

Queering Childhood in Early Modern English Drama and Culture

“Advocating a radical unknowing regarding the early modern child and childhood, this fascinating collection challenges even as it extends queer theoretical paradigms. From the role of race in reproductive futurity to asexuality as a queer orientation, the energy and variety of these essays move the question of queering beyond the erotic appeal of children and their purported innocence toward the knowledge relations they were conscripted to perform.”

—Valerie Traub, *Adrienne Rich Distinguished University Professor of English and Women’s Studies, University of Michigan*

“A historically complex account of queer childhoods. The essays in this fascinating volume are attuned to the historically variable forms of desire between adults and children and they force us to reckon with the contingency of our own sexual moralities. Confronting head on the meaning and validity of a range of erotic encounters between all kinds of bodies, young and old, the scholars gathered here exercise a mode of ‘radical unknowing’ in order to leave open the meaning of the erotic systems they find in a wide range of texts from the early modern period. Essential reading in queer theory and beyond!”

—Jack Halberstam, *Professor of English and Gender Studies, Columbia University, Author of The Queer Art of Failure and Female Masculinity*

“In this current climate in which pseudo-scientific claims about childhood are regularly made in the names of cognitivism and neuroscience, it is all the more important and salutary to be able to welcome this volume that engages seriously with childhood as a culturally and historically contingent identity. It will be of great interest to Early Modernist scholarship but also much more widely in showing how childhood crucially inflects issues of history and identity.”

—Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, *Professor of Critical Theory, Director of the Graduate Centre for International Research in Childhood: Literature, Culture, Media, University of Reading, UK*

“This collection of essays co-edited by Jennifer Higginbotham and Mark Albert Johnston extends the insights of queer theory to the study of children in the Renaissance. After a cogent and theoretically sophisticated introduction, a series of essays demonstrates that Renaissance childhood is very queer indeed. The authors make a persuasive case for the centrality of children to concepts of both the Renaissance and queerness. We can all learn a lot from this collection.”

—Stephen Guy-Bray, *Professor of English, University of British Columbia*

Jennifer Higginbotham
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Editors

Queering Childhood
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