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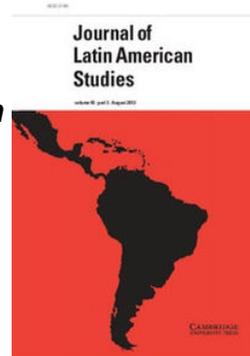
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Merike Blofield, *Care Work and Class: Domestic Workers' Struggle for Equal Rights in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012), pp. x+185, \ \$64.95, \ \$29.95 pb; £47.03, £27.50 pb.

KATHERINE EVA MAICH

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The articles Carter has painstakingly developed with each of them represent well their key arguments. It is a pity the book was not simultaneously published in English; hopefully an updated edition will soon be produced and published for these readers, as they are the ones who most need to understand that the protagonists of any real fight for social justice must be those most affected by the exploitative systems they seek to transform.

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Merike Blofield, *Care Work and Class: Domestic Workers' Struggle for Equal Rights in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012), pp. x + 185, \$64.95, \$29.95 pb; £47.03, £27.50 pb.

In a region as unequal as Latin America, domestic work is hardly a new phenomenon. In fact, the central, ubiquitous practice of domestic work has shaped the nature of how class has developed within the region from colonial relations to contemporary politics. The largest source of employment for women in Latin America, domestic work as both a daily, lived-out practice and a legislative rights battle is the foundation for *Care Work and Class: Domestic Workers' Struggle for Equal Rights in Latin America*.

Merike Blofield provides unique, comprehensive insight on this historical aspect of Latin American culture, examining how domestic workers and their organisations have overcome challenges to mobilise for labour reform by capitalising on strategic alliances, legislative allies and political windows of opportunity within varying political contexts. While military regimes have transitioned into democratic governments within the last two to three decades, these shifts have not always signalled immediate equal rights equally among disadvantaged groups. Blofield argues that this new, regional democratic stronghold (with the exception of Cuba) allowed instead for formal challenges to discrimination along racial, ethnic, gendered and classed lines. Women's organisations, labour unions and human rights groups thus could openly contest discrimination, resulting in significant legislative changes with an eye to equality over the last 20 to 30 years. However, legal reforms for domestic workers, a populous group of historically marginalised women, have lagged considerably. This injustice applies categorically to an assemblage of workers that suffers not only from outright discrimination and a lack of formal rights, but also from a lack of enforcement methods for those hard-to-come-by legally guaranteed benefits.

Blofield's book is strongest when focusing upon the intricate details of legislative struggles within her four case studies of Bolivia, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Chile. She finds different framing tactics were successful in Bolivia and Costa Rica based upon either the internal social movements or the external reputations of each country – Bolivia utilised indigenous rights, while Costa Rica's movement favoured a human rights frame. The poorest country in Latin America and the only one with an indigenous majority, highly unequal Bolivia was the first country to enact domestic worker legislation. Developed, wealthy and democratically stable Costa Rica eventually pushed through legislation to a unanimous vote, thanks to Acosta's effective leadership.

Uruguay and Chile represent two much more similar countries with varying outcomes regarding domestic worker rights. Rather than utilising a specific labour

code like other Latin American countries, Uruguay enjoys a series of laws that govern the rights of workers in both particular and more general sectors of the economy, and Uruguayan reforms since 2005 have been progressive, strong and comprehensive, as demonstrated in the final bill for domestic workers. Chilean left-wing politicians have worked to create piecemeal reforms for domestic workers, though working hours still remain an untouched and problematic issue, signifying Chile's 'top-down incrementalism' as juxtaposed to Uruguay's 'basic universalism' frameworks of political mobilisation.

Blofield also shines in a thoughtful analysis of the complicated way that the industry of domestic work exemplifies the intersectionality of class, race and gender in contemporary Latin American society. Studies and popular misconceptions have long equated higher representation of women in governmental positions of power with an outcome of feminist legislation or at least nods toward a generalised notion of women's concerns, yet Blofield describes how more women holding legislative or executive power does not necessarily translate to more rights for domestic workers – though it does bring elite resistance into the spotlight of an entire chapter. Blofield delves into the nuances of feminist politics and the inability of domestic worker reform to transcend class divisions, as it is infinitely easier for women to rally behind reproductive rights or efforts to end violence against women in the name of a general feminism, regardless of race or class. And yet when these women come home from a long day of arguing, rewriting bills and vying for signatures and votes, their own domestic worker most likely has dinner waiting in a clean home with contented children and a male partner, and is mysteriously absent from the conversation about reproductive labour duties and the gender division of labour within the home. Herein lies the exceptional nature of domestic work – it is exceptional in its status as unregulated or under-regulated, yet its existence is crucial to the functioning of daily life in the home, day in and day out.

