

# Historicizing Affect, Psychoanalyzing History: Pedophilia and the Discourse of Child Sexuality

Steven Angelides, PhD

University of Melbourne

**ABSTRACT.** Within the last two decades in Australia, Britain, and the United States, we have seen a veritable explosion of cultural panic regarding the problem of pedophilia. Scarcely a day passes without some mention in the media of predatory pedophiles or organized pedophile networks. Many social constructionist historians and sociologists have described this incitement to discourse as indicative of a moral panic. The question that concerns me in this article is: If this incitement to discourse is indicative of a moral panic, to what does the panic refer? I begin by detailing, first, how social constructionism requires psychoanalytic categories in order to understand the notion of panic, and second, how a psychoanalytic reading of history might reveal important unconscious forces at work in the current pedophilia “crisis” that our culture refuses to confront. Here, I will suggest a repressed discourse of child sexuality is writ large. I will argue that the hegemonic discourse of pedophilia is contained largely within a neurotic structure and that many of our prevailing responses to pedophilia function as a way to avoid tackling crucial issues about the reality and trauma of childhood sexuality. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>>*  
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Steven Angelides is a research fellow in the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne, Australia 3010.

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If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization—possibly the whole of mankind—have become ‘neurotic’?

—Sigmund Freud<sup>1</sup>

Within the last two decades in the United States, Britain, and Australia, we have seen a veritable explosion of cultural panic and alarming media reportage regarding an apparent “crisis” of pedophilia. In 1998, police in 14 countries raided the homes of about 200 suspected pedophiles, in what has been described as “one of the largest international efforts” to crack a pedophile ring. Two years later, in “name and shame” campaigns to “out” child sex offenders, two British newspapers published photographs of convicted pedophiles, which led to a number of violent vigilante attacks. In one particularly frightening instance, a mob of 300 people were reported to have gone on a rampage outside the home of a man suspected to be a pedophile because he had worn a neck brace similar to one worn in one of the published photos. The group was mistaken. But is the fear mistaken? Not according to the mass media, where scarcely a day passes without some mention in the press or on television news and current affairs programs of predatory pedophiles or organized pedophile networks. Nor according to many men who have decided to forego careers in primary and secondary teaching. Australian research has indicated that one factor in the critically declining rates of men entering the teaching profession is a fear of being accused of sexual abuse or being branded a pedophile. And neither is the fear misplaced according to the Australian Federal Police and US Federal Bureau of Investigation, it would seem, who would have us believe that pedophiles are indeed “a growing threat.”<sup>2</sup> To even raise the question of an irrational fear of pedophilia is abhorrent to many. For instance, in the United States, the Missouri State Legislature voted in April 2002 to cut \$100,000 from the University of Missouri’s budget, merely because Harris Mirkin, a senior academic, had published an article in 1999, ar-

guing that there is a moral panic surrounding pedophilia and that all discussion on the matter is unduly stifled.<sup>3</sup>

What is happening in many western societies right now? Are pedophiles really “a growing threat”? Or is the recent frenzy of pedophilia newspaper reporting a form of media sensationalism? Are pedophiles, as some media critics contend, the latest in a series of cultural scapegoats? Is the almost rabid pursuit of them akin to a crusade or witch hunt? Do we live in a climate of hysteria? Or are we in fact being made more aware of this thing called pedophilia as the discourse of child sexual abuse, and thus our knowledge of the problem, grows? Have we been ignorant in the past to the numbers of pedophiles in our populations and to the depth and breadth of pedophile activity? Or are our criteria expanding, such that many more behaviors are being pulled into the definitional fields of child sexual abuse and pedophilia? Are we inventing more and more pedophiles? It is doubtless impossible to adjudicate the question of whether or not the cultural incidence of pedophilia has increased.<sup>4</sup> What it *is* possible to conclude at a minimum is that within the last decade in particular there has been an immensely intense cultural cathexis of the object pedophilia, and thus to borrow Foucault’s terms, a veritable incitement to discourse.<sup>5</sup> Pedophilia has become a highly explosive and emotive key cultural term. The question that concerns me in this article is: If this incitement to discourse is indicative of a moral panic, to what does the panic refer?

### ***SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE THEORY OF MORAL PANIC***

The theory of moral panic occupies a pivotal place in the sociology of collective behavior and social deviance. British sociologist Jock Young pioneered the application of the term in 1971, to refer to public concern over apparent increases in drug abuse in Britain. He suggested not only that a moral panic ensued, but also that the panic itself led to increased drug-related arrests, thereby amplifying the “deviance” under examination.<sup>6</sup> Stanley Cohen furthered this model, with his analysis of youth disturbances between the Mods and Rockers in Britain in the 1960s. Together, Young and Cohen described moral panics as the escalating effects created by the mobilization of the media, public opinion, and various agents of social control around a perceived social problem. As Cohen put it:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.<sup>7</sup>

The use of highly emotive terms such as “folk devils,” “scapegoats,” “delusions,” “irrational fear,” “anxiety,” and “hysteria” are common in the sociological literature when describing moral panics.<sup>8</sup> The underlying assumption of moral panic theory is that the concern at hand is inflated or unwarranted, that it is disproportionate to the actual threat posed. Under this model, it might be possible to see the apparent increase in pedophile statistics as resulting not from an actual rise in numbers of pedophiles, but rather as part of the interactive, cumulative processes by which societies construct social problems. Indeed, many authors have already applied these terms and this kind of analysis to the nascent child sexual abuse and pedophilia “crisis.”<sup>9</sup> Vern Bullough has described the pedophile as the latest scapegoat “for everything that seems to be wrong with American society and the family.”<sup>10</sup> He has also, along with many others, equated the intensity of concern about pedophilia with moral panics and hysteria.<sup>11</sup> Still, others have described the overzealous tracking of suspected pedophiles by law enforcement bodies as witch-hunts, and those subjected to such witch-hunts as “folk-devils.”<sup>12</sup> On the whole, there is agreement among moral panic theorists that the danger represented by pedophiles has been altogether exaggerated. For the most part, the concept of moral panic and its associated terms have been applied to the phenomenon of pedophilia as loose and descriptive metaphors. On this rather superficial level, I would agree that many cultural and community responses to pedophilia certainly resemble aspects of (at least) popular understandings of each of the psychological formations such as delusional thinking, anxiety, irrational fear, panic, and hysteria. However, unaccompanied by psychological analyses, these terms tell us very little about the psychodynamics of individuals or groups. Short of some tacit moral presumption, we are left with no *explanation* of exactly *why* anxiety, panic, and hysteria emerge around the issue of pedophilia.

In my view, this reaches to the very heart of the problem with moral panic theory. Based largely on social constructionist history and sociology, moral panic theory seeks to explain the emergence of social panic responses by isolating the various social trends and changes that place stresses on populations. For instance, in his book on moral panics in Britain, Philip Jenkins lists sociopolitical and economic factors such as demographic changes and immigration, unemployment, Thatcherism, feminism, gay liberation, and so on, as providing the basis for social unrest and anxiety. These anxieties are then publicly disseminated by the media and various interest groups, leading often to fully-fledged moral panics.<sup>13</sup> The term moral panic thus *describes* the end product of an array of social processes and actors taking part in the identification and regulation of a particular social problem. Although the theory of moral panics is more descriptive than it is explanatory, if we take a closer look, it is clear that there is an implicit causal chain operating: Social change—anxiety—interest group agitation. Priority is accorded to social and material changes; these changes generate anxiety in individuals and groups; and this anxiety stimulates interest groups to make claims to articulate and/or solve the particular problem. The media is seen as a prime agent and conduit for expressing and arousing social anxieties. While I do not doubt that in many instances social changes and media publicity arouse anxiety, this is not an a priori or universal fact. That many sociologists, historians, and journalists use the phrase moral panic to describe what they evaluate as irrational or exaggerated responses to a social issue is itself testimony to this fact. What remains to be determined is precisely *why* certain groups and individuals react with anxiety and panic and others do not. Nothing in the theory of moral panic enables us to understand the relationship between social, material and discursive change and the psychology of affect, or emotion. The reason for this is that many social constructionist theorists frequently assume, wittingly or otherwise, that individual and group psychology is the one-way *effect* of material and discursive conditions.<sup>14</sup> Little epistemological space is made for examining the force exerted by psychological dynamics, and the ways these shape the social and material contexts within which people are situated. The contemporary ‘crisis’ surrounding pedophilia, in my opinion, provides an instructive, indeed exemplary, case study for interrogating the theory of moral panics and for historicizing and theorizing the place of affect in social and discursive relations.

