

Book Reviews

PRE-1800

MERRIDEE L. BAILEY. *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England, c. 1400–1600*. York: York Medieval Press, 2012. Pp. 284. \$90.00 (cloth).
doi:10.1017/jbr.2013.126

This book uses late medieval writing for and about children to demonstrate how households and schools “socialised” children. Bailey states that she makes a “systematic attempt” to put this process “into the broader context of society, politics and religion” (1), which she does in relation to the social structure of households and schools. As a historian, her primary interest is in the history of childhood, and this field forms the backbone of her arguments. Bailey’s source material for this history is conduct literature written in late medieval and early modern England. Each of her five chapters, she explains, deals with particular examples of conduct literature that convey “a sense of childhood and children” (1).

Chapter 1 looks at seven courtesy poems concerned with table manners and service. Bailey observes that these poems represent young people as themselves responsible for learning manners and etiquette. Of special significance is “meekness,” and Bailey sees this as an important qualification to scholarship that has fixed “increased awareness of others” (18) as a sixteenth-century rather than a medieval concern. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these poems are concerned with outward conduct, not moral instruction, and focus on pragmatic issues of employment in households. They place a high value on “elite” culture.

Chapter 2 considers the ways in which individual manuscripts modified courtesy texts for nonelite audiences. Written works in MS Ashmole 61, for example, are adapted by its scribe, Rate, to emphasize specifics of dress and work that would be relevant to nonelite readers. Similarly, six manuscript versions of the poem *The Lytlylle Children’s Book* contextualize the poem in various ways, such as including English and French conversational exercises immediately before the poem—information that would be useful to a merchant family—and incorporation of dietary rules into the poem itself. The rest of this chapter considers works aimed at particular nonelite readers according to gender. Bailey finds that literature written for girls tended to emphasize virtue more strongly than did literature written for

boys. She finds, too, that inner value and personal merit were emphasized more strongly in works adapted to merchant and gentry readers.

Chapter 3 is concerned with six books printed by Caxton between 1476 and 1487. Bailey uses the term “instructional” to refer to these works and argues that these works reflect growing resistance to “courtesy” as superficial. Instead, growing emphasis was placed on “true” virtue as opposed to “over-courtesy” (100). Bailey, again, draws attention to differences in gender and uses *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, a collection of stories written by a knight for his daughters, to emphasize the much stronger attention paid to virtue in works written for girls and women. Further, she argues, Caxton published works specifically with a “family audience” in mind, anticipating the significance that such small, domestic groupings had in the sixteenth century.

Chapter 4 turns to a particular type of sixteenth-century instructional manual, which Bailey refers to as “the household or parental advice book” (8) and which includes vernacular material by authors such as Richard Whitford, Robert Shelford, and William Vaughan as well as translations by Richard Hyrde from Vives and by Hugh Rhodes and Francis Seager from Bruto. Here, Bailey finds ever growing emphasis on virtue for boys as well as girls. In this literature, the household was identified as the best environment for instruction, and the voices of parents, rather than children, were increasingly inscribed in this kind of book.

Chapter 5 moves from discussion of the household to the schools. Here, Bailey emphasizes the role of schools as “transmitter[s] of social values” as well as transmitters of academic subjects (160). In this chapter, Bailey “tease[s] out information concerning social conduct from . . . descriptions of school organisation” (163). Her sources for this chapter are school statutes, grammars and other educational books, and school account books. Among the interesting points raised in this chapter is a discussion about the observation of the behavior of schoolmasters as laid out in official records. Bailey finds that the schools were concerned with “complete” education, which included socialization in terms of “outward appearance and inner behaviour” (193).

Bailey’s careful work with her source material makes this book extremely useful for scholars interested in the late medieval and early modern efforts to socialize children. Although the history she traces may feel familiar to readers who have studied conduct literature, Bailey has written a book that is thoughtful and attentive to important details. Indeed, some of her most interesting observations are brief asides about aspects of this history that puzzle her or do not fit neatly in an overarching narrative. For example, she draws attention to the disjunction between conduct literature’s emphasis on traditional family structures and the actual nature of households and families in the period: “The reality of social and economic pressures, deaths and blended families” meant this traditional structure was not “relevant to every household,” yet, nonetheless, “[i]nstructional writers paid no heed to elements outside this perfect household group. Households headed by widows, single people or those who rented rooms within a property are largely rendered invisible in didactic material” (151–52). *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England* contributes to our understanding of education in the period by refusing to ignore such details.

Rebecca Krug, University of Minnesota

JIM BOLTON. *Money in the Medieval English Economy, 973–1489*. Manchester Medieval Studies series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. Pp. 352. \$110.00 (cloth). doi:10.1017/jbr.2013.127

Jim Bolton’s new book is a welcome addition to the literature of medieval economic history. Over the past two decades, there has been a substantial increase in scholarly output by numismatists and monetary historians, but much of it has been narrowly focused and published in