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Childhood

in the English Renaissance

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Contents

Childhood in the Renaissance – Introductory Remarks 1
Anja Müller

Rational Perception versus Bodily Expression –
Negotiating Grief, Consolation and Mourning in Early Modern Childhood 13
Sonja Fielitz

"A white paper" – Anamnesis and the Character of the Child
in Early Modern English Literature 31
Matthias Bauer

Childhood in Early Modern Stairs of Life – Envisioning Age Distinctions 43
Anja Müller

John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* as Children's Literature 57
Bettina Boecker

"See my lords what hopes you store in him" –
Child Characters in Jacobean Revenge Tragedies 69
Carolina Bauer

"To be [or not to be] boy eternal" –
Dichotomies of Royal Childhood in Shakespeare's Histories 77
Imke Kimpel

Three Henries and the Dashed Hopes of the Early Stuart Dynasty 89
Barbara Bienias

Tudor and Jacobean Mother-and-Child Portraits and their Patrons –
An Overview 103
Martin Spies

Childhood Denied – Infanticide in Archives and Literature 121
Josephine Billingham

Conceptions of Childhood in Renaissance Midwife Manuals Between Naturalistic and Religious Interpretations 133
Monika Pietrzak-Franger and Marcel Hartwig

Epilogue – Becoming Child, Becoming Other: Childhood as Signifier 145
David Kennedy

The Janus Child: A Response 155
Peter van Dolen

Contributors 167

Childhood in the Renaissance – Introductory Remarks

Anja Müller

A young boy, with conspicuous carrot-coloured hair is looking at us, directly, frankly, a broad smile beaming on his face. The source of his mirth is, apparently, a drawing he produced – a drawing of a man in the matchstick style typical of young children's drawings. The illustration on the cover of the present volume, Giovanni Francesco Caroto's *Boy with Drawing*, is remarkable for various reasons. Painted around 1525, its depiction of a young boy caught in a moment of leisure is outstanding in its realistic representation of a young child at a time when portraits of children positioned the young figures within religious or mythical surroundings or within family groups. Such portraits also revealed difficulties with representing children in the life-like manner that renders Caroto's painting so captivating. In view of comments uttered by historians of childhood that early modern children were regarded as small adults and were represented respectively, the *Boy with Drawing* appears almost modern. The reality effect owes much to the drawing within the drawing, which reflects accurately the developmental stage of drawing of this particular age group. The child's immature artistic skills are depicted faithfully – and with no disparaging attitude. On the contrary, the immature artistic production of the child contributes to the mirth the painting evokes. One can, with Angela Rosenthal, perceive the portrait as the painter's comment on different age-specific, developmental stages of artistic production (605-7). The reasons why I selected Caroto's painting for the cover of the present volume are threefold: First, as already mentioned, the painting's realism illustrates that childhood in the Renaissance was perceived as a stage of life with its own peculiarities. Second, the image exemplifies the heterogeneity of views of the child: it deviates from more common representations of the infant Jesus, of putti or cupids, or little adults. Third, the portrait gives evidence that children's lack of maturity was not necessarily a reason for disrespect or despise but could even become a source of pleasure. All three aspects imply a perspective on childhood in the Renaissance that challenges traditional ideas of Renaissance children dying early, being treated like small adults, or being educated so that they pass on from childhood into adulthood as quickly as possible. Last but not least, the *Boy with Drawing* is one of the rare tokens explicitly acknowledging the creative production of children. Historical studies of childhood often lack sources that could provide evidence for children's voices, their own cultural production and, hence, their agency. Caroto's painting with its drawing-within-the-painting, at least imagines a product of childish creativity. By conflating an adult's and a child's artistic productions within the frame of the same painting, Caroto's *Boy with Drawing* simultaneously raises awareness to age distinctions.