### PEDOPHILIA AND MORAL PANIC

Unfortunately, very few sustained historical and theoretical treatments of the issue of pedophilia have been produced. Philip Jenkins's book, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*, is one of the few exceptions, although it deals with child molestation more generally.<sup>15</sup> Employing the concept of "moral panic," Jenkins attempts to ground it in a constructionist historical analysis of American responses to sex crimes against children. Following the work of Stanley Cohen and Stuart Hall, Jenkins describes a moral panic as a "wave of irrational public fear," a reaction to a person or group that is "wildly exaggerated and wrongly directed."<sup>16</sup> The fear, in short, is altogether disproportionate to the actual threat posed. According to Jenkins, and other constructionist historians, child molestation panics of the twentieth century have occurred around the 1910s, 1940s, and 1980s. Despite arguing that "panic responses" have been "repeatedly produced" (7) throughout the last century or so, Jenkins is quick to underscore the point that this has not been the only response to child molestation. There have been historical periods of relative complacency or indifference to the problem of child sexual abuse, such as the 1920s and 1960s. He demonstrates that panic responses can be explained by "changes in the audience to whom activists are seeking to appeal" in the context of shifting social trends: the demographic balance of the population, sexual revolutions and the attitudes toward sexual experimentation, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, feminism, changes in family structure, gender roles and the workplace, economic factors, marriage and divorce rates, increases in child care outside the home, expansion of psychotherapeutic industry, globalization, and so on. "Why has the public been so fickle in its fears?" Jenkins asks: "The lesson seems to be the one so often found in studies of social problems: that claims about danger are rather like commodities in a competitive marketplace, items that gain or lose a following depending on how well retailers strike a chord among the consumers whom they wish to attract" (216). But exactly how and why do claims-makers "strike a chord" with particular groups of people?

Jenkins's constructionist account has certainly enhanced our understanding of the various forces contributing to moral panics. Yet it is limited, I argue, by its prioritization of social determination and by the concept of panic itself. That the concept of panic has clear allusions to a psychological formation—for Jenkins, it is a wildly exaggerated and irrational fear—suggests that its formulation must be situated at the nexus of the social and the psychical registers. However, for all its pretensions

to explaining the (psychological) concept of moral panic, Jenkins's analysis ultimately refuses a discussion of psychical dimensions. (Nor has anyone else to my knowledge yet offered an adequate account of psychodynamics in relation to pedophilia and child sexual abuse.) Panic amounts to little more than a vague metaphor for identifying a set of *social* responses (discourses) that reflect or represent a certain state of community or cultural affairs. Without an analysis of psychodynamics, it would seem impossible to place the individual or group within this social or symbolic structure, except as its mere reflection or mouthpiece. It would be impossible, therefore, to explain *why* certain interest groups are in fact *able* to "strike a chord" among various publics *and what this chord is*. Identifying changing material and sociopolitical conditions is not sufficient to answer this question, as these tell us nothing about the dynamics of human psychology. Nor is there any uniform subjective response to these phenomena; not everyone exhibits panic responses. If there were uniform responses, there would be no place for the concept of moral panic, no way of recognizing a discrepancy between actual and perceived danger.

In continuing the economic metaphor, Jenkins implies just this when he concludes that the inexplicable vagaries of individual subjectivity are ultimately responsible for whether or not a chord has been struck. "The products themselves [e.g., child protection], although they may be packaged with greater or less sophistication, remain fairly constant," he says, "their success in gaining market share depends on the composition and *tastes* of the consumers, which change over time" (216; emphasis added). Jenkins is thus unable to account for the effect of shifting social and historical conditions on individuals, or the mobilization and intensity of subjective responses to child molestation, or the ways these responses shape, and are shaped by, various discourses and social practices. Individual subjects instead emerge in Jenkins's history as rather two-dimensional figures, which are interpellated and spat out, in rather crude structuralist-like terms, by social discourses. Remaining unexplained is the dynamic two-way relationship between the interlocking structures of psyche and society. As Tim Dean argues, these two structures are mutually informing, even though "never directly or homologously."<sup>17</sup> Neither can assume the position of first cause, and nor can one be seen as a mirror image of the other. The question of how individual subjects affect discourse, how discourse affects subjectivity, and *why within this dynamic certain subjects take up particular (dis)positions* is pivotal to any account of moral panic; especially, it might be said, when sex is at issue.<sup>18</sup>



There is an abundance of insightful historical material and analysis in Jenkins's book upon which to draw and to which I am indebted. What I would like to do is not jettison this constructionist research, but supplement it by exploring the dynamic interface between the social and the psychic conditioning discourses of pedophilia. Worth noting here is how the impressive archive of constructionist scholarship on sexuality has been unmistakably indifferent or ambivalent, if not often resistant or overtly hostile, to psychoanalytic categories.<sup>19</sup> I, too, have shared all of these responses, not least because of psychoanalysis's apparent universalism and heteronormativity. I have grown increasingly dissatisfied with the pictures emanating from many historicist accounts however. The omission of the psychic dimension flattens out both the subject and history, leaving each devoid of affect (feelings and emotions)—the very things denoting psychic events such as hysteria and panic.<sup>20</sup> Other vital subjective elements such as ideals, values, fantasies, and desires are also discounted, as Mark Bracher points out, as are the “interpellative forces . . . of discourse that cannot be reduced to a function of representation.”<sup>21</sup> This is an impoverished notion of history and sociology that begins with the “death of the author” but that ends with the annihilation of the subject. It is a form of historical sociology that might also be seen as the effect of a mighty act of repression. For repression, as both Freud and Lacan describe it, is the process whereby thought and affect are detached, the thought being that which is repressed or pushed out of consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

Like a host of other scholars, I cannot disregard, and indeed find much of value in, psychoanalytic theory, particularly in view of the *intensity* of affect aroused by the issues of sexuality and pedophilia. Here I would have to agree with Dean's suggestion that the volatility of an issue is often indicative of “its proximity to something psychically fundamental.”<sup>23</sup> The appeal to psychological terms such as *hysteria*, *panic*, and *irrational fear* to describe the responses to pedophilia is doubtless suggestive of a deeper, unconscious level of psychosocial functioning. I would certainly argue that, at present, these terms capture much of the sentiment of dominant cultural responses to the phenomenon of pedophilia. However, when sociopsychic terminology is employed only descriptively or metaphorically without the aid of psychoanalytic categories, a vast gulf is opened up between the social and the psychical realms. The two are detached, and the psychic is effectively erased from the social. An analysis of their inevitable inter-implication is thus foreclosed. One of the reasons for this is that “irrational,” or perhaps nonrational, psychical responses, cannot adequately be examined by a rationalist analy-



sis at the level of conscious thought or representation. I have spent much of the past four years researching the entire archive of social science, psychiatric, criminological, and popular media literature on the subject of pedophilia. In that time, it has become evident that, in addition to *ostensible* concerns, something rather profound, albeit largely unrecognized, is animating the contemporary “crisis,” and that a constructionist analysis of changing social trends and moral panics is insufficient by itself to explain it. In order to understand the relationship between changing social trends and anxiety, it is necessary to analyze how anxiety is working at the level of the individual and the group. The unmistakably high level of affect or emotion associated with almost any pedophilia discussion, in my view, clearly points to the work of powerful unconscious forces. What I would like to do now is foreground this accent on the sociopsychic, but give it a more precise psychoanalytic inflection. I will be suggesting that not until we are able to grapple with history at the level of subjectivity will we be able to understand the history of the present.

### **REVISITING NEUROSIS AND CHILDHOOD SEXUALITY**

Why it is that responses to pedophilia that are anything but disparaging so often provoke such intensely emotional and often extremely violent reactions? Why does the very mention of pedophilia evoke such fear, anxiety, and panic among so many people? And what unconscious forces might be at work? I suggest that *one way* the dominant panic response to pedophilia might be usefully rethought is through the psychoanalytic concept of neurosis. I propose that the discursive field of pedophilia is contained largely within a neurotic structure and that many of the prevailing cultural responses to this phenomenon are neurotic. In what follows, I do not claim to have unearthed some buried psychosocial truth for each and every individual, and I do not speak with the empirical weight of clinical psychoanalysis. Nor do I regard psychoanalysis as the only useful paradigm for approaching these questions, although in my opinion, it goes further than any of the other social sciences in penetrating the dynamics of sexuality and the unconscious. My aim is merely to stimulate discussion and debate, and to resuscitate and reformulate what I think are some useful psychoanalytic concepts that are being increasingly disregarded in recent years when examining subjectivity and sexuality.<sup>24</sup> I firmly believe that the social sciences and humanities must foster a truly interdisciplinary practice, and to this end I offer an

historicist and poststructuralist engagement with Freudian theory and some of its post-Freudian reformulations as a potentially productive and important interdisciplinary exchange, and one which has yet to be staged in the quest to apprehend the cultural phenomenon of pedophilia.<sup>25</sup> I do not argue that all concern about pedophilia is misplaced and neurotic, only that the way in which this concern is *often* articulated reveals much more than surface representations would indicate. Along with very real and legitimate anxieties about child safety and protection are also deeper, unconscious dynamics that our culture remains unwilling to confront. Here, I suggest, the figure of child sexuality is writ large.

