

## Presentation

*A tous ceux qui crevèrent d'ennui au collège ou qu'on fit pleurer dans la famille; qui, pendant leur enfance, furent tyrannisés par leurs maîtres ou rossés par leurs parents. Je dédie ce livre.*<sup>1</sup>

—Jules Vallès, *L'enfant* (1879)

A diminutive being, crawling through life on four limbs; infancy as described, summarily though incompletely, by the enigma of the Sphinx, a simple yet imperfect link in the chain of human existence... a perception that would endure for centuries, even millennia (almost two). There are notable exceptions, such as Xenophon's *The Cyropaedia*, the first part of which is as much a first image of a prince as it is the portrait of a child, though one with an adult's wisdom. Socrates and Plato were interested in educating young adults, not infants; and the Gallo-Roman tombstones at the *Museum of Sens* (France) show no trace of this stage of life: What? Only artisans, judges and couples died?

Nor would the Middle Ages pay them much attention, though one catches an occasional glimpse of Death dancing with a toddler lifted from its cradle, as in the fresco by La Ferté Loupière (Yonne-France); in paintings, even the Jesus child has an old man's face. But with the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries a new spirit emerged; we see the

<sup>1</sup> "To all those who died of boredom at school, or who were brought to tears by the family; to all those who were bullied or beaten by their teachers or parents, I dedicate this book".

birth of schools in the shadow of cathedrals, then the first universities, though in reality they attended pre-adolescents –according to today’s classification– not true children, much less infants. Similarly, the crusades of children or “young pastors” (*pastoureux*) in the 13<sup>th</sup>-to-15<sup>th</sup> centuries was but marginally related to those age groups, despite their undoubted historical protagonism.

The Renaissance was concerned, above all, with the individual; his different moments, exigencies, needs, virtues and defects, so it was important to pay attention to the crucial formative stage of childhood, to get to know children so as to better mold them. Here, as on other topics, Erasmus opens the way to the “civilizing process”, as Norbert Elias would later call it, in his *De civilitate morum puerilium* (*On the Urbanity of Children’s Manners*), an oft-reprinted work (30 times in the author’s lifetime), a reflection of the new interest in infancy. Gradually, even in iconography, half of humanity began to be taken into account by the other half.

Yet with a certain timidity. In the western world, Spanish culture was the first –almost only– to make a child the principal hero of an opus, in *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). Ingenuity is born of children: at the outset, the narrator writes, “it seemed that in that instant I awoke from the simplicity in which, as a child, I slept”. There are other memorable examples –Rinconete and Cortadillo in the *Novelas ejemplares*– but they were adolescent boys emerging from infancy. Seville is the common fatherland of Ingenuity so naturally, Murillo, its painter, offers the first real portraits of free children, playing dice or eating fruit, without all the paraphernalia that adorned the portraits of the offspring of the elite.

But the picaresque paints attitudes and actions, little interested in psychology or of the soul. What, in the end, do we learn of Lazarillo as a thinking being?; only his perception of the hostile world around him. Similarly, infant, toddler, child, and boy are convenient terms for the same thing, though imprecise, like that age group’s still undefined sexual status, for up to age seven, boys and girls are dressed identically. Only later are they decked out as miniature versions of adults marked ‘male’ or ‘female’. If a deceased newborn finds itself abandoned in an undefined limbo, his surviving brother is in a social

limbo. A philosopher like Descartes thinks that the child that every adult carries inside must be killed for the adult to achieve every desired rational faculty.

Fortunately, not everyone thinks alike, so the Enlightenment proffered infancy its first true opportunities, as well as its attention: breastfeeding is recommended instead of its mercenary alternative—the wet nurse—and some ladies of the Court lead by example. Recalling Erasmus' proposals, a system of open education was advocated, one devoted to exploring the potentialities of the child, in contrast to the disciplinary pedagogy of Jesuit colleges. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762) was a 'bestseller' of the time.

Progress, surely, though Rousseau had few scruples about placing his *own* children in a hospice. Still lacking was an integral representation of the child, autonomous, un mutilated, unbesmirched by the adult model. Paradoxically, that image emerged in later centuries, the Steel Age, if you will. The 19<sup>th</sup> century's Industrial Revolution was particularly cruel on the unprotected; *i.e.*, children. Writers reacted by denouncing those realities through the most luminous and coherent figures of infancy that literature has to offer: *Oliver Twist* and *Gavroche*. Since then it has become possible to write an autobiography, in novel form, devoted exclusively to infant rebellion, like *L'Enfant* by Jules Vallès, himself a rebel (communard in 1871): things that today seem stale, repeated to the point of boredom, were not perceived so in 1879.

