

## **The Imagined Dangers of Man-Boy Love**

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## **Abstract**

In seeking to establish a homonormative model within a discourse of rights, gay liberation has fallen silent on the discussion of man-boy sexualised unions. The criminality and immorality of these relationships are seen as a threat to its intended aim of achieving social equality for the adult homosexual. But the fear of man-boy love is exaggerated. Articulation of an identity based on a desire for boys is complicit with the normalised understanding of how all sexualised desire works. There is no disruption to the normative discourse of sexuality in the announcement of being a man who loves boys. Rather, this act of articulation helps to reaffirm the bourgeois regulation of our bodies through making our desires visible within the paradigm of sexual types.

**Key Words:** Articulation, Closet, Gay, Homosexual, Man-Boy

# The Imagined Dangers of Man-Boy Love

## Con-Fessing Up

There are multiple dangers in speaking of a sexualised union between an adult and a child, not least of which is the danger to the speaker himself. Those who go public with statements or research that focus on such unions without expressing outright condemnation of them are often later forced to refute suspicion that is raised over their own sexualised desires (Foucault, Hocquenghem & Danet, 1990: 273; Underwager and Wakefield, 1994). The issue of man-boy love is for a man—and especially for a man who does not deny his experiences of corporeal pleasures with same-sexed bodies—a minefield.

Dennis Altman (1982) has argued that the reason why academics who are otherwise openly gay do not acknowledge their homosexuality when writing on the issue is because they have been 'socialized into the academic ideology that personal experience is not valid data' (53). Homosexual academics are urged to 'come out' in order to remove the silence and powerlessness imposed upon them within the academy, and to remove the feeling of being alone therein (Tierney, 1997: 104-05, 139). Is it therefore necessary that I begin this article with an admission of having sexual desires for boys to make an attempt to validate my

work and my being? Is it necessary that I deny having such desires in order to combat any assumption likely to be made because I ('male') am the writer, here willingly signing my name to the topic of man-boy love?

It may be acceptable to deploy the concept of an 'academic ivory tower' in which to write books on the pederasty of ancient Greece and the boy-lovers of history, but to speak of man-boy love in terms that locate it in the here and now is an entirely different matter (Thorstad, 1991: 268). Permission to begin raising questions about these sexualised unions is feared because of the potential within such interrogations to pave the way for a gradual relaxation of morals and laws (Lansdown, 1984: 113). Those who seek greater legitimacy for man-boy relationships do, indeed, see language as a means of de-victimising the non-adult subject and de-abusing the adult's sexualised contact with the child (Jones, 1991: 284; Riegel, 2002: 5-6). But opponents of the concept do not wish for this 'deviant' to find any way of being able to excuse his behaviour through putting into words the notion that 'I was seduced and picked up by a boy and I'm very glad he did it' (Tsang, 1981a: 40). For some the very imagining of a man having sex with a boy goes against what they hold to be naturally real (O'Meara, 1999) and naturally right (Duin, 1999; Larue, 1999). Any exploration of this kind of union is therefore likely to be interpreted as seeking to mount an apologia for what is currently widely defined as a criminal and an immoral sexual act.

It is not my intention here to admit to having sexualised desires for boys. The purpose of this article is not to add to the movement to liberate man-boy love, although I cannot guarantee that what I write will not be used for this purpose. Nor is it my intention to deny that these desires are a part of my sexual self. To do so would be futile. Given the notion of identity as dependent on all that is deemed to be excess to it, any process of conscious expulsion of sexualised desires for boy-ed bodies would surely locate these desires already within me (Fuss, 1991: 3). It is also not my aim here to support men and boys who are currently involved in intergenerational sexualised affairs. Equally, however, it is not my aim to condemn these unions, bodies, and desires. I will not participate in this act of oppression. In what I see as a faltering slippage on his part, Michel Foucault once claimed that 'there is not a book I have written that does not grow, at least in part, out of a direct, personal experience' (Miller 31). His rejection of the demands of the confessional is, however, better served by a don't ask, don't tell policy that insists: 'Do not ask what I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to the bureaucrats and our police to see that our [identity] papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write' (Foucault, 1972: 17).