I want to begin this discussion of neurosis with a standard Freudian reading. In classical psychoanalytic terms, anxiety is the “nodal point” of neurosis, and repression the ego’s primary defense against it.<sup>26</sup> When disturbing or forbidden ideas threaten to emerge into consciousness, anxiety acts as the danger signal to the ego. The ego attempts to defend itself against these intrusive thoughts, and employs the defense mechanism of repression.<sup>27</sup> When an individual is unable to mount a successful defense against the forbidden thoughts, symptoms develop. As conflict solutions, neurotic symptoms are both signs of and substitutes for unconscious desires; they are a return of the repressed. Elements of the discourse of pedophilia are, in my view, indicative of neurotic symptomatology. They have both manifest and latent meaning. One of the benefits of employing a psychoanalytic understanding of neurosis is that it accounts not only for pathological processes. That which we call “normal” is also subsumed within the neurotic structure. As Freud points out, “If you take up a theoretical point of view and disregard the matter of quantity, you may quite well say that we are *all* ill—that is neurotic—since the preconditions for the formation of symptoms can also be observed in normal people.”<sup>28</sup> This enables me to locate both the so-called justifiable and the seemingly irrational responses to pedophilia within the same (psycho)analytic framework. I should point out that in drawing on elements of classical psychoanalysis, I will not be conforming to a strict Freudian model. Although I will be employing some key Freudian insights with regard to neurosis and infantile sexuality, these will be recast through the post-Freudian theories of Jean Laplanche and discursive psychology.

If our responses to pedophilia are neurotic, to what does the anxiety about pedophilia refer, and what has been repressed? Again, classical psychoanalysis provides us with some useful resources with which to begin tackling these questions. Classical psychoanalysis understands childhood sexuality, and more specifically, *childhood sexual conflict*,

to be the root cause of neurosis.<sup>29</sup> What anxiety is signaling is an earlier (childhood) event that entailed the threat of danger, the basis of which is a traumatic moment “when the ego meets with an excessively great libidinal demand.”<sup>30</sup> What “a person is afraid of in neurotic anxiety . . . is evidently his own libido” (116). Thus, Freud concludes, “the commonest cause of anxiety neurosis is unconsummated [libidinal] excitation” (114-15). Despite the influence of Freudian theory, one of the prevailing phantasies of most contemporary western cultures is that childhood is, or ought to be, a developmental space free from sexuality. Adults, so the narrative goes, are those who have crossed over into sexuality. Of course, parents today are often among the first people to acknowledge the erotic strivings of children. However, they also often consider this as a kind of “innocent” experimentation or exploration. The transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood is thought to proceed via linear stages of sexual maturation. Children are thus routinely viewed as asexual, latent, or proto-sexual beings, awaiting adolescent pubertal development before the emergence of supposedly “mature” or “real” adult genital sexuality.<sup>31</sup> Such a linear, developmental narrative makes the subject of child sexuality an especially controversial one. I want to argue, first, that infantile sexuality is a reality that must be substantively acknowledged, in order to argue, second, that it is the traumatic origins of infantile sexuality<sup>32</sup> that is at the heart of our neurosis about pedophilia.

Espousing a concept of infantile sexuality is certainly not new. Various sociological, psychoanalytic, anthropological, and legal discourses have acknowledged this fact for a good part of the twentieth century. However, as I have argued elsewhere, with the advent of the feminist discourse of child sexual abuse in the 1980s, there has been a monumental historical shift in which there has been a steady repudiation of any substantive concept or discourse of child sexuality.<sup>33</sup> The notion of childhood sexual innocence became paramount in the 1980s, in large part through the confluence of feminist anti-rape and anti-pornography movements and the New Right backlash against the sexual excesses of the sexual and gay revolutions. The child sexual abuse movement drew directly from the language and rhetoric of feminist anti-rape and anti-pornography movements. Feminist critiques worked hard to expose the widespread problem of incest in the patriarchal family, and they were vigorous in contesting legal definitions of abuse that ignored or downplayed non-penetrative sexual acts. A new approach to abuse emerged, which, as Jenkins reveals, made it “a matter of subjective definition and eroded distinctions between violent or incestuous assaults

and acts like exhibitionism.”<sup>34</sup> Feminists were also concerned to challenge notions that women and children subjected to rape and sexual abuse were somehow complicit in the crime (by “asking for it” or fabricating charges), or that child prostitutes and children in child pornography could willingly consent to commercial sex. Concepts of the innocent, blameless, and unconsenting “victim” and the “survivor” of rape and sexual abuse became key cultural terms.<sup>35</sup> In earlier decades, it was easy to find representations of child sexuality and of sexually “seductive” and “flirtatious” children in a range of sociological, psychological, and legal discourses.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, these ideas were commonplace in all earlier decades of the century, even during the height of the sex crime panics in the 1910s and 1940s.<sup>37</sup> As late as the mid-1970s, psychiatric theories continued to cite evidence that young children are capable of seduction, and commonly do so. In canvassing psychiatric literature in his 1974 *Guide to Psychiatry*, Myre Sim found it “surprising” how “little *promiscuous* children are affected by their experiences [of sex with adults], and how most settle down to become demure housewives. It is of interest that Henriques lists two categories—the unaffected and the guilty—and that seems to put the matter in a nutshell.”<sup>38</sup> Or consider this quotation from a 1970 sex education text, *The Facts of Sex*:

There is the incontrovertible fact, very hard for some of us to accept, that in certain cases it is not the man who inaugurates the trouble. The novel *Lolita* . . . describes what may well happen. A girl of twelve or so, is already endowed with a good deal of sexual desire and also can take pride in her “conquests.” Perhaps, in all innocence, she is the temptress and not the man.<sup>39</sup>

From the Victorian period until the 1980s, children have been represented simultaneously as sexual *and* innocent.<sup>40</sup> However, from the mid-1980s to the present day, the idea that children can sexually seduce adults or that they are able truly to consent to sex with an adult is pretty much abhorrent. This is in large part due to important and rigorous feminist critiques of simplistic notions of “seductive” and “flirtatious” children and their reinterpretation of power relations between adults and children. In no way do I wish to imply that we should return to pre-1980s notions of sexually seductive and flirtatious children. I am merely registering the fact that, however problematic, the use of such concepts nonetheless served as an articulation of a signifier of child sexuality, and that along with the rejection of the notions of child seductiveness and flirta-

tiousness has been a rejection of almost any notion of child sexuality. As adolescent psychiatrist Lynn Ponton points out, although there is a good deal of “noise” surrounding childhood and sexuality, there is little, if any, open and *direct* discussion and intra-cultural debate on the issue.<sup>41</sup> Of course, children are often described as pre- or proto- or latent sexual beings, and it is commonplace to recognize forms of childhood sensual eroticism. However, I argue that such representations are typically reduced to a form of childhood exploration that is seen to be distinct from, and to precede the onset of, “real” adult sexuality. Childhood and adulthood are thus disconnected by sexuality, rather than bound together by it, and the (psychoanalytic) concept of childhood sexuality as inextricably informing adult sexuality is repudiated. It is in this way that I am arguing that the dominant post-1980s figuration of children is one of innocence without sexuality, in a way different from earlier decades of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> This is also reflected in the shift to a more identity-based construction of sexuality in the latter part of the twentieth century, a construction within which children are generally excluded.<sup>43</sup> Child sexuality has thus been repudiated, or, as I will argue shortly, intra-psychically and dialogically repressed.

