

Rutherford's analysis is that his account provides little information upon which one might appraise the impact of television in accelerating or slowing the American impact on Canada. Canadian values may have been influenced by proximity to the United States and consumption of its television programmes, but Rutherford's account does not address the issue.

His account of the early history suffers from a similar lack of analysis. In spite of Rutherford's expressed affinity for the medium, his account of its early history seems detached—even superficial—lacking the sort of critical analysis I had expected. On the same page that Rutherford tells us that “Canadians seemed to like roughly the same things as did Americans” he says that “the shocks, violence, and action of westerns and crime dramas offended the moral sense of many a Canadian adult” (p. 360). Are we to infer from this that Americans were also offended or are we to infer something else? The apparent contradiction notwithstanding, Rutherford never tells us what Canadians believed that made the shocks, violence, and action of these dramatic forms offensive.

The brief afterword placing Canadian television in the context of the development of the medium elsewhere does not do justice to the subject. After almost 500 pages, the best that Rutherford can manage is to employ the analogy of Janus to explain television's impact. “Television is a medium looking backwards and forwards. It is restrained by the force of tradition; it is also an instrument of novelty” (p. 495). The fault may be

primarily my own; I should not have expected more. Rutherford was clear about his ambivalence towards the medium from the outset: “My feelings about the medium may not be so obvious....I don't claim to be especially pro- or anti-television....I can find evidence that it fostered social or moral decay...as well as proof that it buttressed the existing order, especially the Canadian versions of capitalism and democracy” (p. 9). *When Television Was Young* is an extremely ambitious work. That its ambitions are not fully realized may be less important than its achievements, chief among which is the quantity of material about Canadian television in its early years.

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Shulamith Shahar. *Childhood in the Middle Ages.* London and New York: Routledge, 1990. Pp. xi, 342. \$35.00.

Since 1962, I have harangued friends, colleagues, and students with the demand: “Read Ariès!” Since about 1975, I have added the phrase, “but read him with great caution!” Why both the continuing interest and the cautionary note? In *L'Enfant en la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (mistranslated as *Centuries of Childhood*), Philippe Ariès made a

short-term and a long-term contribution to the historiography of the western tradition. For the short run, Ariès presented us with a provocative interpretation of the nature of childhood and family life in medieval and early modern France. For the long run, Ariès effectively created and did much to shape the still burgeoning fields of the social and intellectual histories of childhood and of the family.

Although Ariès' specific formulations enjoyed a considerable popularity amongst both historians and other social scientists (and one still occasionally sees them stated as truisms in the literature of the latter), they gradually came under increasingly rigorous critical scrutiny. Two books culminate this scholarly reinterpretation. In *The Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (1983), Linda Pollock refuted what Ariès, and many of his followers had to say on the nature of childhood in post-medieval society. And now, in *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, Shulamith Shahar makes abundantly clear that medieval childhood was very different from Ariès' account of it.

Shahar's central thesis meets that of Ariès—"In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist"—head-on. On the contrary, she argues, "a concept of childhood existed in the Central and Late Middle Ages...and...parents invested both material and emotional resources in their offspring" (p. 1). Shahar lays out her case in a series of well-organized and straightforward chapters. She begins by describing the ambivalence that medieval culture displayed

towards procreation in which it made "a clear distinction...between those who chose chastity within the framework of the church, and laymen...[who] were exhorted to wed and to beget children" (p. 12). It was also a society that held two conflicting images of the child. Some believed, with St. Augustine, "that every child born into the world inherited the sin of Adam and Eve" (p. 14). To others, childhood "was the period of purity, innocence, and faith" (p. 17). Shahar then continues by explaining that this society divided childhood into three stages (*infanta*, *puerita*, and *adolescencia*) and notes that she will deal only with the first two. In subsequent chapters she describes birthing and nursing practices, and comments on abandonment, infanticide, accidents, sickness, handicaps, bereavement, and orphanhood. Bereavement, or the lack of it has, of course, been at the heart of the debate over Ariès. Shahar presents both direct and indirect evidence that, even in the face of very high rates of infant and child mortality, parents did indeed grieve their losses. She tells of "a weeping and wailing mother, tearing her hair or beating her breast and head; ...a bereft mother refusing to hand over the corpse of her little son for burial; [and] a father totally paralysed with grief" (p. 153). She also notes that theologians and preachers, such as Humbert de Romans, castigated those who grieved excessively "when their beloved ones die. This is because they do not believe they will live after this life. The faithful should not behave thus" (p. 151). Such condemnations, Shahar explains, would have been unneces-

sary if parents had accepted the death of their children "with the indifference attributed to them by modern historians" (p. 152). Touché!

