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COMING OF AGE AND THE FAMILY IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

B. Gregory Bailey, Meaghan E. Bernard, Gregory Carrier,
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This article examines coming of age in medieval England through a very broad-based, multi-authored approach not normally found in the social sciences. Among other things, it examines what equated to legal ages for inheriting land and for criminal responsibility; the age-specific activities of young people, especially as revealed through proofs of ages; the spiritual framework of coming of age, particularly through the perspective of confirmation; and the introduction of young people to work in a practical sense and how this was probably bolstered morally through such things as fairy tales. The article also draws on comparative material from the Industrial Revolution. Preeminently, the article demonstrates the exciting potential for further work on how children became adults in medieval society.

Keywords: *England; medieval; children; family; adolescence; labor*

The novelty of this article is primarily a methodological one. It sprang from a graduate seminar on medieval children at the University of Alberta during the fall of 2006, in which eight students and one instructor participated. From the start, the

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intention was to pool the energies of the group into a common enterprise of creating a new sort of research statement, to try to get beyond the vast majority of historical studies based on one person's thoughts, whether it is an article, a chapter in an edited book, or a book itself. (Even in avowedly coauthored works, sections are often written by single authors.) Nor is this like the scientific model of a chief researcher surrounded by a coterie of research assistants, in which the driving force is very much generated by one individual despite the fact that a number of authors may be given. It is true that the undertaking grew out of the personal interests of the instructor in initially setting up the seminar, but it very quickly took on a life of its own through the particular interests of the students themselves, rather than being, say, a much more rigorously controlled scientific, or even social science, project. Certainly, at the very least, the intention here was to use a broader collection of minds than is normally the case in writing about history, and to see what transpired.

In the seminar, we started our considerations more generally around the issue of the family in medieval England and then focused more specifically around children in the family and, in particular, the vexed question of "coming of age," that is, when and how did children become adults in medieval society? These deliberations, of course, had much of their initial inspiration in Philippe Ariès's famous work on pre-modern children,¹ but the sheer complexities about when children entered the adult world, if indeed they could ever be considered children at all, soon dominated our discussions. In this regard, three main areas came to the fore: the legal distinction between childhood and adulthood, the spiritual separation of the same, and the transition from idle child to working adult (even if this came at a very early age). Also key was how the family was drawn into all three of these: the family as enemy in the case of legal cases, especially over wardship; as harassed accessories to the ecclesiastical process in the case of spiritual matters; and as motivator and beneficiary in the case of work. We also felt it important to try to get a comparative perspective. We limited ourselves geographically to England, but did consult the abundant literature about child labor during the Industrial Revolution as a source of ideas. Our key determination, indeed, was that, contrary to the view that childhood in the Middle Ages is largely a "hidden" topic, there are many very promising, and perhaps unexpected, avenues for future enquiry.

LEGAL ISSUES AND PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

In our own (in this case, Canadian) society, there are specific ages that young people have to attain before being legally able to do or participate in certain activities, whether, to name a few, it is voting (eighteen), having a driving license (sixteen), being able to buy alcohol (eighteen or nineteen, depending on the province), being liable for sentencing in court as an adult (fourteen), or being able to engage in sexual activity (fourteen).² Medieval England similarly had a range of legal age restrictions, but in the lay courts, these were usually much more narrowly restricted to land tenure. The highest age—twenty-one—was required of males to inherit land held in military tenure (i.e., knight's fees);³ for women inheriting the same type of land, it was fourteen if married, and sixteen if single. For land held in socage, more agricultural in nature, the age of majority for males was fifteen; whereas for burgage tenure, it was more complicated in that it depended on the ability of the person involved to manage his (the gender designation is quite deliberate here) own affairs,

but seems often to have been around twenty-one.⁴ The careful defining of such ages was not only to make sure that new heirs were mature enough to handle the duties of a property, whether as a fighting person or farmer or burgess, but also to allow certain financial perquisites, principally the profits of the heir's lands, to flow to the guardian of the minor—often the king himself. As an aid to unraveling some of the issues, we assembled a sample of fifty-seven cases from the year books of Edward II, as printed by the Selden Society, covering cases from 1307 to 1320,⁵ which involved squabbling over the guardianship of the heir. The majority of these were either lords competing for the wardship (36.8 percent of the fifty-seven cases) or lords versus the ward's kin (26.3 percent). The rest involved a miscellany of cases ranging from the guardian's control of the ward's marriage to issues of dower.

The world presented by these cases does seem to portray the "infants," the universal term for the wards, as little more than chattels, and their mothers as not much more. Mothers of the heir had rights of dower and of nurture (*nutricia*), although it is difficult to say what the latter meant. Walker has suggested that it simply indicated that the mother kept the child until the guardian was determined.⁶ One example in our sample that seems to suggest this concerns a double suit brought by Thomas Bardulf and by the bishop of Norwich against Jane, the wife of William of Caxstone. Both Thomas and the bishop sought the wardship of "the body" of Jane's son, John, the infant heir of Jane's deceased husband, William. It transpired that William's father, Robert of Caxstone, held land of both claimants, and Jane did not know to whom she should deliver the wardship of John. She told the court that she claimed nothing in the wardship except by nurture and pledged to render the infant (the age of whom is unfortunately not given) to whichever party the court decided held the rightful guardianship.⁷

In this case, the mother is almost portrayed as a threat to the feudal order, someone to be removed as soon as possible to preserve the essential link between the heir and his or her father, which the guardian stepped in to protect.⁸ The large number of cases in our sample pitting the kin against the lord/guardian would seem to reinforce this sentiment. One lord claimed rights of wardship against the four sisters of the heir, who argued that his claim was false on the grounds that their father had leased the lands to them during his life, and therefore the lands had not passed to the underage heir. In another case, two lords demanded that a mother relinquish the wardship of the bodies of her daughters, joint heirs of her late husband. Still other cases were brought against mothers who refused to yield the guardianship of their children to those lords who claimed the right was theirs.⁹

Not all wardship cases were as contentious as this, and widows were probably as a general rule allowed to be with their children until they were at least six or seven.¹⁰ Several cases in our sample justify guardianship of the heir by the mother by reason of nurture,¹¹ which suggests that things did not go totally the way of guardians. But the power of guardians was still extremely strong, particularly over the issue of arranging betrothals and marriages, which could occur at very young ages.¹² Although the children involved were not necessarily bound to carry through such contracts,¹³ over which presumably they had little say, the advantages of arranging such early marriages, for both financial and political reasons, imply that both parties felt the possibility of future annulment of the contract was low enough to justify the risk.¹⁴