Ours has become a culture of denial and silence with regard to child sexuality. This is in stark contrast to the “polymorphous incitement to discourse” on matters of adult sex.<sup>44</sup> As much as Foucault strove to debunk the repressive hypothesis and psychoanalytic notions of repression, I suggest that any notion of a polymorphous incitement to discourse is dependent upon forms of discursive repression.<sup>45</sup> The time has come to reopen dialogue on the topic of repression and childhood sexuality.<sup>46</sup> That psychoanalysis is possibly the only discourse of the human sciences to have consistently and rigorously demanded a signifier for child sexuality—not to mention formulated coherent theories of repression—makes it an essential starting point for any analysis of human intersubjective relations, particularly so in the case of pedophilia.<sup>47</sup>

### ***PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE UNIVERSAL TRAUMA OF CHILDHOOD SEXUALITY***

Infantile, or, childhood sexuality is arguably the core tenet of classical psychoanalysis. While there are divergent models for understanding the intricacies of its development, one of which I will outline shortly, I consider the simple existence of childhood sexuality to be a grounding axiom. By this I mean, firstly, that human sexuality is prefigured by the

intense physical and emotional relations between parents and children, and secondly, that these relations are not simply erotic but also psychologically enduring. As Melanie Klein describes it: "Because our mother first satisfied all our self-preservative needs and sensual desires and gave us security, the part she plays in our minds is a lasting one, although the various ways in which this influence is effected and the forms it takes may not be at all obvious in later life."<sup>48</sup> What Klein is referring to is the idea that, though not determinative, such parent-child relations at the very least inflect all subsequent sexual object-choices.

Freud, of course, pioneered this idea a century ago, and it was revolutionary for his time. As he famously put it, "a child's first object-choice is an incestuous one."<sup>49</sup> In other words, a specific form of incestuous desire underpins parent-child relations. "There can be no doubt," he stated in *Three Essays*, "that every object-choice whatever is based, though less closely, on these prototypes [of the mother or father]."<sup>50</sup> However, psychoanalysis has focused primarily on this incestuous desire from the perspective of the child. I wish to extend this, and by incorporating the perspective of the parent, suggest that a specific form of *pedophilic* desire also structures this parent-child relationship. Jean Laplanche's general theory of primal seduction and the enigmatic signifier is useful here.<sup>51</sup> In his rewriting of Freudian theory, Laplanche holds that "seduction is not primarily a fantasy but a 'real' situation."<sup>52</sup> Although this is not to be confused, he points out, with "an event-based realism" (663), namely, the thesis of actual seduction that Freud abandoned and that many feminists have reclaimed. Rather, seduction is conceived of as a universal or "*primal situation . . . in which*" a new-born child, an infant in the etymological sense of the word (*in-fans*: speechless), is faced with the adult world."<sup>53</sup> This universal situation involves the child's inevitable *confrontation* with the other, which Laplanche calls a "communication situation."<sup>54</sup> The child is "addressed" by the other in this confrontation with the adult world, which is a mode of communication where the (m)other transmits messages to the child through her caring, nourishing, and stimulating of the child. As the (m)other is a sexual being that cares for her child with her whole personality, this mode of address and communication intrinsically entails the transmission of elements of the (m)other's unconscious sexuality to the child. "So even the slightest gesture for the infant will carry something enigmatic," Laplanche suggests.<sup>55</sup> He describes this as "the intrusion of the adult sexual universe" into the child's world, whereby sexuality is "*implanted* in the child from the parental universe: from its structures, meanings, and fantasies."<sup>56</sup> In turn, the child is invited, enticed, and in-

cited to respond to the mother's communication. The child, in other words, is *seduced by the mother*, and thus by her sexuality.<sup>57</sup> This communication or message to the child is what Laplanche refers to as the "enigmatic signifier" or the compromised message. It is a very different conceptualization of seduction than either the feminist or classical psychoanalytic notions. And it is enigmatic and compromised primarily for two reasons. First, there is a clear asymmetry between child and adult and child and adult psychic universes, such that the child is unable to understand and integrate the questions and enigmas of the adult world. Second, the messages communicated to the child embody elements of the parent's unconscious. It is in this way that the compromised message, the enigma, "is in itself a *seduction* and its mechanisms are unconscious."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, this "implantation of an erotic message in the infant which he or she does not understand" is, as Laplanche stresses, also not symmetrical. "It is not an interaction. It is a one-way action." Importantly, he goes on to qualify and elaborate this statement:

It is only one-way on the sexual level. I do not deny the interaction on the self-preservation level: in feeding the infant, for example, one feeds and the other is fed, hence there is an interaction. But when the feeding message relays the sexual, it is one-way, if follows one direction from the feeder to the fed. From the beginning, one is active and other is passive. But very quickly, the little human tries to turn this passivity into activity, that is, to make something of this message from the other. Still, there is a dissymmetry. This comes from the fact that the active one has more "knowledge," more unconscious fantasies than the passive infant. The adult has more, because he or she has an unconscious.<sup>59</sup>

The enigmatic signifier (of adult desire) is first inscribed in the infant's bodily, or, erotogenic zones.<sup>60</sup> In a second phase, because the child cannot fully or successfully integrate the excessive libidinal excitation, or, unintelligible erotic messages from the parent, this enigmatic signifier undergoes a primal repression.<sup>61</sup> The repressed, residual elements thereafter ensure a permanent conflictual relationship with the ego, producing a subjective core of irreducible otherness. The child is thus split unto him- or herself, and sexuality is ever after inflected by an enigmatic otherness. This universal theory of primal seduction and the enigmatic signifier is therefore the foundational structure for the constitution of the primordial unconscious, and thus sexuality, in the child.<sup>62</sup>



As the flipside to the psychoanalytic notion of incestuous desire, then, I see the scene of primal seduction described by Laplanche as involving a form of *pedophilic* desire. Indeed, pedophilic desire precedes and produces incestuous desire. Although pedophilic desire is not the same as the desire of an adult to sexually abuse a child, as Freud pointed out, this primordial scenario nevertheless involves a form of adult sexual desire *for* the child. As he reminds us in *Three Essays*, the mother regards her child “with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life: she strokes him, kisses him, rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object.”<sup>63</sup> Childhood sexuality is thus constituted through the production—and as we will see shortly, also through the simultaneous prohibition—of both incestuous and pedophilic desire.

We live in an era in which child abuse, especially child sexual abuse, is deemed the ultimate evil. One of the regrettable corollaries, or perhaps consequences, of this is the widespread belief that almost any form of childhood psychological conflict and trauma can, and should, be eradicated.<sup>64</sup> Childhood is increasingly represented as a period of blissful innocence that is, or at least ought to be, free of conflict and trauma. Childhood psychological conflicts and traumas are often seen as signs of bad parenting, of child maltreatment. Most psychoanalysts have resisted such optimistic views of human development. Instead, multiple psychological conflicts and traumas are considered an inevitable aspect of child development, especially so in the case of sexuality.<sup>65</sup> Psychoanalysis has cogently demonstrated, for a century now, that the emerging sexuality of a child is experienced as inevitably traumatic. To continue my discussion of parental seduction, while mysteriously enticing, the inexplicable desire or sexuality of the (m)other—the enigmatic signifier—is also traumatic, as it overtaxes the infant’s immature psychical apparatus. The (m)other’s sexualized messages are thereby experienced by the child as both attractive and threatening. In addition to this, there is that second momentous sexual trauma that goes by the name of the Oedipus complex.<sup>66</sup> The experience and exploration of these erotic relations between parents and children—or between children and children for that matter—have strict cultural limits (incest taboo). The child *becomes* sexualized through parent-child interactions, but the child’s emergent sexuality must not be realized or played out with one’s parents. The child must confront the fact that s/he is not the sole bearer of his or her parent’s affections but that s/he must compete with others for them. Not only must s/he then redirect any sexual desires away from the parents, s/he must strictly circumscribe the expression of almost all signs of overt sexual desire. As psychoanalysis has stressed, both the

loss of parents as love objects *and* the severe circumscription of child sexual expression are two of the more significant and formative traumas in a child's development.<sup>67</sup> The trauma of childhood sexuality—or what I call the simultaneous *production* and *prohibition* of incestuous and pedophilic desire (and thus of sexual desire in general)—frustrates and enrages the child intensely, and these emotional events in turn produce profound grief, guilt, and shame for both the child and the parent.<sup>68</sup>

The problem is that our culture demands that any eroticized parent-child emotions and any overt childhood sexual desire remain unexpressed. We simply do not have a language to speak childhood sexuality, let alone a language to articulate the erotic bond between children and parents.<sup>69</sup> These topics are taboo. We are not even expected to talk about them, let alone admit to having such desires. But without a language to work through these prohibited desires, the grief, guilt, and shame they engender remain unresolved. And this only intensifies the original trauma of infantile sexuality. How do we then deal with these highly intense and inarticulate incestuous and pedophilic desires? The answer, which might in these post-Foucauldian, post-repressive hypothesis times appear somewhat outdated, is, I suggest, repression.<sup>70</sup>

