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Book Review: Migration, Domestic Work and Affect: a Decolonial Approach on Value and the Feminization of Labor

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***Migration, domestic work and affect: a decolonial approach on value and the feminization of labor.* 2010. Encarnacion Gutierrez-Rodriguez, ed. New York: Routledge, 234 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-99473-6, \$81.13**

Reviewed by Ronnie Mmotlane¹

The book in question in this review is entitled '*Migration, domestic work and affect: a decolonial approach on value and the feminization of labor*' by Encarnacion Gutierrez-Rodriguez (2010). In this book Gutierrez-Rodriguez concludes that domestic work involves affect, and that it is not just the business of cleaning and arranging the household. With this powerful exit on the deliberation of the politics of household work and the colonialities of power in 21st century Europe, Gutierrez-Rodriguez reminds us of the challenges faced by migrant workers from the postcolonial Latin Americas, the Caribbean and Africa. While aware of the challenges facing these workers today, Gutierrez-Rodriguez goes further to illustrate the history and politics of migration programmes in the present European Union countries.

What is most interesting about Gutierrez-Rodriguez's illustration in this book is that she takes different angles to explain to us the importance of affect in labour; combining philosophical, sociological approaches and her own personal experiences of life as Latin American descendant living in Germany, she makes us aware of the hardships involved in living in Europe. She makes the reader aware of the paradoxes that exist regarding residence in the European Union (EU); 'while the demand for domestic and care workers in the EU is increasing due to the growing incorporation of women into the labour market among other reasons, the possibility of entry and settlement for non-EU citizens has been restricted' Gutierrez-Rodriguez uses the case study approach to look into the depths of the feelings regarding this situation for domestic care workers in Europe. Using their own words as testimonies of their daily injustices, she uncovers the less communicated concerns that domestic workers have about the relationships with their employers, the conditions of their employment and the situation concerning their migration permits.

As Gutierrez-Rodriguez shows 'how the "social fabric" of domestic work is shaped by affection', in the heart of her argument we learn that 'affects are not just movements of deterritorialization, flows and circuits rooted in material conditions, but that they evolve within the dynamics and in the ambivalent movements emerging outside those material conditions'. To explain and justify her argument, Gutierrez-Rodriguez uses some of her respondents' expressions in her case studies; she begins by illustrating the paradox of Veronica's feelings about her role as a domestic worker in Germany. Veronica is a domestic worker of Latin American descent living in Germany. Here we note the paradox of her situation as an economist by profession who came to Germany in 2005 to further her studies, but is now forced to work as a domestic worker because she failed to secure her 3 month tourist visa. From Veronica's situation in Germany, Gutierrez-Rodriguez uncovers the politics of (1) migration, (2) domestic work and (3) affect; adding her own personal experiences she skilfully narrates the difficulties faced by foreign domestic workers.

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Gutierrez-Rodriguez first introduces the politics of working as a foreign domestic worker in EU countries by deliberating on the politics of wages for housework in these countries. She argues that not much has changed since the feminist movement's campaign for wages for house work in the 1970s. Gathering data from middle-class women in Spanish, German, Austrian and British urban households, she has found that gender divisions in labour still existed in these countries. But she has noticed the change in this tradition on tendencies for other households to employ another woman to do the housework. Gutierrez-Rodriguez introduced the politics of migration by investigating policy facilitating immigration in EU countries. She has noticed that although the demand of domestic and care work was on the increase, that the model of housewife was falling in the EU region recently and that this need for this job was met providently by the female "undocumented migrant", policy on immigration was too restrictive for non-EU citizens. In this case, the desperate need to have "another woman" do chores for domestic work meets the desperate need for foreign nationals to secure jobs while negotiating their stay within the EU and at the same time dealing restrictive migration policies for non-EU citizens persist.

In the second chapter Gutierrez-Rodriguez takes a philosophical approach on the issues of colonialism, migration policies in post-colonial EU. In her own words she states that the chapter 'engages politics of translation on four levels'; that is (1) exploring the epistemic foundations of the politics of translation (i.e. power of colonial difference and double translations), (2) translation process between researcher and participants regarding experience of migration and becoming woman, (3) possibility of decolonizing migration studies by pursuing the feminist, postcolonial and decolonial methodologies, and (4) discussion on the production of knowledge and its conditions. She further elaborates on the encounters within the transcultural spaces occupied by distinct cultures. Although domestic work forms the core part of the space of agreement between these cultures, the transcultural affects widen; the author's notions of transcultural translations involves difficulties of Latin American women in terms of racism and discrimination present in postcolonial EU.

Through Velma's attestation Gutierrez-Rodriguez illustrates on the issues of coloniality of labour, a subject which raises questions and difficulties of everyday racism and discrimination present in the German labour market for "undocumented" foreign nationals. Like Veronica, Velma is a Latin American female migrant worker who immigrated to Germany in the hope fulfilling what her native country in South America could not offer. Gutierrez-Rodriguez continues to show how and why a Latin American Diaspora to EU countries is met with harsher challenges for immigrants. For example, through Velma and some of her participants' stories she argues on how the European migration regimes (politics and policies) continue to remain "unwelcome" banners for non-EU citizens and shows how domestic work as a profession is more of an 'irregular' labour as it is not protected by existing trade unions.

