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Nara B. Milanich. *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850–1930.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. xv + 355 pp. $89.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-4557-2; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-4574-9.

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Patriarchy without Patriarchal Households

Nara Milanch's complex and engaging book, *Children of Fate*, analyzes the intersections between the history of childhood and the formation of the liberal state in Chile from the 1850s to 1930. Her work challenges North American and European analytic categories in the discipline of childhood studies by focusing on state formation and social class–two areas of particular importance for historians of modern Latin America. Milanich provides the reader with a nuanced understanding of the various types of children considered to be illegitimate in the eyes of the state and explains what happens in a Latin American republic where there exists "patriarchy without patriarchal households" (p. 18). Milanich sets up an ambitious task for herself in "steering an analytic middle ground between unreconstructed empiricism and wholesale poststructuralism" (p. 27). She accomplishes it beautifully. Her methodologies and theoretical foundations allow her to uncover the everyday experiences of poor children and parents (both plebian and elite) as well as to deconstruct the relations of power inherent in the state and church views of family and legitimacy.

Milanich connects the story of the changing legal definitions of kinship relations and illegitimacy to the emotive aspect of her historical subjects. She provides richly detailed accounts of the individuals' struggles in the following capacities: to establish and/or refute paternity; to recover natal origins obscured by the Catholic Church and the Chilean state; to form families outside of blood relations; and to resist/escape subordinating labor relationships disguised as relations of kinship. As such, each chapter begins with a story relating these struggles, making the human aspect of this history all the more compelling. First, her source base is impressive. She analyzes more than 1,000 cases from Chilean civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical courts. In addition to this treasure trove of material, Milanich uncovers information about family structure and inheritance issues from more than 450 wills. Archival records from the *Casa de Huérfanos* in Santiago, photographs, newspaper accounts (particularly those involving extreme cases of neglect or litigants from socially and politically connected families), and an orphan's memoir round out her study.

The book is divided into three sections. In part 1, "Children and Strangers: Filiation in Law and Practice," Milanich considers how the essential Civil Code of 1855 changed the legal definitions of kinship and family. The code severely limited the rights of illegitimate children to bring paternity suits against errant fathers. She demonstrates how the code "stripped everyday acts that were socially indicative of paternity of their legal significance" (p. 58). This is part of the brilliance of Milanich's work: she reveals the complex interplay between cultural practices and the law. After the code, illegitimates were left with very little recourse to sue for paternity as fathers' rights and privacy became paramount. One of Milanich's most astute observations is that an analysis of post-code paternity suits allows us to see "the usually imperceptible process of individuals acquiring a class status" (p. 87). Instead of the importance of witness testimony and informal evidence of paternity considered sufficient to win cases during the pre-code era, Milanich sees "social congruity" and contract as key after the code went into effect in 1857.

Milanich indicates that kinlessness marked social status and marginalized poor, illegitimate children, usually for the rest of their lives. In part 2, "Children of Don Nobody: Kinship and Social Hierarchy," we see that individuals alienated from their legal ties to family encountered obstacles to marriage–both civil and ecclesiastical. Next, Milanich analyzes the civil registry process that together with the Civil Code represented "the two great milestones of nineteenth-century secularization and liberal state-making in Chile" (p. 131). Her findings indicate that this newfound state bureaucracy fostered an erasure

of natal identity. Milanich sees this transformation as departing from the colonial Bourbon legislation that considered more earnestly child welfare and state interests. By the late nineteenth century, "the inalienable rights of fathers, and secondarily the interests of the state, held sway" in Chilean legal and social practice (p. 154). Here we see that legislation purportedly about children's well-being rarely considered the rights and needs of children but rather focused on the rights of fathers. Truly child-centered reform would have to wait.

Part 3, "Other People's Children: The Politics of Child Circulation," offers a view onto the circumstances that brought about and the implications of children living in households of unrelated individuals. Child circulation could take many forms. It could be a part of family formation or companionship for widows or childless couples, or an exploitative labor arrangement between individuals occupying different rungs on the social ladder. Perhaps not surprisingly, Milanich finds that this circulation of children was "intimately tied to the dynamics of the female labor market" (p. 166). Children could develop long-lasting ties to wet nurses, and, at times, domestic servants could be part of an affective family milieu. But she is quick to caution readers not to romanticize plebian relations in terms of child circulation. That is, she portrays this as "a story of poor people exploiting even poorer children" (p. 214). In terms of elites using orphaned children in domestic servitude, she demonstrates how children raised in non-natal households failed to fit neatly into categories of legal dependency and that "patrones were obliged to resort to ill-fitting criminal categories–kidnapping, *rapto*, flight–to characterize their loss of control over these children" (p. 212).

The last section of the book addresses the continuities and changes of state policies after 1930. Milanich argues that capitalist development during the mid-twentieth century transformed the "plebian patriarchal household that in the nineteenth century had proven for many poor people a normative fiction" into a necessity and a reality (p. 233).

The strengths of *Children of Fate* are numerous. First, this piece of scholarship represents a paradigm shift in the history of childhood in that it privileges and problematizes the processes of state formation and social class as they relate to childhood in Latin America. That is, Milanich does not take categories or debates gleaned from the history of childhood outside the region and apply them uncritically to the Latin American case. Secondly, Milanich's work continuously makes reference to how the Chilean case both compares and contrasts with other Latin American nations and the United States and western Europe. For example, she carefully balances a discussion of how the Chilean Civil Code influenced–and was influenced by–familial law in other nations (p. 43). Additionally, the attention Milanich gives to the nuances of language and what they can reveal for historians of childhood are striking. She deconstructs the multiple meanings of orphanhood, illegitimacy, and child circulation. Milanich avoids the term "fictive kin" because, as she rightly points out, for those involved these relationships were very real, infused with meaning and purpose in their daily lives. Lastly, the variety of sources analyzed provides the reader with a complex understanding of state- and church-constructed discourses *and* the lived reality of Chileans dealing with issues related to kinship and illegitimacy.

Children of Fate is a model for future historical scholarship on childhood in Latin America. Rather than attempting to replicate precisely the framework and methodologies employed by Milanich–for that would do a disservice to the particularities she illuminates in the Chilean case–historians working on childhood in the region should emulate her ability to engage the historiographical debates in childhood studies on Latin American terms and using the categories of analysis deemed most important by scholars of the region. As she so deftly demonstrates, an attention to state formation and social class yields tremendous insights into the social and cultural meanings of family and kinship. The process by which systems of dependency are perpetuated remains a salient topic in Latin America and throughout the world–whether through the lens of childhood, social class, race, gender, or some combination thereof.

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