### REPRESSION AND COLLECTIVE NEUROSIS

According to psychoanalysis, at the level of individual psychology we rely on repression to ward off prohibited desires. As Anna Freud reminds us with regard to neurosis, “repression is not only the most efficacious, it is also the most dangerous, mechanism.”<sup>71</sup> Any reminder of the original conflict easily reactivates the repressed material, which has been pushing relentlessly throughout our entire life toward release. In other words, the intra-psychically repressed elements of childhood sexuality remain in permanent conflict with the ego, attracting metonymically associated ideas that are similarly discordant with the ego or super-ego, such as pedophilia. These metonyms act as dangerous reminders of the original sexual conflict. As intra-psychic repression is not a singular event but a permanent process, ever more expenditures of psychic energy are required to keep the repressed material at bay.<sup>72</sup> If successful in its struggle for release—and it should be kept in mind that neurosis is the norm rather than the exception—the repressed returns in the form of neurotic symptoms. As unfashionable as it may be to employ aspects of classical psychoanalysis, I argue that pedophilia stirs up reminders of the traumatic origins of sexuality (return of the repressed) and that the irratio-

nal social response to the threat pedophilia is seen to pose is in part an attempt to *avoid* confronting the production and prohibition of incestuous and pedophilic desires. In this way, the category of the pedophile might, in part, be seen as a convenient scapegoat that acts as a poison container for the restaging and projection of traumas.<sup>73</sup> Social hysteria about pedophilia might also, in part, be seen as an attempt to express the very incestuous and pedophilic desires that are prohibited, as well as the displaced articulation of the erotics of childhood sexuality.

However, the classical psychoanalytic emphasis on intra-psychic dynamics is insufficient in explaining the relationship between psyche and society. An intra-psychic reading of repression presumes a prior cultural prohibition, or rather, an interactive theory of the discursive repression of child sexuality. In order to elaborate this relationship, I draw on the work of discursive psychologists, who have provided useful tools for rethinking repression and situating it at the intersection of the individual and society. In forging fruitful links between psychoanalysis and forms of poststructuralist *discourse* theory, Michael Billig argues that it would be wrong to understand repression as simply an internal psychical phenomenon, and that there is no “sharp distinction between internal mental life and external social life” (56).<sup>74</sup> His point is that we cast away or repel distressing thoughts in a similar manner to which we evade disturbing topics of conversation. According to Billig, therefore, the very tools essential for repression are contained in discourse and the broader skills of language use (46).<sup>75</sup> “What is customarily said may also routinely create the unsaid, and, thus, may provide ways for accomplishing repression . . . language, or rather dialogue, provides the means of repression” (67). This is the idea of discursive, or, dialogic repression.<sup>76</sup> Discourse and language-use provide historically specific symbolic frameworks and normative ground rules for what can and should be said or left unsaid. Repression is thus not simply an intra-psychic but an “interpsychic” and relational process, whereby subjective identifications and investments are made possible by intersubjective dialogue and discursive subject positions.<sup>77</sup>

A discursive psychoanalysis is uniquely positioned to explore the inextricable relationship between the individual and the social, or, between individual subjective investments/identifications and social discourses. Despite its apparent emphasis on a depth psychology of the individual, as an analytic paradigm psychoanalysis has always been preoccupied with highlighting the irreducible and mutually constituting nature of the individual and society. The founding psychoanalytic concepts such as the unconscious, fantasy, superego, ego ideal, and repres-

sion, among others, demonstrate clearly the processes by which social formations are internalized by, and indeed constitutive of, the individual subject. In other words, one is an individual subject only to the extent that s/he is a social subject. Freud was quick to point this out in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, arguing that “from the very first individual psychology . . . is at the same time social psychology as well.”<sup>78</sup> As he went on to note, this is because:

Each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous group minds—those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality, etc. (161)

Such a radical blurring of the lines between the individual and the social opens up a space, in my view, for understanding certain cultural formations as types of collective or discursive neurosis. As we have seen, Freud stressed that neuroses most often emerge out of a clash between forbidden unconscious wishes and unsuccessful repressions, or, defenses.<sup>79</sup> Such defensive efforts, moreover, represent the mediating function between desire and the external world. Because unconscious wishes are routinely *forbidden* by discursive prohibitions and because individual identifications and ego ideals have been *internalized* from *discourse*, it is easy to see how there might thus be a “convergence of individual ‘ego-ideals,’” as Laplanche and Pontalis put it, and thus, I suggest, *a convergence of neurosis*.<sup>80</sup> That is to say, through discourse and discursive subject positions, neuroses might very well emerge both as individual and social, or, collective phenomena.<sup>81</sup>

On this discursive psychoanalytic model identification, projection, and repression are largely inseparable. Almost any psychic identification or any acceptable and normative identity claim requires deviant behaviors, desires, or identities to be expelled, or rather repressed, from its terms. The act of disidentification (“I am not this”) thus has as its condition of possibility a simultaneous identification (“I am that”), and vice versa. This means that each and every speech act or identity claim inevitably entails a simultaneous introjection and repression within the self and a defensive projection onto others: “I am heterosexual/I am not homosexual,” “We are Christian/We are not Muslim.”<sup>82</sup> Even though an utterance or speech act may not seem on the surface to entail a conscious or deliberate process of disidentification, at the levels of language and the unconscious, these two processes are indissociable. The

“said” and the “unsaid,” the avowed and the disavowed, go hand in hand. It is for this reason that I prefer to specify this process with the term dis/identification. To take an over-simplified example more pertinent to this discussion, the socially constructed value and power conferred to the subject position of the “ideal parent” provides particular kinds of identificatory desire for a mother or father. In a cultural and historical context in which adult/child eroticism is strictly taboo, a mother’s or father’s identification as a parent is likely to be made possible by concomitant disidentifications: not pedophile, not child sex abuser, not sexually desirous of children. Normative desires and beliefs are introjected and inappropriate desires and beliefs are projected. This process of dis/identification thus depends upon interpsychic—that is, both intra-psychic and dialogic—repressions. With this notion of dialogic repression, a different picture of the unconscious emerges, and it is one in which, again, there is no easy distinction between psyche and society, or unconscious intra-psychic processes and collective discourses. Neither is there a one-way correspondence between discourse and subjectivity, or a timeless concept of the unconscious. Individual investments and identifications (desire) cannot merely be reduced to the various subject positions made possible by discourse. Instead, individual investments and identifications in particular discursive positionings must be seen as the complicated and interactive effect of personal history (intersubjective relationships) *and* power-knowledge relations in a given society.<sup>83</sup> The point I wish to underscore is that *interpsychic repression* is an inevitable function of this process.

I argue that the cultural prohibition, or, dialogic repression of child sexuality since the 1980s encourages, above and beyond the first major intra-psychic repression (of infantile sexual trauma), further unnecessary and harmful repressions. Without a language to express childhood sexuality, we deny human beings the capacity to symbolize the erotic and traumatic child/adult encounter, and it is this capacity to symbolize experience that is essential for coping with desire, loss, guilt, shame, and grief. Furthermore, in psychoanalytic terms, the more extreme the repression, the more intense is the neurotic symptomatology. This might well explain many of the exaggerated emotional responses to pedophilia. Although inextricable from individual subjectivity, as I have just argued, we can also see an intensified neurosis at work at the level of cultural representation. The dialogic repression of child sexuality has, in my view, resulted in issues of child sexuality being endlessly distorted into, metonymically displaced onto, and substituted by, a range of other issues. This is because the action of repression or silencing is not a singular event but a

dialogic and intersubjective process. In order to repress or silence a subject, it is also necessary simultaneously to avow or articulate something in its place. The more we dialogically repress, silence or deny child sexuality, the more steadfastly do we express, avow or affirm other issues, such as those pertaining to adult sexuality and other normative (“nonsexual”) aspects of childhood. Hence, the media *obsession* not just with pedophilia, but with a generalized disappearance of childhood narrative in which anything from the Internet to child murderers to youth drug-taking to faulty parenting to the earlier arrival of female puberty is seen to be threatening children and blurring the boundaries between child- and adulthood. I consider these symptomatic of *collective neurosis*. Scratch the surface and it is not difficult to see the dreaded “child sexuality” as punctuating these representations.

