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*Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. xi + 335 pp. Includes: notes, bibliography, index.

What do youth do? In England, between 1500 and 1700, the answer was work, mainly in service outside the family. What defined youth? In early modern England it was not a distinctive *rite de passage*. Historians have argued that early modern Europeans had little concept of adolescence and either that children were plunged into adulthood after a short transition period, or that the putative adolescent was treated as a child during a very long transition period. Ben-Amos argues that the co-existence of both ideas about youth throughout early modern England produced tension and anxiety.

Two previous works--Linda Pollock's *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (1983) and C. John Sommerville's *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* (1992)--largely ignore the years after childhood. Sommerville, self-consciously a cultural historian, examines how Puritan texts constructed the idea of childhood. To place adolescents within early modern social structure Ben-Amos uses both Bristol apprentice records as well as numerous diaries and autobiographies.

One chapter surveys the cultural questions upon which Sommerville focuses. Cultural and literary conventions need to be mapped more systematically. Early modern autobiographies include Puritan memoirs, and such suspect sources, "tending to focus on their spiritual lives" (p. 114), cry out for a cultural as well as social reading.

The work is composed of topically-arranged chapters. One chapter provides evidence of a mobile youth with continuing ties to parents, or at least to "friends" (p. 162). Patriarchy gives way to a contemporary model, even for the master-apprentice relation, based on brotherhood and friendship. If true, this seems novel and important. Ben-Amos devotes a sensible chapter questioning whether there was any cohesive youth sub-culture. Two chapters on male urban apprentices are solid, but ignore religious and political life. Although England has little record of anything similar to French abbeys of misrule, there is no mention of Anglican young men's meetings analyzed by John Spurr. There is only a brief mention of the politicized (and rioting) apprentices studied by S.R. Smith, Tim Harris, or Paul Seaver. The chapter on young women, based on the few available records, is the least clear. For example, how does a female servant differ from a young woman apprenticed in housewifery?

This work's attention to detail suggests future avenues of research. Did the apprentice's "bargaining power" through knowledge gained from living-in (p. 212) affect the master-servant relation? How did apprenticeship fit into the moral, legal, and political patriarchal ideal? Was youth really a unifying concept when "apprentices sometimes hired younger apprentices on their own" (p. 225)?

This is a sound and careful study, marred by an infelicitous style, extraneous information (apprentices' names, for example), and pedestrian conclusions. Roads were dangerous. Money lured apprentices away from one master to another. Girls had different tasks from boys. Young people postponed marriage because demands worried them. By the time of marriage in their late twenties, "most people in early modern English society were adults" (p. 236)! More daring assertions are attributed to other historians.

Yet, lurking beneath this work is a fascinating history, a narrative of apprenticeship. As the population of London skyrocketed, the proportion composed of apprentices steadily fell. What took the place of formal apprenticeship? Why did young men continue to value apprenticeship, while women's apprenticeships become more associated with poor relief? Ben-Amos draws on Steve Rappaport on London and her own work on Bristol to suggest strategies by which poor youths could enter crafts and trades. But how did this change as apprentices became a more circumscribed group? "The predominance of rural youth" in London (p. 99) suggests that the adolescent had become an important link, perhaps the important vector, in forming a national experience.