Since the history of childhood and the history of education are now sometimes written as if they deal with two very different fields of study, I am pleased to report that Shahar concludes her account of medieval childhood with no less than five chapters on education. In the first she outlines the educational theory of the time. Moralists, didactic writers, preachers, and the authors of confessors' manuals felt the education of those at the *puerita* stage should include the inculcation of morality, respect for parents, and vocational training. Shahar then describes how the theory was variously applied to those destined for church service, for the nobility, for life in urban society, and for life as peasants.

While the principal focus of these later chapters is on institutions and customary practices, we are occasionally rewarded with a realistic glimpse of children working, learning, and playing. Thus Shahar reports that in 1385, the Bishop of London excommunicated boys for insolence, idleness, "for shooting arrows and throwing stones at pigeons, ravens and other birds nesting in the walls of St. Paul's cathedral, playing ball in the gateway of the church and within its portals, and causing heavy damage to the stained glass, the pictures, and statues" (p. 238).

Shahar has examined an extremely rich array of primary sources. Of them she accurately observes, "it is easier to depict the views, educational

theories, images, and stances of those who could write...than to gauge...the degree to which they reflected...reality." (p. 20). Nonetheless, Shahar has discovered some surprisingly intimate vignettes. Thus, even from the *Acta Sanctorum*, a primary source in which the actual lives of saints were often transformed to meet religious, didactic norms, she finds an authentic note in a fourteenth-century vision of St. Ida of Louvain. In the vision, St. Elizabeth permits Ida to assist in bathing the infant Jesus:

Elizabeth brought the bath in order to bathe the infant and the other utensils required for this and bent with all courtesy in order to bathe the child in the warm water together with Ida. When the Holy Infant was seated in the bath, he began to play as is the way of infants. He made noise in the water by clapping hands, and as children do, splashed in the water until it spilled out and wet all those around. He continued to splash while moving all of his tiny body. On seeing the water splashing all around, he began to shout with joy in a loud voice...and when the bathing was completed, she lifted the child from the bath, dried him, and wrapped him in his swaddling bands. She seated him on her lap and as mothers do, began to play with him (p. 96).

As Shahar suggests, surely Ida crafted this element of her vision out of her own experiences and observations; in it we are looking upon a real scene

drawn from medieval family life. Shahar explains that she tried to mine her sources with "empathy, a feeling for nuances, and objectivity," at the same time trying to set aside her own cultural assumptions (p. 5). However, she lays out much of her discussion in frameworks suggested by her thorough knowledge of modern neonatal, paediatric, and psychological theory. Thus "Piaget and Erikson point to additional indications to those cited by medieval sages for each stage of childhood" (p. 30). Sometimes theory leads Shahar to infer beyond what she finds in the sources. She notes, for example, that Erikson regards toilet training as a major step in the process of creating a sense of self. Since she found no reference to the topic in her sources, she concludes that it is "highly feasible that children learned gradually and at their own pace through imitating adults, without specific 'toilet training'" (p. 98).

On the whole, Shahar writes clearly and vigorously. She surveys her evidence thoroughly and presents her conclusions without equivocation. She is, however, partial to extremely long paragraphs, some of which extend over two or more pages (see, for example, pp. 33-35, 66-68, and 79-80). *Childhood in the Middle Ages* does not include a bibliography. Nonetheless a careful (but time-consuming) examination of Shahar's very extensive footnotes takes us into primary literature she explored. She also refers to, and often comments on, much of the secondary literature in the history of childhood, not only for her own period but to the field in general. Both stu-

dents and scholars will find these notes useful.

If most of Ariès' notions have been refuted then why do I continue to urge people to read *Centuries of Childhood*? I do so for the same reason that historians of the United States must continue to read Frederick Jackson Turner on the role of the frontier in American history and historians of colonialism must read Harold Innis on the historical economics of staples. Reading each of these seminal works helps one recreate the sense of excitement which came upon their original readers, to say with them: "This is how it must have been!" More important, of course, these pioneers shaped the ways in which their fields subsequently developed. Most who have written on the history of childhood or the history of the family over the last thirty years have been acutely conscious of the long shadow that *Centuries of Childhood* casts over their work. The fine books of Linda Pollock and Shulamith Shahar would have taken a very different and probably a much less invigorating form if they had not had to contend with Philippe Ariès. I suppose I should now say: "read all three of them!"

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Peter Ward. *Courtship, Love and Marriage in Nineteenth Century English Canada*. Montreal &