

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Histories of Elites, Redux: Oligarchs, Families, and Power

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This essay reviews the following works:

Families in War and Peace: Chile from Colony to Nation. By Sarah C. Chambers. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. Pp. xi + 288. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822358831.

Of Love and Other Passions: Elites, Politics, and Family in Bogotá, Colombia, 1778–1870. By Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. Pp. xii + 268. \$55.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780826355850.

The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Latin America, 1880–1970. By Dennis Gilbert. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017. Pp. x + 293. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781442270909.

Los terratenientes de la pampa argentina: Una historia social y política. By Roy Hora. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2015. Pp. 390. \$21.96 paperback. ISBN: 9789876295567.

Una familia de la elite argentina: Los Senillosa, 1810–1930. By Roy Hora and Leandro Losada. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2015. Pp. 166. \$46.72 paperback. ISBN: 9789875747463.

Not so long ago, almost all history was the story of elites. They were the powerful, whose actions and decisions drove the motor of history; they mattered in ways most people, who lived and died while presumably leaving no more lasting mark than a footprint in falling snow, simply did not. Moreover, even if you wanted to study the vast majority, how would you do so? For much of history, only the elite knew how to read and write; only they left the written sources on which historians rely so much. Even if some enterprising peasant intellectual had left a diary or cache of letters, it was unlikely that an archivist would have considered them important enough to save, preserve, and catalogue. Why save the letters of some *fulano de tal*, when you have enough trouble preserving the letters of presidents, planters, and other people of import?

Of course, the social history revolution of the mid-twentieth century turned this world of elite historiography upside down. It turns out there were lots of sources for the mass of humanity, or at least ways of reading traditional sources with fresh eyes to reveal stories beyond the elite. Popular groups—be they the lower class, the poor, the working class, women, slaves, indigenous peoples, or eventually subalterns—did drive the motor of history, too. The most exciting and innovative works of history told the stories of these previously excluded groups, stories left out of traditional master narratives. At first these stories centered on the daily lives, the social history, of groups ignored in the past—especially indigenous peoples, slaves, women, and the working class. For the nineteenth century, these groups—and their social history—still rarely left much of an imprint on history; their tracks were still quickly covered by the falling snow of time. By the 1990s, however, a new political history, often inspired by the South Asian project of subaltern studies, sought to insert popular groups not only into the social history of daily life but into the master narrative of the political and cultural history of the state and nation.¹ The nation and state formation literature has been

¹ This literature has grown too vast to cite. Two useful review essays are Doug Yarrington, “Power and Culture: The Social History of Nineteenth-Century Spanish America,” *Latin American Research Review* 38, no. 3 (2003): 210–222; and Sarah C. Chambers, “Political Ideas, Political Cultures: New Works on the Middle Period in Spanish America,” *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 2 (2007): 169–180.

the most active, prolific, and transformative historiography for those studying nineteenth-century Latin America over the past three decades.

While this literature, I would argue, has transformed our understandings of popular groups and the general master narrative of the nation-state, all this attention has perhaps left little oxygen for a history of elites to thrive. (Elites are not the most understudied class—that distinction still falls to the middle class.) Even the most ardent promoter of popular history would concede that we need new and better histories of the powerful in society, if there is to be any improvement in the general historiography. Roy Hora and Leandro Losada open their book *Una familia de la elite argentina: Los Senillosa, 1810–1930* by noting how the history of nineteenth-century elites appears to be well known, but that, in fact, elites have been little studied beyond the early hagiographic efforts (9, 12). Each of the five books reviewed here make valuable contributions to rectify this lacuna. All of these books, save one, proudly state that they are focusing on elites. (Sarah Chambers is more ambivalent on this front, but, in the end, her book is mostly about the most wealthy and powerful Chilean families). All of them seek to look at elites with fresh eyes, to reassess their actual power, and to bring the tools of social history to bear on their lives.