The barbarity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also weighed heavily and tragically on children. Among its legacies: the parades of Hitler's Youth (among others); the photograph of the Polish (and Jewish) child, hands raised amid a throng of Nazi soldiers; the *Diary* of Anne Frank... Nor can we forget the child-soldiers of Africa's civil wars in our own century, the 21<sup>st</sup>.<sup>2</sup> It is in this context of inhumanity, but with the resurgence of a spirit of family and the years of the 'baby boom', that the West rediscovers childhood. Significantly, the first

<sup>2</sup> There is ample literature on this topic. One of the most recent books is: Luca Jourdan, *Generazione kalashnikov. Un antropologo dentro de la Guerra in Congo*, Bari, Editori Lagterza, 2010, 229 pp.

historian to approach this topic is a “Sunday afternoon historian”, as Philippe Ariès pictures himself.<sup>3</sup> Since then, studies have multiplied in disciplines like demography and social and cultural history. The history of education is separate, a field long tended by historiography, characterized by multiple entrances and postures, varied sources, a long association with prestigious institutions, schools, universities, and celebrated pedagogues.<sup>4</sup>

One could argue that many topic areas have been precipitating through contemporary Mexican historiography,<sup>5</sup> especially for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as we shall see here. But historians are not alone in these terrains, for sociologists, pedagogues and other anthropologists have marked out their own hunting territories, like gender studies or research on youth groups;<sup>6</sup> developments that raise issues of border-crossings: where does childhood end and adolescence begin—unless the two are confounded, as Elena Jackson Albarán suggests herein—yesterday, today, for male beings, for females...? So let us open the drawer and turn our attention to this intriguing collection of articles with their—essentially—cultural focus that proves revealing of both the autonomy and integration of childhood into society “as a whole”.<sup>7</sup> Undeniably there are filters, so one essential task is to try to measure those adult filters (“the invisible hand”, as Norma Ramos Escobar puts it), so as to “neutralize” them (ideally). Hence, as these three essays show, it is necessary to conserve the traces that children have left in archives, like those of the Department of Public Education (SEP).

After reading Susan Sosenki, we may well ask just how important it is to found toy museums, which are multiplying rapidly, especially in Europe. Are they mere glorifications of consumer society? I

<sup>3</sup> *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, 1960.

<sup>4</sup> See the recent *Historia mínima ilustrada. La educación en México*, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> For example, *Historia Mexicana* recently published (no. 245, July-September 2012) an article by Sergio Moreno Juárez, “La infancia mexicana en los dos centenarios de la Independencia nacional (ciudad de México, 1910 y 1921)”.

<sup>6</sup> The journal *Alteridades* has just edited a thematic issue on the young, though we have not been able to access it.

<sup>7</sup> We thank Susana Sosenki for coordinating this Section.

must confess that though I did play with my nephews' toy trains, I never (*mea culpa*) played with my daughters' dolls. But my greatest failing was probably that I offered trains to the former and dolls to the latter, and not the other way around. . . , History shall judge me.

I will not bade farewell to the children without a last look back at the cover and its three charming infants (the esthetic and mythological reference here is not fortuitous) captured in 1919 by the North American photographer Horne in El Paso. I am not sure what it was that fascinated me when I first saw that photograph in a catalogue: perhaps the cultural references that brought to mind the cliché of the three charms, the water fountain-pitcher with all its vital ambiguity?; or the attitudes of the three girls that we can relate to all humanity facing –it makes no difference– life or death: surprise, acceptance, rejection?; or the mystery that surrounds the whole setting and how it came to be: was it a casual encounter, or did Horne mount his object, contrasting the artifice of composition with the naturalness of his subjects?; and what of the later life of those ghosts (which is what they are for us), and the complex impression that this simple piece of paper has, with time, come to represent for us? May each spectator (*a la* Roland Barthes) begin her/his own dialogue.

