

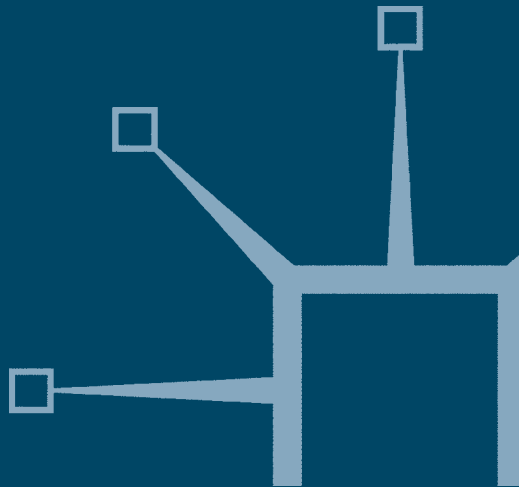
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# Children and Sexuality

From the Greeks to the Great War

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Edited by  
George Rousseau



*'Children and Sexuality* is a courageous and timely book. The authors, who include historians, anthropologists and psychoanalysts, dare to confront one of the most difficult social problems of our time and to view it from a historical and a comparative perspective.' – **Peter Burke**, *Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, UK*

*'At a time when the combined forces of sophisticated technologies and unfettered capitalism objectify children in myriad ways, Children and Sexuality* takes a fascinating and in-depth look at their sexuality as perceived by adults throughout history, raising important questions about innocence, eroticism, commodification and societal mores. An intriguing, thought-provoking book.' – **Susan Linn**, *Harvard University* and author of *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*

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# **Children and Sexuality**

**From the Greeks to the Great War**

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George Rousseau

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Editorial matter, selection, introduction, chapters 5 and 6

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‘We shall not always give out a sound like a beaten gong as one sensation strikes and then another. Children, our lives have been gongs striking; clamour boasting; cries of despair; blows on the nape of the neck in gardens.’

(Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, London, The Hogarth Press, 1931, pp. 41–2)

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# Preface

Nowadays a book entitled *Children and Sexuality* raises concerns about sexual abuse and other antisocial forms of behaviour contributing to the current malaise – some will say outright hysteria and panic. Little doubt exists that in 2007 westerners find themselves, and perhaps easterners too, in the grip of a moral panic about children: their mental and physical well-being, especially their new levels of obesity, their education, safety, and increasingly dire forms of vulnerability. A systematic book compiling aspects of the history of sexual abuse would be worth attempting, but this book does not do that. We, the contributors, have much to say in these pages about abuse and scandal, past and present, yet our remit in *Children and Sexuality* looks elsewhere: to the conception of childhood, and what it meant to be a child, at a few defined historical moments when we could construct adequate contexts to account for the versions of sexuality found in the lives of these children.

We take the long view: children and their sexualities (both in the plural) from the Ancient Greeks to the Great War. We do so cognizant of, but largely apart from, the totalizing theories of the great system builders of modern child sexuality: the Freuds (Sigmund and Anna), Melanie Klein, Kinsey, Bowlby, John Money and many others, and also apart from the calls for children's rights in this domain amidst crusaders encouraging young people to reclaim their rights. We admire these masterminds and crusaders, but our gaze here looks elsewhere. Instead we work collectively as cultural historians who have selected a very limited number of case histories (perhaps too limited) of intergenerational sexual actions and attachments, each representative – or unrepresentative – of its historical epoch.

For the most part we offer these 'case studies' as 'thick description', in anthropologist Clifford Geertz's sense, whose phrase it is – 'thick description' of the admittedly controversial points we seek to unpack about the curious world of children's bodies and adult minds. And we have found in practice that we need the whole case: full range of personages, places and narratives, and all the voices chiming with their polyphonic stories, to weave contexts sufficiently broad to brave preliminary interpretations about children and their repertoires of sexual expression in history.

Our coverage is eclectic: we make no claim whatever for its representativeness. We strive to be vigilant to the cultural specificities of childhood itself and the different constructions of childhood over time – a further reason why each ‘case study’ necessarily reconfigures childhood in its own way. In some instances, as the section on the Middle Ages, the ‘case history’ is textual rather than biographical. Nevertheless, we aim to provide deep detail, as it were, rather than generalize sweepingly from the superficial approach that might have glanced at dozens of texts or lives. In brief, this book does not amount to a panopticon of childhood in the sexual domain but identifies a few selective moments capable of suggesting what some of the issues and problems have been. If *Children and Sexuality* sheds light on the modern dilemma it will be as an added fillip rather than an integral component of our remit.

No doubt exists about the complexity and delicacy of the topic, a further reason why it continues to be eschewed. Childhood sexuality lies on the border of taboo and the frontier of suspicion despite decades of psychiatric investigation from the time of Freud and Melanie Klein; even the ulterior motives of those researching these topics are suspect. Provided the approach is ‘clinical’ (scientific, medical, prescriptive), there has been little impediment to the discussion of childhood sexuality past or present. But as soon as the discussion turns to ethical, moral, legal and legislative aspects, the discourse becomes fraught, sometimes too explosive to pursue calmly.

As historians basing our arguments on archives and documents we take some refuge. But not even the archival ditch can immunize us from the realities of this topic’s moral pitch. We acknowledge them and hope we have approached our materials candidly and honestly, without dwelling on sexuality’s repugnant, sensational, or illegal facets. If, as we are being told at conferences and in journals, the history of childhood is now a burgeoning field with already well-developed tentacles extending in many directions, especially in the media, it cannot claim to be so in the sexual domain. So far sexuality has eluded its grip apart from its pathological dimensions. Even an historian of sexuality as influential as the late Michel Foucault treaded delicately when discussing intergenerational sexual relations in the Ancient world.

Collectively, we aim to show how children have always been complicit in sexual forms of expression; that it is adults who have recently foisted on them their fierce anxieties – even panic – about the terrors of life in our time. This view – that the history of childhood is in large part a history of adult fantasies about their own early lives as projected on to children – is a topic about which we say much in the following

pages. And we hope that by taking the 'long view', extending over many centuries, we can offer a cushion of comfort to those readers caught up in the present terror fuelled by the media, especially those awkwardly being told that our time is the first to have been subjected to such a dire state of affairs. It is not so: our times are not without precedent, a claim buttressed by abundant evidence in the following chapters. Our technology merely enables the perpetrators to be detected more swiftly.

*Children and Sexuality* neither synthesizes a field nor presents a survey of children and sex. Instead, we select one representative case from each major historical epoch – the Greeks, Medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, Victorian and Edwardian societies, etc. – from which to probe the intersection of children and sexuality. We propose that each case study represents a microcosm of aspects of this convergence and overlap. And we hope that the range of our cases – their genders and geographies, social and economic class, and political and religious affiliations – demonstrates that childhood's diverse sexual expression cannot be reduced to a few simple paradigms. The reduction is too simplistic even within a single century.

This task would have been difficult in a short book. We needed amplitude for such a sweep of time and geography, as well as the input of different disciplines: history, literature, classical and modern studies, the social sciences, and especially anthropology from whose demonstrations of cultural relativism we take heart. The anthropologists, above others, have understood how much in sex and sexuality is culturally constructed. The final chapter glancing at the book's former landscape from an anthropological perspective enriches this book.

*Children and Sexuality* originated in seminars presented in the Michaelmas term of 2004 at the Oxford University Centre for the History of Childhood, where the editor is a Co-Director. All the chapters, except those by Stefano Evangelista and William G. Naphy, were originally presented there as talks and later reworked into papers. All of us are grateful to the Faculty of History in the University of Oxford, where the Centre is based, and especially to Professor Laurence Brockliss, for assistance during that term and afterwards. Our collective gratitude would run to many pages if we assembled it properly. Instead we acknowledge all our colleagues and friends, in several countries and on several continents, who joined us in these discussions, many of whom are named in the following pages. And we thank the seminar audiences too who asked penetrating questions focusing our minds about this often confusing intersection.

We particularly thank the team at Palgrave Macmillan and the three outside readers it selected to help us strengthen the chapters while they

were under review. We have tried to take all their suggestions on board. In Basingstoke we found a remarkable team – especially in Michael Strang, Tim Kapp, Ruth Ireland and Nick Brock – who did everything possible to ensure that this book would be published in 2007.

GEORGE ROUSSEAU  
Oxford England  
December 2006



# Notes on the Contributors

**Elizabeth Archibald** is Reader in Medieval Studies in the English Department at the University of Bristol. She is the author of *Apollonius of Tyre* and *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, and co-edited *A Companion to Malory*. Her research interests include the Arthurian legend, medieval romance, and baths and bathing in the Middle Ages.

**Dr Thomas Betteridge** is a Reader in early modern English Literature at Oxford Brookes University. He is the author of a number of works on early modern English history and literature including *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* (2004) and editor of *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (2002).

**Elleke Boehmer** is Professor of world literature in English at the University of Oxford. She has published the widely praised *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995, 2005), *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial* (2002), and *Stories of Women* (2005), and, as editor, *Empire Writing* (1998). Her fiction includes *Screens against the Sky* (1990; short-listed David Higham Prize) and *Bloodlines* (2000; shortlisted Sanlam Prize). Her edition of Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* was a summer 2004 bestseller.

**Daphne Nash Briggs** is a Child Psychotherapist and an Honorary Research Associate at the School of Archaeology at Oxford University. She is an independent scholar with expertise in ancient numismatics and in the history and archaeology of Europe in the first millennium BC.

**Richard Dellamora** teaches in the Departments of English and Cultural Studies at Trent University in Canada and is the author of *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (1990), *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending* (1995) and *Friendship's Bonds: Democracy and the Novel in Victorian England* (2004) as well as editor of *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (1999).

**Nicholas S. Davidson** is Tutor in History and Fellow of St Edmund Hall in the University of Oxford. He writes about early-modern Italy and is the author of *The Counter-Reformation* (1987).

**Elisabeth Dutton** is Senior Research Fellow in Medieval English Literature at Worcester College, Oxford. She has published on late-medieval mystical and devotional writers, particularly Julian of Norwich and the Flemish mystic, Hadewijch of Brabant, and on late-medieval drama.

**Stefano Evangelista** is a Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford. He has published research on the Victorians, especially the circle of late Victorians, including John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater.

**Lawrence Gasquet** is Senior Lecturer at the University Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III (France). She is particularly interested in the interrelations of text and image. Her publications include *Lewis Carroll & les mythologies de l'enfance* (2005), *L'Eblouissement de la peinture: Ruskin sur Turner* (2006), *L'Art de Plaire* (2007), and several articles on Lewis Carroll, Julia Margaret Cameron and Peter Greenaway.

**Mark Harrison** is Professor of the History of Medicine and Director of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine in the University of Oxford. He has written widely on aspects of health and medicine in relation to the history of imperialism and war.

**Alison Hennegan** is a Fellow Commoner and Director of Studies in English at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and a member of the University's English Faculty. She has a background in gay politics and journalism (Literary Editor of *Gay News* from 1977 to 1983) and feminist publishing (*The Women's Press*, 1984–91). She has published widely on aspects of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and sexuality.

**Josephine McDonagh** is Professor Victorian Literature at Oxford University, and Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford. She is author of *De Quincey's Disciplines*, *George Eliot*, and *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720–1900*, and has written articles on nineteenth-century British literature and its cultural contexts.

**Heather Montgomery** is Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at The Open University. She is an anthropologist by training and author of *Modern Babylon? Prostituting Children in Thailand* (2001). She has also written about children and sexuality and children's rights and is currently working on a book on anthropology and childhood.

**Alfonso Moreno** is Fellow and Tutor in Ancient History at Magdalen College, Oxford. Once an attorney, he is a social and economic historian interested in law and rhetoric, and is author of *Feeding the Democracy*:

*the Athenian Grain Supply in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC* (2007) and co-editor of *A Commentary on Herodotus I-IV* (2007).

**William G. Naphy** is Professor of History at the University of Aberdeen. He is the author of numerous articles and books, including *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*; *Plagues, Poisons and Potions*, *Born to be Gay*; *Sex Crimes from Renaissance to Reformation*; and *Plague* from Tempus Press.

**Josephine Crawley Quinn** is Fellow and Tutor in Ancient History at Worcester College, Oxford. She works on imperialism and culture in ancient North Africa and the Mediterranean.

**George Rousseau's** books include (with Marjorie Hope Nicolson) *This Long Disease, my Life: Alexander Pope and the Sciences* (1968); *The Languages of Psyche* (1990); a trilogy of *Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses: Medical, Scientific, Anthropological* (1991); (with Roy Porter) *Gout: The Patrician Malady* (1998); *Framing and Imagining Disease in Cultural History* (2003); *Nervous Acts* (2004), and a biography of Marguerite Yourcenar (2004). He was Regius Professor of English at King's College, Aberdeen, and is a Co-Director of the Centre for the History of Childhood in the University of Oxford.

**Lindsay Smith** is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. She is the author of *Victorian Photography, Painting and Poetry* (1995), *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth Century Photography* (1998) and many essays on nineteenth-century literature and culture. She is currently completing a book on Lewis Carroll.

**Michael Vickers** is Professor of Archaeology in the University of Oxford, a Senior Research Fellow in Classical Studies at Jesus College, Oxford, and a Senior Assistant Keeper in the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

**Katherine D. Watson** lectures in the Department of History and manages the research of the School of Arts and Humanities at Oxford Brookes University. She works on the history of crime and forensic medicine in Britain since the early eighteenth century, and is the author of *Poisoned Lives: English Poisoners and their Victims* (2004).

# 1

## Introduction

*George Rousseau*

### **Contraband: aesthetes, pornographers and paedophiles**

These days a book entitled *Children and Sexuality* rings alarm bells. Is it another call to whip up the flames demanding an end to sexual abuse and other forms of behaviour that contribute to the current malaise – some will say outright hysteria and panic? Or is it something else? No doubt exists that in the early twenty-first century many Westerners, and perhaps Easterners too, find themselves in the midst of a moral crisis about children: their mental and physical well-being, especially their safety and new levels of obesity; their legal rights in systems of law currently in rapid transition; the state's sense that children's rights must be protected and policed; as well as concerns about their education, access to the Internet and other forms of vulnerability. On grey days, when the media lurch out about the decay of our children, it seems as if we dwell in the land of *The Color Purple*.

A book attempting to compile the history of sexual abuse might repay the effort but this book does not do that.<sup>1</sup> We the contributors say much in these pages about scandal and abuse, past and present, yet our remit in *Children and Sexuality* takes us elsewhere: to the evolving concepts of childhood and, concurrently, to forms of sexual expression among both children and adults at defined historical moments when we could construct adequate contexts.<sup>2</sup> Our attention here is more specifically focused on the versions of sexuality found in the lives of these children or the adults with whom they interacted.

We take the long view: children and their sexualities (both in the plural) from the Ancient Greeks to the Great War and we do so largely apart from the theories of the great system-builders of modern child sexuality. We work collectively as cultural historians who have selected

a limited number of case histories (some will say too limited to be representative) of intergenerational sexual arrangements and attachments, each located within its historical epoch.<sup>3</sup> Our coverage is also eclectic: we make no claim for its representativeness. And we strive to be especially vigilant to the cultural specificities of childhood itself and the different constructions of childhood over time – a further reason why each ‘case study’ necessarily reconfigures childhood. In some instances, as in the section on the Middle Ages, the ‘case history’ is textual rather than biographical while aiming to provide deep detail, as it were, rather than generalize sweepingly from the superficial glossing of texts. In brief, the book does not amount to a panopticon of childhood in the sexual domain but to selective moments capable of suggesting the range of issues and problems in interpretation. If *Children and Sexuality* sheds light on the modern dilemma it will be as an added fillip – presentist VAT – rather than an integral component of our call.<sup>4</sup>

No one can doubt the explosiveness of the interface of children and sexuality today, one reason why it continues to be overlooked, conveniently avoided. Provided that the approach is ‘clinical’ and ‘practical’ (scientific, medical, prescriptive), there has been little impediment to the contemporary discussion of childhood sexuality (as in most of the works cited above in note 1). But as soon as the discussion turns to ethical, moral, legal and legislative aspects, the topic becomes charged, fraught, and often too delicate to conduct in polite discourse. As historians who base our arguments on sources we take some sanctuary in our documents; yet not even archival refuge will immunize us from the reality of this topic’s frayed and nervous moral edges. We acknowledge them and hope we have approached our materials openly, without dwelling on sexuality’s sometimes repugnant, sensational, or illegal facets. If, as we continue to be assured, the history of childhood in the aftermath of Philippe Ariès is currently a burgeoning field with well-developed tentacles extending in many directions, especially in the media, it cannot claim to be so in this domain.<sup>5</sup> Even Ariès speculated relatively little about children in relation to sexuality, and scholars in his footsteps have also been reticent.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the pathological dimensions, sexuality has eluded this field’s grip, and even an historian of sexuality as pioneering as the late Michel Foucault took extreme care when discussing intergenerational sexual relations in the Ancient world.<sup>7</sup> We can do worse than tread as delicately as he did.

Childhood sexuality lies on the border of taboo and the frontier of suspicion despite decades of clinical psychiatric observation from the time of Freud and Klein.<sup>8</sup> The motives of those researching these topics

who are not clinicians themselves are sometimes construed as suspect; when suspicion is not explicitly alleged it is implied and couched in secretive doubt. Yet the sexual lives of children under the age of – approximately – fourteen is not news in the twenty-first century. Part of the challenge in writing about this topic, as Foucault discovered, exists because no discourse, outside technical medical writing, readily awaits tapping into. No discourse has been available to discuss the histories of intergenerational sexuality.<sup>9</sup> The phrase itself resounds with pathological overtones that frighten and instil fear – this apart from implied scandal and abuse.

Collectively we also aim to show how children have always been complicit in sexual forms of expression; that adults have recently foisted on them their own anxieties – the above hysteria and panic – about the terrors of life in our time. Perhaps adults have always responded anxiously to sexual expression; the projection nevertheless appears more pronounced now than in the past. This view – that the history of childhood is in no small part a history of adult fantasies about their own early lives as projected on to children – is a topic about which we speculate in the following pages. And we hope that by taking the ‘long view’, extending over many centuries, we can offer a small cushion of comfort to those readers caught up in the present malaise, especially those being told that our era is the first to have been subjected such a dire state of affairs. Some of our energy is directed towards understanding of how the current dire state of affairs arose. Hence while we remain fixed to the past, especially the pre-First World War past, the present ‘crisis’ (if crisis it is) and present anxiety for our children drives a significant part of our project. This approach, however, does not place blame on children of the past, even less on any notion that children have sought to be abused (although one of our early cases verges on such a possibility). The approach acknowledges biological realism in an evolving global context where the onset of puberty now continues, it seems, to be younger each decade.<sup>10</sup> Puberty was more or less constant in the nineteenth century but drastically changed as the result of diet in the twentieth. Moreover, even in the limited domain of sexual abuse we aim to demonstrate that the developments of our time are not at all without precedence: technology merely enables the perpetrators to be detected more swiftly than ever before, and thereby lends an impression that abuse, literal and broadly construed, is swelling to unprecedented proportions. But few reliable statistics exist to support the perception.

*Children and Sexuality* neither aims to synthesize the existing research in a sub-field of the history of childhood, nor present an overview of

children and sex.<sup>11</sup> Instead, we select at least one representative case from each major historical epoch – the Ancient Greeks, Medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, Victorian and Edwardian societies – through which to explore the intersection of children and sexuality. We do not affirm that our cases typify children in that era but propose that each case study represents a microcosm of aspects of the intersection. And we hope that the range and diversity of our examples – their genders and geographies, social and economic situations, political and religious affiliations – suggest that childhood's diverse expressions of sexuality cannot be reduced to a few, neat paradigms. The reduction would be simplistic even within a single century. More research is required to demonstrate the range of such expression over time.

If, as has been mentioned, our disciplinary affiliations vary, none of us can legitimately be self-styled as 'an historian of childhood.' This fact of our biographies may appear superfluous but has consequences for our essays and equally enriches collective our strength, we think, through the variety of approaches and diversity of points of view. Nevertheless, we share common ground in the reliance we place on printed texts and manuscripts, and to a lesser degree, on visual images. These sources anchor us despite their incompleteness and frustrating silence; each of us has wished for more archival material from which to rest our interpretations. In a more perfect world than ours we would also have found historians of the visual image to bring their expertise to bear on these case studies. The realm of visual images is the domain where incompleteness most manifests itself here. We would have given much indeed to discover ancient vases depicting Alcibiades' escapades in Periclean Athens or drawings of William Naphy's victimized children in Calvin's Geneva. They have not been found and may never have existed.

## **Arcadians and Ruralists**

The visual realm also demonstrates the effect this sense of 'crisis' has on our work as retrievers of past lives. In 1972 two English collaborators, painter Graham Ovenden and writer Robert Melville, published an extraordinary book called *Victorian Children*. Issued by Academy Editions in London and St Martin's Press in New York, the latter an international publishing house affiliated with Macmillan, this unpaginated book consists of 149 images of little girls.<sup>12</sup> Many are strikingly nude and shown in postures not even Germaine Greer would have included in her recent 'candid' study of the *other* sex: 'boys'.<sup>13</sup> The language used to describe them is now adjudged to be offensive: not

merely unacceptable but legally actionable. Perhaps this is why the book has not been reprinted in our time. If we had reproduced any of the illustrations here, *Children and Sexuality* could not have been published, and if somehow printed, our readers would be shocked by images we consider inappropriate. Yet in 1972 the authors described these images as 'the most exquisite' photographs of nude children ever to have been found. How can such change have occurred in just one generation?

The authors claim their fascination was shaped by their 'recently acquired interest in photography'. They scrupulously annotate, where possible, the original photographers and sitters, as in images they reproduce originally taken by Lewis Carroll. Many – both girls and boys – are so erotic and alluring they exceed the borders of decorum. Yet Ovenden and Melville would not have published in 1972 if they had sensed any impropriety – indeed they print to share their admiration of such juvenile 'innocence' and 'beauty.' What we today believe is prurient sexuality directed to children they call 'being haunted', and they eloquently describe how the emotions instilled in themselves led to sublimity of a somewhat terrifying type.

One image of two girls in the 'Budding Grove' grasps the attention. Ovenden calculated her age as six and her sister's somewhere between seven and ten. The older girl is skinny and flat chested, the younger plump, with fully-formed breasts. Ovenden writes:

I have been haunted for thirty years by a photograph of two little girls I never knew and never wanted to know. It's because this photograph remains distinct in my mind's eye (whilst other more beautiful and horrifying examples drift away and are only dimly recalled) that I am paying my respects to an album devoted to other little girls. I feel I owe those two girls something, but I'm not sure what it is.<sup>14</sup>

This queasy uncertainty must have derived in part from the incongruity of their mammalian organs, 'horrifying' as the result of the fully-developed breasts of the younger. Ovenden continues: 'the girls have slipped their arms out of their underclothes and blouses and uncovered the upper part of their bodies as if for a medical examination of their chests, but in fact to provide a quasi-scientific record of the premature development of one of the girls, who is very young but has the breasts of a grown woman.' She does indeed, and we wish we could have shown her here. The expression on both their faces, as I sit in the Bodleian Library in Oxford pondering this photograph, is forlorn: the flat-chested, older girl more pathetic and undernourished than her



nubile but no happier companion. Discrepancy and incongruity drive the viewer's 'haunting' emotion more than specific facial expression or speculation about biographical circumstances and national origins.<sup>15</sup>

These bare-breasted girls are not the only oddities – some would say monstrosities of puberty – among this display of Victorian children. Ovenden, as mentioned, includes several photographs taken by Lewis Carroll that also cannot be exhibited here, especially image number 3: Carroll's three-year-old 'Maud Constance Meulbury' whose breasts are almost as well developed as the six-year old in the 'Budding Grove'. Number thirty-three displays a postcard by Alexander Bassano of two children, boy and girl around the age of five, passionately kissing in an erotic embrace.<sup>16</sup> Image forty-two shows 'Mary Simpson, a common prostitute age 10... who has been known as Mrs. Berry for at least two years' and who is 'four months with child', the image on our cover. Number fifty-five, a postcard printed by the Victorian photographic firm Frith of Reigate, shows a pre-pubescent girl in a compromising position, the folds of her loins practically visible. Number 114, allegedly anonymous and photographed circa 1904, displays a female child of no more than four or five entirely nude, wrapped by floating lace and garlands of flowers around her privy parts. A useful appendix lists all the photographers. The gloss on Lewis Carroll as 'the finest child photographer of the 19th century' (and by 'child' they mean children of both sexes) explains what is at stake:

...he created in his pictures of his little girl friends some of the most sensitive yet latently sexual images ever seen in art. They demand attention not only by their skilful composition and elegance but also by their humanity. They are the product of human love and are innocent in the true sense. (Appendix, entry under Lewis Carroll)

'Innocence and human love' is not the alloy these images have conferred on Carroll's contemporary students who have become preoccupied with their erotic and sexual aspects, as Lindsay Smith demonstrates in chapter 9. The interdiction today is such that a fierce debate rages among Carroll scholars about Dodgson's own sexuality and aesthetic pleasures. But we must not lose sight of the main point about a paradigmatic leap – a moral panic – that has rapidly swung from innocent appreciation to fierce interdiction. The fact is we live now in Western societies whose children cannot be photographed at all – by



*Illustration 1.1* 'Viola Hamilton, posing naked in a classical attitude as Flora against a square column in a photographic studio, circa 1898–1908'. Reproduced by kind permission of The Wellcome Library, London.

anyone – without their parent's permission. So far has the public mood altered from pastoral appreciation of just thirty years ago.

My assessment of *Victorian Children* would be different if Ovenden and Melville had been obscure, second-rank figures verging on the pornographic. They are not. Ovenden is a natural-born artist of immense originality who has acknowledged his youthful indebtedness to British painters of a pronounced romantic and literary bent, especially Samuel Palmer and William Blake – the same Blake who himself celebrated undressed children in his paintings and in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.<sup>17</sup> British writer Laurie Lee has claimed of Ovenden: 'He is undoubtedly the finest portrait painter of children, probing their personae with clinical precision and a psychological understanding that goes beyond mere knowledge and is based on some primitive form of empathy.'<sup>18</sup> Lee also gazes deeply into Ovenden's sense of Victorian childhood as a state integrated into the adult world, especially its forms of sexual expression, and concludes that 'the most fascinating aspect of the pre-adolescent female is the absolute innocence we endow her with'.

British art critic Robert Melville, who died in 1986, was the art critic for the *New Statesman*. His studies of Samuel Palmer, Henry Moore, Picasso, Graham Sutherland, E. H. Gombrich and others continue to be read with admiration.<sup>19</sup> He pioneered the avant-garde and explained his view of the erotic dimension of children's bodies in *Erotic Art of the West*.<sup>20</sup> Melville and Ovenden joined five other artists to form the 'Brotherhood of Ruralists', an exhibiting group loosely based on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood whose name was suggested by Lee himself. They exhibited their works, including portraits of naked children, at the Royal Academy in London and then on tour in England, never having been charged with prurience in the way the Baron von Gloeden, for example, had been at the turn of the century.<sup>21</sup> How can Ovenden, who wrote meticulously about Carroll, who has followed in Carroll's footsteps and gathered a veritable cadre of nymphets who disrobe for him, have avoided the crisis afflicting us today?<sup>22</sup> The Ovenden who, according to Melville, has based so many of his drawings on a young tribe of Lolita-like models, and whose attraction to paint them arises from the sexual love for minors?<sup>23</sup>

Melville's reply is that Ovenden has learned from Carroll's mistakes, especially his embarrassment over the disrobed children:

The girls who posed for Graham Ovenden are the Annie Phillpots of our time, released from tension. Had Dodgson's (Carroll's)

nudes survived, I think they would have been disappointing if only because he was so anxious to register innocence, he would scarcely have dared to allow his camera to stare at their forms as openly as Ovenden's.<sup>24</sup>

How did Ovenden dare a century later? The question touches directly on our work in *Children and Sexuality*. Just one generation later we cannot forget the reply: not only do we *not* dare, the compliant among us could not think of setting our cameras at these forms. Yet Ovenden and Melville delighted in their imaginative liberty to collect their photographs, studied the children's bodies and wrote about them, and technologies of the mid-twentieth century enabled them to do so expeditiously.

Their nostalgic quest for childhood's innocence embraced pathos for their poverty, as well as aesthetic joy in what Freud had called childhood's polymorphous perverse sexuality: so carefree and open it had no regard for time and place, nor gender, class and rank. It is one reason why their text abounds with quotations surrounding the margins of the photographs, especially by writers as different as William Blake, Lewis Carroll (who they capture commenting to one mother that her children were so 'nervous' to pose he could not think of asking them to bare their feet), Henry Mayhew (the Victorian founder of *Punch* and author of a class quartet of books about the London poor),<sup>25</sup> and Robert Francis Kilvert of *Kilvert's Diary*.<sup>26</sup> A photograph of semi-nude girls at a brook (images 58–59) is adorned with this passage in Kilvert's *Diary* – the Kilvert who was not embarrassed in 1870 to be watching naked little girls from behind a bush:

They ran after each other flinging water in showers, throwing each other down and rolling over the grass. Seeing us amused and laughing they became still more wild and excited.... there were one of two quite pretty and one in a red frock was the wildest and most reckless of the troop. In her romp her dress was torn open all down her back, but whilst one of her sisters was trying to fasten it for her she burst away and tore it all open showing vast spaces of white, skin as well as linen... romping girls with their young supple limbs, their white round arms, white shoulders and brows, their rosy flushed cheeks... graceful and active as young antelopes or as fawns... (text accompanying images 58–59)

The annals of European literature abound with similar versions of these peeping, Kilvertian tropes, extending back to the Enlightenment, Renaissance and Greeks. More pathetically, a pornographic child is captured by an unknown photographer and inserted as image 43, 'from an album assembled by Withe in 1847, containing many explicitly erotic scenes with children and perhaps the finest nude studies of young girls during the nineteenth century.'<sup>27</sup> The image is annotated with this passage written by Henry Mayhew:

It has been proved that 400 individuals procure a livelihood by trepanning females from eleven to fifteen years of age for the purpose of prostitution. Every art is practiced, every scheme is devised, to effect this object, and when an innocent child appears in the streets without a protector, she is insidiously watched by one of those merciless wretches and decoyed under some plausible pretext to an abode of infamy and degradation. . . . She is stripped of the apparel with which parental care or friendly solicitude had clothed her, and then, decked with gaudy trappings of her shame, she is compelled to walk the streets, and in her turn, while producing to her master or mistress the wages of her prostitution, becomes the ensnarer of the youth of the other sex (accompanies image 43–47).<sup>28</sup>

*Victorian Childhood* is not, of course, a work of scholarship nor does it pretend to be an enduring record of its subject matter, but it serves as a vivid counterpoint to the current malaise fuelled by our perceived 'crisis'.<sup>29</sup> And it begs us to reconsider whether our children have been the most vulnerable – especially sexually vulnerable – in history. They have not, and the chapters of this book will demonstrate why in different keys and, as it were, modulated through different eras. If *Victorian Childhood* is also a glaring gauge to the mindset of some of our predecessors just a generation ago, this is because it seems hard, in hindsight, to imagine that it was being gathered and published just a decade after Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood*. While Ariès was 'proving' that childhood was a recent invention, born in the eighteenth century, the British Brotherhood of Ruralists was celebrating childhood aesthetically and publicly: in print, on the canvas, at exhibitions, and explicitly in the sexual domain, a possibility that no longer exists.<sup>30</sup>

By the late nineteenth century photography was prompting adults to 'revisit their childhoods' through the children they could photograph: the sitter's image reified the glowing memory of their own childhood, when life was imagined as simpler and happier than in the

present, uncluttered by new empowering gadgets such as cameras – a perpetual counterpoint in the evolution of technology and nostalgia.<sup>31</sup> The new camera-technology evolved free of legal constraint: Lewis Carroll required only the informal verbal permission of the mothers of his girls. Almost a century elapsed before the law was significantly changed vis-à-vis the images one could make of children: in England and Wales first in 1978, when the Protection of Children Act in 1978 made it an offence to take or distribute indecent images of children, and then, in 2004, when The Children Act of 2004 tightened the law with respect to the possession of images of children. More recently, the presence of child pornography on the Internet has been so parlous that nothing, it seems, can be done to stem it, not even tough prison sentences. In just two decades since the 1980s all three – childhood, image making, and the Internet – have drastically changed. The culprit has been technology – an easily accessible Internet as seductive to its users as Freud thought children could be towards adults – rather than sudden shifts in human nature.

The aesthetic pleasure children afford us has almost ceased to be a legitimate category of thought; perceived by some as unnecessarily litigious it has been less burdensome to focus on its psychological contexts.<sup>32</sup> This view has a long history, recently reactivated by post-Freudians and social scientists claiming that children themselves are seductive creatures, especially towards one another.<sup>33</sup> Philosophical engagement with the issue has been considerable but so far has made little difference to Anglo-American law; if anything, the law continues to be tightened in the name of preventing further exploitation and abuse.

## **Eros, seduction, and philosophical engagement with sexual abuse**

Before Freud's seduction theory there was no explicit commentary on children as seducers of adults. The child's forms of sexual expression had been discussed (in certain legal domains from the Renaissance forward and when the late nineteenth-century European sexologists wrote),<sup>34</sup> but treatment was usually embedded in an already developed discourse of prostitution. In child prostitution, it was often claimed, children had learned to become consummate manipulators, malingerers and con artists, who could extract whatever they wanted – so cunning was their savvy arising from destitution and homelessness.<sup>35</sup> Freud peered deeply into these power relations between adults and children, especially the trauma of some children, and concluded that little in the

interaction was more potent than its sexual component: so powerful was adult parental instinct.<sup>36</sup> In literature, the nineteenth-century novel portrayed child prostitutes as moral exemplars and vivified their desperation. Yet however significant its contribution to the development of child psychiatry, imaginative literature excavated little in the explicitly sexual domain, not an unexpected development among Victorians whose attitude to adult sexuality could be fraught and rarely devoid of hypocrisy.<sup>37</sup>

The law also played a major role. In 1861 Parliament in Britain passed the Offences against the Person Act (24 & 25 Victoria, Cap. 100) confirming the age of consent at twelve, and for the first time making 'carnal knowledge' of a girl between the ages of ten and twelve a misdemeanour. The impact of the Act was to regulate against the seduction (or abduction) of young women without the permission of their parents or guardians. However, the widespread view that children under the age of twelve were unable to comprehend the situation at hand when sexual violation occurred, and were therefore prevented from giving evidence on behalf of themselves, meant that the detection and conviction of child molestation cases were hampered. Various groups combined forces in the 1880s to protect English girls from intercontinental sexual trafficking, especially in Europe, and in August 1885 the Criminal Law Amendment Act was finally passed. It included 'Labouchere's Amendment' criminalizing homosexual acts between men and repealed the most important parts of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act and its 1875 amendments. It did so by raising the age of consent to sixteen and placing severe penalties upon those attempting white slavery. Sexual attacks on girls under the age of thirteen were now deemed felonious and assaults on girls between thirteen and sixteen misdemeanours. These were the fiercest laws passed in Britain in this domain for centuries and were effected largely as the result of individual campaigners, such as W.T. Stead, but they legislated wholly with the child's welfare in mind rather than the adult's.<sup>38</sup> It was a different form of reasoning from that found during this period in the medical establishment.

Freud's concept of intergenerational sexual relations depended less on 'power relations' (the crafty or wily adult versus the needy and helpless child) than on trauma in childhood and the 'stages of sexual development': birth and childhood, maturity and senescence, sex and the death wish.<sup>39</sup> But he could not see to what extent these primary 'traumas' were dependent on the local experiences of his Central European, middle-class, bourgeois patients. Oblivious to them, he instead demonstrated the child's universal complicity in these sexual liaisons. Moreover, no



adult, he judged, again universally, could resist the child's lure, even those who were not parents themselves. Physical abuse and violence depended on the adult's pathology, Freud thought, far more than on socio-economic deprivation (even in Benjamin Britten's 1945 opera *Peter Grimes*, based on George Crabbe's much earlier poem (1810), there is no undertone of sexual malfeasance in Grimes' alleged murder of young boys, nor any sense among the Suffolk villagers that he may be a paedophile).<sup>40</sup>

Post-Freudian constructions of sexual abuse owed much to the master for their conception, but veered away from him for his neglect of the stark, non-sexual, factors. The accumulating dispraise must be viewed within the context of the broad debunking of Freud in the late twentieth century, but much also owed its existence to newer attitudes of social scientists about the child's role within the family, community and state. If historian Laurence Stone is correct that 'England [was] the first in the development of the child-oriented family', then it is not surprising that by the late eighteenth century the child would be managed, medicalized, and even sexualized, hints of which are found in Rousseau's *Émile* (1760), the most influential book for the Enlightenment legacy of the child.<sup>41</sup> In time competing models sprang up. By the turn of this century, theories about the causes of sexual abuse existed in such diverse forms that the picture was overcast and nebulous: far less monochromatic than it had been a century earlier. Nevertheless, circa 2000 one aspect towered above the others: whatever its origins or cultural dynamics, sexual abuse had to be brought under tight legal surveillance and revenged by severe punishment, some would say too severe.<sup>42</sup>

The modern concept of 'power relations' can be facile and glib. The metaphor it conceals was always a political one: relations about states and political figures. It evolved during the decade of political correctness in America – the 1970s – when 'persons' and their 'rights' were elevated to the status of countries and nations. Since then it has implied the need for explicit protection against behavioural excess, as well as curbs and laws in place to identify offenders, but the drive to punish would-be offenders has been so stringent that those taking longer views – historically – wonder what drove it. At the least we wonder to what degree our sense of 'power relations' has been shaped by the new view. Prior to the Second World War this state of affairs was different, and around the time of the Great War the legal thresholds were lower by far. From time immemorial adults and children have indulged in diverse forms of intimacy: the Bible affirms it, as did literature from the Middle Ages (as we shall see in Elizabeth Archibald's chapter) to the nineteenth century. Yet some



historians wonder about the currents of belief and contemporary practices that have transformed longitudinal and intergenerational sexual relations to the work of the devil – if not one demon then another.<sup>43</sup> This book grapples with the question viewed over many centuries through a few case studies. Despite inconclusivity it demonstrates for how long intergenerational intimacy has been problematic.

The debate about intergenerational relations has usually been framed in moral contexts into our time; the biological components – the bodies of children and their lives as active sexual creatures – dwarfed because the topic is too explosive apart from its moral anchors. By focusing on the biological elements Freud thought he had shifted old discussions to ‘scientific’ bases and deserves credit for the heroic attempt.<sup>44</sup> Since Freud and his followers pronounced we find it too controversial to address the subject apart from biological realism and social convention. For example, the already mentioned role of puberty in recent intergenerational sexuality. The age of puberty among girls in Western countries has been precipitously declining and continues to cause anxiety among parents cognizant that their daughters can now be sexually active. Yet most scientists conduct surveys and issue statistical reports without commenting on the bioethical realities. Why, that is, should nature enable girls to be sexually active, and even reproduce, at eleven or twelve if such activity cannot be discussed? Hitherto premarital sex was condemned as illicit by segments of church and state, but the recent reduction of age is so alarming that it breaks the boundaries of ordinary morality and religion. As historians, we want to inquire about the trajectory of this interdiction and its attendant discourses in the erotic capability of youth.<sup>45</sup> Other examples than puberty exist: for example, adult fantasies of children’s bodies. In all these, the matter is how to chart adequate contexts to historicize them.

## **Conceptualizing and historicizing sexual abuse**

A book attempting to historicize intergenerational sexual liaisons can be conceptualized, framed and presented in many ways. All are perilous and have their fair share of disadvantages. It may concentrate exclusively on definition and semantics: what is a child, what an adult or sexual liaison; and what conditions, especially the chronological ages, must obtain for an experience to count as a ‘sexual’ encounter? Even the clinically sounding ‘intergenerational’ poses huge semantic hurdles leaving this editor with residues of unresolved angst. Or the approach can aim to produce statistical materials about these contacts without concern for

the definitional and conceptual hurdles and interpret the figures.<sup>46</sup> It can restrict itself to words (literature in the major genres of prose and poetry) and images (visual materials) on the topic, or firsthand accounts of the participants: children or adults who engaged in these liaisons and wrote firsthand accounts of their involvement.<sup>47</sup> These approaches would have produced little material before the eighteenth century, and not much more until the twentieth. The definitional approach, pausing on each term used and historicizing it, could be productive but will inevitably appear innately theoretical: where are the living and breathing examples throughout history? To what end these verbal definitions and semantic refinements without the evidence from lived life? History is, if one may say so baldly in the vernacular, a mess but its indispensability must not lead to abandonment. It is a necessary mess with which we are consigned to live.

This book, instead, is organized around approximately a dozen case studies that are microcosms of larger structures of belief about sex and society at the time. Every 'case study' is a charged phenomenon: it has been selected from a variety of competing 'other' case histories (the fact of having to make the choice itself is worrying for the narrator) and has been made to seem representative – or the opposite – of cultural norms and national traditions. It entails a delicate balancing act between the presentation of the so-called 'facts' and charges of voyeurism and invasiveness; the tension is doubly fraught in the case of reconstructing children's lives. The scholar knows what resistance there is to such acts of alleged retrieval. Even so, she has selected it as a deliberate act of the intellectual will, yet rarely reflecting discursively on the reasons in any comparative fashion or explaining what the ulterior motives have been; still less on how they relate to presentist positions influencing the topic: in our case the problematic of children and sexuality as the linkage historically developed. Also, the narrator's method of inclusion and exclusion of detail is equally momentous. Selectivity guides the outcome, and unless we check the original case it is hard to know how reliable the narrator has been.

These lacunae are consequential for intimate liaisons between children and adults: at the very least one wants to know where the narrating retriever stands in relation to the moral controversies involved in intergenerational sex: present rather more than past. But case histories, however cleverly retrieved and presented, are not neutral sites. Not even the medical case history of patients, as it developed in the nineteenth century, was a blank slate for the doctors and nurses retrieving it.<sup>48</sup> Our approach tends to err on the side of inclusivity by constructing

broad contexts capable of explaining how these intergenerational relations have been understood. But we remain rugged individualists to the end, and gather ourselves from far-flung disciplines and chronological periods: the Greeks to the Great War. We cannot be expected to agree. A book whose microcosmic case histories originated in the same century could have been constructed but its rationale would have been different.

### **Methodology: the case history**

Each chapter focuses on a specific milieu, fixed in time and place, telling the story of one of more protagonists (even when the protagonist is a text). The storyteller wants the story to unravel from *within* the society to probe how character and narrative were interlinked. But the historian *within* the storyteller – the historian who remembers other stories and has been sensitized to comparing them – rarely divests herself of her own belief system; adopting – or aiming to adopt – the story's values to her own. In contrast, the anthropologist works across this grain: divesting everything possible before entering alien territory, and by such strip tease of the dominant value system a remote cultural landscape and collective mindset unravels. The anthropologist's structural differences reveal radical relativism: 'our Western way of doing things' is one among many.

According to Western mindsets embedding Judeo-Christian belief systems, many of our children today are being sexually abused. This book expends energy to demonstrate that while there is nothing new in the fact of abuse (if anything it appears to have diminished statistically) our contemporary forms of surveillance have intensified: never before have the bodies of children been so heavily managed and policed. Policed for their size and shape, policed from making copies or images of it, policed from predators wanting to watch, touch or assault it.

Anthropologist Heather Montgomery demonstrates that other cultures police their children so differently from ours that the idea of equivalence for concepts of Western 'sexual abuse' is problematic. The category itself requires reinterpretation. The already mentioned pre-pubescent Melanesian boys in Gilbert Herdt's study, to which Montgomery refers and who routinely fellate older men, are striking examples.<sup>49</sup> The boys are not 'abused' despite ingesting their elders' semen but ritually initiated into manhood. Other customs, such as the practices of covered females in Islamic countries, also demonstrate how the veil functions beyond religious and gender concerns and infiltrates the social arrangements of the sexes.<sup>50</sup> Western countries such as France,

which pride themselves on secular advancement and claim to ensure a maximum degree of individual liberty, have outlawed veils in public institutions, but the practice proves controversial and has led to riots and civil disobedience.<sup>51</sup> *Difference* observed in daily practices involving intergenerational sexual relations is widespread in both the West and the East, and by concluding with Montgomery's anthropological approach to children and sexuality in Southeast Asia we demonstrate how we could have selected different stories: case histories of children from the East.<sup>52</sup> And we could have narrated them differently: as cultural relativists, which few of us are.

If the authors writing in this book share a single belief it is the view that the so-called 'sexual abuse' of children has a long pedigree; that what differs from era to era are the conditions under which abuse, or perceived abuse, is enacted and the ways of understanding its forms of interdiction and surveillance. We could, of course, have identified other transgressions and traced their historical filiations, narratives, and paradoxes. Instead we selected children and sexuality in response to the new history of childhood developing in the last decade because it fills a void in the contemporary discussions.<sup>53</sup> Besides, collectively we sense a propaedeutic obligation: to instruct commentators and politicians pronouncing in the media as if abuse were a new invention, an untenable position by any historical measurement. A related purpose has been to draw attention to legislators and statesmen who deal with the practical aspects of the regulation of children; who often legislate draconian laws to punish transgressors without attending to the underlying causes. We are, of course, neither politicians nor judges; as cultural historians we think that our leaders would legislate more effectively if they were better informed about children and sexuality in the past. But we do not mean the 1980s or 1960s but the *longue durée* – hence our Greeks to the Great War. Had there been more time and space we could have compiled three or four volumes of similar case histories, thereby providing a vertical understanding of this coupling in each epoch – Greeks, Romans, Middle Ages, Renaissance and so forth – rather than the few sketches offered here. At least we have broken the silence.

## Conceptualizing lives

As retrievers we want to be as accurate as we can, consult every document and artefact, leave no stone unturned. We aim to get the pulse of each protagonist, or group of characters, right. But larger conceptual matters, often disguising unconscious assumptions and

masking personal and contemporary Western value systems, have proved thornier. For example, the matter of *life* itself; how a life can be known. The contemporary view throws out signals gathered around the word 'biography' and thrives on notions of time and place, class and rank, profession and attainment, external and internal personhood. But modern views of biography generally minimize the relation of essential personhood to larger family structures except in psychodynamic or dynastic ways. Only post-Freudian interpretations recreate the subject from the intergenerational shards of parental and sibling influence. Otherwise, the subject is viewed as ruggedly individual, existing apart from these structures of kinship. The differences encompass, as it were, 'biographical children': not merely in the sense what it was *to be a child* in the past but how that child could be reconstructed as *having a life*.<sup>54</sup>

Vickers and Briggs demonstrate the ambiguities of juvenile identity among the Ancients in their psychodynamic study of the historical Alcibiades who still perplexes us today.<sup>55</sup> Stereotypically though Alcibiades' libidinous antics have come down through the ages, primarily in Plato's *Symposium*, he appears so far to have eluded in-depth interpretation. Vickers and Briggs problematize the known facts of his juvenile sexual conduct, as well as ways to interpret his behavioural patterns. Elizabeth Archibald, on the other hand, collects stories – her protagonists, major and minor – embedding incest. Working as a comparative phylogenist of incest narratives she evaluates medieval stories for their repetitions and similarities. Everywhere she finds strange silences and curious gaps: puzzling texts, bare artefacts, stones that do not speak, further suggesting that children and sexuality in the Middle Ages remain understudied.<sup>56</sup> By the time William Naphy discovers his remarkable Swiss archive of the murderous sexual liaisons of children and adults in Calvinist Geneva, much has changed: civic and ecclesiastical courts have convened, records are meticulously being kept, legal sentences doled out – a stern Reformation society revealing its inner mettle through the sexual enactments of its children.<sup>57</sup> Questions we had asked during the History of Childhood seminars in Oxford in 2003–4 about youth in Alcibiades' Athens, even sexually deviant youth, would be extraneous to Naphy's Geneva, as well as irrelevant in Victorian England. Cultural relativism notwithstanding, universals seem not to exist in the historical domain of *children* and *sexuality*: their relationship is culturally constructed.

By the time George Rousseau disentangles the sexual arrangements inside an all-male Oxford college two centuries later, in the 1730s, everything again seems to have changed, especially in realms defining

selfhood and identity. By now the archives were fuller (in Rousseau's case providing most of the information needed on which to base a secure interpretation), the law more fully fleshed out vis-à-vis sexual contacts between children and adults, and the state of biographical knowledge for the figures involved more complete. But why Oxbridge colleges rather than schools, the workplace, or the military? Records were then also maintained in the British army and navy, court martials documented, even if not so abundantly as college archives. The difference lodges in the physical settings where these power relations among old and young were enacted. They could flourish inside ivy sanctuaries in ways impossible at sea or in the field, where men and boys breathed on one another, awake and sleeping. The dark corridors and sequestered interiors of Oxbridge colleges, like those of much plusher Continental chateaus and palazzos, or English country houses of the type where the child Pamela in Samuel Richardson's novel of that name works for the adult Mr. B, were natural habitats for corruption of the young – especially if only two of the authority figures in college were in residence. This is probably what occurred at Wadham College Oxford in 1739. Detecting abuse in the past can revolve around the identification of a single secret.<sup>58</sup>

Spin the chronological dials forward a century to the nineteenth and sexuality itself is being radically reconfigured. Despite the appearance of Rousseau's path-breaking *Émile* and the dozens of manuals on the management of children, a child's *sexuality* had not been a topic of focused discussion during the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Femininity and masculinity were topics bandied about, as were the differences between little boys and girls, but not the child's explicit *sexual* life outside (what we would call) purely biological and moral imperatives. A century later – by the 1850s – these matters are cropping out everywhere, especially within contexts of education. By then, the British were developing a 'science of children' that would lead to child psychology and child psychiatry, while the French and Germans configured a science of sexology carved from the shards of Enlightenment sexological theories.<sup>60</sup> Yet even these burgeoning discourses danced lightly about the child's sexuality, and were ordinarily silent about intergenerational sex between adults and children except in extreme pathological cases.<sup>61</sup> The new welter of theory circa 1900 helped to explain the contexts of individual cases, such as some of ours' in this book, but could not restore the lost facts: the identification of a single secret.

Perhaps this is why Stefano Evangelista is justifiably perplexed by the affair between Victorian aesthete and poet Walter Pater and an

obscure Oxford undergraduate, William Money Hardinge, who probably did more to corrupt his mentor (Pater) than the reverse. The seduction of the old (Pater was all of thirty-five when his scandal was brought to light) by the young bewildered the Victorians and Edwardians who saw it less as a branch of criminology than biological and moral degeneration. Their generation rarely framed it as seduction or trauma (Freud made that intuitive leap) but viewed the process clinically as mental action enlisting reason and logic: i. e., how could a young person, possessing only a partly developed mind, plot such entrapments?

Children of the 1860s had long since acquired an aura of Blakean innocence. It was awkward to believe they were capable of premeditated seduction of their elders, and when proved to have done so, as in several of the Victorian cases in this book, the authorities were incredulous.<sup>62</sup> Freud gazed deeply into the disparity and demonstrated the conditions under which 'the child is seducer of the man', but most educational authorities and even legal leaders remained dubious. So wretched Pater, having permitted himself to be conned by the nineteen-year-old 'Balliol-bugger' – as Hardinge was locally known – was punished for life: Jowett, the mighty commander of education and more influential than anyone in the Oxford of his time, the Jowett who was earlier Pater's staunchest patron, intercepted his academic advancement. Pater-the-adult turned paranoid to the degree that he distrusted young people wanting to be friends.

Both Evangelista and Rousseau tease out the substantive portions of these cases: topics that continue to haunt our politically correct and incrementally litigious twenty-first century.<sup>63</sup> Playwright David Mamet, the author of *Oleanna*, would not be bewildered: his protagonist Oleana profits from her mentor's guidance cum affection until the feminists on campus twist her mind. The underlying philosophical issue then, as now, is the public face of *affect*: can students learn in environments devoid of *affective* relations?

Jowett said no but national debates about the question, on both sides of the ocean, have proved perfidious since the 1870s, in whose ashes we linger – the matter is too explosive. Today 'affect' between a teacher and student is prohibited but Jowett had other ideas: his pedagogy brimmed over with affection for his students. They walked together on idyllic strolls in gardens, younger and older man arm in arm, sipped tea, went on reading parties into the country, slept in the same rooms, as would later be commemorated by the 'arcadian' and 'uranian' poets among them<sup>64</sup> – here were the origins of collegial privilege satirized by 'Brideshead' Waugh and mythologized by Waugh's followers.

Jowett intended affect to be construed as the highway to great academic performance: affect instilled a desire to learn, desire formed when a role model demonstrated (what we now call) homoerotic affection towards a student, homoerotic love was a positive force – the syllogism paved the way to the ‘Greek love’ of Jowett’s Oxford.<sup>65</sup>

Jowett never formulated his homology so crudely as this but it roughly amounted to this sequence. Why then, George Rousseau asks, were there not more cases in Victorian and Edwardian Britain? He speculates that archives speak through silence: for every Pater and Symonds a dozen others would have been hushed up and have now fallen away to time. Besides, the losers then became winners later on: victors in time who could not have fulfilled themselves if their sexual identity had not manifested itself early in life. The 1860s and 1870s actually formed something of a watershed in the evolution of children and sexuality; transformative decades auguring Wilde’s *fin-de-siècle* and his trial, which forced the question about same-sex affect to be aired in national debate. But Jowett’s ‘Platonic Renaissance’ had not taken hold in the 1860s when Symonds was enduring the inquisitions of the Fellows of Magdalen College.<sup>66</sup> Today we tend to assume that the rise of Classical Studies evolved almost preternaturally, as the logical heir of traditions developing since the Renaissance and Enlightenment, but its rise had never been guaranteed in the curriculum. Classical Studies, like other subjects, were subjugated to the tyranny of the doctrine *in loco parentis*.

So far our cases have involved males – what about mothers and daughters as teachers and students? Did similar practices, especially the doctrine of *in loco parentis*, have similarly dire consequences in that gender? Alison Hennegan demonstrates they could, especially when girls waxed lyrical about their teachers or vice-versa. Intense attachments among women, especially between mature and young women, rarely raised Victorian eyebrows unless those involved were discovered in uncompromising circumstances.<sup>67</sup> They could embrace and kiss with impunity, as they do in the illustrations of so many Victorian annual calendars, their sexual organs not yet visibly aroused as they were among males. But some ‘sapphist’ teachers encouraged affections and enacted affairs. Potentially alarming, they held these girls in their palms, so to speak, at their most formative periods of development. The making of youthful Victorian lesbians was not a topic fit for polite discussion then, especially as the ‘wicked lesbian’ had not yet been invented, but it formed a quiet but churning backwater to the pulse of Victorian children and sexuality.<sup>68</sup>



Or was it the reverse – girls unwittingly seducing teachers? Surrogate mothers with whom they had fallen in love at school?<sup>69</sup> Hennegan illustrates how the figure of the mother occupied a secure site within erotically-charged female affective relations. Nervous anxiety accompanied these attachments, precisely because they seemed so licit. Little is new in the historical formation of the all-important Victorian maternal model; the difference in Hennegan's ladies is that the ordinarily heterosexual mother is serving as mediator for illicit *lesbian* ties in a society intent on repressing *all* heterosexual female desire. These complex affective realms and their forms of expression have been understudied, and what emerges from Hennegan's diaries and letters is 'girls' who unequivocally enjoyed 'private sex lives'.

As industry, professionalism and the march of technology circa 1900 shaped family arrangements, it became increasingly difficult to pinpoint the ideal Victorian mother's function. One duty was plain: to dismiss her erotic space as degenerative. Most Victorian women would have been appalled to think she was serving as some type of surrogate go-between among young, developing, lesbian girls.<sup>70</sup> Yet Hennegan explicates the contrary state: how this could be the underbelly reality; how in darkly-lit dormitories of lonely boarding schools a teacher's embrace could seem more charged – as some girls wrote in their diaries – than any mother's hug at home.