These five books, while focusing on elites and mostly on the long nineteenth century (although most go into the twentieth century as well), are very different in their subjects and goals. Two of the books, *Los terratenientes de la pampa argentina* by Roy Hora, and *The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Latin America, 1880–1970* by Dennis Gilbert, focus on the link between the economic power of elites and their political influence. Two other works—*Families in War and Peace: Chile from Colony to Nation* by Sarah Chambers, and *Of Love and Other Passions: Elites, Politics, and Family in Bogotá, Colombia, 1778–1870* by Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas—are more interested in elite family life, and how questions of family and gender affected the political development of the nation. The fifth book, coauthored by Hora and Losada, perhaps offers a bridge between the two groups, as it traces how one family's journey affected their economic condition, social station, and political involvement.

Gilbert's book provides a propitious starting point, as it is an overview of elite power from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The work has two distinct sections. The first, based mostly on secondary sources, is a synthetic look at elites and their political power from the 1880s until the mid-twentieth century, focusing on Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Peru. The second part, based more on archival primary sources (and oral histories), is a more detailed case study of the processes outlined in the first part, focusing on three oligarchic Peruvian families. Gilbert categorizes oligarchic politics into two periods: the "oligarchic republics," which ran from the later nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, and their replacements, the "contested republics," which endured only as long as the 1930s (in Mexico) or the late 1960s (in Peru) (56, 92–93).

Gilbert focuses on the relationship between economic and political power (as does Hora); thus, he studies not just the political manifestation of oligarchic power but its economic and social bases as well. He argues that many oligarchs were not descendants of powerful colonial clans, as is often assumed, but parvenus, often immigrants arriving in the late colonial period and the nineteenth century, who then often married into those more pedigreed clans. This is exactly the experience of the Argentine Senillosa family described by Hora and Losada. After tracing the bases of these oligarchic clans' economic power, Gilbert describes their dominance of politics under the oligarchic republics: "Initially, the oligarchs were all powerful, because others were weak" (62). He presents a dated vision of subaltern politics: caudillos dominated politically isolated and quiescent lower-class clients, who only entered the public sphere as coerced voters or cannon fodder. Gilbert sees oligarchic states, wealthy with export revenue, as far stronger than the "caudillo-dominated regimes they displaced" (31). Both this vision of elite power and the oligarchic states' origins—simply replacing caudillos—reveal a significant weakness with the book. Gilbert does not engage at all with the nation and state formation literature of the last three decades, even for the more developed Peruvian case.²

Gilbert assumes these oligarchic republics were built without cost, that the poor "posed no threat to the continent's oligarchs" (37). However, the oligarchies were constructed in the 1870s and 1880s precisely to confront and control rising subaltern demands, to destroy functioning, if imperfect, republics in which the powerful often had to negotiate with subalterns and their visions of politics and society. Oligarchs did not just spring into power due to a jump start from the world economy but seized power in an effort

² Gilbert does not cite any of the works on nation and state formation that have transformed Peruvian historiography, such as Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Post-Colonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Nelson Manrique, *Campesinado y nación: Las guerrillas indígenas en la guerra con Chile* (Lima: Centro de Investigación y Capacitación, 1981); Cecilia Méndez, *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820–1850* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Mark Thurner, *From Two Republics to One Divided: Contradictions of Postcolonial Nationmaking in Andean Peru* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

to delegitimize and undo the active republics that came before, when supposedly illiterate and isolated peasants, Indians, and ex-slaves had successfully entered the political sphere, transforming both society and politics. This vision of the nonexistence and unimportance of subaltern politics affects how Gilbert understands historical change. For Peru, he argues that the oligarchic republic ended due to “a purely *intraelite* struggle,” but one difference of the factions was over labor law: that this was even on the table was due to the pressure of miners and plantation workers (although Gilbert claims this took place in 1904, before “a significant working-class movement,” ignoring the century of preceding subaltern protest and politics [108]). Even though, at times, Gilbert mentions “growing social challenges from below” as a reason for political change, these challenges are usually amorphous, without historical actors, and the subjects of attention (and the motors of history) are always elite politicians or military officers, at least until the mid-twentieth century (113). This is a study of high politics, without significant subaltern actors (which, unsurprisingly, means a priori that subaltern politics play no role in the narrative).

