

Nara B. Milanich. *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. Pp. 376. Paper \$25.95.

Nara Milanich, Associate Professor at Barnard College, makes a thrilling contribution to Latin American studies with *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930*. Milanich focuses on orphan children as they grew up in Chilean society over an eighty-year period when new laws caused unintended consequences for families. Divided into three parts on law, adulthood, and orphaned children, Milanich uses 450 wills, over a thousand court cases, and sources from Santiago's *Casa de Huérfanos* to demonstrate how family law, gender, and class contributed to the growing number of orphans and illegitimate children and their inability to develop kinship ties. The book argues that Chilean law established standards for familial obligations that favored well-established white men.

Until the mid-nineteenth century women were able to go to court and force men to take financial responsibility for a child by offering witnesses, oral admissions to parenthood, or previous financial contributions by the father as proof of paternity. The Chilean Civil Code, adopted by other Latin American countries in 1857, regulated marriage, inheritance, and bureaucratized *filiation* (family ties). The Civil Code abolished paternity investigations by making it illegal to file a paternity suit, because some believed that lower class women were using the process to better their own social status. Class played a significant role in determining paternity; the courts often sided with rich men. The court's decision to free men from their financial responsibilities to their children forced many women to give up their children. Many children grew up not knowing their fathers or mothers, entering adulthood without family ties.

As children grew up and participated in society, they were increasingly marginalized by the state. Those who lacked kinship ties were forced to rely on charity. These individuals, known as *huachos*, could not trace their family origins. A *huacho's* inability to find kinship ties set them up for further alienation. Identification was needed in order to marry, so those unable to prove filiation, as well as their children, were marginalized further, and the population of *hijos naturales* increased.

Taking in children was fairly common in Chilean families. Though there were individuals who cared for children out of the goodness of their heart, others did so for financial gain. Many took in children as their servants, and some children were even abducted and sold into domestic slavery. Most of them were not paid wages and were subject to violent beatings and sexual assault. Child servants were a symbol of status in the post-slavery era. Child servitude was so common that several institutions, such as *Hijas de Maria Immaculada*, prepared poor young girls for servitude by providing ironing classes. Even though the author demonstrates the extensive use of orphans as child servants, she does not ask if any of the families taking in children did so out of necessity. Readers might also wonder if any of the abuses against children were ever taken before the court.

Milanich demonstrates how in Chile, bureaucracy played an overwhelming role in children's lives. She uses court records and wills effectively to explain how kinship related to state and legal restrictions promoted continued oppression. Laws created to solve one problem created many others. This book tells the stories of orphaned Chilean children and how they were marginalized in the community, contributing new insights to the history of childhood. Milanich outlines the complexities of the Chilean state and family, along with how class and gender

affected individual lives. This book is suitable for anyone interested in Latin American studies or the history of childhood.

*Natalie Torres*