Unfortunately, *Care Work and Class* jumps from a few intimate worker testimonies and relevant source material to coverage of broad-scale political reforms, and we are left spinning. Blofield does not elaborate on her methodology or how she in fact accessed these workers and other actors within the narrative positioned alongside the larger political story. Additionally, care work, intimate labour and affective ties within the home have many dimensions which construct a central component of domestic service that the book does not focus on, and therefore the title remains a bit perplexing. Blofield's data (which are not easy to access) are gathered consistently and copiously in comprehensive charts that detail dynamic, cross-country legislative moments, deeming *Care Work and Class* worthy of making a strong contribution to the disciplines of political science, Latin American studies, women's studies, sociology and labour studies; however, there is so much information floating around about ten to 17 countries that a more systematised approach to taking on particular legislative rights battles – a minimum wage, for instance, or one of the toughest struggles, the limits to the working day – would be welcome.

With an eye to organising around the International Labour Organisation's Convention 189 on domestic work, Blofield describes the next step in moving toward region-wide ratification across Latin America. However, with regard to the influence and interventions of the international community, Blofield fails to give enough attention to effects of the internal armed conflicts that drew bloodshed for decades across multiple Latin American countries. The dynamics of the internal armed conflicts in relation to these governments that either stilted or opened up new political

possibilities for social change would have added needed depth to our contextual understanding of the varying political situations across the region.

This important contribution highlights the way that grassroots organisations and marginalised populations can mobilise against obstacles to create legislative change as one initiative in the broader struggle toward equality in a highly unequal region of the world. Blofield has created an impressive and comprehensive addition to our understanding of the politics behind recognition, legislative struggles of marginalised workers and contemporary inequality and class in Latin America, when fought for in the legislature, lived out on the street and fully realised in the home.

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Karen Ann Faulk, *In the Wake of Neoliberalism: Citizenship and Human Rights in Argentina* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. xvi + 220, £21.50; €27.00, pb.

Karen Ann Faulk has written an important book about human rights and citizen participation at a critical juncture in contemporary Argentina. The study ably weaves together two fascinating and important stories about social activism. One is that of Memoria Activa, a movement formed in the aftermath of the 1994 bombing of a Jewish cultural centre, the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association, AMIA) building, in Buenos Aires. The attack left 86 dead and scores of people injured. The other is that of Cooperativa Bauen, a pioneering experiment in worker-run enterprises in the post-2001 economic crisis. It was formed by employees of a bankrupt, once-prominent hotel in downtown Buenos Aires. After a decade, the Cooperativa has become a beacon of success for similar initiatives. Drawing on a wealth of data, Faulk authoritatively chronicles the history of both movements. Her narrative is packed with original information and perceptive observations. Her argument is that both movements represent the reinvigoration of social rights at a time when the Kirchner administration was pushing for the roll-back of neoconservative policies.

The two cases are analysed in the context of the historical clash between solidarity and exclusion, equality and exploitation, rights and persecution, in Argentina. Although they have existed in tension throughout the country's turbulent political history, these currents tragically clashed during the last military dictatorship in the 1970s. Although the military regime systematically violated individual and collective rights, it didn't completely stamp out demands for rights. State terror inevitably meets resistance. The Madres de Plaza de Mayo notably carried the flags of truth and justice during the harshest years of the regime. Their discourse and street actions influenced myriad forms of social activism in the post-dictatorship period. From protests against trigger-happy police to mobilisation demanding government and business accountability in the aftermath of fires and accidents that left dozens dead, mobilised citizens embraced the discourse of rights.

Faulk's choice of cases for comparative analysis is interesting. Her justification is that both movements are primarily concerned with collective well-being. They represent values that go beyond liberal individual rights. She is correct in this point – undoubtedly, Memoria Activa follows the trail blazed by the Madres and other human rights organisations. It is inscribed in the politics of memory and justice