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Fiore, Teresa. *Pre-Occupied Spaces. Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. Pp. 264. ISBN 978-0-823-27432-1 and 978-0-823-27433-8 and 978-0-823-27434-5. \$125.00/35.00/34.99 (hardcover/paperback/eBook).

In her preface, Teresa Fiore equates the process of writing a book to the experience of migration. In fact, her book—much like a displaced subject—underwent many changes during the long period in which it was written. In those ten years, this project adapted to the changing reality regarding migration in Italy, including new migratory flows and citizens' public reactions to them, and to new scholarship on the subject. Yet its core—particularly its thematic organization and sectional divisions—remained the same. In fact, the uniqueness of *Pre-Occupied Spaces* stems from its structure, from the author's decision to approach migration from many different angles, across multiple disciplines and genres. The texts studied “range from novels to short stories, nursery rhymes, memoirs, testimonios, films, songs, and documentaries” (14). Beyond the book's solid theoretical foundations, Fiore creates a space in each chapter in which she compels her readers to think about migration in different ways, broadening and challenging their perspectives along the way.

*Pre-Occupied Spaces* includes an introduction and three main sections, each organized around a central theme. Each part includes two chapters and an “aperture” that introduces the main topic. These “apertures” are an effective way to use a text, or a series of short texts, as a framework to establish connections among the material analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

In an introduction that sets the tone for the entire volume, Fiore uses Italo Calvino's 1965 short story “All at One Point” to denounce an entrenched prejudice against *the other*. Calvino's story is set before the *Big-Bang*, before space even existed, when everything and everybody coexisted in just one point. Yet, even before space and time existed, even when there was “no other place to migrate from or to,” prejudice and racism were part of human nature (2). As the subtitle to the introduction indicates, Fiore uses Calvino's story to create a link between Italy's emigration, immigration, colonialism, and post-colonialism. This section includes clearly drawn maps that illustrate the roots of Italian emigration: Italy's unification process, the changing regional and national borders of the country in 1919-1920 and after 1947, as well as the main emigration flows from Italy between 1876 and 1976. Maps of the former Italian colonies, and of Italian descendants around the world (as of 1994), are followed by statistical data about immigration into Italy in 2014. These maps reinforce one of Fiore's core assertions, namely that “space as a crucial paradigm to examine the links between old and new forms of migration” (13). Pre-occupying, occupying, and being preoccupied with a space are concepts that allow space and time to interweave and provide a better, broader understanding of migration patterns and, in this case, of Italian civilization and history too.

In part I: “Waters. Migrant Voyages and Ships from and to Italy,” the “aperture” examines the multimedia show *L'orda/ The Horde*, based on Antonio Stella's 2003 book that pointed out similarities between the mistreatment of Italian emigrants in the past and that of immigrants arriving in Italy today. The two primary spaces in this section are the Atlantic Ocean (crossed by Italian emigrants) and the Mediterranean (crossed by immigrants of the present-day). The pages of the first chapter of this section are then *occupied* by an analysis of the nostalgic, emigrant-centered songs of Gilda Mignonette who was famous in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century both in Naples and New York. Her repertoire, which included traditional Neapolitan songs and colonial anthems, is useful for drawing a connection between immigration and colonialism. Fiore correctly points out that Mignonette's career was rooted in the “concept of Italy beyond its borders, which embraced both the emigrant colonies and the territorial colonies in Africa” (33). In the same chapter, Fiore reviews the concept of “the voyage” from a national and transnational perspective, and as a time of shifting identities in Crialese's 2003 film *Nuovomondo/*

*Golden Door* and Marra's 2001 *Sailing Home*. Fiore proposes a new interpretation of Crialese's ship that she sees as a "figuration of Foucault's heterotopic ship, a real place acting as a countersite, in which all the real sites of a culture are represented, contested, and inverted" (46). Unlike previous critics that often described it as non-space and non-time, she argues persuasively that it is the excess of space and time that characterizes Crialese's ship.