Gilbert then turns to the “contested republics,” in which oligarchs were forced to share power with new actors and rarely dominated the state directly, but under which their position was nevertheless not seriously challenged. These contested republics, with massive oligarchic influence, lasted longest in countries (Chile, Argentina, and Peru) with a national elite that was relatively united (in interests, in social life, and geographically), and shortest in states (Mexico and Brazil) with regionally, not nationally focused elites (Gilbert, 91). Eventually, he argues that elite division, urbanization (and an urban working class), and growing middle classes, along with a professional middle-class officer corps, all changed politics, removing the oligarchs, sooner or later, from their former dominance.

The strength of Gilbert’s book lies in three excellent chapters of elite social and political history describing three oligarchic Peruvian clans (the Aspíllagas, planters; the Prados, bankers; and the Miró Quesadas, publishers). Here we get a peek behind the curtain at oligarchic life, economy, and politics. Gilbert offers very useful charts showing all the political and economic connections held by the Prado family, including all the different boards of directors and political positions each family member enjoyed (198–199). He calls the Prados’ business empire “patrimonialism,” inspired by Max Weber’s notion of a patrimonial ruler of a state, as no clear division existed between supposedly independent joint-stock corporations and the Prado family’s personal fortunes and interests (207).

Hora’s book, based on exhaustive archival research on “the great landholding Argentine bourgeoisie” (9), shares with Gilbert’s study the same time period and preoccupations concerning the relationship between economic power and political power. This is the second edition of a Spanish edition first published in 2002, which was the expanded translation of an English edition published in 2001. While many assume that elites simply held power, Hora wants to investigate if they did, the ways they did, and their relation to the state. Hora, Losada, Chambers, and Gilbert all agree that elites themselves did not assume that their status and wealth automatically ensured their control of the political realm; it was hard work to influence it, and many elites often felt they were on the outs, politically.

Hora’s work thus offers both a confirmation and something of a critique of Gilbert’s study. In Hora’s Argentina, the landholding elites are not the oligarchs of Argentina’s oligarchic republic (for Hora, these would be provincial politicians who have taken over the state). Hora’s landowners (who are Gilbert’s oligarchs) feel mostly isolated from politics, by choice or by necessity. Even before Gilbert’s period of contested rule, when supposedly oligarchs ran the show openly and directly (Gilbert, 38), Hora convincingly shows how landowners felt they were excluded from political power. This would appear to question Gilbert’s work, and it does in the sense that Hora’s local history is much more complex and contingent than Gilbert allows. Yet, for all their feelings of political isolation, the landowners almost always got exactly what they wanted and needed from the state, and the state never challenged their interests, until the 1940s and the rise of Peronism (in line with the end of Gilbert’s contested republic).

Hora’s book is particularly valuable in doing the hard work of social history now often done for popular classes: he investigates how landholding elites “began to perceive themselves as a landowner class” (9). In other words, his study is both economic—how elites became a class of themselves (how they built their wealth and social position)—and political, about how they became a class for themselves (how they pursued their class interest politically). He opens with the weakness of these elites: they were looked down on by the urban upper class, were excluded from political power, and faced challenges in the countryside, especially a lack of infrastructure and hostile indigenous raiders. This elite built itself in the nineteenth century: “The vision that affirms that, since colonial times or immediately after independence, the country was dominated by an economic elite that based its primacy in landed property should be rejected” (Hora, 309). As Gilbert also describes, one challenge nineteenth-century elites did not face was from nonindigenous rural subalterns;

Hora sees the countryside as largely quiescent—"the modernization of the estates was carried out without major social conflicts"—and largely does not engage with the nation and state formation literature on Argentina that might challenge this assertion (Hora, 312).³ To gain power, landowners needed to transform landholding from just a source of wealth to "social prestige and political power," which they succeeded in doing in the late nineteenth century (Hora, 40).