The next article presents a document from the Franciscan Archives in Celaya, Guanajuato; an encounter with the Church at a time when this institution was dashing its head against an adverse world, one plagued by contradictions in the fateful year of 1820, the first of the restored Cadiz Constitution. May the reader be forewarned that patience is required to endure the peninsular language (*gachupinismo*), antiquated forms and particularly convoluted rhetoric. But perseverance pays off as an image of the delicately tangled and extremely incommensurable situation that the good fathers and prelates of the Franciscan Order confronted comes to light. I admit that even I had to read the text twice before I could –I think– begin to understand it. This was due in part, no doubt, to my own shortcomings, but also to the fact that the Temple guardians (beginning with “Fernando el Grande, monarch of the world, protector of the Church”) found themselves obliged to defend precisely what for them was most abominable: liberalism. And the words stuck in their

throats; so much, in fact, that it is by no means clear to whom the message was directed: to liberal sheep long strayed from the flock, as María Elena Ruiz Marín believes?; or to reactionaries still in the fold at the time, but with a blind faith the might lead them to forget loyalty, as I think? History has other cases, and 1821 was not far off: loyalty measured in terms of one's own interests, then and now.

In this issue, the “note and debate” that follow concern history. We asked a specialist, Aliocha Maldavski, to present an especially suggestive historical source that would allow us to broaden our knowledge of the history of missions in the Indies, one little studied on this side of the Atlantic. The source is a collection of over 14,000 *indipetae* letters penned by European Jesuits to implore the General of the Order to allow them to seek martyrdom in one of the Indies (preferably China, the Philippines, or Japan). My presentation may seem provocative and caricatured; I recognize this and leave each reader to reap what she/he may from the article.<sup>8</sup>

I shall limit myself to recounting the history of one Jesuit, Francisco Marcelo Mastrillo, perhaps an extreme case of this system, but one that exemplifies it. Many of Mastrillo's fellows wrote several *indipetae* letters to the General, but never received the reward they so yearned to obtain.<sup>9</sup> Though Mastrillo may not have written a single letter, he soon found himself en route to his new destiny. Like many others, he was a devoted follower of San Francisco Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies. Indeed, while lying with a grave head wound in Naples in 1634 he was visited on four occasions by that recently canonized figure; miraculously, he was cured in an event that, logically, attracted wide attention. Soon, permission arrived for him to set sail. Mastrillo was careful to nurture his ascent, so while in Ma-

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography at the end is most useful. We would emphasize two works, one of which appears there, while the other is more recent. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent, coords., *Missions religieuses modernes “notre lieu est le monde”*, Rome, Ecole française de Rome, 2007, 410 pp.; Charlotte de Castelnau-L'Estoile, Marie-Lucie Copete, Aliocha Maldavsky, Ines G. Zupanov, coords., *Mission d'évangélisation et circulation des saviors, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle*, Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, 2011, 522 pp.

<sup>9</sup> In total, 14,067 letters by 5,157 Jesuits are available, an average of almost 3 per aspirant; Anna Rita Capoccia, “Le destin des *Indipetae* au-delà du XVIe siècle”, in Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Bernard Vincent, coords., *Missions religieuses modernes*, p. 91.

drid that year he had his story printed. Afterwards, during his almost worldwide travels, he always took care to hand out copies of his booklet, while raising a banner emblazoned with the image of Francisco Xavier everywhere he went. In 1637, in Mindanao (southern Philippines) he was given the opportunity to carry it at the front of a Spanish army that was about to undertake a (failed) expedition against the Muslims: it galvanized the soldiers, revealing him for what he was: a “divine” warrior disguised as a mystic in search of sacrifice, surrounded by miracles, a true protagonist. Finally, in 1637, came the offer he had so longed for: the chance to disembark on the coast of Japan. His detention shortly thereafter coincided with “a great earthquake”. At his trial he stated that he was an “ambassador sent by the glorious P.S. Francisco Xavier for his greater glory”, and proceeded “to recount the miracle of his prodigious cure” to the Japanese judges. He hoped to cure the Emperor with pills made from relics of that saint. On October 14 1637 he received a severe punishment that lasted several days, at the end of which, “his blissful soul soared off towards the heavens”.<sup>10</sup>

Here we have the extreme expression of the aspirations documented in the letters, but not all ended in this way, for others terminated with much less glory: perhaps due to family pressures, or possibly overcome with fear in the face of the unknown, some candidates repented, backed down from their petition once the General’s authorization had been granted. Others destined to the Far East simply ‘forgot’ to go on once they reached the shores of New Spain and remained there drinking rich chocolate and increasing the profitability of the Society’s businesses.

