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Polish Migration to the UK in the 'New' European Union – After 2004.

KATHY BURRELL (Ed), 2009

Farnham, Ashgate

241 pp., £60 hardback

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Academic interest in Polish migration has flourished over the past five years in the context of a new wave of Polish migrants to the UK since Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. This interdisciplinary collection of works effectively stands alone as a resource on contemporary Polish migration research. Going beyond macro demographic trends, the authors offer in-depth analysis of empirical studies on a range of salient topics from economic impacts (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk), discourses of gender and masculinities (Siara, Datta) to cultural discourse in post-communist cinema (Mazierska). Kathy Burrell introduces the volume with a historical overview of Polish emigration showing comprehensively that while this is not a 'new' phenomenon, it is in many ways significant. Casting 2004 as a 'watershed moment in history' Burrell traces the growth in migration flows to the UK from Poland since 2004 and discusses the increased visibility of Poles in the press and in local landscapes as well as the academic trajectories on theories of new migration (p.6). Indeed, a key strength of this collection is its attempt to showcase emerging academic work on Polish migration from young, migrant scholars working in the Academy.

The book is separated into two sections – part one relates to the contexts, strategies and discourses of emigration, part two presents the localised, everyday experiences of immigration and settlement in the UK. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are written from the Polish perspective with case-study research on particular rural towns and villages and the impact of migration on these 'home' locations. Elrick and Brinkmeier discuss the changing migratory patterns in two rural areas, tracing the distinct 'histories of migration' of each locality and the role of intermediary agents in shaping migration to the UK (p.50). Following this, Anne White explores family migration from small-town Poland based on empirical work with Polish women. Implicit in this discussion are the gendered aspects of decision-making and family strategies for making livelihoods through migration, the non-economic motives for migration and the centrality of children in such decisions. Part one continues with two chapters related to discourses of migration, in online form and through cinematic representation. Galasińska and Kozłowska focus on the discursive strategies adopted by Polish migrants in the UK as represented in interviews and internet forums, suggesting that the discourse of a 'normal life' is frequently present in narratives of migrant experience. Mazierska interrogates the cultural discourses of migration as represented through Polish cinema. She explores motifs of family and country, economic gain, personal freedom in Polish cinema during the communist era and discusses the persistent negative portrayals of emigrants as vulnerable, precarious and miserable throughout this period, ending with a plea to find a more diverse range of cinematic 'voices' on migration.

Part two showcases a number of recent studies on the experiences of immigration and settlement in particular *places* beginning with Maruška Svašek's discussion of the intersections of emotion, migration and representation in her chapter on Polish migrant experience and the politics of display in Northern Ireland. London is the focus of Chapter 7 and 9, with Ryan, Sales and Tilki's exploration of Polish migration to London using a social networks perspective and Ayona Datta's investigation of Polish masculinities on a London building site. Datta convincingly analyses the ways in which Polish male builders construct masculinities through social interaction with white working-class English males. She recognises the intersections of class, race, nationality and ethnicity in the production of masculinities and stresses the importance of socio-historical context. The chapter is highly contextualised with history, narrative and images collected during an empirical study and stands out as the most substantial chapter devoted to gender issues in the volume.

Gender is also an explicit focus on gender of Chapter 8 which examines discourses of gender and ethnicity in cyberspace. A feminist perspective underpins an analysis of internet forum discussions among Polish men and women interrogating the ways in which gender is negotiated and re-configured through migration and engagement with a new 'multicultural environment' (p.167). Siara asserts that in Polish culture patriarchy 'continues to shape popular perception regarding sexuality' and that both its reproduction and contestation are expressed through internet fora (p.169). She argues that the construction of discourses on gender and ethnicity in cyberspace are complex, with a discourse on patriarchy offset by discourses of gender equality and rights by both women and men. The book concludes with a final chapter on consumption and migration in which Burrell and Rabikowska discuss the material worlds of Polish shops, food and homes in London and the Midlands, demonstrating the increasing importance of materiality as a worthy topic of study in cultural geography.

Overall, the collection is a good starting point for those interested in the range of academic research on Polish migration in the 'new' Europe, and represents much of the work done, by new and established academics, to date in this relatively young field. As editor, Burrell ensures the historical routes of Polish migration to the UK are given due attention and as such each contribution is grounded in this context well. However, while a range of interdisciplinary work is presented in the collection, gaps remain. There is a distinct lack of policy related research or a review of policy on Polish migration, which may have contributed a different angle to understanding Polish migration in the context of the British state. Furthermore, as Burrell herself points out in the conclusion, future work on Polish migration could focus more specifically in areas of sexuality and migration, the role of faith in migration, and return migration. In light of this, a second edition will be welcomed to fill this lacuna and provide more depth in understanding of the changing nature of Polish migration to the UK in the context of economic downturn and the recent assaults on immigration and multiculturalism in Britain.