

values and traditions that have made Manitoba what it is today will be transmitted along with the skills, knowledge and ability to function in a rapidly changing technological society. These last two chapters introduce the reader to more recent and intriguing developments in Manitoba and beg for further detail and analysis. The authors have whetted our appetites, certainly not satiated them.

The inclusion of higher education in this history is a welcome change linking the various levels of education and acknowledging the universities as one aspect of the public educational system. However, the relationship among these levels needs to be examined much more closely. Included in the text are some delightful photographs which add to the story, lists of all the premiers, ministers of education and Catholic and Protestant superintendents — a handy reference. The text also contains a select bibliography, which, together with the footnotes, provides a comprehensive reading of the available sources. As Gregor and Wilson summarize,

“Manitoba’s history has been a microcosm of the Canadian dilemma: the conflicting claims of the two founding cultures, of the Native peoples, and of the numerous, and various ethnic groups who followed. Manitoba’s efforts to reconcile those claims within an educational system which must also answer the legitimate expectations, social, economic and personal, of the individual and the larger society, provides valuable insights into how the nation can address its complex and challenging future.” (p. 158).

This book is one small step in that direction.

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Pollock, Linda A. *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, xi + 334 pp., \$16.95 U.S. (paper).

In *Forgotten Children*, Linda Pollock asks whether a history of childhood is possible. Her answer is the following admonition:

If... all the sources of evidence which are available were analysed separately, with full awareness of the problems pertaining to each source, and in bulk, then the prevalence of various attitudes to children and various child-rearing methods through the centuries would be revealed. Once this had been done, all the sources could be looked at together, a synthesis attempted, and in that way a more accurate history of childhood could be written than has been achieved hitherto (p. 67).

If that observation sums up the main intent of Pollock’s study (and I believe it does), then *Forgotten Children* is a fascinating book for reasons I doubt that she had in mind.

“Is a history of childhood possible?” is a question profoundly disturbing to historians of childhood. As a sometime practitioner, I too have a stake in any answer. If Pollock’s question is whether it is possible to know historical childhood experiences directly, my conclusion is that we cannot. Pollock’s work demonstrates why, although it is theoretically possible in the sense that it is conceivable, the quest is practically impossible or better yet not worth the effort. However, before addressing the issue of whether a history of childhood is possible, I will discuss some troublesome qualities in the book.

I found the book replete with amazing statements. First, a few examples will suffice. Pollock cites the assertion by Stephen Brobeck that writers of advice manuals who are not parents “may not even have perceived behavioural and cultural patterns accurately.” (p. 44). What can one say about such anti-intellectual twaddle? Second, at the conclusion of a summary of contemporary studies of child abuse, Pollock observed that evidence “demonstrated that child abuse does not occur in a normal parent-child relationship; but because there is something lacking in the relationship.” (p. 41). Besides being a tautology, the statement runs afoul of Pollock’s conclusion that there is no requirement that “past societies should have regarded children in the same way as Western society today.” Let us assume that it is empirically demonstrated that children in eighteenth century England were reared in a much harsher manner than in mid-twentieth century. Given Pollock’s statement, we may not necessarily characterize their treatment as abusive and yet we could detect a qualitative difference in parental behaviour (and sentiment?). To see differences between our world and the worlds of past historical actors is not to hold the past in contempt. What Pollock lacks is what Bernard Bailyn has called the historian’s instinct, i.e., “the belief... that the elements of her world might not have existed at

all for others, might in fact have been inconceivable to them, and that the real task is to describe the dawning of idea and the creation of forms — surprising, strange, and awkward then, however familiar they may have become since — in response to the changing demands of circumstances” (*Education in the Forming of American Society* 1960, p. 10). Third, in discussing the relative lack of advice in American diaries, Pollock suggests the answer might be that Americans “as emigrants to a new land would be less able to help their children.” (p. 113). Was everyone in colonial America an emigrant? Fourth, there are a series of odd references to Americans. Amos Bronson Alcott is cited as Amos Alcott instead of the customary Bronson Alcott and James Fenimore Cooper as Fenimore Cooper. Finally, Pollock has a quotation from *Louisa May Alcott, Her Life, Letters and Journal*, which suggests that Alcott was a mother (p. 173).

Since Pollock relies on primary evidence, diaries and autobiographies, the odd statements and inferences raise serious questions about her use of other materials. Individually such errors or mistakes are trifling but in bulk they suggest that we should proceed with care. However, I will now return to whether Pollock’s study demonstrates that a history of childhood is possible.

A more significant problem is caused by Pollock’s narrow view of the statement “with full awareness of the problems pertaining to each source.” In the discussion prior to the statement, Pollock cites the work of Alan Macfarlane as a model because he has “concentrated on primary documents and investigated them in a systematic manner.” She then goes on to observe (did Macfarlane fail here?) that “unless the whole document has been analysed, it is impossible to ascertain whether or not any particular action, statement or attitude was typical of the person concerned.” If Pollock is correct in saying that “parent-child interaction is a continuous process, not a series of isolated events,” then the documents must be seen as part of history and not as isolated artifacts. Thus the researcher must be knowledgeable about the cultural and historical context of the documents being analyzed. It is this point that I found gravely lacking in Pollock’s discussion of some of the American figures in her study. In a grand case of reductionism, she treats all historical actors as if the context of their lives and historical moment do not count. Here is a case of stripping away the individual to leave us with uniform elements. This rampant scientism creates a sense of unreality while reading what appears to be a very careful piece of scholarship. This is said because Pollock makes a strenuous effort to criticize the work of those historians who have argued that specific periods in European society have manifested harsh or indifferent attitudes toward children. Indeed, she charged them with having created a myth based on an “over-hasty reading, a burning desire to find material to support the thesis and a wilful misinterpretation of evidence” (p. 271). Of course, one can find similar instances in *Forgotten Children*: a conflating of English and New England puritans (p. 14); the misunderstanding of deMause (p. 42); a muddled use of the concept of childhood (p. 48); favourable recounting of authors who agree with her views (p. 50); a limited reading of Rousseau and Locke (p. 120); equating indifference with cruelty (p. 125); and an unwillingness to acknowledge degrees of behaviour and sentiment (p. 141).