The distinct qualities attributed to the age of childhood during the Renaissance were in the focus of the conference "Childhood in the English Renaissance", held at

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"A white paper" – Anamnesis and the Character of the Child in Early Modern English Literature

Matthias Bauer

This paper derives from two sources of interest: the first is the fact that there seems to be a particular, and in certain ways new, emphasis on children and childhood in early modern English literature.[1] The general reasons for this emphasis are likely to be manifold and may come to light by explorations into historical, sociological and anthropological contexts. My aim is a more modest one: I would like to understand a little better the conceptualizations of childhood that find expression in specific literary representations. My second source of interest is a fact which I could not but notice when reading Victorian literature: angels, in the nineteenth century, are mostly conceptualized as women, but also, closer to my topic here, as children – which is by no means a matter of course, given that angels are by definition asexual, spiritual beings and were traditionally thought to appear as young men (Marshall and Walsham, 5). Lewis Carroll unsurprisingly speaks of "an angel-child" in one of his poems ("Stolen Waters", Carroll, 866), and Charles Dickens, to cite just one further example, has Florence Dombey (who is herself regarded as an angel by others) conceive of her little – dead – brother as an angel. In one scene, she prays besides Paul's empty bed "to let one angel love her and remember her" (ch. 18, 261), and in another, her face is said to turn "to the sky [...] as if it sought his angel out, on the bright shore of which he had spoken: lying on his little bed" (ch. 50, 747). My suggestion is that those different sources of interest belong together; in other words, that the conceptualization of the child as angel (that is still with us today as a sort of Victorian heirloom) has, at least in an English context, to do with the emergence of the child in early modern literature. And I would further like to suggest that memory, or anamnesis, plays an important role in the character of the child as it appears in this configuration.

When I say "character", this is meant quite literally. Character sketches in the tradition of Theophrastus (4th century BC) became fashionable in England around 1600 in the context of rhetorical and dramatic representations of comic types.[2] An early popular example of this genre is Joseph Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices* (1608), which does not (by contrast with Theophrastus) focus on weak characters alone but includes exemplary characters as well (see Müller-Schwefe). The model of all models is the first character he presents, who is called "The Wise Man": the pattern of a humanist desire for self-knowledge, who is prudently aware of his strengths and, in particular, weaknesses. Sir Thomas Overbury continued the tradition (his *Characters* first

1 This article is based upon, and supplements, my essay "Die Entdeckung des Kindes in der englischen Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts".

2 Cf. Boyce, Smeed, McIver, and Hockenjos.

appeared posthumously in 1614), even though he is more interested in social types than moral patterns. As if in answer to Hall, the prominent position of the first character is now held by "A Good Woman" (Overbury, 95). And it is in answer to both Hall and Overbury that the child first appears, for in the third major collection of characters, John Earle's *Microcosmography* (1628), primacy is given to the character of "A Child".

A Child

> Is a man in a small letter, yet the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple; and he is happy whose small practice in the world can only write his character. He is nature's fresh picture newly drawn in oil, which time, and much handling, dims and defaces. His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world, wherewith, at length, it becomes a blurred note-book. He is purely happy, because he knows no evil, nor hath made means by sin to be acquainted with misery. He arrives not at the mischief of being wise, nor endures evils to come, by foreseeing them. He kisses and loves all, and, when the smart of the rod is past, smiles on his beater. Nature and his parents alike dandle him, and tice him on with a bait of sugar to a draught of wormwood. He plays yet, like a young prentice the first day, and is not come to his task of melancholy. His hardest labour is his tongue, as if he were loath to use so deceitful an organ; and he is best company with it when he can but prattle. We laugh at his foolish sports, but his game is our earnest; and his drums, rattles, and hobby-horses, but the emblems and mocking of man's business. His father hath writ him as his own little story, wherein he reads those days of his life that he cannot remember, and sighs to see what innocence he hath out-lived. The elder he grows, he is stair lower from God; and, like his first father, much worse in his breeches. He is the Christian's example, and the old man's relapse; the one imitates his pureness, and the other falls into his simplicity. Could he put off his body with his little coat, he had got eternity without a burden, and exchanged but one heaven for another. (Earle, 5-6)

