

Zontini, Elisabetta: *Transnational Families, Migration, and Gender. Moroccan and Filipino Women in Bologna and Barcelona.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2010. 268 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-618-4. (New Directions in Anthropology, 30) Price: \$ 90.00

The book of Elisabetta Zontini joins the growing literature on the feminisation of migration in Southern Europe and it enriches the latter in different ways. The aim of the work is to develop a comparison on gender and domestic labour in two urban contexts of Bologna and Barcelona, and with reference to two different ethnic communities: Filipino and Moroccan. Different reasons support this choice. First of all, the author aims at exploring the macro- and micropolitics of domestic labour in two regional contexts which have historically been reputed as the most progressive in their national contexts, and yet have approached migration either as a problematic issue or through a celebrative attitude unable to substantially address migrants' needs and rights. Secondly, and importantly, the book aims at going beyond the representation of the "domestic worker" as a homogeneous category, and delves into internal and crosscultural differences which characterise the *most* (Filipinos) and *least* (Moroccans) favoured nationalities in the racialised niches of domestic labour. In developing a "double act" of comparison – across geopolitical locations and migrant communities – Zontini will succeed in unravelling how certain features of immigration generally ascribed to Southern Europe (shift from emigration to immigration countries, asymmetric sex distribution, lack of coherent legislation, and ethnic fragmentation) differently connote the dialectic between locality, transnationality, and heterogeneous women's experience.

After introducing the peculiarities of Southern European immigration and the similarities and differences between Bologna and Barcelona, the author moves to review the existent literature on gender and transnationalism. The second chapter maps the progressive shifts in the existent literature from a stereotypical representation of women as passive subjects in migration to the growing scholar awareness of the multifaceted and complex role that women have historically played in international mobility. Zontini stresses the importance of connecting studies focusing on structural forces underpinning migration with an analysis of how different women have actually actively negotiated the meanings and purposes of migration. The author rightly questions the representation of Moroccan women as "passive followers" and of Filipino

ones as "active workers," and unravels how economic, family and personal reasons and ambitions frame the experience of migration in both cases. This is ethnographically documented in the central part of the book (chapters 3 and 4) through the presentation of different life histories and narratives. An important feature which emerges from this analysis is the ambivalence of kinship in both sustaining and constraining migration. Zontini notes how migration decisions are rarely taken within the household and are more often than not negotiated within the wider kinship group. Gendered normative expectations certainly mould the extensive "kinship work" in which Filipino and Moroccan women are differently engaged across national territories. At the same time, these norms intertwine with the possibility of creating novel kinship experiences or the attainment of autonomy in framing personal destinies.

Although Zontini is certainly right in stressing the need to develop more accurate analysis of how transnationalism both affects and is shaped by kinship, I would have expected her to develop in the central part of the work a more detailed dialogue with the existent and important literature on transnational households and marriages (among others: Gardner, Charsley, Grillo, and Shaw). This would have considerably strengthened the theoretical and rich ethnographical analysis developed in the book. In the final two chapters, Zontini concludes reasserting the need to go beyond the uncritical association between capitalism and patriarchy in moulding migrant women's experiences, and to analyse in detail the individuality of everyday experiences and the new types of families which emerge through migration. In relation to this, it seems to me that while Zontini successfully develops a comparative analysis of how Moroccan and Filipino women create and transform their kinship relations, the promise made in the introduction – namely, to explore how Western families have also been transformed through immigration and domestic labour – remain somehow unfulfilled. I warmly hope that this work would also lead the author to subsequent analysis of how the politics of domestic labour shed light on the equally heterogeneous and multifaceted "Italian" or "Spanish" kinship and families. Nevertheless, and beyond certain limits of (any) work, the book of Zontini makes an important and original contribution to studies of migration, gender, and transnationalism. It will certainly be of much interest to scholars as well as students working in these fields.

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