By the 1880s, the landowners had succeeded. The Conquest of the Desert removed the indigenous threat and opened up massive amounts of new land for the ranchers to exploit. Ranching went from being seen as backward to become the most modern, capitalist segment of the economy (while gaining social prestige), with large landowners becoming known as progressive entrepreneurs. Now the rural landowners, with their grand country estates and Jockey Club, dominated society. Hora is sympathetic to their claims. He contests a vision that only sees "the *estancieros* of the Pampas as a parasitic, rentier class, lacking in vocation and entrepreneurial talent" (10). Hora argues instead that this negative portrayal of the agro-exporting economy ignores how successful this economy was, not just for elites and general economic growth but for "social mobility and the improvement of popular well-being" (12).

By the 1890s, landowners wanted to take a greater role in politics, as due to their class, but also as a necessity due to the economic crises of that decade. They tried to form their own party in the 1890s—the Unión Provincial and then the Defensa Rural—but both ended in failure, as they could not mobilize the electorate. (Hora assumes "the docility and subordination" of the rural labor force on the big estates; however, their numbers were too small to matter much electorally [143].) First, the landowners had gained confidence and prestige as a class, and then they had decided to take political power, at which—contradicting Gilbert—they failed. Instead, "the middle and lower classes weighed as much as the upper classes in political networks" (Hora, 148). However, the reader does not get a sense of why subalterns wanted to participate in politics or what their politics were, beyond simply being motivated by "caudillos"—mostly middle-class political operatives (Hora, 151). Once again, it is not necessary to study subaltern politics just in order to include them but because it is impossible to understand elite politics without them.

Hora argues that "the governing groups of the oligarchic regime were far from being an instrument that the large landowners manipulated at whim; moreover, the landowners lacked sufficient power to modify this relationship" (191). Yet, in spite of this supposed lack of political power, Hora admits that the state and large landowners "held interests and visions largely in agreement over the long term" (46). Hora is convincing in showing how isolated elites felt but also notes how the state never challenged the basis of their economic success, even under the Radicals, until the 1940s and Peronism, when industrialization, not protecting landowners, became the state's primary concern. By then, the once golden image of the modernizing rural entrepreneur had been replaced by that of lazy, absentee rentiers, living off the labor of poor tenants, "a parasitic, retrograde class" (Hora, 195). Hora excels in tracing the changing visions of the landowning class over time, and how they themselves changed, many investing in industry, commerce, and urban real estate.

Hora and Losada bring the panorama Hora developed for Argentina down to one family, the Senillosas, in *Una familia de la elite argentina*, in order to show the complexity and internal diversity of the elite class. The experience of the Senillosa family largely confirms the theses developed by both Hora and Gilbert, including a surprising one for works on elite power—namely, that individual families often lose their elite positions. Eventually, the Senillosas cease being oligarchs, following a downward trajectory over the course of the later nineteenth and especially early twentieth centuries. Before this denouement, the family was one of the wealthiest in Argentina. Confirming Gilbert's idea of a new, postcolonial oligarchic class, Hora and Losada trace how Felipe Senillosa immigrated to Argentina in 1815, arriving with almost no resources beyond his engineering education. He made his fortune surveying the pampas (still seen as having little value), appraising the best lands, renting those from the state, and then using his position as a congressman to help pass a law that privatized such rented lands at terms very favorable to the purchaser. One way that Hora and Losada's book improves over Hora's earlier text is by emphasizing the role of the state, and political power, in creating this elite via laws and institutions that favored large landholding by a small minority. (This would happen again after the Conquest of the Desert of the 1880s, a state effort—of genocide—which opened up vast swaths of land, most of which was seized by a very few.) By the 1830s, Senillosa held forty thousand hectares and ten thousand head of cattle, one of the forty largest *estancieros* of Buenos Aires

³ See Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853–1870)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos: State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Gabriel Di Meglio, *iViva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo (1810–1829)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2013).

(Hora and Losada, 30). However, in spite of the importance of the state, Felipe's son Pastor felt isolated from politics he viewed as backward and corrupt (as in Hora's solo study): he decried "the archaism dominating the political sphere" compared to "the modernity ruling in the economic" (Hora and Losada, 115).