This article aims to explore the relationship between the discourse of gay liberation and the discourse of man-boy love, a relationship that the former

attempts to deny, but which I argue is historically and discursively a very close one. Ken Plummer (1991) has argued:

As homosexuality has become slightly less open to sustained moral panic, the new pariah of 'child molester' has become the latest folk devil to orchestrate anxieties over the political, moral and interpersonal life of western societies. (231)

While this may appear to be the case, I wish to explore how the boy-lover—monstrous or otherwise—is but one more piece in the bourgeois puzzle(ment) of corporeal pleasures that permits the discourse of sexuality to maintain its own naturalness and to maintain regulation of our bodies within the paradigm of sexual beings. The discourse of gay liberation is mistaken when it assumes the boy-lover to be its biggest threat. There is, in the response by the discourse of gay liberation to the discourse of man-boy love, an over-exaggeration of differences where differences do not exist.

### **What a Man Wants**

The challenge that the concept of man-boy love poses does not relate exclusively to the homosexualised content of the relationship. Gay liberation has

already addressed this, and, in general, Western culture has agreed to tolerate (to a certain degree) sexualised desire for an object of the same sex. The politics of gay liberation have questioned the culture's refusal to allow the male body to be a legitimate subject and object of homosexualised desire, with the result that permission has been granted for changes in the way we can now view certain sexualised practices between same-sexed bodies. These changes, however, have affected the adult male who is already viewed both legally and discursively as possessing the maturity to consent.

What is contentious about the discourse of man-boy love is its demand for discussion of sexual involvement with and by those who have become increasingly defined by the culture as pre-sexual, innocent, and therefore deserving of protection (Cunningham, 1995: 59). It appears to pose challenges to a culture which insists on maintaining strict boundaries between the man and the boy, and which denies the latter any ability or right to consent in sexualised matters. While some may agree with the suggestion that the sexually innocent child is an 'artificial state' in need of abandonment (Califia, 1981: 139), there is a vast difference between acceptance of the child's ability to experience sexualised desire and claims to the validity of a sexual relationship between an adult and this child. The scenario of an adult and a child engaged in sexualised contact is still most widely understood as an attempt by the adult subject to corrupt and abuse the child object. When it is suggested that the child may also claim

subjectivity through desire, and indeed the right to be objectified by desire, as the discourse of man-boy love does, the culture's insistence on maintaining the position of 'child' as distinct from 'adult' becomes problematic.

Andrew Lansdown (1984) has likened the notion of permitting a child to engage in sex to allowing the child to drive a car down the main street, or failing to rescue him/her from the approach of an over-playful dog (119). His intent is to stress that if you truly care about your child, you will not permit him/her to have sex; but his conflation of sex with death offers an interesting insight into the current normalised acceptance of an absolute boundary between the adult and the child, especially when it comes to matters of sex. Age of consent laws work to keep the child in its place through imposing restrictions on when it is permissible for the child to engage in sexualised activities. These laws therefore emphasise one momentary corporeal act as the most dangerous thing that the child can do (Plummer, 1981: 239-241). They demarcate the death of the child and the birth of the adult at the very point of the body's first involvement in what the culture's has pre-determined to be 'sex.'

But these laws are critiqued by the discourse of man-boy love for reaffirming the belief that sex for the child is always bad; reading all sex between a child and an adult as rape; and criminalising all sexual behaviour of and amongst young people (Thorstad, 1991: 258). They are dismissed by the man-

boy love movement as an invasion of privacy and an enforcement of state-controlled ways of being sexual (NAMBLA, 1981: 94). Boy-lovers argue that it is hypocritical to deny the boy the right to engage in consensual sex with an adult male, when this same boy can be punished for failing to maintain attendance at a school even if this attendance goes against his wishes (Riegel, n.d.). This kind of critique—one that Lansdown (1984) dismisses as a clever tactic deployed by paedophiles to align their lusts with the notion of an oppressed group of children (106)—aims to expose the double standards of a culture which already recognises the child's capacity to consent, but does not apply this same recognition when it comes to the child's deployment of his/her own body for the purpose of attaining sexualised pleasures. In contrast to the notion that all sex is bad for the child, the man-boy love movement contends that it is the current illegality of man-boy sexual unions that makes them so precarious (Brongersma, 1991: 167-69). This movement argues instead that greater social acceptance of these unions would reduce the damage that is caused to the participants through currently having to hide their desires in the dark.