Erotically suffused the embraces undoubtedly were, but they served no useful purpose for the nation: the British Empire around the turn of the last century hardly prided itself on building global prowess through the tribadism of barren daughters. Still, Victorians rich and poor continued to celebrate the mother's symbolism as the Great Nurturer: a crucial public figure at the colonial pinnacle perceived as having played a large role in making far-flung imperial 'Britannia' the richest country in the world.<sup>71</sup>

The symbolic mother was the protector of children, albeit not the guarantor of their sexual expression, responsible for every facet of their physical health and moral upbringing. She played a part in their education, although circa 1900 more men than women taught children in schools.<sup>72</sup> Fathers, literal and symbolic, fulfilled other functions, often enacted in the world beyond the home, especially in remote, distant places. Turgenev, in *Fathers and Sons* (1862), had broadened the distinction in a Russian redemptive key. As the British Empire grew and daily activity increasingly occurred in distant places away from the 'island nation', the father's role became more nebulous: he was a provider and protector, of course, but if too domestically invasive *within the home* his motives could become the object of suspicion.<sup>73</sup>

Late nineteenth-century fathers who took too great an interest in the upbringings of their children were seen as neglecting their work, profession, or business. Victorian apostles and prophets had touted 'a new fatherhood' but their reforms could be rhetorical and programmatic – campaigns conducted *outside* the home. This, in part, explains why his contemporaries viewed Baden-Powell's interest in boys so positively and, as Elleke Boehmer demonstrates, located it in contexts larger than purely domestic. She explores the *asexual* dimensions of his 'keep clean' reforms in *Scouting for Boys*, inviting us to reconsider what *asexuality* can have signified to tight-lipped Victorians and Edwardians.

But asexuality was neither taboo nor off-limits in Victorian discourse but indelicate in the moral realm. If childhood, even in the early twentieth century, amounted to a fantasy world about children conjured by adults, its imaginary asexuality was a crucial component. Baden-Powell obsessed on asexuality in the figure of Peter Pan: as Boehmer calls it, 'his life-long enthusiasm for remaining a "boy-man"'. Soon the great psychoanalysts – Freud to Klein – would consider such ingrained proclivities the most unambiguous sign of repressed homosexuality. Yet the concept of *asexuality* itself had been raised long before Baden-Powell elevated it to something of a national credo, extolling the virtues of masculine sexual modesty.<sup>74</sup> The early nineteenth-century botanists had condemned asexual flora as flowerless, the most mutant and anomalous exemplars of any species.<sup>75</sup> In geology, asexual reproduction was considered inferior to sexual versions, as could be seen in shells along the seaside, and as it had been viewed during the Enlightenment by Erasmus Darwin who explicated inferior flowers along these lines. Other naturalists devalued human beings who were unable to reproduce themselves: sexually or asexually.<sup>76</sup> In the 1890s the hypocrisies of Victorian female asexuality came under scrutiny too. Lina Eckenstein, the turn of the twentieth-century feminist polymath and cultural historian whose writing on medieval women revolutionized modern understanding of them, wondered whether 'the high estimation of virgin purity...advocated by the leaders of thought and asexual existence' was so much fluff.<sup>77</sup> Even the popular myth that women were more asexual than men came under critical fire, culminating in D.H. Lawrence's famous attack in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1925).<sup>78</sup> The new process of turning libidinous women into sterile, asexual creatures – a practice circa 1900 sometimes called 'asexualization' and not to be confused with sterilization – was being viewed shockingly by some as a remedy to relieve mental imbalance.

How then trust Baden-Powell's 'asexual boys' as an advanced civilization's way forward? Boehmer demonstrates the ambiguities of his position, while Mark Harrison confirms that these preventative measures were commensurate with Victorian military and medical campaigns to sanitize the body. As Harrison writes, 'it was a form of masculinity compatible with the ethic of service and had the additional merit, in Baden-Powell's view, of being conducive to health.' Compatible and conducive it undoubtedly was, but the historian accurately records as well as shrewdly assesses the past, and viewed within the context of children and sexuality such extreme preoccupation with anal cleanliness – even in an era of rampant cholera – robbed boys of their natural rights to experience their natural bodies. It also denied them their masturbatory bodies, promoting instead a brand of masculine modesty, at home and on the imperial frontier, as tendentious as that of the 'asexual girl'. Asexuality was equally censorious of the other side of human sexual apparatus, the fundament: no neutral bodily zone but the orifice most condemned to Victorian debasement – Boehmer's 'anal ethics'. Here, in the rear, in the unseen caverns of the bum, are the bleakest consequences of Baden-Powell's 'asexual boys'.

These interdictions on organs and orifices, kisses and hugs, rendered Edwardian adults vulnerable. Yet before the Great War broke out legal protection against paedophiles – the word did not yet exist and was coined in English after the Second World War – was of minimum public concern.<sup>79</sup> For example, none of the first readers of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, published in 1911–12 as the clouds of war were gathering, ever recorded the slightest suspicion that Gustave von Aschenbach was a closet paedophile. Mann's story describes the protagonist pursuing the beautiful young Polish boy Tadzio; yet however Dionysian and erotic Aschenbach's passion there is no sense that he is posing as a paedophile. Nor was there any such intimation in the later analysis of Aschenbach's homoerotic psyche made by the pioneering psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut after the Second World War, or by the early reviewers of Luchino Visconti's film (1971) or Benjamin Britten's opera of the same name (1973), his last opera. No one made a fuss about poet Norman Douglas' pursuit of boys in Capri after the Great War. But since the 1980s, when a new Puritanism invaded the Anglo-Saxon world in partial response to the excesses of the Sixties, a sort of incipient *paedophobia* turned hysterical has infiltrated the discussion, and violated the artistic intention of all these figures. The erotic parts of human anatomy remained off bounds in polite discourse: unmentionable, even unthinkable. The fundament, or 'bum', was not a word in the vocabulary of the Oxbridge dons and

students discussed in our chapters except in the most compromising circumstances; even medical doctors used euphemisms in their lectures to describe it to medical students.<sup>80</sup> Outside the realms of pornography reference to the child's clitoris or penis was as prohibited as it was to the fundament: conveying the recoil of defilement and evacuation and suggesting the speaker's crudity. For reasons hardly surprising, references to young female anatomic parts were adjudged less reprehensible than to male, the latter suggesting a covert homosexual motive of the lingering type Baden-Powell would be accused after 1918.<sup>81</sup>

### Prologue to the future: children and fear

The early twentieth-century anthropologists would have taken another view of Western children and sexuality if they had pronounced on the interface, which they did not. We can imagine how different from the Edwardian commentators on Baden-Powell's 'modest clean boys' anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski would have been in *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927).<sup>82</sup> Before the Edwardian configuration of 'anthropology' as a 'science', anthropology included anything pertaining to mankind, as the historical profile of the English word itself since the Renaissance demonstrates.<sup>83</sup> Anthropology's elevation to a 'discipline' circa 1870–1900 had occurred during the heyday of empire, but more recently within the contexts of the history of children and sexuality the anthropologist's relativistic gaze is overlooked. This is why it is useful to include amongst their voices an anthropologist capable of appraising child abuse more generally.

Heather Montgomery's message may not be one our authors or readers want to hear. But it is a necessary alternative, if not corrective, to two dominant strains developing in the recent history of childhood: one claiming in the aftermath of Ariès that children, having been 'invented' in the eighteenth century, have ever since been configured by adults as illusions of their (the adults) own fantasies, their sexuality sanitized to the point of obliteration;<sup>84</sup> the other purporting that despite philosophical shifts in the historical views of the state of childhood since the Enlightenment, the child from time immemorial has coveted a sexual life – even desired it secretly – and needs to express sexual behaviour.

Montgomery traces some of these tensions along the lines of cultural relativism – savage and civilized, East and West, past and present – especially a relativism often too narrowly practiced: as enslavement to absolute norms and values we adopt without interrogation. To do this

she excavates the archaeology of sexuality itself: not merely childhood sexuality or adult fantasies about children's sexuality. Little is more hazardous, she cautions, than imposing our own systems of thought on other cultures.<sup>85</sup> Aware, as we are today, that the Western sexual abuse of children is intrinsically tied to psychological dysfunction, we nevertheless foist our failing systems of belief about the family on to cultures that would rather not have them. When gender differences are included, the imposition becomes even more problematic.

According to Montgomery some students of the history of childhood fail 'to distinguish between indigenous cultural practices, which may appear abusive to outsiders, but are not considered so internally to a community, and those which are acknowledged as aberrant.' If so, then these case studies may suggest a securer method of decoding child sexual abuse within local or historical contexts. The local contexts themselves are insufficient. As Montgomery cautions, 'the broader sense of the social values and hierarchical structures prevailing in the wider society at particular times' must also be consulted. It is a tall order straining the retriever to engage in juggling acts of the spatially proximate and remote.

Another collection extending these case studies chronologically forward to Germany's Nazi camps of the 1940s, Stalin's death communes in the 1950s, and Southeast Asia's embattled jungles after the 1960s, could have been assembled. It would have proved more excruciating than the narratives found here. If Africa were also included, the book would be more horrific yet. The cupola of children and sexuality in times of heightened persecution will always be more charged than it is during periods of relative calm. Perhaps this is why the Ruralist Brothers, with whom I began, could idealize naked childhood innocence so unabashedly. Their collective fantasy about infantile purity was more powerful than any embodied realism: the children themselves are silent in their pictures, their body parts arousing adult fantasy. Today these Ruralists and their photographs of nude children seem to us proof that they were undetected exploiters who existed on another pastoral planet.

Yet even such a forward thrust into the barbarous second half of the twentieth century would not have altered the main gesture of this book: to open up a space for frank public discussion with ripostes. Bearing in mind Montgomery's cautions about the spatially and temporally local and remote, we would discover ourselves again toiling from Hitler to Cambodia and Darfur in a double juggling act requiring the construction of adequate contexts and the possession of moral fibre in relation to both adult's minds and children's bodies. To write about children and

sexuality in any epoch requires a plastic frame of mind that does not crack when interrogated about ulterior motives.

As I finish writing this introduction in October 2006 one hundred eminent scientists and academics have signed a widely circulated document claiming that contemporary children continue to get a raw deal.<sup>86</sup> They mean *all* children, even the children of the Western rich. Their language is adamant, their tone vexed, they want action now. At the same time new societies continue to be launched to guarantee their advancement. These are but two of dozens of annual initiatives, it seems, intent upon increasing the rights of contemporary children to ensure that they grow up to be better functioning adults.<sup>87</sup> None of these initiatives mentions sex or sexuality: when we fear for the safety of our children's lives, we do not have the luxury to contemplate their sexualities. Despite the intractable presence of adult fantasy over childhood reality in the twenty-first century nanny state, one would have thought there might be some space for sexuality. Apparently not yet. Sooner or later children and sexuality will be a required topic for consideration.

Where does this leave *Children and Sexuality*? With a map of the past suggesting that the events of our era are far from unique. If we end these case studies at the Great War, as was our plan, then we must be cautiously optimistic that the present hysteria will calm as the perils of the nanny-state continue to reveal themselves. But if we speculate beyond 1914, or – again – beyond 1945, then the stakes alter yet again as the result of two relatively new developments: the legal definition of paedophilia and treatment of the predatory paedophile, and the ways in which technology has invaded the sexual life of children. If developments since 9/11 are also included, the map changes again, especially insofar as models of the child as citizen since then have altered.

The harsh reality of our Era of Anxiety over Children since 9/11 give pause for good reason: sexual crimes against them continue. We cannot close our eyelids and dream them away. Our children routinely continue to be abducted and raped. As I correct the proofs for this book yet another dire event has occurred: the case of four-year-old Madeleine McCann dominating the international media, stolen from her bed in a holiday resort in the Algarve while her parents ate supper a few metres away. Who abducted her? What was the motive? Time alone will tell whether she is alive. Such cases have routinely occurred for centuries; the difference now is that our technology, abetted by the media, encourages them to be reported swiftly and repeatedly until the public imagines that these events are recurring daily. The Internet has relocated them to the public sphere whereas earlier they were known locally, spread

within villages and towns by word of mouth, but not much beyond, the voices of everyone – the afflicted and their respondents – lost to time. Today, in contrast, every detail of the agony of Madeleine's parents instantly becomes public knowledge, their anguish incapable of being diminished because it sits on the tip of every parent's imagination as their own worst nightmare – this despite the sensational elements and taints of huge financial rewards.

But Madeleine's abduction is not unique. Its root cause lodges entirely in *adults*: the adult, or adults, who abducted her and have committed their nasty deed, whatever it may turn out to be. Too glibly we label her kidnappers 'paedophiles' while our models of the type remain hugely defective. Having thrown up our hands at adequate, nuanced and variegated classification, at diagnosis and treatment, we capture and incarcerate the offenders, call for tougher laws to gaoil them for longer sentences, and enact draconian controls to identify their geographical movements when released from prison. So far these measures have not proved salutary, even when it is realized to what extent their motives are primarily financial; and the numbers of offenders increase, aided by ever-more powerful Internet technology that raises the financial rewards. We continue to rely on the law to substitute for a defective medical model of the paedophile gone into the wilderness. It is bleak to augur anything in this domain, but until the therapeutic dimension becomes more secure and treatment grows more successful, the Madeleine McCanns will continue to disappear from their beds. Yet the topic is too painful to discuss publicly.

The second strand appears unrelated. Juvenile sexuality is rather different from our current predicament in the realms of paedophilia. As we noted earlier, even Freud recognized a century ago that the sexual expression of children was misunderstood. Some of his colleagues doubted his solution in seduction and continued to generate their own models. Freud's analyses, developed in part as a 'seduction theory', were unsatisfactory but served as antennae trumpeting the hydra-headed predicament about children facing the western world just before and after the Great War. One of its most ineluctable facets is that adults alone have assessed and commented on the child's forms of sexual expression. Even our selected case studies show as much. The point seems self-evident: children have always sought to express their sexual energies without understanding or reflecting on them; adults have permitted them in varying degrees according to their religions and national systems of belief, and as dictated by adult sexual fantasies about children. But recently several Western governments have erected nanny-states

compelling adults to manage children so stridently on the one hand, while policing them to be super-humanly perfect on the other, that there is no space or time for sexual expression. Not even for the possibility of a sexual life for the child. Historically over time the delicate balance of expression, permission and management has been culturally mediated by geography and local custom; yet technology – the variable in the equation gone out of control – technology has usually been omitted from the discussion from the time of the Industrial Revolution forward.

Paedophiles and youthful sexuality do not sit together easily. To some they appear to exist at the antipodes. Yet the truth is even more complicated than this – truths with which the recent media are uncomfortable because they prefer monolithic simple truths: those that distort reality. The fact is that technology heavily mediates between children and adults – here the editor speaks – in the sexual realm; and not merely current technology but technology throughout modern history. If we can control our runaway technology, including the uses to which it is being put so far as children are concerned, we may be able to lower the temperature of the current malaise. But technology is controlled by business interests that governments find almost impossible to monitor: profit before national policy. And if technological capability continues to outstrip moral intention and develops apart from ethical consideration, as it appeared to do at the transformative moments when photography and cheap reproduction burst on the scene in the nineteenth century, and later on when films and the Internet began delivering images of naked children to arouse adult erotic imagination, then we will pay a huge price for the consequences. So large, that present anxieties about children and sexuality will further increase. And then the currently lamentable impasse between children and adults will grow even greater than it is now.

## Notes

1. An important treatment of the subject is found in Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2000). For contemporary studies see also: F.M. Martinson, *The Sexual Life of Children* (Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey, 1994); Benjamin Schlesinger, *Sexual Abuse of Children: A Resource Guide and Annotated Bibliography* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1982) and idem, *Sexual Abuse of Children in the 1980's* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), Barbara M. Jones, Linda L. Jenstrom and Kee MacFarlane, *Sexual Abuse of Children* (Washington, DC: National Center on Child Abuse, 1980),



- David R. Walters, *Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children: Causes and Treatment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), Robert L. Geiser, *Hidden Victims: The Sexual Abuse of Children* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), Barbara McComb Jones et al., *Sexual Abuse of Children* (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1980), Ruth S. Kempe and C. Henry Kempe, *The Common Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1984), David R. Walters, *Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children* (Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press, 1975), William T. O'Donohue and James Geer, *The Sexual Abuse of Children* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1992), Richard A. Gardner, *Sex Abuse Hysteria: Salem Witch Trials Revisited* (Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics, 1991), George K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870–1908* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982).
2. For some of the interdisciplinary hurdles see: Marie Mulvey Roberts, *Sex & Sexuality, 1640–1940: Literary, Medical and Sociological Perspectives* (Marlborough: Adam Matthew Publications, 1998); Robert A. Nye, *Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
  3. Mention must be made of American psychohistorian Lloyd deMause, whose large, edited volume entitled *History of Childhood* (London: J. Aronson, 1974) unfolds in somewhat similar manner to our presentation here, with chapters by diverse hands covering different historical epochs. Despite similar chronological arrangement, however, we have not modelled our collection on any aspect of deMause's work or been influenced by his contents. Indeed very few of our authors even refer to his book despite its discussions of sex and sexuality (see deMause's index p. 447, column 2). Building on Freud's theories of childhood trauma and somewhat in the manner of Ariès, deMause codified six basic childrearing modes and correlated them to the evolution of childhood in history: 1. infanticide (the Ancient world); 2. abandonment and incest (Medieval); 3. the sexual abuse of children (Renaissance); 4. the terrorizing mode (Enlightenment); 5. the socialization mode (nineteenth century); 6. the helping, or intrusive, mode (twentieth century). Neither the six modes nor their historical correlatives are commensurate with our understanding of the past, nor do we use them in this book. It must nevertheless be conceded that deMause's collection was one of the few historical books before 1975 to include 'children and sexuality' as a category for exploration. The *New York Review of Books* called it 'brilliant . . . bold . . . challenging.' Nevertheless, the neglect or silencing, as the case may be, of deMause since then by historians of childhood on both sides of the Atlantic remains a mystery awaiting elucidation. Having published this majestic book as a prelude to entering the subject, deMause turned aside to other work. See especially pages 44–51 dealing with children and sexuality from the Romans forward, which occasionally makes for riveting reading even if his sources are often not reliable.
  4. A complementary approach for the grieving over children is found in Robert Woods, *Children Remembered: Responses to Untimely Death in the Past* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Woods' book represents a single voice rather than the polyphonic engagement we encourage here. Woods' sources are invaluable as an introduction to the historiography of children and sexuality.

5. His classic work of 1960 (French), *Centuries of Childhood* (London: J. Cape, trans. Robert Baldick, 1962). For astute appraisals of Ariès' work see Adrian Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès,' *History and Theory* 19 (1980); Patrick H. Hutton, *Philippe Ariès and the Politics of French Cultural History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004); and chapter 1 of Robert Woods (n. 4).
6. One exception is the group of anthropologists and historians of the family centred around Professor David Kertzer of Brown University, an authority on Italian politics, society and political history. Kertzer began his work as a demographic anthropologist, working with Peter Laslett at the Cambridge University Centre for Population Studies, and then moved to the historical roots of the Western family. He and his colleagues now explore aspects of the history of the child from the perspectives of biology and the family. See David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, *Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500–1789, History of the European Family*; v. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), idem, *Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1789–1913, History of the European Family*; v. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), idem, *Family Life in the Twentieth Century, History of the European Family*; v. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); David I. Kertzer and Dennis P. Hogan, *Family, Political Economy, and Demographic Change: The Transformation of Life in Casalecchio, Italy, 1861–1921* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); David I. Kertzer et al, *The historical roots of the Western family: The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), David I. Kertzer, *Family Life in Central Italy, 1880–1910* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1984).
7. Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality* (London: Allen Lane, 1978).
8. For demonstration of how Freud's unprecedented theory of the causal role of child sexual trauma related to seduction of the adult see Stephen Kern, 'Freud and the Birth of Child Psychiatry,' *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 9 (1973), and idem 'Freud and the Discovery of Child Sexuality,' *History Childhood Quarterly* 1 (1973), and below, pp. 326, 344.
9. The available studies barely extend backwards into history: see Warren Middleton, *The Betrayal of Youth: Radical Perspectives on Childhood Sexuality, Intergenerational Sex, and the Social Oppression of Children and Young People* (London: CL Publications, 1986); Derek Gordon, *Occupational Sex Segregation and Intergenerational Mobility* (Cardiff: Social Research Unit, University College, 1986).
10. For some of the historical implications see Helen King, *The Disease of Virgins: Green Sickness, Chlorosis and the Problems of Puberty* (London: Routledge, 2004); for male puberty in non-Western societies and its implications for male modesty see note 74 and pp. 331–3.
11. In this sense it differs from Robert Woods in *Children Remembered* (see n. 6).
12. Graham Ovenden and Robert Melville, *Victorian Children* (London: Academy Editions; St. Martin's Press, 1972) with unpaginated leaves. Compare its visual boldness with, for example, Eleanor Allen, *Victorian Children* (London: A. and C. Black, 1973) published in the same year. For some of the erotic cults feeding into their approach see James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992).
13. Germaine Greer, *The Boy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

14. Ovenden (n. 12), n. p., photograph entitled 'The Budding Grove'.
15. Ovenden once thought the girls were 'the Papin sisters', French servants who rebelled in 1933 against their mistress and then brutally murdered her in a notorious murder case that rocked French memory; see Rachel Edwards and Keith Reader, *The Papin Sisters* (Oxford University Press, 2001). But Ovenden decided they were American, having traced the original photograph to a New York art dealer, Julien Levy, who had illustrated the photograph in some of his writings.
16. Alexander Bassano was a popular Victorian commercial portraitist a few of whose photographs of young girls are in the Wellcome Trust Library, London.
17. Among his many art books are *Pre-Raphaelite Photography* (London and New York: Academy Editions; St. Martin's Press, 1972); *The Illustrators of Alice in Wonderland and through the Looking Glass* (London and New York: Academy Editions; St. Martin's Press, 1979).
18. See Nicholas Usherwood, *The Brotherhood of Ruralists: Ann Arnold, Graham Arnold, Peter Blake, Jann Haworth, David Inshaw, Annie Ovenden, Graham Ovenden* (London: Lund Humphries, 1981), p. 33 for both citations in this paragraph.
19. See Robert Melville, *Picasso: Master of the Phantom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939); Henry Moore and Robert Melville, *Henry Moore: Sculpture and Drawings 1921–1969* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1970).
20. Robert Melville, *Erotic Art of the West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).
21. See Wilhelm von Gloeden and John S. Barrington, *The Boys of Taormina and the Baron Von Gloeden* (n. p., 1974), and Wilhelm von Gloeden, *L'arte di Gloeden* (Palermo: Poligraf, 1979).
22. Graham Ovenden and Lewis Carroll, *Lewis Carroll, Masters of Photography Series* (London: Macdonald, 1984).
23. See Melville's chapter, 'Aspects of Lolita', in Nicholas Usherwood (n. 18), pp. 65–77.
24. Robert Melville, 'An Osmotic Approach to the Photographs', in Nicholas Usherwood (n. 18), p. 82.
25. Henry Mayhew and William Tuckniss, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 4 vols. (London: Griffin Bohn, 1861), a sociological classic of the mid-Victorian years.
26. Ovenden and Melville owned copies of the 1960 edition: William Plomer (ed), *Kilvert's Diary* 3 vol. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960).
27. *Victorian Children* (n. 12), text accompanying images 43–47.
28. See Henry Mayhew (n. 25).
29. It differs from such books as: Eleanor Allen, *Victorian Children* (n. 13); Susan P. Casteras et al, *Victorian Childhood* (New York: Abrams, 1986) and James Kincaid's important *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (n. 13).
30. Since the 1960s dozens of gallery exhibitions of paintings by and about children have appeared but these are now increasingly scrutinized for their decency; for the development and its literature see: Sara Holdsworth et al., *Innocence and Experience: Images of Children in British Art from 1600 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1992); Bettina Hèurli-mann et al., *Children's Portraits: The World of the Child in European Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1950); Mary Frances Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Epping: Bowker, 1983).

31. See Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).
32. For further reasons see: Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret* (n. 1); Robert Geiser, *Hidden Victims* (n. 1); R.S. Kempe, *The Common Secret* (n. 1); W.T. O'Donohue, *The Sexual Abuse of Children* (n. 1).
33. The British Youth Justice Board reports that 1,664 children were given police warnings or court orders for sex offences in 2002–3; by 2005–6 this number rose had risen to 1,988.
34. For historical sexology see: Lucy Bland and Laura L. Doan, *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); idem, *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); M.E. Perry, *Childhood and Adolescent Sexology, Handbook of Sexology; V. 7* (Amsterdam; Oxford: Elsevier, 1990).
35. See Alyson Brown et al., *Knowledge of Evil: Child Prostitution and Child Sexual Abuse in Twentieth-Century England* (Cullompton: Willan, 2002); Paul McHugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Michael Pearson, *The Age of Consent: Victorian Prostitution and Its Enemies* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972).
36. See Kern (n. 8).
37. Such commentaries are found, more recently, in the writings of child psychiatrists: see, for example, Sami Timimi, *Pathological Child Psychiatry and the Medicalization of Childhood* (Hove: Brun Routledge, 2002), and the far-ranging but nevertheless intuitively revealing discussion in D.W. Winnicott et al., *Thinking about Children* (London: Karnac Books, 1996). Pat Barker demonstrates in *Border Crossing* (London: Viking, 2001) how these ideas can be used in fiction.
38. For these legal reforms within child sexual abuse see: Carol Smart, *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992); George K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse* (n. 1). It may also be noteworthy in this context that fathers remained the legal guardians of their children throughout the nineteenth century; not even the Infants Custody Act of 1886 gave them exclusively to their mothers.
39. Kern (n. 8).
40. Britten was more likely exploring the pathology of a lonely man consumed by a depressive disorder and displays him (Grimes) in high spirits as well as low melancholic moods. Britten himself was no stranger to clinical depression, which sank him into clinical illness during the Second World War while he was living abroad in America. The discovery of George Crabbe's poem in 1941 about the Suffolk coast, and the decision to return to England in 1942, lifted his nostalgia and prompted him to return home. As preparation he composed an opera about this brutal killer of boys. Once back on the Suffolk coast, Britten and Pears, who sang the role of Grimes in the first performance, themselves became the quondam objects of local gossip in the sexual domain; both would have been sensitive to the possibility that the eponymous Grimes was a sexual predator but – for whatever reason – Britten omitted any hint of sexuality in his libretto.

John Bridcut delicately approaches these matters in his unsensational study of Britten's children, particularly the boys who sang for him and to

whom he was often sexually attracted. Britten was especially intimate with German Wolfgang ('Wulff') Scherchen, son of composer Hermann Scherchen, whom he met when Wulff was 14 and Britten 21. Britten's boys often came alone to stay with him and shared his bed. The status quo altered in his relation with 13-year-old Harry Morris. Morris was from a troubled home, the only boy ever to accuse Britten of sexual abuse. They were on holiday visiting Britten's sister in Cornwall when Harry claimed that Britten sexually approached him in his bedroom. Harry appears to have screamed and struck him with a chair; Britten's sister Beth came running into the room when she heard the noise. Harry left the next morning and recounted the abuse to his mother, who did not believe him. To what extent events like these leaked into the public domain to solidify a view that Britten was corrupting boys is not clear after reading Bridcut's book from which these details are cited. The parallels with the scandals recounted in chapter 6 below and, more recently, Michael Jackson's court case, are apparent despite their very different outcomes. See John Bridcut, *Britten's Children* (London: Faber, 2006), based on his June 2004 BBC2 TV documentary of the same name.

41. Laurence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*. Abridged edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 321; see pp. 114–5 for children and sexuality, and pp. 318–20 for reasons why the eighteenth-century child's masturbation was not construed seriously in England.
42. See note 1 for these legal developments as they impinge on the philosophical models of abuse.
43. See William G. Naphy's chapter 4 below and his *Sex Crimes from Renaissance to Enlightenment* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002).
44. See Kern (n. 8).
45. In some of the ways that historian John R. Gillis explored the topic even though he omitted sexuality; see John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 – Present* (New York; London: Academic Press, 1981). See also Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (London: W.H. Allen, 1985).
46. The demographic and statistical approach to the history of childhood has many virtues, not least that it often substantiates its positions in responsible scholarship with figures. Sexuality, however, and almost by definition, resists the approach: when the sexuality under exploration involves patterns of behavior and thought in remote cultures of the distant past the approach is even more fraught; for an example of the advantages and disadvantages see Robert Woods (n. 6).
47. Again and at the expense of repetition it must be reiterated that few accounts survive before 1850, if they ever existed, and the little remaining evidence is usually found in legal proceedings and court cases. A small amount of information can be extracted from medical theory prior to 1850 that pronounced on the health and sex of children. Before the Second World War the term 'intergenerational relations' usually denoted the duty of children to their parents. After the 1950s it was used primarily by cultural historians to refer to intergenerational memory in the aftermath of Nazi atrocity and Middle European death camps. But since the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s it has been hijacked from war memory to the recent realms of sex, especially among adults and children. A useful discussion of its application to history is

- found in C. John Somerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1982). More recently British novelist Margaret Drabble fictionalized its concerns in *The Peppered Moth* (London: Viking, 2000).
48. For psychohistorical approaches to the case history see William McKinley Runyan, *Life Histories and Psychobiography: Explorations in Theory and Method* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); for the cultural relativism implied in reconstructing lives, Clifford Geertz, *An Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); and for his contrast of local and global interpretations idem, 'from the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,' in Paul Rabinow et al., *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 230–42
  49. See Gilbert Herdt, *Rituals of Manhood: Male Initiation in Papua New Guinea* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998) and idem, *Sambia Sexual Culture: essays from the field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and p. 331 below.
  50. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992); Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male–Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge, Mass: Schenkman: 1975); idem *The Harem Within* (London: Doubleday, 1994); Nilüfer Güle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
  51. At the time of writing in 2006 the veil is most problematic in Turkey, which claims to be a secular state yet where the veil has proved to be the most divisive public symbol between secularism and Islam. Indeed, it has cost Turkey's first and only Nobel Laureate in Literature, Orhan Pamuk, the disaffection of a large segment of the Turkish population.
  52. For cross-cultural perspectives see W.H. Davenport, 'Adult-child sexual relations in cross-cultural perspective,' in O'Donohue et al (n. 1), pp. 73–80 and the large bibliographical overview by D.F. Janssen, MD, 'Enculturation Curricula, Abuse Categorization and the Globalist/Culturalist Project: The Genital Reference,' *IPT Journal* 13 (2003): 1–18.
  53. One that remains historically faithful to the evidence but attuned to the present structures of abuse as expressed in Martin C. Calder, *Child Sexual Abuse and the Internet: Tackling the New Frontier* (Lyme Regis: Russell House, 2004); idem, *Children and Young People Who Sexually Abuse: New Theory, Research and Practice Developments* (Lyme Regis: Russell House, 2005).
  54. Most Western views of biography develop their theories as if 'lives' were capable of being understood primarily through stages or phases; the child has no life apart from the adolescent, the adult none apart from the senescent and the geriatric; see David Novarr, *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography, 1880–1970* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1986). Nigel Hamilton has traced the ways of 'knowing a life' from the Ancient Greeks and Romans to present thinkers in *Biography: A Brief History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
  55. For preliminary aspects see Mark Golden and Peter Toohey, *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); for theories of biography in Ancient Greece see Patricia Cox Miller, *Biography in Late Antiquity: a Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford: Oxford



- University Press, 2003); Foucault's indispensable *History of Sexuality* (vols. 1 and 2).
56. This despite recent studies such as Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).
  57. For other developments in northern Europe see Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland: From the Golden Age to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).
  58. As various studies of the early modern child have demonstrated: see Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); idem, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children over Three Centuries* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987).
  59. For some of the reasons see J.H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England,' *Past and Present* 67 (1975); Alan Richardson, 'Romanticism and the End of Childhood,' in Mitzi Myers (ed.), *Special Issue: Culturing Childhood: Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 21.2 (1999), pp. 167–89; Donelle Ruwe et al., *Culturing the Child, 1690–1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005).
  60. See note 2 above and Nye (n. 2).
  61. Discourse about the history of intergenerational relations has burgeoned since the global wars of the second half of the last century, especially in the social sciences, in respect of the current preoccupation with intergenerational memory, and as it braves up to the challenge of facing the sexual dimensions; for a primer of the developing discourse see S. N. Eisenstadt, *From Generation to Generation*, 3rd edn (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003). Its main evidence has been felt in imaginative literature.
  62. The visual tradition especially strengthened this aura of innocence: see Susan Casteras et al., *Victorian Childhood: Yale Center for British Art* (New York: Abrams, 1986); Jonathan Cott, *Forever Young* (New York: Random House, 1977); Terry Parker et al., *Golden Hours: The Paintings of Arthur J. Elsley, 1860–1952* (Shepton Beauchamp: Richard Dennis, 1998).
  63. For recent contexts see Christopher Newfield and Ronald Strickland, *After Political Correctness: The Humanities and Society in the 1990s* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995); Howard S. Schwartz, *The Revolt of the Primitive: An Inquiry into the Roots of Political Correctness* (London: Praeger, 2001); Anthony Browne, *The Retreat of Reason: Political Correctness and the Corruption of Public Debate in Modern Britain* (London: Civitas, 2006).
  64. See Timothy D'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970).
  65. As Linda Dowling and others have shown: see her *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).
  66. For its development and effects see Dowling (n. 65); chapters 5 and 6.
  67. An astute evaluation of lesbian mothers is found in Maureen Sullivan, *The Family of Woman: Lesbian Mothers, Their Children, and the Undoing of Gender* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005). For motherhood generally in Victorian England see: Valerie A. Fildes and Dorothy McLaren, *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London: Routledge, 1990); for the later period, Julie-Marie

- Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For the earlier background of motherhood, Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The ‘ignorant mother’, of the type often causing abuse in history, has been less studied but see Ariès himself who claimed that ‘the practice of playing with children’s privy parts [had] formed part of a widespread tradition’ (Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, n. 5, p. 101). Ariès could reason this way because he thought he had found abundant evidence suggesting that ‘the child under the age of puberty was believed to be unaware of or indifferent to sex. Thus gestures and allusions had no meaning for him; they became purely gratuitous and lost their sexual significance’ (p. 103). No contemporary historian could find herself writing these sentences.
68. These were not, it must be emphasized, conditions leading to child murder, which more often than not resulted from dire poverty; see Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For these contradictions in the romantic and sexual realms more generally see Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
  69. The child’s unconscious seduction of the mother had been a topic of concern to psychoanalytic theorists from Freud to Klein and afterwards; see Kern (n. 8).
  70. See Louise Jackson (n. 1).
  71. For the dominant images see Howard D. Weinbrot, *Britannia’s Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
  72. See Patrick Greig Scott and Pauline Fletcher, *Culture and Education in Victorian England*, Bucknell Review vol. 34, no. 2 (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990).
  73. See the works by D. Kertzer (n. 6).
  74. The cultural history of male modesty so far remains locked, often perceived as too indelicate to recount except by feminists unabashed by the discourses of the male genitals; for further astute insights see Laurence Goldstein, *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) and Calvin Thomas, *Male Matters: Masculinity, Anxiety, and the Male Body on the Line* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).
  75. For example, John Lindley et al., *An Introduction to the Natural System of Botany...* (London: Longman, 1830), p. 19: the passage beginning with ‘Asexual plants are flowerless...’
  76. See Erasmus Darwin’s cosmologies about the loves of plants; George Henry Lewes in *Sea-Side Studies at Ilfracombe, Tenby, the Scilly Isles, & Jersey* (Edinburgh, 1858), p. 289, the passage about reproducing themselves by sexual and asexual methods.
  77. Lina Eckenstein, *Women under Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), p. 307.
  78. Of women Lawrence wrote, ‘I feel I’ve shot it [sc. the book] like a bomb against all their false sex and hypocrisy...as my Florentine doctor said, against all their asexual sexuality.’ See 1903 *Daily Mail* 10 Sept. 2/7.
  79. Havelock Ellis seems to have been first to use ‘paedophilia’ in our sense but a ‘paedophile’ as a free-standing agent who sexually loves children



was not coined until 1949. See Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: In Six Volumes* (London: 1936, rev. edn), vol. 5, part I, p. 11: 'Paidophilia [sic] or the love of children... may be included under this head [sc. abnormality]'. The overlapping cultural histories of paedophilia (love of children), pederasty (homosexual relations between a man and a boy, with the boy or younger man as the passive partner), and pedagogy (the methods or principles of instructing the young) have not been properly disentangled. However sharp their differences, all sorts of questions remain about our current obsession with all three. When and how, for example, did the current obsession with paedophiles arise, and what constellation of fear and anxiety in adults does it specifically signify? Long ago the American classicist Thomas Gould configured pederasty-pedagogy as a form of 'love' rather than 'discipleship'; see his *Platonic Love* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1963). But Gould wrote during the pitch and frenzy of the American Sexual Revolution of the 1960s when any form of heterosexual libertinism was tolerated but, paradoxically, the slightest hint of homosexual indiscretion à la Allen Ginsburg was taboo. The confusion gives us all the more reason to hope that David Halperin's forthcoming study of pederasty will rectify the lacuna and institute much needed distinctions between pederasty and paedophilia.

80. See George Rousseau, 'Bums in the Time of Cholera: Sex, Sodomy, and Representations of the Fundament', in C. E. Forth et al., *Body Parts: Critical Explorations in Corporeality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 44–64.
81. For the biographical debates see Elleke Boehmer's chapter 10; for sexuality and colonialism see Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).
82. For discussion of his fieldwork vis-à-vis children and sexuality in the context of early twentieth-century anthropology see chapter 11.
83. See Reba N. Soffer, *Ethics and Society in England: the Revolution in the Social Sciences, 1870–1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).
84. Healthcare professionals, especially psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, have been exceptions but their influence in shaping the public's opinion on these explosive matters may be overestimated. For another approach to this perceived 'erosion' see Valerie Polakow, *The Erosion of Childhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), and for another treatment delimited to the Victorians and Edwardians, Lionel Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood: Child Oppression in Britain 1860–1918* (London: Routledge, 1991).
85. The example from incest with children, studied below by Elizabeth Archibald, demonstrates to what degree Christian incest differs from savage and aboriginal; for some contexts see the classic work by Emile Durkheim and Edward Sagarin, *Incest. The Nature and Origin of the Taboo ... Together with the Origins and the Development of the Incest Taboo by Albert Ellis* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1963).
86. *The Times*, 12 September 2006, Letters to the Editor.
87. Historian of childhood Hugh Cunningham launched his series on the invention of childhood in 2006 but prudently without engaging in the current hysteria fanned by the media; see Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006).

# **Part I**

## **The Ancient and Early Modern World**

## 2

# Juvenile Crime, Aggression and Abuse in Fifth-century Athens: a Case Study

*Michael Vickers and Daphne Nash Briggs*

‘[The Athenians] love him, they hate him, they cannot do without him’ (Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1425). This was a comment made about the fearless, fickle, and above all controversial figure of Alcibiades not long before he died in 404 BC in squalid circumstances (shot with arrows, running naked from a burning cabin in a village in Asia Minor where he had spent the night with two prostitutes). At the height of his power and influence his chariots had been placed first, second and fourth at the Olympic Games in 416 BC (he had entered an unprecedented seven teams), and he had been elected one of the Athenian generals on the Sicilian campaign in 415 BC. Having been recalled to Athens to face charges of impiety (accused of the equivalent of celebrating Black Masses in his home) and having been condemned to death *in absentia*, he fled to Sparta. Here, he not only seduced the wife of one of the kings and (some said) got her with child, but assisted the Spartans to attack Athens in the most effective ways possible. We hope to investigate elsewhere what Plutarch called ‘the strange inconsistencies and contradictions’ (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 2.1) that Alcibiades displayed throughout his adult life. Here, we shall concentrate on his childhood, concerning which we have a rich fund of telling anecdotes. These have rarely received the attention they perhaps deserve, for reasons we shall discuss later. The better to discuss Alcibiades’ troubled, and certainly abused, childhood we shall set the scene by presenting some generalities about child abuse in ancient Greece, as well as making some observations concerning scenes on Athenian pottery, and the way in which they have until recently been read.

There were divine and heroic exemplars of child abuse of one kind or another: such tales as Cronus eating his children, the sacrifice of

Iphigeneia at Aulis, Medea's murder of her children, or the cruel treatment of the children of Hector come to mind. But these were generally paradigms of excess, rather than normative models. On a secular level, there were many instances where what was considered acceptable in antiquity would be considered abusive today. The exposure of unwanted children to the elements so that they were left to die was tacitly tolerated then,<sup>1</sup> but makes news headlines now. The Spartan educational system was harsh beyond our imaginings, but was justified on the grounds that it produced loyal and hardy citizens. The saying 'Only a rich man keeps more than two daughters' encapsulates the situation. Girls raised on sufferance as second-best are unlikely to have made mothers who were contented with their lives, with dire consequences for their own children's emotional security: germane to the theme of the current chapter, male children raised in infancy by mothers depressed in this way often have lifelong difficulty in managing their emotions, something that shows up during childhood as hyperactivity, recklessness, cruelty, and aggression.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that even ancient Athens, the supposed birthplace of democracy, was little different from a Third World city today, with a huge gulf between the haves and the have-nots: a wealthy elite leading a comfortable existence on the one hand, and a large proletariat, whether free or enslaved, leading a much harsher existence. Democratically inclined politicians might introduce pay for jury service or subsidized grain to relieve the lot of poor citizens, but this was unusual, and slaves, of course, were excluded from citizenship.

At the level of employment, children would have been set tasks on a par with Third World practices that attract criticism in the West today. The ubiquity of slavery complicated matters. Athenian 'democracy' was far from being a case of 'one individual one vote'; rather 'one landowning male, one vote'. We have a plausible figure of half-a-million slaves for a male citizen population of 20,000 or so at Athens at the height of its power in the fifth century BC (although it should be said that there are those who consider the figure to be inflated).<sup>3</sup> Even if the figure was only 80–100,000, say, the possibilities for exploitation are immense. We might for instance extrapolate from the use of children in coal mines, or as chimney sweeps, or even silk-workers, in early Victorian England and speculate that, in Athens, too, little expendable bodies may have lent themselves to working narrow seams in the Laurium silver mines, and that when 20,000 slaves managed to escape from the mines during the Peloponnesian War (Thucydides 7.27.5), there were children



*Illustration 2.1* An Attic red-figure cup, fifth-century BC, showing naked slave boys preparing to serve wine. Reproduced by kind permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Ashmolean AN G. 276.

among them. The trouble is that we are very badly informed even about the daily life of an adult slave, never mind that of an infant. Nonetheless, we get some glimpses. In a speech, for instance, the Athenian orator Lysias (*Against Simon*: 3. 12–18; 32) described violent homosexual rivalry between Simon, portrayed as a drunken thug, and the defendant, owner of a Plataean boy, Theodotus – probably a slave – whom he himself courted ‘with affection’. Simon had been stalking the boy, had broken into the defendant’s house to look for him, had summoned the defendant from a dinner party to fight with him, and had finally ambushed and grabbed the boy in the street. The boy flung off his cloak and fled, taking refuge in a fuller’s shop, pursued by Simon and his men. He cried for help and a crowd gathered; the fuller and some others trying to protect the boy got beaten up; the brawl progressed down the street until the owner turned up unawares with his friends, whereupon Simon and his men let go of the boy and a violent fight ensued between the rivals, the boy pelting Simon’s men and defending himself and the rival men using fists and stones (Athenians carried no weapons), until they all got their heads broken and Theodotus’ owner took Simon to court.

Although we know next to nothing from historical sources about child slaves, we do have surviving images on painted pottery of aspects

of everyday life that include young servants, sometimes performing degrading intimate tasks like holding a drunken reveller's head while he vomits, or holding a pot for him to piss in (though the interpretation of scenes on pots are themselves fraught with difficulties: see below).<sup>4</sup> It would appear that at Athenian banquets the cupbearer, always a young male slave, served clothed guests stark naked – presumably in all weathers, regardless of personal choice, and regardless of the norms of his society of origin – a humiliating and sexually vulnerable position on the threshold of adolescence.<sup>5</sup> An anecdote told about Pericles' rebuke to the playwright Sophocles (who had cast lustful looks at a young cupbearer) that 'a general ought to keep not only his hands clean, but his eyes' (Plutarch, *Pericles* 8.7; Cicero *de Officiis* 1.40; Valerius Maximus 4.3. ext.1) suggests that such individuals were regarded as legitimate prey. Female slave children might be reared specifically to become prostitutes (Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* 18–19). We also know that the slaves routinely sold at city markets in this period everywhere in the Mediterranean had almost always been uprooted from distant communities of origin, whether as captives of war or raiding, or by opportunist kidnap.<sup>6</sup> In myth that valorized everyday practice, Ganymede, cupbearer of the gods, was a Trojan boy abducted because Zeus was smitten with his beauty: he is represented in every artistic medium as small and naked, sometimes swept off his feet under the arm of a triumphant Zeus: in a famous fifth-century terracotta statue from Olympia the boy looks distinctly unhappy.<sup>7</sup> In the temporal sphere domestic slaves were much in demand as infants or children – cupbearers must have needed replacement at least once a decade – and they never forgot their loss, however attached they became to their owners' households. This is relevant when considering the lives of citizen children, because in households where children were partly cared for by slaves, nannies and tutors became trusted attachment figures, such as Odysseus' nanny Eurycleia (*Odyssey* 19. 467–475) or Achilles' tutor Phoenix (*Iliad* 485–495). Their success or failure in coming to terms with their own experiences of separation and loss will have had a lasting influence upon their charges' psychosocial development, including their ability to manage strong emotions, as we shall see with Alcibiades, the main subject of this chapter.<sup>8</sup> There will have been no exercising in the palaestra or gymnasium for young slaves, or education at the hands of a pedagogue. Individual cases will have differed, of course, but there will have been exercise enough in many cases from the work slaves were expected to do. Intellectual opportunities will have been non-existent. Within this culture there were stringent laws and customary norms relating to what free citizens

(those who had been enrolled soon after birth in the carefully guarded deme registers) could and could not do to one another. Despite a widespread view, partly based on a misunderstanding of what Athenians meant by *eros*,<sup>9</sup> pederasty in the present-day sense of actual sexual abuse of children was far from prevalent, and was indeed discouraged. Many Greek states, including Classical Athens, did, however, sanction, at least amongst aristocrats, mutually idealizing and sometimes passionate attachments between youths aged between the first hint of puberty (normally during the ages of 11 and 13 say) and fully bearded manhood (later teens), and a grown man who persuaded the boy of his choice to let him be his constant companion, role-model, and mentor, guiding his transition to independent manhood on the battlefield, at banquets, in public places, and, for all we know, also in brothels. Such partnerships could, within strictly prescribed limits, become sexually intimate, but boys were expected to be cautious and choosy in accepting a mentor, to be difficult to seduce, and in particular were supposed to refuse penetrative sex, which, if discovered, would disqualify them from citizenship.



*Illustration 2.2* An Attic red-figure cup, fifth-century BC, showing boy with a plate of food and bowling a hoop. Reproduced by kind permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Ashmolean AN G. 276.

Consonant with textual evidence, even on the tiny minority of painted pots that show men courting boys it is usual for the boys to show reluctance or disdain.<sup>10</sup> Abuse did nonetheless sometimes occur, and non-penetrative sexual acts, including pseudo-penetration between the boy's thighs, must have been impossible to resist if a mentor insisted.

This age-specific pedagogical relationship occurs in various forms amongst early Europe's warrior elites (and as *erastes* and *eromenos* in the Athenian instance) and inevitably confronted the adult partner with provocative exposure to his charge's (and his own nascent) adolescent sexuality, as we shall see with Alcibiades, while it also exposed the boy concerned to a risk of sexual exploitation.

The fact that something is widespread or unquestioned in a society does not mean that it is without consequence for children's development: there are, for instance, parts of the world to this day where it causes surprise that in western law it is a criminal offence for a man to rape his four-year-old granddaughter.<sup>11</sup> In Classical Greece men seem almost everywhere to have indulged unashamedly in pleasurable gazing at boys' and girls' naked bodies at gymnasia (Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 13. 566; Spartan girls were even stripped for visitors).<sup>12</sup> If these acts of stripping and looking often involved no more than transient idealizing projection into the children of spectators' nostalgia for their own bygone youth, it did also expose the children to surreptitious abuse in some spectators' sexual fantasy, with the consequent risk that a child might get stalked or assaulted (Aeschines *Against Timarchus* 135). In an exaggerated comic critique of Spartan practice, boys were taught how to sit so as to hide their genitals from view and how to stand up again so as not leave a titillating imprint on the sand (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 973–80).<sup>13</sup>

Overt sexual ogling of boys, slave or free, was plainly discouraged or disavowed. The story about Sophocles and the young cupbearer cited above is a case in point. When Pericles' ward Alcibiades had run away from home to the house of one of his lovers, and the suggestion was made that a reward should be offered for the boy's safe return, 'Pericles forbade it, saying that, if he was dead, he would only be found one day sooner because of it, while if he was safe, he would be disgraced for life' (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 3.1). It was not unknown for fathers to arrange for older adolescent sons to live with a trusted mentor (Lysias *Against Simon* 22),<sup>14</sup> but Alcibiades was under age for such a partnership and, true to form, had run away without permission. The fear of Alcibiades' potential loss of reputation was real, for a successful charge of having sold one's body for sex led to the loss of citizen rights.<sup>15</sup> Even in intellectual circles,





*Illustration 2.3* An Attic red-figure cup, fifth century BC, showing a paedophile and his victim. Reproduced by kind permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Ashmolean AN G. 276.

where one might have expected a certain tolerance for loose living, the ideal taught by Socrates was *sophrosyne*, or restraint and moderation. Socrates thus rebuked Critias, the future tyrant, for making a fool of himself over the youthful Euthydemus, pointing out to him that it was both demeaning and unseemly for a gentleman to beg for favours from someone he wanted to impress. Critias took no notice, and so Socrates said ‘in the presence of many others, “Critias seems to me to have the feelings of a pig, wanting to rub against Euthydemus as a pig rubs against stones”’ (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.2.29–30). Critias never forgave him. Much more pertinent to the question of child abuse is Socrates’ concern for the fatherless young Alcibiades who was so beset by admirers that he took steps to protect him (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 6).

### The problem of scenes on Greek painted pottery

In 2004 there was an exhibition dealing with Greek childhood going round the United States, but child abuse did not figure very large. Indeed,

the organizers were so concerned lest any unwholesomeness should cast its shadow over what was billed as fun for all the family that some of the publicity material was bowdlerized. One result was that perfectly harmless figures of little boys were shown without their genitalia.<sup>16</sup> There are, however, pictures on Greek pots that are decidedly unsuitable for a family audience, such as the image in the central scene of an Athenian pottery drinking cup in the Ashmolean<sup>17</sup> that currently bears the label 'paedophile and victim', the loan of which was not requested by the organizers of the Greek childhood show. The organizers of the Oxford series on which this book is based originally hoped that we would perform a reprise of Sir Kenneth Dover's work on similar scenes on Greek pots,<sup>18</sup> but not only would it be impossible in the present climate of opinion (so that no slides at all were shown at the original presentation of this chapter), but it must be said that scholarship has moved on, even in the study of Greek ceramics.

For decades, for centuries indeed, the study of Greek vases was locked into a view of the past that regarded them as somehow remarkable objects in their own time: that they were of great value in antiquity, and that they were decorated by the greatest artists of their day. This was the framework within which they were universally studied until comparatively recently, and this was the model that was universally accepted in the belief that pictures on pots represented first-hand, quasi-photographic, evidence of the daily life of Athenians, and that images of childhood, even the most abusive, might reflect the daily experience of the average juvenile. There are, however, great difficulties involved in the traditional interpretation of Greek vases, and they, and their images, can no longer be taken at face value. Although many still believe that Greek pottery vases were central to ancient economic, social and artistic life, there are signs of change. Some scholars will still have playboy artists decorating pots for aristocratic symposia and being entertained to dinner by their patrons,<sup>19</sup> but this is a highly speculative position to adopt, and one that it is only possible to hold because allusions to pottery are almost completely absent from the ancient literary and inscriptional record, a situation that has created room for much scholarly wishful thinking. Just as man-made fibres are very hard-wearing, so too, man-made facts are difficult to eradicate. The very few ancient references to pottery are rarely to the credit of the material or its producers. The Psalmist's 'Thou shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel' (Psalms 2:8–9) is a typical ancient view of ceramic; as is the Greek proverb 'The wealth of a potter is something cracked, unsound and easily broken' (Diogenianus 5.97).<sup>20</sup> One ancient source refers to the potters' quarter at Athens as 'the place

where potters and rent-boys hang out' (Hesychius, *s.v. Kerameikos*), and indeed to become a rent-boy was a step up the social scale from being a potter (Justinianus 22.1; Plutarch, *Moralia* 176e.). The literary and epigraphic sources by contrast suggest that gold – and especially silver – vessels were on the tables of the rich at Athens; hardly surprising, when we recall that the city possessed silver mines at Laurium which, it has been estimated, produced 20 tons of silver a year.<sup>21</sup>

Whenever we hear of a member of the Athenian elite using a vessel, it is usually of gold or silver, rather than pottery. The symposium, or drinking party, will normally have been equipped with vessels of precious metal. Thus, when the tearaway Alcibiades played a joke on the wealthy tanner Anytus, 'he looked into the dining room, and seeing the tables covered with gold and silver drinking cups, ordered his slaves to carry away half of them' (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 4.5). Then if, as Athenaeus informs us, Socrates drank from a 'silver well' – a large cup – at Plato's symposium (*Deipnosophistae* 5.192a; cf. Plato, *Symposium* 223c), then the rest of the dinner service, including the wine-cooler drained at one go by Alcibiades (Plato *Symposium* 213e), was probably also of precious metal. Private individuals will have owned the silver wine-craters which 'lined the whole of the circumference of the Piraeus' when the Athenian fleet under Alcibiades, Nicias and Lamachus left for Sicily in 415 BC (Diodorus Siculus 13.3.2), and when libations were poured 'on every deck' from gold and silver vessels (Thucydides 6. 31.3–32.5–6). 134 triremes left the Piraeus that day, and we may thus perhaps envision 134 craters belonging to those Athenians who had paid for the warships.

There are a few, a very few, silver vessels decorated with gold-figure ornament that help us to imagine the lost world of the Athenian aristocrat.<sup>22</sup> Vessels such as an Athenian libation bowl from Thrace, decorated with a gold-figure chariot-racing scene, weighed 100 drachmas when new.<sup>23</sup> Not only could it have bought many kilos of painted pots,<sup>24</sup> but it illustrates what lay behind the surviving decorated pottery. It was the effect of gold on silver that potters probably evoked in making their wares red on black. The skill and sensitivity of the drawing on the metal vessel is equal to, if not surpassing, the finest work in red-figure pottery. It is important to remember that most complete pots in museums come from graves, and that there were laws against lavish funerals in most Greek communities; hence the presence of cheap but respectable surrogates in the tomb. The finest vases, if one can still use the term, come for the most part from Etruscan graves. Their choice of subject matter will have as much, if not more, to do with Etruscan taste

as Athenian. A major difficulty with the conventional view of Greek ceramics is how pots apparently made for a Greek elite found their way into the tombs of Etruscan aristocrats. This is a problem that disappears when we realize that the Greek elite never saw the pots, which were simply made as space-fillers on ships that went to Etruria to pick up iron ore.<sup>25</sup>

The prices of pots in antiquity were minimal. In a world where a decent riding horse might cost 12 minae, say a little over £2,000, a pot like the Attic red-figure *pelike* attributed to the late Sir John Beazley's 'Achilles Painter' currently on loan to the Ashmolean would cost 35p. And we have the price scratched underneath to prove it.<sup>26</sup> The rider shown on the pot, like any upper-class Athenian, would in real life have lived on a silver standard. Artistry could add to the bullion value of precious metal, and the text where we learn about this also indicates that scenes unsuitable for a family audience might appear on gold and silver vessels. Pliny laments how 'we have made gold and silver dearer by the art of engraving . . . The enticements of the vices have augmented even art. It has pleased us to engrave scenes of licence upon our drinking cups, and to drink through the midst of obscenities. Afterwards these were flung aside and began to be held of no account, when there was an excess of gold and silver' (Pliny, *Natural History* 33.1.4–5). Precisely which period he is alluding to is a little uncertain, but the account would fit very well the period when we do actually have the downmarket ceramic evocations of 'scenes of licence upon drinking cups', before Alexander's conquests brought about 'an excess of gold and silver'. Since 'dirty pictures' were part of the repertoire of the silversmith, potters will have followed suit, if only to stay in business.