While Felipe employed a more colonial pattern of economic diversification, his children, Felipe Bonifacio and Pastor, reflected the more monocrop-oriented nineteenth-century economies, focusing all their attention on their rural estates. Although Felipe Bonifacio modernized his father's rural holdings (confirming Hora's insistence on an entrepreneurial elite) and greatly increased their value, he still slips from being one of the richest men in the country, as his father was, to being merely rich but not among the most elite. He and his brother missed out on the late-century bonanza of further land acquisition. Pastor, with a large family, further faced the problem of splitting the inheritance, and was forced into liquidating many of his holdings. A central preoccupation of the family became social and economic decline.

Hora and Losada trace this decline across the third generation. While the massive power of oligarchic clans would seem to insulate them from loss, the Senillosas show this was not the case (as did the Aspíllagas in Gilbert's study, who eventually lost the plantation that was the basis of their wealth [174]). Pastor's children pursued professional and commercial careers oriented to the domestic, urban market; they could not afford to capitalize themselves as hacendados, especially as credit and crop failures during World War I collapsed the family's finances (Hora and Losada, 126, 132–133). The Argentine elite had complained bitterly about taxation to support a larger public sector (Hora, 224). Ironically, several of Pastor's children ended up working for the state as employees (even elites, or former members, turned to state employment in difficult times) (Hora and Losada, 132–133). For a while, the family managed to maintain social prestige, even without the economic means and with many now in salaried work. Eventually, however, this became impossible, as they could not afford to maintain appearances: "Social position had to be constantly reaffirmed via public performance" (Hora and Losada, 120). Social performance was key to being in the elite, not just money or political status. As Hora and Losada contend (10), the Argentina elite was definitely a class aware of itself as a class, a trend we see in all the other books under consideration. It is only nonelites, usually the middle classes (sometimes academics), who do not think class is important and vital for shaping society and history. While social scientists might debate the merit of class as an analytical category, all of the elites in these books had no doubt about the centrality of class for defining their worlds.

Hora and Losada give more attention to gender than does Gilbert or Hora alone, examining how gender shaped family living patterns, sexuality, and access to society. In Gilbert's and Hora's works, gender was mostly about exclusion. Gilbert simply notes that "guided by patriarchal principles," females were largely excluded from family business (159). Studies of oligarchy have at least some necessary link to family and gender studies, since oligarchic economic power is so controlled by family units. These were patriarchal clans after all, with power often assumed to pass to the elder son (even if primogeniture in inheritance was not allowed—often a massive problem for elites, as Gilbert and Hora and Losada show).

Hora and Losada perhaps address gender somewhat more also due to their central sources: the letters of the Senillosa family, letters often written by women. Of course one of the advantages of studying elites is the wealth of documentation they have left behind, especially personal letters. When women left behind so few sources, these letters are a treasure trove for historians. Letters are the archival base for both Hora and Losada's and Dueñas-Vargas's books, and are important for Chambers as well. Dueñas-Vargas studies elites because they were the only ones who had left enough sources for the study of her topic, emotions. These letters provide an entrée into the world of the powerful that is largely not available today, as global elites now have the suspicions and means to buy privacy from nosy historians—as Gilbert notes, "Wealthy elites are notoriously resistant to study" (4). But nineteenth-century elites are more accessible, as they still had faith that historians shared their interests and worldviews when they donated their letters. Indeed, for some groups, especially women, it is much easier to study elites than nonelites, where the availability of evidence (that old excuse!) is often apparently lacking.

While gender is not a key analytical tool and category for analysis in these first three books, this is certainly not the case for Dueñas-Vargas's and Chambers's excellent works, in which gender is not just used to explain exclusion of women from a male public sphere but to show how gender shaped that public sphere (and revolutionized the private as well) in unexpected ways. Dueñas-Vargas makes good use of letters (and diaries) to create a rich tapestry of the lives and loves of elite families, tracing how notions of love and other emotions changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Dueñas-Vargas posits that, while in the colonial period and independence era passionate love was often associated with extramarital affairs (often with supposed social inferiors, at times between white men and women of African descent) and seen as dangerous, by mid-century romantic love became "channeled into and controlled inside marriage" (2). Love

and romantic attraction become chief considerations when choosing a spouse by mid-century; it is not that economic interests and family alliances were no longer considerations, just that these prosaic considerations had to align with romantic love between the betrothed.