Because marriage could be thrust on children at such a young age, it may seem surprising that in so many ways they were still considered "infants," the somewhat quaint word, to our ears, to describe people who could be as old as twenty and yet

not bound by contract or liable for certain kinds of punishment. The issue is at the heart of a very interesting case concerning a much more modest landowner than the ones we have just discussed. Here, in 1330, John, son of Walter of Langeley of Thrapston, brought “an assize of novel disseisin” against Roger Walrond, Thomas Cade, and Alice Cade (Thomas’ wife) for “1 messuage, 1 ½ acres of land, and 1 rood of meadow in Thrapston (Northamptonshire).” Roger, Thomas, and Alice sent their attorney to represent them, and that attorney stated that John had leased the three defendants the tenements “for the term of their three lives . . . and that they had done no wrong.” John alleged that he was underage when he made the agreement and that he was still underage. Presumably working from the knowledge that being “underage” nullified the contract, John had previously entered the tenements, through a window, and claimed his right to the property. At the first hearing, a written deed recording the agreement and dated February 2, 1330,¹⁵ was shown, to which the jury stated that John was fourteen years old when the deed was made. The justice in the case, Henry le Scrope, however, was clearly suspicious and ordered the case adjourned, although he noted that had he been absolutely sure of John’s infancy, he would have awarded him the right to the property immediately. Later, when the case reopened, John failed to prosecute and lost his case, and, indeed, it transpired that he had been twenty-three on February 2, 1330.¹⁶ Although this case involved someone falsely claiming to be a minor, it was clearly advantageous to be so to avoid consequences, as in a Derbyshire case, in which a young woman named Eleanor of Kniveton charged her brother, her uncle, and an unrelated man of forcibly taking charters and livestock from a property of hers at Bradley, Derbyshire, in 1329. After a very convoluted court process, in which the defendants were threatened with imprisonment, it was eventually judged that Eleanor had made a false complaint. But, instead of being punished with at least a fine for a very provocative and unwarranted action, she was forgiven “because she is under age.”¹⁷

Although minor status, especially in landholding, gave a certain immunity from consequences, this immunity was not unlimited. There does seem to have been a gradual hardening of attitudes around young people committing felonies during the fourteenth century, compared to the thirteenth century, when judges were allowed to show considerable leniency in punishment; at this earlier time, even children committing quite horrific cases of homicide might well be pardoned or let off with a whipping.¹⁸ The eyre of Kent (1313-1314) provides some rationale for this by pronouncing that anyone younger than the age of seven was considered not to have knowledge of “good and evil,” and for that reason could not be judged a felon. The same opinion, however, left the door open for harsher penalties for children seven and older. Thus, while settling on the punishment of an eighteen-year-old “enfaunt” found guilty of felony in the same eyre, Justice Henry Spigurnel recalled a case he had adjudicated at an earlier date. This involved an eleven-year-old “enfaunt” who had stolen “certain chattels” and had killed a child in the process. Spigurnel condemned the boy on the basis that he had concealed the body, leading Spigurnel to the conclusion that the boy had decided “of his [own] heinous malice” to kill the child.¹⁹ This case clearly became a powerful precedent, as later recorded in 1338 over the condemnation of a young girl:

Item a young girl of thirteen years of age was burnt because while she was a servant to a woman she killed her mistress: and it was found to be so and adjudged treason. And it was said by the old law [that is, before Spigurnel’s ruling] no one under age

Table 1
Events in the Lives of Children and Adolescents of Different Ages

	<i>Younger than 10</i>	<i>10-14</i>	<i>15-17</i>	<i>18-20</i>
Marriage	0	2	2	21
Fatherhood	0	1	5	31
Entering into land or property ownership	0	2	1	12
Business, or working for a lord or church authorities	0	1	5	23
Death of parents or other important relatives	5	2	1	23
Participation in long-distance travel	0	0	2	4
Mentioning of school (studying or being in school)	1	0	0	2

was hung, or suffered judgement of life or limb. But SPIGURNEL found that an infant of ten years of age [the original case, as indicated above, gave the boy's age as eleven years] killed his companion and concealed him; and he caused him to be hung, because by the concealment he showed that he knew how to distinguish between evil and good. And so malice makes up for age.²⁰

This hardening of the attitude to young people seven years and older and certainly those ten and older may have a lot to do with the system of frankpledge, fully established by at least the twelfth century, which required every adult male below the level of the aristocracy, who was twelve and older, to be organizing into tithings of ten to twelve "men," essentially self-policing units for more effective social control.²¹

The ambiguities between the strict ages of majority for landholding and a more fluid situation concerning what young people actually did and how they were held accountable are perhaps best encapsulated in the proofs of ages, a process through which juries testified as to the age of a potential heir. The proof-of-age inquests have been used for many different purposes by scholars, including, most recently, Bedell's dissection of the proofs concerning the nature of medieval memory and Lee's use of them for recollections of childbirth.²² Curiously, no one (even Bedell, who has performed the most detailed examination of proofs of age to date) has tried to use them as a cross-section of males who were coming of age themselves—that is, twenty years or younger—when the events they witnessed took place. Thus, if it were a male heir whose age of twenty-one or older was being verified, this would include all those men who were recorded as being forty-one years or younger when they testified at the inquest. If it were a married female, who, as noted above, could inherit at age fourteen, it would include all those men who claimed to be thirty-four or younger at the time of the inquest; if an unmarried female (inheriting at sixteen), it would include all those recorded as thirty-six or younger.²³ In such a way, using the printed proofs of age of the reigns of Edwards I and II (covering 1272-1327),²⁴ we were able to create a mini-sample of 146 men who were seemingly twenty or younger at the time of the event to which they were testifying.

Table 1 categorizes the various activities and events with which these 146 men associated the birth of the heir. Perhaps not surprisingly, five out of the six of those who had seemingly been very young at the birth of the heir, that is, younger than ten years old, remembered it through the death of a family member. Thus, in 1297 Robert Fraunceys remembered the birth of the heir when he was nine because "his father Simon died 15 days before."²⁵

The deaths of family members remained important memory markers for the older age groupings as well, but increasingly other, more "adult" matters began to impinge. The 10-14 age group included two cases of marriage. For example, in 1297 Peter de Polton, aged twenty-five, remembered the date of the birth of the female heir because in the same year "he married Cecily his wife, who is yet living, and since then he is sure 14 years have passed and more." If Peter's facts were accurate, he should have been about eleven when he was married. William of Darnhale, allegedly aged thirty-four years at the time of his testimony, also in 1297, recollected the time of the male heir's birth twenty-one years before, because "in the same year . . . he married Dulcie his wife, who still survives," making him thirteen at the time.²⁶

Nor were these necessarily early marriages to be consummated at a later date. In yet another testimony from 1297 (an extremely fruitful year for the survival of proofs of ages), Peter de Mareny, aged thirty-six, mentioned that his son, born around the same time as the male heir, would be twenty-two soon after the inquisition, making Peter around fourteen at his son's birth. Indications of early fatherhood continued into the 15-17 year group in table 1. Thus, again in 1297, William Waryn, "aged 30 years and more" and testifying to the age of a female heir, remembered the heir's birth because he had a daughter born soon after, named Denise, "who if she had lived would be 14 years old," making William himself possibly around sixteen at the time. Finally, in a very telling piece of testimony, William le Cerf (c. 1300) recollected that the male heir's father "was of such a tender age when the heir's mother was pregnant that it was commonly said he could not have begotten a child."²⁷