So rather than seeing the surviving pots decorated with 'scenes of licence' as first-hand records of widespread Athenian practice,<sup>27</sup> they are perhaps best viewed as imitations of the kind of vessels that were made from precious metal for some members of the Athenian elite, and mediated through Etruscan taste into the bargain. Even the inscriptions on pots seem for the most part to be derived from patterns made for metalwork, including the supposed artists' names, and encompassing the inscriptions that read 'so-and-so *kalos*' – 'so-and-so is beautiful' (or perhaps 'so-and-so is in the bloom of his youth') – that have been taken in the past as an indication that a pot was a gift from a lover, an *erastes*, to his beloved, his *eromenos*. In reality, a pot worth a few pence would have been an insult rather than an inducement. The whole field needs to be reassessed, but this is not the place to do it, for we have bigger fish to fry.

## Alcibiades: 'Achilles himself'

Specifically, it is the personality of Alcibiades that will occupy us for the rest of this chapter. We have met him several times already: as a child running away from home to stay with one of his many fawning admirers; as a teenager stealing gold and silver plate from a rich admirer; in his thirties drinking a vast quantity of wine at one draught and in joint command of the Athenian fleet. He was, without any doubt, the most controversial figure of his age, having been elected one of the three generals for the Sicilian expedition in 415 BC (a campaign he had done much to promote); having been suspected of involvement in various acts of impiety on the eve of the fleet's departure; having been recalled from Sicily to stand trial; having jumped ship and gone into exile at Sparta; having advised the Spartans on the most effective ways to defeat Athens, having supposedly got a Spartan queen with child; having eventually, albeit briefly, returned to Athens in triumph as the city's potential saviour; and having finally died a cruel and ignominious death in north-west Asia Minor while on the run from his enemies.<sup>28</sup> So much for the larger picture; it is Alcibiades' childhood that concerns us now.

Alcibiades was born in about 453 BC, and was the elder son of Cleinias and Deinomache, the one a rich landowner and war hero with long family ties with Sparta, the other the daughter of the influential aristocratic family of the Alcmaeonidae who, however, suffered from an ancestral curse which their enemies were wont to recall when it suited them (Thucydides 1.126–7). It was probably because of his family's Spartan associations that Alcibiades had Spartan nannies, whose names we even know: Amycla (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 1.3) and Lanice (Scholion to Plato *Alcibiades* 1.121d). He had a younger brother, named Cleinias after their father, who was presumably born not long before the elder Cleinias died in battle in 447. Alcibiades was then about six, and two of their relatives, Axiochus and Pericles the statesman – also an Alcmaeonid and perhaps their maternal uncle – became their foster-parents. Deinomache disappears from view and presumably remarried. Both of her sons were therefore, in effect, completely orphaned, an inherently stressful circumstance, albeit not uncommon at that time.

Old enough to grasp that their parents would never come back, but too little to cope realistically without a great deal more understanding than was evidently available, Alcibiades and Cleinias seem to have created mayhem as they entered a household that was already in emotional disarray. The precise sequence of events at this point is unfortunately unclear, but we do know that Pericles had two pubertal sons, Xanthippus



*Illustration 2.4* Socrates seeking Alcibiades in the House of Aspasia by Jean Léon Gérôme (1861)

(a few years older than Alcibiades) and Paralus, who had reasons for disgruntlement other than the arrival of the little boys. Not only was their father repressive and stingy, but their mother left home, with Pericles' consent, to marry another man. In her place, apart from his numerous girlfriends,<sup>29</sup> Pericles introduced his fascinating and influential foreign mistress, Aspasia of Miletus, with whom he conducted an openly passionate relationship. Aspasia lived with Pericles from a date some time between 452 and 440 BC until his death in 429<sup>30</sup> and they had at least two children, including a son named Pericles; all four legitimate boys had many adjustments to make.

Alcibiades and Cleinias were evidently difficult children to handle from the start. Pericles tried separating them because of what was seen as Alcibiades' bad influence on his little brother and Cleinias was sent away to Axiochus, who returned him within six months saying he could do nothing with him. Thereafter both boys were *de facto* wards of Pericles, and Alcibiades lived in his house between 447 and 435 BC, when at the age of 18 he came of age and took over his fortune. Saddled with this problem child, Pericles seems to have given up on him. It is difficult to disentangle truth from fiction in the anecdotal tradition, but it does seem that Pericles was uptight, controlling, yet teasingly sensual – an impossible man for a confused and needy child to get close to or to trust.



Both friend and foe agreed that Pericles was much more concerned with his girlfriends in his private life, and with affairs of state in his public, than with anything else at all. So Alcibiades was placed in the care of one of Pericles' slaves, the Thracian Zopyrus who was 'useless on account of his old age' (Plato *Alcibiades* 1.122b), from whom for all we know he got more genuine attention than from his guardian. Later in life, *en route* to a reputation as one of the greatest boozers of all time (Pliny *Natural History* 14.144), he found it especially relaxing to drink with sailors (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 36.2), which will have won him much political support in a city that relied heavily on the rowers in the fleet for defence. A boyhood spent in the company of amiable slaves may, indeed, have primed him to be at ease with working men. Alcibiades could, however, also afford to immerse himself in horses, an expensive hobby, scarcely to the liking of his parsimonious guardian, and became ringleader and trendsetter for a coterie of rich boys that evolved in adolescence into a sometimes delinquent gang, in which Alcibiades revelled. To the end he was a leader of fashion amongst a segment of the Athenian propertied class that had never been so rich, wearing extravagant purple cloaks (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 16.1; cf. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 12.534c), and shoes that were so distinctive that they were called 'Alcibiades' after him (*ibid.*).

One glimpse of Alcibiades as a very young boy is especially relevant to the current theme of child abuse. He is said to have refused point-blank to interrupt a game of knucklebones in a narrow street to give way to the driver of a cart, obstinately blocking the way (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 2.3). This dangerously provocative act suggests a psychologically isolated child already in resentful and omnipotent denial of his smallness and vulnerability, resorting instead to a grandiose and contolling performance. Well might the driver have challenged him with something like 'who on earth do you think you are?' It is likely that Alcibiades' lifelong insecurity and problems with self-image began in earliest infancy, something about which we have too little information to do more than speculate. He may, for instance, have had an inherently low tolerance of frustration and therefore been a difficult infant to calm, even under optimal circumstances. What we do know is that he lost both parents in early childhood, was fostered in a confusing household, and went through the rest of his life unable to make stable attachments. As we shall see, his reported conduct ever thereafter suggests a severe pathology of childhood grief that probably compounded an underlying developmental disorder.<sup>31</sup> Unable psychologically to move beyond shocked denial of his father's sudden death and his mother's premature departure, he grew up living lies, a theme taken up by Sophocles in his

*Oedipus Rex*, to which we will return. Plutarch, elaborating on Alcibiades' ever-changing character, compared him to a chameleon, 'a creature which cannot, indeed, turn itself white, but Alcibiades never found anything, good or bad, which he could not imitate to the life.... In Lacedaemon you would say, looking at his appearance, "It is not the son of Achilles, but Achilles himself". He was just such a man as Lyncus himself would have brought up, but if you examined his habits and actions more closely, you would say: "It is the woman of old"' (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 23.5–6). Skilled to the point of self-delusion at getting into someone else's skin ('At Sparta, he was devoted to athletic exercises, was frugal and reserved; in Ionia, luxurious, companionable, and indolent; in Thrace, always drinking; in Thessaly, ever on horseback; and when he lived with Tissaphernes the Persian satrap, he exceeded the Persians themselves in magnificence and pomp': Plutarch *Alcibiades* 23.5), he had little inside to fall back on. When realities outside his phantasied control threatened to unmask him as a fraud, he would become violent or silly, both on a personal level and as a leader.

There must, of course, have been Athenian families who coped better or worse with the numerous orphans of Alcibiades' generation but, once again, the fact that a circumstance was widespread does not mean that it was without developmental consequences for the individual children concerned. Chronic stress resembles trauma in its effects and has devastating psycho-biological consequences at any time of life. If endured through early childhood it can affect the very architecture of the developing brain, and hence the personality, with adverse results for the rest of a life.<sup>32</sup> In an emotive passage in the *Iliad* with which many a war orphan could identify, Andromache, hearing of Hector's death, laments their son's imagined future. No more feather-bed cuddles with mother or nurse, nor mutton-fat treats from his father. 'An orphaned child is entirely cut off from his contemporaries. He is downcast in everything, with tear-stained cheeks. Need drives him to his father's acquaintances, and he tugs a cloak here and a tunic there until someone out of pity holds out a cup briefly to him, just enough to wet his lips but not his palate. Then another boy, with both his parents alive, bullies him from the feast, hitting him with his hands and jeering: "Go on, get out! Your father isn't dining here with us!" So the child runs off in tears to his widowed mother...' (*Iliad* 22. 482–506). Alcibiades himself was raised in material comfort, but Andromache's lament was nonetheless probably closer to the unspoken emotional truth for Alcibiades and many other, poorer, orphans than any of their elders might have cared to admit. Such is the lasting value of great literature and poetry (and we know



that Alcibiades had a great liking for Homer [Plutarch *Alcibiades* 7.1–2]). Alcibiades was a mother's boy for the rest of his life who compulsively charmed his way into one household, bedroom, or royal court after another on a truly international scale, as though forever a needy little orphan. His inability to keep away from women's quarters gave him a reputation for effeminacy (Pherecrates *Poetae Comici Graeci* 163),<sup>33</sup> and the physical attractiveness for which he was famous throughout his life (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 1.4; cf. 4.1; 16.4; Plato *Symposium* 216c–219e; Protagoras 309a; Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 12.534c; Aelian *True History* 12.14; Dio Chrysostom 64.27) ties in with the way in which a narcissistic boy over-identified with an unavailable mother can radiate a striking kind of 'look at me' beauty.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, he was growing up in a household where erotized excitement seems to have been rife, making it an overstimulating environment for motherless growing boys, and where Pericles set an equivocal example of fatherly conduct. Pericles was 'much given to *aphrodisia*', according to a relatively sober writer (Clearchus *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* 2.314), while for others he was 'the King of the Satyrs' who coupled with a bitch-faced whore (Cratinus *Poetae Comici Graeci* 256), even using the trademan's entrance – disparaging allusions to his mistress, Aspasia. Alcibiades will have lived in the same house as Aspasia for between six and 12 years, and she may well have been genuinely fond of him and concerned about his welfare. She is certainly reported as having been overcome with pleasure and relief when she heard that Socrates wanted to take the lad on in late adolescence (Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 5.219c), but the Athenian gossip-mill was hard at work generating untoward imputations concerning their relationship. It will probably have been Aspasia who was in the implicit frame when it was alleged by a contemporary that 'Alcibiades lay with his mother, his sister and his daughter' (Antisthenes, quoted by Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 5.220a). For if Pericles played the role of a *de facto* father towards Alcibiades, the mother will have had to have been Aspasia. We must, of course, allow for the likelihood that malicious gossip has distorted our picture of Aspasia, especially since Pericles' idealized reputation both in his own time and afterwards could only be upheld if his more damning failings and mistakes could be pinned on the two most available scapegoats in his immediate circle, namely Aspasia and Alcibiades.

It has been suggested that the Periclean ménage is alluded to by Euripides in the *Hippolytus*, with Theseus coming forward as Pericles, and Hippolytus as Alcibiades.<sup>35</sup> If so, then the character of Phaedra can be read as Aspasia, and her unlawful and unrequited passion for the chaste

Hippolytus as a very clever way of drawing attention to a relationship that in real life was widely thought to have been consummated.<sup>36</sup> 'Very clever', because if anyone had been so foolish as to say 'you got the story wrong: Alcibiades was far from chaste', they would only be drawing attention to what was being alleged rather than countering it. For it was later said of Alcibiades that 'When he was a young boy he lured husbands away from their wives, but when he was a young man he lured wives away from their husbands' (Bion, quoted by Diogenes Laertius 4.49). With his history of disrupted attachment to primary caregivers and his foster-placement with Pericles, it is scarcely surprising that he sought father-figures indiscriminately in childhood, and competed with them in adolescence. He seems never to have been secure in his own identity. Another Alcibiadean character in tragedy is a stickler for the truth (Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*).<sup>37</sup> In fact, Alcibiades' whole career was said by Plutarch to have been characterised by 'lying and misdeeds' (*Alcibiades* 41.1).

It seems that Pericles' methods of running a family attracted public criticism and dramatic comment and it is hardly surprising that in adolescence both his own sons and Alcibiades were wildly oppositional. Xanthippus was so enraged with Pericles over his stinginess that he 'abused his father, sneering at his way of life and his discussions with the sophists' (Plutarch *Pericles* 36.4). The latter included Protagoras (Plutarch *Pericles* 36.5), who was in Athens until 444 when Alcibiades was nine and Xanthippus about 14 (Plutarch *Pericles* 11.5; Diogenes Laertius 9.50). Later, Xanthippus was to spread rumours that Pericles had an intrigue with his (Xanthippus') young and spendthrift wife (Plutarch *Pericles* 36.3), and remained estranged from his father until his death of plague in 430/29 BC.

Alcibiades' problems were compounded by his own behavioural strategies and it is here indeed that the question of sexual abuse becomes most pertinent. He seems to have been driven by the need to act a part – sometimes with conspicuous talent, sometimes destructively, often with erotized charm; but always with underlying desperation to hold himself in others' attention at any cost, lest otherwise he find himself insignificant and bereft of identity, a mere lost child. For Alcibiades was probably most authentically himself when living by his wits as a general on campaign. In other contexts he seems from childhood onward to have been on stage, clowning about, 'being bad', astonishing people, and deliberately attracting extremes of reputation – idealized and diabolical – before as wide an audience as possible. Therefore he laid himself open to extremes of credit and blame and was all too ready

for sexual acting-out. He had good reason to be frightened later in life of what his countrymen would do behind his back, when he could not use his remarkable powers of persuasion upon them (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 1.6; Isocrates 16.21): it was said that his speech was rendered the more charming on account of a childish speech defect that he kept throughout his life: he pronounced his Rs as Ls (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 1.8). In search of a vicarious identity through the reactions of other people, craving affection and praise from anyone who would take notice of him, the young Alcibiades lived on his charm and was both seductive and easy to seduce.

We will never know for sure exactly what he did or what he suffered – his under-age escapade with one lover has already been mentioned – but he certainly earned a reputation for precocious sexuality. Already in his early teens, according to a late, but well-informed, Roman period writer, he ‘boasted that dressed in women’s clothes, though a male, he attended symposia undetected’; that he was ‘in no way inferior to Omphale in his powers of seduction’, and that he was ‘a sodomite at symposia and effeminate when drunk; womanish in the evening, changing his nature more than Proteus’ (Libanius *Declamations* 12.42). Since the only women normally admitted to symposia were servants, musicians, and courtesans, one wonders which role Alcibiades took. The early death of his own father and inadequacy of Pericles as a surrogate will have created a craving for substitute father-figures whom he seems to have sought in a series of male lovers – the many flatterers of whom we hear, who will only have served to inflate his narcissism and grandiosity – and he was forever proposing exaggerated and grandiose schemes. His inherent sensuality also drove him promiscuously into the arms of women. In some respects he parodied Pericles; late in his teens during a gap year with his uncle at Abydos in the Dardanelles he is alleged to have learned sexual tricks (literally ‘ways of doing things’) from the women there (Antiphon, quoted by Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 12.525b). Alcibiades seems never to have sustained a stable intimate attachment. In his maturity, if the word and state can be applied to him, he caused his wife great distress by consorting with ‘prostitutes, both foreign and Athenian’ (cf. Pericles, above), but gained great popularity with his countrymen by the stories of his having seduced and had a son with Timaea, a Spartan queen. He seems never to have liked sleeping alone, and even on the run at the end of his life was accompanied by one famous courtesan or other: one of them made the arrangements for his funeral.<sup>38</sup>

A consistent picture emerges from this and other anecdotal evidence of an emotionally deprived but energetic, attractive, rich, and talented youngster with scant respect for authority cobbling together a ‘special’

identity for himself by acting parts that kept him in other people's minds, whatever the cost to his reputation. We can perhaps identify two important sources of his role-models. One was the Homeric repertoire, with which we know he was obsessed (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 7.1–2) and offered him characters like the omnipotent and sexually possessive Achilles, or ill-fated little Astyanax, son of Andromache (whose name even resembled Deinomache) whose pampered life of privilege was shattered when his hero father was killed. This is a theme we will enlarge on elsewhere. The other was his own Alcmaeonid family script in which heroes win prizes, escape enemies and come home forgiven to get their girls. His keenness for chariot-racing, which is indirectly attested from his earliest childhood, certainly links him with the Alcmaeonids who were famously descended from *hippota* ('horseman') Nestor (Homer, *Iliad* 8.112).<sup>39</sup>

Whatever Alcibiades did, it was usually extreme and controversial. He was given to reckless daring (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 18.1), to the extent that some decades after his death the Romans erected a statue of him as 'the bravest of the Greeks' (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.12). He was, in point of fact, an outstanding commander, meeting another collective need: his delinquent boyhood exploits, a sense of danger verging on paranoia, and a delusion of himself as a hero of Homeric stature prepared him well for military command. His bravery, however, probably developed from a childhood inability to know that he was frightened, as when he blocked the cart in the street, and in many respects he might be understood in psychodynamic terms as having been on the high functioning end of the autistic spectrum, with consequent disturbances in self-image and difficulty in forming intimate relationships.<sup>40</sup>

Unsurprisingly in such an omnipotent young man, Alcibiades was also given to cruelty and violence. There are many anecdotes attesting to this side of his character, ranging from when as a boy he bit a wrestling opponent (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 2.2) and beat up a schoolmaster because he did not have a copy of Homer (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 7.1), to his hitting the man who was to become his future father-in-law on the jaw 'as a joke' (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 8.1), to his beating up a rival sponsor of a chorus in the theatre ([Andocides] 4.20–21; Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 16.5; Demosthenes 21.147), and to his having killed a servant with a club (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 3.1); not to mention in later life his intimidation of officials (Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 9.407c) and judges at dramatic festivals (in the plot-summary to Aristophanes, *Clouds* [5 Coulon]). He once deliberately docked the tail of a very expensive hunting dog, to universal disapproval. When his friends told him how sorry everyone

was for the dog, Alcibiades replied 'Then what I want has come about. I want the Athenians to talk about this, rather than that they should say something worse about me' (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 9). His obsession with his reputation could scarcely have been better expressed. All this in a society that was characteristically not given to exceptional violence, and where self-restraint was the officially honoured norm.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, a role he was available and willing to play on behalf of the whole Athenian people was that of a charming bad boy: someone who would do – or accept a reputation for doing – things that others denied themselves in conformity to the prevailing moral code. The way in which this worked within the wider group may help to explain why he so often got away with transgression.<sup>42</sup>

In *Hippolytus*, Phaedra confesses to her nurse that 'the sinews of my limbs grow faint' (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 199), an expression that echoes Aspasia's claim that 'my body was suffused with the glow of joy' when she heard that Socrates had decided to take Alcibiades on (Aspasia, quoted by Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 5.219c). Patently, Alcibiades had difficulty accepting authority figures, but here was one last window of opportunity for change before he reached his majority. Socrates is said to have confronted him with stern common sense and patient affection. He is said to have partnered Alcibiades in his first military skirmish and, as a gesture of *erastes* to *eromenos*, let Alcibiades collect the prize of valour that should by rights should have gone to himself – nominally on account of Alcibiades' *axioma* or high social standing, but presumably also to reward his courage and boost his confidence (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 7.5; Plato *Symposium* 219e). Alas, Alcibiades was already complacent with fraud, and Socrates failed in the task of reforming him because by then that would have been impossible without a heroic commitment to personal change on Alcibiades' part. Socrates did, however, confront him with his misconduct and ultimately earned his love, becoming the firm but affectionate surrogate father that he needed.<sup>43</sup> He was certainly the only known attachment figure in Alcibiades' life who managed – sometimes – to resist his wall of charm and actually get through to him.

Socrates is said genuinely, even passionately, to have loved the boy, but was, it seems, careful not to give his feelings physical expression. He must certainly have relished a challenge, for Alcibiades initially tried every means he knew to seduce him, evidently supposing that was what Socrates would want. At Alcibiades' instigation Socrates did once sleep beneath the same blanket with him, and Alcibiades was surprised when nothing happened (Plato *Symposium* 219b). 'Surprised', because if the

stories told about his numerous admirers (*kolakes*, flatterers, as the Greek puts it) are true, Alcibiades was accustomed to explicit sexual activity.<sup>44</sup> The standards that Socrates, besotted or not, hoped to instil in Alcibiades were those of sobriety and restraint. A tall order, and an ambition in which he failed, for Alcibiades' flatterers 'would bribe him with the offer of many pleasures to which he would yield and slip away from Socrates... and indeed Alcibiades was very prone to pleasures' (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 6.1–2).

### Alcibiades on the couch

Psychologically speaking, Alcibiades never grew up. We have already seen how he could not bear to be alone, how he compulsively sidled up to or competed with father-figures, and how he needed constantly to feel special and to astonish people, as though the only position in which he felt safe was that of a pampered, clever little boy. Perhaps this is precisely what he was in the crucial first year or two of his life, before his original world collapsed; and he seems to have hidden his losses from his own view with an ongoing fantasy world that could intrude into real life. Many a disgruntled adolescent wonders whether there had been a mistake at birth about their parentage, but Alcibiades' view of himself as special and his notorious acts of high-handedness and impiety indicate that he not-so-secretly believed he actually was a demigod or hero. He did in fact reckon his physical descent from Zeus (Plato *Alcibiades* 1.121a), and was to be flattered with divine honours late in life on his return from exile (Justinianus 5.4). As someone self-created, he need acknowledge no ordinary parents. In keeping with this, he is said to have replaced his family emblem on his parade shield with an image of Eros – Aphrodite's sexy child – brandishing a thunderbolt (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 16.1–2; cf. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 12.534e) and if this was an invention of the stage, as some maintain,<sup>45</sup> the point still holds good. Not surprisingly, he was a woefully inadequate husband and father; his wife objected to the way in which he was forever patronising 'prostitutes foreign or Athenian' (Plut. *Alc.* 8.4), and his son 'kept a mistress when under age, and imitated his ancestors' (Lysias 14.25). We hope to explore all this elsewhere.

On the specific issue of sexual abuse, we can only speculate, but it seems unlikely that he got through his adolescence unscathed. He was unquestionably vulnerable to sexual exploitation as a youth, with his effeminate good looks, craving for attention, and relish for erotic

adventure. His culture did condone some forms of flirtation with adolescent boys, which Alcibiades was in no position to moderate, and we have numerous references to flatterers and the 'pleasures' they offered him as well as the tale of his running away from home as a child to stay with an older man, and his seducing men at banquets while dressed as a girl, all of which at very least put him at risk. Alcibiades' reported dislike of gymnastics (Isocrates 16.33) might, then, not simply have been based on a known dread of defeat, but also on an aversion to revealing his naked body to other men's gaze in circumstances where he could not control what they did with their eyes when his body was stripped of the flamboyant wraps under which he normally kept it hidden. He was a control freak and prone to delusions about himself and other people, but if he had also in fact been sexually abused, he would very likely have been terrified that this damning secret would somehow tell its own tale, perhaps especially in contact sports.<sup>46</sup>

On the behavioural front a narcissistic child whose omnipotence has been unduly indulged and allowed to go his own way (and Alcibiades does seem to have evaded realistic confrontation until his time with Socrates) is almost always prone to frightening temper outbursts when thwarted. With little ongoing experience of managing his feelings appropriately, he could not be described as happy. Although we cannot, of course, use delinquent behaviour on its own as evidence for sexual abuse, it is also the case that child sexual abuse can be a contributory factor in delinquent behaviour.<sup>47</sup>

A man whose own personality was permanently, flamboyantly, on stage in the public arena was a gift for a playwright, and his influential role in Athenian political life attracted comment and rumour both on and off the stage. Sophocles the tragedian, according to a little regarded insight of the eighteenth-century classical scholar Samuel Musgrave, may well have based his *Oedipus Rex* on Alcibiades' situation.<sup>48</sup> Writing in 425 BC,<sup>49</sup> at a time when Alcibiades was already laying precocious claim to Pericles' political mantle, Sophocles bears out Aristotle's distinction between history and poetry. Good history deals, of course, with 'particulars', and the illustration Aristotle chooses is 'what Alcibiades did, or what was done to him'. Poetry, by contrast, deals with 'the universal' concerned with 'describing the kind of things that a person of a certain character would inevitably say or do' (Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.2–4). In the *Oedipus Rex* Sophocles appears to describe the kind of thing that he envisages a mature Alcibiades saying or doing at some time in the *future*, given his proclivities and ambitions – something that,

as Sophocles recognized, the Athenian democracy urgently needed to reflect upon.

One immediate benefit of seeing the action of *Oedipus Rex* in this light is that many of the unlikely and unbelievable elements in the plot become much less disconcerting. For Voltaire, the offences against reason in *Oedipus* were enough to deem classical simplicity so much clumsiness, but if the improbabilities arise from an attempt to broad-brush the future – from Sophocles' prophecy of a worst-case scenario for Alcibiades' career given the way he was already going – then 'offences against reason' all disappear. Oedipus notoriously 'loved his mother' (as Tom Lehrer put it): Alcibiades was said to have lain with 'his mother, his sister and his daughter' (Antisthenes, quoted by Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 5.220a), which brings him nicely into the frame. Oedipus limped because his ankles had been tied when he was abandoned as a baby; Alcibiades limped from a war wound (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 7.4 and 1.8). In particular, we might compare the intransigence of both parties when Oedipus' path in the 'narrow way' (stenōpos: *Oedipus Tyrannus*) was blocked by the carriage with the intransigence of the infant Alcibiades who refused to give way to the driver of a cart in a narrow street (en tōi stenōpoi: Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 2.3). Oedipus' angry blow parallels Alcibiades' habitual belligerence, and the 'swift blow from his staff' that put paid to Laius recalls the youthful Alcibiades' violent and fatal attack on one of his servants, as well perhaps as his attack on his future father-in-law. There are many other reasons for associating what Thucydides was later to describe as Alcibiades' 'perverted' way of life (6.15.4)<sup>50</sup> with Sophocles' topical retelling of the legend of the House of Laius.<sup>51</sup> It is perhaps not irrelevant that Laius was reputed to have introduced paederasty to Greece (Plutarch *Pelopidas* 19.1; Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 13.602; Plato *Laws* 836c–e).

Whether Alcibiades ever actually 'lay with his mother' is difficult, probably impossible, to say. We can only sketch in the possibilities. Alcibiades was clearly an insecurely attached mother's boy, an unweaned babe afraid of loss who clung on in the women's quarters long after it was customary to leave. For all we know, his natural mother Deinomache got more pleasure from nursing her baby son than from sexual intimacy with his father, and may have turned to him as much for her own comfort as for his consolation when Cleinias was killed. It is not unknown for a lonely mother to let an affectionate and needy son climb into her bed at night until she finds he won't get out and they get locked into an unconsummated quasi-marriage that frustrates them both and attracts gossip. To this day it sometimes happens that relatives or



teachers complain of impasse in managing conduct-disordered teenage boys, and on investigation it transpires that they still sleep with their mothers at night. Alcibiades' multiple problems certainly became manifest after his father's death<sup>52</sup> and we do know that later in life, at least as early as the famous incident with Socrates, he almost never slept alone. Alcibiades' providential Oedipal victory, when his father's death coincided with the climax of a developmentally age-appropriate love affair with his mother, was a lasting disaster if what happened was that he took his father's place as mother's little man not just in his own imagination but also in his widowed mother's bed at night.<sup>53</sup> But then he promptly lost his mother as well, and if Aspasia initially responded to his tears by taking him to her bosom and even into her bed when he was little and lonely, it is more than likely that she found it difficult to prise him off later on – though we owe it to Aspasia to assume that she probably tried. Some such history would account for the incestuous innuendo that later surrounded their relationship. Motherly love can sometimes be read by the world as incest; the boundary between affection and sex can be difficult to define, and we do not know enough about Deinomache to be sure what passed between herself and her sons. We are on safer territory suspecting that Alcibiades had an overly close relationship with the woman who eventually became his *de facto* mother, namely Aspasia. Some such unresolved entanglement with mother-figures at an impressionable age would also connect with the lasting distortions we hear of in Alcibiades' developed personality, as he dodged through the rest of his life inciting envious resentment in the many people he outcompeted and outshone (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 24, 44), deluding himself that winning was easy, if only by cheating, and by projecting a grandiose image of himself as quasi-divine (Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* xii.534). His omnipotence also laid him wide open to sexual exploitation in adolescence as he sought sleeping partners outside home.

This is but to scratch the surface of an anecdotal tradition, but enough to give an impression of a very complex and essentially disturbed individual – an outstandingly talented adult who was governed by the mind of a traumatized child. By the time Socrates had care of his education in his teens he could do little to help. Alcibiades will undoubtedly have sensed that he was living lies, slipping amidst flatterers like Hans Andersen's naked emperor from one omnipotent role to another and avoiding situations where he could be stripped of his pretensions. Like Sophocles' Oedipus, Alcibiades seems to have shelved this as a problem so long as he could find a context somewhere in his world where he

would be pampered like a prince.<sup>54</sup> In the end this grandiose defensive strategy killed him.

True to his personality, it is almost impossible to place Alcibiades diagnostically: he could be described as an hysteric, as a creative psychopath, as a neurotic with autistic features, as having a narcissistic personality disorder, or all of those things. Diagnosis would be a useful tool if we could be confident we got it right, but at this distance in time certainty is impossible; context and historical analysis yield a more secure approach. Of especial interest is how the main features of his individual personality interacted with his wider social group and therefore influenced the outcome of the Peloponnesian war.

What is most surprising is that Alcibiades' personality has never been subjected to psychological study. Aspects of his personality have appealed at different times. In the fourth century BC, it was his *physis* ('nature', or 'what made him tick') that monopolized attention.<sup>55</sup> For the Romans, it was his audacity that appealed (Pliny *Natural History* 34.12). In the Renaissance and later, it was the salacious tales that attracted attention (e.g. [Rocco] 1652), and Eugene Field (1850–1895) (best known for 'Little Boy Blue') wrote the homoerotic doggerel 'Socratic Love' about the philosopher's base desires for the young Alcibiades.<sup>56</sup> More recently, some have taken Alcibiades to be a genius,<sup>57</sup> while others have properly taken a more jaundiced view.<sup>58</sup> A reluctance to engage with Alcibiades' psychological make up may in part be because he represents Pericles' Achilles heel, and also embodies much that the Athenian democracy strove to disown. Since Pericles has become a secular saint in an ideal city-state in many people's eyes, it would on this view consequently be an act of impiety to draw attention to his failure as a surrogate father, a failure that can be seen to have led directly to Athens' downfall and impoverishment. Alcibiades' worst excesses were committed long after Pericles' death, it is true, but it was the notion that he had a hereditary right to Pericles' political and military mantle that fuelled his ambition. Pericles did not foresee this until it was too late. Had he taken Alcibiades' education more seriously, Athenian history would have been different. The failure of Socrates, another secular saint, to curb Alcibiades' excesses is perhaps another reason why the subject has been overlooked. Alcibiades' *psyche* is, however, such a potentially rich field of study that we have thrown caution to the winds and have recently started to examine it together as collaborators now in different disciplines: an archaeologist turned classical philologist and an archaeologist turned psychotherapist.

## Notes

1. E.g. P. McKechnie, 'An Errant Husband and a Rare Idiom (*P.Oxy.* 744)', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 127 (1999): 157–61; C. Patterson, '“Not Worth the Rearing”: The Causes of Infant Exposure in Ancient Greece', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 (1985): 103–23. See too J. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: the Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).
2. R. Balbernie, 'Circuits and Circumstances: the Neurobiological Consequences of Early Relationship Experiences and How They Shape Later Behaviour', *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 27 (2001): 237–55; S. Gerhardt, *Why Love Matters: How Affection Shapes a Baby's Brain* (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004): 174–191; M.H. Teicher, 'Scars That Won't Heal: the Neurobiology of Child Abuse', *Scientific American* (March, 2002): 57; L. Murray and P.J. Cooper (eds), *Postpartum Depression and Child Development* (New York: Guildford Press, 1997), pp. 37–220. See also note 31 below. For the Spartan *agoge*, the 'gruelling endurance test and obstacle course' undertaken by Spartan boys between the ages of seven and eighteen, see e.g. A.J. Holladay, 'Spartan Austerity', *Classical Quarterly* 27 (1977): 111–26, P.A. Cartledge, *Agésilaios* (London: Duckworth, 1987); P.A. Cartledge, *The Spartans: the World of the Warrior-heroes of Ancient Greece, from Utopia to Crisis and Collapse* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook, 2003).
3. A controversial issue: M.I. Finley, 'Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?', *Historia* 8 (1959): 150; idem, *Slavery in Classical Antiquity: Views and Controversies* (Cambridge, 1960) p. 58]. We follow T. F. Taylor, 'Believing the Ancients: Quantitative and Qualitative Dimensions of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Later Prehistoric Eurasia', *World Archaeology* 33 (2001): 27–43, T. F. Taylor, 'Ambushed by a Grotesque: Archaeology, Slavery and the Third Paradigm', in M. Parker Pearson and I.J.N. Thorpe (eds), *Warfare, Violence and Slavery in Prehistory* (Oxford: BAR) International Series 1374 (2005), pp. 225–33.
4. See J. Neils and J. Oakley (eds), *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past* (Hanover: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College/New Haven: Yale University Press: 2003), p. 17.
5. See the exhibition catalogue (Neils and Oakley 2003 [n. 4 above]): 258–62; we do not concur with J.N. Bremmer, 'Adolescents, Symposion, and Pederasty,' in *Symptica*, edited by O. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 135–48, who maintains that some of the small boys seen in symposium scenes might be members of the host family.
6. D. Nash Briggs, 'Metals, Salt, and Slaves: Economic Links between Gaul and Italy from the Eighth to the Late Sixth Centuries BC', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 22.3 (2003): 243–59, D. Nash Briggs, 'Servants at a Rich Man's Feast: Early Etruscan Household Slaves and their Procurement,' *Etruscan Studies* 9 (2002–3): 153–176.
7. K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978), first plate.
8. See n. 2 *supra*, esp. Gerhardt (2004): 56–7, 122–5, 131; eds. Murray and Cooper (1997) *passim*.

9. *Pace* the likes of W.A. Percy, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), the relationship between *erastes* and *eromenos* was more like the military 'buddy' system than a chronicle of constant carnality. Thanks are due to Professor N. Sekunda (who promises a study on the subject) for advice in this area.
10. C. Johns, *Sex or Symbol? Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 101; Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 94–7; T.K. Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Selected Documents* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2003), pp. 18–19. An image on an Attic red-figure water jar appears to show a man introducing an adolescent boy to a prostitute: H.A. Shapiro in Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece*, p. 99.
11. L. Hays, 'Law in Ghana', *LMH News* 9 (2004): 17.
12. J. Redfield, 'The Women of Sparta', *Classical Journal* 73 (1978): 146–61; S.B. Pomeroy, *Spartan Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
13. Cf. M. Vickers, *Pericles on Stage: Political Comedy in Aristophanes' Early Plays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 49–50.
14. Cf. Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Rome and Greece*, p. 120
15. D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society: the Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), pp. 171–202; R.W. Wallace, 'Private Lives and Public Enemies: Freedom of Thought in Classical Athens', in *Athenian Identity and Civic Ideology*, edited by A. Scafuro and A. Boegehold, 127–55 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 152: 'The Athenians publicly and officially refused to allow those who sold their bodies for sex to participate in city administration.'
16. E.g. J. Neils, 'Gym class', *Dig Magazine* 6, 4 (2004): 20–3.
17. Ashmolean Museum AN 1967.304; H.A. Shapiro, 'Leagros and Euphronios: Painting Pederasty in Athens', in *Greek Love Reconsidered*, edited by T.K. Hubbard (New York: Wallace Hamilton Press, 2000), pp. 31–2 (with earlier bibliography).
18. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*.
19. For example, G. Grimm 'Der schöne Leagros oder Tyrannenmörder, Künstler und Banausen im spätarchaischen Athen', *Antike Welt* 33 (2000): 179–95.
20. Diogenianus 5.97; cf. 5.98: 'A potter: what is unsound'. For Near Eastern views, cf. F. Vitto, 'Potters and Pottery Manufacture in Roman Palestine', *University of London, Institute of Archaeology Bulletin* 23 (1986): 61 (citing an Egyptian source): '[The potter's] life is that of an animal. Dirt besmeared him more than a pig', *Ecclesiasticus* 22.7: 'Whoso teacheth a fool is as one that glueeth potsherds together'.
21. C.E. Conophagos, *Le Laurium antique et la technique grecque de la production de l'argent* (Athens: Ekdotike Hellados, 1980), pp. 341–54.
22. In Plovdiv and the Hermitage, St Petersburg for the most part: M. Vickers and D. Gill, *Artful Crafts: Ancient Greek Silverware and Pottery*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 132–6, figs 5.20, 5.22–5.24; M. Vickers, *Skeuomorphismus, oder die Kunst aus wenig viel zu machen* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999); and M. Vickers, 'Materialwerte gestern und heute – eine kleine Geschichte über den Stellenwert griechischer Keramik', *Antike Welt* 35 (2004): 63–9.
23. D.W.J. Gill, 'The Distribution of Greek Vases and Long Distance Trade', in J. Christiansen and T. Melander (eds), *Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on*

- Ancient Greek and Related Pottery, Copenhagen, 1987* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet; Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek; Thorvaldsens Museum, 1988), pp. 175–85.
24. M. Vickers and D. Gill. 'They Were Expendable: Greek Vases in the Etruscan Tomb', *Revue des études anciennes* 97 (1995): 231–6.
25. M. Vickers, 'Imaginary Etruscans: Changing Perceptions of Etruria since the Fifteenth Century', *Hephaistos* 7/8 (1985): 153–68, pls 1–5.
26. Vickers and Gill, *Artful Crafts*, pp. 85–7, figs 4.3, 4.4; Vickers, *Skeuomorphismus*, p. 48; Vickers 2004 (n. 22 supra): 66.
27. Cf. M.L. Banner, *Sex and Pottery: Erotic Images on Athenian Cups, 600–300 B.C.* (MA thesis, Department of History, East Tennessee State University, 2003): 'Out of 7901 cups only 130 had erotic images. As cups with erotic images represented only a small portion of the sample it was likely that they only appealed to the tastes of a small sub-set of the Athenian population. The context of these images is questionable and they should be used with caution by the historical community'. It should be added that homoerotic scenes constitute but a small sub-set of the sample.
28. W. Ellis, *Alcibiades* (London: Routledge, 1989); P.J. Rhodes, 'What Alcibiades did or what happened to him' (Durham: University of Durham, 1985); J. de Romilly, *Alcibiade, ou, Les dangers de l'ambition* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1993); Vickers, *Pericles on Stage*.
29. For a list (of at least 10), see Vickers, *Pericles on Stage*, p. 135.
30. P.J. Bicknell, 'Axiochos Alkibiadou, Aspasia and Aspasio', *L'Antiquité classique* 51 (1982): 240–50.
31. On pathologies of grief in children see J. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Volume III: Sadness and Depression* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books: 1981), pp. 137–228; 265–310; 320–76, esp. 350–76. On dangerous behaviour, see J. Anderson, 'The Mythic Significance of Risk-taking, Dangerous Behaviour', *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 29 (2003): 75–91. On the developmental significance of early experience see Balbernie, 'Circuits and Circumstances', Teicher, 'Scars that Won't Heal', Gerhardt, *Why Love Matters*, cited in n. 2. Some children may be genetically more at risk than others to the consequences of ill-regulated early care, at least in present-day European populations. A rather common variant of the gene MAOA on the X chromosome, that produces the enzyme monoamine oxidase-A, is linked with variants in brain structure: a smaller than average amygdala and cingulate cortex, both of which are involved in perceiving and regulating emotion. Boys, with their single X chromosome, are more affected by any consequences of this variant than girls, and we may note that Alcibiades was prone to outbursts of rage and that both Alcibiades and his brother Cleinias were difficult to handle. See H. Phillips 'A Brain Primed for Violence', *New Scientist* (25 March 2006): 16, with references.
32. Gerhardt, *Why Love Matters*, 57–9, Balbernie, 'Circuits and Circumstances'.
33. Cf. J. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: the Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 165.
34. G. Williams, *Internal Landscapes and Foreign Bodies* (London: Duckworth, 1997), pp. 33–50, chapter entitled 'Double deprivation'.
35. B.S. Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens: Ideology and Society in the Era of the Peloponnesian War* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1993), pp. 166–75. Strauss lists many of the parallels between Alcibiades and Hippolytus: a lack

of respect towards older males, a love of horses, and a childhood in the household of a great political leader. Like Alcibiades, Hippolytus 'appears in the company of young men and is sometimes seen as representative of them (*Hipp.* 967–70, 987)', he is a good orator (986–9), he is ambitious, and aspires to a famous name (1028, 1299) and to the 'first place in the contests of the Greeks (1016)'. Like Alcibiades, Hippolytus' 'gender is ambivalent', he 'disdains the common people (986), [and] does not hesitate to sing his own praises, announcing that no one will ever find a more *sōphrōn* (prudent, modest, virtuous) man than himself.'

36. M. Vickers, 'Alcibiades and Aspasia: notes on the *Hippolytus*', *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 26 (2000): 7–17.
37. M. Vickers, 'Alcibiades on Stage: *Philoctetes* and *Cyclops*', *Historia* 36 (1987): 171–97.
38. Or at least of his headless body. The head was carried off to show to the King of Persia.
39. Alcibiades' uncle Megacles had scored an Olympic chariot-racing victory, in 424 BC, and his grandfather Megacles was victorious in the Pythian games (Pindar *Pythian Ode.* 7). His great-grandfather Alcmaeon's wealth enabled him to breed horses and to be the first Athenian to win at Olympia (Herodotus 6.125; Isocrates 16.25). See too, Thucydides 6.16.1 and the plot-summary to Aristophanes *Clouds* (5 Coulon).
40. Cf. F. Tustin, *The Protective Shell in Children and Adults* (London: Karnac Books 1990), esp. ch. 7: 'The Autistic Capsule in Neurotic Adult Patients'. Self-stimulating autistic manoeuvres, developed in early infancy to substitute for ordinary unreliable human help, can be compulsively depended on thereafter to block a person's awareness of their own – and others' – vulnerability, need, and bodily separateness, and are an underlying component in all the other clinical descriptions that can be applied to Alcibiades' complex personality: his destructive narcissism (cf. H.A. Rosenfeld, *Psychotic States: A Psychoanalytical Approach* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), pp.176–9; J. Steiner, *Psychic Retreats: Pathological Organizations in Psychotic, Neurotic and Borderline Patients* (London: Routledge, 1993)), his ensconcement in psychic retreats (e.g. M. Klein, 'On Identification', in ead., *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946–1963* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 145–55), his manic episodes and hysteria (cf. C. Bollas, *Hysteria* (London: Routledge, 2000)).
41. Cf. G. Herman, *Morality and Behaviour in Democratic Athens* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), Chapter 6, 'Revenge and Punishment'.
42. Cf. the way in which early-modern village communities tolerated people with reputations as witches for decades on end: bearers of dangerous roles have important functions in regulating social tensions (R. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), pp. 75–6).
43. In effect, Socrates offered Alcibiades an appropriate, if doomed, therapeutic transference relationship (cf. Bollas, *Hysteria*, pp. 150–1, 175). Enid Bloch (SUNY Buffalo) has raised some pertinent questions concerning Socrates' own psychopathology and likely experience of maltreatment in childhood: 'Socrates and I', internet publication (2005) at: <http://www.pbos.com/phpnuke/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=17>.



44. The world took a different view of what went on with Socrates: Aristophanes imputes worse at *Clouds* 868–9, 871 (cf. Vickers, *Pericles on Stage*, pp. 25–6), as does [A. Rocco], *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* (Oranges: Juan Wart, 1652) (more conveniently accessible in: A. Rocco, *Alcibiade enfant à l'école* (Montreal: Les éditions Balzac, 1995)) (once said to be 'un livre néfaste et abominable, dont l'auteur eut mérité d'être brûlé avec tous ses exemplaires').
45. D.A. Russell, 'On Reading Plutarch's Lives', *Greece and Rome* 13 (1966): 45; R.J. Littmann, 'The Loves of Alcibiades,' *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 101 (1970): 267–8.
46. P. Jaques, *Understanding Children's Problems* (London, Unwin, 1987), pp. 47–51 describes rather vividly this common type of childhood and adolescent anxiety.
47. See H.Y. Swanston, P.N. Parkinson, B.I. O'Toole, A.M. Plunkett, S. Shrimpton, R.K. Oates, 'Juvenile Crime, Aggression and Delinquency after Sexual Abuse', *British Journal of Criminology* 34 (2003): 729–49. A cruel streak in Socrates' adult personality has been related to probable maltreatment in childhood (Bloch, 'Socrates and I'); cf. Anderson, 'The Mythic Significance of Risk Taking'.
48. S. Musgrave, *Sophoclis tragoediae septem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1800), 1.289; M. Vickers, *Oedipus and Alcibiades in Sophocles* (Xenia Toruniensia 9, Toruń, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2005), pp. 2–22.
49. Following B. Knox, 'The Date of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles', *American Journal of Philology* 77 (1956): 133–47; B. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).
50. 'Alarmed at the greatness of his license and his perverted way of life, and of the ambition which he showed in whatever he undertook, people set him down as aiming at tyranny, and became his enemies.' Translated by M. Munn, *The School of History: Athens in the Age of Socrates* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 386, n. 56.
51. See Vickers, *Oedipus and Alcibiades*.
52. Cf. M. Target and P. Fonagy, 'Fathers in Modern Psychoanalysis and in Society: the Role of the Father and Child Development', in *The Importance of Fathers: a Psychoanalytic Re-evaluation* edited by J. Trowell and A. Etchegoyen (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), p. 61.
53. Cf S. Wilson, *The Cradle of Violence: Essays on Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and Literature* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1995), pp. 98–109.
54. For a relevant reading of Oedipus' psychopathology see J. Steiner, *Psychic Retreats: Pathological Organizations in Psychotic, Neurotic and Borderline Patients* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 116–30.
55. D. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens: A Study in Literary Presentation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); I. Bruns, *Das literarische Porträt der Griechen im fünften und vierten Jahrhundert vor Christi Geburt* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1896).
56. There is a copy in the Newberry Library, Chicago. Thanks are due to Dr Ingrid Rowland for facilitating access.
57. E.g. E.F. Benson, *The Life of Alcibiades, the Idol of Athens* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929), M.F. McGregor, 'The Genius of Alcibiades,' *Phoenix*, 19 (1965): 27–46.
58. E.F. Bloedow, 'Alcibiades "Brilliant" or "Intelligent"?', *Historia* 41 (1992): 139–57, Vickers, *Pericles on Stage*.

## Josephine Crawley Quinn responds

While the body is still supple it should, for that very reason, be made pliant to all manners and customs. Provided that he can restrain his appetites and his will, you should not hesitate to make the young man suited to all peoples and companies, even, should the need arise, to immoderation and excess... I have often noted with great astonishment the extraordinary character of Alcibiades, who, without impairing his health, could so readily adapt to diverse manners: at times he could outdo Persians in pomp and luxury; at others, Spartans in austerity and frugal living. He was a reformed man in Sparta, yet equally pleasure-seeking in Ionia.

So Montaigne, in his 1580 essay 'On Educating Children'.<sup>1</sup> There's no denying that Alcibiades is a seductive character. Tales of this charming rogue have entertained writers and readers for almost 2,500 years – none more so, perhaps, than his role as a provocative schoolboy in the seventeenth-century rhetorician and philosopher Antonio Rocco's *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola*.<sup>2</sup> In this satirical erotic dialogue, published anonymously in 1652, Alcibiades continuously frustrates the attempts of his tutor Philotimos to penetrate him, until the older man eventually persuades him that he will learn more from experience than from lectures and debate, and that sperm will improve his mind.<sup>3</sup>

But how far should we let Alcibiades lead us on? Vickers and Briggs' provocative essay asks us to consider whether we can use twentieth-century psychoanalytic categories and concepts, and our notion of 'abuse', to illuminate the behaviour of individuals in radically different cultures, with social structures and institutions very far removed from those which underpin the modern case studies.<sup>4</sup> To take just one example of this difference, consider the concept of the 'family' itself. This is a peculiarly modern word, with no equivalent in ancient Greek (or Latin, or Hebrew, for that matter). The closest Greek word is *oikos*, best translated 'household', which includes all those bound by household ties, whether of blood, property, or mere practicality. Slaves, tutors, and nurses are all members of the *oikos*, and there is no easy way of describing a smaller unit that we would recognise as the nuclear family. Family relationships must in any case have been very different in a society in which average life expectancy was 20–25, infant mortality was very high, and divorce, remarriage, adoption and the resulting 'complex households' were not only common, but were in fact the norm at all levels of society.<sup>5</sup>



Applying modern psychoanalytic insights is made even more complicated by the difficulty of excavating the 'real' general and politician from beneath the flamboyant persona presented in many of the ancient sources. But perhaps disentangling Alcibiades the man (or boy) from 'Alcibiades' the literary construction would spoil the fun: 'Alcibiades' is a cultural construction as well, with his roots in fifth- and fourth-century Athenian sources, and he can tell us much about larger political and cultural discourses in Athens.<sup>6</sup> In my view, it is impossible to explain Alcibiades' image, including his supposed sexual exploits as a 'child', without explaining the way his fellow Athenians understood, suspected and made use of his class position. And to do that requires some words on the close links between sexuality and class in his society.

Sex was unquestionably a class issue in Athens. In particular, the concept of pederastic love, or relationships between an older man (the *erastes*, or lover) and an adolescent (the *eromenos*, or beloved), was clearly associated with the city's aristocracy.<sup>7</sup> The elaborate rituals of the *erastes* and *eromenos* relationship required money and leisure, and it is no surprise that scenes of courtship and sex between younger and older men appear in great numbers on the pottery used at *symposion* parties, themselves distinctly upper-class milieux. The advent of the radical democracy in 508/7 seems to have been incompatible with such imagery, which declined after 500, and had disappeared by 475.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, fifth-century popular art forms like comedy ridiculed the pederastic relationships of the city's political elite.

Fourth-century evidence suggests that pederasty could be justified in elite discourse as a purer and more intellectual form of love than carnal and indiscriminate lust.<sup>9</sup> At the time it certainly seems to have been coupled with an ideology of moderation and self-restraint. As Briggs and Vickers note, pederasty was only acceptable in Athens under certain conditions: that the boys displayed (feigned?) reluctance, that they did not sell their bodies, and that they gave up the passive role at a certain age. This ideology is satirized by the comic playwright Aristophanes in the *Clouds*: the old-fashioned character of Just Argument defends the traditional upper class education system in which 'so modest were students then, that when they rose, they carefully smoothed out the ground beneath them, lest even a pair of naked buttocks leaving its trace in the sand should draw the eye of desire.'<sup>10</sup>

Such restraint played little part in the excessive sexual ideology of the democrats, vividly demonstrated by the Herm statues, four-square pillars adorned with the head of Hermes, arm-stubs and an erect phallus. These creatures crowded the marketplace and doorways of the city, powerful

symbols of the democratic equality of male citizens against and above everyone else, especially women.<sup>11</sup> (Perhaps for this reason, sex with women was more central to this discourse than in that of the traditional elite.) On this reading, far from being a psychological search for father-figures, pederastic relationships were an ideological tactic, a way of asserting aristocratic values in an increasingly hostile world. This class distinction between attitudes to sex means that reports of the ultra-democrat Pericles' disapproval of pederastic voyeurism, alongside his own unrestrained sexual behaviour with women, make sense even in a world where relationships with adolescent boys were encouraged in some ideological circles.

It also makes sense of popular suspicions about the mutilation of the sexually excessive Herm statues in 415. Just before Athenian warships were to sail on the ill-fated 'Sicilian Expedition', the Athenians woke up to discover that the Herms had been attacked and disfigured during the night. The incident, says the contemporary commentator Thucydides, 'looked like an omen for the voyage and furthermore as though it had been done as part of a conspiracy for revolution and for the overthrow of the democracy'. No one knew who was behind the attacks, but some accused Alcibiades, 'adducing as evidence the undemocratic licentiousness of his conduct in general.'<sup>12</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, his public image made Alcibiades a suspect, and it is to this public Alcibiades I shall now return: an elite figure, but an unpredictable one, which made him good to think with in Athens.

To his fellow Athenians, Alcibiades was first and foremost an aristocrat, and therefore a figure of suspicion in the democratic city. Briggs and Vickers discuss the emphasis in our sources on his companions among the idle young rich, his extravagant fashion sense, and in particular his much-noted fondness for horses and chariot-racing.<sup>13</sup> Horses and chariots were heavily associated with aristocracy and wealth in the communal imagination: horse-racing required serious capital, and was the chosen pursuit of an interstate elite – as opposed to athletics, which were less expensive and carried more democratic connotations.<sup>14</sup> And then, of course, there are the stories of his pederastic exploits, which seem at first glance to fit neatly into this picture.

Once again, though, 'Alcibiades' turns out to be a tease, refusing to play by the generally accepted rules of the game. At times he lives the life of the aristocrat, at other times rejects it, and often exaggerates it *ad absurdum*: while he displays luxurious tastes, he lacks aristocratic restraint. As an *eromenos* he sometimes plays the *erastes*, but then remains an *eromenos* too long, while at the same time he seduces an excessive

series of women.<sup>15</sup> Just as he will not commit to a stable set of sexual preferences, neither do his actions fit into a clear sociopolitical ideology: is he an oligarch or a democrat?<sup>16</sup> He is a liminal figure in the political discourse of fifth-century Athens, but one who is central to the contradictions of that discourse. He represents for the citizens the worst of both worlds, expressing the friction and contradiction between them, and embodying the attractions and dangers of trying to reconcile them – a reconciliation critical in a world where the leaders of the radical democracy are themselves wealthy aristocrats. The lurid tales of his childhood experiences are as much a part of that constructed, constructive confusion as those of his later life. He can't make his mind up, but equally, and perhaps more worryingly, the Athenians couldn't make their minds up about him.<sup>17</sup>

## Notes

1. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, tr. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 187.
2. For more examples, including Francis Bacon's essay *Of Beauty* (1597), and Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1948), see Nikolai Endres, 'Alcibiades', in *glbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*. Ed. Claude J. Summers (2002–05). [www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/alcibiades.htm](http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/alcibiades.htm)
3. Antonio Rocco, *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* ed. Laura Coci (Roma: Salerno, 1988).
4. It is not clear to me that sentiments expressed in the *Iliad*, an East Greek text originating in, probably, the eighth century BCE, are a reliable guide to the *mores* of fifth-century Athens.
5. Cynthia Patterson, *The Family in Greek History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 42–3.
6. Although many of the most colourful stories come from Plutarch, who was writing 500 years later, he explicitly relies on Alcibiades' fifth-century contemporaries such as Antisthenes, Antiphon and Plato for much of his information: see, for example, *Alcibiades*, 1.2, 3.1. That some of these sources were probably inventions of the intervening period does not call into question the overall picture of a continuous and coherent tradition about 'Alcibiades' going back to his own lifetime.
7. Marilyn Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 114–24. There is a great deal of earlier bibliography debating this point, much of it collected at Victoria Wohl, *Love among the Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 5 n. 8. There was also a change over time; Wohl herself goes so far as to suggest that this sort of love, although originally associated with the elite, over time 'became... central to the Athenian democratic imagination' (6), citing the fourth century lawyer

Aeschines' speech against Timarchus, where the speaker assumes that the (democratically selected) jury would want their sons to have pederastic relationships. To me this suggests that even in the fourth century pederasty was still considered an aristocratic pastime, albeit one to which the people at large might aspire.

8. Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 157: 'Scenes of men courting young boys begin around 575 and are particularly popular after 550; they decline after 500 and disappear around 475.' By contrast, scenes of men courting women peak c.470–450.
9. Plato, *Symposium*, 181bc.
10. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 973–975, tr. William Arrowsmith in *Four Plays by Aristophanes* (New York: Meridian, 1994).
11. See now Josephine Crawley Quinn, 'Hermes, Kouroi and the Political Anatomy of Athens', *Greece and Rome* 54 (2007): 82–105. The celebration of excess in democratic ideology and restraint in aristocratic discourse was by no means exclusive. There was also a strong democratic and proto-democratic tradition of valorizing moderation, on which see Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 110–91. This could include criticizing aristocratic pederasty as excessive: see Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* above, 118–20 for examples. Similarly, there was an aristocratic tradition of luxury and excess discussed by Morris and by Leslie Kurke, 'The Politics of *Habrosyne* in Archaic Greece', *Classical Antiquity* 11 (1992): 91–120. This is especially visible in the evidence from outside Athens.
12. Thucydides 6.27. For more on this incident, see William Furley, *Andokides and the Herms* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1996).
13. E.g. Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 11.1, Isocrates, *de bigis* 32–5 and Thucydides 6.16.2.
14. Stephen Miller, 'Naked Democracy', *Polis and Politics*. Ed. Pernille Flensted-Jensen, Thomas Heine Nielsen and Lene Rubenstein (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2000), p. 280.
15. For examples of this tendency to excess, see Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 16.1.
16. Some contemporaries apparently thought that the answer was 'neither': Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 25.5.
17. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1425: 'It longs for him, it hates him, and it wants him back.' Tr. Richmond Lattimore in *Four Plays by Aristophanes* (New York: Meridian, 1994).

## Alfonso Moreno responds

I call my response to Vickers and Briggs 'Abusing Alcibiades'.<sup>1</sup> In a well-known series of studies on characterization and individuality in Greek literature, Pelling demonstrated that in the tradition of ancient Greek biography (best known to us through Plutarch but, of course, not confined to him) 'the interest in politicians' childhoods remained stunted'.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to overstate the importance of this claim, for the idea that a developed biographical tradition (as Greek political biography doubtless was) might exclude childhood – or, at most, show only a descriptive, as opposed to a psychological, interest in it – appears fundamentally alien to European conceptions of personality since Freud. Yet it is precisely this limited, descriptive treatment that Plutarch provides when writing his *Life of Alcibiades*, and that Pelling sees as the 'fundamental difference between Plutarch and modern biography'.<sup>3</sup>

This is the crucial point to consider when presented with a picture of Alcibiades derived from modern psychoanalytic theory, according to which adult behaviour is determined by the experience (or, equally important, the subjective perception) of childhood trauma. Regardless of how obvious its heuristic importance appears to us, the psychoanalytic approach would strike any Greek biographer as the wrong way to understand a person.

In using Alcibiades in a case study, we must place the surviving anecdotes about his childhood in their ancient literary context. Since we rely so heavily on Plutarch, the essential preliminary is to take account of his method and motives in looking at childhood, as well as his own (and contemporary, that is first-/second-century AD) ideas and assumptions about childhood.<sup>4</sup> But Plutarch himself drew from a complex anecdotal tradition on Alcibiades' personal life, the foundational features of which can be traced back to the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC.<sup>5</sup> Indeed Gribble has shown that the presentation of Alcibiades in Plutarch derives from (and perpetuates) a long tradition of moral and political discourse.<sup>6</sup> When using these anecdotes we must therefore draw a crucial distinction between 'genuineness' and 'historicity'. That is, there is no doubt that much material is in origin roughly contemporary with Alcibiades, but none of it is straightforward fact.<sup>7</sup>

Sexuality of course plays a particularly potent part in Athenian public perception: Alcibiades' notoriously ambiguous persona as man of the people or oligarchic subversive was constantly articulated in popular speculation and fantasy regarding his sexual history and proclivities.<sup>8</sup>

Not all, however, is reducible to this. As Vickers and Briggs show, there are many other anecdotes tending to point to Alcibiades' childhood cruelty and violence, egotism, impiety, or (alternatively) to positive qualities of even heroic proportions. Gribble takes all of these as facets of discourse on 'the uncontrollable power of the ambitious, ruthless, politically creative individual'.<sup>9</sup> Here childhood gets subsumed (perhaps to the point of disappearing) in a meta-discourse that deals mostly with adults. Is this justified, and is Athenian political discourse really so uninterested in childhood *per se*?

Obviously not. It is immediately clear, for instance, that Alcibiades is associated with a very large number of childhood anecdotes – one might even speak of a corpus, which is no doubt what in his case makes the psychoanalytical approach initially so attractive. One could even argue that childhood itself plays the leading role in fashioning the presentation of Alcibiades. His childhood may be said to 'last' until chapter 13 of Plutarch's *Life*, an unprecedented length.<sup>10</sup> Since in this chapter he enters politics 'though still a stripling' (*eti meirakion ōn*), it appears that Alcibiades' childhood overlaps with his political maturity even to the point of negating it: that (in effect) the legal coming of age did not entail the end of Alcibiades' childhood.<sup>11</sup>

In origin, this image is neither psychoanalytic, nor Plutarch's invention, but instead a rhetorical fabrication of the fifth century BC. We find an interesting version of it in Thucydides, an author whose rhetorical and artistic genius has become increasingly appreciated in recent times. Alcibiades' youth is in fact a leitmotiv in the *History*. He was *at least* 32 years old in 420 BC, when he is introduced as '... Alcibiades the son of Cleinias, a man (*anēr*) who would have been thought young (*neos*) in any other city, but was influential by reason of his high descent'.<sup>12</sup> If today we might hesitate to call 'young' a man in his early thirties, in the context of even the most optimistic estimate of average life expectancy in ancient Greece (forty years) the statement is revealed as a clear instance of artful manipulation.<sup>13</sup>

The theme returns in Thucydides' presentation of the Sicilian debate in spring 415, where Nicias abuses Alcibiades as 'too young (*neōteros*)' for the generalship, and claims his impetuous supporters are similarly young.<sup>14</sup> Here, granted, the subjective (and even more egregious) claim is not in Thucydides' narrative voice, but precisely the same chord is struck. Interestingly, Alcibiades himself is shown to embrace the image, revelling in his youthful achievements, pointing to his acme of daring and strength: 'Do not be afraid of me because of my youth (*neotēs*), but while it is at its peak and Nicias enjoys the reputation of good fortune,

use the services of us both'.<sup>15</sup> The point is reinforced towards the end of Alcibiades' speech:

Nicias must not divert you from your purpose by preaching indolence, and by trying to set the young against the old; rather, in your accustomed order, old and young taking counsel together, after the manner of your fathers who raised Athens to this height of greatness, strive to rise yet higher. Consider that youth and age have no power unless united; but that the lighter and the more exact and the middle sort of judgment, when duly tempered, are likely to be most efficient. The state, if at rest, like everything else will wear herself out by internal friction.<sup>16</sup>

This wonderful medical metaphor turns out to be crucial in understanding Thucydides' presentation of the Sicilian failure.<sup>17</sup> Although Nicias and Alcibiades, the old and the young, initially shared in the Sicilian command (along with a third general, Lamachus), by summer of the following year Nicias was left as sole general. Unbalanced in this way, the old *without* the young, the army under Nicias is ruined precisely as Alcibiades has outlined. The conservative old man fails to besiege Syracuse at once and becomes contemptible to the enemy.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, an expedition that had departed Athens in dazzling glory and strength instead collapses.

Alcibiades' youth is therefore part of a highly rhetorical presentation that is elaborated by Thucydides, but is not exclusive to him. Indeed it is likely that Nicias and Alcibiades made frequent use of the 'politics of age' not just in the Sicilian debate, but in their agonistic confrontations throughout the preceding years.<sup>19</sup>

But the portrayal of Alcibiades probably found its fullest expression in the Athenian courts.<sup>20</sup> If the overtly political nature of these may strike us as alien, the role of character evidence in forensic speeches will seem downright perverse. Whereas modern legal systems usually set severe limits even to the *admissibility* of character evidence in a case, Athenians not only admitted character (*ēthos*) freely and pervasively, but regarded it *alongside law itself* as a proof;<sup>21</sup> Aristotle even calls it 'the most effective means of proof'.<sup>22</sup> Why this difference? It was considered a basic condition of Athenian democracy that its courts should be free of legal specialists: there were no judges, and both speakers and juries were expected to be amateurs.<sup>23</sup> In this context, it is no surprise that character, along with the rhetorical skills to portray it, were so powerful in Classical Athens: it was the simplest way for men to judge their

peers. In one case we even find an Athenian prosecutor asking a jury to convict the defendant based not on the crimes which he had actually committed, but on those which he *would* have been able to commit if given the chance!<sup>24</sup>

With this in mind we can understand why entire typologies of behaviour, like Theophrastus' *Characters*, were developed and compiled for the use of students of rhetoric. These essentially consisted of patterns of conduct popularly associated with particular types of men – an invaluable source for the history of popular morality, as Dover showed in an excellent book.<sup>25</sup> Particularly useful in this respect is the speech against Alcibiades' son (Alcibiades IV), delivered in 395 BC.<sup>26</sup>

When this man was a child, he was seen by a number of people at the house of Archedemus the Blear-eyed, who had embezzled not a little of your property, drinking the while he lay at length under the same cloak; he carried on his revels till daylight, keeping a mistress when he was under age, and imitating his ancestors, in the belief that he would not achieve distinction in his later years unless he could show himself an utter rascal in his youth. He was sent for by Alcibiades [III], since his outrageous conduct was becoming notorious. And indeed, what ought you to think of the character of the man whose practices were such as to discredit him even in the eyes of the great ringleader in those ways? He conspired with Theotimus against his father and betrayed Orni to him: but he, when he had gained possession of the stronghold, after abusing him in the flower of youth, ended by imprisoning him and holding him to ransom. But his father felt so deep a hatred of him that he declared that even though he should die he would not recover his bones. When his father was dead, Archebiades, who had become his lover, obtained his release. Not long afterwards, having dived away his fortune, he took ship at White Cliff, and attempted to drown his friends at sea...<sup>27</sup>

This passage gives us only part of the picture. The tirade culminates with accusations of incest (with his sister), and (since the young man is 'a hereditary enemy of the city'<sup>28</sup>) proceeds to list the many political crimes of the father. We can easily forget that the actual prosecution is for desertion from the ranks (*lipotaxia*), but to an Athenian the entire pattern of behaviour *proved* the crime. Surely a violent, depraved, and lawless youth with no respect for family or city was the sort of character who would desert the ranks! What should strike us immediately



in these allegations is their similarity to the surviving anecdotal tradition surrounding Alcibiades III, who of course *did in fact* desert. But the detail here is suspiciously duplicated, down to a less innocent version of the story of the *erōmenos* and *erastēs* sharing the same cloak. Contrast also how well Alcibiades III (briefly) plays the character of the aggrieved father.

We are, in short, dealing with conventional ways of describing the Greek rake, a character reproduced pervasively not only in many other speeches in the Athenian oratorical corpus, but also in comedy (which in its use of political invective is closely akin to forensic rhetoric).<sup>29</sup> The wastrel Pheidippides in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, just to take one example, is cut from the same rhetorical cloth as Alcibiades IV, Pericles' son Xanthippus ('naturally prodigal'), and numerous other Athenians abused in the courts as dissipating their patrimonies over the course of a debauched youth.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, this sort of invective was not limited to public oratory and comedy. Despite the success of works like the *Phaedrus* in encouraging a modern romantic view of Athenian intellectual life, we should not overlook (nor be surprised at) the fact that some of the rawest of Athenian abuse was deployed in the city's rhetorical and philosophical schools. Plato himself was 'inimical towards everybody', as Athenaeus reminds us in his summary of this tradition.<sup>31</sup> The latter is not only amusing, but puts Alcibiades' scandalous childhood (including his relationship with Socrates) in sobering context:

Most philosophers have a natural tendency to be more abusive than the comic poets; for example, Aeschines, the disciple of Socrates, derides Critobulus, the son of Crito, in the *Telauges* for his boorishness and sordid manner of life... Again in the *Aspasia*, he calls Hipponicus, the son of Callias, a booby, and says sweepingly that the women who come from Ionia are adulterous and avaricious. And his *Callias* contains the contrast drawn between Callias and his father, also the bitter mockery against the sophist Prodicus and Anaxagoras... his intention being to show the kind of instruction given by these teachers from the wickedness and the itch for depravity in those whom he named. In the *Axiochus* again he bitterly disparages Alcibiades as a drunken sot and an eager pursuer of other men's wives. Antisthenes, too, in the treatise on the second Cyrus, abuses Alcibiades and says that he was perverted in his relations with women as well as in his mode of life generally. He even says that Alcibiades lay with his mother, his daughter, and his sister, as Persians do. The

dialogue on the *Statesman*, by Antisthenes, contains a denunciation of all the demagogues at Athens; the *Archelaus*, of the orator Gorgias; the *Aspasia*, slanders against Xanthippus and Paralus, the sons of Pericles. One of them, he says, lived with Archestratus, who plied a trade similar to that of women in the cheaper brothels; the other was the boon companion of Euphemus, who used to make vulgar and heartless jokes at the expense of all whom he met. Again Antisthenes changed the name of Plato to Satho ['Cock-boy'], a filthy, vulgar word, and published the dialogue against him under this title. For in the eyes of these gentry no statesman is honest, no general is wise, no sophist is worth considering, no poet is good for anything, no populace is capable of reason; only Socrates is – he who consorts with Aspasia's flute-girls at the workshops, or converses with Piston the cuirass-maker, or instructs the courtesan Theodote how to lure her lovers, as Xenophon represents him in the second book of the *Memorabilia*.<sup>32</sup>

The essential thing to notice about character types in Athenian rhetoric is that they are static constructs – indeed, this is precisely what a type is.<sup>33</sup> Any pattern of behaviour associated with the adult is assumed to be present in the same person in childhood: there is the rake, but no progress, no change in personality. If Alcibiades IV is a bad man, then he must have been bad as a child. Likewise, the elder Alcibiades III does not *become*, but instead *is made to play the conventional role of*, the concerned father. Childhood anecdotes have a probative value in that they illustrate and confirm the character of the adult. Accordingly, the childhood anecdote is either invented or derived from a rich store of behavioural typologies: in short, the child is extrapolated from the adult.

Since this method of characterization is present in so many of its sources, it is no surprise to find it also in Plutarchan biography, as carefully analyzed by Pelling and Duff.<sup>34</sup> In a fundamental sense, therefore, the ancient biographical approach is a direct reversal of the modern psychoanalytic method. Instead of the adult determining the presentation of the child, in the Freudian era the child determines the presentation of the adult. We must be keenly alert to the dangers of circularity whenever using ancient sources to write modern biography.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, the 'positivist fallacy' is a danger in this and any other attempt to write on the history of Greek childhood: methodological oversight may result in misinterpretation of the evidence.<sup>36</sup> The art of interpretation is never straightforward, but it is especially difficult whenever we try to disengage unarticulated meanings or allusions

from works of art or literature.<sup>37</sup> The history of Greek childhood must therefore depend ultimately on the judicious combination of texts and material evidence. The latter includes the study of iconography, principally in vases and sculpture, together with physical evidence, usually from burials (for example bone analysis).<sup>38</sup> Disciplines and approaches must be combined. In this sense, works like Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* are landmarks. We must, to take up the theme of that book, and not to end in *aporia*, pursue the Greek child with a measure not only of persistence, but also of circumspection.

## Notes

1. I am indebted to Tim Duff for stimulating discussion on key parts of the following, as well as for sharing his forthcoming paper on *paideia* in Plutarch. I also thank Adrian Kelly and Oliver Taplin for their help.
2. C.B.R. Pelling, 'Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography', in C.B.R. Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 213–244 (p. 219).
3. Pelling, 'Childhood and Personality', p. 235, confirming the distinction between character ('moral appraisal') and personality ('unique individuality or identity') drawn by C. Gill in order 'to discriminate between ... the prevailing approaches of ancient and modern biographers', respectively. See C. Gill, 'The Character–Personality Distinction', in Pelling (ed.) (n. ii), pp. 1–31 (p. 1).
4. These have been treated, respectively, by T. Duff, 'Plutarch on the Childhood of Alcibiades (Alk. 2–3)', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 49 (2003), pp. 89–117; and E. Eyben, 'Children in Plutarch', in L. van der Stockt (ed.), *Plutarchea Lovaniensia* (Leuven, 1996), pp. 79–112.
5. As becomes clear below, I believe these antedate Alcibiades' death in 404/3 BC, cf. D. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens: a Study in Literary Presentation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 31.
6. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 29: 'the key to understanding the presentation of Alcibiades lies in civic discourses about the relationship between individual and city'.
7. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens*, pp. 31–6; Pelling, *Characterization and Individuality*, p. 216.
8. Such a meshing of sex and politics is not alien to modern democracy. Consider Bill Clinton's confession of marital 'wrongdoing' in a televised pre-election interview in 1992, and how it worked to his advantage in portraying him as an ordinary – and repentant – 'man of the people'. Contrast the backlash against another, infinitely less successful, presidential candidate, Gary Hart, who in 1987 first evaded popular interest in his infidelity only to be photographed while cavorting with his lover (a 29-year-old model) aboard the sailboat 'Monkey Business' off a Bahamas resort. Wealth, another powerful element in Athenian political discourse, obviously plays a role here:

the supposedly austere (and aristocratic) politicians of fifth-century Athens worshipped by Demosthenes (see K.J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) p. 108), are like the millionaire oilman George W. Bush, who spends his free time hacking at undergrowth at his ranch in Crawford, Texas ('Down on the Ranch, President Wages War on the Underbrush', *Washington Post*, 31 December 2005).

9. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 23.
10. However, Plutarchan anecdotes are not chronologically arranged: see Duff, 'Plutarch', p. 91.
11. Athenian males became adult citizens at 18, or (in the fourth century) at twenty, at the age of admittance to the city's ruling assembly (*ekklesia*) (however, in what could be viewed as a further stage of political maturity, access to magistracies was allowed only from the age of thirty); females became women at some point between marriage and giving birth: see J. Neils and J.H. Oakley (eds), *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 310, with further references; M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, (rev. ed.) Oxford (1999), pp. 88–9, 129.
12. Thucydides 5.43.2 (Jowett trans.).
13. See M.H. Hansen, *Demography and Democracy* (Herning: Forlaget Systime v, 1985), p. 11. The Athenian age requirement for the generalship is likely to have been thirty: see M.H. Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, p. 227.
14. Thucydides 6.12.2, 13.1.
15. Thucydides 6.17.1: *neotēs* is carried from the previous sentence.
16. Thucydides 6.18.6 (Jowett trans.).
17. A.W. Gomme, A. Andrewes and K.J. Dover (eds), *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) (hence *HCT*), p. 255.
18. That Athenian delay led to failure is Thucydides' own judgement (see 7.42.3 with *HCT* ad loc.).
19. Compare the use of the politics of age in the recent British Parliament: the 39-year-old Conservative leader David Cameron attacked the 52-year-old Prime Minister Tony Blair, by saying: "I want to talk about the future, he was the future once." ('Tories Hail Leader after Commons Tussle with Blair', *The Guardian*, 8 December 2005)
20. See R. Osborne, 'Law in Action in Classical Athens', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985), 40–58. J.W. Headlam's little classic still sums it best: 'In a state where offices are filled by popular election, personal pique and party prejudice concentrate at the elections; it is then that men try to injure their opponents and help their friends. At Athens this was not the case. The passions which with us find expression at elections could there find no vent except in the law-courts.' (*Election by Lot at Athens*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1933), p. 36.
21. Here is another difference: modern legal systems regard law as normative, not probative. On modern character evidence, see generally D. Walker (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 206. On character evidence in Athenian law, see A. Lanni, 'Relevance in Athenian Courts', in M. Gagarin and D. Cohen (eds), *The Cambridge Companion*

- to *Ancient Greek Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 112–28.
22. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356a13.
  23. Headlam, *Election by Lot*, pp. 145–53; Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, p. 180.
  24. Dinarchus, *Against Philocles* 11.
  25. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*.
  26. Alcibiades IV is thought to have been born in 417 or 416 BC: see J.K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 19.
  27. Lysias 14.25–7 (Loeb trans.).
  28. Lysias 14.40.
  29. See especially Demosthenes 54; Aeschines 1; Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, makes the crucial point about the link between comedy and oratory, pp. 23–33.
  30. Plutarch, *Pericles* 36.2; see Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, pp. 175–80; Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens*, pp. 61–82.
  31. Athenaeus 506a; see also 219b: ‘But further: not one of the scandals uttered by Plato concerning Socrates is mentioned even by any comic poet; for example, that he was the son of a strapping midwife, or that Xanthippe was a shrew who poured slops over his head, or that he lay down to sleep with Alcibiades under the same coverlet.’ Invective obviously elicits positive (and similarly suspect) replies, as in 215e: ‘And when did he [Socrates] go on a campaign against Potideaea, as Plato has asserted in the *Charmides*, alleging that on that occasion he also resigned the price for the bravest to Alcibiades? Neither Thucydides, nor even Isocrates *On the Team of Horses*, has mentioned it.’
  32. Athenaeus 220a–e (rev. Loeb trans.).
  33. See Lanni, ‘Relevance in Athenian Courts’, p. 122.
  34. See Pelling, ‘Childhood and Personality’, ii; Duff, ‘Plutarch’, 92: ‘Childhood anecdotes... most often assume a static character and are deployed to reveal and prefigure the character-traits which will be more prominent later in life.’ Duff’s newest paper, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 127 (2008) (forthcoming), is especially good on what initially appear to be two approaches (one static, one developmental) in Plutarchan biography.
  35. A statement like Aristotle’s ‘From day comes night, and from the boy comes the man’ (*Generation of Animals* 724a22, as translated in Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece*, p. 1) might appear strikingly close to the psychoanalytic approach. Yet it is actually part of a very different, teleological view of childhood, one in which children are ‘not yet complete and whole’ and are ‘adults in waiting.’ (M. Golden, ‘Childhood in Ancient Greece’, in J. Neils and J.H. Oakley (eds), *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece*, pp. 12–29, 14, with references to Aristotle). Greek *paideia* is best understood as a process, not of change but of development of pre-existing qualities: ‘the German word *Bildung* clearly indicates the essence of education in the Greek, the Platonic sense; for it covers the artist’s act of plastic formation as well as the guiding pattern present to his imagination’: W. Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (translated by G. Highet from the 2nd German ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939), p. xxiii (a classic on Greek education – another is H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, (trans. G. Lamb) (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956)).

36. The case is eloquently made in M. Vickers and D. Gill, *Artful Crafts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
37. This is especially true of Athenian drama, since 'the plays which have survived intact are only a pitiful remnant of the hundreds of tragedies staged in the course of the century' (B. Knox, *Word and Action* (Baltimore/London, 1979), p. 8); a helpful overview of interpretational approaches in S. Saïd, 'Tragedy and Politics', in D. Boedeker and K.A. Raafaub (eds), *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 275–95 (pp. 275–84).
38. The excellent catalogue by Neils and Oakley (*Coming of Age in Ancient Greece*) collects and discusses much of the iconographic evidence. On burial, see especially I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). On nutrition (through osteology) see P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also M. Golden, *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), a general treatment.

# 3

## Incest between Adults and Children in the Medieval World

*Elizabeth Archibald*

The topic of children and sexuality has not attracted much attention from medievalists.<sup>1</sup> There is no entry for *children* in the index of Bullough and Brundage's *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality* (1996). There is no entry for *abuse*, *incest*, or *sexuality* in relation to children in the index of Pierre Payer's study of sex in the early medieval penitentials (1984), or in Shulamith Shahar's study of children in the Middle Ages (1990); in more recent studies, *abuse* (*physical, mental, sexual, verbal*) does appear in the index of Orme's study of medieval children (2001) and *incest* in Phillips' book on medieval maidens (2003), but none of these terms is indexed in Albrecht Classen's collection of essays on childhood in the Middle Ages (2005). Brundage does have an index entry for *children* in his magisterial study of legal attitudes to sex during the Middle Ages (1987), but he is mostly concerned with issues of legitimacy and inheritance, rather than the sexuality of children. The same concerns are reflected in the index of Karras's recent study of medieval sexuality (2005) under *children*, though she does briefly discuss their sexual experience too (in relation to awareness of parental sexual activity, and also to rape cases). As for medieval literature, Jean-Charles Payen maintains that 'l'enfant n'est pas un personnage fréquent dans les oeuvres médiévales'; this is particularly true of chivalric romance, where the protagonist has to be old enough to fight and to fall in love.<sup>2</sup> Scholarly work also reflects contemporary social attitudes: in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, we have become painfully aware of incest and child abuse as a major social problem in the western world, and so we are becoming more interested in the treatment of medieval children, and more prepared to discuss their sexual experiences.

By the twelfth century medieval incest law included not just immediate family members but the extended family – extended to a point

that we would not consider incestuous.<sup>3</sup> The taboo included all those related by blood or marriage to the seventh degree, and those spiritually related to the third degree. In effect, all family members were taboo, however distant, and it was forbidden to marry the in-laws of the in-laws of one's in-laws; spiritual kin, such as godparents and godchildren, were also included. At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, these rigid laws covering all possible relationships by blood and by marriage were rescinded, on the grounds that they were causing too much hardship; the forbidden degrees of consanguinity were reduced to four, and of affinity to one. But in the later Middle Ages, when stories about incest were very popular, the taboo still covered a much wider range of relationships than we would include today. Various forms of incestuous relationship appear in these stories, sometimes abusive, sometimes consensual: mother-son, father-daughter, and sibling are the most frequent, and there are some examples of uncle-niece, cousin, or godparent-godchild. There seem to be many reasons why incest stories became increasingly fashionable from the twelfth century on. They include the Church's emphasis on the importance of contrition, confession and penance; the codification of marriage law by Gratian and others, which raised issues about appropriate and inappropriate partners; and the rise of the romance genre, with its emphasis on the psychology of love, and its themes of separated and reunited families, and of the discovery of identity.<sup>4</sup> Of course incest stories can be found in cultures around the world, in antiquity and more recently.<sup>5</sup> Medieval writers knew many classical incest stories; they adapted and reworked some of them, with additional twists, in a variety of genres – saints' lives, moral *exempla* (cautionary tales), romances, allegories. Parent-child incest is more common in these stories than sibling incest, and is seen as much more shocking; when both types of incest occur in one narrative, the parent-child relationship usually constitutes the crucial turning point in the plot. Much has been written about these narratives in recent years, but no attention has been paid, as far as I know, to the age of the children involved. First I shall summarize some examples of the most popular types of incest stories; then I shall discuss medieval ideas about the definition of childhood and about children's sexuality; finally I shall give some examples of historical evidence for child abuse, and the difficulties raised by the nature of the sources.

An incest story which was continuously popular throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance is the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (*History of Apollonius King of Tyre*), more familiar to us today as the play *Pericles Prince of Tyre* in which Shakespeare had at least a hand.<sup>6</sup> The



earliest texts of this narrative are in Latin and date from the fifth century, though it is thought that there may be a Greek version behind them.

King Antiochus of Antioch, a widower, seduces his only daughter, and sets a riddle to deter her suitors, killing all who fail. Apollonius of Tyre solves the riddle, which reveals the incest; he flees, fearing the king's wrath. He is shipwrecked in Cyrene, where he is befriended by the king and marries his daughter. Antiochus and his daughter are killed by a thunderbolt. When Apollonius and his pregnant wife sail off to claim the throne, she apparently dies in childbirth. Her coffin is thrown overboard and arrives at Ephesus, where she is revived by a doctor and lives in the temple of Diana. Apollonius leaves his baby daughter Tarsia with fosterparents at Tarsus for many years. The jealous fostermother tries to murder the teenage Tarsia, but in the nick of time she is carried off by pirates and sold to a pimp in Mitylene. She manages to preserve her chastity in the brothel, and is protected by the local prince, Athenagoras. Apollonius returns to Tarsus and is told that Tarsia is dead; despairing, he comes by chance to Mitylene, where Athenagoras sends Tarsia to entertain him. She asks him riddles, and they feel mysteriously drawn to each other; when she tells him her sad story, they discover their relationship. Tarsia is married to Athenagoras. Apollonius is reunited with his wife in Ephesus; the villains are punished; Apollonius inherits the throne of Cyrene, and has a son.

In the standard Latin version, we are told at the beginning that Antiochus' daughter has reached marriageable age when he falls in love with her, but there is no particular comment on her youth or vulnerability. The emphasis here is on the parallels between fatherhood and kingship. Antiochus is a bad father both domestically and politically, who abuses his daughter and also his royal power. Arcestrates is a good king who treats his daughter well and allows her to marry the man she loves. When Apollonius meets his long-lost daughter, he is drawn to her and she to him, but this attraction leads to recognition and family reunion, not incest, and also to Apollonius' reinstatement as a good king. The story of Apollonius was much translated and adapted; some versions are more Christian, some more chivalric, some long, some short, but all retain the basic plot with the opening incest scene and the final recognition scene between father and daughter, with its potential for further incest.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries incest began to feature in extended narratives of the conversion and penance of saintly figures such as the legendary Pope Gregorius (not a historical character, though there were many popes of that name). These hagiographies used the Oedipus plot (probably not derived directly from classical stories), but they added a new twist in the form of double incest, deliberate the first time, inadvertent the second. The earliest versions of the Gregorius legend are French, from about 1150, but the best known is probably the Middle High German version by Hartmann von Aue (about 1200).<sup>7</sup>

The orphaned son of the Duke of Aquitania seduces his sister; when their son is born he is exposed in a little boat with tablets explaining his incestuous birth, though not naming his parents. The brother goes to the Holy Land on pilgrimage and dies; the grieving sister rules the dukedom. The infant is found by fishermen and raised under the patronage of an abbot after whom he is named Gregorius. When he is fifteen, a quarrel with his fosterbrother leads to his discovery that he is a noble foundling born of incest; he insists on being knighted, and sets off to find his parents. His first adventure is to rescue a beleaguered duchess, whom he then marries; she is his mother, as they later discover. Both are horrified and undertake rigorous penance; Gregorius chains himself to a rock in the middle of a lonely lake. There he is found years later by emissaries from Rome who want to make him Pope (prompted by a vision). His fame spreads and his mother comes to Rome to seek absolution from him, not realizing who he is. When she confesses, he recognizes her. They live piously ever after.

Here the double incest of Gregorius' unnamed mother leads not to a series of personal and political disasters, and to numerous deaths, as in the Oedipus story, but to a spiritual happy ending for both mother and son. This type of double incest narrative, unknown in the classical world, was very popular in the later Middle Ages, and was attached to a number of saints and bishops.

An inverted version of this plot also appears in some versions of the Arthurian legend, when Arthur sleeps unwittingly with his half-sister Morgause and begets his nemesis Mordred, who later tries not only to usurp the throne but also to marry his stepmother Guinevere (a forbidden incestuous relationship in the Middle Ages). The earliest references to this incest appear in the early thirteenth-century French

prose Arthurian romances known as the Vulgate Cycle; it is extended in the Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*, and is included in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* in the following form.<sup>8</sup>

The newly crowned Arthur lusts after Morgause, Queen of Orkney, who has recently come to court. Unaware that she is his half-sister, he sleeps with her and begets Mordred. Arthur has an ominous dream about the destruction of his kingdom and his own death. Merlin explains the dream in terms of the king's sin of incest, and foretells that the fatal child who will destroy him and his realm will be born on May Day. Arthur sends all babies born about then to sea in a ship which is wrecked; Mordred alone survives. Later Mordred as regent usurps the throne and tries to marry Guinevere. He and Arthur kill each other in battle.

It is not clear how old Arthur is when he commits the fatal incest. When he becomes king shortly before this episode, the discontented barons and minor kings refer to him contemptuously as a 'berdless boy'; but by the time he sleeps with Morgause he has already begotten an illegitimate son, so he is clearly past puberty.<sup>9</sup> In the story of his unwitting incest there is no talk of penance or confession. Mordred does kill his father, fulfilling his prophesied destiny, though he does not succeed in sleeping with his stepmother.<sup>10</sup> This is a fatalistic story, closer to classical legends than to medieval hagiographies. There was also a fashion in medieval romance for near-miss mother-son incest: in the Middle English *Sir Eglamour* and *Sir Degaré*, for instance, the mother and her unrecognized foundling son do marry, but the incestuous consummation is averted by an immediate recognition scene, and reunion with the father soon follows.<sup>11</sup>

The stories I have described so far focus on a male protagonist; the incestuous daughter or mother does not always have a name, and her fate is less important than that of her brother or father. A very popular form of medieval incest story which focuses on the woman rather than the man is the Flight from the Incestuous Father, in which incest is threatened but does not actually occur; this threat is the catalyst for the daughter's departure from home, whether she is exiled or flees of her own accord, and then for her marriage and subsequent ordeals and adventures. A well-known example is *La Manekine* by Philippe de Beau-manoir, a French landowner who composed romances and lyrics in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

The King of Hungary promises his dying queen only to marry a woman who looks just like her. The barons suggest his sixteen year old daughter Joie; after initial reluctance he falls in love with her and plans to marry her. Horrified, she cuts off one of her hands, which falls out of the window into the river and is swallowed by a fish. The furious king wants her burned, but a kind seneschal sets her adrift instead. She arrives in Scotland, where the local king marries her. He is away when her baby is born. The hostile queen mother forges a letter telling the king that the baby is a monster, and a reply ordering that Joie and the baby be burned. A compassionate provost sets them adrift instead; they arrive in Rome where Joie lodges with a rich senator. When the King of Scotland discovers the truth, he immures his mother and searches for his wife. When he comes to Rome he happens to lodge with the same senator, and identifies his wife through her wedding ring, which their son is using as a toy. Meanwhile the King of Hungary has come to Rome to do penance for his incestuous lust and makes a public confession, which Joie hears; thus they are reunited. The fish that swallowed her hand is found in a fountain, and the Pope reattaches the hand. She and her husband return to Scotland and have more children.

There is no classical analogue for this type of incest story, to my knowledge; we may wonder why it was so popular in the Middle Ages. The heroine who endures so many vicissitudes may represent the virtuous soul in a wicked world; she is finally rescued and restored to her proper status not by her own actions but by divine providence. There is seldom any reference at the end of these narratives to the threat of incest at the beginning, nor is the reader warned to avoid such heinous sin; sometimes there is a moral concerning the importance of faith and trust in divine grace, and of not succumbing to despair, but the incest motif which seems so striking to us does not appear to have been the central issue for the medieval writer.

These various types of incest narratives could also be seen as very long *exempla*, or cautionary tales. Short anonymous *exempla* taken from many sources – classical and medieval, religious and secular – were collected in anthologies for use by preachers and by pious readers. Incest is a common motif in these short stories, and here the daughters do not always escape the lustful advances of their fathers. One very popular *exemplum* of father–daughter incest found in numerous collections and several languages was even dramatized in Middle English as *Dux Moraud*, though only part of the text survives.<sup>13</sup>

A father seduces his daughter and they have a long affair. When the mother catches them *in flagrante delicto*, the daughter cuts her throat and buries her. She also kills the two children she bears her father. When her father gets old, he repents and confesses his sin; she kills him too. She goes far away and becomes a prostitute. Eventually she is induced to repent; she confesses and dies immediately. In some versions, the townspeople do not want to bury her in holy ground; but roses emerge from her mouth bearing Latin inscriptions rebuking her detractors, and they yield to this sign of divine grace.

Here incest leads to further violence, and to prostitution; but the point of the story is the power of divine grace once the sinner has shown true contrition through confession.

In most of the types of incest story that I have discussed, where the incest is not consensual, the aggressor is male. Today we tend to think of incest almost exclusively as an act of patriarchal aggression, committed by fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, stepfathers. We do not like to view mothers as sexual aggressors who abuse their own children. But in the Middle Ages there were popular exemplary stories, probably written by clerics, about mothers who, if not sexually aggressive, did have consensual sexual encounters with their own sons. As in the *exemplum* of *Dux Moraud*, the point is the power of contrition and confession; even a woman who sleeps with her own son can find grace if she is truly repentant. There are various versions of this mother-son *exemplum*; I discuss three here in order of increasing complexity. The first is *De Amore Inordinato* ('Of Excessive/Irregular Love'), chapter 13 of the popular early thirteenth-century anthology *Gesta Romanorum*.<sup>14</sup>

An emperor's daughter is so attached to her son that she sleeps in his bed till he is eighteen. The devil induces the son to have sex with his mother; when she becomes pregnant, he goes far away. The mother kills her newborn baby, but drops of its blood make four ineradicable marks on her hand so that she has to keep it covered with a glove. She is too ashamed to confess, but the Virgin appears to her confessor and tells him that the glove conceals evidence of a secret sin. He persuades the princess to remove the glove, and finds a Latin inscription relating to her sin. She confesses, and dies a few days later.

The son plays very little part in this *exemplum*; we do not know his fate. The important issue is whether the princess will confess or not. Once she

does, she dies very soon – but dies saved. A moralization following the tale offers several allegorical interpretations. One seems to assume that the princess was seduced by her father the emperor (though this is not stated in the tale), but explains this as the mystical marriage of human nature with Christ; in an alternative explanation, her incestuous lust represents the original sin of humankind. It is characteristic of religious writing in the Middle Ages to offer allegorical explanations of human behaviour, but it seems quite surprising that incest, usually so strongly condemned, can be read here as union with Christ. It is less surprising to find incest representing original sin, which might be taken as the worst and most selfish form of lust.

In some versions of this story, the incestuously conceived baby is not killed. In the verse version known as the ‘Dit du Buef’, the baby is a girl who is raised by her mother, and eventually persuades her that they should go to see the Pope, at whose court the son/father has found refuge. The Pope tells all three that they must do penance separately for seven years, each sewn into an animal skin. At the end of the seven years, all three meet by chance; after one night they die, and are revered as holy miracle-workers. One might have expected that the son would fall in love with his daughter/sister, in accordance with the double incest motif that was so popular in the later Middle Ages, and in the hagiographic tradition. This does happen in yet another version of the story, found in many texts from 1200 on, but perhaps best known from chapter 30 of the *Heptaméron*, a collection of short stories by Queen Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549).<sup>15</sup> Here the embarrassed mother sends away the baby daughter born of incest; the son (who seems to be about 15) also leaves home, and later meets and marries his unrecognized daughter/sister without consulting his mother. When he brings his bride home and his mother discovers what has happened, she is appalled and consults her confessor; she is advised to leave the happy couple in ignorance of their true relationship, but to do penance herself.

In these incest stories and their many analogues, the age of the child is sometimes mentioned (they mostly seem to be in their mid-teens), but the writers do not comment on the youth and innocence of the incest victim. In stories of father–daughter incest, the daughter is often said to be of an age to marry when her widowed father first begins to feel inappropriate desire for her. The implication is that the father becomes jealous or at least possessive at the thought of handing her over to another man; this is, of course, a common motif in folktales, myths and legends around the world. In the medieval stories, when

father–daughter incest is consummated, the daughter often becomes pregnant, as does the mother in stories of incest knowingly committed by mother and son.<sup>16</sup> It seems that in these stories at least, the daughter or son has reached puberty. At what age was puberty thought to occur in the Middle Ages, and did medieval readers and writers think of the incest victims in these stories as children in the sense that we think of children today – as minors in the care of adults whether or not they have reached puberty, not yet legally responsible for their actions, innocents who are vulnerable to abuse by the selfish adults who should be protecting them?

While most historians would dispute the argument of Philippe Ariès that during the Middle Ages there was no concept of childhood in our modern sense, it is clear that in some respects medieval children were treated as adults at a much younger age than seems appropriate to us.<sup>17</sup> A child was thought to become ‘capax doli’ (capable of deception) at seven.<sup>18</sup> There does not seem to have been any consensus about when a child became legally responsible: the age varies between 12 and 17. In 1118 English law under Henry I stated that ‘fifteen was the age at which a child might bring a legal action, or sit on a jury’.<sup>19</sup> This is more or less the time of puberty, which seems to have been broadly considered to be about 12 to 14.<sup>20</sup> Presumably puberty was the reason for the legal age for marriage – 12 for girls, 14 for boys – though in fact many nobles betrothed their children at a younger age, and sometimes even in the cradle.<sup>21</sup> The Church disapproved in principle of such practices, and a marriage before puberty was not considered valid, but there seems to have been considerable tolerance of breaches of this law; Robert of Flamborough, writing in the late twelfth century, rules in his penitential that no child could marry or promise to marry before the age of seven.<sup>22</sup>

Various schemes for describing the ages of man were proposed and discussed during the Middle Ages: they range from three ages to 12.<sup>23</sup> Two very influential commentators were Isidore of Seville (d. 636) in his *Etymologiae*, and Bartholomaeus Anglicus in his *De proprietatibus rerum* (c. 1230). Isidore used the six ages established by Augustine, but added specific age bands: *infantia* to seven, *pueritia* to 14, and *adolescentia* to 28. He links *pueri* to the word for *pure*, and notes that *pueri* ‘are not yet old enough to reproduce’.<sup>24</sup> The innocence of childhood is certainly an aspect of medieval thinking, but this did not mean that children were thought incapable of behaving badly, or even viciously.<sup>25</sup> Rob Meens argues that *infantes* were believed to be incapable of sin and

thus penances were not prescribed for them, but *pueri* did make confessions, and are mentioned in some penitentials and canons.<sup>26</sup> According to Orme, however, after 1215 children were not expected to confess; they were also not given extreme unction, on the grounds that it was intended to absolve sins committed in adulthood, and that the recipient needed adult understanding of the sacrament.<sup>27</sup>

Bartholomaeus Anglicus repeats Isidore's point about the link between *pueri* and purity, adding that they are capable neither of sexual activity nor of shame at their nakedness.<sup>28</sup> Orme draws attention to a passage in John Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* (late fourteenth century) in the section on Rape where Gower condemns as unnatural 'the man who goes seeking in a young virgin what he has not been able to do previously because her tender childishness was inadequate'.<sup>29</sup> Does this imply that a pre-pubertal girl could not respond sexually, or rather that it was physically impossible to have sex with her? Cadden notes that even when girls reached puberty, it was thought dangerous for their health to have babies before they were fully grown, though they were capable, anatomically and biologically, of sexual intercourse.<sup>30</sup> Phillips gives an historical example of a girl who was married at 12 but whose father arranged that she was not to have intercourse until she was 16; she also cites the case of Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, who had her first child at 13, and later seems to have tried to shield her grand-daughters from the same fate.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, medieval children were clearly not shielded from all knowledge of sex: Karras notes that given the lack of privacy in medieval homes, they were more likely than modern children to have witnessed sexual intercourse, though less likely to have seen images of it.<sup>32</sup> Shahar quotes the fourteenth-century writer Konrad of Megenberg who rebuked parents "who are amused by childish profanity...and those who teach girls to stimulate their genitalia, thereby arousing their sexual instinct".<sup>33</sup> Once they reached adolescence, young people were thought to be very prone to lust: according to McEdwards, 'adolescence is defined by generative ability rather than by age'.<sup>34</sup> Adolescence was an ambiguous stage in the Middle Ages and also in the early modern period, as Ralph Houlbrooke comments:

... all the more important schemes of 'ages of life' devised in antiquity and the Middle Ages put the achievement of full adulthood in the middle or later twenties. The people of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries regarded adolescents as children in some respects, adults in others, as we still do today.<sup>35</sup>



Since *adolescentia* could continue into the twenties, teenage characters in incest stories might have been considered by medieval readers to be still children even though they are close to adulthood in our terms.

The incest stories I described earlier seem to focus on teenagers who were old enough to marry according to medieval law, though still very young in our terms. This does not mean, of course, that there was no incest between parents and young children during the Middle Ages. The fact that there are almost no court records of such cases may merely mean that formal charges were rarely brought against the abusers. We know how hard it is for children today to accuse fathers or grandfathers of incest, or for wives to accuse spouses of abuse. Medieval fathers had a great deal of power over their households. Domestic problems were more likely to be dealt with behind closed doors, or in the confessional, than in the courts. Brundage discusses the rape of underage girls mostly in connection with abduction and the multiple meanings of rape in medieval law; he notes that by the fifteenth century, 'academic lawyers taught that the sexual molestation of a girl who had not yet reached puberty merited the death penalty under any circumstances'.<sup>36</sup> This suggests that not everyone shared Gower's view that sex with a pre-pubertal girl was impossible. Karras comments that 'medieval court records are full of examples of the rape of girls (and sometimes boys) under that age' (i.e. the age of puberty), but unfortunately she gives no examples or references, so it is not clear if these included cases of incest.<sup>37</sup> In an essay on children's rights in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the legal historian Richard Helmholz points out that children in the Middle Ages had no legal rights in canon law, and could not bear witness against their parents.<sup>38</sup> He reports that to his surprise, he found that 'the perceived danger was that children would violate parental authority, not that children would be subject to child abuse'; the anxiety was about violent children, not violent parents.<sup>39</sup> This may be one reason for the lack of comment on parent-child incest. Orme too notes that there was little explicit concern about the mistreatment of children by their parents: 'Certainly, people appear to have found it easier to imagine abuse by strangers or guardians than by mothers or fathers. Physical abuse in the home, in particular, attracted little attention.'<sup>40</sup> There are records of some cases of monks accused of abusing children in their charge, both sexually and by severe physical punishment, but I do not know of any evidence for cases of sexual abuse of young children by parents.<sup>41</sup>

Certainly there was plenty of opportunity in the Middle Ages for closely related family members to have sex, in that it was quite normal

to share beds, and to sleep naked; and given the lack of reliable contraception, wives must have been frequently pregnant and so sexually unavailable, or unattractive. Some clerical writers warned against letting young brothers and sisters sleep together, apparently for fear of sexually inappropriate behaviour, particularly if they were over seven years of age.<sup>42</sup> In Hartmann's version of the Gregorius story, we are specifically told at the beginning that the orphaned brother and sister sleep in separate beds, though this does not prevent him from seducing her (lines 294–5). Yet historically the main worry about shared beds seems to have been that infants sleeping with their parents would be accidentally smothered, rather than seduced.<sup>43</sup> 'Overlaying' was a significant cause of infant death in the later Middle Ages. Orme cites a fifteenth-century cleric who advised godparents at baptism 'to make sure that the child did not sleep by the father or mother until it could say "*Ligge outter!*", in other words, "*Lie further over!*"'<sup>44</sup> Some mothers clearly continued to sleep beside sons who were past puberty. In a French version of the *exemplum* of the incestuous mother discussed above, when the son reaches 'bon äage' he suggests to his doting mother that it is time they stopped sharing a bed; she rejects the idea, claiming that he just wants the freedom to sleep around with loose women, and soon she is pregnant by him.<sup>45</sup>

Medieval children did not always grow up with their own families, of course: babies might live with their wetnurses, and it was common practice for the gentry and nobility to send their children away to be raised elsewhere. Some historians argue that these practices may have reduced sexual tensions in the household caused by close proximity, though Epstein thinks that this early separation may have led to more incestuous desire.<sup>46</sup> The presence in affluent households of servants who might be as young as eight or ten may have offered another outlet for the lust of those attracted to the young. There may have been significant differences in behaviour of different social classes, since the nobility often married much younger than lower social classes; girls in particular were likely to marry earlier (especially if they were heiresses). In a culture where virginity was so important for upper-class brides, it would seem problematic for fathers to seduce their unmarried daughters, as King Antiochus does in the story of Apollonius of Tyre. A passage from Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* highlights the problems caused by loss of virginity: 'Great harm often comes to young women from Rape and her followers: when they are no longer virgins in body and the secret is out, they lose their chances at marriage, bring scandal to their family; so that (like orphans) they run away for shame, and, forced into brothels

to support themselves, their shame increases into more shame.<sup>47</sup> In life, if not always in literature, father–daughter incest would surely have damaged marriage prospects.

One might argue that the lack of reference to incest between parents and young children in imaginative literature in the Middle Ages reflected a general tendency not to discuss something so repugnant as child abuse, rather than the rarity of such incest in medieval society. More significant and more problematic, I think, is the lack of reference to it in lawcodes, penitentials and confessors' manuals, which deal with many varieties of sin, including many forms of incest. There are a few references in early penitentials to the penalties prescribed by the Church for a mother who fornicates or imitates fornication with her little son, but nothing comparable for fathers and daughters, strangely.<sup>48</sup> Incest is much discussed in canon law and in didactic treatises and ecclesiastical manuals, but children are hardly ever mentioned in this context. In the later Middle Ages, when there was a strong emphasis on contrition and confession, writers of penitentials give examples of the sorts of questions confessors should ask. They include such details as whether the confessant has slept with a blood-relative, a menstruating woman, a Jewess or heretic, or a nun, a goddaughter, or a future daughter-in-law.<sup>49</sup> This concern with incest in the broader sense, rather than nuclear-family incest, is also found in court records about incest cases, which tend to be about whether a man can marry the sister of a woman with whom he has already slept, or a godchild, or a cousin in the third degree. Age is not a particular concern. In John Mirk's fourteenth-century manual for parish priests, the discussion of Lechery begins with incest; Mirk suggests that the confessant should be asked whether he has committed incest, and if so whether the woman was married or not, and how closely related she was – but here too there is no reference to age.<sup>50</sup> The possible abuse of pre-pubertal children by close family members really does not seem to have been a concern for medieval writers.

Incest in the broader sense was certainly a concern, however. We know from comments in a variety of sources (such as law codes, court cases, penitentials, and church councils) that the laws about marriage partners were often honoured in the breach: the nobility and royalty frequently married close relatives, and sometimes pleaded inappropriate consanguinity as a reason for dissolving an unsatisfactory marriage.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes incestuous couples got away with illegal marriages, but popes and bishops could and did excommunicate kings and barons who married against the rules, as well as humbler folk.<sup>52</sup> Modern scholars have produced various theories about the rationale for the medieval

incest laws.<sup>53</sup> According to Duby, the complexity of the marriage laws gave the church more control over the aristocracy. Goody takes a more cynical view, that the church stood to benefit if it was difficult for the laity to find appropriate marriage partners; unmarried people might leave large legacies to the church.<sup>54</sup> However, this implies concerted and devious action on the part of the church as an institution – and as Mitterauer has pointed out, Goody's argument would not explain the insistence on spiritual affinity as another area of potential incest.<sup>55</sup> According to Herlihy, the wide reach of the incest laws protected female members of the extended family living in one household from sexual aggression.<sup>56</sup>

Herlihy's view is accepted by Epstein, who argues that incest and child abuse may well have been increasing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>57</sup>

Urbanization in the eleventh and twelfth centuries permitted an increased reliance in the middle and upper classes on wet nurses. This practice probably weakened the innate lack of sexual interest in people raised together, especially when the wet nurse did not live with the family. This weakening of the trait would lead to more sibling incest/child abuse within the family and undercut opposition, based on some fear of pollution, to cousin marriages.

Epstein makes it clear that this is only a hypothesis developed with hindsight: 'Contemporaries were probably not conscious of this cause-and-effect relationship, but heightened concern to define incest could result from more personal experience and knowledge of the problem.'<sup>58</sup> However, he also argues that there was growing concern about the sexuality of children in the early thirteenth century, and that the changes in the incest laws promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council were prompted by this concern: 'By 1215, some realism may have set in, but the key to understanding the church's motives in my view remains the children – either the sexual abuse of them or the production of tainted children through incestuous unions.'<sup>59</sup> This is an interesting theory, but it raises a number of problems. Medieval references to 'the production of tainted children through incestuous unions' are very rare, as far as I am aware – and indeed, in medieval romance and hagiography, the children born of incest are often outstandingly beautiful and talented.<sup>60</sup> The frequency of stories about parent-child incest in imaginative literature, both ecclesiastical and secular, does suggest that the church was worried about incest; but very little emphasis is put on the age of the children

concerned, who are usually past puberty – teenagers in our terms. The lack of reference to young children in the very detailed discussions of incest in penitentials, clerical manuals and law codes remains surprising and problematic. Given what we have discovered about the frequency of incest between adults and young children in our own society, it is hard to believe that it did not occur just as frequently in the Middle Ages; but the evidence is hard to find.