### CONCLUSION

Historians too frequently assume the discourses of psychoanalysis and historicism to be diametrically opposed adversaries. Disciplinary adversaries they may be, but diametrically opposed they are not. Whether or not acknowledged by historians, what both psychoanalysis and historicism have in common are theories of subjectivity. Psychoanalysis relies upon historically specific social relations to elucidate inter/subjective dynamics, and historicism relies on a theory of the human subject to elucidate social and historical determination. In short, psychoanalysis and historicism depend on one another for their own disciplinary and methodological identities. In this article, I have attempted to think psychoanalysis and historicism together, as neither discourse is alone sufficient to explain the current pedophilia panic. I have argued that the primal trauma of childhood sexuality and its intra-psychic repression are at the heart of our neurotic responses to pedophilia. My argument is that the intra-psychic repression of infantile sexuality (desire, loss, rage, guilt, shame, and grief) is reactivated by pedophilia, because the signifier of pedophilia is situated in such close proximity, associatively and metonymically, to the repressed elements of childhood sexuality. Pedophilia, in other words, is the closest reminder we have of the trauma of childhood sexuality. According to my model, however, this would also be the case of child molestation in the earlier panics of the twentieth century. That is, in the 1910s and 1940s, the signifier of child molestation would also act as a reminder of the trauma of childhood sexuality. However, what is different now, and



this is the second part of my argument, is the interaction between individual and discursive meanings of child sexuality. Although this childhood trauma and a degree of neurosis are inevitable psychologically, it is the peculiar configuration of post-1980 sociohistorical and political conditions that interact with this individual subjective phenomenon to produce heightened anxiety and mass pathological neuroses. Among a range of sociohistorical and political conditions, what distinguishes the post-1980 historical milieu, in particular, is the absence, prohibition, and dialogic repression of any signifier of child sexuality.

Intra-psychically childhood sexuality is writ large, yet discursively or dialogically child sexuality is disavowed. As I argue elsewhere, in stark contrast to the pre-1980 coexistence of competing notions of childhood—as sexual *and* innocent—the post-1980s have been characterized by a conscientious effort to resolve this contradiction. In this way, the dominant post-1980s figuration of children is one of innocence without sexuality, in a way different from earlier decades of the twentieth century.<sup>84</sup> What this means is that the intra-psychic repression of childhood sexuality is redoubled by the cultural, or, dialogic repression of child sexuality. Child sexual molestation, the dominant signifier of which is now pedophilia, has had heightened emotional significance in the last twenty years precisely because of this erasure of child sexuality and intensification of (dialogic) repression. Pedophilia stands as symbolic of both a return of the intra-psychically repressed *and* a return of the dialogically repressed. Heightened panic and cultural neurosis can therefore be seen as an effect of the ever-increasing efforts demanded to sustain the intra-psychic and dialogic repression of child sexuality. Of course, coincident with the feminist erasure of child sexuality has been the feminist exposure of the fact that it is primarily fathers, male relatives, and male family friends who perpetrate child sexual abuse. We thus have a contradictory scenario whereby, on the one hand male sexual desire for children has been pathologized, yet on the other it has been shown by feminists to be congruent with the construction of normative male sexuality. This contradictory dynamic—made possible by the erasure of child sexuality—has contributed to a profound crisis of masculinity. In turn this crisis of masculinity has contributed to an intensification of cultural panic and neurosis, as ever-increasing efforts are demanded to reassert normative masculinities free of the stain of pedophilia. The endless projections of normative masculine desires onto the scapegoated deviant masculinities such as the “pedophile” and the “homosexual” are indicative of this.



What this means is that the sites of pedophilia and child sexuality have become saturated, more than ever before in the twentieth century, with repressed desire, anger, guilt, shame, and grief.<sup>85</sup> It is thus not so much that changing social trends and shifting discourses cause pedophilia anxiety, as moral panic theorists propose—although these changes certainly contribute to its intensity—but rather that changing social trends and shifting discourses are dredging up and reactivating more deep-seated and unconscious anxieties about child sexuality and adult sexual desire for children, the expression of which is not just emotionally distressing, but also highly circumscribed in most western cultures. In other words, anxiety is rigorously attached to the signifier of pedophilia and not created anew by it.

Adults are subjected in ever more stringent ways and for a good deal longer to the individual and dialogic repression of the signifier of child sexuality. However, adults are also situated very differently than children in relation to sexuality, repression, and pedophilia. As adults, the signifier of pedophilia compels us, consciously or unconsciously, to identify simultaneously as adults and children. That is, we are compelled to identify *with ourselves as children* (or with our child selves) and *as ourselves with children*. In conjunction with the dialogic repression of child sexuality, this dual identification means that the neurotic panic over pedophilia is an adult phenomenon. Such panic is usually rationalized away not just as an acceptable response but, indeed, as the proper response befitting anyone concerned with child protection. Often, however, panic responses and the rhetoric of “child protection” function less as a way of protecting children from the world of adult knowledge, experience, and deviance, than as a way of protecting *adults* from the more deep-seated anxieties about childhood sexuality we are loathe to revisit. Above and beyond genuine fears of child abuse, I submit that pedophilia also activates adult memory traces of: our own incestuous desires as children; our own desires *for* children; our role in awakening the sexuality of children; our complicity in the cultural sexualization of children (thus the undermining our conscious investment in child protection); and our part in the denial of a signifier, or, discourse of child sexuality.<sup>86</sup> In an era when child sexuality is so thoroughly repudiated and parenting subject to such microscopic examination, I can only conclude that this return of the repressed is even more disturbing for adult parents. My concerns are therefore not so much about a culture of pedophiles and the risks they pose for children as they are about the ways in which we are producing a culture of neurotic parents and the damaging effects they have on children.<sup>87</sup>

## NOTES

1. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930 [1929]), Pelican Freud Library (PFL) 12 (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p. 338.
2. "FBI: Internet pedophiles a growing threat," CNN News, 8/4/97, <http://cnn.com/US/9704/08/kiddie.porn.fbi/index.html>; "1800 names on secret paedophile database," *Age*, 3 April 1998, p. 6.
3. Jodi Wilgoren, "Scholar's Pedophilia Essay Stirs Outrage and Revenge," *New York Times*, 30 April 2002.
4. For a useful discussion of the question of the shifting conceptual boundaries of 'child abuse' and the effect of this on how we quantify child abusers and victims, see Ian Hacking, "The Making and Molding of Child Abuse," *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (Winter 1991): 253-88.
5. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).
6. Jock Young, *The Drugtakers: The Social Meaning of Drug Use* (London: Paladin, 1971).
7. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1972), p. 9.
8. Kenneth Thompson, *Moral Panics* (Routledge: New York, 1998).
9. Joel Best, *Threatened Children: Rhetoric and Concern About Child-Victims* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); J. Richardson et al. (Eds.), *The Satanism Scare* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991); Chris Atmore, "Towards Rethinking Moral Panic: Child Sexual Abuse Conflicts and Social Constructionist Responses," in Christopher Bagley & Kanka Mallick (Eds.), *Child Sexual Abuse and Adult Offenders: New Theory and Research* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).
10. Vern Bullough, "Boy-Love and Pedophilia—The Contemporary Storm," Interview by Joseph Geraci, in Joseph Geraci (Ed.), *Dares to Speak: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Boy-Love* (Swaffham: The Gay Men's Press, 1997), p.172. See also Best, *Threatened Children*, pp. 180-181.
11. Interview with Gilbert Herdt, conducted by Joseph Geraci, in Geraci (Ed.), *Dares to Speak*, p. 31; Lawrence A. Stanley, "The Hysteria over Child Pornography and Paedophilia," in Geraci (Ed.), *Dares to Speak*, pp.179-206; David T. Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993); Harris Mirkin, "The Pattern of Sexual Politics: Feminism, Homosexuality and Pedophilia," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 37 (1999), pp. 1-24.
12. Henry Jenkins, "Introduction: Childhood Innocence and Other Modern Myths," in Henry Jenkins (Ed.), *The Children's Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 24; Lea Redfern, "The Paedophile as 'Folk Devil,'" *Media International Australia*, 85 (1997), pp. 47-55; Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (London: Methuen, 1987).
13. Philip Jenkins, *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Great Britain* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992).
14. The problem with this kind of explanation, as Lloyd de Mause points out, in "The Psychogenic Theory of History," *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 25 (1997), p. 113, is that "the explanation that 'culture determines social behavior' is simply a tautology. Since 'culture' only means 'the total pattern of human behavior' . . . to say 'Cul-

ture is what makes a group do such and such' is merely stating that a group's behavior causes its behavior."

15. See also Philip Jenkins, *Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; and Judith Levine, *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

16. P. Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, pp. 6, 7.

17. Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 96.