These references to young men starting their families early are also reflected in precocious starts to careers. John de Judon, testifying in 1297, said he remembered the birth of the heir when he "took a certain land to farm," possibly as early as fourteen. Roger Crescy testified in 1300 that, when he was about age seventeen, he was with (probably serving) a knight when the heir was born. Two jurors, testifying in one inquisition in 1302, had gone on long journeys at about age sixteen after the birth of the heir; one crossed the sea to France, and the other to Ireland, where he stayed a year.²⁸ A full range of these adult activities is clearly indicated in the 18-20 year group in table 1, from having families, in which 31 of the 116 cases (or 27 per cent) for this age group remembered the heir's age through births of their children, to undertaking various business or occupational activities. As examples of the latter, John de Conytone, testifying in 1311, "lent his house" at around age twenty. Richard Walter, testifying in 1315, alleged he "was a thresher at Hockingdenne" (Hockenden, near St. Mary Cray, Kent) when he was probably about nineteen, and Henry de Ardern (testifying in 1321) was a merchant with £100 of money, again at about age nineteen. Not all people in this group had reached their final occupation. Robert Buck, testifying in 1304 when he was forty-one, recollected the male heir's "exhibition" (probably the first showing after the birth, which occurred on August 25, 1283, according to one of the other jurors), because he had been at school at Clitheroe (Lancashire) and, on the previous June 25, was "so badly beaten there that he left the school," probably when he was nineteen or twenty.²⁹

It should be stressed, as Richard the thresher at Hockenden and perhaps William le Cerf indicate, that undoubtedly most of the jurors were not members of the knightly class,³⁰ and so were of a group that assumed adult activities at a much earlier age than the heirs for whom they were testifying, much as socage tenure, with an age of majority of fifteen, assumed that males of that age could run a farming

operation. As a result, many male wards classified as “infants,” although they were definitely learning a very adult craft as fighting men, perhaps very much deserved the appellation in that they had not yet proved themselves at their profession (much like students today embarking on an academic career). Otherwise, table 1 very much demonstrates an early start to adult life for most people in medieval society.

THE WARRIOR CHILD

This expectation of an early emergence from childhood is observed in other quarters. We decided here to examine confirmation, the spiritual equivalence of being drawn into the adult world. From our modern perspective, confirmation is something associated with puberty, but in the medieval world it seemingly occurred at a much earlier age. Medieval parents—in England at least—were expected to present their children for confirmation at a very early age indeed, normally ranging from one year to five.³¹ The rhetoric for this was phrased in urgent terms, as in a pronouncement about confirmation from Exeter in 1287:

Since in baptism we are regenerated to [spiritual] life, after baptism we are confirmed for the fight, because this is the struggle joined by us against the prince of darkneses. And therefore we strictly order the parish priests such that they should frequently warn their parishioners to prepare their baptized children as soon as possible to be confirmed. And lest it should happen because of parental neglect that they [the children] remain for a long time without confirmation, we decree that children within three years of birth receive the sacrament of confirmation.³²

Such sentiments became a common feature of church pronouncements concerning confirmation throughout the thirteenth century. The Council of Westminster, held in 1200, instructed parish priests to inform parents regularly of the necessity of having their children confirmed, so that they would be better able to be victorious in life and to oppose continually spiritual evils. The 1240 Statutes of Worcester likened the newly baptized to a “neophyte” and a “new soldier of Christ,” with the grace of confirmation being required to fight the devil more effectively. Parish priests, under pain of possible punishment if they did not discuss the matter every Sunday, were to warn parishioners always to have their children ready for confirmation. The circa 1258 Statutes of Wells were similarly couched in language of war, stating that the “prince of darkneses” was continually taunted by baptisms, and that only through confirmation could a “battle” against him be effectively waged.³³ Other later medieval texts meant for the laity contain similar themes of combating temptation and the devil. In 1357, John Thoresby, archbishop of York, emphasized how receiving confirmation makes one stronger and more steadfast in faith than before. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the confirmed are better able to “stand ogaynes the fend, and deadly syn.”³⁴ The *Babees Book*, a late fifteenth-century manual meant for the etiquette of middle-class children, includes a prayer before going to bed, wherein is emphasized the request to battle and be protected from the devil all night, through the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁵

The pressure put on parents was far from subtle. The 1240 Statutes of Worcester decreed that parish priests should keep a list of parents who had neglected to have their children confirmed, being ready to present this list to the bishop and to have the children in question ready to be confirmed as soon as possible. Actions barring delinquent

parents from entry to the parish church and the keeping of lists were recommended by the Statutes of Salisbury II (1238 x 1244), the Statutes of Wells (1258), and the Statutes of Winchester III (1262 x 1265), which also recommended for groups of neglectful parents to be gathered together and made to fast on bread and water for one day. The Statutes of Exeter II (1287) also demanded lists of the unconfirmed, additionally requiring neglectful parents to fast on bread and water every Saturday until their children had been confirmed.³⁶ The fact that bishops tended to come irregularly to communities must have increased parental uncertainty and a rush to have their children ready when the bishop did come round. A very public ritual was enacted with the young children, who, when presented to the bishop by parents and godparents, had chrism placed on their forehead, which was covered by a cloth tied around their heads. This cloth was to be worn by the child for a period varying from three to eight days, after which the parish priest would unwrap the cloth from around the child's head, wash away the chrism on the child's forehead with holy water from the font, and then very publicly burn the cloth.³⁷

This concern to make very young children in effect spiritually adult has resonances with Philippe Ariès's famous statement that childhood in effect did not exist in medieval societies.³⁸ But it also demonstrates what seems to have been a very strong attempt at increasing social control by the church in the thirteenth century, adding to the "panoptic" power already inherent in confession, but extending it over the family.³⁹ This vision is Foucault in reverse, because the late medieval church began to lose much of this power over families as confirmation became a rite more associated with puberty or at least more associated with the child's ability to understand what the ceremony was about.⁴⁰

THE WORKING CHILD

Our third and most intensive focus was on how children were introduced to work. If there was a strong attempt to make children more spiritually adult in the thirteenth century, do we see anything like this in terms of their contribution to family work and income? A defendant in a case from 1530, for example, claimed he started working with his father "at plough and cart" by age four.⁴¹ There is nothing inherently improbable in this statement, and we can probably see youngsters, both male and female, helping out with household and other chores right from an early age. But can we add more precision to this statement? Here we are going to look at the issue of the child's introduction to work from a number of perspectives: how it looks from the point of view of medieval illuminated manuscripts (or at least one of the most famous of them), how this ties in with some manuscript evidence, and how it looks from coroners' roles, in which children's activities at the point of their deaths are sometimes indicated. Going further afield, we will examine some of the moral framework in which such children's work was posed, particularly as revealed from folk-tale evidence, and finally we can compare child labor in medieval England with that by children in the better documented era of the Industrial Revolution.

To begin, we examined the illuminations in the early fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter for possible images about childhood and children at work. The Psalter is, of course, one of the most heavily mined medieval documents for images about the Middle Ages, being "viewed as a pictorial repository of traditional English life and customs" since the eighteenth century.⁴² Yet the use of the Psalter and other medieval illuminated manuscripts has been curiously "stand-alone," in that such illustrations are



Figure 1. Stone Slinging and Harrowing Scene from the Luttrell Psalter.

