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Donna R. Gabaccia. *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. 192 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-32529-7; $16.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-253-20904-7.

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Under the many surface variations of immigrant women's lives in the United States, Donna Gabaccia has uncovered the patterns of shared experience and common, yet evolving, history. Her study accomplishes the difficult task of examining female immigrants as members of groups and of families while placing them in the larger picture of American gender, immigration, and social history. It recognizes the importance of a woman's cultural, economic, and class origins in determining motives for emigration and the way these factors shaped her life once in America. This work also acknowledges the power of outside forces in immigration history: the capitalist market economy, American immigration policies, international migration patterns. But most importantly, *From the Other Side* succeeds in clarifying the centrality of gender in determining a woman's immigrant experience and in influencing how she shaped an ethnic identity for herself. This focus is its most important feature, distinguishing it from other broad-based studies of immigration in America which, as Gabaccia says, "begin with the experiences of migratory men disguised as genderless humans" (p. xi).

In Part I, Gabaccia identifies changing global economies "on the other side" as sources of gender-specific behavior as well as of emigration to the United States. In subsistence economies under pressure from natural disasters, political centralization, or developing capitalism, families react by sending men and young women out to work for wages while older women maintain the household. Such changes in traditional gender and family patterns, Gabaccia shows, are often important preludes to transnational migration which prepare immigrants to adapt to new surroundings. And while such change may offer both young and older women new opportunities for power and autonomy, she makes clear that family economic considerations are typically primary motivations, no matter what the cultural background of the immigrants. This was especially true of those who came to the United States from subsistence and proto-industrial economies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this time period, women came to America expecting to work, as they had at home, in order to maintain the family life of the other side. In the mid- and latter twentieth century, however, the combination of restrictive immigration laws, a changing labor market, and American assumptions about female behavior have caused female immigrants to enter the United States primarily as dependents and to be viewed as such, often in a negative fashion, by the native-born. As Gabaccia points out, this situation would now seem "ripe for change" (p. 41), as more and more highly skilled women immigrate.

Gabaccia synthesizes the continuities of immigrant women's lives in the second part of her study. She points out the similarities between the lives of labor (Chapter 4) immigrant women led on the other side and in America, both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Then as now, "the combination of paid work with heavy domestic responsibilities has been the norm" (p. 46). She further notes the extent to which certain low-skill labor markets (domestic service, the garment industry, home piece work) and family businesses have remained the most important entry-level work places for immigrant women. In her fifth chapter, she explores the central importance of kinship in immigrant life. While family and kin relationships are understood differently in various cultural groups, common to all was and generally still is a broader understanding of these relationships than in American culture. For women, in particular, kin relationships play a central role that can suffer under the new conditions in America or that can provide a support for adjusting to them.

Ethnic communal relations were another source of support. Immigrant women in the past generally restricted their group-building activities to the realm of kin and neighborhood and, eventually, to ethnic voluntary organizations. The women of the second genera-

tion may have become prominent in labor activism, but those of the first generation did not seek to build communal bonds with the native-born, no matter how much their lives paralleled those of women born on this side. Today as well, "immigrant women's communal lives remain largely invisible" (p. 89). American feminism was and is still particularly foreign to these women, who seek to build new lives in common with rather than separate from their male peers.

The third and final section of the book looks at the changing aspects of immigration history in the twentieth century. By Gabaccia's definition, this century has seen a much higher percentage of middle class immigrants: those with "above-average education, a family income significantly higher than that of their fellow immigrants, professional status, or a long-term career" (p. 95). Such women, Gabaccia claims, had and have more support for autonomy and opportunities for gender equality than native-born women. And whereas in the past they tended to be prominently active only in ethnic enclaves (the exceptions being those who went into the performing arts), they are increasingly joining the ranks of native-born professional women.

Perhaps the most interesting discussion of the book is that of the complex cultural transformations that accompany immigration (Chapter 8). Other scholars have noted immigrant women's roles as cultural conservers and as cultural mediators. And Gabaccia is also not alone in recognizing the importance of women's activities in both preserving ethnic identity and in encouraging their children to "become American"–but without abandoning their ethnicity. The difficulties this dual message poses to the second generation often has been solved by their seeming abandonment of their mothers' worlds. But Gabaccia also notes the unexpectedly high degree of ethnic self-identification among many Euro-American women of the third and subsequent generations. She is able to explain the fact that more women than men so define themselves by tracing the manner in which the preservation of ethnic identity came to be located in the domestic sphere: "The psychological dimensions of domesticity...ultimately explain both immigrant daughters satisfaction with domesticity and the next female generation's continued embrace of the ethnic hyphen" (p. 120-121). Women's work (such as food ways, holiday practices) was often the only concrete link with the ethnic past. And for women of later generations, who are still today more attached to the domestic sphere than their male counterparts, this link is often a means to self-understanding and individual identity.

Gabaccia's study is also noteworthy for its attention to the native-born side of immigration history. American reactions to immigration as these have been expressed through immigration laws and social institutions and policies receive their due. Such concrete expressions of attitudes reveal much about native-born views of immigrant men and women as gendered beings. More subtle is the long-term effect of immigrants on U.S. society and culture as their presence questions established attitudes. In the case of Euro-Americans, a broadening of the definition of "American" to embrace differences of religion and varieties of ethnic holiday practices, for example, has resulted. They are now viewed as family-oriented people with admirable group loyalty. Gabaccia argues convincingly that the women of these ethnic groups have been able to choose their self-identification.

Such ethnic self-selection has not been the case for women (and men) of color. Gabaccia notes throughout her work the parallels between the experiences of immigrant men and women and those of "colonized" native minorities in respect to their marginalization in American economic and social spheres. She traces the similar strategies immigrants and minorities have used to find a place in American society. But finally she concludes that the isolation of African-American culture from "American" has not yet been alleviated, and that this group does not share in the respect Euro-American minorities have gained over time. As Gabaccia points out, the influx of Asian and Latin American immigrants will perhaps be a better test of whether our multi-ethnic society can develop to be truly inclusive of all its members or whether those who look noticeably "different" than the tradition majority will continue to have their ethnic identity imposed upon them.

This is an important and provocative study that should be in every college library. It is one of those rare scholarly books that leaves the reader and the scholar hungry for more. Some readers will regret the briefness of biographical references, for example. But Gabaccia's copious footnotes and her concluding bibliographic essay point the way for satisfying that hunger. Here the reader will find both general and specific resources. And the scholar will find information and inspiration for further work on related topics. Indeed, it may prove to be Gabaccia's most lasting accomplishment if *From the Other Side* stimulates detailed studies of specific groups of female immigrants as well as comparative and cross-disciplinary studies of related topics, and if it encourages immigration scholars to consider gender more systematically.

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