Rachel Humphris (2019), *Home-Land: Romanian Roma, Domestic Spaces and the State*, Bristol: Bristol University Press, £80.00, pp. 256, hbk.
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Rachel Humphris has produced an important book that cuts across and brings together a range of critical issues for a social policy audience. It illuminates and advances debates about the changing form and role of the state, the pressures on, and practices of, front line workers, the sifting and sorting of migrant and minority groups, and their routes to citizenship and welfare.

*Home-Land* is founded on ethnographic work with 'Romanian Roma' families in Luton: Humphris lived with a number of families and was party to many of their encounters with 'front line' state workers. She is careful to point out that the idea of 'Romanian Roma' is a category developed and deployed among state workers (and not one that the mothers with whom she lived would use as a self-identification). The book begins from the over-riding concern for child welfare that drives the encounters between these women (and their families) and the state. The home emerges as the focal point of these encounters: it is convenient (Romanian Roma are believed to be poor attenders at bureaucratic appointments), it enables a focus on children's well-being and development and it provides a setting in which women front line workers may construct relationships with the mothers. This practice of home visiting builds on a long history of social welfare interventions (back to the Charity Organisation Society in 1860s London) and provides a scene in which identity, worth and deservingness can be negotiated and assessed.

However, Humphris is clear that this is no simple continuation of home visiting as a welfare practice; rather she foregrounds the changing state structures and welfare policies that make it central to the governance of marginalised groups: producing what she intriguingly calls 'governance through uncertainty' (4). The complex and shifting rules that determine nationality and citizenship make encounters between state workers and migrants highly charged at the point when the state is being thinned out and many of its welfare tasks are devolved to non-governmental organisations. Front-line workers are thus ambiguously located and have been given a growing array of responsibilities while resources to support them shrink. As a result, the women (and they are usually women, and often women from minority or migrant backgrounds) who form this front line find themselves stretched thin and frequently supplement their paid work with unpaid labour – because they believe that children should be supported, especially where their mothers are deemed to be 'deserving'.

It is in these 'intimate state encounters' between mothers and front line workers that these families are sifted and judged: some being supported, helped to access welfare of sorts or even official recognition as citizens, while others are excluded. This is the critical site of discretion, exercised through workers' judgements that are shaped by clusters of norms and values, personal trajectories, experiences (including as mothers) and expectations about 'Romanian Roma'. The home thus becomes the space through which the apparently formal and public criteria of citizenship are negotiated: mothers try to perform home-making in appropriate ways; try to construct relationships with the workers (or the volunteers who supplement the workers, while carrying their own ethical/moral judgements); and seek to distinguish themselves as 'good mothers'. In this analysis she draws productively on Andrea Muehlebach's work on the 'moral neoliberal' (2012).

Humphris's book is rich in powerful – and harrowing – accounts of these intimate state encounters and their consequences. Her analysis sees both workers and mothers exercising agency while understanding how they are constrained and shaped by their different structural locations. Anyone interested in front line workers or 'street level bureaucrats' should read this:

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it is a model of how to think about how such positions are inhabited and practised. Humphris is also compelling about how these individual workers and volunteers come to be the 'faces of the state' for the mothers: not just an abstract institution but embodied in particular individuals and their practices. As she puts it: 'these intimate state encounters are both forms of hyper-surveillance and spaces of constrained opportunities to gain informal support' (195). Critically, she makes visible the ambivalent and contradictory feelings about the state that animate these encounters: both workers and mothers have desires (to help, to be helped, to be recognised as 'good citizens' and 'caring people'), yet the encounters are overshadowed by fears and anxieties (about the possibility of failure and loss, especially the loss of children).

It is striking how much discretionary space is available to workers and volunteers – affecting decisions about children's status (the threat of children being taken into care hangs heavy over these encounters); access to other forms of support (from state services to charity); and support in negotiating their official status (applying for national insurance numbers; indefinite leave to remain and so on). Here Humphris makes important contributions to the study of citizenship. She highlights the strange, and unsettling, mingling of established categories – these citizenship decisions emerge at the intersection of public and private, formal and informal, political and personal realms, where citizenship is usually treated as lying on the formal, public and political side of those distinctions. Equally important is her insistence that the analysis of the state and citizenship needs to move from an emphasis on 'state acts' to 'state encounters', highlighting the processual and relational quality of how states are made in practice. She argues that 'the perspective of encounters makes the situated positions of *all* social actors visible without privileging one side. In essence, encounters bring relational struggles into focus' (193).

This is a remarkable book: grounded in rich fieldwork with mothers, workers and volunteers, it illuminates many critical debates at the heart of social policy, state analysis and citizenship studies. It speaks powerfully to the contemporary state of Britain and to the state in contemporary Britain (as we reorder our relationships with the rest of the world again).

## Reference

Muehlebach, A. (2012), *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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Sam Friedman and Daniel Lauriston (2020), *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged*, Bristol: Policy Press, £9.99, pp. 224, pbk.
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In his plenary address at the 2019 Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association, Professor Satnam Virdee concluded that the current phase of neo-liberalism was bringing about a 'recycling of the same old crap: racism, sexism and classism.' Anybody wanting to find out how this recycling plays itself out, particularly on the latter, could do no better than study this fine and readable book by Sam Friedman and Daniel Lauriston, which shows clearly how class privilege is reproduced in the current labour market.

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