## Notes

1. There has been a great deal of interest in medieval children in recent decades. For bibliography see Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), and the introduction and individual essays in Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005) (which was brought to my attention by George Rousseau at a very late stage in the writing of this essay). There is also a useful survey in Barbara Hanawalt, 'Medievalists and the Study of Childhood', *Speculum*, 77 (2002): 440–60.
2. Jean-Charles Payen, 'L' Enfance occultée: note sur un problème de typologie littéraire au Moyen-Age', in *L'Enfant au Moyen-Age*, *Senefiance* 9 (Provence: CUERMA, 1980), pp. 179–200; see also Classen, *Childhood*, pp. 10–11 and 12–20.
3. For more extended discussion see the chapter on medieval incest law in Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 9–52.
4. For an overview of medieval incest stories, see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*. It had not occurred to me to consider the age of the children in these stories until I was invited to participate in the seminar series on which this book is based.
5. See, for instance, Lowell Edmunds and Alan Dundes (eds), *Oedipus: A Folklore Casebook* (New York: Garland, 1984) and Allen Johnson and Douglass Price-Williams, *Oedipus Ubiquitous: The Family in World Folk Literature* (Stanford: Stanford: University Press, 1996).
6. See Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations, including a text and translation of the 'Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri'* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991) and G.A.A. Kortekaas, *The Story of Apollonius* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004). For Shakespeare's play see the Arden edition; William Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (London: Arden Edition, 2004). My synopsis follows the standard Latin version, though there are variations of both names and plot in some other versions (in the play the protagonist is Pericles; his wife is Tarsia, daughter of Simonides; and his daughter Marina marries Lysimachus).
7. See *La Vie du Pape Grégoire*, ed. H.B. Sol (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1977) and Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius*, ed. Hermann Paul. 14th edn, revised by B. Wachinger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992); for a convenient facing page

- translation of the German version, see Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius the Good Sinner*, trans. Sheena Z. Buehne (New York: Ungar, 1966). For discussion see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 110–19.
8. For references and discussion see Elizabeth Archibald, 'Arthur and Mordred', *Variations on an Incest Theme*, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 25 (1989): 1–15, and Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 213–19; the account of the incest and of the exposure differs slightly in the French and English versions.
  9. See Sir Thomas Malory, *Works*, ed. E. Vinaver, 3rd edn, rev. P.J.C. Field, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), I, 41, 44 and 55.
  10. This is true in versions where he is Arthur's son by incest; when Mordred is Arthur's nephew, he does sometimes seduce or even marry Guinevere.
  11. For references and discussion see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 126–33.
  12. Philippe de Beaumanoir, *La Mankine*, ed. and trans. Barbara Sargent-Baur (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999). The best-known Middle English version is *Emaré*; there are versions in most European languages. For further references and discussion, see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 145–91.
  13. For references and discussion see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 188–9; I have conflated several versions in this synopsis.
  14. *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. H. Oesterley (Berlin: Weidmann, 1872), pp. 291–4. For references and discussion of all the versions discussed here, see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 133–44.
  15. Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, ed. M. François (Paris: Champion, 1963), pp. 229–33.
  16. It is interesting that in the Gregorius story, where the son is old enough to be accepted as an appropriate champion and husband for the duchess by her barons, no child is born of their incestuous union. Perhaps this is to make Gregorius seem as saintly as possible when he becomes Pope.
  17. Much has been written about medieval children since the publication of Ariès's controversial book in 1960: see Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962). For bibliography see n. 1 above.
  18. Rufinus of Bologna, cited by Glenn McEdwards, 'Canonistic Determinations of the Stages of Childhood', in Gunar Freibergs (ed.), *Aspectus et Affectus: Essays and Editions in Grosseteste and Medieval Intellectual Life in Honor of Richard C. Dales* (New York: AMS Press, 1993), p. 70.
  19. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 322.
  20. Glenn McEdwards, 'Canonistic Determinations of the Stages of Childhood', p. 73 assumes that the age of menarche was probably about twelve. See also Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 26; Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 145; Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 329; and Kim Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in Medieval England, 1270–1540* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 9–10 and 24–6. I am indebted to Dr Elisabeth Dutton for bringing Phillips' useful book to my attention.
  21. Mary Martin McLaughlin 'Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries', in Carol Neel (ed.), *Medieval*

- Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household and Children* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 48; see also James Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 357.
22. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 336; Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 357; Robert of Flamborough, *Liber Poenitentialis*, II.51, ed. J.J. Firth, CSB (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 85.
  23. For detailed discussion, illustration and bibliography, see Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) and also John Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
  24. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI. 2.1–8, cited and translated by Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 61; see also Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 17–18.
  25. See the comments on childhood in Michael Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age: The Human Life Cycle in Medieval Thought* (London: University Press of America), pp. 89–95, and Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 25–6.
  26. Meens, 'Childhood and Confession in the Early Middle Ages', in Diana Wood (ed.), *The Church and Childhood* (Oxford: Blackwells for the Ecclesiastical History Society), pp. 53–65. He cites the case of a ten-year-old boy abused by an older boy; the victim was expected to do penance, perhaps as a sort of ritual cleansing (pp. 62–3).
  27. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 215. See also Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 18–19 on medieval attitudes to the innocence of childhood, and pp. 24–5 on the question of sin and guilt in young children.
  28. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Liber VI, cited by McLaughlin, 'Survivors and Surrogates', pp. 60–1.
  29. John Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*, lines 8704–12, trans. W.B. Wilson (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992), cited by Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 103.
  30. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 145.
  31. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens*, pp. 36 and 38–9; see also Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 17. In the introduction to his collection of essays, Classen discusses the thirteenth-century German romance *Mai und Beafloer*, in which the childishness of the young heroine is repeatedly emphasized even after she has given birth: see Classen, *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, pp. 44–5.
  32. See Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 18, 153–4.
  33. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 101.
  34. McEdwards, 'Canonistic Determinations of the Stages of Childhood', p. 71; he cites Bede as claiming that 'adolescents are those who can copulate' (p. 68).
  35. Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450–1700* (Longman: London, 1984), p. 166.
  36. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 532.
  37. Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, p. 154; she also states that 'rape of a child was punished very severely' (p. 126).
  38. R.H. Helmholz, 'And were there Children's Rights in Early Modern England?', *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 1 (1993): 23–32.
  39. Helmholz, 'And were there Children's Rights in Early Modern England?', 32.
  40. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 101.
  41. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 104 cites references to a case involving an eleven-year-old boy, and another involving an eight-year-old girl; paedophile



- priests are not a phenomenon of our age alone. See also McLaughlin, 'Survivors and Surrogates', p. 54, n. 186 on Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus*.
42. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 79 cites John Mirk, fourteenth-century author of a manual for parish priests, who urged that children over seven should not sleep together; see John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Gillis Kristensson, Lund Studies in English, 49 (Lund: Gleerup, 1974), p. 80 (lines 216–21). See also Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 101.
  43. Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 78; McLaughlin, 'Survivors and Surrogates', 42.
  44. Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 78–9.
  45. 'La Bourjosse de Romme', in B. Munk Olsen (ed.), *Dits en quatrains d'alexandrins monorimés de Jehan de Saint-Quentin*, Société des anciens textes français (Paris: Picard, 1978), pp. 40–1.
  46. See, for instance, Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 55–76; Steven A. Epstein, 'The Medieval Family: A Place of Refuge and Sorrow', in Carol Neel (ed.), *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household and Children*. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 422–3 (I return to his argument at the end of this essay).
  47. Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*, lines 8725–36.
  48. See the useful collection of early penitentials in translation by John T. McNeill and Helena Gamer 1938, and for discussion of the incest references Pierre J. Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials* (Toronto and London: Toronto University Press, 1984), pp. 30–2. In Payer's appendix on 'The Language of the Penitentials' (140–53) the word *incestus* does not appear; references to mother/son incest occur under *fornicare* and *fornicatio*.
  49. See, for example, Robert of Flamborough, *Liber Poenitentialis*, IV.viii.225, p. 197, quoted in Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, p. 37.
  50. Kristensson, Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, pp. 138–9 (lines 1235–42).
  51. See Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 41–52.
  52. Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Foster (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) and idem, *The Knight, the Priest and the Lady*, trans. Barbara Bray (London: Allen Lane, 1984).
  53. For further discussion of both rules and rationales, see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 40–1 and Epstein, 'The Medieval Family', pp. 418–21.
  54. Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially chapters 3, 6, and 7.
  55. Michael Mitterauer, 'Christianity and Endogamy', trans. Markus German, *Continuity and Change*, 6(3) (1991): 295–333 (320–1).
  56. David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 61–2, 78 and 135, and 'Making Sense of Incest: Women and the Marriage Rules of the Early Middle Ages' in Bernard S. Bachrach and David Nicholas (eds), *Law, Custom and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe: Essays in Honor of Bryce Lyon* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 1990), *passim*.
  57. Epstein, 'The Medieval Family', p. 417–24; the quotation is taken from p. 422.
  58. Ibid., p. 422. For alternative explanations for rising concern about incest, see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 26–41.
  59. Epstein, 'The Medieval Family', p. 423.
  60. See Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 50–2 and 183–4.



## Elisabeth Dutton responds

Elizabeth Archibald's chapter reveals an interesting tension in the surviving evidence about incest between adults and children in the medieval world: in the numerous retellings of tales involving incest, the focus on the familial ties which make a relationship incestuous appears to preclude any interest in the age of the protagonists; on the other hand, there is evidence that the medieval world was concerned about the age at which children might experience sex, one striking example of which is that, as Brundage's research reveals,<sup>1</sup> sexual abuse of a pre-pubescent girl was seen as a capital offence.

Thus the evidence might suggest a distinction between the literary pre-occupations of the medieval writer and the actual concerns of the medieval society in which the literature was produced. Of course, it is always dangerous to read literary material – poetry and romance – alongside historical material such as Brundage's academic legal evidence. It is dangerous to expect a literary text, particularly perhaps a romance, to provide an exact portrait of the social setting in which it is created or disseminated. Furthermore, as Archibald has indicated, incest may adopt an almost symbolic value in medieval literature, and, although to make incest symbolic is not necessarily to deny its literal reality, yet it inevitably focuses attention on certain aspects of the incest which are conducive to symbolic interpretation.

So, as Archibald notes, in the Latin story of Apollonius of Tyre, Antiochus' sexual abuse of his daughter makes him a bad father: he is also a bad king. The private abuse of a father's power runs parallel to the public abuse of a king's power. It is an appropriate symbol – rape is as much about power as about sex, or even more so. But might the abuse of power not seem more shocking as the victim is younger, smaller, more vulnerable? Jean E. Jost writes that in medieval literature, 'in most cases of destruction and reclamation of children, audience involvement is ensured through the force of *pitié* evoked for the vulnerable children, often fragile, docile, unknowing victims of fate or fortune, good or evil'.<sup>2</sup> Historically, the vulnerable child victim was vital in pulling together a community against the Jews, as Diane Peters Auslander has demonstrated.<sup>3</sup> If the child is the most poetically effective victim of violent abuse, why not also of sexual abuse?

In the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, it is not necessary that Antiochus's daughter be a child: in fact, it is necessary that she be old enough to be desired by other men as a wife, and it is the thought of giving her to another man which suddenly creates Antiochus' lust. *Et cum pater*

*deliberaret, cui potissimum filiam suam in matrimonium daret, cogente iniqua cupiditate flamma concupiscentiae incidit in amorem filiae suae.* ('While her father was considering to whom best to give his daughter in marriage, driven by immoral passion and inflamed by lust he fell in love with his own daughter').<sup>4</sup> The crime which has a sexual manifestation seems to have its first motive in envy, or the greedy inability to give something away: Antiochus is lacking the largesse which is a vital quality in the medieval ruler, and his determined sexual possession of his daughter is at some level symbolic of this failing as a ruler.

In this version of the story the daughter is shown resisting her father, and resolving to kill herself after the rape: it is the 'cajoling words and arguments' (*blando sermonis conloquio*) of her nurse which persuade her to live and 'satisfy her father's desire' (*patris sui voluntati satisfacere*).<sup>5</sup> She is fully capable of apprehending what has happened to her and what its consequences will be: she declares that 'in this bedroom two noble reputations have perished' (*in cubiculo duo nobilia perierunt nomina*).<sup>6</sup> Pathos in this scene comes not from the vulnerability of a naïve child but from the daughter's mature awareness of her own ruin, which she expresses in a sophisticated comment: *periit in me nomen patris* – 'for me the name of father has ceased to exist'.<sup>7</sup> The violation is not of youth but of the father–daughter bond.

In Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, when the story of Antiochus is retold, the daughter's age is again unmentioned but we are told that the virginity she loses is a flower which she 'hath longe bore',<sup>8</sup> which does not suggest extreme youth. Again, the focus is on the horror of Antiochus raping his own child: 'The wylde fader thus devoureth his oghne fleish'.<sup>9</sup> The daughter's lament echoes the tragedy of 'for me the name of father has ceased to exist': in Gower, she mourns that that 'Thing which mi bodi ferst begat into this world, onliche that mi worldes worshippe hath bereft'.<sup>10</sup> The phrase again emphasizes the abuse of power along with the abuse of one's child: in drawing attention to Antiochus as the creator of her body, the daughter describes him in terms recalling the Christian God, and this makes his destruction of her worldly honour the more shocking as the greater power is abused.

When Shakespeare makes Gower the narrator of *Pericles* as well as its source, he does not put this abuse on stage: we learn from the narrator about Antiochus and the daughter whom he 'provokes' and 'entices' to incest. 'Provocation' and 'enticement' suggest seduction more than rape, which, together with the 'many princes' who come 'to seek her as a bedfellow', indicates a degree of sexual maturity, although we are again told nothing directly about the girl's age.<sup>11</sup> On seeing her suitor Pericles,

the daughter hopes that he will successfully solve the riddle which will win her, saying, 'Of all ssayed yet, mayst thou prove prosperous; Of all ssayed yet, I wish thee happiness'.<sup>12</sup> These lines, as the only two lines the daughter is given in the whole play, are the only direct insight into her attitude to the incestuous relationship in which she is engaged. Suzanne Gossett notes that under the influence of feminist readings the daughter has been variously portrayed as complicit in the incest – in one production she was 'wrapped with her father in a large piece of cloth' – or as desperate to escape: Gossett describes the 1998 Washington Shakespeare Company's production in which 'a terrified child eagerly whispered in Pericles' ear until Antiochus pulled her away'.<sup>13</sup> Although the daughter's lines might suggest an eagerness to escape, Shakespeare seems readier than his source to give some blame to the daughter. In the narrator's comment, 'Bad child, worse father, to entice his own to evil',<sup>14</sup> child and father seem both parallel subjects of the verb 'to entice.' Is the suggestion that the narrator considers the daughter has 'enticed her own' with her charms – 'so buxom, blithe and full of face as heaven had lent her all his grace'?<sup>15</sup>

'Bad child, worse father' – what is certain is that just as the appellation 'bad' stands in relation to its comparative 'worse', so the 'child' is a 'child' in relation to her 'father'. In medieval and renaissance English as well as in modern English the term 'child' has various meanings. The *OED* indicates that a 'child' was originally an unborn or newly-born human being, and the term was always used in relation to the mother: this sense is preserved in phrases such as 'with child' and 'child-birth'. However, as early as the year 1000 this meaning had been extended to a young person of either sex below the age of puberty, and no longer necessarily related the child to its mother. By Shakespeare's time, the word could also be used to distinguish the female, referred to as a 'child', from the male: in *The Winter's Tale*, the shepherds finding the abandoned infant Perdita ask: 'A boy, or a child?'<sup>16</sup> But from the twelfth century onwards the term could also be used as a correlative to 'parent', signifying simply 'offspring'. For all our own age's interest in childhood as a particular developmental stage, the term 'child' retains non-specific meaning: 'Do you have children?' is an enquiry about descendants, regardless of age. The retellings of the story of Apollonius of Tyre are stories of 'child abuse', but not the abuse of a child defined by age; rather that of a child defined as offspring.

If, as the *OED* states, this use of 'child' was originally always in relation to the mother, new aspects of the motherless state of Antiochus' daughter are suggested. In one sense, perhaps, the daughter ceases to be

a child when the mother is lost. The necessary substitution of the father for the mother as the parent defining the child is clearly problematic for Antiochus' daughter: from the father's point of view, the connection between mother and child may bring to the fore the idea that the daughter is in some way a substitute for the lost wife. Gower's telling of the tale hints at this through its textual juxtaposition of wife and daughter: 'The king, which made mochel mone, tho stod, as who seith, al him one withoute wif, but natheles his doghter, which was piereles of beaute, duelte about him stille.' Similarly, when in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* Leontes explores the idea of marrying a young woman whom he does not know to be his daughter, he comments that he 'thought of' his wife as he looked at her.<sup>17</sup> In Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, when Walter tests his wife, Griselda, by proposing to replace her with a young woman whom Griselda does not know to be her own daughter, the young woman is described by comparison with her mother: 'For she is fairer, as they deemen alle, than is Griselde, and moore tendre of age.'<sup>18</sup> The text goes on to offer, in the voices of Walter's subjects, an unwitting justification for incest – a process of refining the royal blood: 'And fairer fruyt bitwene hem sholde falle, and more plesant, for hire heigh lynage.'<sup>19</sup> When the father replaces his wife with his daughter, he can increase the strength of his own blood in the blood line.

Although it is important not to take literary portraits of society as historical documents, medieval literature cannot be dismissed as unrelated to medieval society's perception of childhood. James A. Schultz writes that 'the knowledge of childhood is the culturally constructed *meaning* of childhood, and literary texts are rich sources of cultural meaning, richer perhaps than census records or school reports.'<sup>20</sup> It might seem, however, that to look for evidence of child abuse, as we understand it, in medieval incest narratives is to ask the wrong questions, or at least questions in which the text is not itself primarily interested. Incest may have strong symbolic power in medieval romance narratives. Some medieval incest narratives involve a child who cannot be defined as such by age, but only in relation to its parent: the trauma for the 'child' is the loss of the parent figure inherent in this incestuous relationship – 'the name of father is lost to me'. If it is the more modern writings of Freud and subsequent psychoanalysts which have enabled us to articulate the ongoing significance of the parent-child bond, medieval literature may be nonetheless aware that one important aspect of childhood is this: as long as we have parents, we are always someone's child.

## Notes

1. See Archibald, above, p. 95.
2. Jean E. Jost, 'Loving Parents in Middle English Literature', in Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 307–28 (p. 327).
3. Diane Peters Auslander, 'Victims of Martyrs: Children, Anti-Judaism, and the Stress of Change in Medieval England', in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, pp. 105–34 (p. 134).
4. *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations, including a text and translation of the 'Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri'*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991) pp. 112–13.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G.C. Macaulay (London: Oxford University Press, 1900) Early English Texts Society Extra Series 81–2, 2 vols. Vol. 1, p. 394, l. 312.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 394 ll. 309–10.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 395 ll. 329–31.
11. William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2004), I.0, ll. 26–33.
12. *Pericles*, I.i, ll. 60–1.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
14. *Ibid.*, I.0, ll. 27–8.
15. *Ibid.*, I.0, ll. 23–4.
16. William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J.H.P. Pafford (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1999), III.iii, l. 70.
17. *The Winter's Tale* V.i, ll. 226–7.
18. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Clerk's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 150, ll. 988–9.
19. *Ibid.*, ll. 990–1.
20. James A. Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages 1100–1350*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1995), p. 14.

# 4

## ‘Under-Age’ Sexual Activity in Reformation Geneva

*William G. Naphy*

Calvin was more than a famous Protestant reformer; he was also a trained lawyer. As such, in 1554 he was asked to give advice on a case involving five schoolboys who had been caught fooling around with one another.<sup>1</sup> The case involved the children of very prominent families and, to a large extent, the names of those involved were kept quiet. The children were accused of ‘incest or buggery...with one another’ and their relatives were called before the Senate to discuss the entire affair.<sup>2</sup> So ‘weighty’ was the matter that advice was also sought from the ‘ministers and learned men’. Initial reports suggested the number of youths involved ranged from four to nine, but it soon became clear that only five were implicated. The list of relatives who attended evidences the social and political prominence of the families involved: Jacques-Nicolas Vulliet; Jean Levet, goldsmith; Tivent Patru; Charles Goula.<sup>3</sup> The two younger boys (Patru and Tares) were ordered to be beaten privately by their parents while the older boys were to throw effigies of themselves on a fire (warning them of their fate should they reoffend) and then be chained in separate rooms in the city’s hospital for three months.<sup>4</sup> Upon their release they were beaten in front of all the assembled schoolboys.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin and his fellow lawyers said that there were three stages of ‘spiritual’ development and maturity. The earliest and first stage (childhood) was the period in which a person did not understand sexual activity (was ‘spiritually incompetent’) and could not perform sexually. That is, the child was immature both physically and ‘psychologically’. In the adolescent stage, individuals were able to perform sexually but lacked a clear (spiritual) understanding of the enormity of their actions.<sup>6</sup> Or, as Roger Edgeworth preached in the 1550s, adolescents were ‘old enough to be wise’ and ‘although neither children in age, neither in condition,

[are] all given . . . to follow their lusts'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, being unmarried, an adolescent was in danger of committing a range of sins (fornication, adultery, sodomy, bestiality) without full comprehension. In the last stage of growing up (adulthood) the person was both physically and 'spiritually' able to engage in sexual activities fully aware (by their conscience and the teachings of church and state) of the consequences of their actions.

Thus lawyers and theologians advised that children could not be held accountable for their part in a sexual act; they were purely victims of rape and abuse. Adolescents might be innocent, partially guilty, or wholly culpable. Depending on the actual events an adolescent might be acquitted or executed (or given any range of punishments in between). An adult was fully accountable (unless mentally deficient) and therefore liable to the full weight of the law. As will be shown, this complex and *ad hoc* approach to adolescent sexual activity produced dramatically differing results in individual trials, especially as the 'age' at which one moved from one phase of development to the next was never clearly fixed. So, when considering the reaction to sexual activities involving anyone under the age of 20 (or so) one has to remember that there was no pre-conceived, exact age at which one moved from one stage to the next. Thus, as will be seen below, one 16-year-old might be seen as an innocent victim while another might be burnt at the stake.

However, it is important to recall how difficult any discussion of sexuality or sexual activity is in the early modern period regardless of the age of the individuals involved. Even a study of adult sexual activity faces the hurdles of individual and societal reticence and official opprobrium. Sex, by its very nature, especially illicit sex, leaves little documentary evidence apart from trials. Moreover, children (even adolescents) leave even fewer records. Early modern societies were certainly not given to recording and preserving their impressions or experiences. Thus, it is extremely difficult to find much to study which might allow one to say anything at all on the subject.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, however, Geneva's criminal records are extensive and preserve nearly seventy trials in the period 1545–1672 involving children and adolescents either as defendants or victims. The vast bulk of these trials are in the period 1545–1625, with an average of a trial every 18 months.<sup>9</sup>

The focus of the discussion which follows will be on attitudes to sexual activity among the young. However, these trials do shed considerable, if incidental and anecdotal, light on one of the great, enduring debates amongst scholars of early modern historiography. That is, what did parents think about, and feel towards, their children. Basically, and

perhaps simplistically, some scholars argue that the high level of infant mortality (among other factors) hardened parents and adults such that they had little emotional attachment to their children. According to this school of thought, the situation began to change during the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the other hand are those scholars who take the view that parents did care for their children in a way which would be termed 'modern' by the other camp in the debate.<sup>10</sup> This essay will not offer a definitive answer to the question, but it will suggest that parental affection was alive and well in early-modern Calvinist Geneva.

To begin with, there is no doubt that Geneva's magistrates, minister, lawyers and parents were appalled by the sexual abuse of a child.<sup>11</sup> Lawyers and judges frequently commented on the loss of innocence as well as their surprise that the assailant did not stop when it was obvious that the victim (a child) was in pain.<sup>12</sup> Time and again it seemed incredible to these officials and dignitaries that anyone would continue to cause physical and emotional distress for no other reason than the fulfillment of 'base and beastly appetite... [a] sinful appetite'.<sup>13</sup>

As will be seen, the visceral reaction of officials and parents was similar to those of modern societies; nevertheless, there are differences which complicate any easy comparisons and simplistic assumptions.<sup>14</sup> First in theory, modern societies have distinct, formal ages of legal maturity for sexual activities. In most, one minute before midnight of the sixteenth (or fourteenth, or eighteenth) birthday the individual is a child afforded the full and potent protection of the law. A minute later, the individual is an adult almost wholly abandoned by the law. Females often pass into 'legal' adulthood at a younger age and some societies attempt to protect even those who are 'legally' of age from predation by authority figures (such as teachers). The reality, however, is that modern nations have diverse and often-perplexing 'ages of consent' for sex, marriage, drink, the vote, driving, and service in the armed forces varying dramatically from 12 to 21.<sup>15</sup> Thus, a person might be able to marry at 14 but only drink at 21 (if at all).<sup>16</sup>

The situation in the world before the French Revolution was similar in practice, though often without the clear codification of the various 'ages of consent'. Most societies had an age at which a person became free of parental control and able to exercise full civic rights.<sup>17</sup> In Geneva, this was around 25 years of age. However, the emphasis was upon one's ability to enter into legal contracts as an independent individual. What these societies never really tried to do was to define with legal precision the precise moment at which a child became a sexual adult.



Indeed, this twofold understanding of development would not have been understood.

The cases examined in this chapter are not preserved in isolation. Rather, they are part of an enormous collection of criminal dossiers relating to crimes of sex preserved in the Genevan State Archives. In most cases, these records preserve the verbatim transcripts of actual interrogations along with witness statements, forensic reports made by doctors or midwives as well as other pieces of evidence such as love letters and amorous poetry – and, from the 1560s, an excellent recipe for ‘A very good aspic’.<sup>18</sup> There are about another 300 that relate to ‘deviant’ or ‘unnatural’ sex acts and a further 3,000 that relate mostly to fornication and adultery in the period from the Reformation in 1535 to the mid-1660s.<sup>19</sup>

It is also important to understand the structure of a Genevan trial. Cases came to the attention of the courts through the denunciation of private citizens, the requests of the Consistory or, rarely, the direct action of magistrates. The city’s prosecuting magistrate (*Lieutenant*) and his assistants (*auditeurs*) then gathered evidence. If there were grounds to proceed, they would interrogate the defendant. This would take place before the *Lieutenant*, an assistant and a scribe; however, the other *auditeurs* and, indeed, the entire senate might also be present. Thus, anywhere from three to thirty senior members of Geneva’s government might be present. In complex cases, the magistrates (who were not legally trained) would send the entire dossier to the city’s legal professionals. They would then write an opinion and the trial would proceed to a verdict or torture. In the latter case additional legal opinions might be solicited.

The key to these trials, however, is that the legal advisors were not present. Thus, the dossiers had to be very detailed indeed. This even included what might be called ‘stage directions’. Thus, the scribe would note if someone wept, or wept ‘profusely’, or threw themselves to their knees. In addition, the transcripts would try to communicate the vehemence of exchanges between the witnesses and the defendants who were confronted personally. As much as possible, the dossiers were designed to provide the lawyers with the clearest, most detailed picture of the events. Consequently, they are ideal sources for examining the interplay of defendants, prosecutors, judging magistrates, character witnesses and witnesses for the prosecution.

The discussion which follows will consider cases of pre-adult sexual activity in four basic categories. The first category involves the physical, non-sexual abuse of the young as well as attempts to ‘debauch’ them.

The second relates to the abuse of pre-adult females. The third group of cases looks at the abuse of pre-adult males. Fourthly, the essay will examine cases which relate to sexual activity among the pre-adult. These four categories accurately define the broad groupings among the trials; each exemplar has been chosen not only for the detail contained in the given dossier but also the extent to which each provides as full an example of the types of information which can be gleaned from the other trials in the category.

The first category relates not to the sexual abuse of the young but rather to treatment of the young which was 'abusive' in a more general sense. These trials serve to highlight the importance that Geneva's rulers placed on protecting the young. In 1600, the Consistory in the rural parish of Gex referred a case to Geneva. They had discovered an engagement between Jean Bourgeois, aged 45, and Clauda Corbet, aged 10.<sup>20</sup> The match had been contracted with the consent of Clauda's mother, Françoise, and her uncle, Bernard Roch. The first cause of concern was that the age of the child made this tantamount to rape (Geneva's term for the sexual abuse of a young female).<sup>21</sup> However, they suspected there was more to the case than met the eye. The 'groom' was a Catholic; Clauda's relatives were, it seems, also Catholic. What the local officials suspected is that this was not actually a marriage but rather a type of guardianship designed to allow Clauda to be spirited across Lake Geneva to the recently re-Catholicized southern shore of the lake. Geneva's judges agreed and simply annulled the contract and forbade her family from sending Clauda to live with any relatives across the lake.

The second case in this category comes from 1611 and involves Gamaliel Cadet from Orbe, near Neuchâtel.<sup>22</sup> He was accused of debauching Geneva's youth. He had been inspiring wicked thoughts in the minds of Bernard Chaillot, aged 15, Pierre Revilliod, aged 20, Ami du Fossal, aged 21, and Moise Noel, aged 37. Even given that Geneva's legal age of majority was 25, these are hardly all impressionable youths. But what exactly had he said or done? He had told them, or more accurately bragged, that he had worked for the exiled Bishop of Geneva in Annecy. He had travelled to Rome and seen the Pope (though he had got sick in the pontifical city). He had visited Bologna and Turin. Indeed, he extolled the virtues of travel. It seems that he was being accused of making Catholic countries sound interesting and exciting. The entire senate attended his one and only interrogation. The result? They halted the trial and offered him an immediate job working for the city (presumably) as a herald, advisor, translator or some combination thereof.<sup>23</sup>

A number of interesting inferences can be suggested at this point. These cases relate more to misconduct involving the young than to

sex. First, the state and parents were very interested in the 'doings' of the young. Cadet's behaviour worried the state enough to investigate but, in the end, the magistrates concluded that the teenager was more useful than dangerous. Secondly, the city's rulers were perceptive when confronted with strange circumstances and even versatile in coming to judgements in these cases. They might well have charged Bourgeois with incest to make an example of him and discourage similar devious attempts to raise a child as a Catholic. Instead, the city's response was measured and clearly tailored to the specifics of the case and the state's ultimate goals. The girl was kept in Genevan – and Protestant – hands. These examples suggest an adult community (parents, ministers, and magistrates) interested in the young and keen to deal sympathetically and individually with young people and their problems.

In 1568, Louis Guey (aged 72) was beheaded for having sexual relations with Beatrice George (aged 13).<sup>24</sup> The man lived with her family and, because of his age, had been allowed to sleep in the same room as Beatrice and her younger sisters. She had told her mother that he had touched her bottom and her father, when he was told, had said she should tell him if it happened again. In reality, for four months, Guey had been abusing the young girl. She had received money from him and, bizarrely, lessons in sex education as he had explained that 'his seed' was what caused pregnancies.<sup>25</sup> The state interrogated both the parents, viewing their failure to act immediately with grave suspicion.<sup>26</sup> It seems they suspected that there might have been some collusion by the parents amounting to prostitution. The case became even more complicated when the midwives, called in to examine Beatrice, reported that 'they had found her pure, without being corrupted'.<sup>27</sup> This then meant that penetration had not taken place and, thus, there was a question as to whether a crime (as opposed to a sin) had actually been committed. This was no minor problem. In England, it was not until *Rex v Wiseman* (1718) that a judge ruled for the first time that sodomy included anal intercourse with a woman.<sup>28</sup>

For his part, Guey says he never told her not to tell and did not know what, if anything, her parents had known. This presented the court with a problem, she had been abused (including oral sex) but had not been 'corrupted'.<sup>29</sup> The city's chief legal advisor was more certain:

Because of his great age he [should] not be subject to the same temptations and follies as a young man and it is against nature for him [to have] addressed himself in such a manner to a girl

so much younger... [In addition]...the spilling of his seed on the ground [followed by] a detestable discussion [about it]

was especially shocking. The lawyer, Colladon, strongly recommended that Guey be executed to purge the church [i.e., society] of the evil and scandal.<sup>30</sup> The judges agreed and sentenced him to be decapitated and exposed on the gibbet. The public verdict specifically mentioned the gross inequality in their ages.

However, the 13-year-old Beatrice was beaten. Why? One night, another guest had been put in the girls' bed and they had slept elsewhere. Beatrice had come in during the night and got into Louis' bed. Louis had asked if the other man was asleep and the guest had pretended that he was. Louis was not fooled and, after some whispering, Beatrice left the room.<sup>31</sup> This amounted to collusion on her part. She had felt free to talk to her parents initially, but had said nothing when the relationship had progressed. Further, she had solicited him by coming to his bed of her own 'free will'.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the jailer, Jacques Gal, had reported that she had made advances on him, too.<sup>33</sup>

Again, this case provides evidence for some tentative conclusions. There is no defined age of consent or responsibility. Beatrice appears to be more than precocious – and had initially approached her mother. The crucial issue in making Beatrice an 'accomplice' was the evidence which Guey confirmed. Beatrice had not done something expected – told her parents everything – and had done something which was unacceptable – approached Guey 'voluntarily'. While there is a lack of any appreciation of the effect of 'grooming' a victim of abuse, in most other ways these cases suggest a nuanced and 'modern' approach by the judges. Certainly, the judges accepted that Beatrice, even aged 13, was a 'sexual being' in some sense of the word.

The next set of cases relates to sexual relations involving older (adult) men and adolescent males. In 1600, Pierre Dufour, the citizen son of a naturalized Geneva, aged 19 and Pierre Brilat, a rural cowherd, aged 16 were arrested.<sup>34</sup> The villagers, when questioned, seemed to have known that a relationship had been going on for about five weeks.<sup>35</sup> Money and grain had certainly been given to the young Pierre. The father of the elder Pierre as well as the local minister had suspected something was going on but had been unable to discover the truth.

How had the case come to the courts? The two youths had argued over grazing rights. The older, socially superior Pierre had tried to badger the young Brilat and had eventually thrashed him. The boy had gone

weeping back to the village and, while being treated by local women, had called Dufour a 'bugger'. He had been told to keep quiet. When interrogated, Brilat said he had just been hurt and angry and the word meant nothing. The court refused to accept this. He also confessed that there had been some horse-play, but nothing else. Brilat apologized for using a word so slanderous and offensive. Under close questioning, he finally confessed. He could not give a motive for his actions. He admitted his error and fell weeping to his knees begging forgiveness.<sup>36</sup>

Dufour took a different tack. He denied everything. Indeed, he asserted that his defence against any accusation of sex with boys was that he had fornicated with a woman – and his father had known about it. Presumably he thought it better to hazard three days on bread and water (the sentence for fornication) than execution. There had been some horse-play, but his mother had been present and his flies had stayed done up. After a confrontation with Brilat and legal advice, Dufour was tortured. He admitted to the sex with Brilat as well as other boys and youths. His final line of defence was that he had always been the active partner.<sup>37</sup> Dufour, a citizen, was allowed to appeal to the *Council of Two Hundred* but it upheld his sentence. They were both drowned – aged 19 and 16.<sup>38</sup>

Previously, in 1561, the city had dealt with a similar, if more bizarre, case. Thomas de Reancourt and Jacques Beudant (aged 18) were arrested. More than a dozen witnesses testified that Thomas regularly groped men, especially during and immediately after church services.<sup>39</sup> He was also known to expose himself at the oddest and most public of times. It seems that a number of individuals decided that something had to be done and convinced Beudant to go along with Thomas' advances long enough to get him into a room.<sup>40</sup> Once there, they would burst in and catch Thomas, *in flagrante*.<sup>41</sup> The court thought this type of 'do-it-yourself sting operation' was objectionable and possibly criminal and delayed proceedings while some of those involved were questioned.<sup>42</sup> They were also amazed that Jacques had agreed and had allowed the situation to evolve to the point that he eventually had Thomas' tongue in his mouth and his hand groping his bottom.<sup>43</sup> The lawyers had no greater luck in deciding what to do. They noted Beudant's youth and that Reancourt was married with children.<sup>44</sup> There seemed to be a general awareness that Reancourt might have had some slight mental impairment. Indeed, Beudant's age and Reancourt's mental stability seem to have saved their lives. In the end, both were banished though Reancourt on pain of death and Beudant on pain of being flogged. While the court never clearly articulates any concern about Reancourt's mental

competence his behaviour, the nature of his acts, the willingness of so many men to tolerate it for so long, and the relatively lenient sentence suggest that this was the crucial issue.<sup>45</sup>

These cases highlight some important features of many sodomy trials, even when youth is not necessarily an issue. Sexual harassment was relatively frequent and normally dealt with by the individuals. The Reancourt–Beudant case suggests that people were often willing to tolerate very uncomfortable behaviour while some individuals were more than willing to force an issue when they thought the authorities were not acting appropriately. Reancourt's accusers clearly knew that the general view amongst their fellow citizens was to do nothing. They did not agree and were determined to put a stop to his actions. Although they did not succeed in getting him executed as a sodomite (which may not have been their goal in any case) he was removed from the city – and their pews. Secondly, Geneva's courts never articulated a clear age of accountability. Each of the cases above involved teenagers who today would be seen as legally responsible. Still, the specific circumstances of a given case decided the level of 'culpability' not an abstract concept of 'consent'. Brilat and Dufour were both executed. Their subterfuge both before the case and in the courtroom seems to have confirmed their 'culpability'. Beudant, who was the same age, seems to have been considered a 'dupe' in the 'sting operation' and, therefore, not punished harshly.

Such willingness to be lenient in some circumstances does not apply when considering cases involving the sexual abuse of boys (rather than male youths) which have much in common with cases where the victim was a young girl. Thus, the case of Abel Revery, aged seven, who accused Mathieu Durand of raping him in 1555 is very similar to that involving Beatrice above.<sup>46</sup> Unlike Beatrice, he went to his father and uncle immediately to report the attack by Mathieu who was an apprentice printer living in his father's house. Mathieu had enticed him to his room by promising to give Abel a pet bird.<sup>47</sup> Abel was required to testify a number of times and seems to have done so with little difficulty. He was examined by two barber-surgeons who swore that he had been forced.<sup>48</sup> Mathieu admitted most of the details of the attack and, under torture, admitted the rape. He was executed for having

abandoned his person to a disgusting and beastly desire and appetite to commit and perpetrate the execrable crime of sodomy and in committing this desire and sinful appetite he had used and

employed force to this end against the person of a young infant of a tender age.<sup>49</sup>

The Senate originally sentenced him to decapitation but a day later, after further consideration of the nature of his crime, decreed that his body should be burned to ashes after his execution.<sup>50</sup>

The case (in 1662) of Col. Alphonse Crotto (aged 43) of Lucca in Italy and Jean Chabaud (aged 13) from Languedoc falls more into the normative pattern of early modern pederasty but straddles the line between the abuse of a 'child' and sexual activity involving an 'adolescent'.<sup>51</sup> As such, this case serves as an interesting counter-point to the Brilat-Dufour case above. Crotto had hired Chabaud as a servant in Languedoc. They had journeyed together for about six weeks during which time Crotto had repeatedly sodomized the young Chabaud in various inns (where they had shared beds) and on the road. They had passed through Montpellier, Avignon, Valence, Romans, Grenoble, Chambéry and eventually arrived at Geneva.<sup>52</sup>

Initially, Crotto admitted to having been seduced by Satan to commit sodomy though he later recanted saying that, being an Italian speaker, he had not really understood the implications of the confession. He swore all he had actually done was frottage and 'external nighttime pollutions', by which he seems to have meant that he had become sexually aroused in his sleep and had ejaculated on the youth during these 'wet dreams'. There is every reason to assume that Crotto was well enough educated to realize that many civil and canon lawyers did not consider such semi-waking acts to be sins, let alone crimes. The lack of penetration was also a crucial consideration. Not until 1817 (in England) was a man convicted and sentenced to death for 'sodomizing' a seven-year old boy by forcing the child to fellate him – and he was acquitted on appeal.<sup>53</sup>

Chabaud eventually admitted under questioning that penetration had taken place. However, the six doctors who examined the boy were unable to offer conclusive proof of this.<sup>54</sup> This made a conviction less likely, but not impossible. Forensic evidence was extremely problematic but when doctors could agree it often proved to be conclusive: in 1730, Gilbert Lawrence was hanged because a doctor had testified categorically that he had forced a 14-year-old boy. Just as worrying to the judges, however, was the fact that Chabaud had continued to travel with Crotto even after the abuse had started. Indeed, they had only learned of the relationship when a Genevan innkeeper heard the boy weeping in his room and found that he was badly bruised from anal

sex. The innkeeper (who was also a member of the city's militia) had arrested Crotto and carried the youth to a doctor because he was unable to walk.

As with the case of Beatrice, this case proved problematic for the court. Once they were convinced of Crotto's guilt (by recourse to torture) they had no problem sentencing him to be hanged and his lifeless body to be burnt.<sup>55</sup> However, they were not sure what to do with Chabaud. In the end they decided that he was as culpable as Beatrice in that he had not run away from Crotto in any of the towns they had passed through nor had he attempted to inform on him. Thus, he had 'colluded' in his abuse. Consequently, he had to be punished. The Senate decided that his age should be a mitigating factor and, therefore, he was *only* beaten on Crotto's still-smouldering ashes.<sup>56</sup>

Again, what might one conclude? Social status is not a sure protection. Sex with a woman was a possible line of defence. Lots of people, even citizens, seemed to tolerate a range of behaviour without going to the authorities.<sup>57</sup> Responsibility and consent were subjective and individual rather than legally defined. Finally, the judges assumed that a young person would not hide details but would immediately and readily tell adults of abuse.

In 1559, Jaquema Gonet, a serving girl in late adolescence, was arrested along with Esther Bodineau, aged 15 and her brother, Nicolas, aged 8-9.<sup>58</sup> Gonet worked for Esther and Nicolas' father, a bookseller. Jaquema and Esther had manually manipulated one another and then molested Nicolas. Jaquema had told Esther that even young boys could get erections because she had seen peasant boys and girls fooling around in her village.<sup>59</sup> Nicolas had promptly told his mother the next day but she had not taken it seriously. The mother was interrogated for this. Jaquema admitted to hurting Nicolas but was unable to say why she kept doing something that he said hurt. She could only say that Satan had led her astray; hardly a wise defence. Midwives reported that Jaquema was a virgin, even though she said her uncle had molested her as a child. However, Esther had been 'corrupted' by her activities with Jaquema.

Jaquema was drowned because, the lawyers advised, she had initiated sex. She was older. As a servant, she had a duty of care. She was guilty of sodomy and a sin against nature.<sup>60</sup> Esther was only flogged until bloodied. She had committed incest and, although young, knew right from wrong. The only reason to spare her from death, which the lawyers said she deserved, was her age – and only her age. Nicolas was admonished since he was simply too young to understand what he had done.



The public sentence read out when Jaquema and Esther were punished said they were guilty of 'a crime too detestable to name' – lesbianism.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, there is a case involving very young children. In 1564, Simon Chastil, aged nine and Pierre Roquet and Matthieu Convenir, both eight were arrested.<sup>62</sup> They had been fooling around. Simon explained that he had recently been molested by a tutor (who had, in fact, just been executed for abusing another child)<sup>63</sup> and had decided to show his friends what he had learned. The court ruled that they should each be beaten in front of a fire by their parents and then be forced to throw a bundle of sticks into the fire to signify their fate should they re-offend. Finally, their parents were to send them to live with relatives in the countryside and to ensure that they did not see each other again until they were grown.

Again, the age of accountability is variable and case-specific. These children were not only sexually active but talked about sexual activities with one another and with adults (Nicolas told his mother immediately). Once before the magistrates there seems to have been no problem with testifying and discussing sexual acts in detail even when they lacked specific terminology – ejaculation is often referred to as 'peeing'. These children were certainly aware that they were doing something they should not do. Instigating, initiating and soliciting were the key factors in deciding responsibility and culpability.

A number of conclusions suggest themselves. The concept of adulthood and responsibility was fluid and subjective, albeit there was a technical age of 'majority'. Solicitation or 'collusion' was crucial in deciding culpability. The lawyers viewed these crimes as grotesque because they violated the innocence of the young in a legal and social – rather than theological – sense. In many cases forensic evidence from physicians or midwives played a key part. The magistrates were very interested in motivation though the lawyers considered this of no consequence. Lawyers wanted the facts detailed; the citizen-magistrates wanted to understand the 'why'. Most defendants, however, were unable to articulate any explanation for their actions. The people, even parents, seemed willing to tolerate or deal with personally, a whole range of behaviour without involving the state.<sup>64</sup> Families talked to their children about their problems and the young talked among themselves about sexual matters. The young who had been abused seemed not to fear reprisal or stigmatization or even being shamed and they quite boldly testified against their attackers. Finally, in some cases, especially of lesbianism, the state on the advice of their lawyers censored the public sentences.

The conclusions arising from these Genevan cases simply echo that seen elsewhere across Europe in the period from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Although there was a fairly subtle understanding of human sexual development from child through pubescent teenager (adolescent) to adult, there were not set legal ages for responsibility or consent. Modern societies are finding that they must cope with similar complexities. By amending laws on ages of consent to include clauses relating to those in positions of authority and trust, they are trying to include some of the *ad hoc*, case-specific discretion consistently used by early modern courts. These earlier courts explicitly dealt with and accepted the sexuality of the pubescent. They acknowledged a period of development in which innocence and culpability overlapped. The continuum was complex and murky.

What is equally interesting is the scarcity of any evidence of sexual abuse within the family unit, that is by relatives as opposed to non-related household members such as servants. The latter type of 'incest' (within the household) is fairly common while the former almost unknown. Indeed, only one trial even mentioned incest – when Jaquema claimed that she had been, years before, molested by an uncle. No more details were presented. This, of course, raises a number of problems and queries. In modern society, child sexual abuse is most likely to occur within the home and involves relatives (and step-relatives). Thus, most child sexual abuse is incestuous. This appears not to have been the case in Geneva.<sup>65</sup>

However, on one point these societies were clear. The abuse of the pre-pubescent was a capital crime. Anyone charged with the abuse of a child was almost certainly going to be convicted and executed because of the use of torture. The cases of child abuse also highlight another difference between early modern societies and the present day. Most children seem to have told their parents or elders immediately if they were abused. The children had few problems testifying face-to-face against their abusers. Indeed, one of the most striking features of child abuse cases is how rarely (almost never) the abuser even tried to convince the child that he or she would get in trouble. Usually, bribes or threats of violence were used to maintain the child's silence. That these societies never thought their children might hesitate to report abuse is confirmed in the trials of adolescents where the failure to speak out is seen as 'collusion'.

Those adolescents (down to the age of 13) who were punished with their adult partners were usually considered culpable because they had not reported the abuse – as everyone clearly *assumed* they would. In their reaction to child abuse the early modern world seems very modern

indeed. However, in its attitude to adolescent sexuality and its expectation that teenagers will speak openly to adults about being abused this early world seems truly alien. Indeed, the seeming boldness of the young in reporting abuse to their parents and confronting their attackers reminds us that this is, on one level, a very alien culture.

## Notes

The research for this article was made possible by a generous grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council. All manuscript references come from the holdings of the *Archives d'État de Genève*. Abbreviations used in this chapter are: PC1 or PC2, *Procès criminels*, série 1 or 2; RC, *Registres du Conseil*; RConsist., *Registres de Consistoire*.

1. The manuscript advice by Calvin is preserved in PC1: 502 (7–16 March 1554), a case relating to Lambert le Blanc (son of the French royal *contrôleur des finances*). However, evidence here and elsewhere makes it clear that his advice actually relates to a case involving five local youths. Moreover, the Senate's discussion of the Le Blanc case stresses that he had tried to solicit 'two youths for buggery'; RC48, fol. 21 (12 March 1554). For what survives about the five youths see RC48, fos. 167–167v (21 December 1554); 168–168v (24 December 1554) & 169–169v (27 September 1554) as well as Michel Roset, *Chroniques de Genève* (Geneva, 1963), p. 363. The published version of the advice, in G. Buam *et al.* (eds), *Calvini Opera* (Berlin, 1863–1900), vol. 15, col. 69, ascribes it to the March date simply because the advice is located in the Le Blanc dossier. PC2: 1078 (26 December 1554) contains a single sheet of evidence from Gabriel[-Daniel] Patru, one of the younger boys, against Jean Levet, one of the older boys.
2. RC48, fol. 176 (21 December 1555).
3. Vulliet was an elder in 1553 and served as a judicial magistrate and *auditeur* in 1554; he fell from power in 1555 because of his ties with Calvin's political opponents, the Perrinists. Patru was also known for his outspoken opposition to Calvin, having been involved in a riot after a sermon; see W.G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1994), p. 106. Jean Levet would later be a senator and Jean Goula was Geneva's treasurer for much of the late 1540s and early 1550s.
4. The children were: Paul (son of Paul Tares); Gabriel-Daniel (son of Tivent Patru); Jean (son of Jean Levet); Jehan (son of Henri Goula); Daniel (son of François Rigot, called De Palaix). RC48, fols., 169–169v (27 December 1554).
5. The families complained of the costs of this confinement – without effect, RC48, fols. 171 (1 January 1555), 173 (4 January 1555).
6. Or, as J. Ennew put it, 'by fixing the ages of criminal responsibility, which may vary according to the infractions committed, childhood is defined as a time of legal innocence when norms and sanctions are not fully understood'; *Sexual Exploitation of Children* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 33.

7. Roger Edgeworth, *Sermons very Fruitfull, Godly, and Learned* (London, 1557): fos. 32D, 34C.
8. Indeed, what one usually finds are stray references to the sexual activities of older adolescents in the context of studies of adult sexual activity. Cf. L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 512–18 and M. Rey, 'Cérémonies secrètes', *Histoire* 63 (1984), 103–4, 104 for discussion about youths aged 17 and 19. Alternatively, adolescents are discussed as a group with little focus on sex; cf., A. Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth century Bristol', *Journal of Social History* 13 (1979): 67–81 where there are references to contemporary comments on the lewdness and lustiness of adolescents (esp., 68, 70, 74–5). See also B. Hanawalt, 'Historical descriptions and prescriptions for adolescence', *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992): 341–51; K.L. Reyerson, 'The Adolescent Apprentice/worker in Medieval Montpellier', *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992): 353–70 and, more recently, P.J.P. Goldeberg and F. Riddy (eds), *Youth in the Middle Ages* (York: York University Press, 2004). Some works focus more explicitly on childhood as opposed to adolescence. See L.C. Attreed, 'From pearly maiden to tower princes: towards a new history of medieval childhood', *Journal of Family History* 9 (1983): 43–58; P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1450–1536* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); S. Ozment, 'The family in Reformation Germany: the bearing and rearing of children', *Journal of Family History* 8 (1983): 159–76. J.-L. Flandrin, 'Repression and change in the sexual life of young people in medieval and early modern times', *Journal of Family History* 2 (1977): 196–211 focuses specifically on the sexual life of the young, but in a broad context. The issue of child abuse in the Middle Ages is dealt with specifically (with some interesting examples) in N. Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 103–6. He notes that most medieval literature seemed to assume that children were most likely to be abused by strangers or to be involved in incestuous relationships with siblings rather than older relatives – a view hinted at in S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, C. Galai, trans. (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 101 in a work which largely avoids the issue of sex and sexuality. C. Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) tends to discuss 'child abuse' in the physical sense (80, 101) and youthful sexual activity in the context of masturbation (37–8).
9. The greatest concentration of trials is during Calvin's ministry (when the city was flooded with religious refugees) with slightly fewer in the period up to and including the aftermath of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, when another wave of refugees poured into Geneva. Thereafter, the number of cases declines dramatically.
10. The debate is extensive and, without considerably more detailed studies, difficult to settle. For the former positions see various works by Ariès, Stone, and Cunningham, especially P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, R. Baldick, trans. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage* (London: Harper Collins, 1977); H. Cunningham, *Children & Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995). For the opposing view, see, especially, B. Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval*

- London: *The Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). Cf. E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Flandrin, *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); J.R. Banker, 'Mourning a Son: Childhood & Paternal Love in the Consolateria of Giannozzo Manetti', *Journal of Psychohistory*, 3 (1976): 351–62.
11. Indeed, magistrates were concerned by more than sexual abuse. Geneva's authorities intervened (along with adult relatives) to protect children from the physical abuse of teachers and tutors. Similar reactions are evident elsewhere. For example, in Ghent, magistrates punished a man for physically mistreating his ward; that is, they actively intervened in the familial environment. D. Nicholas, *The Domestic Life of a Medieval City: Women, Children, and the Family in Fourteenth-Century Ghent* (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), p. 114.
  12. See note 11 for the substantive points. In Geneva, parents and magistrates limited the ability of tutors and teachers corporally to punish their pupils. For more information on schooling in Geneva see Naphy, 'The Reformation and Evolution of Geneva's Schools', in B. Kümin (ed.), *Reformations Old and New: Essays on the Socio-Economic Impact of Religious Change c. 1470–1630* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 185–202. Indeed, treatises at the time discussed these contractual arrangements – R. Mulcaster, *Positions wherein those primitive circumstances be examined, which are necessary for the training up of children*, London (1581), Mmijv. For a specific example on the early modern theory of corporal punishment see Pierre Saliat, *Declamation contenant la manière de bien instruire les enfans* (Paris, 1537), p. 37. Opposition to corporal punishment may have arisen from a fear that this would lead to sexual arousal, cf., A. Stewart, 'Boys' buttocks revisited: James VI and the myth of the sovereign schoolmaster', in T. Betteridge (ed.), *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 132.
  13. Cf., PC1: 517 (23 January 1555).
  14. The very 'modern' feel about early modern reactions to child abuse is stressed by R. O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500–1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 164. On the other hand, the very alien nature of early modern ideas on sex and the young can be found in the rather Freudian interpretation of the rearing of Louis XIV in D. Hunt, *Parents and Children in History: the Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France*, London (1970), 159–79; cf., Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, 106–7, 507–12.
  15. In much of the early modern period the age of full civic maturity varied from 16 to 25; see Ennew, *Sexual Exploitation*, 32.
  16. Hanawalt stressed a similar variability in the 'exit-age' from adolescence depending on the issue at stake (e.g., criminal liability, inheritance, apprenticeship, marriage); *Experience of Childhood*, 201–6 *passim*.
  17. In Venice, after 1424, children aged 10–13 involved in sexual activity received three months in prison (note the punishment of the three older schoolboys below) and 12–20 lashes. Those under the age of 10 (under 13 prior to 1424) were simply released – as 'innocent victims'. However, attempts to enforce mandatory punishments on defendants were thwarted

- and the reality was that many social factors continued to play a part in sentencing. P. H. Labalme, 'Venetian Justice in the Renaissance', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 52 (1984): 217–54, 236.
18. PC1: 1526 (23 March–4 April 1569).
  19. Cases of 'unnatural' sex and witchcraft simply disappear in the mid-seventeenth century. While the witches disappear permanently, there are a further two cases relating to sexual deviance in the eighteenth century.
  20. PC2: 1932 (20 August 1600). No mention is made of the case in the Senate's minutes.
  21. Although sex with males and females under (about) the age of 12 was normally treated very harshly indeed, Venice provides an example of a man convicted of a non-penetrative sexual assault against a six-year-old girl who was only forced to pay her medical bills and contribute to her dowry. Labalme, 'Venetian Justice', 236–7 (esp. n. 85). In 1884, a 15-year-old Dutch army trumpeter was imprisoned for three months for frottage against the buttocks of a three-year-old boy. An adult soldier, in 1873, was jailed for five years for fondling (but not penetrating) two boys, aged 15 and 12; G. Hekma, 'Homosexual Behavior in the Nineteenth-century Dutch army', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1991): 266–88, 281.
  22. PC1: 2055 (4–9 October 1611).
  23. RC108, fol. 44 (9 February 1611). His 'choice' was to accept employment or banishment.
  24. PC1: 1494 (11–21 September 1568); the case is not mentioned in the Senate's minutes.
  25. PC1: 1494 (16 September 1568).
  26. PC1: 1494 (11 & 21 September 1568): the mother, Dominique Patry, told Beatrice to report any additional advances and her father, Nicolas George, denied all knowledge of the events and offered to punish Beatrice however the state suggested.
  27. PC1: 1494 (14 September 1568): report by Gilberte Jubet and Marguerite Barrier, midwives.
  28. A. D. Harvey, 'Prosecutions for Sodomy in England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century', *Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 939–48.
  29. Testimony by Guey and Beatrice suggests that oral sex and masturbation had taken place.
  30. PC1: 1494 (undated).
  31. PC1: 1494 (11 September 1568), evidence from Michel Grandon.
  32. As Colladon said in his legal advice: 'she came to his bed to seek to know him and to have his company which is horrid at such an age'.
  33. PC1: 1494 (21 September 1568).
  34. PC1: 1818 (5–14 November 1600). One might have more reasonably suspected that this would be a case of bestiality which, at least in Scotland, normally involved adolescents. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, "'Wild, filthie, execrable, and unnatural sin': Bestiality in Early Modern Scotland," in Betteridge (ed.), *Sodomy*, p. 87.
  35. Eighteen villagers were questioned and all knew about the altercation that sparked the case and most spoke of the youths' 'close friendship'. The delay (five weeks) between the time of the fight and the trial again

- suggests difficulties in getting testimony from Brilat's neighbours, friends, and relatives.
36. The crucial interrogation was on 5 November 1568. When asked if he understood the gravity of his offences, Brilat's dramatic response was recorded by the scribe: 'he threw himself on his knees and wept fiercely confessing and asking mercy from God and the court'.
  37. Genevan sources seem wholly unconcerned with the issue of passivity – both active and passive participants were treated the same. Age alone seemed a mitigating factor. Individuals variously argued the importance of active *versus* passive and also previous sexual relations with women, but to no avail. See Naphy, 'Reasonable Doubt: Defences Advanced in Early Modern Sodomy Trials in Geneva', in M. Mulholland and B. Pullan (eds), *Judicial Tribunals in England and Europe, 1200–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1: pp. 129–46. For a discussion on the issue of passive–active see D.M. Halperin, 'Is there a History of Sexuality?', *History & Theory* 28 (1989): 257–74, 260, 268 and Labalme, 'Venetian Justice', 225. Also Martha Vicinus, 'Adolescent Boy: fin de siècle femme fatale', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5 (1994): 90–114, 94 where the constant tension arising from classicism's approval of 'boy-love' and social reactions to same-sex relations are discussed.
  38. The case was clear-cut. Brilat had confessed when questioned and Du Four had confirmed the details when tortured. The case merited little interest in the Senate beyond the appeal to the larger council even though it led to the execution of a member of a prominent family; RC95, fos. 191 (10 November 1600), 191v (11 November 1600), 193v (13 November 1600).
  39. PC1: 957 (4 July 1561).
  40. Certainly the list of his 'victims' included some prominent Genevans (e.g., Jean Aubert, Jacques Fabri; both citizens) who may have felt forced to act when the state failed to move against someone with a 'mental problem'.
  41. Fabri, a merchant citizen, noted that the group which made the 'arrest' included leading citizens and the minister, Beza (9 June 1561).
  42. A similar operation was undertaken by Dutch soldiers to rid themselves of the importuning Joseph Bendix in 1878, Hekma, 'Dutch Army', 278–9.
  43. PC1: 957 (17 Jun. 1561). Beudant testified that 'after having closed the door, Thomas kissed him placing his tongue between his lips and loosened his flies... taking his member in his hand he wished to touch [Beudant's] privates but [Beudant] would not consent... [Thomas] wished to place his member between [Beudant's] thighs then hugging him threw him on the bed'.
  44. Colladon's undated advice notes, especially 'the great age of the said Thomas and that he has a wife and children'. Another (anonymous) advice says 'undoubtedly, Thomas is of an adult age having a wife and children'.
  45. The public sentence leaves no doubt about nature of Reancourt's repeated offences: 'you have debauched yourself among many young men many times in diverse places even at church trying to touch them [in a manner] leading towards the detestable crime of sodomy'. For a fuller discussion on Genevan sodomy trials see Naphy, 'Sodomy in Early Modern Geneva: Various Definitions, Diverse Verdicts', in Betteridge (ed.), *Sodomy*, pp. 94–111.
  46. PC1: 517 (7–23 January 1555). See also RC48, fols. 174v (8, 10 January 1555), 176 (11 January 1555; torture was ordered on the 10th and 11th),



- 177 (14 January 1555; he was ordered to repeat, without the threat or application of torture, his confession to 'sodomy').
47. PC1: 517 (7 January 1555).
48. PC1: 517 (9 January 1555). Legal opinions (which do not survive) were also presented on 15 January 1555 (RC48, fol. 177v) and 17 January 1555 (RC48, fol. 179) when the lawyer De Lautray recommended the death penalty. The Senate debated the opinions on 21 January 1555 (RC48, fol. 181) and the following day (RC48, fol. 181v) before deciding that Durand should be beheaded. The very young did not normally give evidence in early modern courts but, as David Hume noted, 'On special occasions, where, from the nature of the charge, persons of earlier years are necessary witnesses, and are capable of understanding the matter in which there is a need of their evidence, the Court may and do take their examinations without oath, *ut prosint ad veritatem indagandum* ('so that the truth might be uncovered'), *Commentaries on the Law of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1797), 2: p. 139.
49. The day of Durand's execution the Senate, having received additional legal advice, decreed that his dead corpse should be burnt to ashes (RC48, fol. 181v). Hanwalt noted that, in England, the rape of a child was 'too abominable to speak of', *Experience of Childhood*, 66 (and n. 44).
50. The Senate kept close track of the case but spent little time in active deliberation on it. Durand's guilt – and eventual end – seem to have required scant discussion. See RC48, fos. 174v (10 January 1555), 176 (11 January 1555), 177 (14 January 1555), 177v (15 January 1555), 179 (17 January 1555), 181 (21 January 1555), 181v (22 January 1555, Monday morning at 7 o'clock), 181v (23 January 1555).
51. PC1: 3768 (9–24 December 1662). The case was also noted in the Senate's minutes: RC162, pp. 300 (10 December 1662, when torture was ordered), 301 (15 December 1662), 304 (20, 22 December 1662), 308 (24 December 1662) as well as other entries discussed below.
52. An older man and his adolescent valet would have occasioned little comment. However, close companionship between individuals of disparate ages was something which concerned authorities. See, Labalme, 'Venetian Justice', p. 226 where the state established a watch specifically charged with 'watching, investigating, seeking and most diligently observing all those who accompanied and conversed with boys and youths of disparate ages'.
53. A.N. Gilbert, 'Buggery and the British Navy, 1700–1861', *Journal of Social History* 10 (1976), 72–98.
54. The doctors were all physicians: Jean Dentant, David Dentant, François Savorin, [Claude?] Thabbuis, Louis Noel. In Venice, physicians were required to report any injury or complaint which might suggest anal intercourse, Labalme, 'Venetian Justice', 227.
55. RC162, p. 307 (23 December 1662).
56. Because of 'his low age'. RC162, pp. 307–8 (23 December 1662).
57. A similar toleration of sexual harassment was noted among nineteenth-century Dutch soldiers in Hekma, 'Dutch Army', 277–8. Cf. the article by C.L. Talley, 'Gender and Male Same-sex Erotic Behavior in British North America in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6 (1996): 385–408 which makes a similar point.