Chapter two first focuses on "the blurring of emigrant and immigrant desires and failures" in Marra's film. It then discusses "the coexistence of painful legacies of emigration and slavery" in Kym Ragusa's autobiographical novel *The Skin Between Us: A Memoir of Race, Beauty, and Belonging*, (2006). Finally, Fiore analyzes "the survival driven-urge to leave North Africa for the postcolonial subject" in Feven Abreha Tekle's 2005 novel *Libera* (50). In these texts, migrant subjects inhabit the space of a new Mediterranean that, according to Fiore, functions as a pre-occupied space. "Occupied by previous stories of demographic relocations and cultural movements, this sea now hosts new concerns over economic stability, protection of human rights, and racial tolerance" (50).

Part II "Houses. Multiethnic Residential Spaces as Living Archives of Pre-Occupation and Invention," is a study of spaces where immigrants live today or have lived in the past. It is, therefore, fitting that the "aperture" explores the documusical *L'Orchestra di Piazzza Vittorio* (The Orchestra of Piazza Vittorio, 2006) that demonstrates how a new approach can transform what was perceived as a worrisome presence of migrants into a vibrant ethnic neighborhood and, ultimately, a truly transnational space.

Chapter 3 provides examples of similar spaces and preoccupations in Argentina and Italy: from Laura Pariani's 1900's *conventillo*<sup>1</sup> (tenement) in Buenos Aires in her 2007 *Dio non ama i bambini* (God Doesn't Love Children) to an apartment building in Rome inhabited by Italians and migrants in Amara Lakhous' 2006 novel *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazzza Vittorio/ Clash of Civilization Over an Elevator in Piazzza Vittorio*. Time periods and continents are different, yet for the perceived problems addressed in these two works similar potential solutions are proposed. Chapter 4 starts in Rome with Moshen Melliti's 1992 novel *Pantanella* and then crosses the Atlantic to make a connection with Melania Mazzucco's 2003 novel *Vita* (Life). With this comparison, Fiore effectively reminds us that although the time frame of these chapters spans almost a century, the dynamics, struggle and desperation of migrants coexisting and claiming a space in the dominant culture remain the same.

Part III, "Workplaces. A Creative Re-Occupation of Labor Spaces against Exploitation," concentrates on what it means to work in a hostile space, in particular for construction and domestic workers. The "aperture" uses Gianni Rodari's nursery rhyme on bricklayers and Gabriella Kuruvilla's short story "This is not a baby-sitter." These texts, though addressed to a younger audience, are powerful for denouncing the exploitation and prejudice at the center of the works analyzed in the last two chapters.

Chapter 5 likens the abuse of bricklayers in France, as described by François Cavanna's 1978 *Les Ritals* (The Wops), to that of the Romanian protagonist in Mariana Adascalitei's short story "Il giorno di San Nicola" (Saint Nicholas' Day) and, once again, draws a connection that spans time and place. In the last chapter, Fiore studies domestic workers by pairing Renata Ciaravino's script for a play about women from northern Italy who in the 1920s emigrated to Egypt to work as wet nurses and maids to a chapter in Gabriella Ghermandi's 2007 novel *Queen of Flowers and Pearls* that tells the story of an exploited Eritrean maid.

The conclusion of Fiore's book brings the reader back to Italy and the present, with a discussion about the unfairness of the Italian citizenship law. Extensive bibliographical references provide a useful tool for scholars interested in migration, colonial and postcolonial studies, and the cultural history of

<sup>1</sup> This term refers to a large shared home rented to poor immigrant families in Buenos Aires at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Italy.

The author's decision to connect migrant and non-migrant authors across several different genres and time frames, though a strong point of this book, runs the risk of limiting the interpretation of the material. One example of such limitations is brief or missing historical contexts. Other potential limitations could arise from Fiore's separation of the stories from their historical context or her presentation of only a single viewpoint. The scholarly style and structure of the sentences, and choice of vocabulary, at times—especially in the concluding pages—could be difficult to follow for the general public. Notwithstanding these few limitations tied to its structure, *Pre-Occupied Spaces* is a unique and important contribution to what is becoming the crowded field of migration studies.

*Preoccupied Spaces* advances a singular perspective that allows its readers to see modern Italy through different eyes. The journey Teresa Fiore began over a decade ago has finally concluded and has brought both the author and her readers to a space, hitherto “unoccupied” yet filled with memories and a new understanding of past events. The author's final destination is a place where, if we stretch our minds, we can all be reminded that even in the fractured world we live in today, we continue to share the same struggles and should seek to develop new forms of empathy in unexpected spaces.

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