Tom Reeves (1981) has argued that the objects of his sexual interest are neither adults nor children, but rebellious boys with 'genuine emotion and authentic, self-originating actions and ideas' (27). The voices of these boys are the voices that the discourse of man-boy love demands must be heard. They are voices that speak of their involvement in sexualised contact—be it for the

purpose of pleasure, pornography, or payment—as their right as a minority group oppressed by wrongfully and unconstitutionally imposed interpretations of what it means for their bodies to have sex (Youth Liberation, 1981). And the man too must speak. He—'Andrew,' 'Bill,' 'Carlos,' 'Kevin,' 'Mikkel,' 'Oscar,' 'Pyort' (Riegel, 2000: 49-82)—must tell the tales of being different, of being normal. He must find the courage to join a movement that holds out the promise of a future liberation:

This is the stuff that moves mountains. As NAMBLA calls to arms (human, warm, and sexual arms—not the patriarch's cold, metallic, killing arms), the spark is ignited. No doubt there will be a price to our resistance—the oppressors do not crumble without conflict.

But we in NAMBLA are certain: despite opposition, change will come. Conditions will improve. We will triumph. Happiness and eros will out.

We are not afraid. We will not be deterred. We *shall* be free. *Every last one of us!* (NAMBLA, 1981: 106)

The assumption of sex as a signifier of death is therefore countered by the claim that sex can liberate. Coming out of the closet to tell this tale has long been noted to be the greatest hope of resolving the problems for man-boy affairs (Plummer, 1981: 244-45).

## **A Homosexual's History of Man-Boy Love**

There is a clear danger in seeking to argue a connection between gay liberation and the love of boys. Despite evidence to suggest that the vast majority of abusive sexualised contact between adults and children occurs within the family unit and within the boundaries of what would normatively be defined as heterosexuality (Levine, 2002: 27-28), a lingering assumption of adult homosexuality and paedophilic desire as somehow being naturally aligned underpins much of the resistance to social tolerance of same-sex sexualised acts between consenting adults. The adult who wishes to participate in such acts is often deemed (demonised) to be only one step away from entering the deviant playground of having sex with a child (Lansdown, 1984). But a connection does exist.

In his investigation into the shift in the discourse of man-boy love at the beginning of the twentieth century, Thijs Maasen (1991) reveals the emergence of a complex and questionable distinction between homosexuality and man-boy love. In 1920, when accusations were made against Gustav Wyneken, leader of the Wickersdorf Free School Community in Germany, for his alleged 'homosexual' relationships with boys, parents of the boys argued that the defining of 'pure friendships' as 'homosexual' was the result of 'urban perspectives,' the very thing they sought to protect their children from by sending

them to receive an 'anti-bourgeois education' at Wyneken's school. In a trial that sought to determine not whether the physical contact had actually occurred, but what this contact meant—were these naked embraces acts of homosexuality?—Wyneken argued that for a man and a boy to be engaged in a naked embrace did not necessarily constitute an act of homosexuality. While the judges concluded that the acts had indeed been of a sexual nature, Wyneken maintained that it was an offence to locate 'pedagogical Eros' as (homo)sexuality, for the two, he argued, were altogether different. He argued that his prosecution revealed the success of the bourgeois discourse in determining the meanings attached to same-sex contact. Homophiles, who were seeking at the time to promote the emerging notion of the homosexual as a natural and exclusive being, offered Wyneken no support, arguing that he would do better to focus his attention on the establishment of legitimacy for the medicalised homosexual type and await the disappearance of prejudice against 'Eros' in the post-equality era.