58. PC1: 862 (12–24 October 1559). The Senate's minutes do not mention the case.
59. 'She had seen some men making their members "longer" '.
60. 'An act of fornication which is also against nature seeing the great youth of the said poor little child'.
61. When Jacques-François Pascal (a defrocked monk) was executed for sexually assaulting and stabbing an errand boy the authorities were keen not 'to make the sin against nature more common by making it known', J. Merrick, 'Commissioner Foucault, Inspector Noël and the "Pederasts" of Paris, 1780–3', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8 (1998): 287–307, 287.
62. PC1: 1168 (4–7 January 1564). The Senate took no official notice of this brief case.
63. See the case against Hozias La Motte, tutor, for molesting the son of Jean Cherubim; PC1: 1167 (29–31 December 1563).
64. Indeed, adults generally undertook to control each other's children and children seem rarely to have been unobserved, J. Warner and R. Griller, '“My pappa is out, and my mamma is asleep”: Minors, Their Routine Activities, and Interpersonal Violence in an Early Modern Town, 1653–1781', *Journal of Social History* 36 (2003): 561–84.
65. K. Gravdal, 'Confessing Incest: Legal Erasures and Literary Celebrations in Medieval France', in C. Neel (ed.), *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 329–36, has argued persuasively that such child sexual abuse did take place in the medieval period. This leaves one wondering what can and should be done in any discussion of Geneva where an argument must, perforce, proceed from silence.

## Tom Betteridge responds

In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* two young adolescents fall in love and marry. There is, however, nothing chaste about the love between Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare went out of his way to emphasize the sexual nature of their relationship. He also provocatively lowered Juliet's age from 16, which is her age in the sources for the play, to 13. Critics have found numerous ways of avoiding the implications of this change, suggesting, for example, that Shakespeare did it simply to make it easier for a boy to play the role of Juliet. *Romeo and Juliet*, however, is not simply a love story. It is also concerned with the ways in which gender and sexuality interact with the needs of societies to enforce norms and regulations. Juliet's age serves to emphasize the hastiness of her marriage to Romeo, but it also reflects Shakespeare's desire to confront the audience with the problem of adolescent sexuality; questions of consent and desire, but also the audience's investment in Juliet's and Romeo's sexualized status. In particular, for the apprentices and servants that were an important element of Shakespeare's audience the idea of being able to marry at 18, let alone 13, was a complete fantasy. And in many ways this is what Shakespeare gives them in *Romeo and Juliet* – a fantasy of adolescent marriage free from the restraints of society. Except, of course, in the Verona of Romeo and Juliet society's rules and norms were reinforced by a barbaric dual that ultimately led to the death of Shakespeare's 'star-cross'd lovers'. *Romeo and Juliet* confronts early modern English society with the costs of suppressing human desire and at the same time warns against the immaturity of the play's central characters. By lowering Juliet's age, and therefore emphasizing that she is not an adult, Shakespeare prevents a too simple identification by the audience with Romeo's and Juliet's transgression of social norms. There are issues in this play relating to pre-adult consent and the sexualization of adolescents that the audience can only deny or avoid by ignoring the reality of the protagonist's ages. By comparing the evidence presented in Bill Naphy's chapter, 'Under-Age Sexual Activity in Reformation Geneva', with recent work on the treatment of under-age sex in early modern England this commentary will suggest that English attitudes were similar to those of the Genevan magistrates that Naphy studies in his chapter. In particular, in both jurisdictions sexual abuse was treated as a serious crime, with magistrates committed to its punishment. The differences that do exist between the English and Genevan approaches to the crime of sexual abuse relate largely to the differences between the two legal systems.

In his chapter Naphy demonstrates the extent to which the Genevan magistrates adopted a pragmatic approach to the issue of under-age sex by seeking to make informed and often subtle distinctions between abusive relationships involving children and adults and sexual activity that took place between people of the same age or maturity. Naphy opens his chapter by discussing the three-stage model that informed the deliberations of the Genevan magistrates when dealing with cases of under-age sex. In this model, while children were regarded as lacking any understanding of sex and adults were considered fully competent and responsible there was a grey area, which Juliet would have undoubtedly occupied, in which a person could be regarded as either wholly innocent or entirely responsible for their behaviour. What made this model potentially subtle and pragmatic, was that unlike modern numerical approaches to the question of adulthood the Genevan model did not include a set or preconceived age at which a person went from being a child to an adolescent and finally an adult.

The potential subtlety of the Genevan approach was important since, as Naphy points out, Calvin and the Genevan magistrates were deeply concerned to protect the children and adolescents of Geneva from abuse. The rather strange idea that early modern parents, and societies, responded to the high morality rate among infants by not developing close emotional attachments to infants and children is belied by the evidence presented in Naphy's chapter. The Genevan magistrates, and the parents of the children who suffered abuse, undoubtedly cared for the children under their care. There is running through Naphy's chapter a sense of a community committed to protecting the weak both from their own immaturity and from abuse by adults. It is for this reason that the responses of magistrates to allegations of sexual abuse often have a starkly contemporary feel in their desire to ensure that sexual abuse was severely punished.

There is, however, one important element of the cases that Naphy discusses which is pointedly different from many modern cases of sexual abuse. The children of early modern Geneva appear quite prepared to come forward and complain of being abused. Naphy comments that:

Most children seem to have told their parents or elders immediately if they were abused. The children had few problems testifying face-to-face against their abusers. Indeed, one of the most striking features of child abuse cases is how rarely (almost never) the abuser even tried to convince the child that he or she would get into trouble.

It is difficult to explain why children in early modern Geneva seem to be relatively free of the shame and guilt that often prevents children in the twenty-first century exposing their abusers. One could speculate that this lack of guilt may relate to the methods of the abusers and their understanding of the kind of acts in which they were engaged. It may also relate to fact that whereas in modern society most abuse happens in the home and involves members of the victim's family this appears not to have been the case in early modern Geneva. What Naphy demonstrates consistently in this chapter is the extent to which the Genevan magistrates took great pains to discover the relative degrees of culpability in cases of sexual activity involving children, and were often surprisingly lenient to those they considered innocent or naïve. At the same time there is little or no evidence of them attempting to understand or reform those adults found guilty of abuse.

Naphy divides the cases he discusses in his chapter into four categories: the physical, but non-sexual abuse of the young; the sexual abuse of pre-adult females; the sexual abuse of pre-adult males; and sexual activity between pre-adults. An example of the first category was the engagement between Jean Bourgeois, aged 45, and Clauda Corbet, aged 10. What is interesting about this case is that although Corbet's age would have made any marriage tantamount to rape the magistrates decided that what was really going on here was an attempt by a Catholic family to place Corbet beyond the reach of Genevan Protestantism. Naphy also discusses a more serious case in which Louis Guey, 72, was executed for abusing Beatrice George, 13. What makes this case interesting is the emphasis placed by the city's chief legal advisor not only on the actual acts that took place but also on the 'detestable discussion' that apparently followed then. Guey was beheaded and George was beaten, largely on the basis of at least apparently voluntarily going to Guey's bed.

Having discussed cases of older men abusing younger women, Naphy goes on to examine cases of same-sex abuse. What is interesting about these cases is that they largely follow the pattern set by the heterosexual cases. The key issue in determining the seriousness of the offence that had been committed was the competency of the child or adolescent. The Genevan state, as Naphy points out, regarded the specific circumstances of each case as crucial in order to determine the level of culpability. For example when Abel Revery, seven, accused Mathieu Durand of raping him the magistrates acted quickly and after examining Abel's story in detail sentenced Durand to decapitation. It is important to note that often medical advice was sought by the magistrates to see if the alleged crimes had actually taken place. One of the most interesting aspects of

these cases, as Naphy points out, is that, 'the judges assumed that a young person would not hide the details but would immediately and readily tell adults of abuse'. And indeed this was certainly the case with Abel Revery.

One of the most significant cases discussed by Naphy is that involving Jaquema Gonet, a servant in late adolescence, Esther Bodineau, 15, and her young brother, Nicolas, aged eight or nine. Esther and Gonet had 'manipulated' each other and molested Nicolas. Gonet's defence, that Satan had led her astray, was not accepted by the court and she was drowned. Esther Bodineau was saved by her relative youth and Nicolas was regarded as simply being too young to know what he had done. Interestingly, the public sentence read out when Esther Bodineau and Gonet were punished did not mention the crime, having sex with each other, for which they were being punished since it was 'too detestable to name'.

Naphy draws a number of tentative conclusions from the cases that he discusses in this chapter. The most important is that the Genevan magistrates, unlike their modern counterparts, regarded adulthood, and therefore culpability, as a subjective and not an abstract concept. Naphy goes on to point out that whereas the lawyers in these cases were concerned only with the facts the magistrates were far more interested in questions of motivation; they wanted to know why the abuse had occurred, if it had. Finally, from a historiographical point of view it is important to note that the magistrates were prepared to censor the public record in order to protect the populace from hearing the full shocking facts.

It is extremely difficult to compare Genevan and English attitudes and approaches to under-age sex in this period due to the relative paucity of information. It is possible, however, even with the limited information that exists to suggest that in the main English magistrates sought to draw similar distinctions to those of their Genevan counterparts with regard to questions of consent and culpability. At the same time the importance of juries, and the degree of discretion that juries were allowed to exercise, in the English system could work in favour of the accused by placing a greater emphasis on questions of morality and class then appears to have been the case in Geneva. In her recent study, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Sixteenth-Century England*, Laura Gowing discusses in detail the case of Margery Evans, a 14-year-old servant who in 1633 accused a gentleman of robbing and raping her on the journey to Wales. Gowing comments that very quickly, despite the evidence of three women, including a midwife, that Evans had been

raped, the case focused upon the morality of Evans and her family. Indeed Gowing points out that the, 'fact that Evans had demonstrated she was no longer a virgin made her testimony less creditable...'.<sup>1</sup> It would, however, be a mistake to suggest that this aspect of the Evans' case was typical. It appears that on the whole English magistrates were prepared to give considerable weight to physical evidence and clear testimony from child witnesses. In his recent article, 'Child Sexual Abuse in Early Modern England', Martin Ingram comments that although the 'evidence is fragmentary and hard to evaluate...child abuse cases were certainly not less, and may have been more, likely to result in guilty verdicts than rapes in general'.<sup>2</sup> In this article Ingram suggests that the two main groups responsible for child abuse in early modern England were neighbours, of various kinds, and servants. Naphy's article suggests that the same groups were also prominent among those accused of child abuse in Geneva. This is perhaps not surprising, but it does potentially reflect an interesting trans-European historical fact since in neither early modern Geneva nor England were stepfathers or other close family members often accused of abuse. Finally, it is important to note that magistrates in England, or at least those charged with recording the evidence of child witnesses, would also resort to the kind of censorship that Naphy found in Geneva. Ingram reports a number of cases where the term 'carnal knowledge', or something similar, was used to gloss more explicit details recorded in witness statements.<sup>3</sup> The general picture that emerges from comparing Genevan and English approaches to child abuse in the early modern period is a similar desire to treat cases of child abuse seriously. There is no sense that magistrates in either Geneva or England were blasé about this issue. Nor is there any real evidence of children being held responsible for the actions of those who had abused them, except in such cases as those of Margery Evans and Beatrice George, where magistrates clearly felt they were entering a grey area of consent and culpability. The main differences between the English and Genevan approaches to child abuse relate most obviously to the different types of law in operation with the inquisitorial approach adopted by the Genevan magistrates gave more credence, and therefore being possibly fairer, to physical and medical evidence than the English system with its emphasis on the role of the jury.

Juliet is 13. In Geneva and England this would have meant that she was old enough to consent to sex, but in both jurisdictions she would probably have been regarded as a child. It is, of course, at one level facile to speculate on what the courts would have made of her relationship with Romeo. Shakespeare, however, quite deliberately places

Juliet within a context that raises questions of consent and even abuse. The audience is given ample opportunities to reflect on the morality of Juliet's parents and they are incited to regard Juliet as a girl who demonstrated sexual desire, albeit unwittingly, from a very early age. It is as though Shakespeare is tempting the audience to sit in judgement over Juliet's actions, and perhaps even more so Romeo's. After all, at one level he is the abuser. In his article Ingram suggests that those apprentices convicted of abusing younger members of the households in which they worked may have been expressing frustration at their low pay and the restrictions that they had to endure. In *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare creates for his audience an image of an upper-class sexually voracious girl. One wonders if, in this most famous of love stories, Shakespeare is inciting his audience, or at least an important section of it, to indulge in a very class-specific and paedophile fantasy. If one had sex with Juliet, even without her consent, given her behaviour, given the stories the nurse tells, indeed given the employment in the Capulet's house of a woman with the morality of a bawd, would it be rape? Would an early modern English jury have regarded it as rape?

When Juliet refuses to marry Paris her father responds with threats that are at once both violent and sexual. He calls Juliet a 'green sickness carrion' and says that his 'fingers itch'. The implication is that Juliet's father is itching to use his fingers to cure her of 'green sickness'. Naphy's chapter shows how careful the Genevan magistrates were when investigating cases of sexual activity involving children and young adults. This seems a far cry from the haste and lack of care consistently demonstrated by all the major characters in *Romeo and Juliet*, and perhaps by scholars too quick to find reasons why Juliet's age is not a problem. It is a problem, Shakespeare knew it, and certainly the early modern Genevan magistrates Naphy discusses in his chapter would have regarded it as one.

## Notes

1. Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 92.
2. Martin Ingram, 'Child Sexual Abuse in Early Modern England', in Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (eds), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 63–84, p. 82.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

## Nick Davidson responds

Dr Naphy's lucid discussion of 'under-age' sexual activity in Reformation Geneva identifies a number of themes that are relevant also for historians of Renaissance and early modern Italy: contemporary beliefs about child development, the types of sexual activity children might engage in (willingly or unwillingly), the response of their families to those activities, and the legal processes employed by the authorities to investigate and punish the adults suspected of sexual crimes. In Italy, as in Geneva, historians are obliged to rely largely on judicial records for their evidence. Often, however, these sources are not as complete as they are in the Swiss city: in many Italian states, only the sentence itself has been preserved, with no record of either witness testimonies, interrogations of suspects, or interviews with the children. Some literary sources – poems and plays in particular – refer to relationships, emotional or physical, between adults and young people. But the extent to which these fictional creations can be used as evidence of their authors' own experience is debatable, and, in any case, they are invariably written from an adult's point of view. The voice of Italian children is therefore frequently lost to us.

Child abuse in Italy has not been investigated thoroughly by historians, and the published research has focused mostly on Florence and Venice. But one thing at least is already clear: by the fifteenth century, Italians had a more precise and discriminating sense of child development than Genevans. Italians commonly referred to the earliest years of life as *infanzia*, when children were considered too young to look after themselves, lacking as they did the ability to express themselves or to understand others. The capacity to speak correctly was acquired, it was thought, only by the seventh birthday, a date that heralded the onset of a second stage in life, usually called *puerizia*. But children in this phase still lacked full access to reason, which was developed only when they reached the age of 14, at which point they became *adolescenti*. This third stage lasted until the later twenties, a period associated with complete sexual maturity, but in which young people still needed the guidance and control of their elders to ensure they distinguished between right and wrong.<sup>1</sup>

These three phases mirrored the scheme set out in both Roman law and canon law, both of which linked the end of puberty with the final attainment of intellectual maturity. They appear too in the work of jurists and in the statutes of Italian states. In the fourteenth century, it is true, Italians were often, even in childhood, unable to say exactly



how old they were; but from the fifteenth century, as recordkeeping improved and the civic significance of the ages of seven and 14 became more established, parents and children displayed a greater awareness of their age, especially in cities. Generally, for example, statutes assumed that children under seven were not responsible for their actions in law, and set lower punishments for offenders under 14 than for those over 14. In almost every fifteenth-century city, for instance, children under 14 were spared the death penalty, even for the most heinous crimes. Some discretion was left to judges when dealing with offenders either side of 14: boys who were believed to be fully mature might be given light punishments, even before the age of 14, while for others greater leniency might be appropriate, even if they were older than 14.<sup>2</sup>

Physical maturity was in fact a key feature in this thinking. For girls in particular, the assumption of adulthood coincided with physical developments that made reproduction possible; and this was generally reckoned to take place earlier for girls than for boys. Canon law (in line with Roman law) set 14 as the minimum age at which boys could marry, but 12 for girls; and canonists argued that a marriage contracted even with a girl below the age of 12 could be valid as long as she was *viripotens*, capable of engaging successfully in sexual relations with a man.<sup>3</sup> And while Italian men in this period tended to delay marriage until their later twenties or early thirties, women usually married in their teens – significantly earlier than in north-western Europe. Patrician women tended to marry earlier than non-patricians, but even outside elite circles, the assumption was that girls should marry young. While the evidence suggests that the average age of female first marriage did rise gradually after the fifteenth century, some girls still married at 11 in the seventeenth century, and even in the eighteenth century, 15 per cent or more of women in Venice married between 14 and 20.<sup>4</sup>

This background is essential if we are to understand Italian attitudes to children's sexual activity. There was a clear consensus south of the Alps that boys and girls could engage legitimately in heterosexual sex from the ages of 14 and 12 respectively, with or without parental permission, and an expectation that girls of 12 or more were marriageable. The law made no distinction therefore between a man who had sex with a girl of 13 and a man who had sex with an adult in her 30s. But if he had sex with a girl younger than 12, even with the agreement of her parents, he was likely to be committing a serious offence. Following the lead of canon law, Venetian legislation, for instance, repeatedly declared that such girls were physically incapable of engaging in sex with a man, and

intellectually incapable of granting consent to any sexual act. Men who did have sex with girls under 12 were thus guilty of sodomy (since the act could not result in procreation) and rape, and could be punished with death. If the girl's parents had encouraged the offence, they too were to be punished – the mothers with two years' exile, the fathers with two years service on the galleys, according to a law of 1563.<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore important to ascertain the age of any female child or teenager when we examine the evidence of her sexual relations with an adult man. A teenager who was known to have lost her virginity would find it difficult to find a husband, and the man responsible was therefore normally expected either to marry her himself or to provide her with a dowry in compensation.<sup>6</sup> When the Friulan noble Paolo Orgiano approached Menega Caponata in 1605 with a request that she let him have sex with her daughter Caterina, then aged about 15, as if in anticipation of the expected punishment, he offered to find her a husband afterwards as part of the deal. To him at least, the offence he wanted to commit was not that serious.<sup>7</sup> But the rape of a small girl was treated much more harshly. In 1591, for instance, when a servant girl called Marietta, aged eight, was raped on two separate occasions while travelling to her brother's wedding on the Venetian island of Zante off the western coast of Greece, villagers helped to identify the men responsible, and the local authorities exiled them both for life.<sup>8</sup>

When an adult male had sex with a younger male, of course, the offence was always treated as sodomy; but here too, the precise age of the boy was a crucial factor. Michael Rocke has suggested that same-sex relations between older men and adolescents were often seen as little more than a stage in the masculine lifestyle. Typically, in Florence, the older man (who took the 'active' role in anal intercourse) was in his 20s or early 30s, while the younger, usually aged between 14 and 18, adopted the 'passive' position.<sup>9</sup> Relationships of this kind were often tolerated by society despite the condemnation of the Church and the law.<sup>10</sup> Men found guilty of sodomy with boys under 14, however, were treated very differently. Only around 5 per cent of the cases examined by Dr Rocke in Florence concerned boys younger than 12; but in these comparatively rare cases, the adults involved were nearly always punished severely – by castration in the early fourteenth century, and by death in later years (usually by burning), though sometimes by only a public whipping and then exile.<sup>11</sup>

Boys and girls were in fact quite often exposed to the risk of sexual assault in Italy. As in Geneva, cases of incest within the family home were very rarely reported<sup>12</sup>; but children who lived away from their own

families in the homes of other adults known to them were not always so safe. Boys were often sent to serve as apprentices from the age of 14, or even earlier, while girls could be sent into domestic service as early as eight, and in each case, they would often share their accommodation with their new masters.<sup>13</sup> Priests and teachers also came into regular contact with children, and the Italian literary topos of the lustful tutor had some basis in reality. In 1633, for instance, don Marcantonio Niccolai, parish priest of Montorgiali in the Maremma, was charged with multiple counts of sodomy with boys at the school he had run in the village since 1611.<sup>14</sup> Such authority figures were hard for children to avoid, and they could easily take advantage of their position to exploit the young people in their care. The risks were sometimes even greater in closed institutions; in 1640, the local inquisitor was obliged to investigate an orphanage in Florence after he had received reports that the widow who ran the institution and her spiritual director had been renting the children out for sex to the local nobility.<sup>15</sup>

But children could also fall victim to men they did not know. Vagrant children who lived on the street were particularly vulnerable,<sup>16</sup> but so was any child seen alone in the city. In 1638, for example, a cook named Zuane, employed by the Venetian noble Tommaso Priuli, snatched a boy called Pierin, aged seven, from Campo San Stae where he was playing, dragged him in to his employer's house, and there raped him while holding a hand over his mouth so that he could not call for help.<sup>17</sup> Mary Hewlett has uncovered what would now be called a paedophile ring in Lucca in the 1580s. The key figure was a baker called Roccho, who first raped a girl called Appolonia, the daughter of a prostitute, and then used her to trap other girls – literally in the case of Sandrina, aged 10 or 11, who was lured into a stable by Appolonia and there tied up before Roccho sodomized her. During their investigation of this case, the city's magistrates discovered that at least two other girls aged about 13 were involved in the ring; like Sandrina, they were both from outside Lucca, and were therefore living without direct parental protection. After he had used them, Roccho passed all four girls on to other men with a taste for sex (anal or vaginal) with children; some of these men were married, with children of their own.<sup>18</sup>

As we have seen, the first factor in determining the punishment for the adults involved in cases of child sex was the age of the child. In Venetian law, for instance, rape of a child (male or female) was punished much more severely – usually by execution – than rape of a teenager or an adult. But milder penalties could be handed down for what were deemed lesser offences. The most serious crimes were those where

the child was physically penetrated.<sup>19</sup> But vaginal rape was deemed less serious than sodomitical rape, and penetration without ejaculation seems to have been considered a more minor crime still. Forms of non-penetrative sexual activity – kissing, fondling, frottage, or intercrural sex, for example – were placed even lower on the hierarchy of offences.<sup>20</sup> Harsher penalties were, however, often given to adults who had abused a position of trust to gain access to a child: a Venetian law of 1520 required magistrates to pay special attention to cases involving virgin girls who had been raped by their employers, ‘because it is possible that out of fear, or obedience, the girls had allowed themselves to consent when they had formerly not wanted to consent.’<sup>21</sup> And a particularly severe view was taken of repeat offenders – men who had committed offences against several children, or who had records of similar offences in more than one city. Such men were thought to be ‘too depraved’ (*troppo depravato*) and so beyond redemption: they were usually executed.<sup>22</sup>

The children involved in cases of abuse were nearly always released, though those approaching the age of sexual maturity might be deemed worthy of some penalty. In 1628, for instance, when the Council of Ten in Venice investigated a waiter accused of sodomy with a serving boy of 14, the initial proposal discussed was to punish only the older man. After a series of votes, however, that proposal was rejected, and the decision was taken to charge the boy as well. The Ten clearly found it difficult to agree whether a boy on the border between two stages of growing up was fully responsible for his actions or not.<sup>23</sup>

During a trial, the courts’ main difficulty was often to secure solid evidence on which a conviction could be based. When they sought proof that a child had been penetrated, they asked witnesses whether he or she had been bleeding after the ordeal, or whether the genital or anal area had been bruised. In cases of doubt, the child could be examined by surgeons or midwives.<sup>24</sup> But evidence that an offence had been committed was not of itself evidence that a named suspect was guilty of that offence. Many suspects insisted on their innocence, and cast doubt on the evidence presented against them. In 1630, for example, a priest called Francesco Finetti was charged in Bologna with attempting to have sex with a 16-year-old boy. When he was arrested, however, he was found in the company of a naked German orphan known as Antonio, aged only ten. Antonio claimed when questioned that Finetti had sodomized him several times; but Finetti denied everything, arguing that no reliance could be placed on the evidence of children.<sup>25</sup> And clearly the risk of a false accusation was one the authorities had to bear in mind. Children frequently shared beds with adults in the family home,

and so became aware at an early age of adult sexual activities. There are some cases in which it does seem as if a child accused an adult of sexual crimes for motives of spite or revenge.<sup>26</sup>

More commonly, however, we find that children were, at least initially, reluctant to report their attackers. The very youngest probably had little understanding of their experience, or of what they could do to stop it occurring again. But some children may conceivably have been bought off by the gifts their attackers gave them before or after the assault;<sup>27</sup> others were just afraid of the adults who preyed on them, especially when those adults were in a position of some power. During a trial, the Venetian government in fact sometimes put children into a 'safe house' for their own protection.<sup>28</sup> Most often, however, the children seem to have been more afraid of telling their parents what had happened than giving evidence in a court.<sup>29</sup> But of course the parents themselves were also often reluctant to provoke a prosecution, either to avoid a loss of honour should the offence committed against their children become widely known, or for fear of reprisals.<sup>30</sup>

Such reluctance could however create a new problem, for any delay in reporting sexual abuse might lead to the suspicion that the victim had in fact colluded with his or her attacker – even that he or she was a willing participant in the illicit sexual activity. And in some cases, the children had suffered repeatedly or over a long period without revealing the details to anyone else. The four girls involved in the Luccese paedophile ring had all apparently been raped by several men, for instance. And a number of children appear in the records as young prostitutes – such as Lucia Grimaldi, who explained after her arrest in 1630 that she had been raped by a priest when she was aged nine. Thereafter she had been unable to regain her honour, and had been forced into prostitution to survive.<sup>31</sup>

Historians of child abuse have sometimes accused the adult world of lacking sympathy with the suffering of the children themselves. In a remarkable recent book on the history of the Piarists, a Catholic teaching order founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Karen Liebreich shows how a number of its members abused their pupils, and one even became superior of the order. Yet the ecclesiastical authorities were clearly more interested in protecting the reputation of the Church than the children in their care. The story she tells is a depressingly familiar one, especially since the 1990s, when Catholic priests in several countries have been prosecuted for abusing young children, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy accused of ignoring or even condoning the problem.<sup>32</sup> But the evidence of the Italian secular courts

in the Renaissance and early modern periods suggests that the families of abused children were only too aware of the pain and distress they had had to suffer. Caterina Caponato's mother, for instance, reported that she had returned home after her first rape by Paolo Orgiano 'crying and wailing'.<sup>33</sup> Court officials also demonstrated on occasion that they appreciated what the children had experienced, and (as far as we can tell from the surviving evidence) treated them gently and sympathetically during the trials. And by the mid-seventeenth century, if not before, the courts seemed to recognise the innocence and vulnerability of children caught up in these cases. In 1661, for example, the man who had abused Ruggiero Beccati, an 'innocent of the tender age of 12 or 13', was sentenced in Venice for 'violating him with vile and unworthy acts... notwithstanding the delicate weakness of his age'.<sup>34</sup> Such records suggest that in Italy, as in Geneva, adults were generally concerned to protect young children in their communities, were shocked when they were abused, and were willing to take action through the courts to ensure that the perpetrators of such abuse were punished severely.

## Notes

1. A useful summary of these ideas is provided by Ilaria Taddei, 'Puerizia, adolescenza e giovinezza: Images and Conceptions of Youth in Florentine Society during the Renaissance', in Konrad Eisenbichler (ed.), *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society 1150–1650* (Toronto, 2002), pp. 15–24.
2. Ottavia Niccoli, *Il seme della violenza: Putti, fanciulli, e mammoli nell'Italia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Bari, 1995), pp. 10–14.
3. A. Esmein, *Le mariage en droit canonique*, vol. I (Paris, 1929), p. 236.
4. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 203–15; Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore, 2000), pp. 187–90, 194–5, 305, 313; Daniela Hacke, *Women, Sex and Marriage in Early Modern Venice* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 116–17; Daniele Beltrami, *Storia della popolazione di Venezia dalla fine del secolo XVI alla caduta della Repubblica* (Padua, 1954), 180–1.
5. Patricia Labalme, 'Sodomy and Venetian Justice in the Renaissance', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 52 (1984), p. 237; Margaret F. Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 129–30.
6. Nicholas Davidson, 'Theology, Nature and the Law: Sexual Sin and Sexual Crime in Italy from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century', in Trevor Dean and K.J.P. Lowe (eds), *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 88.

7. Claudio Povolo (ed.), *Il processo di Paolo Orgiano (1605–1607)* (Rome, 2003), pp. 132–4.
8. Daniela Hacke, 'Marital Litigation and Gender Relations in Early Modern Venice, c. 1570–1700' (University of Cambridge unpublished PhD thesis, 1997), pp. 92–5.
9. Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1996), pp. 88–9, 94–105, 115–18, 126–9, 243–6.
10. N.S. Davidson, 'Sodomy in Early Modern Venice' in Tom Betteridge (ed.), *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 74–7.
11. Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, pp. 21, 23, 51–2, 78, 116, 312 n. 185; Davidson, 'Theology, Nature and the Law', pp. 94–5.
12. Gabriele Martini, *Il 'vitio nefando' nella Venezia del Seicento: Aspetti sociali e repressione di giustizia* (Rome, 1988), pp. 124–5.
13. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Marriage in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 106–8; Martini, *Il 'vitio nefando'*, pp. 121–2.
14. Oscar Di Simplicio, *Storia di un Anticristo: avidità, amore e morte nella Toscana medicea* (Siena, 1996), pp. 25, 66.
15. Karen Liebreich, *Fallen Order: A History* (London, 2004), p. 135.
16. Niccoli, *Il seme della violenza*, pp. 187–8.
17. Martini, *Il 'vitio nefando'*, p. 122.
18. Mary Hewlett, 'Women, Sodomy and Sexual Abuse in Late Renaissance Lucca' (University of Toronto unpublished PhD thesis, 2000), pp. 221–6.
19. Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* (1980), pp. 165–7; Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), pp. 93, 96, 125; Hacke, 'Marital Litigation', p. 73; Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, pp. 116, 260, 312.
20. Hewlett, 'Women, Sodomy and Sexual Abuse', p. 220; Di Simplicio, *Storia di un Anticristo*, p. 106; Labalme, 'Sodomy and Venetian Justice', p. 237.
21. Hacke, 'Marital Litigation', p. 62.
22. Hewlett, 'Women, Sodomy and Sexual Abuse', pp. 196–7, 214–15, 217.
23. Martini, *Il 'vitio nefando'*, p. 119; cf. Labalme, 'Sodomy and Venetian Justice', p. 236.
24. Hewlett, 'Women, Sodomy and Sexual Abuse', p. 206.
25. Niccoli, *Il seme della violenza*, pp. 186–8.
26. See Hewlett, 'Women, Sodomy and Sexual Abuse', pp. 229–30 for a likely example from 1614.
27. Di Simplicio, *Storia di un Anticristo*, p. 106.
28. Labalme, 'Sodomy and Venetian Justice', p. 237.
29. Hewlett, 'Women, Sodomy and Sexual Abuse', pp. 215–17.
30. See, for example, Povolo, *Il processo di Paolo Orgiano*, p. 134.
31. Niccoli, *Il seme della violenza*, pp. 184–5.
32. Liebreich, *Fallen Order*; see especially pp. 258–69 for recent scandals.
33. Povolo, *Il processo di Paolo Orgiano*, p. 133.
34. Martini, *Il 'vitio nefando'*, p. 120.

# 5

## Privilege, Power and Sexual Abuse in Georgian Oxford

*George Rousseau*

No giant step is required to jump from the dank cobblestones of post-reformation Geneva to the monastic environment of the Restoration and eighteenth-century Oxford colleges. Even then these establishments may have been socially and intellectually privileged but were not yet steeped in the ‘port and wine’ – the soft luxuries Gibbon claimed to have found at mid-century. In theory they consisted of enclaves of male scholars formed along old monastic regulations and statues requiring self-discipline, dedication and celibacy. In practice they fell short of these pieties. In extreme circumstances, such as the case at hand, they veered in an opposite direction towards outright profligacy, not least as the result of asymmetrical hierarchies of power. The issue for the historian is not primarily how such aberrations could occasionally occur, but their contexts and comparative conditions in the local Oxford of the day. For even then – almost three centuries ago – the colleges assembled privileged groups of males elevated far above the lower social orders and granted them almost unlimited freedom to study and worship in rarefied surroundings.<sup>1</sup>

The cases discussed in this and the next chapter – one at Wadham College in the 1730s, the other at Magdalen in the 1860s – are so different that they pose a methodological predicament: how to tease out their patterns of intergenerational sexuality. In some ways they were thoroughly unique, as we shall see. Furthermore, our guard is continuously up against presentist prejudices and the imprisoning, but necessary, labels they have generated: heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, and the current penchant for sexual abuse and paedophilia. The historical cases at hand occurred chronologically before the late nineteenth-century sexological constructions of ‘Urnings, Uranians, and Dorians’ – pretty-sounding Greek names bestowed in a culture of



euphemism and ellipsis to dignify an evolving type – and also prior to Freud's psychoanalytical revolution explaining how such seductions of children arose in the first place.<sup>2</sup>

They evolved in male colleges where sodomitical relations (which we shall discuss in a moment) were still unthinkable and largely unspeakable, despite having surreptitiously existed for centuries.<sup>3</sup> College foundations largely sustained by the Church of England had no place for such practices, let alone their discussion. Still, the paradox of interpreting these relations remains with us, and as time elapses both cases – earlier and later – seem stranger than they were a generation ago when the salad days of the 1970s found them less problematic. Their sources are primarily archival. Very little contemporary anecdotal information exists about them outside these archival remains and they have been neglected, perhaps because they tread on delicate ground in the very places, the Oxford colleges, two centuries after the event: public institutions would rather not confront these aspects of their history. My approach aims to let the stories speak for themselves and then cautiously tease out patterns and trends, conclusions and directions for further thought.<sup>4</sup>

## **The assault at Wadham**

On Saturday 3 February 1739, Robert Thistlethwayte, the then 48-year-old Warden of Wadham, sent his manciple to fetch Master William French, a 22-year-old Commoner who had been in residence for two years.<sup>5</sup> Robert Thistlethwayte was a middle brother. His two brothers, Francis and Robert, had both matriculated at Wadham: Francis, the older, proceeding to practice in the courts of law. The Thistlethwayte boys had grown up in Wiltshire, in a country family whose parents moved around to various southern shires. Nothing in the younger Thistlethwayte's career gave cause for alarm in light of the scandal that ensued: a younger son of a good family destined for holy orders gets a place at Oxford, wins a Fellowship, chooses a life as Fellow over one as a parish priest, and when still in his mid-thirties is elected Head of his College. There had been many similar backgrounds and careers in Augustan and Georgian Oxford. Such pluralism had been a way of life for centuries: most heads of Oxford colleges were in holy orders and had a parish tucked under their belts. In later years they might also pick up a canonry or prebend, even if they did not climb higher up the clerical ladder, and their careers remained nonetheless respectable. Thistlethwayte was a canon of Westminster Cathedral and Chaplain to

the King at Windsor.<sup>6</sup> He was also the Rector of Winterslow from 1723 onward, the family living in Wiltshire.<sup>7</sup> Why then a sexual attack on a much younger man, one of his own Wadham students?

Heads of houses, as the masters of Oxford colleges are still known, had been brought up in (what we today would consider) an alarmingly homophobic world. They were all in holy orders and religion and the social order had been hammered into them from an early age that such acts exceeded immorality – they were utterly detestable. Hence for dutifully religious undergraduates, as Thistlethwayte and French may have been, this moral code ought to have dampened their activity.<sup>8</sup> Yet it did not, and Wadham under his rule may have become an unusual type of college, as we shall see; otherwise, it is hard to understand how the protests of just one student, Commoner William French, can have stirred up such a ruckus. Other colleges prior to 1739 had occasionally brought similar charges of gross lewd conduct against their members. For example, at University College in 1699 a student was accused of spreading a rumour that the Master had sodomitically assaulted another student: a very serious charge then for all parties involved, not least the rumour-spreader.<sup>9</sup>

Wadham appears to have been different. One is hard-pressed to name another college of the day with so few Fellows in residence. There were indeed only two – Thistlethwayte and Swinton – a strikingly small number by any comparison.<sup>10</sup> The others had retreated to their sinecures, parishes and country estates. The vacuum created an atmosphere difficult to capture and describe accurately; it was as if the parents had absconded and the children were left to their own devices; alternatively, as if the two parents could create an ambience of misrule because they themselves were so profligate. Such an atmosphere prevailed in the absence of the large majority of Fellows, if the *Faithful Narrative* is to be trusted. The reconstruction rests on symbolic connections in the absence of further evidence, even anecdotal, but it remains psychoanalytically and culturally valid to account for the behaviour found.

This is rather a different interpretation from claiming that Wadham somehow transformed itself into a libertine foundation in the mid-eighteenth century. There is no evidence to substantiate that view, which may well be preposterous.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to note that Oxford colleges were significantly smaller then than they are now. Even the wealthy ancient colleges had fewer than a hundred members and the middle range of colleges, such as Wadham, had far fewer in the 1730s.<sup>12</sup> In a small college, where most of the fellows were absent, as was the case at Wadham, all activity was noticed, not least lascivious

behaviour and excessive attachments. Even the most inoffensive activities were commented upon, as when Thomas Cockman, the thoroughly honourable, married Master of University College (another middle-sized college), was praised in his tenure (1722–45) for calling on undergraduates in their rooms to see how they were getting on. Some part of his pastoral visitation was doubtlessly inspectorial: to ascertain that nothing untoward was occurring in his small and relatively poor college.<sup>13</sup> But the boundary between efficiency and prurience could be blurred, as it was during the 1730s when some college chaplains were charged with taking their pastoral duties *too* seriously and in one case led to dismissal.<sup>14</sup> We sometimes imagine our era to be the first to police sexual relations vigilantly between teachers and students, but the historical facts will not substantiate it.

Moreover, the atmosphere in Oxford colleges during the 1730s was, in brief, affectively repressed along the entire hierarchy of college society – top to bottom – and those with homosexual leanings, *unlike* Thistlethwayte, were usually too frightened to act on them. You could say that the realm of affect was stifled. The execution of more than two hundred sodomites across the North Sea, in provincial Netherlands in the 1730s, spread far and wide and would surely have travelled to English shores, certainly to the Oxbridge colleges that formed an integral part of metropolitan society then despite their relative sequestration.<sup>15</sup> In Oxford Thistlethwayte was surely an *exception*, the reason perhaps why no other case parallel to his exists down through that century.<sup>16</sup> Unlike him, most dons and students sublimated whatever erotic impulses they may have had as best they could, except in dire cases such as the attack at hand (and I continue to refer to it as such based on the evidence), when – for whatever bizarre reason – containment was impossible.<sup>17</sup>

This may be one reason for Thistlethwayte's shocked response to the accusations of his opponent – the student French's. French had visited Thistlethwayte's lodgings that afternoon and remained sequestered with him for about three hours. Three or more long hours: a key fact in the legal case that would follow. Afterwards French displayed 'uneasy' manners and 'disorder'd' disposition.<sup>18</sup> Despite the inquiries of his chums, he gave no reply, said nothing about what had transpired, merely excused himself and continued to vomit. In fits and starts he claimed that the Warden was a scoundrel, and that it was within his power to have him brought before the law and expelled. The two had not been caught *in flagrante delicto*. Yet French claimed that he was shocked at the sexual advances made on him, at 22 no child in the eyes of the law but one still *in statu pupillari*. Clearly French was repelled and revolted

by the advance or assault – hence the vomit. Yet why did he stick it out for three hours? Was he imprisoned and unable to break loose, or did he at first willingly acquiesce to the Warden’s advances, but once having succumbed found himself consumed with guilt and horror? – hence the vomit. The sequence is puzzling. Nothing in French’s testimony explains this all-important duration. We may also wonder how Warden Thistlethwayte can so thoroughly have misjudged his client: how he can have thought his actions would go unnoticed. Or are there other explanations for these inconsistencies and flaunting acts?

Two days later, George Baker, another Wadham Commoner and friend of French who was to play a major role in the unravelling of the scandal, advised French to remain silent or place the matter in the hands of a magistrate. To date it appears reasonable to assume that other Wadhamites did not know what had transgressed; French himself had been silent beyond cryptic asides that the Warden ‘did not love women’. Clearly some type of ‘sodomitical attempt’<sup>19</sup> had been made, as the printed account stipulates.<sup>20</sup>

But no one could be certain in that world where sodomitical assaults were less well understood than they would be in the nineteenth century what exactly had happened. Had the men been drinking? Was French lubricated with abundant wines, only to find himself raped? Whatever the case, French at first demurred, afraid to give offence, and then for fear of expulsion and the loss of his Bachelor’s degree. At this point his tutor, the Reverend John Swinton (1703–77), intervened. Swinton was 36, a classicist with exotic interests in faraway Oriental languages and places, who had just published his first work, *Some remarks on a Parthian coin with a Greek and Parthian legend, never before published* (London, 1739). His life remains a riddle. Earlier he had travelled through Germany and across the Alps to Italy and kept an intimate diary where there is no whiff of interest in homosexuality among the foreigners.<sup>21</sup> Later, after the scandal abated, Swinton married but never had children.<sup>22</sup> In college he seemed to be deaf to the complaints of others. Finding him unsympathetic they sought advice elsewhere, during which time – the space of a few days – the offence became common knowledge within college, and possibly beyond the walls of Wadham.

Then, on the Friday of that first week – 9 February 1739 – French signed an affidavit to a Justice of the Peace and to the Vice-Chancellor. Now, having recovered from his earlier shock and trepidation, he was determined to take the matter forward despite his awareness that the complaint amounted to one word against another (guilt by mere fact of accusation was not the norm it would become in the next century, as

we will see with Symonds). Besides, there was French's family to reckon with; not least an intractable father who paid for his son's education and who would soon rage over what had transpired. Fellow student Stone persuaded French to write to his father, setting out the sad facts. The letter has disappeared but father summoned son, son returned home, gory details were apparently recounted, and the pair soon returned to Oxford, Father French angered and determined to have his son exonerated and justice brought down on the culprit. George Wyndham, a Law Fellow at Wadham who was also a barrister in London, was retained and the necessary legal briefs drafted.

College statutes at that time required students as well as Fellows to receive a certificate of good character before they could see the Vice-Chancellor. *A Faithful Narrative* makes it clear that French applied to Thistlethwayte for this endorsement.<sup>23</sup> But in this instance the Warden *himself* was the defendant. So when French applied to him for the certificate Thistlethwayte cleverly pretended he did not know why French was going to visit the Vice-Chancellor. Thistlethwayte was well aware who his accuser was, but by pretending he did not, or by feigning he had no idea why French wanted to visit the Vice-Chancellor, he pleaded for time. Besides, once having complained to the Vice-Chancellor the charge became a university matter rather than college affair, to be investigated as well by Justices of the Peace. For all these reasons Thistlethwayte saw the great advantage in slowing down the process as best he could: he impugned the barrister's testimony on grounds of a defective document, demanded it be rewritten, and sought to quell future proceedings by flattery, claiming that he and French had been 'friends' and that an accusation of this sort represented a misunderstanding.

Thistlethwayte's ploy was cover-up through a combination of obsequy and concealment. French's tenacity, on the other hand, is uncanny: why go to such lengths to object to the Warden's affections? One wonders whether a type of pig-headed moral righteousness dominated his character, or whether he had earlier been the object of other male advances from which he himself had recoiled. There is no way to know – these are conjectures at best. But it is also important to recollect that English law at the time did not specify age in sexual assaults on male persons; age was only addressed in female child-molestation cases.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it did not matter whether French was 15 or fifty. What counted from the legal perspective was the veracity, or lack of it, of sexual assault.

Viewed objectively, then, the family gained little by making these accusations public. What then, one wonders, was the advantage for

French junior, or senior, in going public to this degree? Today, when we are surrounded by similar occurrences every hour, it seems, they appear routine and less noteworthy, if also more heavily policed. Yet in 1739 the university process of investigation required more than moral indignation if penalty were to be incurred. Anyone could come forward in the charge of sodomitical assault of an Oxford college warden. But French's version of raging indignation and unrelenting tenacity is what distinguishes him from others. It also raises questions about the boundaries of adult and child, and the borders of drink and touch in his early Georgian Oxford.

Eventually having obtained the required certificate from Thistlethwayte, French pressed his complaint to the Vice-Chancellor who held an informal meeting with himself in the Chair and Dr Thomas Pardo, the Principal of Jesus College, reading out the charge *viva voce*.<sup>25</sup> Pardo emphasized to young French the tribulations he would face if he could not substantiate the charges. French's friends confirmed his version; indeed, French himself gave a deposition prepared by his barrister. Then enter tutor Swinton's crucial testimony: that he had gone to the Warden's lodgings and found it bolted; that he waited for a long time before the door was opened; and that when it was opened he saw French in the room with Thistlethwayte. What did he see? Swinton did not say, but was eventually persuaded to testify *in favour of his pupil*. Like Thistlethwayte he was reluctant to come forward at first, and sought to delay the prosecution for murky reasons. What can have been his motive? He tried to bribe Father French, begging him to remove his son with him into the country so the scandal could settle; he promised that the Warden would bear all the costs if the charges would be retracted. He was, alas, all too transparent.

French *père* refused to play ball and the proceedings continued. The Vice-Chancellor summoned French *fils* and his major witness, tutor Swinton, but Swinton was nowhere to be found. In his sudden absence the students of Wadham offered a witness in the unlikely person of William Bloxley, a servant. Nothing is known about Bloxley's character or age but he himself claimed to have been previously sodomized (we would say raped) by Thistlethwayte, a charge French had never made, and when the Justices of the Peace arrived they adjudicated that this now evidently 'grave' case must go forward to the Assizes – as a criminal matter rather than one of university discipline. It did, and the magistrate adjudicated that Thistlethwayte had a case to answer, which the Assizes would try. He had not, of course, yet been found guilty of anything, had merely been charged. Thus charged he was asked to post £200 bail, then

a comparatively substantial penalty to which he complied. However, he simultaneously resigned from *all* his offices, collegiate and clerical in Oxford, Westminster and Wiltshire, forfeited the £200 bail by not appearing in court at the Assizes, and fled from London – like Oscar Wilde in the next century who literally took the night train – across the Channel to Boulogne, where he set up house and died five years later, on 4 February 1744.<sup>26</sup>

The *Faithful Narrative* is more detailed than this summary suggests. It describes other members of Wadham who testified against Thistlethwayte in his absence at the Assizes. These included the subpoenaed Swinton who turned up this time and promptly gave damning evidence, as well as the college Butler and Barber, who provided their own comic accounts. How, one continues to ruminate from a contemporary perspective, can the Head of an Oxford college – even if license ruled Oxford as Edward Gibbon and others vividly describe – have behaved so egregiously? Or was it less than heinous in the context of the time?

The most risible account is the Barber's. He testified (a charge that appears in the *Faithful Narrative*) that the Warden came up to him one day and asked: 'How dost do, my dear Barber? It's fine Weather my dear Barber, How does thy Cock do, my dear Barber? Let me feel it.'<sup>27</sup> The Barber was also explicit on the staircase-route from the Butler's room (not his own) to the Warden's, an account more likely of being found in an *opera buffa* than inscribed in court proceedings about a violent sexual assault. The *Faithful Narrative* actually ripples with comic as well as brutal details: an incredulous compendium that gives pause two and a half centuries later. Are they fabrications, we wonder, based on hysteria and hearsay or the stuff of truth? There is little reason to think, as Dudley Ryder and Gibbon suggest, that the Oxbridge colleges at this time were hotbeds of libertinism and license, but how else to explain Thistlethwayte's behaviour unless it was only slightly unusual and the real oddity of the case French's strange tenacity. Or was the able and gifted Thistlethwayte a once-in-a-lifetime exception: the chancer whose parallel would not be seen again in any century, let alone the long eighteenth, or are the archives understandably mute on such matters? Dudley Ryder's curious advice to parents earlier in the century – 'it is dangerous sending a young man that is beautiful to Oxford' – must have been based on some type of truth about collegiate libertinism even if he overstated the peril: 'among the chief men in some of the colleges, sodomy is very usual'. Otherwise his warning would have fallen flat. But not even alarmist Ryder had trumpeted his earlier caution in such pitched frenzy.<sup>28</sup> Imagine how he would have admonished them in 1739 if he could have known about French.

## Assault number two: the plot thickens

These are not simple questions to put because they lack adequate context, and the whole case defies resolution the more one asks questions about the motives of the two dons involved: Thistlethwayte and Swinton. Thistlethwayte's unique libertinism seems to lie at the core of the case for just a few days after the trial in the Oxford assizes, George Baker – French's friend and a fellow student with his own agenda – instigated a *new* case, this one racier than French's. Thistlethwayte and tutor Swinton had been colleagues, although in a college containing only a few dozen students all friendships – close and distant – would have been microscopically inspected in ways they could not have been in the larger colleges. Briefly, Baker's claim was that the two men had formed something of a homosexual ring in which they procured for each other, or at least shared with one another the fruits of their exploits. This gave the earlier assault on French a different spin.

This time the victim was an adolescent servant boy, no more than 13 or 14, a child by any definition, including the legal constructions of childhood at this time. The details as recounted in the *Faithful Narrative* are lurid: whose tongue went into whose mouth and how many times this boy was penetrated. Baker somehow extracted from this child a tale of 'lieing [sic] in the Bed with Mr Swinton' every bit as abusive as the recent charges against Michael Jackson in Neverland. 'Mr Swinton,' the boy told Baker, 'used to tickle and play with me in the Morning, and I used to play with Mr Swinton's Cock, which used to stand. . .'<sup>29</sup>

It soon became evident that both groups were buffeting this illiterate servant. For as soon as Baker presented his new 'evidence' to the Fellows of Wadham College, the Vice-Chancellor – Theophilus Leigh, who was then also Master of Balliol and had impeccable credentials – took the matter in hand and compelled him to sign a document recanting his allegations against Swinton. This was a shrewd move: no one at Wadham wanted yet another scandal after Thistlethwayte's verdict and flight caused them to lose their warden, and the Vice-Chancellor sought to indemnify his university from disgrace.