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seldom integrated effectively with other sources of evidence.⁴³ What we have done here is to concentrate on the series of arable farming scenes from the Psalter, starting with the ploughing scene on folio 170 through to the scene of the cart hauling away the harvested sheaves on folio 173v. In between, there are scenes of a man sowing the seed after the ploughing (fo. 170v), a male slinging stones at crows plus another leading a harrowing horse (fo. 171; see figure 1), a man and a woman breaking big clods of earth (fo. 171v), two women removing weeds from the growing crop (fo. 172), three women reaping the crop and a man behind them tying sheaves (fo. 172v), and a number of men stacking the sheaves (fo. 173; the sheaves were presumably those shown being carted away on fo. 173v.). Generally speaking, as the harvesting year progresses through the pages, the laborers seem to grow older. The ploughman and his driver in the opening scene appear to be in the prime of their lives, whereas the seemingly stout women reaping (on fo. 172v) are accompanied by an elderly-looking man binding the sheaves, and the laborers stacking the sheaves in the following scene appear to be old and quite worn out. These scenes almost appear to be not only a representation of a progression through the life of the crop, from the young and fertile soil receiving the immature seeds to the fully grown and ripe grains that are being plentifully harvested in preparation for the upcoming winter, but also contain a tinge of allegory portraying the progression of human life through its own “seasons.”⁴⁴

The one scene that most disturbs a smooth “progression of life” interpretation of this set of cultivation scenes is that including the stone slinger. As figure 1 shows, he may be an adult, and indeed perhaps considerable skill was needed for the job, but here at least we have evidence that may show something of the age profile of jobs right across this set of cultivation scenes. The farming accounts from lords’ demesnes are particularly useful in this regard, and here we concentrate on two manors from the estates of Westminster Abbey, that is, Westerham, Kent, and Launton, Oxfordshire, for which accounts during the period from 1267 to the early 1350s were examined.⁴⁵ Payments to the *famuli* (manorial servants) were routinely recorded in these accounts, sometimes even for stone slingers, although they are not as frequently recorded in manorial accounts as other workers such as the ploughmen. At Westerham, however, the hiring of a stone slinger (*rocherdus*—“rook scarer”)⁴⁶ is recorded year by year from 1313-1314 to 1335-1336.⁴⁷

The list of “liveries,” or grain payments given to the *famuli*, for the first of these years (1313-1314) provides a pretty good sense of where the rook scarer fit in the demesne servant hierarchy. In the order in which they were listed, the first group—the harvest overseer, four ploughmen, one carter, one cowherd, and one shepherd—received one quarter (eight bushels) of grain every ten weeks throughout the entire year. Next in the list, one woman (*mulier*) received one quarter every twelve weeks throughout the entire year for winnowing threshed grain and making *potagium* (probably oats porridge, as indicated in other abbey accounts) for the *famuli*. In the last group, in terms of generosity of payment, the “boy” (*garcio*) looking after the ewes and lambs from Epiphany (January 6) to the feast of St. Augustine (May 26) throughout twenty weeks received one quarter every sixteen weeks. One swineherd (*porcarius*) was given five bushels of grain for ten weeks from the eve of St. Mary Magdalen (July 21) to St. Michael (September 29) for watching the pigs during the harvest, a rate again of one quarter of grain for every sixteen weeks. Finally, bringing up the rear, the rook scarer (*rocherdus*) was given one bushel of grain for a fortnight, again equivalent to one quarter for sixteen weeks.⁴⁸

As the order of the listing might suggest, the rook scarer was low person on the totem pole. The account makes clear that his job was very temporary (two weeks) and paid at the lowest rate. He did not receive a small cash wage in addition to the grain, which both the *garcio* tending the ewes and lambs and the swineherd did.⁴⁹ It seems likely, then, that rook scaring was a job for neophytes on the demesne (like dishwashing in a restaurant today). Unfortunately, no age is given for any of these people, but perhaps like boys at Montaillou in southern France, who started work as shepherds at age twelve, these rook scarers were of a similar age.⁵⁰ The job next up on the hierarchy was likely that of the stone slinger’s companion in figure 1, that is, leading the harrowing horse. Thus, for example, a *garcio* at Launton, Oxfordshire, in 1329-1330 was paid four bushels for eight weeks “for going to the harrow because the carter was doing the seeding,”⁵¹ again a rate of one quarter every sixteen weeks. Here, a young person was likely stepping in for the carter, who normally did the job in addition to his transport work. The interchangeability between rook scaring and leading the harrowing horse was indicated in a 1315-1316 account for Battersea, Surrey, where a grain livery of one quarter for sixteen weeks was given to “a boy harrowing at the wheat and oats sowings and chasing crows from the corn.”⁵² Indeed, the 1313-1314 Westerham and other similar “lists” might indicate a sort of career path that, for males, would eventually lead from rook scaring and harrowing through part-time animal

caring to being a full-time ploughman, carter, cowherd, or shepherd. It is surprising, in fact, that so little has been done to map out the potential “career paths” of young people from these documents, because there are literally thousands of such accounts existing for medieval England that give this type of information.⁵³

Finally, if one looks carefully, the accounts sometimes suggest subterranean layers of child or adolescent labor, often found on out-of-the-way places in the documents. One such was found in the accounts of Launton for the late 1280s. In the “Small Expenses” sections of the accounts for these years, there are surprisingly full descriptions of the people who were at the Christmas and Easter parties for the *famuli*, and for which the lord—the abbot of Westminster—supplied ale.⁵⁴ The largest number attending occurred in 1289-1290, when it was said that 5s. was spent on Christmas (1289) and Easter Sunday (1290) for

the sergeant, the reeve, the granger, the four famuli ploughmen, one boy of theirs, one carter, one shepherd, one boy of his, one cowman, his boy, one miller, his boy, the dairymaid, her maidservant, the smith, the swineherd and the harvest overseer.⁵⁵

This list of twenty goes far beyond the number of *famuli* normally recorded. Of particular interest are the four boys (*garciones*) and the one maidservant (*ancilla*), none of whom appear elsewhere in the account and seem likely to have been younger related members of the adult *famuli*. One gets here the strong impression that adult workers on the demesne were regularly accompanied by younger members of their families helping out.⁵⁶ This extended to other forms of work. As Orme pointed out in the commentary on one of the illustrations of his book, which shows what looks to be a very young boy shooing away ducks from a pond,⁵⁷ such activities, perhaps a mixture of work and play, were a preliminary perhaps to a job like the gooseherd shown in the Luttrell Psalter (fo. 169v).

It was this mixture of work and play in children’s activities that prompted us to do a reexamination of the coroners’ rolls to see what children were actually doing when they died.⁵⁸ Only a sample from the printed sources available at our university was attempted here,⁵⁹ mainly drawing on inquests from London and Buckinghamshire, but it was felt a fresh look might be useful by concentrating on the entries that actually gave the age of the child. Altogether, sixty-nine child deaths up to the age of sixteen were recorded, mostly for the fourteenth century. Nearly two-thirds of these (forty-three) occurred when the children were three or younger, the remaining deaths being spread fairly evenly across the age range from four to sixteen. Similarly, in keeping with the young age of most of them, forty-nine seem to have been at play when they died. Thus, on April 7, 1267, Emma, a two year old living in Bedfordshire, left her home and went out onto the street, where she fell into a ditch and was drowned by “misadventure”; her mother found her a short time later.⁶⁰ A similar case involving an older child occurred on July 22, 1301, when

Richard, who was 8 years of age, was walking . . . across London Bridge to school, he hung by his hands in play from a certain beam on the side of the bridge, so that, his hands giving way, he fell into the water and was drowned.⁶¹