Thirst for recognition, unto martyrdom. But other thirsts are more vital... and deadly, like the thirst for water, the vital liquid *par excellence*. Such is the history of San Miguel de Horcasitas narrated by Esther Padilla Calderón against the background of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Sonora. Land and water management, so essential for rural communities, and governed by traditional structures that support

<sup>10</sup> *Breve relación del martirio del Padre Francisco Marcelo Mastrillo de la compañía de Jesús, martirizado en Nagasaki [...], n.d., s.l., 8 pages.*

the rights of established groups, lead to complex, often conflictive, situations at various levels: institutionalized authority (municipal presidency) *versus* power emerging from the Revolution (commissioner of the *ejido*); small-scale, legitimate property owners *versus* *ejidatarios* only recently arisen from their proletarian condition and, perhaps because of that, with connections to the large local landowner (himself new on the scene?).

Complexity, of course, but one that boils down to a simple dilemma: who irrigates first and, therefore, who will be deprived of water at the end? Will the law of gravity, apparently of neutral logic, be obeyed, though it favors the *ejidatarios*. . . or will the law of seniority of possession reign to favor the small, private owners? Nor can it be forgotten that this is post-revolutionary Mexico where all things are in flux, where the commissioner of the *ejido* has been coopted by a family or clan and its clients who own machinery, and wells and who, therefore, can take advantage of state-sponsored investments in hydraulic matters.

Tremendous depredation and monopolization; perhaps some socioeconomic fate that could be called universal, like capitalism as feudalism's successor? I am not sure, but it is present in the logic of a land (continent) conquered, dominated and destroyed by an imperialism both political and ecological, ruthless, whose sequelae still exist today under the guise of legality or legitimacy, of solidarity, of a moral economy never been completely lost.

But water management is not just an asphyxiating corset. Through initiative and cohesion a small community can find a viable solution. In the *El Porvenir ejido* discussed below, 23 *ejidatarios* shelled out four million pesos to install a drip-irrigation system: it paid for itself with the first harvest. Of course, that copious flow of money soon led to other confrontations or, at the very least, mistrust.

At one point the article presents a witness speaking of a period of severe water shortage: "Really, no drought? There goes Fontes with his truck loaded with wheat, there goes Tapia with his truck full of wheat [. . .] Because at that time they had opened the wells". At that moment, in that corner of the earth, what is now a grand truth was revealed: the wheat, soya [or] meat that today some export and oth-



ers import is the modern form in which water circulates over planetary distances, far beyond any canal or aqueduct, part of the great confrontation that is being prepared and is spreading over our blue Earth. What's more, calculations show that one kilogram of wheat requires between 120 and 500 liters of water... a huge amount, but a kilo of meat demands ten or twenty times more! So, at whatever cost, for perhaps the third or fourth time since the Neolithic Revolution, we must make changes to our diet; though each earlier change has been negative in terms of physiological stress. It is important that our grandchildren understand this.

The article by Gabriel Torres offers another opportunity to play with changes of scale, from the coast of Jalisco to the smoking battlefields of Iraq or Afghanistan, through the metaphor of the *Hummer*, an artifact of war, devouring monster, but of a consummate fragility. Having said this, there is another reality, one more historical. It is not the neo-imperialist armies as such that patrol the streets and trails of Latin American countries in their *Bushman Hummers*, but members of national bourgeoisies, much more difficult to eradicate than a *Hummer*. And they occupied their place on the scale for centuries. Unfortunately, the springtimes of people have been even more ephemeral than the mode of the *Hummer*: 1848, 1936, 1967-1968, 2011-2012... Each century, every 40 years: where is the accumulated energy of which Gabriel Torres speaks, does it follow the path of the theoreticians? Perhaps, once again, it is with our grandchildren: after all, the region of study is called *El Porvenir* [trans.: *The Future*].

But changes of scale also prepare surprises: so when we return from the "imperial" scale of the *Hummer* to that of the *ejidos* on the coast of Jalisco in times of Echeverría, we are told that the *ejidatarios* purchased a truck to better move their followers. It probably also served to carry "invaders" to what would be the future lands of the locality of *El Porvenir*, armed with machetes, axes and augers. The genes of a certain politics never die, not even among groups of heterogeneous and recent origin (the article mentions migrants from several states).

When all is said and done, from the starting point of childhood we have traversed, in huge strides, the roads of Humanity, with sacri-

fice, the struggle for vital resources, and even the (regenerating?) tragic death of a youngster from *El Porvenir*, as the reader will see. Bleak? Well, we still have our grandchildren. The important thing is to know how to reach out to them, understand them: killing the adult in ourselves will not suffice. The road to that archipelago is long: as Jean de la Varenne wrote, “childhood is a voyage forgotten”.

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