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Eileen Ford. *Childhood and Modernity in Cold War Mexico City.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 240 pp. $114.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-350-04002-1.

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Eileen Ford's thought-provoking book explores children's experiences and adult conceptions of childhood in Mexico City after the Mexican Revolution and during the Cold War. The volume proposes an interesting approach as she uses age as a category of analysis by focusing on the children who grew up in that period, a perspective that has not been explored despite the recent development of the field of childhood and infancy history. The book is a work of social and cultural history focused on the conditions faced by children in Mexico City, but also on the representations and ideas about childhood developed during this period. The author proposes to investigate "the intersection of discourse and lived reality" (p. 14). In other words, Ford compares the expectations and preconceptions about childhood with the everyday lives of children, using varied sources, including newspapers, magazines, census materials, and official documentation, combined with less traditional material, like film and radio programs, comic-book-style publications, and oral history.

Mexico's population of children grew very quickly after 1930, to the point where children aged fourteen or younger became the largest segment of the population, transforming the capital of Mexico into a "city of children" (p. 28). Ford states that this growth turned children into a target for political and religious reformers, but also for producers of popular culture and consumer goods. The state and the Catholic Church converged on ideas and strategies regarding children, like using the developing mass media to influence them to reproduce social and gender norms "with a modern, cosmopolitan face" (p. 3). At the same time, children were considered potential consumers, and thus new media devices, such as radio and television, were used to attract them into buying material objects as well as ideas about modernity, class, gender, and social status. In this context, Ford's book studies the development of an ideal image of childhood that presented it as a time for leisure and protection while also revealing that "the rights and privileges of a protected childhood were lost on countless children who slipped through the cracks" (p. 177).

The purpose of Ford's investigation is to study the cultural markers for the construction of a modern idea of childhood in Mexico City, leading to her selection of two specific years to delimit the analysis. Her research starts in the year 1934, when the "mass-produced, mass-consumed children's radio entertainment in Mexico first debuted" with the presentation of a program that featured a popular character called Cri-Crí, and ends with the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, when government forces attacked a student protest move-

ment and killed hundreds of protestors and bystanders, including a twelve-year-old boy, in an episode that Ford defines as "a metaphorical end of innocence" (p. 4). The book constitutes a study of the influential forces that were involved "in the social and political formation of the children raised during these critical decades leading up to the 1968 student movement" (p. 23).

The book is organized in five chapters that analyze different factors that influenced the idea of modern childhood in Mexico. The first chapter focuses on the capital city and proposes that it helped shape the political and social views of the children who frequently traveled across the city. During these decades the city started an outward expansion that transformed Mexico City into an industrializing city with new symbols of modernity, but this expansion increased social inequality and political and economic protests that were witnessed by youngsters and that "informed the social and political consciousness of a generation of children" (p. 43). Chapter 2 studies the education policies imposed by the state with the objective of transforming young citizens into productive workers for the modern nation they aspired to build. These policies included the ***jardines de niños*** (kindergarten) movement and the construction of schools, initiatives developed to influence children from a young age with an emphasis on economic productivity and rationality, but also on social and cultural norms that they would teach their parents and neighbors. From Ford's perspective, this meant that children "represented a means for the state to reach into the private lives of parents" (p. 53).

Chapter 3 reconstructs the development of a new child-centered form of popular culture that was directed at children and that used children as its subject matter. Ford examines shows and films for and about children that gave them "a sense of belonging to society as Mexicans but also as children" through the encouragement of national identity and cultural traditions (p. 89). Despite the intention of using media to mold children, Ford concludes, "ironically, the state's promotion of popular culture in the postrevolutionary and Cold War decades encouraged the evolution of a youth culture with its own distinct identity" as revealed during the student movement of 1968, where students used media to communicate their ideas and demands (p. 84).

In chapter 4, the author reviews such projects as the publication of children's magazines organized by the Catholic Church to compete with secular forms of entertainment. These magazines, intended to strengthen traditions considered threatened by foreign influences, were tied to broader anticommunist ideas. Ford demonstrates how these publications instilled ideas about "hierarchies and social-class distinctions that characterized Cold War Catholic ideology across the globe" (p. 19). Lastly, chapter 5 analyzes magazines and newspapers to observe their idealized images of childhood and their contradictions. For example, they criticized the problem of children living in poverty and being exploited and "photographed [them] en masse as proof of the failures of the industrial capitalism, and by implication, the revolutionary government" (p. 161), but at the same time promoted a consumerism typical of the middle class that deepened those inequalities.

One of the most interesting aspects of ***Childhood and Modernity in Cold War Mexico City*** is that it considers the agency of the children studied. Despite focusing on ideas, values, and practices imposed on the children, Ford also examines how children gave them their own significance. She emphasizes that regardless of the influence of secular and religious educational programs as well as mass consumerism, children made interpretations and adaptations to the messages they received and "their choices framed within the limitations configured by socioeconomic status nevertheless gave them some semblance of power" (p. 15).

The book is suited for an academic audience due to the author's thorough and detailed research, but Ford's clear narrative and persuasive arguments can also reach a broader public. The vast research she conducted is one of the strong points of this volume, which will be of value to a wide range of readers interested not only in the history of childhood but also in Mexican history and the impact of the Cold War in Latin America. However, at the same time, the author's interest in covering and connecting several different topics may sometimes confuse the reader as some ideas lose impact among too many details.

Above all, the main strength of Ford's work is her effort to contemplate all sides of the researched subject and their contradictions. This asset can be summed up with a photograph on the cover of the book, which portrays a group of children from the urban environment who seem to be smiling and happy; this photograph contradicts the image depicted by the media of Mexico as a place inundated with abandoned children. Ford concludes that "capitalism produced social stratification and children were often the most vulnerable.... Those atrocities existed, but so did other happier childhoods, and not only for those children with significant material advantages" (p. 177). This contrast is not seen by Ford as a contradiction or a mistake but as a manifestation of a complex reality, so she "invites the reader to consider both these vantage points as valid and representative of realities—among a range of realities—of modern childhood in the capital city" (p. 21).