Only four were doing some kind of work, but the young age of some of them is striking. For example, the youngest was seemingly a two year old, who was collecting apples near a well in 1389 when he fell in and drowned.⁶² Similarly, in 1324

a five-year-old London boy was working as a laborer or servant in a household, when he tried to steal a “parcel of wool” by hiding it under his cap; his master’s wife hit him “with her right hand under his left ear” causing him to die;⁶³ and in the same city in 1340, a nine-year-old girl was filling a pot of water when she fell into the Thames and drowned.⁶⁴ The final work-related death involved a fourteen-year-old girl who accidentally impaled herself on a sickle in 1374.⁶⁵ Finally, some of the deaths did not occur while the child was working, but the child seems nonetheless to have been normally in a work situation, as in the case of a nine-year-old Buckinghamshire girl who was apparently a “servant” when she drowned in 1376.⁶⁶

Sometimes, the deaths of children recorded in the coroners’ rolls point to other children working. This was particularly the case of girls babysitting other children. A very interesting case of this from Buckinghamshire is as follows:

On Saturday 16 December 1384 Sabrina, wife of Robert Attehurne, gave Henry, aged ten weeks, to Agnes Attehurne, his sister, aged six years, to look after by the fire. Henry fell into the fire and died, through Agnes’s fault.⁶⁷

There was obviously some suspicion that Agnes had tossed her brother into the fire, because five years later, at Michaelmas 1389, the sheriff was ordered to bring her to court “to answer for her felony.” The case is doubly interesting because it indicates that a certain responsibility—akin to that of an adult—had been given to a six-year-old child and that, having failed in that responsibility in a particularly egregious way, the child was to be tried for it almost as an adult would be, matching the harder attitude toward children’s misdoings mentioned above. Indeed, it is also striking how little condemnation there was of parents for what we might consider today as criminal neglect.

In short, children as old as, say, twelve might well find themselves in a situation in which they were given adult-like responsibilities, with adult-like consequences if they failed, which they routinely mixed with periods of (mostly?) unsupervised play. This balance of work and play might clearly be contingent on the work opportunities open to them. The harvest was well-known as a time when all available hands would be put to work,⁶⁸ except perhaps those considered too young to take part, as in an August 1380 Buckinghamshire case in which a three-year-old boy and a four-year-old girl were crushed to death by the collapse of a wall under which they were sitting, while their father was “reaping in the vill’s field.”⁶⁹ But, outside this period, work, especially for prepubescent children, might have depended on the general economic situation. There certainly does not seem to have been any reservations about letting such children work if there were opportunities for them.⁷⁰

The mixture of work and play in a manner far less segregated than in society today most certainly resulted in certain cultural forms that have carried over from the medieval period to our own time. One of these cultural forms is storytelling, especially stories that have to do with work. We accordingly decided to look at the issue of children’s work in the medieval period through the media of fairytales, sagas, and ballads. Throughout Europe, there are literally thousands of folk and fairy tales, which have been divided into almost 2,500 subtypes according to the Aarne-Thompson classification system.⁷¹ According to Joseph Szoverffy, “Perhaps half of the motifs included in the Motif-Index must be regarded as material of medieval provenance.”⁷² The tales, sagas, and ballads that include or feature children are

redolent with sentiments about the nature of young workers and typically carry a subliminal but decidedly firm message reinforcing socially acceptable work ethics.

The traditional work of girls is central to many children's stories. Snow White, although a princess in exile, attempts to stay hidden from her wicked stepmother by becoming a willing maid for the seven dwarfs.⁷³ In the 1816/1818 Grimm Brothers' version of the "The Children of Hameln," a young babysitter clutching a child witnesses the invasion of rodents, then rushes to the village to warn the inhabitants.⁷⁴ Indeed, it is interesting that the most popular fairytales involve girls engaged in work: "Cinderella," "Snow White," and "Little Red Riding Hood" are the prime examples.⁷⁵ Red Riding Hood, as a courier, reminds us of the dangers of children in the workforce, because in some of the early renditions of this tale, the wolf kills her.⁷⁶ Cinderella, in some versions, like Snow White, is a princess and the victim of an ill-tempered, authoritarian stepmother. Both are reduced to drudgery until the amorphous Prince Charming comes to their rescue.⁷⁷ All three tales, however, point to the idea of children's diligence, or the intention of diligence.

Other stories portray young girls avoiding altogether the prospect of work. In the Swedish tale "The Girl Who Could Spin Gold from Clay and Long Straw," a lazy girl is forced to go onto the roof of the family home with a spinning wheel "in order that all the world might be witness of her sloth." When a prince appears and asks why the girl is on the roof, the mother tells him, "Aye, she sits there to let all the world see how clever she is. She is so clever that she can spin gold out of clay and long straw." The girl is then spirited away to the prince's castle to perform her magic and, one would suspect, supplement the royal coffers. A hideous but magical character appears, and offers her a pair of gloves that will allow her to weave gold from straw and clay. To acquire the gloves, however, she must guess his name or she will have to marry him. Sheer chance allows her to discover the creature's name, keep the gloves and weave gold, marry the prince, and avoid work forever after.⁷⁸

This last story has parallels with those describing lazy boys.⁷⁹ Whereas girls, however, are generally blessed with beauty and sweet natures, boys often possess a kind of abnormality that makes them extraordinary workers. The smallness and cleverness of Thumbling,⁸⁰ for example, serve as attributes, whereas the extraordinary size of Tom Hickathrift gives him great strength, a characteristic also found in Pwyll Prince of Dyved, the boy of the Celtic legend.⁸¹ The story of Tom Hickathrift opens with a description of his laziness, his voracious appetite, and the fact that he grows to eight feet tall by the time he is ten. After considerable nagging by his mother Tom finally begins working. His first task involves picking up "twenty-hundred weight" of straw and carrying it home. Word of this strength circulates, and his services are soon in demand. When working for a woodcutter, he lifts an entire tree and carries it away. Then a brewer employs him to deliver huge volumes of beer to customers. Another local giant waylays him, however, and attempts to steal the shipment. Tom, of course, defeats the giant, takes control of his land, and establishes an estate. In addition, he gives some of the land to local peasants, which helps him become an important man of the community.⁸²

"Lazy Jack" is another English tale in which a widow nags her son to contribute to the household income. He reluctantly goes to work for a farmer, is paid in barter, but loses his pay. He then becomes a cow keeper to earn milk, but the milk goes sour. He works for another farmer to earn cheese, which quickly spoils. He tries laboring for a baker and is paid with a tomcat, which runs away. A butcher then employs him,

yet the meat he receives for wages soon spoils. Finally, he returns to the cow keeper vocation and is paid with a donkey. (The cow-keeping aspect of the story has particular resonance with the seemingly young animal keepers indicated in the medieval accounts above.) To bring the donkey home safely, he carries it on his shoulders. Fortunately for Jack, the king's mute daughter, who has never laughed in her life, sees this and bursts out laughing. The king is so pleased he gives Jack his daughter's hand in marriage.⁸³ Here, we see an example of folklore reinforcing the idea that work, diligence, and sheer chance can result in good fortune and happy endings.

The fifteenth-century English ballad "Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough, and William of Cloudesley" presents a more realistic view of a boy's work as a village swineherd with the description of the young swineherd seemingly about to witness a hanging.

A lytle boy stod them amonge,
And asked what meant that gallow-tre;
They sayde, "To hange a good yeaman,
Called Wyllyam of Cloudeslé."

