

Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, eds. *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*.

Women and Gender in the Early Modern World. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011. xv + 248 pp. \$99.95. ISBN: 978-1-4094-2997-5.

In 2007, *Renaissance Quarterly* published a review article by Margaret King in which she adroitly summarized key features and recent trends of the history of childhood in the early modern era, including the impact of gender. Historians of childhood have used gender as a category of historical analysis for their study of midwifery, wet-nursing, girls' education, and the like, but it has not always been a prominent arrow in the methodological quiver. In an attempt to show that "gender matters to early modern childhood" (2), this collection of fourteen essays seeks to explore the intersection of gender and the construction of childhood in Western Europe between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

The volume consciously pursues an interdisciplinary approach with a balance of history, art history, and literary analysis, organized into three thematic sections. Part 1, "Conceptualizing Childhood," describes parental attitudes in response to the arrival or loss of children and the subsequent impact upon parent-child relations. Part 2, "Imprinting Identity," includes four contributions about how children were to be raised: these essays draw from the works of Rabelais, Montaigne, Parè, and Shakespeare as well as from two extensive collections of letters by a French Huguenot noblewoman (Louise de Coligny) and by a wealthy Englishwoman with ties at court (Anne Cottrell Dormer). The final set of essays, "Transitional Stages," explores the parameters of growing up, what Shakespeare deemed one's "second childishness." Over half of the essays examine case studies from England, while France, Italy, and Spain serve as the locus of one or two essays each. It is the sixth

title to appear in Ashgate's series *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. It is an odd curiosity that for a work dedicated to ferreting out considerations of gender and demonstrating the subtle ways in which boys' and girls' experiences were often different, the authorial group is overwhelmingly female. The variety of sources is commendable: funeral monuments, personal correspondence, poetry, plays, paintings, legal records, treatises, genealogical records, and more demonstrate that the sources for a gendered history of childhood are there to be found by attentive scholars.

The editors' introduction declares that this volume was instigated by a desire to move beyond a mere analysis of adult attitudes about children, and instead to examine the lived experience of children through their own voices and roles. The challenge, of course, is that children generally left few primary sources, and those sources that do exist suffer from the problem of exceptionalism. Despite this inherent methodological quandary, the authors in this volume do succeed in bringing out new aspects of a child's world. Patricia Phillippy, for example, writes about the poignant funeral monuments of early modern England, which mixed textual and visual records to commemorate the loss of children and spouses. She quotes Thomas Fuller, who opined that pretty monuments should be reserved for females while pompous (by which he meant grand and impressive) structures should be dedicated to men, thus underscoring the gender divisions current in his culture. Phillippy further points out the rise of increasingly lifelike and intimate representations of children in the seventeenth century, as well as the larger number of monuments dedicated to children alone. Katherine Larson describes the function and gendering of games played by elite early modern English girls, and how these games were sometimes adopted by adults to negotiate complex social realities. Naomi Yavneh utilizes Paolo Veronese's painting *The Finding of Moses* in the Prado Museum to explore the theme of child abandonment; although her efforts to link this subject to a specifically Venetian context are, in my view, unconvincing, her iconographical and biblical analysis deepens our understanding of the baby Moses and of other children left to the kindness of strangers.

Nearly all of the essays in this volume challenge the traditional views of Philippe Ariès, Lawrence Stone, and others who proclaimed four decades ago that infants and adolescents were only little adults, and that parents prior to 1700 did not truly love their children. The pair of essays by Jane Couchman and Sara Mendelson, drawing upon epistolary collections of two important noblewomen, show clearly the abundance of love that existed in these early modern families. Julia Marciari Alexander's essay surveys the portraits of King Charles I and his family to confirm how the portraits were used as a dynastic tool, but she also emphasizes the attention that Van Dyck paid to depictions of the royal children during a moment when the conception of their individuality and humanity was perhaps just beginning to shift.

CHRISTOPHER CARLSMITH

University of Massachusetts Lowell