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Ondina E. González, Bianca Premo, eds. *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007. 270 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8263-3441-1.

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Children and Colonialism in the Iberian Empire

In an influential 2001 essay, Ann Laura Stoler described how studies of empire have increasingly attended to the "intimate domains" of "sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and childrearing." Both before and after that essay, a veritable explosion of historical scholarship has explored the intersection of gender and sexuality with imperial power and colonialism. Usually this scholarship defines intimacy in terms of sexual and affective relations involving adult men and women. Much less explored is the final part of Stoler's assertion–that child rearing and, by extension, children and childhood have some bearing on imperial governance, colonial social relations, and the construction of ethno-racial categories.[1]

This topic is the focus of Ondina E. González and Bianca Premo's innovative edited volume. As González asserts in the introduction, "in the Iberian American colonies, child-rearing practices and childhood itself became part of the very process of creating an empire, of establishing the cultural and social boundaries of life in the Indies, as well as the racial and political domination of Europeans over others" (p. 7). This is a big claim, one that, if substantiated, opens up broad and heretofore largely unasked research questions, not just about Iberoamerica but about other colonial and postcolonial contexts. As this volume demonstrates, these may fruitfully take the form of "social history" questions about everyday practices of colonial domination and racial differentiation.

Ultimately, cultural practices surrounding children and child rearing matter because they redound on social reproduction, defined as the "mental, manual, and emotional" work necessary for "providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation."[2] Social reproduction is a familiar concept in the sociology of childhood but is more rarely applied to historical contexts. While it is not an explicit category of *Raising an Empire*, colonial social reproduction in essence constitutes the empirical and conceptual focus of this volume.[3]

Comprising eight essays and an analytic introduction and conclusion by the editors, the volume ranges over a wide geographical and temporal territory, treating societies on both sides of the Atlantic, within both the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and across a temporal swath extending from 1500 to the end of the nineteenth century. Drawing on original archival research as well as novel reinterpretations of familiar secondary literatures, the essays explore diverse aspects of childhood in Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, and Spain.

The contributions to the volume show that children intersect with empire in several ways. Sometimes they embody quite literal links between metropolitan and colonial societies. This is the case of the boys trained as sailors for Spain's maritime exploits by the Royal School of San Telmo, explored in Valentina Tikoff's essay on juvenile asylums in Seville. In other instances, children serve as links in the methodological sense, that is, as tracers for comparing and contrasting homologous institutions and practices on either side of the Atlantic. Thus, Tikoff's essay on asylums in Seville may be read against González's and Ann Twinam's essays on the foundling home of Havana. Likewise, readers may compare homologous practices of child circulation (the rearing of children beyond natal households or kin networks), which Isabel dos Guimarães Sá describes in Portugal and Cynthia Shelton traces in northwestern Mexico.

Such transatlantic comparisons shed light on one of the central questions González poses in the volume's introduction, namely, what is colonial about colonial childhood? One answer concerns the fragmentation and differentiation of childhoods in the colonial setting. The entrenched status hierarchies of the Iberian metropoles notwithstanding, there existed some tangible common-

alities of experience among children of diverse backgrounds. Thus, Portuguese children (in particular boys) of all social classes circulated beyond kin, and Seville's myriad charitable institutions housed a surprisingly heterogeneous population of the city's youngsters. The corresponding New World situations suggest a very different reality. In northwestern Mexico, circulating children of both sexes were in essence servants, and child circulation was a form of labor recruitment. The Havana asylum was associated with the socially stigmatized conditions of abandonment, illegitimacy, and genealogical anonymity. Ultimately, there appear to be few shared childhood experiences across the dramatic rifts of class and caste in colonial societies.

Scholars of colonial Latin America will encounter well-traversed topics in this volume, from the great postconquest Andean migrations, to African cultural resilience and resistance, to the dislocations occasioned by the transition from colonies to republics. As described below, the lens of childhood offers new perspectives on, and sometimes even new interpretations of, these themes. But beyond its contribution to colonial Latin American historiography, the volume is of interest to scholars of colonialism and empire more generally. As Premo argues in her thought-provoking conclusion, while issues of modernization and modernity have long motivated the history of childhood in Europe, in Iberoamerica the relevant conceptual framework is colonialism: "childhood … is … an opportunity to better understand how the early modern Iberian political and social order, and its bequest of colonialism to Latin Americans, was lived and reproduced" (p. 241). How exactly does childhood do this?