The Child's soul is a white paper

Days of innocence

To a certain degree, the sketch is a variation on Matthew 18:3, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Authorized Version), especially since Earle stresses the function of the child as "the Christian's example"; but the notion of the child partaking – apart from his burdensome body – in "eternity" and having, in coming to earth, "exchanged but one heaven for another" is given a splendid concreteness that goes beyond mere biblical paraphrase and is, as far as I can see, unprecedented in English literature. I will limit myself to a few observations. Critics have regarded the description as an example of "cultural and chronological primitivism" (Boas, 43), and to a certain degree Earle can be identified as a model of such later primitivist concepts as Rousseau's. In the extended metaphors of writing we clearly notice the distrust of worldly knowledge and perhaps even of learning in general; "His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world, wherewith, at length, it becomes a blurred notebook". In response to Hall's "Wise Man", Earle stresses that the child "arrives not at the mischief of being wise, nor endures evils to come, by foreseeing them". Wisdom in this sense is more like prudence or worldly wisdom, which is a state of corruption; Earle's child indeed has some features reminiscent of Montaigne's noble savage.

But the notion of primitivism may also obscure the picture drawn by Earle. Just as the child questions and undermines the humanist concept of progressive self-knowledge, it confirms that very concept in becoming "the example" after which the Christian has to strive. While the wisdom is rejected that results from the memory of worldly experience and expects evils to come, the wisdom is advocated that results from otherworldly experience ("heaven") and provides a model of perfection to the adult. The old man's falling into second childishness and mere oblivion ("the old man's relapse") is in fact a *felix culpa*, taking him closer to God. In this respect, oblivion and remembrance go together: the child itself, with its link to the prelapsarian world of Adamic perfection, reminds the grown-up of what he has forgotten ("those days of his life that he cannot remember") and thus may be said to represent memory; the forgetting of the scribbled observations of the world becomes the remembrance of the Edenic state. The ambiguity of the "white paper" enhances this point: on the one hand, it is an Aristotelian image: in *De Anima*, the empty slate is an image of the nous, the mind that "is in a sense potentially whatever is thinkable, though actually it is nothing until it has thought" (III.iv.430a). But in Earle's context the image of the white paper does not primarily indicate potential that waits to be realized. The colour white indicates fullness rather than emptiness or nothingness, the fullness of perfection and innocence, indestructibility. And thus, on the other hand, the "white paper" evokes a Platonic concept, the idea, expressed in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, that "the soul is forever in a state of having known" (Scott, 113) as it is pre-existent. In this respect the fact that the child is the "copy" of Adam not only suggests the idea of its being his reproduction but also of being the original of the father whose example or model the child becomes: copy may also mean "The original writing [...] from which a copy is made".[3] Thus the child is both the image or counterfeit and the archetype and, accordingly, provides a link between the fallen world and original perfection.

This whole complex of notions is illuminated by the writings of the second author to whom I would like to refer, the metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan. In his poem "Childe-hood" (Vaughan, 288) he speaks – in a similar context of writing and memory ("chronicle", l. 3) – of "Those white designs that children drive".[4] The colour of origin and innocence is here expressly linked to a term that evokes Platonic archetypes and forms, "designs", which are both the patterns that move children and are the aims that are pursued by children. We see a double position or role of children being both realizations of an original design and exemplary to the adult who studies them.

3 *OED* "copy" 8.a.; cf. 8.c. the quotation from Shakespeare's *All's Well* 1.2.46: "Such a man Might be a copie to these yonger times"; cf. also, in Sonnet 11, the speaker's advice to the young man: "Thou shouldst print more, nor let that copy die."

4 On Vaughan's poem, see Inge Leimberg, "Interpretation: 'Childe-hood'", in *Heilig öffentlich Geheimnis*, 442-56.

This is quite close to Earle's concept and agrees with both writers pointing out the child's proximity to heaven and expressing their distrust of worldly wisdom and experience acquired with age.