In chapter 3 she particularly argues that there is a relation, though at a distance, between the State and private household concerning domestic labour which was previously unconsidered 'professional work'. For example, she argues that when the 'undocumented migrant worker' is employed by the private household, she is continually affected by migration policies which are regulated by the State. Here she uses a case of Erika, a German employer who is also her interviewee, to exemplify the situation in

German households. She notes that, like most of her female employer interviewees, Erika's story emphasises three rigid divisions of work within the household: the cleaning and sorting out of the house, maintaining her relationship with her husband and taking care of the children. Applying Michel Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', Gutierrez-Rodriguez justifies how power becomes located within private households. She shows that the state's powers shifts through national policies to private practice; or how 'while the state strictly controls the borders of migrant workers while the demand for their services is increasingly growing in EU private households'. Gutierrez-Rodriguez further shows how different EU countries regulate domestic work; here she compares Britain, Germany, Spain and Austria.

Chapter 4 illustrates on biopolitics and value concerning labour and its feminisation; quoting Karl Marx, she argues that the position of domestic work is considered "simple labour" in terms of skills required. With this Gutierrez-Rodriguez leads us to the realization that the value of domestic has never been completely analysed by governing political economies. She further divulges on the unrecognised value of domestic work as lacking the credentials of producing commodities; she shows a further devaluation as concerning the reproductive character of domestic work than its cultural codification by arguing that 'if labour produced by the worker is socially characterised as unskilled labour its value character is socially considered inferior'. On arguing on the feminization of labour, Gutierrez-Rodriguez points to the importance of 'domestic work in the production and reproduction of society', criticizing Marx's analysis of labour reproduction as having silenced the costs of reproduction of the housewife or domestic worker.

Gutierrez-Rodriguez's feminist criticism of Marxist claims on reproduction of labour leads her to analyse the role of biopolitics in labour. Defined as the intertwining of 'life and power' in Michel Foucault's work, Gutierrez-Rodriguez shifts this concept to suit Antonio Negri's hypothesis of the 'living labour', where 'life is seen as a crucial aspect in the accumulation of capital'. Through biopolitics Gutierrez-Rodriguez highlights the importance of "work or labour" in life; she argues that 'the accumulation of capital does not end at the front gates of the factory but glides into all spheres of life' and that the quality of labour is also linked to these spheres of life and its productive power relations'. This she shows by making reference to the Madrid feminist collective '*Precarias a la Deriva*' which 'argues for a broader understanding of women's work as symptomatic of the new quality of labour'.

From the fifth chapter towards the end, Gutierrez-Rodriguez transverses from the politics of power and "Difference" to issues involving value and rights in decolonised EU. The author situates the issue of power between domestic workers their employers and expresses their relationships as being represented by symbolic power- a kind of power Bourdieu recognises as 'the power negotiated on the symbolic level' whose main vehicle is language. For example, when explaining this in the subsection entitled 'Embodied Differences and Symbolic violence' Gutierrez-Rodriguez reminds us of the differences in the power relations between the domestic worker and the employer. She argues that since the communication between domestic workers and their employers is mediated through power relations within the household, the utterance of the domestic worker addressing her employer will not have the same effect as when the employer is addressing the domestic worker. Here Gutierrez-Rodriguez concludes the chapter by

showing ways in which dehumanization portrayed in migration policies of many European and American countries can be resisted. Using Gloria Anzaldúa's analysis of Borderlands in North America between the United States and Mexico, she shows that by applying 'strategies of resistance through living and juggling with the border's constraints', 'rigid boundaries, unshakable norms and cemented ideological barriers can be destabilized'.

The last two chapters deal with the question of affect; first we are introduced to affective value as Gutierrez-Rodriguez link the relationship between domestic work and value. She argues 'that domestic work holds the emotions and feelings of its labour force and connects them to other "energies" and sensations in the household'. According to her 'it reveals the affective dimension of labour by connecting its value production to the circulation of feelings and emotions'. Throughout the chapter she discusses the psychology and philosophy of affect and its connection to domestic work.

Much like other research completed in the subject of migration and domestic work in the EU (e.g. Gallotti, 2009; Lutz, 2008; Kofman, Phizacklea, Raghuram & Sales, 2000), this text insists on describing the relations between gender roles and work with a special emphasis on migrant workers leaving their homelands for a better 'paying' jobs in Europe. Like most researchers on the subject of domestic work and migration, Gutierrez-Rodriguez, through her empirical findings and field experiences with subjects of her research, gives a 'personal' picture of migrant workers in Europe. Gutierrez-Rodriguez's decolonial approach helps in understanding the position of 'undocumented workers' in EU. However, her feminist picture (1) barely described the demographic scale of migrant domestic workers in the EU, (2) ignores the value inter-European migration and its impact on the domestic work as 'work' in the EU, and (3) gives little comparative picture between feminization of labour and 'the male migrant work' in the EU. For example, the Italian national social security institute (INPS) has provided a gleeful picture on the scale of migrant domestic work and highlighted that the number of male migrants is almost two thirds of employed migrants. Lutz (2008) highlights the trends of migrant workers moving from Eastern Europe to Western, Southern and Northern Europe and from South to North. Although Gutierrez-Rodriguez has given a full view of the historical migration trends in some of the EU countries such as Spain, Portugal and Germany, she has only traced the colonial movements of Latin Americans to Europe and has omitted the analysis of the demographic composition of those migrants in these countries.

In general, one can conclude that Gutierrez-Rodriguez book acts as a constant reminder of the injustices most foreign women domestic and care workers face in Europe. Although she has only focused her efforts on describing the these injustices for people coming from Latin American and Caribbean countries- as is evident of her decolonial approach to the feminization of labour, her thoughts in this book can be generalised and understood on the for other migrant workers outside the EU. Domestic work is a 'neglected labour' globally. I therefore recommend this book for everyone interested in investigating issues of domestic work, its affect and issues of migration and labour anywhere around the world. Most notable, sociologists and other social scientists can learn from taking her perspectives in these issues.

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