18. I have borrowed this formulation of "(dis)positions" from Mark Bracher, *Lacan, Discourse, and Social Change: A Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) p. 19.

19. See Tim Dean & Christopher Lane, "Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis: An Introduction," in *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Tim Dean & Christopher Lane, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, pp. 3-42; David M. Halperin, "Homosexuality's Closet," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 41 (2002), pp. 21-54.

20. Elements of the child sexual abuse and protection movement have responded to the moral panic theorization by arguing that it is part of a "backlash" against acknowledging the severity of child sexual abuse. Interestingly, 'backlash' theorists also attempt to explain the highly emotive nature of child sexual abuse, but similarly offer no adequate psychical analysis, other than to presume as self-evident certain tenuous assumptions about human subjectivity. In one particularly absurd example, which I feel compelled to quote at length, John E.B. Meyers, "Definition and Origins of the Backlash Against Child Protection," in John E.B. Meyers (Ed.), *The Backlash: Child Protection Under Fire* (London: Sage, 1994), offers the following explanation:

"To appreciate why child sexual abuse evokes such strong emotions in adults, it is helpful to engage in a simple mental exercise. First, put any thought of child abuse completely out of mind. Shift your thoughts entirely away from child abuse. This done, ask the following question: What do adults feel strongly about? Children come immediately to mind. Normal, healthy, non-abused children evoke strong emotions in adults.

Now put children to one side and ask the same question: What else do adults feel strongly about? Victimization. Few subjects evoke stronger emotions than victimization. Most of us are victims at some point, and the anger and helplessness that accompany victimization are strong emotions indeed.

Finally, put children and victimization aside, and ask once more: What do adults feel strongly about? Sex! Few subjects evoke stronger or more varied emotions than sex and sexuality.

Now, put the three together—children, victimization, and sex—to form child sexual abuse, and the stage is set for emotional fireworks. Few events evoke stronger feelings of outrage, scandal, and pity than the sexual victimization of helpless children. Thus one element of the backlash movement is the sheer strength of emotion the subject stirs up in adults" (19-20).

This is nothing short of baffling to me, and unfortunately I don't have the space to offer a critique. I share no such responses to those questions. I see this not as analysis or explanation but as an exercise in normative pedagogy.

21. Bracher, *Lacan*, p. 10.

22. Sigmund Freud, "Negation" (1925), PFL 11; Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 112-113.

23. Dean, *Beyond Sexuality*, p. 159.

24. As unlikely as my analysis might seem to many readers, the fact that any discussion of sexuality appealing to psychoanalysis tends to elicit extremely passionate, if not hostile, responses, leads me to believe that at the very least this might be an effective strategy for kick-starting debate.

25. It seems to me that too often rigid disciplinary boundaries function to foreclose interdisciplinary exchanges; exchanges that may very well lead to productive theoretical debates and conceptual innovation.

26. Freud, *Inhibitions* (1926), PFL 10.

27. In his earlier work, Freud often used repression interchangeably with defense, suggesting anxiety, and thus neurosis, to be the result of repression and the damming up of instinctual impulses. The introduction of his structural model of mental functions in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), PFL 11, led to a revision of the theory of anxiety. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926 [1925]), PFL 10, Freud reversed his earlier formulation, arguing not that repression causes anxiety but anxiety repression (Freud, 1926). See Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), PFL 2, p. 118, where he reiterates this view. I would argue that neurosis is dependent upon both of these formulations of anxiety.

28. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917 [1916-1917]), PFL 1, p. 404.

29. Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940 [1938]), PFL 15, p. 420.

30. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p. 127. According to Freud, the typical developmental events identified by psychoanalysis as most likely to give rise to traumatic situations for every child are birth, separation anxiety, castration anxiety, loss of love objects, and loss of super-ego love (*Inhibitions*, 1926 [1925]).

31. See Evans, *Sexual Citizenship*; Alice Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1984); Vikki Bell, *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1993). In a footnote appended to *Three Essays* (1905), PFL 7, in 1920, Freud argued that "There is, of course, no need to expect that anatomical growth and psychical development must be exactly simultaneous" (93). Moreover, as he stated in "The Sexual Enlightenment of Children" (1907), PFL 7, "except for his reproductive power, a child has a fully developed capacity for love long before puberty; and it may be asserted that the 'mystery-making' [i.e., dialogic repression of child sexuality] merely prevents him from being able to gain an intellectual grasp of activities for which he is psychically prepared and physically adjusted" (176). After summarizing more recent research on child sexuality, L.L. Constantine, "Child Sexuality: Recent Developments and Implications for Treatment, Prevention, and Social Policy," *Medicine and Law*, 2 (1983), argues "nothing in the preceding summary supports the notion that child sexuality is in any fundamental way different from adult sexuality" (61). Ronald and Juliet Goldman, *Show Me Yours! Understanding Children's Sexuality* (Penguin: Ringwood, 1988), claim that the "evidence is that earlier experience and understanding of sexuality is well within the moral competence of children" (226).

32. Christopher Bollas also argues that sexuality is inherently traumatic for all children. For a different reading of this than the one offered here, see his *Hysteria* (Routledge: New York, 2000).

33. See Steven Angelides, "Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality, *GLQ*, 10.2, 2004" (unpublished manuscript).

34. P. Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, p. 130.

35. Among exemplary feminist texts are: Gladys Shultz, *How Many More Victims?* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1965); Diana E.H. Russell, *The Politics of Rape: The Victim's Perspective* (New York: Stein & Day, 1975); Diana E.H. Russell, *The Sexual Trauma* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986); Florence Rush, "The Sexual Abuse of Children," in Noreen Connell & Cassandra Wilson (Eds.), *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* (New York: New American Library, 1974), pp. 65-75; Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980); Judith L. Herman & Lisa Hirschman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Ann W. Burgess et al., *The Sexual Assault of Children and Adolescents* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1978); David Finkelhor, *Sexually Victimized Children* (New York: Free Press, 1979); Susan Forward & Craig Buck, *Betrayal of Innocence* (New York: Penguin, 1979).

36. Angelides, "Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse"; P. Jenkins, *Moral Panic*.

37. For a summary of research on child sexuality until 1983, see Constantine, "Child Sexuality" (1983), pp. 55-67. For discussion and references to child sexuality in decades prior to the 1980s, see P. Jenkins (1998); Sterling Fishman, "The History of Childhood Sexuality," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17 (1982), pp. 269-283; Angelides, "Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse."

38. Myre Sim, *Guide to Psychiatry*, 3rd ed., (London: Churchill Livingstone, 1974), p. 778.

39. Quoted in Rush, *The Best Kept Secret*, p. 98. See also Lindy Burton, *Vulnerable Children* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 87-98 for an account of around thirty studies on child sexual assault between the 1930s and 1960s that recognized child sexuality.

40. James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); James R. Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Fishman, "The History of Childhood Sexuality."

41. Lynn Ponton, *The Sex Lives of Teenagers* (New York: Plume, 2001).

42. See Angelides, "Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse."

43. For instance, it is very rare to describe a young child as being gay or lesbian, even within biologically determinist discourses.

44. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 34. It seems that throughout the last two decades we have spent immense effort evacuating sexuality from the conceptual field of childhood at the same time as we have evacuated asexuality from the conceptual field of adulthood. This might be seen as one way of securing the distinction between child- and adulthood.

45. I will detail this argument below.

46. In fact, I argue that it is negligent to continue to avoid the subject; in my mind, we are morally and ethically obliged to address child sexuality.

47. Anthropology has also often incorporated discussions of child sexuality; unlike psychoanalysis, though, it has not been a central organizing concept. In "Has Sexuality Anything to do with Psychoanalysis," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 76 (1996), André Green laments the fact that within the last ten years or so there has been a waning of interest in the concept of sexuality within psychoanalysis. He puts this down to the "contemporary fashionable focus on object relations" within the United States (871). As I have been suggesting, I would see this development as also bound up with the feminist discourse of child sexual abuse and the fear of pedophilia.

48. Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt and Reparation" (1937), in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (Virago Press, London, 1988), p. 307. For an excellent attempt to revive this psychoanalytic insight into a popular book, see Noelle Oxenhandler, *The Eros of Parenthood* (St. Martin's Press: New York, 2001). "The language of Eros is the language of touch," she says, "and we learn this language as infants, in the arms of those who first care for us. As we grow into adult sexuality, we alter this language, extending its range and our own fluency. But its deep structure, the grammar of how we experience touch, is absorbed in the context of our earliest relationships" (6).

49. Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, PFL 15, p. 220.