Maasen writes:

The psychopathology of sex made possible a different view on pedagogical Eros. The emergence of this sexual perception in an era at the same time characterized by an anti-homosexual climate produced fertile soil for homosexual insinuations with, at times,

political consequences. But the heated debate on man-boy friendships at that point reveal more: a shift in discourse on boy-love. Views on boy love proved subject to change. The platonic model of pedagogical Eros, Eros *paidikos* or *paiderastia*, was forced to make way for the medico-psychiatric model of homosexuality and pedophilia. (65-66)

Man-boy love and adult male homosexuality are not mutually exclusive categories, but the results of conscious and legally sanctified efforts to separate bodies according to arbitrary interpretations of very specific sexualised acts that these bodies are seen to do. Both the homosexual and the boy-lover (paedophile) are made into permanent species as a result of this process; and both forms of desire are therefore able to be socially, legally, and discursively regulated more effectively.

### **The Discursive 'Rights' of Non-Boy Love**

In the wake of the Stonewall riots, the post-1960s gay liberation movement boldly announced itself as an attack on the oppressiveness of the dominant institutions (Adam, 1987: 84). At the beginning of the movement, Dennis Altman (1971) wrote that in 'any talk of gay liberation we need a fuller examination of sexual

mores, not merely discussion of the attitudes towards homosexuality, for the liberation of the homosexual can only be achieved within the context of a much broader sexual liberation' (72). Sexuality among children would, he argued, cease to be frowned upon within such a social order (100). Similarly, in an early Australian publication Camp Ink, Gary Baldi (sic) wrote:

If the Campaign Against Moral Persecution is to live up to its name, we must stand against discrimination on grounds of moral and sexual preference, rather than to merely become a vehicle for the redistribution of surplus discrimination to other minority groups.  
(1973: 5)

In addressing the specific issue of intergenerational sexual relationships, (s)he suggested that 'If a child desires a sexual relationship with an adult (morally, if not legally) the child has at least the same entitlement to choose or refuse; to continue or to discontinue as does an adult' (5).

In these founding days of the movement, ages of consent were not considered to be sites of negotiation between an emerging demand for sexual freedom and the defenders of conservative morality. Carl Wittman's 'Gay Manifesto' affirmed the possibility of consensual man-boy sexual relationships as a site of resistance to the kind of heterosexist normativities in which the former

homophile movement was deemed to be guilty of participating (Adam, 1987: 84-5). Humphreys (1972) notes how the 1972 Gay Rights Platform, adopted at the National Coalition of Gay Organizations in February of that year, called for the repeal of all laws governing ages of consent, but adds that this demand was quickly withdrawn when it became evident that there was a lack of support for such a demand even amongst 'liberal' politicians (167-68).

If we accept the hypothesis that '[...] our primary erotic orientation to the same or to the opposite sex; what arouses us sexually and what turns us off; our sense of security and comfort as sexual beings; our sexual fears and preoccupations; all these and more are fixed or first established in childhood' (Constantine and Martinson, 1981: 3), then there is certainly grounds for demanding the support of the discourse of gay liberation for the exposure of homosexuality in boys under the age of consent. If (homo)sexuality is already fixed in childhood, there can be no evidence of corruption in this exposure. Rather, it would suggest an attempt to rescue the homosexual child from the demands of a compulsory heterosexuality. Pat Califia (1981) has argued that it is the responsibility of the gay liberation movement to address this, because attraction towards bodies of the same-sex is not something that gay people suddenly feel after attaining adulthood. It is something they do experience as children (135).

However, while the politics of the gay liberation movement continue to challenge the dominant position of heterosexuality, the construction of a homonormative model as an acceptable alternative to the already normalised heterosexual model has translated into the creation of demands for, amongst other things, legitimate homosexual families, homosexual marriages, homosexual partnership rights in employment and superannuation (pension schemes), and the homosexual's right to access adoption and IVF treatment programs. This current political focus reveals a significant shift in the aims of the gay liberation movement since its inception. Rather than seeking to challenge the structures that construct and constrain ideals of human relationships, the movement now endeavours to seek inclusion for its gay-normative identity within a culture where state control of the validity of sexual unions is still encouraged and widely accepted (Seidman, 1997; Warner, 1999). This 'gay rights' movement can legitimately challenge the suggestion that homosexuality is more corrupting than heterosexuality—evidenced in the continuing existence of higher ages of consent for homosexualised activities—but it cannot ask for more than the limitations of its bid for equality will allow. While there are inputs into the debate that seek possible ways of revising such laws to pay closer attention to actual consent and abuse rather than homosexual-heterosexual equality (West, 1981: 266-267), the discourse of gay liberation cannot ask for all sexualised acts to be removed from the label of corruption, particularly when these acts involve boys.

