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H-France Review Vol. 14 (August 2014), No. 127

Linda Guerry, *Le genre de l'immigration et de la naturalisation: L'exemple de Marseille (1918-1940)*. Lyon: ENS Editions, 2013. 303 pp. Maps, tables, figures, and bibliography. 26.00€. (pb). ISBN 978-2-84788-342-8. ISSN 1258-1135.

Review by Leslie Page Moch, Michigan State University.

Linda Guerry has tackled the important question of gender and immigration from a fresh and thorough perspective, using a triad of lenses—focusing first on the discourse about male and female newcomers, then on immigrant women in the labor force, and finally on naturalization by application or through marriage. Guerry asks how gender affected not only how immigrants were viewed, but also one's chances for residence and work permits and for citizenship. It is well known that French naturalization law became welcoming in the 1920s, when the need for new workers and their children was felt most keenly; this resulted in the reducing of residency requirements from a decade to three years with legislation passed in 1927. Guerry shows us that this is a small part of the story of gender and immigration, and she does so by investigating not only national trends and discourse, but also by delving into administrative practice and the particular case of Marseille in the crucial interwar period, when a welcoming and labor-hungry France turned xenophobic with the depressed labor market in the 1930s.

Anglophone readers have long been aware of the key role of Marseille in our understanding of immigration to France, from William Sewell Jr.'s *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille* that appeared in 1985 to Mary Dewhurst Lewis's more recent *Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918-1940*.<sup>[1]</sup> Italian historians such as Paola Corti of the University of Turin have also contributed to this literature, since Italians were the leading group of foreign nationals in Marseille.<sup>[2]</sup> Indeed, the French administrator and the Italian state alike were in competition for Italian women—for both their labor potential and their wombs—during the crucial period between the wars under investigation here.

Following a forward by historian Françoise Thébaud an introductory chapter acutely situates the study in the literature dealing with gender and with women immigrants by Anglophone and Francophone scholars, including Donna Gabaccia, Nancy Green, Manuela Martini, Mirjana Morokvasic, Philippe Rygiel, and Joan Scott. Guerry delineates the epistemological problems of discerning gender in qualitative and quantitative sources before revealing some of those she uses, such as requests for naturalization and “call letters” to bring family members to France. The reader is prepared for a study that examines gender and immigration in the light of contemporary thought and today's literature, and is not disappointed by the opening substantive chapter “Penser, représenter et compter l'immigration.”

If there is anyone who doubts that migration is a gendered process, this chapter will provide a conversion experience, for Guerry begins with the national discourse on newcomers from the interwar period, establishing that men and women were perceived as utterly distinct in the eyes of scholars and policymakers; while women were a stabilizing force, men would wander. It was not only Georges Mauco's famous 1932 study *Les étrangers en France* that gave voice to this view. One 1929 inquiry testified that Polish women, with their crooked toes and ankles the color of the earth, looked as if they

had just been pulled from the soil, whereas Polish immigrant men were soldiers in a working army, needing only an army cot and trunk. Because women offered a settling influence, moral, economic, financial, and demographic rationality favored the family migrant: men would stay on, the economy would gain workers, earnings would remain in France, and the metropole would gain new citizens. Family reunification policies that we associate with the period after 1945 found their origin in the early 1920s.

Of course, the possibility of gaining of new citizens from the wombs of settled foreign-born women was a key issue and the demographic concerns of policymakers thread through these pages, along with observations that the Italian fascist state that particularly wanted new citizens, preferring to send out only the men in order to, in Mauco's words, "keep the family as a virtual hostage" (p. 33).<sup>[3]</sup> Desirous of its own citizens, Italy refused in some cases to send the necessary civil status documents that enabled a citizen to marry in France. On the other hand, the state paid the cost of transportation for women to come home to give birth, paid for the birthing expenses, and gave the baby a trousseau. By 1928, Italian restrictions forbade both a father to send for an unmarried daughter and a brother to send for an unmarried sister unless she was without father, mother, brother or sister living in Italy. The logic articulated revealed specific expectations of foreign men and women. Italian women were viewed more positively than Italian men or any men residing outside a familial context—as Gérard Noiriel has written, xenophobic discourse rests on the violence of foreign men. Thus, the views of the inferiority of foreigner's gender relations that are part of recent discourse about Muslims in Western Europe had found voice already in the 1920s.

Guerry organizes the four subsequent chapters with a pair on immigrants in the labor force, then a pair on naturalization; she begins in each case with the scholarship on immigrants in France and follows by reviewing the work on gender before turning to her material on Marseille. As a consequence, this work is thoroughly contextualized in a literature that scholars of France and of immigration will recognize before the reader approaches Marseille. This is appropriate because both Marseille and its history of immigration are remarkable. In many quarters, Marseille had the reputation of being a marginal, crime-ridden port city. It was also cosmopolitan, the "Capital of the Colonies," and a port city with close relationship with the Mediterranean and colonies to the south, concretized by the Colonial Exposition of 1922: this history, Lewis has already informed us, produced an integrated, diverse population.<sup>[4]</sup> Its reputation rose as the French were charmed by Marcel Pagnol's trilogy *Marius*, *Fanny*, and *César* that began to appear in 1929 and became tarnished once again with the assassination of the King of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister on the Canebières in 1934—filmed and in broad daylight. Apart from colonial subjects, the foreign-born in Marseille were Italians, for the most part, then Spaniards, and in the interwar period, Armenian refugees, the balance among them changing as the Italian state restricted emigration and Armenians arrived. This was, more than any other in France, a city and region of immigrants: while the proportion of foreigners in interwar France peaked at 6.6 percent of the total population in 1921, it constituted 18.7 percent in the Bouches-du-Rhône in 1926 (p. 68).