While the book tells us much about changing emotions and gender roles, Dueñas-Vargas is using gender not just to explore these themes but to understand broader changes in Colombian society that might appear at first glance not to have much to do with gender (this is also Chambers's strategy). Dueñas-Vargas carefully ties in her more universal themes (the changing nature of marriage and love) with local historical change, especially the disruptions caused by independence (both the wars themselves and the changing society thereafter). She argues that independence eroded patriarchal authority over families and gave children more say in choosing spouses, in spite of republicans' efforts to restore gender norms that had been disrupted by the war. Eventually those efforts succeeded. After the "independence spring" when "patriarchal control" was lessened, the return to Conservative governments in the 1830s also marked a "return to the old familial order" (Dueñas-Vargas, 93). The control and regulation of gender norms was seen as strengthening the republic. Dueñas-Vargas, in the examples above and throughout her book, makes fascinating connections between internal, personal emotions and political culture. The strength of Dueñas-Vargas's and Chambers's works is that they use gender to explain postcolonial republican nation and state formation in ways that studies that focus only on class, race, or high politics cannot.

Dueñas-Vargas's almost novelistic stories of wives, husbands, and lovers shows why a history of elites, based on their letters and diaries, can be so rich. However, like Gilbert and Hora, she makes assumptions about subalterns. When discussing romantic love, she claims that only "the cultured elite ... had the time and material wealth to cultivate these sentiments" (3). Yet we have no evidence (just perhaps a lacuna of sources) to suggest that this is true. More concretely, Dueñas-Vargas details how a new liberal, bourgeois masculinity—based on speaking and writing in the public sphere—affected marriages and notions of love. Yet, this public sphere was a highly contested space where to have success, Liberals especially had to be able to engage and negotiate with subalterns, especially in Colombia's Democratic Societies (popular political clubs). While it may be possible to isolate the study of elite emotions, one can no longer study elite honor or politics independent of the agency of the lower classes, since those spheres were so tied to interactions between the classes. And if we are to believe Dueñas-Vargas on the link between politics and emotions (and she is convincing), then even a study such as this must consider the role of subalterns, even in something so seemingly far removed as elite romantic love.

Like Dueñas-Vargas, Chambers explores how constructing a new nation was tightly interwoven with the politics of family life; one cannot be understood without the other. Chambers examines the family as both a discursive strategy used to explain rebellion from Spain and later national reconciliation and, even more innovatively, as the subject of state policies with far-reaching effects for nation and state formation. As with Dueñas-Vargas and Hora and Losada, family letters are critical to this story (Chambers, 17, 27, 61), and one elite family, the Carreras, unites the book and opens every chapter. While Chambers considers middle-class and even popular actors now and again, the book centers on elite families and their concerns, especially disputes over property seized by both royalist and patriot forces.

The excellent first chapter centers on the story of Javiera Carrera, who partially defied her Spanish husband by being such a proponent of independence. Women were supposed to follow the politics of their husbands instead of being free to pursue their own political path. Women's politics were still mostly the critical work of "private correspondence and social networking," but women played more of a public role during the independence struggle than post-independence (Chambers, 61). As Dueñas-Vargas shows, the independence era was an exceptional time when many of society's gender norms could be bent if not broken; however, the republican state would be eager to restore those norms in an effort to bolster its own legitimacy.

One of the most contentious issues for royalists, before their defeat, and for the later postcolonial state was the question of returning property seized from political enemies to support the war effort. Even concerning enemies, the state could not ignore family considerations and therefore granted pensions to the wives and children whose husbands' property had been seized, taking on a paternalistic role. This accelerated after the war, as ideas of family reconciliation—of both real families and the national imagined family—became paramount. Republican governments used paternalist benefits (pensions, returning property to defeated and loyalist rivals, recognizing illegitimate children) to gain legitimacy and increase its support. The republican state would increasingly forgive its exiled political rivals and return their land (family ties were critical in expediting this process), as a way of gaining legitimacy but also strengthening an elite class. By welcoming wealthy Spaniards, the state hoped to stimulate the economy (Chambers, 144). Pensions for

mothers, widows, and orphans of soldiers also served national reconciliation and to unite the imagined Chilean family. However, following Spanish law, most pensions (there were exceptional rules for soldiers who died in battle) were only for legitimately married officers.