There is something else, however, in Vaughan, and that is the strong note of personal longing, which is felt from the beginning in the speaker's desperate exclamation, "I cannot reach it". It is as if the speaker had taken the injunction of Matthew 18:3 (and the recognition of the child as the "Christian's example") seriously but comes to realize that he cannot put it into practice. Childhood, to the adult, becomes a celestial state only to be glimpsed at from afar, a "bordering light" upon the "narrow way" which "leadeth unto life" (Mt. 7:14 AV). The same kind of desire is to be noticed in "The Retreat", in which Vaughan even more emphatically stresses that the progress towards life is actually a return. Just as in "Child-hood" the speaker realizes that childhood must be "live[d] twice" if he wishes to see "God's face", in "The Retreat" he "long[s] to travel back,/ And tread again that ancient track" (Vaughan, 173, ll. 21-2). In that very wish the sense of direction is ambivalent and is actually transcended: travelling backwards and travelling forwards becomes one and the same, since in his longing to travel backwards the speaker wants to repeat the steps of the child to the point where "That shady city of palm trees" (l. 26) could be seen. It is the point where a heavenly state is still near. In Earle, the child is seen as having just to put off its physical dress, i.e. its body, to step into heaven; in "The Retreat", the speaker remembers feeling through that physical dress the ray of the original light, "bright *shoots* of everlastingness" (l. 20). The speaker does not remember the city of palm trees immediately but remembers the state of childhood in which he could still see it. The child is thus the medium of anamnesis.[5]

This is not a sentimental, nostalgic longing for the past,[6] but in all the texts we have been looking at so far the speaker's representation of childhood, however strongly mixed with desire, is conceived in terms of cognition, knowledge, teaching, study,

5 See Martin, 247; for the idea of childhood as a medium of anamnesis in Dickens, see Černý, 7.

6 With regard to Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne, Lobsien has observed that they should not be regarded as "wistful poet[s] of childhood and nostalgia for a world of arcadian innocence eternally lost" (212). She contradicts Conrad, 272-5, who "cast[s Traherne, like Vaughan] in the role of a precursor of Wordsworth, at best, a proto-Romantic" (ibid.); Lobsien furthermore stresses that Vaughan and Traherne are "incompatible with nineteenth-century pastoralism" (ibid.). While this is entirely convincing, it should also be pointed out that concepts of childhood in nineteenth-century literature, despite the fact that the child could be part of "childish, escapist, or Oedipal" fantasies (ibid.), was by no means confined to them or to pastoralism. Černý's study, for example (see previous note) helps us realize that it would be unwise to dissever the nineteenth century entirely from the earlier metaphysical tradition. Similarly, Zirker has shown that Lewis Carroll, in contradistinction to the nostalgic desire expressed in his poetry, participates in (and rewrites) a tradition of conceiving the metaphysical faculties and otherness of the child, especially as regards memory (see e.g. 69-72).

enlightenment, seeing, understanding, and so on. The rational integration of the child into the Platonic concept of the pre-existent soul and its remembrance, anamnesis, prevents the speakers' becoming maudlin in their veneration of childhood. One might say that the privileged position of the child is the logical consequence of such a concept, but this should not be taken for granted. Henry More, for example, the leading Cambridge Platonist of the seventeenth century, does not expressly take that step when he points out: "For I would sing the Praeexistency/ Of humane souls, and live once more again/ By recollection and quick memory/ All what is past since first we all began."[7] It is Henry Vaughan in particular who locates this anamnesis in the child and thus gives it (being present and unreachable at once) almost a tragic dimension.

Vaughan's knowledge of hermetical writings and related sources may have induced him to enhance and modify the Platonic tradition in stressing that it is the child that is endowed with the power of anamnesis.[8] He combines their ideas about the special quality of childhood not only with a Christian but also with a very personal perspective. The characteristic note of loss, moreover, corresponds to the fact that elegies and funeral epigrams on children became a prominent genre in the first half of the seventeenth century.[9] In "Child-hood" and "The Retreat", Vaughan's persona sings, as it were, the elegy of his own former self as child; only when it is lost can childhood be realized as a special state and can its specific quality become a cause of hope.