That lytle boye was the towne swyne-heard,
And kept there Alyce swyne;
Full oft he had sene Cloudeslé in the wodde,
And geven hym there to dyne.⁸⁴

Along with the idea of community employment, this ballad implies danger in children's work, because mother sows in particular could be exceedingly protective of their young. Moreover, this passage reinforces those excerpts from medieval accounts about the hiring of swineherds (*porcarii*) at wages that suggest that they were little more than adolescents.

We see, therefore, in sagas, fairy tales, and ballads significant evidence to suggest it was certainly not unknown for boys and girls of a very young age to be found working at a variety of jobs. These tasks appear in literary forms to have included efforts to advance the well-being of both family and community. Some work was dangerous, and some tedious, but all these realities of employment appear to have involved a kind of baptism, or rite of passage, leading to better work habits, eventual maturity, and a greater ability to achieve happy, prosperous lives.

In short, there are abundant signs that it was certainly not unknown for boys and girls of a very young age to be found working and that various tales provide an indirect commentary and a kind of moral compass for it. Two questions that arise are How usual was such work among children, and What was the rationale behind it? To get some sense of this, it is perhaps helpful to compare the medieval period with that period with which child labor is most associated, the Industrial Revolution. There is now a very sizable literature associated with child labor in the industrial era.⁸⁵ One thing of particular value that this literature supplies are personal accounts of the workers themselves, as in John Burnett's extremely useful collection of such accounts, for which there are no equivalents from the medieval period. These give much useful information about when children were first put to work and the motivation for doing so. Thus, an anonymous navy boy born in 1820 recalls that "the first work I ever did was to mind two little lads for a farmer. I drew them about in a little cart, for which I got my breakfast and a penny a day."⁸⁶ Some children were drawn early into an industrial setting, as in the case of Lucy Luck, born in 1848, who recalled that when she went

into the silk mills to work at eight years of age, she “was too little to reach my work, and so had to have what was called a wooden horse to stand on.”⁸⁷

The Lucy Luck story emphasizes what has generally been seen as an underlying, and in many ways novel, characteristic of the Industrial Revolution, namely, that it drew such young labor out of the domestic sphere into manufacturing and other areas.⁸⁸ It is likely that this distinction is overdrawn, because in the medieval period child labor as a necessity was often required to move, especially when going into servanthood. What does seem clear in the case of the Industrial Revolution is that such child labor was seen as necessary to family survival, as was poignantly recalled by William Lanceley, a house steward born in 1854. After his first year away from the home at work, he returned to make his contribution to the family economy:

Even the small sum of £8 I saved during the first year and took it home (it was paid yearly and not in advance), handing it over with pride to my mother. She had been left a widow with nine children, the eldest eighteen years of age, and to make matters worse my father had died in debt. I can still see her face when she took it and then, giving me £2 back, said, “I cannot take it all, lad.”

“But mother,” I pleaded, “you must want it and I can get plenty of tips to keep me.” On leaving I put the £2 quietly on the cottage table where I knew she would find it.⁸⁹

Although the children of such female-headed households were sent to work earlier, typically between the ages of five and nine,⁹⁰ such pressures on children to work were well enough known even in families with working fathers. Here, low adult male wages were often seen as the problem. Another anonymous navvy stated that his father was a laborer who made “nine shillings a week at the best of times; but often his wages were reduced to seven shillings.” This was an inadequate wage for a family with six surviving children on which to survive. Thomas Wood, an engineer born in 1822, was the oldest of ten children, many of whom worked. He stated, “Those who were working ranged from 1s. 3d. to 5s. per week in their earnings. Father . . . was a handloom weaver, whose earnings did not average 10s. per week.”⁹¹

But to posit that these sorts of seemingly desperate family situations provided much of the driving force for child labor and perhaps for the Industrial Revolution as a whole, as argued by Humphries in particular,⁹² is putting the cart before the horse, as in fact Cunningham suggested in his well-known 1990 article, in which he questioned how much children were actually employed.⁹³ Employment opportunities had to be available before children could work. When that employment was available, as Tuttle has argued, “During industrialization the child generated income for the family for at least ten years instead of depleting it.”⁹⁴ It also—critically—provided the economic base for the marked population increase that featured in the period of 1750 to 1850 in particular.⁹⁵

Why these observations are valuable for the medieval period is that it, too, experienced its own economic surge, called the “Commercial Revolution,”⁹⁶ particularly during the thirteenth century, which likely shared many of the demographic and social characteristics of the later Industrial Revolution. Although it is much more dimly perceived, the labor of women and children was likely mobilized in ways analogous to those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹⁷ It has been argued that such employment was critical to a surge in family income, which underlay the marked thirteenth-century population increase.⁹⁸ Although there are certainly dangers of anachronism here, closer comparison with the Industrial Revolution period might provide useful conceptual frameworks for examining this earlier period.

CONCLUSION

One reviewer of Nicholas Orme's book, *Medieval Children*, recently stated,

Overall, Orme's study investigates almost every conceivable facet of childhood in the Middle Ages. The fact he must draw on such a constricted range of sources perhaps shows how little imaginative influence childhood had during the period.⁹⁹

This is a very narrow view of the potential of the subject. Indeed, the work on medieval "coming of age" and medieval children in general has only begun. There is a wealth of material to be mined in depth, particularly in manorial accounts or even more indirectly in such things as the ample body of folk tale material. Reworking already studied sources of material through different perspectives also has its place, as well as comparisons throughout time, as indicated here through the issue of confirmation and our short examination of child labor during the Industrial Revolution. This is not, as the above review suggests, simply collecting various bits and pieces to make a story that can never be told as clearly as for other, mostly later, periods, but marshaling what in many ways is a unique set of sources to illuminate the issue of children's lives and culture throughout time as a whole. It has to be done with ingenuity and a willingness to look further afield than we have at present. It is hoped that this exercise, simply by stretching the pool of ideas beyond that which would normally be the case in what effectively tends to be a single-authored domain, has shown some of these possibilities.

NOTES

1. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962; originally *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*, 1960).

2. Any number of Canadian publications can supply this information, but the last is eerily reminiscent of the medieval situation in which a married woman aged fourteen could inherit land: see Government of Canada, "Canada's Legal Age of Consent to Sexual Activity (PRB99-3E)," <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/ParlLigner/Highlighter.aspx?Query=legal+age+&lang=e&url=http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/prb993-e.htm>.

3. For a good discussion of how the age of majority of twenty-one for military tenures gradually settled around the age of twenty-one by about the eleventh century in northwestern Europe, see T. E. James, "The Age of Majority," *American Journal of Legal History* 4, no. 1 (1960): esp. 24-28.

4. As implied in Elaine Clark, "City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England," *American Journal of Legal History* 34 (1990): 177, table 2.

5. *Year Books of Edward II*, 24 vols., ed. F. W. Maitland et al. (London: Selden Society, vols. 17-104, 1903-1988).

6. Sue Sheridan Walker, "Widow and Ward: The Feudal Law of Child Custody in Medieval England," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976): 107-18. Walker cited two late thirteenth-century cases for this: see 113 n. 29.

7. *Year Books of Edward II*, 13:178-83.

