

Empire's Mobius Strip

Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention

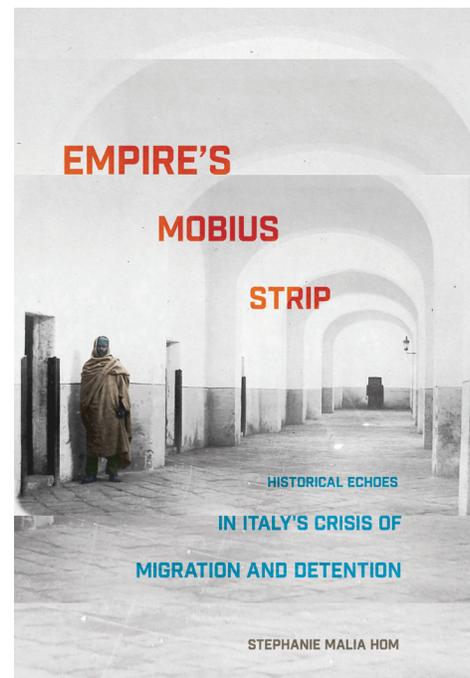
STEPHANIE MALIA HOM

\$24.95 | 296 PAGES | PAPERBACK

Italy's current crisis of Mediterranean migration and detention has its roots in early twentieth century imperial ambitions. *Empire's Mobius Strip* investigates how mobile populations were perceived to be major threats to Italian colonization, and how the state's historical mechanisms of control have resurfaced, with greater force, in today's refugee crisis.

What is at stake in *Empire's Mobius Strip* is a deeper understanding of the forces driving those who move by choice and those who are moved. Stephanie Malia Hom focuses on Libya, considered Italy's most valuable colony, both politically and economically. Often perceived as the least of the great powers, Italian imperialism has been framed as something of "colonialism lite." But Italian colonizers carried out genocide between 1929–33, targeting nomadic Bedouin and marching almost 100,000 of them across the desert, incarcerating them in camps where more than half who entered died, simply because the Italians considered their way of life suspect. There are uncanny echoes with the situation of the Roma and migrants today. Hom explores three sites, in novella-like essays, where Italy's colonial past touches down in the present: the island, the camp, and the village.

STEPHANIE MALIA HOM is Executive Director of the Acus Foundation. She is author of *The Beautiful Country* and tweets @empire-strip.



"A lyrical and important work that moves between the realms of reportage, historical analysis, and political reflection to illuminate the ongoing crisis of migration in Italy. In both form and content, the text is a hybrid: elegant in its simplicity and brilliant in its execution."—Pamela Ballinger, *University of Michigan*, author of *History in Exile*

"Exploring the historical and contemporary treatment of undesirables by Italian authorities, Stephanie Malia Hom unearths the imperial formations buried beneath the rhetoric of the modern nation state. Her study of forced migration in the contemporary Mediterranean is perfectly timed and destined to become a classic of the transnational turn in Italian Studies."—Claudio Fogu, *University of California Santa Barbara*, author of *The Historic Imaginary*

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