50. Freud, *Three Essays*, pp. 151-152.

51. For a comprehensive reading of Laplanche's theory of seduction and the enigmatic signifier, see John Fletcher, "The Letter in the Unconscious: The Enigmatic Signifier in the work of Jean Laplanche," in *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation and the Drives*, edited by John Fletcher & Martin Stanton (Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1992), pp. 93-120.

52. Jean Laplanche, "Seduction, Persecution, Revelation," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 76 (1995), p. 663.

53. Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, David Macey (trans.) (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 89-90.

54. Jean Laplanche, Interview by Martin Stanton, in *Jean Laplanche*, p. 10.

55. Laplanche, Interview, p. 10.

56. Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Jeffrey Mehlman (trans.) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976 [1970]), p. 48.

57. Laplanche is attempting to draw out what is already there in Freud's work, but which remains mired by the limitations of his time and discourse. For instance, in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940 [1938]), PFL 15, Freud says "By her care of the child's body she [the mother] becomes its first seducer" (423).

58. Laplanche, *New Foundations*, p. 128.

59. Laplanche, Interview, p. 10.

60. Freud certainly recognized the sexually stimulating, or seductive, nature of the parent-child relation. See, for example, *Three Essays* (1905), PFL 7, where he notes that: "A child's intercourse with anyone responsible for his care affords him an unending source of sexual excitation and satisfaction from his erotogenic zones. This is especially so since the person in charge of him, who, after all, is as a rule his mother, herself regards him with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life: she strokes him, kisses him, rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object" (145).

61. See also Jean Laplanche, "The Drive and Its Object-Source: Its Fate in the Transference," in John Fletcher & Martin Stanton (Eds.), *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1992), pp. 190-191; Jean Laplanche, "The Theory of Seduction and the Problem of the Other," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 78 (1997), pp. 653-666.

62. Laplanche rejects the Lacanian idea that the unconscious is structured like a language.

63. Freud, *Three Essays*, 145. Or as he noted in *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910), PFL 14: "A mother's love for the infant she suckles and cares for is something far more profound than her later affection for the growing child. It is in the nature of a completely satisfying love-relation, which not only fulfill every mental



wish but also every physical need; and if it represents one of the forms of attainable human happiness, that is in no little measure due to the possibility it offers of satisfying, without reproach, wishful impulses which have long been repressed and which must be called perverse" (209-210).

64. At the same time as our culture desperately attempts to purge childhood of the stains of sexuality, it also attempts to construct the normative child as one who is free from forms of psychological conflict and trauma. The recently invented conditions of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) are examples of the increasing medicalization and pathologization of childhood conflict and anxiety. In psychoanalytic terms, it would not be unlikely that, in many instances, there might well be childhood sexual conflicts at the heart of such conditions as ADHD and ODD. The more we essentialize seemingly 'deviant' child behaviors and continue to confuse psychological symptoms with diseases or medical conditions, the further away we are from understanding childhood psychological dynamics. The end result of attempts to eradicate conflict, anxiety, and trauma from childhood psychology is often more insidious forms of child abuse. Recent deaths of children medicated for ADHD in the US with such stimulant drugs as Ritalin and Dexedrine is a tragic case in point. See John Merson, "The Wild Ones," *Good Weekend*, 11 May 2002, pp. 20-25.

65. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940 [1938]), PFL 15, Freud says, "No human individual is spared such traumatic experiences" (419).

66. I am not here suggesting that we must accept the entire Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex. At a minimum, however, I accept the notion of oedipal desire. In other words, we do not have to jettison the notion of oedipal desire entirely just because we may not agree with Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex. Unfortunately, however, the feminist discourse of child sexual abuse has done just that, ostensibly on the grounds that Freud covered up the reality of child sexual abuse when he abandoned his seduction theory. See Miller (1984).

67. Sandor Ferenczi, in "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child" (1933), *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-analysis* (London: Hogarth, 1955), pp. 156-167, describes as inevitably traumatic the imposition of the adult's language of passion onto the child. "If *more love* or *love of a different kind from that which they need*, is forced upon the children in the stage of tenderness, it may lead to pathological consequences in the same way as the *frustration or withdrawal of love*" (164).

68. The psychoanalytic literature on love and guilt is enormous. For a classic example, see Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (London: Virago Press, 1988).

69. Ozenandler's *The Eros of Parenthood* is a superb attempt at initiating just such a language.

70. As we will see, however, this is an expanded and reformulated notion of repression.

71. Anna Freud, in *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (London: Hogarth Press, 1948 [1936]), p. 54.

72. Freud argues that repression proper requires a repressing agency, the ego or super-ego. On after-pressure, see *Inhibitions* (1926 [1925]), PFL 10, p. 245; "Repression" (1915), PFL 11.

73. On "scapegoats as poison containers for traumas," see Lloyd de Mause, "The Psychogenic Theory of History," p. 154.



74. Michael Billig, *Freudian Repression: Conversation Creating the Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 56.

75. One of the problems with Billig's approach, however, is that he evades the question of intra-psychical dynamics. In his attempts to broaden the concept of repression and avoid some of the shortcomings of the Freudian over-emphasis on intra-psychical functions, Billig leaves unspecified the relationship between dialogic repression and intra-psychic repression. We are therefore left with an account that privileges repression as a function of language/discourse and leaves unanswered the question of what happens *within the actual psyche* to the discursively repressed (or the unsaid).

76. Somewhat like Lacanian theorists, Billig elevates the role of language as constitutive of the un/conscious (although he does not specify what the structure of the unconscious might be). In following Laplanche, I resist the idea that the unconscious is structured like a language, just as I resist the idea that the unconscious is solely a function of language. Of course, language acquisition and use must entail retroactive and ongoing effects on the formation and action of the unconscious, but I think it is not necessary, and is indeed unproductive, to attempt to specify any precise contents or structure of the unconscious. In specifying this, one cannot fail, on some level, to posit an ahistorical notion of language and discourse relations. While I have argued that a form of primal repression is achieved without the preverbal infant having attained the broader skills of language use, it is a repression that is still situated within—and thus can be viewed as an effect of—language/discourse. By this, I mean that because the (m)other is a language user, her subject position is situated firmly within relations of signification. As such, her unconscious messages (enigmatic signifier) are also inextricably bound up with language/discourse. Therefore, while it is possible to argue that language/discourse does not directly constitute the child's primordial unconscious—thus implying a one-way transposition of language into the child's psychic structure—a certain *relation* to (the world of adult) signification does constitute the child's primordial unconscious.

77. Wendy Hollway, "Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity," in Julian Henriques et al. (Eds.), *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (London & New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 258.

78. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), PFL 12, p. 95.

79. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1893-1895), PFL 3, and "Repression" (1915), PFL 11, Freud used the term repression as a general category to refer to the different ways of pushing aside certain desires. A. Freud, in *Ego*, reformulated this to argue that the term defense mechanisms should be used as the general category, within which repression is but one of its forms. Within this category, she included such things as regression, reaction formation, isolation, undoing, projection, introjection, turning against the self, reversal, sublimation, or displacement. In order to stress the *interpsychic* (dialogic) rather than primarily *intra-psychic* nature of repression, I am using repression as the general umbrella category. In other words, I consider the nine defense mechanisms Anna Freud identified as different forms of repression.

80. Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, D. Nicholson-Smith (trans.) (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), p. 144. Or as Freud put it, in *Group Psychology* (1921), PFL 12, this is when "*a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego*" (147).

81. Elaine Showalter employs a more generalized psychoanalytic framework to argue that phenomena such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Gulf War Syndrome, Recovered Memory, Multiple Personality Syndrome, Satanic Ritual Abuse, and Alien Abduction are modern forms of hysteria. See *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1998 [1997]).

82. Psychoanalyst Jeanne Lampl-de Groot notes, in "Symptom Formation and Character Formation," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, 44 (1963), "projection . . . promotes the distinction between self and outer world" (6).

83. Hollway, "Gender Difference," p. 256; Cathy Urwin, "Power Relations and the Emergence of Language," in Henriques et al., *Changing the Subject*.

84. See Angelides, "Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse."

85. See Steven Angelides, "Child Sexuality and the Culture of Melancholia" (unpublished manuscript) for a discussion of the way these unresolved and unsymbolized affects are producing melancholic cultures of considerable proportions.

86. Although referring to abusive sexual encounters between adults and children, in "Confusion of Tongues" Ferenczi comments on the way in which children identify with adults and easily introject "*the guilt feelings of the adult*" (162).

87. See Angelides, "Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse" for a discussion of some of the social and psychological problems this erasure of child sexuality creates.