressive deskilling process, premised upon the reification and essentialisation of supposedly natural qualities and dispositions of migrant women employees. The depiction of migrant women as naturally inclined to specific areas because of cultural, racial or ethnic affiliations is part of what Scrinzi terms the 'the social construction of unskillfulness' (p. 21), a process that accompanies and justifies symbolic and material inequality across class, gender and ethnicity. This process of material and symbolic deskilling of the migrant 'other' is not confined to the 'domestic sphere'. As Scrinzi notes (p. 27), deskilling in the domestic sphere goes hand in hand with the political constructions of 'suitable and docile workers' promoted by various public and private institutions involved in the 'management' of migrant workers.

The cross-national comparative analysis of France and Italy joins a growing—but still limited—turn within the literature towards the need to unravel how general labels like 'feminisation of

migration', 'care regimes' or 'international division of reproductive labour' are apprehended and played out in different national contexts. The book moves beyond the stereotypical representation of the so-called 'Mediterranean model', commonly portrayed as a model of a familialistic welfare state system that delegates the burden of care to families and women in particular, as internally homogeneous: in France where migrant care work is most concentrated in formal and institutionalised employment, the number of migrant workers doing care work remains low compared with the higher presence of lower-class French women. On the contrary, in Italy, although migrant women are largely present in direct and informal employment, Italian women are withdrawing from full-time, live-in salaried domestic work.

Chapter 1 analyses how racialisation and racism become integral to salaried and home-based care labour. It explores how exploitative labour relations tend to be masked by the adoption of maternal attitudes by employers, which in turn allows them to deal with the tensions and embarrassment arising from market relations that are being introduced into the household. Chapter 2 discusses the institutional and informal organisation of care labour that characterises France and Italy, and how the offer of specific services tends to be differently distributed in the market or the household depending on national and local policies. Chapters 3 and 4 examine how the racialisation and feminisation of a job is constructed through daily practices of placement and training of migrant domestic workers, and how these are inscribed within different institutional settings and discursive repertoires in each of the two countries. Chapter 5 puts forward the conceptualisation of the 'social construction of unskillfulness' and shows its gendered and racialised dimensions.

Overall, the book makes a welcome and original contribution to the growing literature on the international division of reproductive labour by highlighting the complex and multilayered relations between the political, institutional and domestic enactment of gender, class, ethnic and racialised differences. It provides novel insights into the role played by the 'intermediary actors' (p. 25) mediating migrant women's entry into paid domestic and care work, such as Catholic informal placement and training agencies (Italy) and state-funded training programs for the unemployed and non-profit care providers in the formal sector (France). However, by focussing mainly on the cross-nationally diverse processes of the naturalisation of women's work and gendered racialisation in domestic service, the book devotes limited space to the diversity of migrants' voices and experiences and their strategies to resist racism and the invisibilisation in the work sphere. In this respect, the analysis appears somewhat unbalanced. Despite this, the book makes an original contribution to current feminist understanding of how gender, class and processes of racialisation intertwine to shape the international division of care labour. It will appeal to academics working in the interrelated fields of care, gender and migration as well as policymakers and civil society actors.

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