

Book Reviews

AGUILAR, Paula, 2014, *El hogar como problema y como solución: una mirada genealógica de la domesticidad a través de las políticas sociales. Argentina 1890-1940*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones del Centro Cultural de la Cooperación Floreal Gorini. 312 pp.

The appearance of *El hogar como problema y como solución: una mirada genealógica de la domesticidad a través de las políticas sociales. Argentina 1890-1940*, by Paula Aguilar marks a promising beginning for the Historia del Presente collection launched by the publications department of the Centro Cultural de la Cooperación Floreal Gorini. This book is the product of a lengthy research project carried out by the author for her doctorate in Social Sciences at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. Aguilar has considerable experience as a researcher and university professor. Her main areas of specialization are social policies, qualitative research methodology, sociological theory, and gender studies.

In this book, Aguilar's principal objective is to analyze the various ways that the notion of home and the problematics of the domestic were forged during the period studied through the intervention of diverse discourses and practices. Thus, the activities of reformers, philanthropists, experts, and government functionaries were fundamental for the slow demarcation of the domestic as a specific sphere. The author's work, therefore, included the review of a wide variety of documents, from the first surveys carried out by the National Department of Work to parliamentary debates, in order to analyze the discourses that led to the emergence of "the domestic" as a privileged sphere between 1840 and 1940. According to her findings, the domestic appears to be the result of a set of practices and discourses that are associated with certain moral values, activities, and spaces of the domestic as a place of tension between the spheres of the market and the public.

The primary contributions of Aguilar's incisive archival research are to point out the emergence of debates about the dangers of "the social question" starting in 1890, as a point of departure for numerous concerns on the part of a variety of actors and institutions interested in responding to issues related to the working class and, especially, their living conditions. The author's hypothesis is that the home begins to appear in public policy debates as part of a desire to safeguard the social order: a well-ordered home, in the discourses of reformers at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, was the other face of a stable society. In this way, the home at once became both an object of analysis and a space for intervention by public policies that sought to regulate it.

The home as a space to be governed emerged through various mechanisms of demarcation that are presented by Aguilar as being organized around four major themes. First, the home began to appear as a space that should be separate from the world of the workplace. The woman, who is charged with maintaining it as a space separate from work, should maintain order in the home as a guarantee of order in the family. Thus, a woman who left her home to work in a factory or even a woman who did paid domestic work had abandoned what should be her primary function. Second, Aguilar analyzes the discourses that refer to the home as housing, illustrating the peculiarities of the debates about the conditions and character of the living spaces of workers. The chapter that focuses on this issue tracks the various arguments about the effects of urbanization and how it would affect popular sector housing. Thirdly, and again taking up some of the issues discussed previously, Aguilar analyzes the debates about how a housing unit could effectively be transformed into a home, improving the conditions of its inhabitants. To this end, she concentrates on how Argentina processed different traditions related to domestic economy, a discipline charged with providing the guidelines necessary for good household management. Finally, during these years, the home appeared as an object of analysis by the state itself; through the construction of a complex institutional network, the state concentrated on using different types of statistical analysis to analyze the conditions of working class homes with the objective of collecting precise information that would make efficient forms of intervention possible.

Aguilar's study provides very solid documentation from a variety of archives. The analysis is very detailed and all affirmations are backed up by various references. It is relevant for two reasons in particular. On the one hand, in thematic terms, Aguilar provides a new view on various areas of study at the same time. Most importantly, without doubt, her analysis of the emergence of domestic space offers new perspectives for rethinking the now classic debate about the transformations that took place as a result of the development of Peronism in Argentina. At the same time, it synthesizes aspects related to the theming of the "social question" and its possible solutions in that country. More generally, this is

a contribution that provides insights into fields as diverse as economic and social history, studies of material culture, and gender analyses. On the other hand, this is a book whose methodology should not only not go unnoticed but ought to be considered as one of its major achievements. Aguilar includes some elements of the Foucault tradition but uses them as methodological motors in an empirical analysis that makes the study a unique work of its type and, at the same time, very difficult to classify. The problematization of the notion of the home associated with the domestic, the guiding principle of this work, is resolved through the use of a combination of archaeology and genealogy, the final results of which are presented in the conclusions of the book where the principal reflections are organized and reinforced. The book stands out for its solid argumentation and detailed archival research, which is an expression of thoughtful methodological reflection and an analysis of documents that ranks alongside the work of the best historians focusing on this period of history.

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