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Willem Koops, Michael Zuckerman, eds. *Beyond the Century of the Child: Cultural History and Developmental Psychology.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. xi + 289 pp. $47.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-3704-7.

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The Pale <cite>Beyond</cite>

The Pale *Beyond*

"It was about time," writes Michael Zuckerman in his epilogue to the new volume *Beyond the Century of the Child*, "to assess the experience of children in the century that was expiring" (p. 225). Perhaps so, but despite the heroic efforts of Zuckerman and his co-editor Willem Koops to paint this volume as an epic rethinking of conventional wisdom, what we actually have is a bit of a shaggy dog–a collection of essays on the general subject of children and cultural history by a group of scholars with disparate agendas. Several of these essays stand alone as useful or thought-provoking statements, but as a group they fall disappointingly short of the ambitious goal set by the editors.

The anthology's title refers to Ellen Key's 1900 best-seller *The Century of the Child*, in which she called for the twentieth century to witness children's being "liberated from educational repression and parental discretion and given a measure of human rights" (p. 164), as Micha de Winter writes in *Beyond the Century of the Child.* The goal of the new volume is to provide a critical assessment of pedagogy and developmental psychology in the twentieth century–and, for good measure, the centuries leading up to it as well.

The editors are upfront about their own views on the subject. "Children have been pushed so far away from the adult world," Koops and Zuckerman write in the preface, "that is has become difficult for them to find the way back.... The principal question that this book addresses is the question whether we have exaggerated the childishness of our children and thereby infantilized them excessively" (pp. ix-x). Koops builds on this view in his introductory chapter, in which he sets out his ideas about the history and science of childhood. If Philippe Ari=s was wrong in some of his particulars, writes Koops, his fundamental insight that childhood in the West has moved in the direction of "infantilization" was correct. Has this change been for the better? We cannot turn to developmental psychology for the answer, since that science is (as Koops quotes William Kessen) "a peculiar invention that moves with the tidal sweeps of the larger culture" (p. 2). But wait! Don't consign empiricism to the rubbish bin yet, since "we will only have a chance of liberation from the cultural constructions and imaginations through empirical-analytical knowledge" (p. 2) (particularly through historical study). Once we are duly liberated, we need to put our Weberian value-rationality caps on to make some "normative, ethical" judgments about just how we want to conceive of a place in society for the little rugrats. Having done that, we can whip our instrumental-rationality beanies back out. While "no scientific feats will be able to change" the fact that "our children will be and will remain necessarily and unavoidably the product of our imagination ... scientific research can provide a wonderful stimulus in finding possible ways for development and upbringing and can also be a fantastic help in critical evaluation of what we do in view of the chosen aims" (p. 18).

Got that? If so, you are ready to delve into "The History of Childhood," the first of two main sections into which the contributors' chapters are sorted. The section opens with a useful essay by Barbara A. Hanawalt, in which she succinctly summarizes the principal arguments against Ari=s's view that childhood, as we know it, did not exist previous to the modern era. (Curiously and unfortunately, nowhere in Hanawalt's essay, nor elsewhere in the volume, is the important and eloquent work of the family historian Steven Ozment cited.) The current view among historians, as Hanawalt accurately describes it, is ironically ahistorical–emphasizing a fundamental "continuity of parental and social formulations of an idea of childhood" since at least the Middle Ages (p. 42). Hanawalt does not deny the existence of some historical change, taking the functionalist view that "con-

cepts of childhood are structured to prepare children for the social reality of their own particular historical time period" (p. 42).

The remainder of the "History of Childhood" section follows in roughly historical order, skipping around the globe as it does so. In the chapter following Hanawalt's, Els Kloek examines "Early Modern Childhood in the Dutch Context." After proudly noting that the Dutch have an "old reputation" for "spoiling children" (p. 53), he goes on to present evidence that by the eighteenth century there was (in Zuckerman's words) "a retreat from such fond focus rather than its ever-augmenting elaboration" (p. 226). Ultimately Kloek takes the handily agnostic view that "questions to the past can be too large to yield answers, like the questions Ari=s introduced with his daring history of childhood" (p. 61).

But, of course, that sort of talk is not stopping anyone, so the volume moves on to a tidy, but unsatisfying, essay from Karin Calvert on "Patterns of Childrearing in America." This is a vast topic, and rather than attempt to synthesize the entire literature in twenty pages, Calvert drops a few suggestive anecdotes for each of four historical periods (Colonial, Republican, Victorian, and Modern).