Perhaps above all, a focus on children illuminates how colonial social, cultural, and ethnoracial boundaries were constructed, maintained, and challenged. In Havana, Twinam argues, the racial and genealogical ambiguities of abandoned children's origins were deeply troubling to local authorities, but children designated as foundlings could traverse racial and status divides in ways their adult counterparts could not. Teresa C. Vergara's essay on colonial Peru also finds children traversing boundaries. The migration of Andean children and youth out of indigenous communities and into urban Spanish households was a vector of acculturation as well as a strategy for social mobility, one promoted both by colonial authorities and, significantly, Amerindian parents. In colonial households, Andean youth "refashioned themselves into colonial Indians," such that the process of growing up was inseparable from changing cultural and ethnic identities (p. 97). Vergara argues that migration afforded opportunities for social mobility to commoner boys in particular, suggesting that gender shaped children's interactions with colonial boundaries. Indeed, a number of the volume's essays attend to the gendered dimensions of Iberian childhoods.

In Brazil, slave children did not so much traverse boundaries as help reproduce them, insofar as cross-generational relationships helped maintain social and cultural solidarities among Africans and their descendants. Refuting the pervasive assumption that family did not exist among Brazilian slaves, Elizabeth Kuznesof argues that slave fathers were surprisingly present and families were often intact (especially on large rural plantations). While the strong presence of African cultures, religions, and languages in Brazil is typically attributed to the prolonged slave trade, Kuznesof's analysis suggests that cross-generational ties also facilitated cultural reproduction, making children and child rearing an important part of the story of African cultural resilience in Brazil. Taken together, these essays as well as others in the book suggest the signal importance of childhood as a period of socialization into dominant and subordinate cultures. They point to the role children and childhood played in traversing, reproducing, and ultimately generating new cultural and ethno-racial identities. This role was obvious to the colonial missionaries who set their sights on Amerindian youth. Historians have been slower to appreciate and exploit it.

One reason perhaps derives from the methodological challenges of locating historical subjects who are not just figuratively, but often literally, "inarticulate." On this score the essays in *Raising an Empire* set a methodological example, not least by showing how children are surprisingly pervasive, sometimes in the most familiar sources. Jorge Rojas Flores offers an innovative reading of a nun's spiritual autobiography for its insights into the narrator's childhood in seventeenth-century Chile. Kuznesof plumbs the enormous historiography of Brazilian slavery to reconstruct her history of childhood in bondage, and Vergara's exploration of children's migratory patterns draws on a well-known seventeenth-century census. Readers will find the book's pages teeming with poor orphans, foundlings, young servants, and slaves. Particularly beginning in the eighteenth century, these historical subjects become relatively more accessible thanks to the expansion of charitable institutions designed to succor them; legislation intended to protect them; the heightened interest of a judicial apparatus overseeing disputes over their custody and wellbeing; and, undergirding these developments, an emerging Bourbon consensus about the political and economic sig-

nificance of children's welfare. Significantly, only one of the eight essays deals specifically with elite children (Rojas Flores's essay on the nun). In Iberoamerica, and perhaps in other cultural and historical contexts, it would seem the history of childhood faces precisely the opposite methodological challenge of most social histories: the lives of poor children are more thoroughly documented than those of their privileged counterparts.

In reconstructing these lives, some of the essays in the volume remain quite close to the ground, engaged more in elaborating social historical description than in proffering broad analytic arguments. This leaves to the introduction and conclusion, as well as to the reader, much of the task of drawing out comparisons and linking the essays' findings to histories of empire and colonialism. That the essays do not always offer explicit answers about how childhood helped create colonialism surely reflects the nascent state of this field. But *Raising an Empire* makes a valuable contribution simply by posing these questions in the first place.

Notes

[1]. Laura Ann Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post)Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 829-865. Stoler herself has attended to this latter theme in chapter 5 of *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002). For Latin America, see Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[2]. Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner, "Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives," *Annual Review of Sociology* 15 (1989): 381-404, quotation on 383.

[3]. The concept does, however, figure in Premo's monograph, *Children of the Father King*.

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