## **The Oppressed Oppresses: No Boys Allowed**

In contrast to the suggestion of a homosexual past based on pederasty and a present based on egalitarian relationships, Norton (1997) has suggested that the majority of same-sex unions in the past more accurately involved people of similar ages, whereas today it is possible to see evidence of much larger differences in age. The notion of a homosexuality based on equality in age is one that only became popularised in the late 1960s (85-91). In his analysis of the ongoing relationship between the gay movement and the issue of man-boy love in a post-Stonewall American context, David Thorstad further points out the discrepancy between a Stonewall rebellion, which involved teenagers and offered a symbolic critique of 'outmoded moral norms,' and the rising conformity of 'an upwardly mobile adult gay middle class' to the demands of a straight society which rejects the sexual needs of young people (252).

Michelangelo Signorile (2000) contends that while the threat of being identified as a 'recruiter,' and thereby being tainted with the label of 'paedophile,' is one of the reasons why many adult homosexuals steer clear of entering the debate on youth and sex—a threat that Graham Willett (2000) somewhat prematurely, I feel, claims to have been considerably eradicated (242)—he adds that a 'maturation' of the movement is the reason why homosexuals are unable to maintain focus on any one particular issue for any length of time. It is not so

much that homosexuals today are apathetic, but rather they are more fragmented as a result of the emergence of diverse gay lifestyles unimaginable at the time of the Stonewall riots. These lifestyles, however, are united around the assumption that the right to be 'gay' is the right of the adult subject whose adult status already grants him the right to be sexual.

David Buchbinder (1991) has argued that homosexuality is 'not merely same-sex erotic desire, but a complex of several factors, including not only a genital preference for members of the same sex, but also a particular set of experiences, attitudes and behaviours (what is popularly today called a 'lifestyle')' ('Mateship' 128). This definition would, however, seem more adequately applied to the signifier 'gay.' 'Homosexuality' continues to be the demanded interpretation of all same-sex sexualised corporeal acts, regardless of whether or not the participants do these acts within the context of being gay; but 'gay' more readily refers to a homonormativity that speaks of rights and citizenship automatically denied to the non-adult subject. The discourse of gay liberation continues to assert that homosexuality is not learned, produced, or created, but is an essentialist trait of the person. There is certainly no room within this discourse for consideration of naked man in contact with naked boy as anything other than sexual. For 'gay' to exist, the discourse relies on the normalised interpretation that this contact, this sex, maketh the (homo)sexual man. However, attempts to disassociate being 'gay' from former representations and understandings of

homosexualised desire as deviant and dirty now underpin the drive by the discourse of gay liberation to establish a 'gay' homosexuality that can be distinguished from the kind of desire seen to be located within man-boy love (Gay Left Collective, 1981). Given the understanding of homosexuality as all sexualised acts between same-sexed bodies, the act of sex between a man and a boy is still a homosexual one; but it is 'gay' that seeks to foreclose on any consideration of man-boy love as a legitimate kind of love.

Given its own logic about the 'closet'—an uncomfortable space of repression—the discourse of gay liberation recognises any refusal to allow people to be actively homosexual as oppression. This same narrative of the closet also permits the blame for the oppression of (homo)sexuality to be apportioned wholeheartedly to a dominant and 'demon' heterosexual model, while simultaneously denying that the 'good gay' can in any way occupy a similar oppressing role (Harris, 1997). And yet, the restraints imposed by a focus on rights do now prevent the discourse of gay liberation from speaking out on behalf of 'closeted' homosexual boys. 'Gay' is willing to sacrifice homosexual boys in exchange for the granting of social and legal equality to adult males who can legitimately identify with this term. These 'gay' adults actively participate in the discursive and practical oppression of young people having sex.