This is different in Thomas Traherne, the Metaphysical Poet perhaps most frequently identified with the praise of childhood. To Traherne, the child participates in an Edenic state of perfection; in poems such as "Wonder", "Eden", "Innocence", "The Preparative", "The Rapture", "An Infant-Eye", and "The Return", as well as in the *Centuries of Meditation* he stresses the child's divine innocence and visionary power.[10] But Traherne is somewhat ambivalent about the adult's (or the adult speaker's) relationship to the child. On the one hand, there is a division between the *docta ignorantia* of the child,[11] a "state of beatific purity and unclouded enlightenment" (Lobsien, 225),

7 Lines 1-4 of the second poem in Henry More, *The Praeexistency of the Soul*; quoted from More, 225.

8 Martin, 247 refers to Libellux X of the *Corpus Hermeticum*; he furthermore mentions Talmudic legends as an example of the tradition in which the newborn child appears as a being of a higher order. Vaughan may also have been inspired by translations of Jacob Boehme's writings, a case in point being Boehme regarding child's play as a remnant of paradise (Martin, 254). Marcus, 159 mentions More, Earle, and the *Hermetica* as the context of Vaughan's "doctrine of preexistence".

9 See Anselment, 69, 89, and the whole of chapter 2.

10 Sabine considers the role of the child when discussing Traherne's poems "The World", "The Apostacy", and "Shadows in the Water". Marcus points out that the child appears in Traherne, as in Earle, as "a faithful replica of Adam just placed in the Garden of Eden" (176); she quotes, among other texts, from Traherne's *The Third Century*.

11 This is reminiscent of Earle's white paper that means fullness rather than emptiness. Traherne uses this image in the first paragraph of the *Centuries of Meditation*, where he speaks of "An empty book" which "is like an infant's soul, in which anything may be

and the tarnished state of adulthood: "A learned, and a happy ignorance/ Divided me/ From all the vanity,/ From all the sloth, care, pain, and sorrow that advance/ The madness and the misery/ Of men."[12] On the other hand, this state "may be regained through the right kind of reflection and recollection" (Lobsien, 225). The world of the child is not as irrevocably separated from the world of the adult speaker as in Vaughan, who must reach it but cannot do so. In the poem just quoted, the child is not the other as in Vaughan's speaking about "my Angel-Infancie"; rather, the past and the present are linked by the personal pronoun "me": the adult is still fundamentally the same as the child. This is why the speaker of "An Infant-Eye" can utter the command: "Return: thy treasures/ Abide thee still, and in their places stand/ Inviting yet [...]" (Traherne, 82, ll. 52-4).

The point is not that the child, who still remembers a state before birth, is seen and remembered from afar but that the adult can actually become a child again. In "The Salutation" (Traherne, 3-4), for example, the speaker discovers and welcomes the child after its birth, but it is neither the speaker's child or any other person. It is rather the speaker as the pre-existent soul of the child who addresses and welcomes the body that has been created *ex nihilo*: "These little limbs/ These eyes and hands which here I find,/ These rosy cheecks [...]" (ll. 1-3); he asks them "Where have ye been?" (l. 4). Accordingly, when there is so much emphasis on identity and identification, remembering, in which difference and loss are inextricably bound up with recovery and permanence, is not a major issue in Traherne. When it is mentioned, as in "Innocence" (Traherne, 8), it serves to stress the continuance of felicity. Thus there is no restrictive sense in the speaker's statement: "A joyful sense and purity/ Is all I can remember" (ll. 9-10). This is not a vague or limited memory but a memory that is exclusively filled with joy and purity. When the speaker at the end of the poem utters his conviction "I must become a child again" (l. 60), there is, other than in Vaughan, no doubt that this is actually possible.