In the following essay, John R. Gillis wheels back to the Victorian era, the pivotal era that produced Ellen Key and in which the modern idea of the child was cemented; appropriately, Gillis's essay is the finest in the volume. Gillis links the emergence of modern childhood to the concurrent discovery of the modern idea of adulthood, during a "crisis of faith" in the West. "Paradise lost became childhood lost," writes Gillis, "when the quest for grace turned inward and retrospective, bypassing institutional religion and finding expression in the newly sanctified realm of the family" ((p. 86). Childhood thus became a "substitute religion" (Hugh Cunningham's phrase), with all of a religion's requisite rituals.

Gillis provides an eminently more satisfying analysis of childhood in "the century of the child" than does Peter Stearns, who in the next chapter notes the presence of modern rituals of childhood such as schooling (he conceives them, not inaccurately, as "constraints"), but is perplexed by what he perceives as a strange tension between these constraints on the one hand and the twentieth-century explosion of children's consumer culture. Stearns sees the modern children's consumer culture as an "outlet" in which the increasingly regulated children, due to an "odd exception [on adults' part] to the regime of careful discipline" (p. 106), were allowed to "form attachments apart from full parental or adult supervision" (p. 104). Stearns's torturous argument (like the rest of the volume) would have benefited from closer attention to the historical sociology of childhood (i.e., Duane Alwin's studies of changing parental values and Ron Lesthaeghe's theory of the "second demographic transition"), which suggests that childhood has become rationalized–explaining both the increasing institutionalization of childhood activities and the ascendant conception of the child as a free consumer in an open market.

The final two chapters in the "History of Childhood" section are histories of childhood in two Eastern nations: Hideo Kojima writes on Japan and Michael Nylan on China. A non-Western perspective is certainly welcome, but the two essays fit poorly in the Koops and Zuckerman volume. Each essay stands on its own as an earnest examination of an important topic (traditional Japanese conceptions of the life course, education, and the state in pre- and post-revolutionary China), but neither piece is particularly well-served by being shoe-horned into this collection–they deserve an audience they would more readily find elsewhere.

The second section of the volume turns to "The Child in Developmental Psychology and Pedagogy." The section's first chapter, written by Micha de Winter, traces a nice (if quite brief) history of major pedagogical movements in the century, beginning with a nice summary of the ideas of Key herself. De Winter locates these movements with respect to three key tensions: calculation versus construction, individual versus social orientation, and assimilation versus political emancipation. He concludes with a heartfelt–if somewhat gratuitous–call for a "pedagogy of participation."

Gerrit Breeuwsma's chapter, which follows, is a bracing critique of the discipline of developmental psychology, noting that early in the twentieth century parents' (and teachers') wisdom regarding their own children came to be seen as illegitimate. This necessitated a sharp separation between the academic discipline and the real-world experiences of children (and the adults who cared for them)–a rift that, Breeuwsma warily observes, may or may not be mended in the foreseeable future.

The volume's final contributor is the venerable psychologist Sheldon H. White, whose measured analysis of the role of his discipline "in a world of designed institutions" (chapter title) comes, at this point in the book, as a cool breeze. Noting the intricate links among developmental psychology, pedagogy, and other social institutions, White calls for a further exploration of "the ecology of developmental psychology" (p. 222). Here again

the sociological literature–in this case, in the sociology of organizations and institutions–would provide helpful insights, but White's essay is apt and eloquent.

In the volume's epilogue, Zuckerman is left the Herculean task of digesting these diverse illuminations and negotiations. Zuckerman does a very creditable job of pulling the pieces together under themes including history, progress, and science; ultimately, however, he is left at something of a loss to tell us what it all means. Noting that the volume's contributors seem to share a basically pessimistic outlook on the recent history of childhood–a sense that we adults have been using and will continue to use children to further our own ends–he finally argues that "we sense, dimly but disturbingly, that we have conceded too much to our children" (p. 241). That is, having assigned all that is precious in life to childhood, we've decided that we want it back–thus, we have begun to act like children ourselves.

It is a stimulating bit of cultural analysis, but its tenuous connection to the content of the preceding 240 pages is symptomatic of the thematic incoherence of this anthology. At one go, *Beyond the Century of the Child* takes on the pre-modern history of childhood; the twentieth-century history of childhood; the international history of childhood; the history and deconstruction of both pedagogy and developmental psychology; the politics of childhood; children's consumer culture; and much more. Clearly Koops and Zuckerman have ideas about how this all fits together, and one is left wishing the two co-editors had simply written a book of their own on the subject. What we are left with, however, is a collection of essays of individual worth, bookended by bits of theory from Koops and Zuckerman. The essays by Hanawalt, de Winter, Breeuwsma, and especially Gillis are of particular merit; one hopes that they find the audiences they deserve among those who are interested in the authors' respective subjects. The book jacket promises, however, that the authors address "the suggestion whether, a hundred years after Ellen Key wrote her international sensation, the century of the child has in fact come to an end." This remains a suggestion.

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