Gay liberation began to claim a legitimate subjectivity for the homosexual at a time when homosexualised activities were deemed to be criminal, and at a time when exposure of a person's homosexuality left them vulnerable to political and social attack. The fear of imprisonment, loss of one's home, job and family, and the risk of being forced to undergo clinical treatment may now be a part of the homosexual's past (on the whole), but they remain a real part of the present for anyone involved in the discussion or practise of consensual sexualised affairs between men and boys (Plummer, 1981: 234). The additional irony is that the discourse of gay liberation tells its own tale of history based on a claimed ownership of past celebrities who would more rightly be associated with man-boy love than with the contemporary ideological preference for same-sex unions based on an assumed egalitarianism of and through age (Reeves, 1981: 26; Thorstad, 1991: 266).

### **'Boy Lover': A Partner in the Bourgeois Bed**

There is already healthy scepticism towards investigations that discuss the issue of adult-child sexualised relationships. This scepticism points to hindrances to research caused by legal and moral restrictions imposed on these unions and by a general lack of acceptance for the diversity of the relationships under scrutiny (Brongersma, 1991: 147-53; Yuill, 2002). There is concern that an unquestioned

acceptance of all adult-child sexualised contact as damaging for the child may help to skew the findings of any research in order to prove this point (Jones, 1991). There are additional claims that false confessions can be extorted from children through manipulation (Foucault, Hocquenghem & Danet, 1990: 274), and that certain professions exaggerate the scale of the problem of child sexual abuse in order to promote their own self and professional worth (Thorstad, 1991: 267-268; Yuill, 2002). Others argue that the damage done to a child may be less the result of the personal and naked interaction, and more the result of the scripted responses demanded from institutions such as the police and the family (Levine, 2002: xxiv; Youth Liberation, 1981: 47). Similarly, however, the results of research that uses as its objects of study men who have been convicted of paedophilic activities, or men who are self-confessed boy-lovers, will be affected by the kind of narratives likely to be produced within such contexts.

Adult-child relationships have been explained as reflecting a desire for difference on the part of people involved; a fascination over what the Other has in comparison to the Self is seen to be the driving force (van Naerssen, 1991: 186). Guy Hocquenghem has argued that the restrictions imposed on sexual relations between adults and children, and the continuing inputs of disgust into the discourse, only serve to highlight the alternative proposition of actually wanting to have sex with a consenting child (Foucault, Hocquenghem & Danet, 1990: 274). Because the adult is warned away from any sexualised contact with the child—a

warning that has extended to the mere act of touch between stranger and child, and to the act of naked bathing between father and son/daughter—there is the paradoxical normalisation of the notion that the child's body *is* essentially sexual and therefore *can* arouse sexual excitement. In addition, Levine (2002) argues that the fear of the paedophile type might far exceed its reality, resulting in an obsession on the part of law enforcement agencies and officials who promote entrapment rather than those who actually do the deeds under scrutiny (36-41).

The notion of what constitutes a paedophile has also been questioned. Some have argued that the paedophile is not a real type, but merely a label that is attached to those who are found to have sexual feelings towards bodies of a particular age (Li, 1991: 131). Here, 'childhood' and 'age' are recognised to be specifically cultural and historical constructions affecting the interpretation of the physical act of adult body engaged in sexualised contact with child body (Moody, 1981: 148-49; Plummer, 1991: 245). The naturalisation of these concepts as real is seen to further restrict understandings of individual relationships and people because of their application to expected modes of being at particular moments in a subject's life (Alhonte, 1981; Constantine & Martinson, 1981: 6; NAMBLA, 1981: 99).

In 1991, Sandfort, Brongersma and van Naerssen posed a number of questions concerning adult sexual relationships with minors:

Will pedophilia become a lifestyle for some people based on their personally designed sexual orientation? Will society allow people to adopt such a lifestyle, or will society persist in seeing them only as child molesters? Can sexual involvement between adults and children be only conceived as child sexual abuse, or will the professionals and the public come to realize that there are various kinds of intimate involvement between adults and children and that distinctions between voluntary involvement and forced involvement can be made? (1991: 11-12)

While the limited amount of available academic material on this issue—mostly involving sociological and psychoanalytical case studies—does offer a critique of the assumption that all sexualised relationships between adults and non-adults are necessarily harmful to the younger participant (Leahy, 1992; Rind, Tromovitch, and Bauserman, 1998; Sandfort Brongersma, & van Naerssen, 1991; Tsang, 1981b), today the suggestion that a boy might be capable of participating in consensual sexual activity with a man continues to raise problems. One would surely have to be mad—or a paedophile—to go public with the idea that perhaps this could be the case. Superficially it would still appear that the concept of a man-boy sexualised union offers an affront to the normative standards of an acceptable sexual relationship.