Although each chapter begins with French demographic and political considerations in light of international scholarship, each concludes with the specificities of Marseille's immigrant workers and aspirants to citizenship. It is here that the reader sees the realities of immigrant lives in a particular context—the men, women and children of the rue de l'Amandier in the count of immigrants; authors of "call letters" applying for family reunification under the rules for *familles rejoignantes*; workers in the textile industry; and applicants for naturalization. The specifics of Marseille administrative practice reveal the crucial role of gender in decisions about labor, women of childbearing age, and men eligible for army service. Those applying for family reunification, for example, were often applying to bring a female relative who would provide unpaid labor in the home or family enterprise, like the bar owner who, in April 1927, asked to bring his mother from Turin to help out, attesting that room could be made for her in the three-room apartment he shared with his partner. The marginal place of immigrant

women in the labor force comes through clearly in requests for *cartes d'identité*, where Guerry found recitations of long, marginalized working lives. Rosa B., for example, applied for such a card in 1927 at age forty-six—after nineteen years in France during which she bore three of her five children while working as a day-laborer in homes, restaurants, or laundries, her occupation at the time of her application. It was foreign-born women who responded to the interwar *crise de domestiques* by taking on the work of nannies, nurses, chambermaids and maids-of-all-work as they did elsewhere. Armenian women worked in the garment industry, sewing at home, and in the weaving of rugs. Italian women provided seasonal labor to silk mills. In the case of carpet and silk production, many workers lived in dormitories.

The question of naturalization provides the finale to Gerry's study—both naturalization by application and by marriage, especially crucial in the interwar years. The long-standing concern about population expansion exacerbated by World War I mortality that had made France so welcoming of new citizens was overtaken by growing suspicion of foreigners with the rising numbers of newcomers. As much change as there was in public sentiment and naturalization law, the drumbeat of France's desire for soldiers and more births provided a steady beat. Through applications for naturalization, the reader sees consistent interest in couples who had sons approaching the age of conscription (and were certified to be in good health). One couple was rejected in 1936, for example, because they had not learned French, but also because two of their three sons had passed the age of military conscription. A third of women's applications were rejected by municipal offices between 1932 and 1939; these women were not considered "naturalizable" because they were in most cases single, widows or too old and without sons. In the words of one note: "la postulante est veuve. Elle n'a que des filles. Sa naturalization ne présente aucun intérêt" (p. 233).

Applications for naturalization were officially gender-blind, but applications for naturalization by marriage applied only to women. In 1927, French women had become able to retain their own nationality upon marriage, and foreign-born women could become French automatically upon marriage, but in November 1938, foreign women had to apply for naturalization before marrying and would not be confirmed as nationals until six months after the wedding. The suspicion that engendered this legislation was fed by reports of *marriages blanches*, imposed by scheming foreigners upon innocent Frenchmen. Although these were rare, potential brides were subject to bureaucratic foot-dragging and investigations of their morality and loyalties. In the case of Marseille, those who were denied naturalization were commonly longtime residents in the city who had worked as prostitutes or were convicted of relatively minor crimes of commercial fraud.

One of the virtues of this work is Guerry's capacity to mine local records of ephemeral phenomena, on one hand, and to record the limits of documentation, on the other—the latter a constant handicap to migration scholars. Among those limits here: the falsification of Marseille censuses, the failure to note the sex of the 2900 workers placed by the Service de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère in Marseille in 1925, the discarding of documents such as applications for *cartes d'identité*, the conservation of some documents (in this case, accepted applications for naturalization) and discarding of others (the rejections), and finally, as with every study of migrants who are obligated to make requests: the slippage between immigrant intentions, as recorded on applications for family reunification or naturalization, and the reality of immigrants' plans. Migration is a slippery matter, so Guerry is to be congratulated for such a sensitive and complete investigation of gender and migration, seated in the best of today's scholarship.

## NOTES

[1] Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918-1940* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2007); William H. Sewell, Jr., *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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[2] For Corti's English-language publications, see "Women Were Labour Migrants Too: Tracing Late-Nineteenth-Century Female Migration from Northern Italy to France," in Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 133-159.

[3] Georges Bauco, *Les étrangers en France. Etude géographique sur leur rôle dans l'activité économique* (Paris: Colin, 1932), p. 525.

[4] Yaël Simpson Fletcher, "Capital of the Colonies!: Real and Imagined Boundaries between Metropole and Empire in 1920s Marseilles," in Felix Driver and David Gilbert, eds., *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 136-155; Lewis, *Boundaries of the Republic*.

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ISSN 1553-9172