8. Noël James Menuge, "A Few Home Truths: The Medieval Mother as Guardian in Romance and Law," in *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. Noël James Menuge (Woodbridge, N.J.: Boydell, 2000); and Ann Ighe, "Replacing the Father—Representing the Child: A Few Notes on the European History of Guardianship," in *Less Favored—More Favored: Proceedings from a Conference on Gender in European Legal History, 12th—19th Centuries*, ed. Grethe Jacobsen, Hell Vogt, Inger Dübeck, and Heide Wunder (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 2005), 6, http://www.kb.dk/kb/publikationer/fundogforskning/online/artikler/12_Ighe.pdf.

9. *Year Books of Edward II*, 12:236, 18:89, 21:97-99, 23:123.
10. Walker, "Widow and Ward," 106.
11. *Year Books of Edward II*, 13:33, 17:9, 24:20.
12. See, for example, Sue Sheridan Walker, "Free Consent and Marriage of Feudal Wards in Medieval England," *Journal of Medieval History* 8 (1982): 125-26, for a case of a male heir being married at four or five and the difficulties that arose when he later rejected his bride.
13. On this issue, see especially Walker, "Free Consent."
14. On the seemingly low level of annulments of child marriages, see R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 98-99.
15. There was some dispute as to the date, which the document itself indicated was in 1329, but which the jurors said in fact was 1330, a result perhaps of the fact that the regnal year had just turned (on January 25) from 3 Edward III to 4 Edward III.
16. *The Eyre of Northamptonshire, 3-4 Edward III A.D. 1329-1330*, 2 vols., ed. Donald W. Sutherland (London: Selden Society, vols. 97-98, 1983), 2:719.
17. William Craddock Bolland, ed., *Select Bills in Eyre, A.D. 1292-1333* (London: Selden Society, vol. 30, 1914), 124.
18. Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 323; and Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), 25.
19. *The Eyre of Kent, 6 and 7 Edward II A.D. 1313-14*, 3 vols., ed. Frederic William Maitland, Leveson William Vernon Harcourt, and William Craddock Bolland (London: Selden Society, vols. 24, 27, and 29, 1910-1913), 1:109, 1:148-49. Orme, *Medieval Children*, 323-24, noted that Spigurnel seemingly had a more tolerant attitude toward the crimes of children earlier in his career.
20. *Year Books of the Reign of Edward the Third, Years XI and XII*, ed. and trans. Alfred J. Horwood (London: Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, HMSO, 1885), 626-27.
21. William Alfred Morris, *The Frankpledge System* (New York: Longman, 1910), esp. ch. 1; H. R. T. Summerson, "The Structure of Law Enforcement in Thirteenth Century England," *American Journal of Legal History* 23 (1979); and Orme, *Medieval Children*, 322.
22. John Bedell, "Memory and Proof of Age in England 1272-1327," *Past and Present*, no. 162 (February 1999); and Becky R. Lee, "A Company of Men and Women: Men's Recollections of Childbirth in Medieval England," *Journal of Family History* 27 (2002).
23. For this exercise, of course, it was necessary that the inquisition give the age of the jurors, which tended to become increasingly common through the latter years of Edward I and during all the reign of Edward II. The precision of the ages of the men testifying was often somewhat loose, in that, for example, it would sometimes be recorded that a juror was "36 or more," "about 30," or "about 40." Nonetheless, for the purposes of organizing the data, the stated age, even if approximate, has been used. So, in the examples just given, it was assumed that these men were thirty-six, thirty, and forty years old respectively when they gave their testimony.
24. As taken from the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* (hereafter, *CIPM*), vols. 2-6 (London: HMSO, 1906-1913).
25. *CIPM*, 3:334.
26. *CIPM*, 3:328, 3:336.
27. *CIPM*, 3:324, 3:328, 3:499.
28. *CIPM*, 3:331, 3:495, 4:77. In this case, both men were recorded as being forty when they were testifying to the heir's birth, but because the heir himself was allegedly twenty-four at the time of the proof, it would indicate that both were sixteen or thereabouts when they made their journeys.
29. *CIPM*, 5:205, 5:359, 6:204, 4:171-72.
30. Bedell thought most were probably peasants, although it is difficult to be categorical here, because clues about status or occupation were rarely given: see Bedell, "Memory and Proof of Age," 15.
31. *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church II. A.D. 1205-1313 II*, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 1:31, 1:71, 1:298-99, 1:369, 1:441, 1:453, 1:591, 1:703, 2:989; see also Orme, *Medieval Children*, 218.

32. Translated by us from the Latin in *Councils and Synods*, 2:989.
33. *Councils and Synods*, 1:31, 1:298-99, 1:591.
34. John Thoresby [et al.], *The Lay Folks' Catechism; Or, the English and Latin Versions of Archbishop Thoresby's Instruction for the People; Together with a Wycliffe Adaptation of the Same, and Corresponding Canons of the Council of Lambeth* (London: Early English Text Society, 1901), 64-65.
35. *The Babees' Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall's Texts by Edith Rickert* (New York: Cooper Square, 1896), 156-57.
36. *Councils and Synods*, 1:298-99, 1:369, 1:591, 1:703, 2:989.
37. Although most of the statutes mentioned above indicate three days, John Mirk, writing in the early fifteenth century, suggested eight: John Mirk, *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests* (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1974), 102-4. For a good description of the ceremony itself, see Orme, *Medieval Children*, 220.
38. "In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 128).
39. This idea is, of course, drawn from Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991; originally *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, 1973).
40. For example, see Orme, *Medieval Children*, 218-19.
41. *Report of Cases from the Time of Henry VIII*, 2 vols., ed. J. H. Baker (London: Selden Society, vols. 120 and 121, 2003-2004), 2:316.
42. Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 10.
43. A good example of this in an otherwise excellent work can be found in Nicholas Orme's *Medieval Children*. The book includes 125 illustrations, mostly from medieval English and continental representations of children and childhood, but the images seem to exist as a parallel but unconnected commentary to the text.
44. For similar thoughts, see Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 134-35, 137-39.
45. The references that follow to the manuscript sources from Westminster Abbey are from notes taken from these documents that we have here at our university.
46. For example, see John L. Fisher, *A Medieval Farming Glossary of Latin and English Words* (London: National Conference of Local History, 1968), 30 (under "Rokherde").
47. Accounts at Westerham generally started at September 30 of one year and ended at September 30 of the next.
48. Westminster Abbey Muniments (hereafter, WAM) 26411, m. 1v.
49. Both of these received 6d. in addition to their grain wages; WAM 26411, m. 2r.
50. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Vintage, 1979; originally *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, 1975), 73, 215-16.
51. "In liberatione j garcionis euntis ad herciam per viij septimanas, iiij bus. eo quod carectarius seminator totius seminis"; WAM 15338, m. 2v.
52. "In liberatione j garcionis herciantis tempore seminis frumenti & avenae & fugantis cornos extra bladum"; WAM 27508, m. 1v.
53. For the number of extant accounts, see Bruce M. S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30-33.
54. The supplying of ale is indicated specifically in the 1285-1286 account in the "Expenses for the Steward and Other Things" section, WAM 15297, m. 2r.
55. "In expensis servientis, prepositi, grangiarii, iiij famularum carucarum, j garcionis eorundem, j carectarii, j bercarii, j garcionis eiusdem, j vaccarii, garcionis sui, j molendinarii, garcionis sui, daie, ancille sue, fabri, porcarii, & messoris diebus Nativitatis domini & Pasche, vs.>"; WAM 15300, m. 1r (in the "Minutae Expensae" section).
56. To the point that many activities should have been seen as family enterprises, particularly in the case of millers, see John Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy: England 1300-1540*

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 238-40, for what seems to have been a family enterprise surrounding the hired miller for the double water mill of Feering, Essex, in the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century.