Both Traherne and Vaughan associate childhood with the nature of angels. "How like an angel I came down!" exclaims the speaker in the first line of Traherne's poem "Wonder", and he stresses that as a child he did see "like an angel" (Traherne, 5, l. 39). Vaughan, in "Child-hood", closely associates the state of childhood with angels: it is "An age of mysteries! [...]/ Which Angels guard, and with it play,/ Angels! which foul men drive away" (Vaughan, 288, ll. 35-8). This is almost an identification of angel and children, for we sense that the foulness of men consists in the driving away of children. In "The Retreat", this identification is complete; it is expressed in a highly condensed and succinct way when Vaughan's persona calls his early days his "Angel-infancy" (Vaughan, 172, l. 2). I think this is remarkable since it anticipates an identification of angel and child which we should therefore not exclusively connect with a

written. It is capable of all things, but containeth nothing" (188). This is close to the Aristotelian *tabula rasa* and differs from the fullness of beatitude and bliss in the child which is mostly stressed by Traherne.

12 "Eden" (Traherne, 6-7, ll. 1-6).

more sentimental age. For again Vaughan is not at all sentimental in doing so. Neither does he simply follow a convention that may be seen to manifest itself in the abundance of *putti* in the visual arts from the fifteenth to the late eighteenth century. For without being able to explore the possible relations between verbal and visual child-angels at this point, I would like to suggest that at least in the earlier part of the period in question, there is no doubt that those little angels are angels represented as little children (cf. Hansmann, 8 and 12), whereas in Vaughan's poems the issue is the human child, even the speaker's former self, as an angel.

It seems to me that Vaughan's identification has to do with the particular kind of mental quality he (like Earle) regards as a feature of childhood. In Plato, the concept of anamnesis is linked to the pre-existent soul. This soul, as we learn in the *Pheadrus*,[13] is a winged charioteer that loses its wings when it falls to earth and becomes imprisoned in the human body. It "can only return to its discarnate state by living philosophically and engaging in recollection. (Recollection of the forms enables the wings, its means of release, to re-grow)" (Scott, 94). Here we are beginning to see why Vaughan, combining a Christian and a Platonic view of the soul when presenting childhood as a "plain" from where the celestial city is still (or already) visible to the "enlightened spirit" of the child, quite naturally takes recourse to the notion of the child as an angel, a spiritual being that wears "face, and wings/ Of aire" (as John Donne puts it in "Aire and Angels", Donne, 76, ll. 23-4). Vaughan is by no means engaged in any sort of harmless belittling when he describes childhood as "angel-infancy" but rather chooses the term to evoke a quite precise definition. He contrasts the spiritual knowledge of the child with what his speaker has taught himself in terms of worldly, sensual knowledge (the parallels to Earle are obvious), that is, he contrasts the "white celestial thought" of the child with the "black art" of the adult. Angels are thoughts, as Dionysius the Areopagite put it, not least because the lexicon itself suggests the connection.[14]

Accordingly, angels are associated with a particular kind of reason that is still to be found in Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Deistic concept of innate ideas, to which belongs the knowledge of God, the *Instinctus Naturalis* (38-9). Herbert

> calls one aspect of 'reason' discursus, and the other instinctus. [This goes back to Thomas Aquinas,] who speaks of 'lower' and 'higher' reason, the first 'intent on the disposal of temporal things', and the latter 'intent on the consideration and consultation of things eternal'. [...] The ratio superior is a faculty which men share [...] with angels,

13 246a-257a, cf. Scott 94.

14 Dionysius Areopagita, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 373A-B, *Complete Works* 197 ("Their hierarchy belongs to the domain of the conceptual [...] The heavenly beings, because of their intelligence, have their own permitted conceptions of God"); in the German translation, this is rendered as "die Hierarchie auf ihrer Ebene ist Gegenstand des Denkens [...]. Die einen denken, da sie Gedanken sind, nach ihrem eigenen Gesetz" (transl. Günter Heil, 97). In his note (158), Heil stresses that in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* the angels are always called thoughts (νόες), i.e. the unfolding of the νους Jesus.

in which mode knowledge is accomplished immediately and without any discursive process taking place.[15]