Chambers shows, in an impressive argument, how the Chilean state's quest for legitimacy, an effort to "build national unity upon a foundation of domestic order," affected ideas and practices of paternal responsibility for illegitimate children, for custody and support for children of divorce, and even for adult dependents of wealthy relatives (185). Chambers suggests that increased rhetoric about the family in national political discourse encouraged more children to sue their fathers (and other relatives) for support by the 1830s, when they would often win. For adult children, this process was highly based upon notions of class; wealthy parents should support even mature children who refused to work in base occupations or did not earn enough to support their lifestyle. One wishes that Chambers had explored further why the republican notion of equality, so fought over in other aspects of society, was assumed not to affect the family. Chambers also carefully traces changes over time as, by the 1850s, courts favored fathers and their position as patriarchs more than in earlier times. The state's role would change dramatically in the 1850s, when a new Civil Code prohibited paternity suits against fathers who denied paternity outside of marriage. And if a father did recognize illegitimate children, he now gained parental authority over them (instead of just having to support them without necessarily gaining custody). The state seemed less anxious about asserting its own paternalistic authority and more interested in reinforcing patriarchy, property rights, and elite power. In general, Chambers is very convincing on the importance of using the family to "rethink the transition to nationhood throughout Spanish America"—we simply cannot understand the politics of the era without considering gender and the family, both discursively and practically (11).

Yet the focus is almost always on elite, not popular families. Since Chambers wrote one of the seminal books on popular conceptions of honor and how this affected the transition to republicanism, it is surprising that popular groups receive short shrift in this work.⁴ It is not just that Chambers focuses on elites (perhaps understandable given the sources) but that she makes dubious claims about popular groups. With only one secondary source cited for support, she argues that "for the majority of the ethnically mixed population, however, local identities would remain more meaningful than the abstraction of nation well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries" (14). If this were the case (and it needs to be proven, not asserted) Chile is different from most other postcolonial American societies, where subalterns determinedly asserted national identities to make claims on the state and nation. Of course, popular ignorance of the nation is a claim of elites everywhere, but studies of Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Cuba, and Argentina, among others, dispute such self-serving claims, posited by these elites not as a reflection of reality but as a justification for excluding subalterns (as in Chile) from citizenship and suffrage. Marginalization of subaltern groups from the narrative is important not just for assumptions made but because so much of Chambers's innovative argument on the importance of the family for nation formation would be more powerful if we knew that it affected, and how it affected, the majority of Chilean families. Otherwise we have returned to the realm where politics, and the nation, were only the purview and interest of a small slice of society.

Which begs the larger question, "How should we study elites now?" All five of these works make valuable contributions to our understandings of elites, as well as broader issues of political power, state legitimacy, emotions, family life, and nation formation. Why should they consider popular groups as well? I would suggest we follow the path of studies of gender. At first relegating gender to the study of women, historians and social scientists then began to use gender to study men's gender roles and norms. Then, gender studies spread beyond those interested in gender norms or sexuality to a whole variety of fields, such as politics, war, or industrialization. Gender has become an analytical tool that must be taken into account not just for the study of women or sexuality or masculinity but for almost any project, even those that at first glance may not seem to involve gender, as with Chambers's study of the high politics of nation and state formation. In these studies of elites, gender enriches the narrative, revealing contingency and contested political projects in the place of an assumed elite hegemony. I would suggest that popular groups must also be considered in any larger study of politics, nation and state formation, or family life. The goal would not be just to include these groups in the work (elites, of course, merit their own dedicated studies), but that you cannot understand elite politics, or elite gender relations, without a grasp of the popular, which so informed the world of elites (whether they wanted to admit this or not). We must include the popular in studies of elites not just to throw a sop to the mass of society but because we cannot understand elites themselves otherwise.

⁴ Sarah C. Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

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