57. Orme, *Medieval Children*, 307.

58. Again, examination of these rolls by scholars is not a new thing; see especially Barbara Hanawalt, *The Ties That Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

59. These were *Select Cases from the Coroners' Rolls A.D. 1265-1413: With a Brief Account of the History of the Office of the Coroner*, ed. Charles Gross (London: Selden Society, vol. 9, 1896); *Calendar of Coroners' Rolls of the City of London, A.D. 1300-1378*, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe (London: Richard Clay & Sons, 1913); *The London Eyre of 1244*, ed. Helena M. Chew and Martin Weinbaum (Leicester, UK: London Record Society, vol. 6, 1970); and *Inquests and Indictments from Late Fourteenth Century Buckinghamshire: The Superior Eyre of Michaelmas 1389 at High Wycombe*, ed. Lesley Boatwright (Chippenham, UK: Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1994).

60. *Select Cases from the Coroners' Rolls*, 5.

61. *Calendar of Coroners' Rolls . . . of London*, 25. The oldest child in the sample dying at play was a fourteen-year-old boy, who in 1383 "went to [the] . . . garden to play with a black foal . . . which struck him with its feet"; *Inquests and Indictments*, 62.

62. *Inquests and Indictments*, 115.

63. *Calendar of Coroners' Rolls . . . of London*, 83.

64. *Ibid.*, 252-53.

65. *Inquests and Indictments*, 18-19.

66. *Ibid.*, 25.

67. *Ibid.*, 59-60.

68. For example, Sandy Bardsley, "Women's Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England," *Past and Present*, no. 165 (November 1999): 4-5.

69. *Inquests and Indictments*, 43-44.

70. John Langdon and James Masschaele, "Commercial Activity and Population Growth in Medieval England," *Past and Present*, no. 190 (February 2006): esp. 69-72; and John Langdon, "Minimum Wages and Unemployment Rates in Medieval England: The Case of Old Woodstock, Oxfordshire 1256-1357" (Edmonton, Alberta).

71. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958).

72. Joseph Szoverffy, "Some Notes on Medieval Studies and Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore* 73 (1960): 139; see also K. M. Briggs, "The Transmission of Folk-Tales in Britain," *Folklore* 79 (1968): 89. Assessing the nature of accuracy in oral tradition, the author explained that "the plot and many of the details of folk stories turn up in different places and at different times remarkably unchanged."

73. Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, "Snow White," in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. Jack Zipes (New York: Bantam, 1987), 196-204.

74. Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, "The Children of Hameln," in *Die Kinder zu Hameln, Deutsche Sagen* 1, no. 245 (1816/1818).

75. Ruth B. Bottigheimer, "Luckless, Witless, and Filthy-Footed: A Sociocultural Study and Publishing History Analysis of 'the Lazy Boy,'" *Journal of American Folklore* 106, (1993): 259.

76. Catherine Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* (New York: Basic, 2002), 4, 21.

77. See also Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, "Katie Woodencloak," in *Popular Tales from the Norse*, trans. George Webbe Dasent (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1888), 357-72. In this Cinderella-type story, Katie is originally a princess. Her adventures find her becoming a cowherd, veterinarian, butcher, kitchen helper, and personal servant.

78. Benjamin Thorpe, "The Girl Who Could Spin Gold from Clay and Long Straw," in *Yule-Tide Stories: A Collection of Scandinavian and North German Popular Tales and Traditions, from the Swedish, Danish, and German* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 168-70, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0500.html#titteli>.

79. Bottigheimer, "Luckless, Witless, and Filthy-Footed," 259-84.
80. "Thumbling," in *Folk-Lore and Fable: Aesop, Grimm, Anderson*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier, 1909), 124-28. In other versions, this character is known as Tom Thumb.
81. "Pwyll Prince of Dyved," in *The Mabinogion*, trans. Lady Charlotte Guest (London: Dent, 1906), 355-56.
82. Joseph Jacobs, "Tom Hickathrift," in *English Fairy Tales and More English Fairy Tales* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 223-28.
83. Joseph Jacobs, "Lazy Jack," in *English Fairy Tales* (London: David Nutt, 1898), 152-54.
84. Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren, eds., *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, 2nd ed. (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute, 2000), 246, lines 169-76.
85. Some of the more useful publications of a general nature since 1990 are Clark Nardinelli, *Child Labour and the Industrial Revolution* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Hugh Cunningham, "The Employment and Unemployment of Children in England c. 1680-1851," *Past and Present*, no. 126 (February 1990); Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, "The Exploitation of Little Children: Child Labour and the Family Economy in the Industrial Revolution," *Explorations in Economic History* 32 (1995); Douglas A. Galbi, "Child Labour and the Division of Labour in the Early English Cotton Mills," *Journal of Population Economics* 10 (1997); Hugh Cunningham, "Histories of Childhood," *American Historical Review* 143 (1998); Carolyn Tuttle, *Hard at Work in Factories and Mines: The Economics of Child Labour during the British Industrial Revolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1999); Michael Lavalette, ed., *A Thing of the Past? Child Labour in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999); Hugh Cunningham, "The Decline of Child Labour: Labour Markets and Family Economics in Europe and North America since 1830," *Economic History Review* 53 (2000); Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (New York: Macmillan, 2003); Marjatta Rahikainen, *Centuries of Child Labour: European Experience from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004); Peter Kirby, "Debate: How Many Children Were 'Unemployed' in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England?" *Past and Present*, no. 187 (May 2005); and Hugh Cunningham, "Reply," *Past and Present*, no. 187 (May 2005).
86. John Burnett, ed., *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (1974; reprint, London: Routledge, 1994), 40.
87. *Ibid.*, 55.
88. For example, Tuttle, *Hard at Work*, 70-75.
89. Burnett, *Useful Toil*, 184-85.
90. Jane Humphries, "Female-Headed Households in Early Industrial Britain: The Vanguard of the Proletariat?" *Labour History Review*, no. 63 (1998): 41.
91. Burnett, *Useful Toil*, 39, 314.
92. Humphries, "Female-Headed Households," esp. 31-32, 40-42, 51-52.
93. Cunningham, "Employment and Underemployment of Children."
94. Tuttle, *Hard at Work*, 58.
95. For the connection of increased child labor to increased fertility and population growth during the period, see Horrell and Humphries, "Exploitation of Little Children," 111.
96. The term was brought into common usage by Robert Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages 950-1350* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971); see also Peter Spufford, *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. pt. II.
97. For example, see Bardsley, "Women's Work Reconsidered," esp. 4-5; and Langdon, "Minimum Wages."
98. Langdon and Masschaele, "Commercial Activity," esp. 69-72; and cf. Horrell and Humphries for the same conclusion during the Industrial Revolution in their "Exploitation of Little Children," 111.
99. Candace Barrington, "Bringing Medieval Children out of the Shadows," *Children's Literature* 32 (2004): 208.