On first reading, there is the temptation to understand Pollock’s position as one arguing for the unilinear, unchanging nature of parent-child relations, and perhaps, insisting on the centrality of scientific and technological advance as an explanation of apparent changes in attitudes and values. An example is the growing body of legislation protecting children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which she sees as the result of industrialization and urbanization that put children at risk in new ways (pp. 61-63). Thus, the legislation and, of course, the voluntary work are merely the expression of ancient, deeply held values in western societies that are brought to bear on new problems. In reading *Forgotten Children*, one has the sense of watching a great plain of existence where centuries and communities exist in a non-temporal world and where parents and children are playing out their lives. Do we then have an odd form of whig history in which protection gets better because the objective conditions get worse?

If we are to take Pollock’s admonition seriously, what is one to say about the fact that in the discussion of discipline in schools (pp. 188-199) there is no reference to school records or secondary literature that surely must have more data about school life, including discipline and punishment, than diaries and memoirs? Of course, her neglect of school documents is not surprising given her contemptuous dismissal of the significance of schooling generally. Pollock’s failure to analyze the role of schooling in creating a modern concept of children is a serious failing and her lack of familiarity with modern studies of education and schooling, particularly the work of contemporary philosophers of education led her into confusing discipline and punishment in her discussion.

Despite all its flaws, I heartily recommend this book to all students of the history of childhood because it raises, intentionally or not, the questions that must be addressed both professionally as practitioners and intellectually as members of a community of discourse. The questions require empirical and conceptual investigations. We will not establish the truth but we should be able to clean up some muddy thinking and sloppy uses of evidence.

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Wilson, J. Donald (Eds.). *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History*. Vancouver: Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, University of British Columbia, 1984, 218 pp., \$10.00.

One would like to express some enthusiasm for a new publication in the field of Canadian educational history, such material being in short supply. But this particular volume serves little purpose at this time, save as a reminder to the participants of a few pleasant days spent at the West Coast in 1983. It is difficult to see Wilson's volume being used as a classroom textbook: the papers are much too limited in scope to hold the interest of the average university undergraduate. Physically, the book is neither attractive nor sturdy: the binding cannot stand much handling and the printed page is not kind to the eye. And why this fixation on long-winded titles? Can we not have something quite ordinary and straight-forward, such as Simon does with his, "Can Education Change Society?" Wilson's "Introduction" is not all that helpful either. Why a repetitive preview of each paper, as if the reader brings no background whatever to these essays? Let us get one thing clear at the outset: this book will be read only by those already in the discipline, even though the editor holds out much greater promise for it.

The finest work in the collection, head and shoulders above the others, is the wide-ranging essay prepared by Brian Simon of Leicester University, the only non-Canadian contributor. It should, of course, have been presented first. But the book's editor choose to place his own "Observations on Recent Trends" at the outset. The first few pages in Wilson's essay are merely a review of material which has upon occasion appeared elsewhere. Of real value here is Wilson's telling critique of the social control thesis — so popular during the 1970's — using appropriate examples from the British Columbian historical experience to denigrate the overwhelming Nineteenth Century educational bureaucracy. What is occurring, Wilson points out, is that interest has been moving away from politically tinged questions within the context of social history, to those with emphasis on "family strategies," as Wilson defines this category, and other related sub-fields. Wilson does serve his readership well in directing attention to where more work needs to be done in the history of education. The educational dimensions within working class history and intellectual history, for example, are not yet fully developed, he finds. Simon's reminder in the essay to follow, of "massive educational advances... in the tertiary sector" (p. 32) has, as well, stimulated educational historians to explore these roots. Sadly, none of the other essays in Wilson's new book seem to match the criteria for relevance which he himself has established.

Simon's essay, although somewhat out of place in this book, is important for the optimistic possibilities for social change imbedded in his analysis. He leads the reader on to a clear demonstration of man's capacity for movement, for acting on the environment, transforming it," (p. 46) all of which becomes, for the participating person, an educative experience. What an excellent point to commence looking at events in the history of education! Simon then seconds Wilson's earlier attack against the social control thesis. It is schooling which gives the learner a "modern outlook," the scientific, objective view of reality, dispelling "magic and superstition." With this grasp of reality, man, Simon reminds us, can bring about change in the environment and within himself. Simon closes by calling on his listeners and readers to recognize and rise to the potential which education offers. As one can see, this call for action does not fit comfortably with those papers of a more commonplace nature yet to follow.

In considering the content essays found within this book there are four worth describing in some depth.

James Love's "Anti-American Ideology and Education Reform in 19th Century Upper Canada," adds no new or significant interpretation of ideological perspectives in its view of Upper Canada. His debatable claim