Baker's motive was his own academic preferment: if Swinton could be removed there would be a vacancy for him to become a Fellow. This motivation does not require a detective's expertise and lies outside the scope of this book: children and sexuality. Baker's ulterior interest was self-advancement, not sex or scandal, and it is unclear whether he understood anything about sex and sodomy, or even knew that sodomy was then illegal no matter what the age of the participants. Certainly the document he signed had positioned himself for ruin:



I George Baker, Bachelor of arts, and Scholar of Wadham College in Oxford, do acknowledge, that I have made a very unjust and inhuman Attempt to ruin the character of the rev. Mr Swinton, Fellow of the said College, by reporting that he hath been guilty of a Sodomitical Attempt and that I had no Foundation or Authority for any such Story; and I heartily ask his Pardon, and the Pardon of the University, for it, being of the Folly and Injustice I have been guilty of.<sup>30</sup>

Baker paid a price for his fabrication, leaving Wadham two years later without proceeding after his bachelor's degree (1737) to take an MA. Likewise French who remained at Wadham to take his bachelor's degree in June 1740, long after Thistlethwayte had fled, but did not attend the examination required for him to retain his Hardy Exhibition – like Thistlethwayte he too had fled.<sup>31</sup> Such cases wreak havoc on their players even when they are victors. Even so, this was the ambience Gibbon claimed to have found: a place where learning had succumbed to most vices *except* sodomy, which Gibbon would probably have mentioned had he seen any; where Lord Hervey's courtly 'Sporus-like' antics – as poet Alexander Pope memorialized them in the same decade in *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* (1734) – were being imitated by Oxford tutors and students. Such mimicry, if it was that, requires unpacking for its social consequences and national ethos.

So far we have understood the contexts apart from geographical ones, but perhaps they too ought to be assessed in the national context of the time. Either way the Oxford scandals circulated far beyond college walls and local rivers, the Isis and Cherwell, certainly to rival Cambridge, where the colleges there blamed these 'crimes' on Oxford's dank climate (the weather inflamed the lustful passions) and circulated printed paraphrases of the case such as a rhymed *College-Wit Sharpened or, The head of a house, with a sting in the tail, burlesque metre, address'd to the two famous universities of S-d-m and G-m-rr-h*.<sup>32</sup> Or disseminated broadsides about the 'Wicked Warden of Wadham', as in this silly Popean imitation in the British Library:<sup>33</sup>

When T[histlethway]te both Sexes acts, before  
 A vile Indorser, and behind a Whore;  
 And 'twixt the Males on O[na]n,<sup>34</sup> Scenes are past  
 Which make old D—'s leud [sic] Nocturnals chaste.  
 Say Dear Swintonius what detested Clime,  
 Taught Latium's learned Sons so dire a Crime?  
 ... Here Sporus live and once more feel my Rage,

Once and again I drag thee on the Stage,  
 Male-female Thing, without one Virtue made,  
 Fit only for the Pathick's loathsome Trade.

*College-Wit Sharpened* was probably read in Cambridge and word about the ongoings in Oxford spread this way rather than as verbal rumour. Nevertheless, and no matter how much such ephemera pleased then, today it provides no clue to the mood inside Wadham in 1739: a place apparently run amok (symbolically speaking) with only a few adults on the premises and the rest adolescents; a space where misrule could prevail because two adults in particular – Thistlethwayte and Swinton – felt themselves to be invincible among this group of inferiors. Perhaps they had carried on in this fashion undetected for some time.

Or was the root cause something else now overlooked in the evolving relations of power? Hitherto, the heads of houses had been viewed as figures of rectitude: if routinely dull in their approach to their duties, they had nevertheless offended *politically* in the past.<sup>35</sup> They had rebelled against State, you could say, rather than Church. But the corridors of moral rectitude were altering in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble, in London as well as within the universities. By the late 1720s the molly houses in London had been purged.<sup>36</sup> Then rectitude asserted itself more vigorously in the 1730s, as Gibbon himself discovered, in part as response to prior recklessness. Thistlethwayte and his clique of one (Swinton) had turned a corner and placed the college's reputation in a vulnerable position criminally in violation of a fundamental tenet of Christianity. Rictor Norton may therefore be reductive when he finds only jolly amusement in the scandals: '... the innocence of the working class and servants – servant Boxley joking about being bugged by Thistlethwayte, and servant Smith worrying that Bob will give Mr Swinton lice by sleeping with him' – and the general sentiment of 'more amusement than abhorrence.'<sup>37</sup> Readers of the ephemera were doubtlessly amused but not all others.

Although this was Oxford rather than Seville the Barber's tale was ribald, and still seems so now when our view of Fielding's England remains stereotyped by vice and excess run riot. But it may not have appeared so – within and without Wadham – in 1739. Nothing is known about Thistlethwayte's politics, whether Whig or Tory, so party venom is not a candidate.

Norton's subsequent claim that Swinton 'had more mettle in him than Thistlethwayte' is equally curious: it may have been innocence rather than mettle that saved Swinton.<sup>38</sup> After all, his case was much easier

to answer than Thistlethwayte's: a poor servant boy had been bribed to come forward. Nor did Swinton have an intractable student French backed by his equally adamant father and competent barrister, a force of three. Swinton may have been as sodomitically libertine as his counterpart in Thistlethwayte – there is no way to know. But he emerged from the scandal smelling like a rose: bonded, protected and redeemed because there was no case to answer to.

It is more difficult to gauge the psychological mindsets of the participants, a compulsory site for the exploration of intergenerational sexuality. The motives of both offenders *and* defendants, except for Baker, are clear only up to a point, not least because it is impossible to know what occurred behind closed doors (the evidence is too thin), and because Thistlethwayte's daring behaviour still seems implausible in light of the extent to which colleges are policed today. But is it?

Was Thistlethwayte one man in a century? Was there a surfeit of such behaviour, only remarkable in this instance because student French was so tenacious – determined to wreak revenge? Baker's transparent ploy for self-advancement needs little comment; even the recantation he signed admitted his 'Folly and Injustice' just as we would expect.<sup>39</sup> Its appearance in Oxford and London newspapers conceding his guilt injured his reputation and, by implication, placed all the other participants in their fair niches. Yet it is ironic how all the players in these cases (in this chapter and the next) – accused and accusers alike – fared so badly in the end. Thistlethwayte fled abroad, into misery and death, a fall from high station by any account. The others succeeded better than he did, but only in comparison to exile and decline. It is so tempting to interpret the whole affair as a latter-day Greek tragedy – the pathetic fall of its blind protagonist – but the possibility that Thistlethwayte's actions fit into a context we have lost continues to hanker. I, for one, am not entirely persuaded that the folly was entirely his own. But it may reveal a fact of academic life, then and now (and perhaps about Oxbridge colleges too), that in time all the accused will be found guilty. French's strange behaviour, especially the unexplained 'three hours', also points to the vulnerability of the under-aged and the mistakes they will make when trapped.

## From generation to generation: All Souls after Wadham

The aftermath of 1739 is difficult to judge. The scandal probably reverberated for years in common rooms and private houses despite being absent in print. Nor were there equivalent cases, causing the historian

of these matters to wonder whether post-1740 Oxford became so well regulated that no other similar scandal erupted until the next century. Or was it an Oxford now steeped in such fear of exposure that no one dared to bring charges? We must be alert to the pitfalls of the argument from *silence*: that nothing occurred because the archives are empty. Certainly there is no parallel case to the Wadham one until the Regency, but there must have been other incidents, in Cambridge too, now lost through silence or suppression. Poet Thomas Gray's youthful homoerotic love, Henry Tuthill, became a fellow of Peterhouse in 1749. Eight years later, in 1757, he was dismissed after detection of some type of homosexual scandal and soon drowned himself.<sup>40</sup>

National scandals, like William Beckford's in the 1780s, had occurred in great aristocratic houses rather than in academic colleges governed by quasi-monastic statutes.<sup>41</sup> Yet in both, reputations and fortunes had been made and lost despite the intervention of families and their legal representatives, as we have seen in the French family. Nevertheless, the fact remains, based on college archives, that in Oxford no other cases have been found tantamount to the Wadham one until the next century. The climate of the time was also important: in addition to the swing to heightened moral rectitude in the aftermath of the French Revolution, near hysteria had been reached in the wars with the French, culminating in their defeat by Nelson in 1805. Throughout the tense war a sense had developed that sodomy at sea was leading to mutiny, mutiny that typified the moral rot underlying surfaces of propriety. It was a pattern as true at sea as in schools and colleges at home, spelling possible disaster.<sup>42</sup>

The only rival of the Wadham case is one at All Souls in 1808–1810; a case admirably recovered by the late Oxford historian John McManners.<sup>43</sup> It centred on Charles Slatter, 19, a clerk at Parker's Books in the High Street, who accused the young Reverend Charles Shipley, 26, a Fellow of All Souls and graduate of Brasenose, the wealthy scion of a clerical dynasty, already (in 1808, when he was ordained) frail and suffering from irritable nerves, for which he had earlier travelled over the seas.

McManners describes the main charge this way:

Shipley had kissed him and fumbled in his breeches, then on the Wednesday he had taken him on his knee, kissed him, put a hand in his breeches and said 'I would like to frig you.' When he [Slatter] showed unwilling, Shipley implored him not to tell anyone, and had given him half a guinea as the price for his silence.

Slatter had reported these events to Mr George [his boss at Parker's books], and George had informed Mr Parker [the owner].<sup>44</sup>

But this explanation is too simple and overlooks the profiles of these figures. Slatter usually delivered his packages with a mate, although not on this occasion, and it later transpired that they had made similar charges against other college Fellows. Shipley for his part was known to be carefree, a high tipper among the delivery boys at Parkers, perhaps the reason Slatter sought to become his favourite deliverer, and having ingratiated himself as such took a chance that blackmail would produce yet more gratuity. Indeed, Slatter seems to have had a crush on Shipley for some time, surely having been greased up by the extravagant tips. This then was hardly the case of an innocent adolescent boy making a delivery who finds himself groped.

Legally, it was an assault rather than penetration, as in the cases at Wadham, and not even Slatter claimed that Shipley had 'buggered' him. But interrogations ensued and the Shipley family interceded with the full weight of its wealth and legal representation, eager for the case to proceed to the courts, where they knew they could have their son exonerated. Accordingly, they retained the acclaimed London criminal lawyer, William Garrow, who succeeded in discrediting Slatter as a 'liar and manipulator' with a past riddled with numerous seedy adventures like these.<sup>45</sup>

Garrow himself could not produce the information he needed: he required a spy or informant who knew the boys at Parkers in Oxford. Reginald Heber, brother of the bibliophile Richard and close friend of Shipley and his family, was ideally suited to play the part. Shipley and Reginald had been at Brasenose together where they formed a deep bond. Afterwards they were both awarded fellowships at All Souls. By now, however, Reginald was living in London and was well positioned to meet regularly with Garrow. He acted out of loyalty to his good friend who had been duped, and later married his sister. His character was sterling and he recoiled at the injustice done to Shipley by this cunning adolescent with a history of dishonesty. A decade later his older brother Richard (just mentioned) had to flee the country under a homosexual cloud:<sup>46</sup> the charge delineated in the Tory periodical *John Bull* of scandalous behaviour with a 19-year-old student Charles Hartshorne – 'the complaint from which Mr Heber has been recommended to travel is said to have been an over addiction to Harthorne'.<sup>47</sup>

The brothers – barrister Reginald and bibliophile Richard – were well connected and mixed with powerful lords like Roxburgh who founded

the Bibliophile Society. Richard remained unmarried to the end and was to be dogged by homosexual scandal throughout his life, but his truest identity was formed by collecting books, and Charles Dibdin estimated that his collections in England alone amounted to 127,500 volumes.<sup>48</sup> Richard had also had amassed huge collections abroad, in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, and was intimately familiar with the curious sexual sociology of bookshops. Untoward delivery boys like Slatter and his accomplice William George, another delivery boy at Parker's, would not at all have been 'closed books' to him. Earlier Richard had seen the likes of Slatter and his brothers (both of whom had lived with older men and shared their beds in compromising situations), and knew all too well how to track down Slatter's prior victims. This done, Richard informed Reginald, and Reginald poured everything out to Garrow who then composed an airtight case based on character defamation: one guaranteed to succeed in court.

Shipley was acquitted in Oxford Crown Court. Indeed, the Jury in the Lent Assizes of 1809 deliberated for only ten minutes before tendering their non-guilty verdict. He was nonetheless expelled from All Souls and chose never to appear within its walls again, somewhat to the shock of Heber and his family. It is of great interest to us that in such matters colleges act more severely than courts, their draconian ears attuned less to the fine points of the law than to their imagined reputations outside the college walls. Had the Fellows of Wadham a half-century earlier been in residence, and had Thistlethwayte not been its Warden, he too may have gone the way of all flesh, which he ironically did for an *opposite* reason: the court, rather than his college, found against him. This may seem a subtle difference yet it continues to surface and will arise again in the *cause célèbre* of John Addington Symonds described in chapter 5.

Slatter, shamed in Oxford, fled to London, worked for a bookseller in Soho, returned to thieving, was caught, tried and sentenced to two years' hard labour in prison.<sup>49</sup> Shipley also left Oxford, to the disappointment of his family and friend Heber, married, had several children, and took the living in a hamlet on the Oxford-Buckinghamshire border. A brilliant career at All Souls was snuffed out. In the words of his biographer *manqué*: 'In that isolated hamlet in the depths of the countryside, at the end of his life [in 1834] he must have reflected on what might have been, remembering the day when his privileged existence at All Souls and his expectations for the future had been ended by the accusations of the youth who had pocketed his patronising half guinea.'<sup>50</sup>

These are outcomes rather than the thick description of processes, especially in the contexts of children and adolescents, for an adolescent

is what Slatter was. He needs to be understood in the context of social deviance and class difference. His sexual orientation remains unknown; all that can be said is that he was willing to prostitute himself for a guinea. The degree to which he was typical (if excessive in his application to lucre) must interest us, as must the glaring social differences involved in this and perhaps similar cases involving delivery boys, male servants and other youthful workers. Yet it is odd that the Fellows of All Souls seem not to have considered the possibility that Shipley was framed. When thirty Fellows 'tried' him in July 1809 they concluded that his 'conduct with Charles Slatter... arise[s] from an impure state of mind.'<sup>51</sup> *Impurity of mind*, a psychological state, never arose in the Wadham case: the assaults there were viewed as *physical*, again even comically; nowhere had their breach implied underlying mental filth or moral pollution, let alone a debased state of the soul. The differences in the two cases are legion: Thistlethwayte faced a *legal* trial, whereas for Shipley the legal trial had *failed* only for him to find himself treated miserably by his college on the most tenuous of grounds. Had Thistlethwayte not resigned and fled, the Wadham Fellows may never have dismissed him; yet here was Shipley, found innocent in a court of law yet stripped by his college.

The other point to note is the new rhetoric since 1739 about 'conduct becoming a fellow of All Souls'. This trope is reiterated and repeated in the college minutes by the Warden and Fellows. McManners notes that the Fellows' 'decision was made in the context of a new climate' – during the Regency – 'of opinion in the country at large, severely censorious in matters which might have been more tolerantly treated half a century previously.'<sup>52</sup> They had been indeed, as Thistlethwayte's ruling of the roost of eligible young men at Wadham demonstrates. Further afield, poet Alexander Pope's exposure of sexual corruption at court and novelist Tobias Smollett's of sodomy in the London underworld would not tell if these behaviours had not existed.<sup>53</sup> By the 1780s libertinism was being punished, and a new censorious climate of oppression infused Britain in the 1790s, only to be heightened afterwards as responses to the French Revolution. By 1809 the England in which Shipley and Slatter were put on trial was in another mood altogether from what it had been in the time of Wadham, just as it would be again in 1895 at Oscar Wilde's trial.

The perspective of the children – the accusers – is more tenuous. Slatter was a delivery boy of 19, French a scholar three years older living in privileged surroundings where he could study and learn. Their

differences – social, economic, political – are so great as to make comparison invidious, let alone suggest what concepts of sexuality they might have held. Besides, Slatter was – as has been noted – a young man with a chequered past, French so far as is known a law-abiding and morally righteous student who had been outraged by Thistlethwayte's lewd conduct. Sexuality must have held different symbolic valences for each. Slatter worked in a milieu – the bookshop – where clients and deliverers could exist under corrupt circumstances in a symbiotic chain based on gratification. Bookshops themselves were sites whose cultural spaces were just being constituted around this time in 1800 and have yet to be understood in relation to sexual preference. They were becoming places where certain types of readers, with specific interests, came to meet others with similar interests. The sociology of such meeting could be complicated and revealed the bookshop as a new space defined by affinities of taste and, in certain cases, of sexual predilection. It would not long be long before some bookshops catered to the erotic tastes of their customers, a type of ancestor of the modern sex shop selling toys and dress as well as magazines and books. Slatter delivered books for Parkers, which sold scholarly books for university scholars. But he had also met many of Parkers' clients who came into the shop to browse on its well-stocked shelves and select their books. When he delivered books to Shipley's rooms he was all too ready to succumb to propositions if well tipped – indeed, the evidence suggests he was seductive himself, luring his clients and then accusing them. The trap Shipley fell into has no parallel with Thistlethwayte who proceeded on the honest but reckless premise that his power as Warden was sufficient to keep his 'children' (French), still in *statu pupillari*, silent.

McManners also attributes some of the new sexual anxiety to revolutionary France and its radical ideas, and to English fears that the decline of its moral standards could initiate a new wave of degeneration. These anxieties were no doubt pressing, but McManners has perhaps relied too heavily on A.D. Harvey's statistical counts of late eighteenth-century prosecutions for sodomy.<sup>54</sup> One wonders whether the rise in prosecutions actually influenced the behaviour of fellows in Oxbridge colleges or whether they felt themselves immune. There is no doubt that the wave of policing swept through England's cities. During the years when Shipley's trial was underway (1808–09) practical measures – the locking of toilets and park gates – were taken throughout Britain's large cities to protect the innocent young from corruption. More locally in Oxford proctors and deans were clamping down on students visiting the notorious brothels of Abingdon, a few miles away. A year later, in



the summer of 1810, just as the Archbishop of Canterbury – the Visitor of All Souls – reviewed Shipley's case, the Vere Street brothel scandal broke out in London, arresting several dozen alleged sodomites at the White Swan (public house) and recommending death as their just penalty.<sup>55</sup>

McManners is on more solid ground when claiming that earlier Georgian libertinism now gave way to a severe backlash. When Shipley was stripped of his fellowship, his influential family demanded to know the reason for aborting their son's promising career. However, in a climate where 'impurity of mind' is the alleged crime all accusations are irrevocable because guilt is substantiated merely by virtue of one's having been accused. So Shipley was effectively ruined at the moment he was accused. It is small surprise then that the Archbishop thoroughly rejected his appeal. As a grief-stricken and traumatized Shipley left Oxford, he referred to the leniency of other Oxford colleges in similar charges – a cryptic reference suggesting that other undercover witch-hunts were being conducted.

### Fallout and aftermath

What, if anything, do these scandals tell us about children and sexuality, especially intergenerational sex? Most salient is that all these implied sexual relations, when they were sexual, involved older men and younger boys. Swinton's alleged victim was not even post-pubescent, but a mere boy of about 12. No assaults on, or overtures to, were made to chronological peers, a state of affairs that will cease only when the nature of the power relations between the participants alters. Among the adolescents – French and Slatter – neither was what we today could confidently call gay, or even mildly homosexual. French was violently repelled by his predator's advances and Slatter's involvement determined by his seducer's gifts, whether it amounted to alcohol to weaken his defences, guineas or trinkets. There is good reason to think (without psychoanalysing Slatter) that his behaviour resembles the prostitute's: pay me and I do whatever you wish. On the other hand, an equally strong case can be made that Slatter's sexuality was polymorphous and unformed; that his was a 19-year-old man's body incorporating the mind of a 12-year old, cognitively and emotionally – so evident are the disparities of mind and body. And it may be that Slatter would have succumbed to female Shipleys had he delivered to them and if they tipped him.

More puzzling are the older protagonists. We will never know whether Thistlethwayte and Swinton (again I must stress that the jury is out about Swinton's sexual orientation) were homosexual men in our sense.

Their bachelordom in an all-male college from which the other Fellows were not in residence proves nothing except possible desperation. They may as well have been at sea or in prison. Either man could have been (again in our sense) bisexual or heterosexual, merely and temporarily starved of female sexual relations. If that were the case why did they not avail themselves of the flourishing communes of female prostitutes extending from Kidlington to Abingdon? This point cannot be too strongly articulated: Oxford was then a city of well-developed prostitution with dons, as well as students, among its clients, one that expended sizable sums on its women. Nor did anyone flinch at the presence of these well-established communities of prostitution.

It is noteworthy how much energy is spent in these and similar cases – among children and adults – in affixing the right labels to the participants. The more crucial issues may lie elsewhere: in their relation to their families, their uses of money, their class differences and the nuanced fantasies they harboured of the opposite social classes to which they were often sexually attracted. This focus may be the legacy of Freud: psychoanalysis and psychohistory mandate that we interpret all protagonists as if they were ‘case histories’. In each it is crucial to tease out the nuanced disparities between motivation and behaviour. But we often do so apart from their socioeconomic milieus and cultural frameworks. Even Freud and his disciples undervalued these components that have only been redressed in our generation in the new methodologies of historical study. A further irony is that none of the cases – so far – deals with children ostensibly ‘courting adults’ for reasons of affect; that is, there is no evidence of trauma in the Freudian sense; no appearance of the child, or adolescent, who craves a surrogate older brother or father who will initiate him into the rites of puberty and then shower him with affection. Slatter is the most proximate, but even he lusts for his guinea rather more than Shipley’s smiles. The tide will turn in the next chapter under the weight of subtle Victorian hypocrisy and blackmail.

## Notes

1. For further assessments of the mood see Lucy Sutherland et al., *The History of the University of Oxford: The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), chap. 5, ‘Student Life’, a revealing source for this topic; Graham Midgley, *University Life in Eighteenth-Century Oxford* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), passim; and the older A.D. Godley, *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1908).

2. The second case involving John Addington Symonds in the next chapter was launched when upper-class young men in the pursuit of boys referred to themselves as 'Arcadians'. The label comes from the Greek region of Arcady where pastoral shepherds courted each other, and long antedates its usage by the group of twentieth-century artists discussed in the introduction (see pp. 4–10). The chronology of these cases spanning from 1739 to 1861–62 coincides with generations when the linguistic names attached to types of sexual desire were unstable.
3. David Halperin cautions scholars engaged in work of this type to exert nuanced care in the deployment of these terms: sodomy, homosexuality, same-sex arrangements, gayness, pederasty – each capturing an aspect of the nature of these conditions; see David M. Halperin, *How to do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
4. I am immensely grateful to C.S.L. Davies, Keeper of the Archives, Wadham College Oxford, for various kindnesses in making his file on the case available to me.
5. The facts of the case are based on one crucial document: *A Faithful Narrative of the proceedings in a late affair between the Rev. Mr. John Swinton, and Mr. George Baker, both of Wadham College, Oxford: wherein the reasons, that induced Mr. Baker to accuse Mr. Swinton of sodomitical practices, ... are circumstantially set down ... to which is Prefix'd. A Particular Account of the Proceedings Against Robert Thistlethwayte, Late Doctor of Divinity & Warden of Wadham College, for a Sodomitical Attempt upon Mr. W. French, Commoner of the College* (London: Britannia in the Old Bailey, 1739), a pamphlet of 32 pages possibly written by Charles D'Oyly, an M.A. of Wadham, whose handwritten name curiously appears on the title page of the copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The motive for writing the pamphlet is unknown, but its origin probably owes something towards vindication of the tarnished college. The only source for William French's age is Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: the members of the University of Oxford, 1500–1714* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2000) 4 vols, referred to as *Alumni Oxonienses* and used as a source for the reconstruction of this episode. The author of the *Faithful Narrative* errs when stating that French was then twenty: French matriculated at Wadham on 22 October 1736 aged 19 and would therefore have been 22 in February 1739. Other biographical facts are found in Robert B. Gardiner, *The Registers of Wadham College, Oxford* (London: G. Bell, 1889–95, 2 vols), II, p. 51; A.D. Godley, *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century* (n. 1) and Graham Midgley, *University Life in Eighteenth-Century Oxford* (n. 1).
6. See C.S.L. Davies' life of Thistlethwayte in the *New Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005–6), sub 'Thistlethwayte'. For Thistlethwayte's family history and its relevance to the case see Clive Cohen, *So Great a Cloud: The Story of All Saints, Winterslow* (Winterslow: Winterslow PCC, 1995).
7. See note 6 for his life there.
8. Homosocial activity in metropolitan London in Augustan England is relevant here: it is tempting to think that Oxford dons destined for holy orders were psychologically distant from the libertine mollies of London, but they were more au fait with libertine London than we think. Many knew London well and had taught some of the fashionable students of the day for whom the

nearby eighteenth-century capital was a familiar playground. The two worlds interconnected more than we think, despite the interlinks not yet having been documented.

9. See Charles Usher, *A letter to a member of the Convocation of the University of Oxford: containing the case of a late fellow elect of University-College* (London, 1699) setting out the case. An accusation of sodomy, even if it amounted to no more than slander, had grave consequences. In Usher's case it was the final straw resulting in banishment from the college and it thoroughly discredited him. Further afield in England and Europe, the annals abound with cases of non-university sodomitical abuse, in almost every instance demonstrating that power relations of older and younger, richer and poorer, employed and unemployed men, were in force. Historian Alan Ross has sent me the report of a pathetic case in Nördlingen, Germany in 1649 of a drunken officer sexually abusing a beggar boy outside a pub in the full view of others. The officer was subsequently taken to court and found guilty. The disposition of these cases ordinarily turned on whether the crime was to be treated as a case of sodomy and thus punishable by death, or commuted to another charge in which the available sentences usually excluded death. The language describing them is usually repulsive to modern readerly sensibility, as each moment of the assault is graphically described in minute detail. I am grateful to Alan Ross, Somerville College Oxford for sharing his archival retrieval of these cases with me.
10. Based on evidence in Wadham College archives and *A Faithful Narrative*, p. 6; for its substantiation I am grateful to the Keeper of the Archives at Wadham.
11. Godley (n. 1) and Midgley (n. 1) are both silent on them as hotbeds of libertinism.
12. The admission numbers are found in Gardiner (n. 5); see also Sutherland (note 1) for the differences of large and small colleges.
13. Although University College took in more undergraduates than some of the larger colleges its income then was small and in the region of £1,200 per annum. I owe this information to Robin Darwall-Smith, Archivist of University and Magdalen College.
14. He was then the Chaplain of Merton.
15. For the evidence see the four chapters, in section III dealing with sodomy in the Netherlands, in K. Gerard and G. Hekma, *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe* (New York and London: Harrington Park Press, 1984), pp. 207–310, especially Theo van der Meer, 'The Persecutions of Sodomites in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam', pp. 263–310. For homosexual liaisons in Oxbridge colleges at mid-century see G. S. Rousseau, in Gerard and Hekma, pp. 330–1. See also Thomas Betteridge (ed.), *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
16. The point is fundamental: very few cases of sodomitical attack in the eighteenth century were heard by the whole college fellowship and the Wadham case remains unique. Throughout its reconstruction I have been struck by the amounts of alcohol available at the post-prandial late-night parties, sessions producing jollity, if not outright inebriation in which behavioural defences were unguarded.

17. It is unnecessary to speculate here about such later (Freudian) concepts as the modes of sublimation. Little is known about both repression and containment then and it is premature to hazard guesses. Explanatory works such as the anonymous *Satan's Harvest Home* (London, 1749) were intended primarily for urban audiences where the threat of the 'molly' camps was proximate.
18. *Faithful Narrative*, p. 6.
19. *Ibid.*
20. See Netta Murray Goldsmith, *The Worst of Crimes: Homosexuality and the Law in Eighteenth-Century London* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).
21. Swinton's manuscript diaries are in Wadham College Library, shelfmark All. 5–6.
22. See Alexander Chalmers, *General Biographical Dictionary* (London, 1816), vol. 29, pp. 70–4.
23. *Faithful Narrative*, p. 8.
24. See Carolyn Conley, *The Unwritten Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
25. *Faithful Narrative*, p. 8.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
27. *Faithful Narrative*, pp. 6–7.
28. See Dudley Ryder and William Matthews, *The Diary of Dudley Ryder, 1715–1716* (London: Methuen, 1939), entry for 1 December 1715, p. 143. Ryder based his views on 'young Mr Powell and his cousin Joseph Billio' who had come down from Oxford to visit him. Ryder was then 24 and 'young Mr Powell', a student at Oxford, 17. When they met on 1 December Powell gave Ryder an extraordinary account of the vices prevalent at Oxford, especially drinking, swearing, and whoring, and told Ryder that sodomy was the most pervasive of these. Ryder would have been confirmed in the view if he could have witnessed the scandal at Wadham in 1739, twenty-four years after he wrote, yet it is unclear who these 'chief' sodomites in the colleges were or which particular 'master of one college' Ryder refers to in 1715. The most recent sodomitical case had been the one at University in 1699 referred to in note 9.
29. *Faithful Narrative*, p. 7. Each act is described in language that seems almost pornographic to our antiseptic twenty-first-century ears.
30. *The London Daily Advertiser*, 21 March 1739, n. p. The recantation was also printed in the *London Evening Post* on the same day.
31. See R.B. Gardiner (n. 5), II. p. 56.
32. Printed within weeks of the trial in the Assizes. No publisher is given on the title page.
33. Cited in Norton (n. 37), p. 276. The scandal probably spread beyond London, but a search for its visual legacy in cartoons and caricatures has so far produced nothing.
34. Onan was the Old Testament figure killed for wasting his seed. Two years before the Wadham case erupted yet another English translation of Bekkers' *Onania* appeared (by then it had gone into almost a dozen editions), a work in the campaign against masturbation that was printed in Latin a generation earlier: *Onania: or, The heinous sin of self-pollution, and all its frightful*

- consequences, in both sexes consider'd, & c.* (London: J. Isted, 1737). Dr Bekkers' first name seems to be unknown.
35. Although the phrase 'power relations' applies primarily to nations in the international world order and to social and racial minorities uprising against majorities, social scientists use it as a key concept in their models of the sexual sphere, where it pertains to symmetrical and asymmetrical hierarchical structures in relation to the prevalent types of sexuality found; see Jim Sidanius et al., *Social Dominance: an Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Sarah Oerton, *Beyond Hierarchy: Gender, Sexuality, and the Social Economy* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996).
  36. News of the purging of the molly houses would have quickly reached Oxford.
  37. R. Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: the Gay Subculture in England 1700–1830* (London: GMP, 1992), p. 168.
  38. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
  39. *Faithful Narrative*, p. 10.
  40. Gray's correspondence from this period has been selectively destroyed. What survives (including letters where Tuthill's name can still be detected behind the erasures of Gray's first editor and biographer William Mason) suggests that Mason and his associate Thomas Wharton conspired to suppress public knowledge of these matters, particularly about Gray's involvement in the affair.
  41. For a vivid account of these matters see Tim Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart* (London: John Murray, 1998).
  42. See A.N. Gilbert, 'Sexual Deviance and Disaster during the Napoleonic Wars', *Albion* 9 (1977): 98–113 and W. Burg, *Sodomy in Nelson's Navy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
  43. John McManners, *All Souls and the Shipley Case (1808–1810)* (Oxford: All Souls College, 2002), p. 6. McManners' is the most thorough account of the homosexual scandals in the Oxford colleges since 1600.
  44. *Ibid.* (n. 43), p. 6, who comments on the 1732 case of the chaplain expelled at Merton.
  45. March 1809, Oxford Lent Assizes.
  46. Here the parallels with the case of Shipley and Slatter are noteworthy, both centring on the sexual life of books. Richard Heber's transgression is being examined by Josephine McDonagh in *De Quincey and the Secret Life of Books* (in preparation). For the biographical details see Arnold Hunt, 'A study in Bibliomania: Charles Henry Hartshorne and Richard Heber', *The Book Collector* 42 (1993): 25–43, 185–212 and the testimony discussed by William Cobbett, 'Heber and Hartshorne', *Weekly Register*, 64, no. 5 (Saturday 27 October 1825) 256–91.
  47. Richard Heber was tipped off by a friend and fled before the scandal erupted, in the same way Thistlethwayte had resigned and fled before he could be charged.
  48. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life...in two parts* (London, n. p.: 1836), i: pp. 429–46. Dibdin dedicated *The Bibliomania or Book-Madness* (London, 1809; rev. 1842) to Richard Heber.
  49. McManners (n. 43), p. 92.
  50. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

51. During the spring and summer of 1809 Brasenose College feted Shipley indicating they wanted him back: did college rivalry transcend taboo or did Brasenose believe Shipley's version? Three generations later, there will be other parallels between Balliol and Magdalen: in both cases the rivalry arises because the college of one's undergraduate years claims to know the student better than the new college that has elected him to a fellowship.
52. McManners (n. 43), p. 67.
53. Smollett's diatribe, which erupted soon after his arrival in London as a young man from Scotland, remains unexplained; to his shock he was apparently propositioned by London sodomites who opened his eyes to this undercurrent of the great metropolis. After the encounter Smollett poured out his anguish and vented his spleen in two of his earliest published works, poetic satires entitled *Advice and Reproof* (1746–48).
54. See A.D. Harvey, 'Prosecutions for Sodomy in England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,' *Historical Journal* 21 (1978), 939–48.
55. The *Times* recommended 'instant death'; see Chris White (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 2, 9–10. There is no doubt that the climate had significantly changed in the two generations since 1739. One strain of evidence lies in the number of allegations made in the second half of the eighteenth century compared to the first half. For example, the cases at Wadham and All Souls were merely two of many. Another notorious case involving a Balliol Fellow and choristers at Magdalen erupted in 1751; see George Wilmot, *A serious inquiry into some late proceedings in vindication of the honour, credit, and reputation of the University of Ox--d, relative to an offence of a certain member of the...* (n. p.: J. Goddard, 1751). Wilmot was an MA of Balliol College and wrote this work in defence of the defendant. It exposed the case far beyond Oxford and caused a controversy. Within weeks in 1751, for example, William Lewis replied to Wilmot's defence; see *An Answer [by W. Lewis] to the Serious inquiry into some proceedings relating to the university of Ox--d [by G. Wilmot.]* (London: n. p., 1751). To this attack Wilmot in turn replied in 1752, signing himself 'Olim Oxoniensis', now implicating Christ Church College and rendering the event something of a university-wide scandal; see George Wilmot, *A Letter to [William Lewis], occasioned by his Answer to the serious inquiry] M.D. heretofore of [Christ Church] college in the University of O--\*-\*-\*-d* (London: n. p., 1752). There were other similar cases in Oxbridge in the decades leading up to Shipley's in the early nineteenth century. But search the archives before the 1730s and very little is found. If our contemporary hysteria over sexual harassment owes much to the past, it is to allegations and scandals of the types found in these colleges in the eighteenth century. What has altered in our time is the vigorous pursuit of the media in reporting these cases: in forcing their way, like 'print paparazzi', into the illicit arrangements of old and young in different social strata and exposing them.



## Tim Hitchcock responds

Anyone familiar with modern-day Oxford, or with the cultural miasma – the archetypes, myths and legends – which seems to cling to its spires, will know that what happens within its honey-coloured quads possesses only a strange and awkward relationship to the rest of the world. Oxford has always pretended to be different, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries actually was. By exploring same-sex scandals in this most peculiar of contexts, George Rousseau has excavated a series of events which, by the very oddity of their social framing, allows us to examine a broad history of sexuality and of childhood. In the process and in not so many words, he locates these histories within a broader transition from a society organized around hierarchical power to one in which affect and emotional engagement gain an ever greater purchase.

As George Rousseau rightly points out in this chapter, both the 1730s and the decades around 1800 are important turning points in the public reception of homosexuality. The 1720s and 30s witnessed a concerted persecution of homosexuals across Europe. In the process molly culture and the issue of the existence of homosexuality was brought to a wide and new audience, heralding a period of almost unique pre-modern public awareness. Several historians have seen in this new publicity one of the motive forces driving the creation of both a new heterosexual and homosexual identity.<sup>1</sup> In a mirror image of these decades the 1780s and 1790s witnessed the thoroughgoing censorship of accounts of sodomy from popular literature. Published trial accounts such as the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, for instance, stop reproducing the details of sodomy trials from the late 1770s, and restrict their reporting to the baldest statement of name and verdict from the 1790s.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the beginnings of a new attitude towards both sodomy and sexuality more generally can be traced to the decades before 1800, providing, in turn, a starting point for the evolution of the fear and denial that infused nineteenth-century gay history. But these moments of transition are important not just as mileposts in the creation of a modern gay identity. They are also part of a broader history of the creation of a new domesticity and a newly mandatory heterosexuality. The western world was transformed between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries from one in which hierarchical institutions (monasteries, courts, guilds and indeed colleges) provided a form of normality, to one in which the heterosexual and domesticated household formed the epitome of regular living. This transition was in turn built on the self-construction



of a new image of emotionality and interiority that made nervous self-reflection ever more central to the construction of the individual. In the process notions of identity shifted from the collective to the individual (from the exterior to the interior), and from almost every form of marker and behaviour, to an ever more narrow focus on sex.

What makes the scandals described by George Rousseau compelling as evidence of a broader set of changes is that they take place within an ever-more abnormal context. The treatment of the principals, their feelings and motives must be analysed with a clear eye to the extent to which an Oxford college could still work as an almost medieval institution in the 1730s, but could not do so by the second half of the nineteenth century. The ever-growing power of a set of norms contained within a new heterosexual domesticity necessarily made the homosocial world of a college seem ever more suspicious. George Baker, William French and the anonymous author of the *Faithful Narrative*, may have presented their scandal in then new-fangled language of Grub-street and of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, but Robert Thistlethwayte probably understood his predicament in a more traditional way.

The late Alan Bray analysed the working of the social hierarchy of a sixteenth-century Oxford college, and suggested that colleges provided its fellows with a unique access to the 'body of the friend'.<sup>3</sup> What emerged from his analysis is the absolute importance of gestures of physical intimacy in the construction of the relationships of real power that tied a man like Robert Thistlethwayte to a student like William French, and a scholar like Charles Shipley to a clerk like Charles Slatter. Bray was attempting to create an archaeology of an essentially medieval form of friendship and affect, but in the process he points up the extent to which the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century scandals discussed by George Rousseau need to be seen as a fragment of an apparently unchanging system of power and of physical access, that survived as an ever-more isolated shard of social ordering within a society that became increasingly unable to accept the idea of a community of young men dedicated to the pursuits of the mind.

Whether or not Oxbridge colleges witnessed high levels of homosexuality or sodomy is both unknowable, and largely unimportant. The silences found in the archives speak equally loudly of the possibility of effective censorship and cultural normalization (or an even more effective admixture of the two). But what is clear is that the colleges reproduced, generation by generation, a series of substantial same-sex relationships that were mapped on to a steep geography of power. It is Robert Thistlethwayte's and Charles Shipley's tragedy to have exercised

that power at moments when the evolution of the town brought the behaviour of the gown into sharp relief.

By the 1860s it is clear that the medieval Oxford of masculine power relations could no longer hold the centre ground. What John Symonds helped to create was a new and alternative set of male relationships that brought the outside world comprehensively within the college walls. A world of naturalized heterosexuality threw into confusion the homosocial relations of Balliol and Magdalen. The need to find words for homosexuality, the appeal to nerves, sensitivities, and classical precedent, reflects the real tension that existed between the ever-more domestic world of Victorian Britain, built as it was on the valorization of sex between a husband and a wife, and the ever-more anachronistic world of a monastic college that denied sex completely.

In relation to the history of childhood and of the control of children's bodies by adults, these scandals betoken a broader story of the exercise of a form of power that is mapped onto to age and immaturity. George Rousseau points up the strong age component to these scandals – the objects of sodomitical attention were younger men, approached by older men. But, what seems to have changed by the 1860s and in the case of Symonds with his Arcadianism (as we see in chapter 6) is once again a question of the evolution of forms of power.

To make a simple comparison, in the almost four hundred cases of rape tried at the Old Bailey during the long eighteenth century the victims were overwhelmingly made up of two types of people – children and servants. And what children and servants shared was a common relationship to power. They were both relatively powerless. The scandals related by George Rousseau help illustrate the interrelationship between age and sexuality, because, like paedophilia, they represent the sexualization of relative powerlessness. If in studying the history of sexuality historians have come to recognise the interrelationship between race, sexuality and power, it is equally important to recognise the extent to which childhood can be seen in similar terms. If sexual desire is equated with power over the body of another then the scandals rehearsed here reflect the extent to which the participants were caught up in a changing landscape of the sexualization of powerlessness. The location of these scandals in the airless world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Oxford simply throws into ever-sharper relief that boundary between a growing heterosexual and domestic hegemony, and the harsh conflicts and desires that fill every human mind.

## Notes

1. See, for example, Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Social History* 11:1 (1977), 1–33; and idem, *Sex and the Gender Revolution, vol. 1: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1998).
2. The last sodomy trial to receive a fully published report in the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* was that of Thomas Jackson and Thomas Dawson in 1777. From the early 1790s the court regularly ordered that evidence in sodomy trials should be suppressed as 'utterly unfit for the public eye'. A similar censorship was applied to rape cases from around the same dates. See *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), 1 January 2005), April 1777, trial of Thomas Jackson and Thomas Dawson (1777–76).
3. Alan Bray and Michel Rey, 'The Body of the Friend: Continuity and Change in Masculine Friendship in the Seventeenth Century', in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities, 1660–1800* (London: Addison Wesley, 1999), pp. 65–84. See also Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

## **Part II**

### **Victorians and Edwardians**

# 6

## ‘You Have Made me Tear the Veil From Those Most Secret Feelings’: John Addington Symonds Amidst the Children

*George Rousseau*

‘You have made me tear the veil from those most secret feelings which should have been as sacred.’

Charles Shorting to chorister Henry Goodman, c. 1860<sup>1</sup>

### Asymmetrical social hierarchies

If the Vere Street scandal ‘outed’ a dark and dangerous activity, the result of its wide coverage was a new awareness among the multitudes. No longer could there be doubt that adults and children were congregating in public places for ‘lewd’ reasons. Throughout the long eighteenth century, same-sex male sodomitical sexual relations had occurred almost exclusively among older and younger men, most of the latter legally children, even in the monastic Oxbridge colleges. Historians of sexuality have therefore been justified to consider Vere Street as something of a watershed in British sexual history.<sup>2</sup> They have also demonstrated that as the nineteenth century progressed sodomitical liaisons were showered with ever-more refined labels attached to its activity, culminating in the *fin-de-siècle* nomenclatures – homosexual, lesbian, bisexual – enduring to our time. Further transformation occurred in that century in the public’s perception of the variety of forms sodomy took: from lewdness of the type found in the dank cellars of Vere Street to the noble and romantic friendships of boys in public schools and men stranded at sea.<sup>3</sup> These passionate friendships suggested a new type of idealistic attachment rare in Thistlethwayte’s Oxford. At least no cases have been found of similar aged boys, locked

into a romantic friendship, who fell out as 'lovers' and then charged each other with gross indecency.<sup>4</sup> Not until the one lying at the centre of this chapter.

Nineteenth-century same-sex attachments shed none of their theological repugnancy: it was the rhetoric of churchmen in the pulpit, and other moralists, which changed. These affinities also acquired new biological explanations after the post-Lamarckian 1830s, and were gradually psychologized and pathologized as part of the march of science's professionalization. By the time Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859, and the French and German sexologists had generated their genealogies of 'Uranian Love' (in Karl Maria Kertbeny's coinage of circa 1868–9) a decade later, the by-now forgotten 'sodomites' of Wadham and All Souls College had been conceptually transformed.<sup>5</sup> Shipley would have understood himself better if he could have awakened in 1880 on German sexologist Albert Moll's couch in Berlin.<sup>6</sup>

Return to the 1840s and 1850s in the colleges in Oxford, and the clouds of rebellion against this all-male order encouraging homoerotic behaviour are beginning to gather. It was not merely objection to the type of debauchery found in the previous chapter, but on more tenable new grounds of rounded lives better capable of educating young men. This was the context, in part, of the great educational reforms of Pattison and Newman as they aimed to wash away three centuries of almost medieval pedagogical belief: not merely conceptualized in terms of subjects and books but people and social interactions.

Contemporary readers often forget how different from ordinary mufti life the hierarchy of an ancient Oxbridge college was (and some would say still is). Their all-male society was required to remain in holy orders until the 1860s; if they married they forfeited their fellowships and moved out of college rooms, usually to take up a parish living.<sup>7</sup> It was then impossible to be an official 'Fellow' without being in holy orders, even if you were a disbeliever under your gown. The import for children and sexuality was considerable, primarily in that Fellows who continued to live in college were necessarily bachelors. They kept mistresses and frequented prostitutes (of both genders) but nominally they remained bachelors. Trouble in the form of expulsion awaited them if they married clandestinely. Some of these Fellows were homosexual (in our sense) and thrived on the camouflage the college system gave them: an all-male society sanctioning the close interaction of young and old – historically the primary ingredient of the sodomitical impulse.<sup>8</sup> For them college life was less constrained if also more dangerous, as we shall see. These homosexual dons could thrive rather better than their heterosexual

counterparts: less sexually frustrated, not missing their mistresses and girlfriends (it was impossible to be married and remain a Fellow), they had a vast field of handsome young men to cast their eyes over, and gaze they did. This surely is what Dudley Ryder had meant over a century ago when warning parents who sent their handsome young sons to these colleges.

Meanwhile the authorities continued to be on the lookout for 'assaults' – often as employees in Town charging members of the Gown, as in some of the cases in the last chapter. Once charged, these crimes usually amounted at least to crimes 'in the mind': 'to think dangerous thoughts was to have them'. The high-and-low world of Wadham in 1739 long ago gave way to the new surveillance, and it intensified down through Victorian decades. The higher a college's clericalism, it seems, the more stringent its forms of vigilance against all types of 'impurity of mind', not merely sexual forms.<sup>9</sup> In counterpoint, the broader the church – as in Balliol under the great educational reformer Benjamin Jowett (1817–93) – the more relaxed its attitudes, so to speak, to such breaches.<sup>10</sup>

Jowett was a major player in *l'affaire Symonds*, as we will see, despite being attached to another college, Balliol, down Broad Street. He had failed to be elected Master of Balliol in 1854: then still a relatively conservative college with a few liberal Fellows. But as the decade wore out dissension set in and he became one of the most controversial figures within the university. His commentary on the *Epistles of St Paul* (1855) was said to contain heterodox notions to the extent that some people called him an outright heretic.<sup>11</sup> A few years later, in 1860, he contributed to a progressive book about theology in which his own contribution was so daring that the view of 'heretic' was confirmed in many quarters.<sup>12</sup> His views about the all-important Greeks, especially Plato, were less suspect, here because he was such an authority on the subject – Classics – that formed the backbone of 'Literae Humaniores'. These strains in the decade took a toll and by 1860 his reputation in Oxford as 'the Great Heretic' had consolidated.<sup>13</sup> It was low indeed in an ultra-orthodox college like Magdalen.

Under his reforms young classicists, like Symonds, slowly began to flock to Balliol. The texts they read under Jowett (who was not yet Master, the far less liberal Robert Scott was) are not fully established. But Jowett leaned to the love poetry of Catullus, Ovid and Propertius and, of course, the Platonic dialogues.<sup>14</sup> If such explicitly amorous texts could be openly discussed anywhere in Oxford – a big if – it was in Balliol, without the tyranny of clerical suspicion and penalty. Here, in Balliol's

somewhat latitudinarian atmosphere, although not yet as broad-minded as it would be under Jowett's leadership, classicists were being nurtured and bred, some destined to become the distinguished scholars of their age. John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) was one: marked from his early days at Balliol as one of their brightest scholars and set to become one of the century's most erudite commentators on the ancient world. He won the Newdigate Prize for English Verse for his poem 'Escorial' and bowled over Jowett with polished essays. Small wonder that Jowett and his Fellowship at Balliol were eager to recommend him to Magdalen as their best candidate for the Fellowship that fell vacant in 1861.

The suspicion of Jowett in some quarters in the 1860s was then understood, but has partly fallen away from historical memory. Some of his motives were inspected, interrogated and challenged; the more brilliant his scholars became, the more envious other colleges grew. It was an instance of collegiate intellectual rivalry that extended beyond the particular developing disciplines (classics, history, humanism) and demonstrated the petty jealousies that had arisen.<sup>15</sup> The historian of these matters must not run riot in an imaginary psychomachia but it would be equally naïve to pretend that Jowett did not raise eyebrows.

Therefore when one of Jowett's most precocious scholars – Symonds – moved into his Fellowship at Magdalen he was greeted with curiosity as well as caution about his intellectual mindset and clerical views, especially by President Bulley and such fellows as the righteously pious Bloxam.<sup>16</sup>

Everything, however, altered when Symonds was accused, like Shipley before him, of 'harbouring an impure mind in a sickly body', the euphemism for homosexuality. Symonds thought to himself that *of course he was ill*: he knew he was ailing but found himself helpless to fight back. His father – a learned and reputable physician in Clifton, Bristol – could verify his son's condition, explaining how he was *already* suffering from consumption and related nervous ailments even before he moved over to Magdalen. John Addington added that the accusations made against him so acutely aggravated his malady that he could no longer remain in Oxford – indeed in England. After several weeks of interrogation the authorities at Magdalen made him *think* the choice was *his* but they overlooked the shame he had suffered. No one forced him out yet sorely shamed, disgusted and ailing, Symonds retreated to his sister in alpine Switzerland where his lungs could recover in pure mountain air. This may have been 'flight' in another key – it remained voluntary flight nonetheless as the result of blackmail.



## The trade in choristers

What had happened? The election process at Magdalen had augured what was to come. The other six candidates were not entirely qualified – Symonds was the clear winner.<sup>17</sup> He was also one of the first Fellows to have been elected after the statutory changes regarding celibacy of the mid-1850s. Yet no sooner was he installed in his rooms than he continued to be viewed as one of ‘Jowett’s men’, and the least offence – especially in the clerical line – was liable to give rise to comment and gossip. Hence when a troubled undergraduate from a small college – Charles Shorting of Corpus Christi<sup>18</sup> – wrote to six of Magdalen’s Fellows about the moral impurity of their new Fellow, they were initially predisposed to think the worst. If his letter had been some type of joke or prank they might have been amused, but *épater le professeur* was the last thing on Shorting’s mind. They hardly knew that the ‘new man from Balliol’ was an ‘Arcadian’, let alone anything about Symonds’ past amours at Harrow: how he had fallen in love with another student there, Alfred Brooke, a tailor’s son, and conducted a passionate romance with him; how his physician-father cautioned him to terminate the friendship or face ruin; how Harrow at that time and its headmaster – Charles Vaughan (1816–1897) – was also steeped in scandal about ‘the love that had not yet had a name’.<sup>19</sup>

The Symonds who matriculated at Balliol in 1859 as a boy of 19 was no stranger to male–male love. There he applied himself to classical studies, responded to Jowett’s quality of mind, and maintained intimate friendships without thinking they were illicit. The Symonds transposed to Magdalen was in a much less enviable situation: the college was rich and ancient, but its intellectual life had been dormant for much of the nineteenth century. President Frederick Bulley’s new reign, which commenced in 1854, seven years before Symonds arrived, slightly changed this atmosphere, but Bulley remained a devout churchman and conservative thinker having nothing in common with Jowett. Besides, someone like Symonds, destined to engage in intimate friendships with younger men of lower social classes, would inevitably still raise eyebrows in this High Church society. Bulley may have been a conscientious tutor, but he was old-fashioned, unattuned to the resonance of the newly developing intimacies among students. Besides, it was social class, above all else in Oxford, which queered Symonds’ friendships, as we shall see.<sup>20</sup>

The intricacies of the accusations against Symonds are more bizarre than substantial, if for no other reason than that the charges were

psychological rather than legal and therefore pre-empted the possibility of trials or court cases. The charges augured the modern model of sexuality as predisposition rooted in genes and psychiatric phenomena rather than in behaviour. For no assault was alleged; no one had been touched. There could not be criminal proceedings, as had been the case at Wadham and almost at All Souls. However, the charges clearly implicated young boy-choristers, Magdalen, like Christ Church, being a college



*Illustration 6.1* Print from G. Lewis from a painting by Auguste Pugin of the interior of Magdalen College Chapel, facing west, published in Ackermann's *History of Oxford* (1814). Reproduced by kind permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.

with an ancient choir. These child singers – ‘choristers’ as they were called (the ‘clerks’ were the adult singers) – had not appeared in earlier scandals and it is important to remember – for definitions of childhood in the 1860s – that they remained in their chorister posts significantly longer than they do today.<sup>21</sup>

The participants in this affair spilled over to several colleges and drew on rivalries, as we have seen, as a major ingredient. Symonds and Shorting became friends during the years when Symonds was still at Balliol. When he moved into rooms at Magdalen adjacent to the college chapel where the choristers rehearsed Shorting had new reasons to cultivate his friend. Shorting was a mediocre student of the Classics. Symonds had informally discussed ancient philosophy with him: a form of tutelage that helped Shorting without placing him in the master–student relation. Hence the power relation between them was minimized, although it must have galled Shorting to see his friend continually praised by the great Jowett. The two younger men had exchanged private letters disclosing their amorous ‘Arcadian’ interests – for the love of young boys – written in coded language. Yet there had never been the *slightest* romantic interest between them, each attracted to much *younger* boys in the way Symonds had been in love with the younger Brooke at Harrow. This fact does not make them (in our sense) paedophiles: two men in their early twenties attracted to pubescent boys without whom they have physical-genital relations. But the Magdalen choristers were not a novelty for Shorting; he had already been an habitu   at Christ Church and was now determined to add Magdalen to his repertoire of boy choirs; to listen to them sing and imagine their reciprocal ‘love’ for him (Shorting’s word), just as he had with Henry (‘Harry’) Goodman – as we shall see – a chorister at Christ Church.

Back at Magdalen, Symonds was guarded in his first term, not easily adjusting, his body further weakening from the consumption. His attraction to the 11-year-old chorister Walter Goolden – ‘the dangerous Mr Goolden’ according to Bloxam<sup>22</sup> – energized him. But he was careful not to cause the slightest indiscretion. Nevertheless, he foolishly revealed his feelings for Goolden to the treacherous Shorting, who, unbeknownst to Symonds, turned on him and used this ammunition when Symonds was most vulnerable: when he suspected nothing. Symonds only gradually recognized Shorting’s motives – the lure to Magdalen for choristers rather than philosophy – but once he did he swiftly resisted his visits and eventually prevented Shorting from coming round at all. Shorting was furious that he had been found out and intercepted in this way. Acting impulsively and without pondering the



*Illustration 6.2* Group photograph of members of the choir of Magdalen College taken by Rufus Stone in the New Forest during a tour of Hampshire made by them in 1863. Goolden is sitting in the front row on the far right. Magdalen College MS Catalogue 408. Reproduced by kind permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.

consequences he penned the now missing letter and sent it to six of the Fellows. The letter has so far disappeared, but its contents can be more or less reconstructed from the ensuing investigations. Shorting painted himself as an innocent, honest Oxford scholar who merely wished Magdalen's Fellows to know that present among their fellowship was an 'Arcadian'<sup>23</sup> who loved choir boys.

Once in receipt of such charges the Fellows had no choice but to summon the defendant to interrogate him. Or did they? Years later Symonds wrote in his memoirs that *Balliol* would not have interrogated him if the charge had been made while he was still there.<sup>24</sup> Or was his point that Balliol *knew* him and *trusted* him whereas Magdalen doubted his motives? A college like Balliol, which had never had a choir composed of men and boys (adults and children), would have been much less aware of the potential dangers from the treacherous Shortings of this world – sexual abuse between adults and children. This was not sodomy, or Arcadianism, between Fellows and their servants, or Fellow and students, but Fellows and *chorister boys*. Of what concern was it at





*Illustration 6.3* Detail of the preceding photograph showing the boy Goolden. Magdalen College MS Catalogue 408. Reproduced by kind permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.

Magdalen if no complaint was made against Symonds by a boy-victim? Certainly no chorister or parent complained.<sup>25</sup> The question appears presentist – shaped by our concerns today – but pierces to the heart of the Victorian riddle about same-sex relations. Besides, Magdalen had been a place of High Church religion for almost a century, especially under the dead hand of President's Martin Routh's 63-year long term, and was not about to be polluted by stings of this variety. Therefore, they acted swiftly to discover the 'truth' in the charge: not whether Symonds loved

young boys – that was neither here nor there – but whether he was a practicing ‘Arcadian’, which would violate his Christian standing so far as to discredit him in a college committed to High-Church Anglicanism. A lengthy investigation ensued, one in which Balliol was requested, to its surprise, to attest to Symonds’ character (Balliol Master Robert Scott exclaiming that he was appalled by these requests).