Vaughan makes it quite clear that the knowledge of the angel-child is not a discursive one, as it exists "Before I taught my tongue to wound/ My conscience with a sinful sound" (ll. 15-16), i.e. before discursive and temporal rather than intuitive and eternal knowledge is acquired. Implicitly, Vaughan presents a far more rigid contrast between the infant's intuitive, non-verbal knowledge, and the discursive knowledge of corrupt adulthood than Aquinas does or Lord Herbert or, for that matter, Milton's Raphael, who points out that

[...] the soul
Reason receives, and reason is her being,
Discursive, or intuitive; discourse
Is oftest yours, the latter most is ours,
Differing but in degree, of kind the same.[16]

For our investigation into the connection between the child as a medium of remembrance and the concept of angelic knowledge it is perhaps useful to remember that there is one class of angels that is most closely associated with knowledge. Dionysius the Areopagite in his *Celestial Hierarchy* explains the name of the Cherubim, second in rank after the Seraphim, as denoting "their power to know and see God" (ch. 7, 205C, 162). In the Renaissance, this was taken up, for example, by Pico, who aligns the Seraphim with love, the Cherubim with knowledge, and the Thrones with judgement (cf. Gordon, 54).

At this point one further author is to be taken into account. "Cherub" or "Cherubim" is a kind of angel that is even more frequently associated with children and childhood than the general denomination "angel". The *OED* (3.c.) has (unsurprisingly) several examples of this from the nineteenth century, beginning with Walter Scott and *Waverley* ("The round-faced rosy cherub"). There is just one solitary earlier example from 1680 (from Otway's *Orphan*, the apostrophe "My little Cherub"), but before that the connection does not seem to have been made, and as the examples show, there is no serious angelic reference implied like the one in Vaughan's "The Retreat". When we look a little further up in the *OED* entry on "cherub" (3.†b.), however, we find "cherubin" as an epithet referring "to a beautiful or beloved woman".[17] The only two examples given for this meaning are from Shakespeare, and I would like to look a little more closely at one of them, which is to be found in *The Tempest*. Prospero, in the

15 See Bedford, 64-65; the reference is to *Summa theologiae* I. Q. LXXXIX.A.9.

16 *Paradise Lost* V.486-90; cf. Bedford, 72.

17 In spite of his frequent emphasis on the Edenic nature of childhood, this is the usage followed by Traherne when he dedicates his *Centuries* to the "friend" who "may write my Makers prais therein/ And make her self thereby a Cherubin" (quoted from H. M. Margoliouth's edition of the *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958] by Lobsien, 213, who reminds us that this friend "is usually assumed to be Susanna Hopton, friend of God like Traherne himself").

long exposition scene I.2., tells his daughter Miranda about the usurpation of his Dukedom by his evil brother, and their subsequent exile.

Miranda Alack, what trouble
Was I then to you?
Prospero O, a cherubin
Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile,
Infused with a fortitude from heaven (I.2.151-4).

The Arden editors dutifully gloss this passage with the *OED* reference about "a beautiful or beloved woman". I am sorry to say, however, that both authorities, the *OED* and the Arden editors, are wrong. The reason is a quite simple one, but it is important for our purposes. As the past tense clearly indicates, Prospero does not call the present Miranda, a young woman, "cherubin" but unambiguously speaks of the time when they had to flee. The audience knows this, for earlier in the same scene he has given a reference to her age:

Prospero [...] Canst thou remember
A time before we came unto this cell?
I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not
Out three years old.
Miranda Certainly sir, I can. (I.2.38-41)

There can be no doubt that the "cherubin" of line 152 is a little child, and we see that the designation is by no means just a term of endearment or a compliment, for Prospero expressly evokes the notion of divine inspiration when he says that she was "Infused with a fortitude from heaven" (I.2.154). Even though she is inspired with the virtue of fortitude rather than knowledge, we realize that this is not acquired by education (discourse) but instinctively. It should not surprise us then that the issue of remembrance is closely connected to Miranda's angel-infancy: even as a young adult, she is marked by an unusual power of memory. As a child, she was still so close to heaven as to partake of its divine virtues.