Plummer (1991) has suggested, however, that an understanding of the complex systems of storying and negotiation that go into the sexing of the body, as opposed to the essentialist determinants of biology, can provide a greater awareness of what it means for adults and children to be involved in intergenerational sexualised relationships. He argues that coming out of the closet has helped the homosexual to dispel the myths surrounding him, to expose him as being just like you and me, perhaps even expose him as you and me; and therefore encourages those involved in man-boy love to do the same (Plummer, 1981: 244). Those who have experienced and continue to experience a sexualised desire for boys listen. And they talk. Verbalisation of their desires is seen as a necessary precursor to their liberation. Their articulated boy-love—'pedophilia, neophilia, philopédie, ephebophilia, hebephilia, Greek love, pedagogical eros, man/boy love, and intergenerational sex' (Sandfort, Brongersma, & van Naerssen, 1991: 7)—has become not an arbitrary means of understanding what it is bodies do within specific cultural and historical locations, but a real sexual orientation, 'genetically predetermined' (Riegel, 2000: 7) just like heterosexuality and homosexuality. Given the future scenario that this 'boy-lover' could legally engage in a sexualised relationship with a boy without widespread social condemnation, this would therefore indicate no epistemological shift in the normalised understandings about sex and sexuality, and the relationship of the body to both.

For those involved in the movement to legitimise man-boy sexualised unions, sexuality too has become the 'ultimate' in liberatory tools (NAMBLA, 1981: 95). Boy-lovers view their sexuality, quite literally, as something worth dying for. They fail to heed the advice to be wary of assuming sex to be the definer of one's being (Foucault, 1976: 69), of assuming sexuality to be real (Foucault, 1976: 105; Halperin, 1994: 22). Instead, they speak of self in terms of their sexualised desires, and thereby cage themselves within the identity of a 'boy-lover' through the articulation of their sexualised desires and corporeal experiences (fantastical or actual) as indicative of the type of person that they are. Their identification with the term reinforces the centrality of sexualised pleasures to our lives, at the expense of diminishing the importance of all other experiences that make up who we are, what we do (Li, 1991: 131), and, more importantly, what we might become. It reaffirms the naturalised idea that one small and particular aspect of a person's life is worthy of excessive scrutiny and surveillance. It allows for one momentary act of the flesh to be translated into a lifetime of sexual something, deviancy or normality; and one that can thereby affect the entire future of our beings. Such a process of coming out of the closet in order to identify self according to these momentary acts of the flesh only helps to reinforce the bourgeois myth of the reality of the sexual being.

The 'boy-lover' is a bourgeois myth. But his face—a masked and unknown but monstrous face, lurking somewhere in our midst, passing himself off as one

of us—has become a popularised one. He represents the contemporary roaming danger that is both real and unreal, both there and nowhere. He is a menace because of his invisibility and his potential to hide. He is the ‘shadow’ and the ‘phantom’ that authorities seek to catch (Foucault, Hocquenghem & Danet, 1990: 281), while individuals everywhere maintain hyper-vigilance over Self to make sure that he does not appear within. He is the new regulator of our sexual normality (Weeks, 1980: 18), tied up with continuing bourgeois fears of the homosexual Other (Altman, 1982: 198-202). Any attempt to expose and understand ‘him’ for the purpose of punishment or *liberté* reveals the necessity of constant and continuous articulation of his being in order to sustain this bourgeois myth as reality. Such articulation permits not only the dishing out of punishment or freedom accordingly, but also the maintenance of the bourgeois position of knowing that we can know of sexual types that we already claim to have knowledge of.

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