

Alessandra Ciucci. 2022. *The Voice of the Rural: Music, Poetry, and Masculinity among Migrant Moroccan Men in Umbria*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 228 pp.

Alessandra Ciucci's *The Voice of the Rural* takes readers inside the lifeworld of Moroccan migrant men in Italy's Alta Valle del Tevere region. This captivating, extensive ethnographic study underscores how the rural (*l- 'arubiya*) and the voice of the rural (*sawt l- 'arubiya*) shape a sense of place and space, belonging and identity among migrant Moroccan men in Italy. As an affective place, *l- 'arubiya* is central to migrants' personhood: it is "something that one has inside...it means belonging (*intima*)" (p. 116) and "a site of longing" (p. 120). Ciucci argues that in Italy, where migrant men are shamed, silenced, ignored, and reduced to working bodies, *l- 'arubiya* becomes a privileged medium through which they meaningfully reimagine and reclaim their place, longing, and belonging through music and poetry steeped in the rural. For instance, migrants' transnational imaginations invoke the rural animal world: the "smell of animals" like sheep, goats, donkeys, horses, camels, cows, etc., and "the smell of nature" (p. 116).

Ciucci's book has four main chapters, with the notion of rurality running through all the chapters, consistently demonstrating that migrant Moroccan men's choices and actions are deeply rooted in *l- 'arubiya*. Chapter One discusses the marginalization and silencing of *l- 'arubiya* in colonial and postcolonial Morocco. By looking at the long-lasting effect of colonial writings on the musical traditions associated with rurality, she argues that as colonial historiography magnified the Arab Bedouin stereotype and, consequently, *l- 'arubiya*, the colonial acoustic regime shaped the sonic difference in the history and panorama of Moroccan music. Chapter Two focuses on "*l-harraga* (The Burners), a song about "undocumented migration, clandestine crossing, loss, and death" (p. 62). The author conceives it as a "sonorous travelogue," a site of memory, knowledge, and experiences that conveys the "emotions and state of mind for those who cross" (p. 59), "from the point of view of a migrant" (p. 66). Interestingly, Ciucci argues that the song 'sounds' an alternative experience of the sea, in which the terrifying waves 'speak' to migrants, providing them an alternative vision of the Mediterranean as a horizon of migration, a frontier that is "inevitably shaped by the shore from which one departs, and on the voyage, one chooses or is forced to undertake" (p. 80).

Chapter Three is a historical discussion of how "a collective trauma" (p. 92), rooted in colonial encounters between the Italian population and the French Expeditionary Corps, tremendously shaped the problematic perceptions and images about migrant Moroccans in Italy. It also looks at the "moral map," negotiations, and reiterations of migrant manhood by examining a song by Abdelaziz Stati, a performer admired by Moroccan migrant men in Italy and beyond its borders. The chapter argues that in response to the situations they face in their everyday lives, Moroccan migrant men negotiate and mobilize: "a manhood that allows one to reconstruct oneself as a worthy individual" (p. 103). Chapter Four is a poetic analysis of two commercial recordings, "*L-ghaba*" (The Forest) and "*Hajti fi grini*" (I Long for My Male Companion), to understand how poetry and vernacular language shape migrant men's constructions and articulations of the rural, and how it enables them to "carry a sense of place along their transnational routes and their transnational lives" (p. 121). Ciucci argues that the rural becomes a site of belonging, knowledge, and experiences, a discursive construction, a

transnational imagination of 'home' that enables migrant Moroccan men in Italy to experience wholeness, claim place and agency, and reject exclusion.

This book provides unique insights and could interest diverse audiences, especially those studying everyday encounters and agency in international migrations and how "migrants live in and hear the world" (p. 12). As a historian, I strongly recommend this book to fellow historians interested in innovative methodological approaches and frameworks that enable them to 'see' and 'think' beyond the borders of conventional archives. This book can be a useful pedagogical tool for teachers in migrations and research methods. Ciucci's translations and transliterations are phenomenal, making the extensive ethnographic accounts remarkably accessible to non-experts (linguistically and historically). Her work powerfully underscores the importance of *l- 'arubiya* and the centrality of local knowledge and theorizations embedded in "local ways of knowing through sound" (p. 4). Through 'guided listening' or collaborative fieldwork approaches, Ciucci accessed and understood Moroccan migrant men's theorizations, their knowledge of crossing frontiers like the Mediterranean Sea, and how they navigate daily life in Umbria.

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