
Communications

Editor:

Linda Pollock's review of my *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* [*Albion* 24, 4 (Winter, 1993): 650–51] does readers a disservice by entirely missing one of its two main theses, and then complaining rather strenuously of a resulting confusion. She registers my claim that Puritans were earlier than other groups in paying attention to children and making efforts to understand them, but views my definition of Puritan as a "serious flaw." It would be if it were as simple as she reports, but in fact my second thesis is that Dissenters (after 1660) proved different from former Puritans in this area, despite their theological inheritance. Puritans formed a movement while Dissenters formed sects, and the social and cultural dynamics involved were quite different. Thus it is an error for Pollock to insist that Quakers should be lumped with Puritans; they were sectarian from the beginning. (I can pretend to greater expertise in these matters than she may recognize; see my "Anglican, Puritan, and Sectarian in Empirical Perspective," *Social Science History* 13, 2 (Summer 1989): 109–35.) Also, the fact that I show diversity in the Dissenting portrayal of children is not due to an over-broad definition of "Puritan"; I am talking about diverse portrayals within the same book!

She notes that I do not cite nearly everything written on earlier periods. But she is mistaken in thinking that medieval scholars have asserted anything like the literary fixation which I demonstrate among Puritans. I certainly never claim that there was no concept of childhood before, but I do offer *systematic* evidence of the Puritans' literary prominence.

Finally, what is one to make of a review which disdains to mention a chapter on Puritan and Dissenting humor (!) for children (which appeared in a previous form in *Albion* 21, 2 (Summer 1989): 227–47)? Could it be that the "moralizing" she complains of is just my misplaced sympathy showing through?

C. John Sommerville, *Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton*

Professor Pollock replies:

I regret the fact that my review appears to have offended Professor Sommerville. However, I consider it to be a fair portrayal of his book.

Linda A. Pollock, *Tulane University*