I would like to conclude with one other Shakespeare passage which establishes the close link between childhood and anamnesis. It is a passage never cited, as far as I can see, in discussions of Shakespeare's representations of childhood.[18] We are moving away from the angels again and closer to "the old man's relapse" in Earle: Falstaff, when he dies (in *Henry V*), becomes a child again. It is not only that he is compared by the hostess to a "christom child" (II.3.11-2), i.e. a newly christened child – a term, as the Arden editor tells us, "specially applied [...] to children who died within a month of their birth"[19] and associated with the white chrisom-cloth. While Vaughan's angel-infant gazes on "some gilded cloud or flower", the dying Falstaff "play[s] wi'th' flowers", presumably embellishing the bed-cover, and "smile[s] upon his fingers' ends". The flowers then link up with the "green fields" (II.3.14-7) of which Falstaff

18 I gladly give credit to my colleague Angelika Zirker for seeing it in this light.

19 Craik in his note on II.3.11-12.

babbles (in Theobald's famous emendation). The vision of the "green pasture" of the 23rd Psalm is thus not to be separated from the memory of childhood or the return to childhood as a time of life when the enlightened spirit could still look back and see "a glimpse of his bright face" and "That shady city of palm trees". The green fields are the fields where the child plays with the flowers, remembering the pastures it has recently left behind. Falstaff, the man who is more than any other character in Shakespeare marked by "all this fleshly dress" (Vaughan, "The Retreat", l. 19) is shown, impelled by memory, to move backwards to the child he once was, so that he, even he, may return in the state he came.

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Childhood in Early Modern Stairs of Life – Envisioning Age Distinctions

Anja Müller

Studies on the history of childhood have frequently speculated about the "invention", "discovery" (Ariès) or "disappearance" (Postman) of this particular stage in life. Criticism of such statements usually insists on the construct character of age, in analogy to the construction of other identity categories, such as gender or ethnicity. A historical approach supports such theoretically informed arguments because there has always been an awareness that human life develops in a sequence of different stages. The ancient riddle of the Sphinx, for example, was based on a tripartite model that divided life into a triad of childhood, adulthood, and old age. In the first chapter of his *L'enfant et la vie familiale*, Philippe Ariès illustrates how this simple structure has become increasingly diversified into up to twelve stages, depending on the correspondences to which human life was related. Four 'ages', for example, associate life with the number of the elements, with historical ages, the humours or the seasons. Such models embed man in the cosmic circle of nature and perceive life magically as it were. The number seven establishes a link to astronomy. Dividing the life span according to the decimal system produces ten or eleven stages.[1] Twelve stages of life, finally, form a calendrical sequence. As far as the length of each stage is concerned, the four-stage model proceeds in steps of twenty years, the ten or eleven-stage models in decades, and the calendrical course in steps of six years. The seven-stage model follows biological developmental stages rather than a regular mathematical gradation. With regard to this model, Philippe Ariès quotes from *Le Grand Propriétaire de toutes choses*, an encyclopaedia of the sciences compiled in Latin in the fifteenth century and translated into French in 1556. This source distinguishes, for instance, between infancy (age one to seven), *pueritia* (eight to fourteen), adolescence (fifteen to either twenty-one or twenty-eight or thirty), youth (until forty-five or fifty), senectitude or gravity (here, no particular age boundaries are given),[2] old age (until seventy, or death), and, finally, *senies*, that is, decrepit old age. Given the average life expectancy of earlier times, these stages of life models hardly reflect biological realities (the highly popular ten or eleven-stage models, for instance, envisaged a regular life span of a century). Instead, the models exemplify a social and cultural periodization of human life as a sequential structure with distinct, gradational stages. In so doing, these models can be regarded as illustrations of the temporal notion of *chronos* – a progredient, linear model of time (see also the article by David

1 That is, depending on whether birth or earliest infancy are viewed as an additional, initial stage, as is the case in most prints showing the stairs of life.

2 *Le Grand Proprìètaire* claims that "en cet âge [i.e. senectitude or gravity] la personne n'est pas vieille, mais elle a passé jeunesse" (qtd. in Ariès, 9).