The Fellows of Magdalen did what they could to keep the case hushed but word got out. Little wonder considering that other colleges were experiencing similar events then: for example, the Principal of St Edmund Hall, John Barrow, who had been in post for seven years from 1854, was also forced to resign his post that autumn after allegations of a sexual relationship – of what type remains unknown – with a student.<sup>26</sup> The size of colleges then was one influencing factor: they were *much* smaller than they became, with fellows and students living together in much such proximity – spatially and emotionally – that romantic liaisons were destined to develop. Magdalen had only 36 fellows in 1861, as Symonds was moving into his rooms, but many of them had left Oxford for their country livings – and it was one of the largest fellowships. Others, like Corpus and Wadham, may not have had more than a dozen living in. As important were the ages of *both* fellows and students: the disparity was then significantly less than it is today, most fellows moving out and leaving Oxford to take a living somewhere when they married.<sup>27</sup> Thus students and fellows existed in an age span from approximately 17 to 30, with very few fellows over the age of 30 except hardened bachelors like Bloxam. Among these would have been statistically several (as we would say) ‘homosexual fellows’, but most, unlike Thistlethwayte in 1739, were closeted. At Magdalen, at least, parties were held in student rooms with fellows present, and often choristers: arrangements until recently socially tempting to us but that appear not to have been so then.<sup>28</sup>

The Magdalen authorities had not been faced with such a charge as Shorting’s, at least not in recent memory. So they set out – first – to ascertain whether Symonds had been similarly accused at Balliol. Master Scott, still appalled at their interrogation, replied at once: Symonds’ character was golden; there had been no accusations at Balliol. Besides, trivia of this type could not have been tolerated in such a lofty intellectual climate as Balliol, a response that further incensed the already dubious Magdalen Fellows and caused them to distrust the radical, or quasi-heretical (depending on one’s point of view circa 1860) college on Broad Street. The recently published progressive theological *Essays and Reviews*, to which Jowett had contributed, was further proof.<sup>29</sup> Diverse

churchmen attacked it, many of whom had associates or friends at Magdalen, with the upshot that by the time Symonds was elected the Magdalen Fellows were not impressed that he had been a pupil of that arch-heretic, Benjamin Jowett. Shorting, for his part, was concurrently being investigated at Corpus. In the end he lost his scholarship despite the imprecations of a supine father (having rushed down from his parish in Suffolk to see whether he could save his son) who pleaded with the authorities not to ruin his family and their good name.<sup>30</sup> Shorting, after falling out of his scholarship, disappeared from Oxford; like many of his accusatory predecessors never to be seen again.

Scrutiny of the extant archival material establishes that the Fellows of Magdalen acted rationally.<sup>31</sup> They were cautious but not intent upon deciding anything – let alone expulsion – before the facts could be assembled. After much agonizing a vote was taken whether or not to strip Symonds of his fellowship and the vote failed on several occasions. Moreover, many Fellows – the eminent naturalist Charles Daubeny, Symonds' friend William Stephens – came to his defence and testified about the integrity of his character. Friends at Corpus, who might have been partial to their college without knowing the facts, also testified in favour of Symonds against Shorting's veracity. Magdalen President Bulley kept a private notebook in which the minutes of the meetings and investigations are recorded: it remains the only known account of the President's intimate views. The fact that it was guarded and locked in the President's vault provides further evidence of Magdalen's desire to contain the scandal. Symonds himself cleared all the hurdles and was exonerated, except that his health further deteriorated.

Far more important are the choristers and Shorting's involvement with them. Only this facet begins to explain his child love and the degree to which paedophilia, or some other phenomenon for which we have no name, is at play. In this context Symonds recedes and Shorting occupies the spotlight: a young man in love with pre-pubescent boys for whom admittedly scant evidence survives: a few letters to one of the Christ Church choristers.<sup>32</sup> Little is known about Shorting's parents beyond their socioeconomic class, yet it is not wanton to surmise that their house on the heath in Suffolk was an emotionally frigid place where Shorting's psychic life had been imprisoned.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps this fact of his emotional history attracted him to the Evensongs in Christ Church where his attention focused on 'Harry' Goodman, aged somewhere about ten or 11. The love letters to Harry followed, as did presents and pocket money but the letters proceeded in one direction only: little Harry's letters are either lost or he never replied.

Shorting's letters resound with pathos. More often than not they read like a parent writing to his child; they are the words he wanted to hear his parents murmur to him and hardly represent the stuff of abuse: 'My dear little boy, I love you so much'. Each one started with 'Harry darling...' Harry's tutor objected and informed the boy's parents of the menace at hand. Harry stopped accepting presents, perhaps even sent them back, which alerted Shorting to the fire he played with. So he pleaded: '*You have made me tear the veil from the most secret feelings which should have been as sacred.*' This to a 10 year-old boy, and what was this 'veil'? The pathos deepened: 'You are the sweet little chorister whom I loved so much, and who hated me.' Later: 'I wish you were my little brother.' It requires no leap of Freudian faith to hear in Shorting's cadences the little boy who had been deprived of the love he craved from 'darling Harry'. The letters are suffused with erotic affect but no gesture of genital contact: all is gifts and toys and unreciprocated love. Can one imagine a contemporary paedophile writing to his victim this way? But soon Shorting recognized the evidence the letters constituted and terror ensued: 'I beg you to burn the letters...' Harry did not, at least not all, for several survive. Finally, Shorting demanded to know why Harry is so 'unkind' to him and why he has had a change of heart.

The authorities at Christ Church lost no time in contacting President James Morris at Corpus, who took the allegation in hand, discussed it with his Fellows and warned Shorting that he must no longer set foot into their neighbouring college or their chapel. But Shorting was pig-headed, obtuse in his defence that he had done nothing wrong by courting the chorister, and so certain was he that he even refused to reply to the President's charges in timely fashion because 'I am engaged to walk with Mr Jowett this afternoon and fear that I shall not have it [the time to reply].'<sup>34</sup> The more cautious Symonds could never have replied in this bold manner. Shorting further justified his letter to a child by the mention of a book in which he had immersed himself: *IONICA: Poems ... by an Eton Master*.<sup>35</sup> 'Others here [i.e., at Corpus Christi College], he pleaded, 'felt and even published to the world the very same sentiments which you [the President] condemn'd so strongly.' Is this a lame defence, or did Shorting believe he was justified? The intersection of education – Victorians reading the Classics – and the emotions in history must give us pause: it is easy to condemn Shorting and his defence as so much gibberish but quite possible that in his mind – and the letters with their ringing pathos and professions of love support the possibility – that he actually *loved* the boy in the way a



parent loves a child and if given the chance would never have broken the incest taboo.<sup>36</sup>

None of Shorting's extant letters are dated, but it seems likely that his romance with little Harry occurred *before* Symonds moved across to Magdalen or – more likely in view of the penalties inflicted by his college – after Symonds forbade Shorting from visiting him again at Magdalen. Otherwise neither the sequence of events adds up nor does President Morris' verdict handed down on 18 February 1862 that Shorting should lose his scholarship. Shorting – having failed to persuade his hierarchical betters at Corpus by resort to the 'same sentiments' in an Eton master – next turned to his father who rushed up to Oxford to implore the college not to ruin him and his family. While the father pleaded, the son remained intractable about his innocence, claiming he could only be ejected from the college 'if found guilty of... *de majoribus criminibus* [a major crime]'. This 'crime' is precisely what the college set out to do while both Shortings – father and son – searched for strategies. When Shorting's defence, based on the habits of other Corpus men, failed, the elder Shorting turned to a medical defence: to have his son declared insane. Dr Alexander Sutherland was brought in, who indeed declared Shorting to be of unsound mind, while Shorting himself continued to protest that he was not, nor should he be deprived of his scholarship 'when more than one of the Fellows of Corpus Christi College is notoriously of unsound mind, & yet is not ejected'. The claim was probably true, if salacious and pathetically ironic in the event, but did not prevent Corpus' President from ejecting him nevertheless; at which point – late in the winter of 1862 – Shorting disappears from all records just as Symonds' health caved in and compelled him to leave Oxford forever.

Not every Fellow at Corpus would have known why Shorting had been sent away. Across the High Street how many of the Magdalen Fellows knew the contours of the Symonds case? But some were in the know. And many outside the colleges involved knew. Swinburne referred to it fleetingly – he had good reason. Headmasters like Oscar Browning of Eton, later to be transported to King's College Cambridge, knew. There must have been many others too.

## Sexualities then and now

All those *charged* in 1861–62 departed Oxford by the next summer, defeated in varying degrees and never to return. Only the choristers remained. The attempted cover-ups by college authorities had also failed, although the Victorians were more adroit at subterfuge than their

Augustan and Georgian predecessors. Indeed, Victorian duplicity must never be underestimated: if Thistlethwayte's world at Wadham bumbled and dithered, their successors in Magdalen and Corpus and elsewhere were masterful at covering their tracks. But what can be said of the adult-child relations they typified?

First was the Church and its social ripples. The events we have witnessed at Wadham could never have occurred in the atmosphere they did if Thistlethwayte had been surrounded by significant numbers of other dons. Likewise a century later at Balliol: the charge against Symonds probably would have been construed less gravely there in view of the religious atmosphere – it was then an institution rather different from the High-Church Tory college down the road. Remove these subtle brands of Christianity and the rug is pulled out of the events.

Equally apparent was the all-male monastic setting whose relation to erotic desire remains murky. Its stark reality could enhance desire or reduce it by virtue of religious rule. The degree of soft luxury in the colleges was also a factor: if it had been the case that flirtation and favour ruled at Wadham when Thistlethwayte and Swinton held sway, then one could construct a culture there based on gifts and presents, as had clearly also been the case at All Souls and Shipley. But there is no evidence that a libertine atmosphere prevailed. In Wadham it was only when one brave student objected to such behaviour (perhaps because the tide was turning as the behaviour of sodomitical men became more fully understood)<sup>37</sup> that Thistlethwayte was charged. Likewise Swinton, although the differences between his case and his Master's are legion. Not so Shipley at 26 and Slatter at 19: the former an adult with well-developed sexual behaviour, the latter a child with a dishonest past for whom homosexual blackmail was to become a way of life. Moving to 1860, Symonds was doubtlessly homosexual unlike his predecessors (at least it cannot be proved that they were) but he was also nervous and ill: an obsessive personality hindered by a hypochondriacal constitution already in the throes of consumption. Only when liberated in alpine air, and later when he could bask in the sunny lagoons of Venice, did he blossom into the prolific classical scholar he was: the author of a seven-volume *Renaissance in Italy* (1875–86) and lover of a young married Venetian man with children who became his long-time lover.

Had Symonds remained in Oxford he never could have found his genuine niche. Far away he created a pan-European network of homosexuals, especially among British travellers abroad looking for foreign men: the Victorian equivalent of the contemporary bulletin board or Internet clubs for gay men and women. You could say that his sexual

orientation became creative in the service of his intellect and imagination. Comparison with the others makes the point about discovery of the self: Shorting was unluckier than Shipley who at least retreated to a sinecure and married. But Shorting – chancer, liar and opportunist – paid the full price for wantonly indulging his trade in choristers and then lying about those who would not collude with him. Only the raw affect apparent in his love letters to young ‘Henry’ Goodman somewhat ameliorates his dreary fate in rural Suffolk. Goodman and Goolden have disappeared from the records beyond what has been noted.

All our cases relate to instances in which one party – usually the initiator – was in a position of power over the other. All the accused were *older* than their accusers and all were *gentlemen*: members of a socially privileged class charged by younger men either of the same class or labourers. No accuser was the same age or older than his defendant, which follows the symmetry of sodomitical relations since the late Renaissance; a pattern identical outside Oxford or Cambridge as well as within it, its determining factor homosexual liaisons formed when older men approached younger ones rather than geography or – in this case – quasi-clerical life in colleges. If instances existed of similar liaisons between identically aged young men – students – they have not come to light; in those cases the boundaries of class and station would not have been breached in same-sex activities between equals. Here, by contrast, the Ladies of Llangollen and their types form no parallel. Among males, this asymmetry of age and rank may be the most jarring aspect for our levelled-out times when so many ‘gays’ have coupled up into enduring partnerships between persons of similar age and class. Furthermore, the accusers in the Regency and Victorian eras were students or servants, delivery boys like Slatter or choristers. By the 1880s and 1890s sexual relationships between *students* are springing up. Why, one wonders, is there so little earlier evidence of these sexual friendships among *equals*? More crucially for the history of same-sex relations, was this trend the beginning of the end of the old Renaissance model, based on Greece, of the older and younger man?

The disparity in social class may strike us as oddest of the various dissymmetries. One understands why: once the middle classes in the twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon world began to assert themselves and their rights it was only a short time until they would pay the price for such hard-won responsibility. Therefore, set the chronological dials to 1940 or 1970 and the situation – even in Oxbridge – will have altered. The surprising aspect of all these cases is not their details – who did what when – but the fact that they exist at all; and we must

continue to ask ourselves over and again why the archives are so *silent*? It is impossible to imagine these as the *only* cases brought forward: over the centuries there must have been dozens of similar accusations. But in a milieu such as theirs', with hierarchies so asymmetrical and uneven, it is perhaps not strange that so many silences occurred.

Perhaps, then, the enduring question is not the blow-by-blow detail of each sodomitical assault, but the suppression of other cases nowhere to be found. Instead of court proceedings and college tribunals we may need studies of *silences*: the conditions in colleges from 1700 forward encouraging such behaviour but preventing the accusers from coming forward, for the outcomes in the past have resembled the fate of accused and accuser alike today. In the words of American journalist Robert Bernstein, who has written a penetrating analysis of sexual harassment during the peak of frenzy in America's hysteria in the 1980s, 'guilty by virtue of accusation'.<sup>38</sup> The social hierarchies have changed, but what was true in 1989 was not entirely different in 1739 and 1862.

### **'Arcadians' and malady**

The medicalization of 'Arcadians' and 'Uranians' and other types of imagined 'Degenerates' in the second half of the nineteenth century is a development now appreciated by a wide swathe of historians, but one whose entrails have yet to be meticulously charted and described.<sup>39</sup> No longer is there any doubt that aesthetes *were* medicalized; what remains to be understood is precisely *how* the doctors medicalized their subjects – their basic assumptions, their methods of explanation, their forms of persuasion among certain types of Victorian and Edwardian reading publics and the professional advantages of doing so – and how the 'degenerate aesthetes' responded, when they did. Some 'Arcadians', like Symonds, adjudged illness to be their natural destiny: the belief that they had no free will in the matter. Malady could even be advantageous because it shielded them from a cruel world and absolved them from loathsome tasks. The nugatory question is whether their perceived degeneracy, their 'Arcadianism', construed illness as a just reward for degeneracy, or whether their ingrained sense from early age that they were *malades* inclined them to degeneracy as a natural habitat. First and foremost, they knew that they were aesthetes: that they lived each day for the frisson beauty could bring them.

Symonds' biographers, including Phyllis Grosskurth, have always recognized the great toll taken by his crisis at Magdalen but have

overlooked his chronic illness as a major component of its development. Indeed his life forms a particularly useful biographical study for the Victorians' self-awareness of their increasingly 'nervous civilization', a theory especially promoted by a now obscure Victorian physician, Dr Robert Verity.<sup>40</sup> This is not merely because Symonds was a lifelong consumptive who became a practicing gentleman-homosexual, or because scandal in Oxford taught him what toll extreme emotional suffering could take, but was also the result of an obsession about the condition of his nerves and the plasticity of his brain at a time when the connection of the two was not yet explicit. Emotional pain and homosexual scandal can appear to us to have nothing in common with nervous anatomy. It could seem otherwise in the 1860s.

Oddly, rather little of Symonds' obsession derived from the medical family in which he grew up (although his early life in a doctor's house must have sensitized him), but from the sense then held that 'Arcadians' had different types of nervous systems from 'normal' people. Additionally, his was a rather extraordinary childhood. Doctor Symonds was the best type of doctor and had taught his son that nothing medical should be alien or repugnant to him; he even tried to arouse his son's curiosity about his body. As young Symonds reached puberty and recognised that his sexual orientation was different he became morbidly fascinated by his 'nervous history', to the degree that he later wrote it out clinically in letters and memoirs.<sup>41</sup> He configured himself as a 'patient' and conceptualized his sexuality as 'deviant' before ready-made labels or words existed to convey it. Nervously ill with a consumption that returned when his lungs caved in under the pressure of the Magdalen inquisition, he intuitively understood that he had to flee England. He paused in Davos, then a hamlet high up in the Swiss Alps where his sister was recovering, took to the place, and spent much of the rest of his life there before descending to warmer Italian skies. He was 53 when he died, then a respectable age and a number he may not have attained had he remained in damp and dank Oxford.

Dr Symonds especially indoctrinated him with an understanding of the new 'nervous medicine'. While his son was still pre-pubescent, the elder Symonds had become intrigued with philosophical questions about the body's anatomy during sleep, memory, dreams and the role imagination played.<sup>42</sup> Educated in Edinburgh's medical school early in the nineteenth century when William Cullen's influence was still felt (Cullen was professor of medicine there and had elevated the nerves to a primary place in his medical system), Dr Symonds sought to understand the nervous system's role in these sleeping states. He raised John in a

liberal atmosphere where father and son could discuss delicate matters, as they had while John Addington was still at Harrow and while earlier scandal had erupted there. It was a home refined and mannered where matters of sex were frankly faced and always in a medical context. Hence by 1861, when scandal threatened to strike his son in Oxford, the doctor in Clifton was contemplating the integration of Darwinism with a forever-creating deity and higher biblical criticism. This was more than most of John's masters at Harrow and, later, at Balliol, would do.

John heard these liberal ideas as a young man and commented on them later in life in his massive correspondence and in carefully composed memoirs that annotate what I am calling 'literary nerves' and evolutionary biology. One passage is especially valuable: chapter 14 of Symonds' memoirs, entitled 'Intellectual and Literary Evolution'.<sup>43</sup> Here he explains how, at an early age, his nervous system and brain colluded to stage the demise of his health and set him up as a sitting duck for the Oxford scandals. From then on, he retreated into a private world in remote geographies where he could spend his life reflecting and writing. The course from nervous breakdown to imaginative writing was smooth, the one segueing into the other almost preternaturally. What was his rationale for this extraordinary conclusion in so young a man?

'Irritable nerves and a morbid condition of the reproductive organs', he writes, were 'due to the particular erethism of my sexual instincts, and the absurd habit of ante-nuptial continence, rendered me physically a very poor creature.' This self-diagnosis is not merely the work of a physician's son but someone widely read in the medical-scientific literature of his time. Symonds turned himself into an authority on 'nervous erethism' on the grounds that it might explain his sexual preference for other males. Even before he went up to Oxford, he combed libraries for books capable of explaining his constant sexual excitability: his 'particular erethism', as he calls it. The idea of excessive sexual excitability – erethism – had developed in the aftermath of Albrecht von Haller's theories of sensibility and excitability. By approximately 1800 medical doctors were exporting Hallerian notions of 'excessive sensibility' to the new 'moral therapies' aimed to restrain sexual excess.

Jean Amédée Dupau is one such example. Trained at the famous medical school in Montpellier by medical professors vigilant to the mind-body barrier and theories of sexual excitability, Dupau specialized in erethism.<sup>44</sup> By the 1830s the French doctors, especially those concerned with sexual aberration, summoned erethism as a cornerstone of their explanations: the patient is predisposed – anatomically and

psychologically through his nervous state – to it through ‘moral pollution’.<sup>45</sup> The nerves are in a perpetual state of inflammation owing to sought-after sexual stimuli. The more the patient restrains his appetites, as Symonds did, the more voracious the erethism, or excitability, becomes. Inflammation escalates so quickly that the mere thought of, or fantasy about, anything sexual arouses the patient and causes emission – so delicate and exquisitely sensitive are his nerves. The process depends entirely on an overly aroused nervous state. Thus the genesis in Dupau’s generation of the word ‘nervine’ – the state of the nerves in extreme sexual excitability – coined to assist ‘nerve doctors’ like him to describe erethism. Remove the nerves and ‘erethism’ ceases to exist. It was one of several erotic moods predicated exclusively on nerves that – glancing backward from our vantage – seems to have been conceptually generated to account for perpetual arousal.

Symonds also attributed his nervous sexual sensibility to an exquisitely delicate dermis. The result was involuntary sexual stimulation, even when not consciously aroused. Overly sensitive dermis and a keen imagination worked in conjunction to excite him into states of sexual arousal. He considered these ‘morbid’ specifically for the way they crept up his spine and ganglia to alter his brain: ‘... in some obscure way my brain became functionally disordered. They called the affection hyperaesthesia, and gave it all kinds of names’.<sup>46</sup> But Symonds considered it derivative from his nervous apparatus. This neuroanatomical constellation drives his self-diagnoses and leads him to conclude a condition of ‘moridity’ or – more accurately – ‘homomoridity’.<sup>47</sup> He reasons that the condition of ‘moridity’ extends to the plasticity of his brain responding to, and becoming altered by, erethism. Moreover, the neural damage in his altered brain also causes a state beyond mere erethism: to hyperaesthesia or excessive sensibility in the brain itself. This was his idiosyncratic explanation, based on the best medicine of his time, of how he had been brought down at twenty, driven by nervous pathology but aggravated by pulmonary tubercular consumption.<sup>48</sup>

Elsewhere I have argued for the need to refine this term from mere ‘moridity’ to ‘homomoridity’: not merely for Symonds, but for homosexuals in history who tell themselves stories about the way their strained nervous systems have altered their bodies and brains. This linguistic refinement notwithstanding, mind and body functioned, Symonds thought, to predispose him to an alternative sexuality: ‘I lived in fermentation’.<sup>49</sup> Larger than life and more nervous, he thought he burned at a higher temperature in all activities: intellectual, domestic and sexual. His lifelong chronic tuberculosis was proof of this nervous

fatalism. Both served to shield him from challenges he could not have faced and duties he could not have met. Yet working against the grain of this nervous hyperactivity was a repressive Victorian moral order, heightened in fastidious Oxford where the mere notion – let alone the reality – of sexual longing for other boys was grounds for expulsion. All these streams fed into the massive river that would be neurasthenia by the 1890s in the milieu of Havelock Ellis and Krafft-Ebing. The developing homosexual was inherently neurasthenic, which further served as proof of his degeneration: sexually uncontrollable, debased, ‘erethistic’ and thoroughly ‘nervous’. No wonder Symonds became so ‘morbid’ about the way the Magdalen College authorities seem to have turned on him despite their acting rationally and cautiously within their own system of collegiate etiquette.

This disentanglement of literary and medical nerves may seem technical and involuted to us, but we must not forget that ‘erethism’ of Symonds’ variety was the archetype in Foucault’s mind when expounding on the repressive discourses of Victorian sexuality in the *History of Sexuality*.<sup>50</sup> The ‘repressive hypothesis’ began life as a Nietzschean concept necessary to demonstrate the degree to which his era had engendered an inimical discourse. Foucault amplified the Nietzschean notion by emphasizing the *discursive* part: that is, sexual arousal occurred primarily by discursive stimuli. Victorians reading about Arcadian shepherds in love – Shorting reading Cory’s Greek anthology – or the loves of Corydon, were as likely to be aroused by them as the glimpse of boy choristers in their college chapels. Hence the path to sexual freedom – Foucault pronounced in a now much-quoted passage – could be found in direct *resistance* to ‘discursive erethism’:

Since the eighteenth century sex has not ceased to provoke a kind of generalized discursive erethism. And these [Victorian] discourses on sex did not multiply apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means of its exercise... From the singular imperialism that compels everyone to transform their sexuality into a perpetual discourse, to the manifold mechanisms that, in the areas of economy, pedagogy, medicine, and justice, incite, extract, distribute, and institutionalize the sexual discourse, an immense verbosity is what our civilization has required and organized.<sup>51</sup>

Symonds is proof of Foucault’s ‘discursive erethism’ and would have sympathized with it if he could have known about it, for the way it had ruined him in Oxford when he was still young and impressionable.



If only he had not been so weak he would have fought back against Shorting-the-liar and the Magdalen authorities. Instead, he spent the rest of his life *writing out* – ‘discursively’ – his *nervous* health: creative states, moods, breakdowns, loves, networks of lovers, the lot. His erethism was thoroughly converted into creative energy. His letters remain the most revealing repository of Victorian male–male love, his books about Greek sexuality and erotics, if not similar to those of Foucault a century later, nevertheless had some of the same effect on a generation of Victorians and Edwardians.

The relations presented here all occurred in contexts of power perverted: one party starts from a position of superiority, or confidence, over the other in terms of *both* age and status. The higher the older man’s perceived sense of class, as at Eton or Oxford, the more he craved the worship of young boys; or, to reverse the principle, the more confident headmasters were of their superiority, the more ruthlessly they encouraged physical brutality and sexual abuse in their schools. Post-Victorian and Edwardian travellers often left the homeland, nostalgically, and sexually cultivated the natives – often boys – while denying they had acted improperly.<sup>52</sup>

## Notes

1. Corpus Christi College Oxford, Manuscript B/6/3/1. See note 20 for the manuscript sources on which this chapter is based. I am grateful to Julian Reid, the Archivist at Corpus Christi College Oxford, for making the full range of his manuscript collection available to me, as well as Dr Robin Darwell-Smith, the Archivist of Magdalen College Oxford for every type of amenity, including the use of his archives and successive commentaries on this essay; and, for their invaluable suggestions, to Stefano Evangelista, Josephine McDonagh, and Katherine Watson whose commentary follows this chapter.
2. See the much-overlooked book by Albert Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child. Translated from the German by Eden Paul* (London: Allen Lane, 1912). For the Vere Street scandals see Chris White (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 9–13.
3. The deciding factor was usually physical contact: provided there was no genital contact there could be no legal charge, yet the Oxbridge colleges continued to discipline and expel for ‘impurity of mind’, however it may have been construed and defined in each individual case. The cases in this discussion are *male*; had they been female they would have followed different profiles after 1700, as well as different linguistic patterns and conceptual developments after the French Revolution – so far apart were the two genders vis-à-vis same-sexual relations.

4. A parallel case is found in the romantic attachments of Horace Walpole and Thomas Gray whose split up is so well known it needs to repetition here.
5. Kertbeny (1824–82) is usually credited with having coined the word ‘homosexual’ in an anonymously published pamphlet about Paragraph 143 of the Prussian Penal Code of 14 April 1851 and Its Reaffirmation as Paragraph 152 in the Proposed Penal Code for the Nordeutscher Bund.
6. Albert Moll had not yet written his large tome on *The Sexual Life of the Child*, which appeared in the 1880s in German as *Das Sexualleben des Kindes* and in 1912 in English translation; see *The Sexual Life of the Child* (London: Allen Lane, 1912). For Moll in context, see Lucy Bland and Laura L Doan (eds.), *Sexology Uncensored: the Documents of Sexual Science* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).
7. The change began after the Parliamentary Act of 1854; during the next few years Magdalen, and other colleges, began to accept lay fellows but it was not until the 1870s that fellows could marry.
8. The disparity in age difference cannot be sufficiently emphasized; together with socioeconomic difference, it had been a mainstay of sodomitical relations from the Renaissance to the early twentieth century.
9. A thorough archival search for the period 1830–1860 might produce evidence in the different college archives. My research has not included anything so ambitious.
10. For the extent of Jowett’s radicalism and the reasons it aroused suspicion in High-Church colleges in Oxford, see Evelyn Abbott, and Lewis Campbell, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A.: master of Balliol College, Oxford* 2nd edn (London: John Murray, 1897), 2 vols.; G. C. Faber, *Jowett: a Portrait with Background* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957). More information about suspicions over Jowett are found by browsing volumes vi and vii of the *History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991–2000).
11. See *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans: with critical notes and dissertations by Benjamin Jowett* (London: J. Murray, 1855).
12. See the discussion of *Essays and Reviews* (1861) in note 29.
13. For the detail see Faber (n. 10).
14. See Linda C. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); for sexual aspects of Jowett’s Platonism see Stefano Evangelista, ‘Against Misinterpretation: Benjamin Jowett’s Translations of Plato and the Ethics of Modern Homosexuality’, *Ranam: ESSE* 6, No. 36 (2003), pp. 13–25. As Evangelista notes (p. 18) ‘Following the hushed homosexual scandals [in Oxford] of the mid-70s, Jowett had become aware of the urgent need for a more informed understanding of ancient and modern pederasty and had therefore chosen to consult Symonds as “an expert” in matters of male love.’
15. For Jowett’s reputation in colleges other than Balliol, and for disagreements with other Oxford academics, see Faber (n. 10), *passim*.
16. John Rouse Bloxam, a lifelong bachelor and the daily symbol of religious life at Magdalen in the middle of the nineteenth century, was a fellow from 1835 to 1863 and High Church: a friend of Newman and Pugin (the latter decorated his room); a passionate supporter of the Chapel Choir, who took personal interest in the welfare of the choristers (he organized Christmas parties for them); a preserver of tradition (he created the May Morning singing in its modern form and the wearing of surplices). He compiled

an eight-volume biographical register of the Choristers, Clerks, Chaplains, Organists, Schoolmasters, and Demies, which remains a core text for the history of Magdalen. For someone like Bloxam, the advent of a Symonds from a nest of heresy like Balliol would have been unwelcome, even more repugnant the implication of Shorting's claim about the new Magdalen Fellow's 'Arcadianism'. By 1861–2 he was one of the most senior Fellows in the College, and he may have come down on the faction against Symonds, although here the evidence is not airtight. His own life offers clues to his contradictory attitude to Symonds: in his own parish in Sussex Bloxam had been affectionately attached to a very young curate who died early. He grieved profusely and asked to be buried beside him: two friends forever laid to rest side-by-side. This occurred at the same time that John Henry Cardinal Newman made his emphatic wish to be buried in the same grave as another much younger man, Ambrose St John. See Alan Bray, 'A Traditional Rite for Blessing', in Katherine O'Donnell *et al.* (eds), *Love, Sex, Intimacy and Friendship between Men, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 87–90. Our Bloxam follows in the tradition of another, much earlier, 'Bloxham' – the late fourteenth-century John Bloxham and John Whytton – who were buried together at the centre of the choir at the foot of the steps to the high altar in Merton's chapel.

17. Two were from Balliol; the fellows there and in Magdalen considered the second Balliol man unqualified, and therefore made all the candidates sit an examination, in which Symonds excelled; one candidate was from Magdalen and four from other colleges in Oxford. The examination included clerical matters testing whether the candidate was 'fit to be a Fellow of the College'.
18. Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses: 1715–1886* (1887–88) records that Shorting's father was also Charles Shorting, a clergyman in the Suffolk parish of Stoneham Aspoll and vicar there. Charles Shorting Senior was a graduate of Cambridge; see Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, vol. 5(2) p. 502. Nothing more than this is known about the family, nor did Shorting Junior seem to have any siblings. Corpus Christi College Oxford, Manuscript B/6/3/1. I am grateful to Julian Reid, the Archivist at Corpus Christi College Oxford for making his manuscript collection available to me, as well as Dr Robin Darwell-Smith, the Archivist of Magdalen College Oxford for every type of amenity, including the use of his archives and successive commentaries on this essay; and for their invaluable suggestions to Stefano Evangelista, Jo McDonagh, and Katherine Watson whose commentary follows mine.
19. Vaughan was elected headmaster in 1844, left in 1859 as a result of the scandals, and retreated to a remote bishopric as Dean of Llandalf in mid-Wales. See Christopher Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School, 1324–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
20. The most crucial archival materials for the Symonds–Shorting affair, other than official college minutes, are these: President's Manuscript Note Book, 11 October 1860 to 7 April 1864, which the President kept locked in his office unavailable to any Fellow; letters contained in Magdalen MSS 594/1; Magdalen MSS 594/2; K.B. McFarlane's extensive manuscript chronological notebook detailing the Symonds Affair, Magdalen College Archives; Symonds' *Memoirs* written at the end of his life (see Grosskurth below). For other evidence about the atmosphere at Magdalen in that year see Lewis

Stacey Tuckwell, *Old Magdalen Days, 1847–1877* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1913). A review of all the extant evidence demonstrates that while the Magdalen President and Fellows were indeed suspicious of Balliol men, especially those who had been under the wing of their radical reformer Jowett, they did all they could to guarantee that Symonds was treated fairly and they were especially sensitive to his medical situation – as fairly as they treated the election to his fellowship. President Bulley presided over the hearings, conducted secretly; resolutions were taken and Symonds summoned to defend himself several times. Historian McFarlane's manuscript compilation is an invaluable resource: even if it is the work of a master archivist-historian whose own sexuality propelled him to research its contents, it remains an essential guide for the understanding of this case's chronology. For McFarlane the man, see his *Letters to Friends* (Oxford: Magdalen College, 1997).

21. So far archival searches have not revealed prior same-sex college scandals involving a child chorister; the silence must not imply there had been none, merely that none has so far surfaced. The boys remained choristers at Magdalen until the age of 15 or 16: nineteenth-century puberty began later than it does today, and choristers could retain their soprano voices for two-three more years than they now can.
22. Walter Thomas Goolden was born on 22 September 1849. He was the fourth son of Richard Goolden of Sussex Gardens, Hyde Park, doctor of medicine; he was 11 when Symonds met him, having been admitted a chorister to Magdalen on 13 September 1858 and ceased being a chorister in 1863, after Symonds had left Oxford. The only known photographs of Goolden appear in this book. Goolden remained at Magdalen College School, where he performed well academically and in 1865 he was awarded the Daubeny Medal in Natural Science. Afterwards, he became a Scholar of Merton, matriculating there in 1867 and receiving a First in Natural Science in 1871. He was awarded a BA in 1872 and his MA 1879, while retaining links with Magdalen, where he continued to be a clerk (i.e., mature male member of the choir who sang other parts than treble ones) in 1868–70, when he stepped down to concentrate on his Finals. Afterwards he taught for a while at the Magdalen College School.
23. We know how to define these labels – Arcadian, Dorian, Platonist, Uranian, Urning and others – but little about their resonance among contemporaries: did they elicit disgust, revulsion, terror, pleasure something else?
24. Grosskurth, *Memoirs*, p. 209.
25. No record survives to indicate that Goolden's parents were aware of their son's involvement. Vaughan's scandal at Harrow reveals how well Victorians could execute the most impressive cover-ups.
26. J.N.D. Kelly, *St. Edmund Hall: Almost Seven Hundred Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 80–83. Barrow, like Thistlethwayte, fled to France (p. 82) and then probably to India. I am grateful to archivist Robin Darwall-Smith for information about this case. It would repay the effort to study the atmosphere in the Oxbridge colleges during 1860–61 as the microcosm of common hysteria further afield fuelling these accusations and their attendant inquisitions.

27. The change started after the Parliamentary Act of 1854; during the next few years Magdalen and other colleges began to accept lay fellows who could not marry until the 1870s.
28. Tuckwell has written of the year 1861: 'The Dons did indeed lay themselves out to make us happy during those few days [around Christmas time]. Most of which were spent in some party or other in the College rooms'; see *Old Magdalen Days, 1847–1877*, p. 15.
29. See Frederick Temple et al., *Essays and Reviews* (London: Longman, 1860), which was in a sixth edition by the time Symonds was interviewed at Magdalen; it caused a furore in many Anglican quarters.
30. Nothing more is known about this family, nor did Shorting Junior seem to have siblings, a fact compounding his craving for close kinship ties within the family structure. It is conjecture to claim that the atmosphere in his home was cold and barren or that he mourned the lack of siblings, but his behaviour among the young choristers suggests it.
31. I.e., after assessing all the extant archival manuscripts listed in n. 20.
32. Forming part of the archive named in notes 1 and 20.
33. Dr Lloyd deMause's main premise (see p. 30 above) differed from Melanie Klein's or Wilfred Bion's and amounted to the view that the abused child is mentalized as a 'poison container'. DeMause believed the fundamental psychological mechanism operating in child abuse involved using children as 'poison containers': receptacles into which adults project disowned parts of their own dejected psyches so that they could control these feelings in another (usually small) body without incurring danger to themselves. By contrast, good parenting involved the child using the caretaker-parent as the poison container, much as it had earlier thrived on the mother's placenta as a poison container for cleaning its own polluted blood. But an immature, or abusive, mother cannot bear the screams and tantrums of her child and strikes out at it. By assaulting the child the parent, or other adult, injects his or her bad feelings and abuses it to cleanse his or herself of depression and rage. But Shorting was neither a parent or older brother, and nothing about the emotional texture of his childhood is known. If it could be said with any confidence that he had never felt loved in his young life, that would be one thing, and one could then extrapolate that when he met Goodman he expected Goodman to love him. But the plain fact is 1. it is unknown what type of atmosphere prevailed inside the Shorting household; 2. for whatever reasons now lost to time Shorting was desperate to identify and love pre-pubescent boys – perhaps all pre-pubescent boys – whether or not he himself had been loved, and 3. it cannot be known whether Shorting's hunger for love derived from negligent parents versus the lust of a young homosexual man. Symonds was also attracted to choristers but never abused them in this desperate way.
34. These comments suggest that the relation with Harry *preceded* Shorting's visitations to Magdalen in the autumn 1861, for it was at Balliol that Shorting had made Jowett's acquaintance prior to that summer and it would have been before then that he 'walked' with his tutor.
35. William Johnson Cory (1823–92) had also written *Hints for Eton Masters* (London: Henry Frowde, 1898), a lesson in restraint in interaction with the young. After his death Cory's students and friends published *Extracts from the*

*Letters and Journals of William Cory* (Oxford: Printed for the subscribers, 1897), which also makes no mention of scandals. More importantly, Cory's poems celebrating 'boy-love' appear not to have landed him in difficulty judging by the rest of his career. The tone of IONICA differs from the cruder atmosphere found, for example, in the anonymous *Boy-worship* (Oxford, n. p., 1880), a copy of which is in the Bodleian Library Oxford. Cory's homoerotic poems celebrating and praising boys might well be compared to those of Edward Cracroft Lefroys' (1855–91). Lefroy was a friend of Symonds who wrote a critical appraisal of his sonnets; see Wilfred Austin Gill's edition of *Lefroy: his life and poems . . . with a critical estimate of the sonnets by the late John Addington Symonds* (London and New York: Bodley Head, 1897).

36. The American group who worked with Lloyd deMause in the 1970s may have had a point in their belief that the darker sides of the history of childhood – especially cases such as these – cannot be decided before one takes a stand on incest.
37. The state of English law in 1739 provided little guidance here; see Netta Murray Goldsmith, *The Worst of Crimes: Homosexuality and the Law in Eighteenth-century London* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998). Although the national mood in 1739 was then less tolerant than it had been a generation or two earlier, owing to wartime and the exposure of urban molly cultures, the numbers of arrests and convictions in England does not suggest an intensified policing of sodomites. This came later in the eighteenth century.
38. 'Guilty, if charged', *New York Review of Books*, 13 January 1994.
39. See Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 80–1 for degeneracy and illness.
40. See Robert Verity, *Changes produced in the nervous system by civilization, considered according to the evidence of physiology and the philosophy of history* (London, 1837).
41. My assessment is based on Phyllis Grosskurth's edition of *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* (London: Hutchinson, 1984). Earlier she incorporated her diagnoses of Symonds in to *The Woeful Victorian: a Biography of John Addington Symonds* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); for Grosskurth's construction of the scandal see pp. 66–72.
42. John Addington Symonds, *Sleep and Dreams, Two Lectures* (London: n. p., 1851; rep. 1857).
43. Grosskurth (1984), pp. 230–1, for the source of the passages in this paragraph.
44. Jean Amédée Dupau, *L'éréthisme nerveux, ou analyse des affections nerveuses* (Montpellier: J. Martel, Jr. 1819), one of many such treatises on the matter.
45. Dupau's 'moral pollution' functions as the cornerstone of his theory of degeneracy through the acquisition of nervous disease.
46. Grosskurth (1984), p. 133ff.
47. The word was coined by G. S. Rousseau; see Rousseau in Katherine O'Donnell et al. (eds), *Love, Sex, Intimacy and Friendship between Men, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 32–40.
48. By 1860 tuberculars had been advised for over a century that they possessed excessively 'sensible nerves'.
49. Grosskurth (1984), p. 230.
50. Foucault (1978), I, pp. 32–3.

51. Ibid.
52. English explorer Wilfred Thesiger is an example, having spent years travelling from the horn of Arabia to the darkest jungles of Africa, often encouraging the natives to promote sexual relations with young boys; see Alexander Maitland, *Wilfred Thesiger: The Life of the Last Great Gentleman Explorer* (London: HarperPress, 2006).

## Katherine D. Watson responds

In an observation that pertains to all three of the cases investigated in his chapters on same-sex scandals in Oxford 1739–1862, George Rousseau notes that both the accused and the accusers fared badly, particularly so in the Georgian period. Although each incident involved the superiority of one party over the other in both age and status – a pattern frequently repeated outside Oxford – by the Victorian era it was the victim's age that had the greater impact on the outcome of same-sex criminal cases. Until the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act outlawed all male homosexual behaviour only sodomy (technically a capital offence until 1861) and some public acts were illegal.<sup>1</sup> Sex between males was subject to increasingly stringent opinions during the nineteenth century, however, and an associated characterisation of homosexuality as deviant and immoral by lawyers and laymen alike provided a background for discourses on the subject of same-sex practices – discourses to which John Addington Symonds became an important contributor.<sup>2</sup> When it came to children, the law recognized that they could not give consent to sexual acts, in effect offering boys a greater degree of protection than it did girls, for whom the age of consent was lower.<sup>3</sup> Cases of adult–child sexual contact tended to be prosecuted as indecent assault, which was easier to prove than rape or sodomy, and the historiography of child sexual abuse suggests that age, class and gender were all influential factors in criminal proceedings.<sup>4</sup>

Taking this as a starting point, it is important to ask whether the Oxford accusers who had apparently abused boys (as opposed to undergraduates, who might arguably be termed young men) fared worst of all. In 1739 John Swinton was saved from ruin by forces acting in the interests of the University, but in 1861–62 no such protection was afforded to Charles Shorting. Might the later episode, then, tell us more about adult–child relations than it does about attitudes to homosexual practices? Rousseau hints at this in observing that the other college fellow involved in the 1860s scandal, Symonds, had never experienced complaints from boys and was found to have acted above reproach; his homosexuality was apparently not the principal issue.

Thus, of the three Oxford scandals that of 1861–62 and, in particular, the figure of Charles Shorting, offers most to the historian interested in adult–child relationships. A young man from what appears to have been a thoroughly upper-middle-class background, he remains a far more mysterious character than Swinton, Shipley or Symonds, one whose life story might well repay further investigation. The little we do know about



him indicates that he was probably properly socialized as a child but spent most of his formative years under the guidance of dominant males, in the form of his father and school masters. Given the circumstances under which he left Oxford, it is likely that he was homosexual.

Charles George Horatio Shorting was born on 13 December 1840, the second of the six children of the Reverend Charles Shorting (1810–1864) and his wife Elizabeth Harriet Shorting (b. 1817). His birth was registered in March 1841 in the Suffolk district of Bosmere, which included the parish of Stonham Aspal, where his father was rector. The births of five other children were recorded in Bosmere between September 1838 and March 1853: Emily Mary (b. 8 August 1838), Mary Elizabeth (b. 1844), Henry Francis (b. 15 January 1847), Ernest Walter (b. 5 April 1848), and Alice Frances (b. 1853).<sup>5</sup> Census records indicate that the family was well off: in 1851 there were five female servants living in a household that numbered seventeen persons in total.

Shorting senior was the son of Henry Shorting, a Suffolk physician who left his family well provided for at his death in 1825.<sup>6</sup> Although Henry Shorting hoped that one or both of his sons would follow him into the medical profession, Charles Shorting chose to enter the Church. In March 1851 he came to public attention through his intervention in a case of murder. When Mary Emily Cage, 40, poisoned her 55-year-old husband James with arsenic, the funeral was about to begin when Shorting requested that it be stopped, evidently suspecting foul play. An inquest was held the next day and, in consequence, Cage was tried and executed in August.<sup>7</sup> Doubtless Shorting impressed upon his family the obvious lesson to be learned from this episode.

Charles Shorting sent his eldest son to Rugby School, where the boy appears to have done well, winning at least two prizes.<sup>8</sup> Shorting junior matriculated at Oxford in May 1859 aged 18, where he was also academically fairly successful. And then the incident with chorister Harry Goodman came to light. Despite the lack of evidence of sexual transgression, Shorting's downfall was assured during an era when, despite poor rates of prosecution in cases of child sexual assault, and especially assaults on boys,<sup>9</sup> the crime was clearly constructed around notions of class and status and linked to the age of the victim. Abusers who chose their victims from the same or a similar social background were more likely to be convicted than those who targeted individuals of a lower class but, in cases of sexual assault, conviction rates were almost twice as high when the victim was a child (of either gender) than an adolescent or adult.<sup>10</sup> Crucially, though, the association of same-sex assaults with social deviance meant that boy victims, particularly those aged

up to 12 or 13, were generally treated more sympathetically than girls of a similar age (in whom any hint of sexual awareness was a mark of precocity). Little boys could easily be construed as doubly victimized and, since same-sex contact was unnatural, they were not quizzed on their sexual knowledge (unlike girls). Louise Jackson has shown that issues surrounding respectability replaced this element of defence at trial, however, and that at adolescence the tables tended to turn, defence lawyers often arguing successfully that teenage boy accusers were delinquents, thieves and blackmailers. In sample cases involving boys under 12, 100 per cent of accused men were convicted, but the rate fell to 75 per cent when the boys were 12 or 13, and to only 33 per cent when the victim was 15 and well over the age of consent.<sup>11</sup>

Shorting's infatuation with Harry Goodman, given the boy's youth, would thus have transgressed the moral standards of the day, and had it gone further might have resulted in criminal charges, but it is not clear what Shorting's motive really was: his letters to Goodman (which, though not explicitly sexual, were clearly love letters) are difficult to interpret. Was Shorting sexually interested in the boy, or was he simply showering love on a child whom he really wished was his brother? Given our knowledge of contemporary paedophiles (who use deception and grooming techniques to avoid suspicion),<sup>12</sup> it may be that what we know of the Shorting/Goodman relationship was merely the early phase of something that Shorting hoped would become physical. He already had two brothers and it was not, after all, unknown for adults in a collegiate setting to target youngsters. The year before the Shorting/Symonds scandal blew up, a schoolmaster and Roman Catholic priest named John Spencer, aged 60, was tried at the Central Criminal Court for feloniously assaulting five boys in his care. Following two acquittals, during which defence counsel alleged that the charges had been trumped up by boys whose own bad behaviour the prisoner had reprimanded (the delinquency defence), Spencer was convicted at the third attempt, his victim being described as a 'young lad' and the boy's father recounting how Spencer had asked him to allow his son to sleep in the same bed with him.<sup>13</sup> The fact that judgement of death was recorded against Spencer suggests that he raped the boy, but the details of such cases were rarely reported, the evidence being considered unfit for publication.

Comparable incidents did not come to light particularly often, but this does not mean that they were not occurring regularly. Rather, it is more likely that the relatively low rate of prosecution and reporting stemmed from a desire to maintain notions of normal, healthy masculinity

and avoid drawing public links between male sexuality and same-sex desires.<sup>14</sup> Those reports that did find their way into the press made it clear how deviant the behaviour was considered. In September 1860 George William Dunbar, 56, and an unnamed boy were charged before Middlesex magistrates with unlawfully assaulting each other in Hyde Park. The evidence showed that the man 'decoyed the boy, the son of highly respectable parents', and the jury subsequently convicted Dunbar but acquitted the lad. In sentencing him to the maximum term of two years' hard labour, the judge denounced Dunbar as a 'moral pestilence'.<sup>15</sup> In the London cases reported in the *Times* during the 1860s, which may have been biased in favour of those that resulted in conviction, terms of 18 months' hard labour seem to have been typical.<sup>16</sup>

Nothing so dramatic befell Charles Shorting. After losing his scholarship he left Oxford but obtained a B.A. from New Inn Hall in 1863.<sup>17</sup> He then appears to have left the country, as his name is not recorded in subsequent Census records. Only his brother Ernest is traceable through the Census after 1861, which shows that he moved to Shropshire after 1871. Nor did the father's career suffer as a result of the son's disgrace: in September 1863 the Bishop of Norwich nominated the Reverend Shorting to one of five honorary canonries in the cathedral church of the diocese.<sup>18</sup> He did not live long enough to enjoy this advancement, however, as the National Burial Index reveals that he was interred at the parish church of St Mary and St Lambert in Stonham Aspal on 4 May 1864, aged 54.<sup>19</sup> Finally, although it is not known what Charles Shorting did after he left Oxford, he seems to have returned to Suffolk sometime after 1891. Records show that he died at the age of 56 and was buried at the parish church in Stonham Aspal on 24 September 1897; his death was registered in the district of Plomesgate in December 1897.<sup>20</sup>

In the restricted world of Oxford same-sex scandals uncovered by George Rousseau, it was clearly Charles Shorting who suffered the greatest ignominy: declared of unsound mind, ejected, and forgotten. The evidence from same-sex criminal cases in the mid-Victorian courts suggests that the reason Shorting fared worse than his erstwhile friend John Addington Symonds had much to do with the fact that his alleged victim was a young choirboy, thereby opening the scandalous possibility of prosecution. The college archives have not thus far yielded other cases of a similar nature; perhaps one of the reasons for this relates to the presence or absence of choristers. During the Victorian era the figure of the romantic, innocent child developed alongside that of the juvenile delinquent, both influenced by age and class. If Oxford college choristers were above reproach, perhaps undergraduates were not. Although it

was unlikely that Shorting could emerge unscathed from the situation in which he entangled himself, he might well have fared rather better had he written love letters to a poor boy, or to a fellow student, rather than to 10-year-old respectable chorister Harry Goodman.

## Notes

1. Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice 1750–1950* (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2005), p. 146. The last execution for sodomy was in 1835: see A.D. Harvey, 'Prosecutions for Sodomy in England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century', *Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 939–48.
2. Ivan D. Crozier, 'The Medical Construction of Homosexuality and its Relation to the Law in Nineteenth-Century England', *Medical History* 45 (2001): 61–82; Rictor Norton, 'Symonds, John Addington (1840–1893)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For more on the legal discourse of 'character' in relation to homosexual conduct, see H. G. Cocks, 'Trials of Character: The Use of Character Evidence in Victorian Sodomy Trials', *Domestic and International Trials, 1700–2000: The Trial in History, Volume II*. Ed. R. A. Melikan (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 36–53.
3. In 1861 the age of consent to sexual intercourse stood at 14 for boys and 10 for girls. It rose for girls, until in 1880 it was lowered from 14 to 13 for boys and raised for girls from 12 to 13.
4. Carolyn A. Conley, *The Unwritten Law: Criminal Justice in Victorian Kent* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 117–22; Louise Jackson, 'The Child's Word in Court: Cases of Sexual Abuse in London, 1870–1914'. *Gender and Crime in Modern Europe*. Ed. Margaret L. Arnot and Cornelia Osborne (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 222–37; Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 90–106.
5. Information has been compiled from the Civil Registration Index, which records births, marriages and deaths since 1837. These records are online at <http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>, though the database is not yet complete. Charles Shorting's marriage was registered in the district of Hartismere, Suffolk, in September 1837. Further information about the family was obtained from the Census Enumerators' Books (1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891) and the British Isles Vital Records Index, both available online at the Family Records Centre, London and searched by surname. The surname Shorting was not common in England and Wales.
6. The National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1700, 351: will of Henry Shorting. Shorting practised in Brome (in the district of Hartismere), Suffolk.
7. *The Times*, 20 August 1851, p. 3f. Coincidentally, John Swinton was also indirectly involved in a case of criminal poisoning: in 1752 he attended the famous poisoner Mary Blandy whilst she was in prison in Oxford and at her execution: Sir Normal Birkett (ed.), *The Newgate Calendar* (London: Folio Press, 1974), 142–43.

8. Shorting won prizes in 1856 and 1858: see *The Times*, 26 June 1856, p. 12d and 29 June 1858, p. 10f. It would doubtless be edifying to learn something about his sexual experiences at the school.
9. Conley, *Unwritten Law*, pp. 117–18 states that in Kent between 1859 and 1880 only one man was charged with sexual assault on a boy, compared to at least 39 charges involving assaults on girls. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 100 shows that of a sample of child sexual abuse cases tried in Yorkshire and Middlesex 1830–1914 only 7 per cent involved boy victims.
10. Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, pp. 117–22; Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, pp. 90–1.
11. Jackson, 'The Child's Word in Court', pp. 222–37; Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, pp. 100–3. In Jackson's Yorkshire and Middlesex samples, the 100 per cent conviction rate for boys under 12 compares favourably to 79 per cent for girls under 12.
12. Anna Salter, *Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
13. *The Times*, 12 July 1860, p. 11b and 13 July 1860, p. 11c.
14. Jackson, 'The Child's Word in Court', pp. 230–4.
15. *The Times*, 13 September 1860, p. 11c.
16. *The Times*, 8 June 1864, p. 13c; 11 August 1864, p. 11e; 17 October 1866, p. 11c.
17. Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1715–1886* (Oxford and London: Parker, 1887–88).
18. *The Times*, 15 September 1863, p. 12a. Charles Shorting was described as M.A., St Peter's College, Cambridge, and was still rector of Stonham Aspal.
19. National Burial Index, online at Family Records Centre.
20. *Ibid.*; Civil Registration Index online at <http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>.

# 7

## Platonic Dons, Adolescent Bodies: Benjamin Jowett, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater

*Stefano Evangelista*

Twelve years after the Symonds case analysed by George Rousseau in chapter 6 of this book, Benjamin Jowett, who had in the meantime become Master of Balliol College in 1870, found himself confronted with another potentially scandalous case of a cross-generational homoerotic relationship between a don and a student. In 1874 Walter Pater, a 35-year-old fellow of Brasenose College, was found to be involved in an affair with a 19-year-old undergraduate from Jowett's own Balliol. Pater had been an undergraduate at Queen's College from 1858 to 1862, had become a fellow of Brasenose in 1865, and had recently gained fame as the author of a controversial volume of essays on the Renaissance (1873). William Money Hardinge, the student in question, had already built a reputation for profligacy, blasphemy, and lack of modesty in his homoerotic inclinations; he was moreover the author of some privately circulated indecent poems and had in fact become known among some of his peers as the 'Balliol bugger'. The exact particulars of the case were successfully hushed up at the time and have never since been fully clarified. It is only in the last 25 years or so that research by literary scholars has been able to provide a more comprehensive account of the Pater–Hardinge events.<sup>1</sup> According to a possible reconstruction by Billie A. Inman, W. H. Mallock, another Balliol undergraduate and the future author of the academic satire *The New Republic* (1877), provided Jowett with some incriminating letters in which Pater and Hardinge had called each other 'darling' and had signed themselves 'yours lovingly'. There is also evidence to suggest that the two men would have been caught in compromising circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

Faced with these letters, Jowett went to talk to Hardinge's father about his son's misconduct before confronting the boy directly. Undergraduates were young men to whom the University and the college stood

*in loco parentis*, and for whose moral health they would therefore be considered accountable. Jowett's motivations and actions in dealing with Hardinge exhibit a distinctly *parental* wish to repress and protect at the same time: while he was concerned that the young Hardinge 'might ultimately harm himself', he was also conscious of the fact that he must not 'ruin the man for life'.<sup>3</sup> After meeting Hardinge's father, he therefore presented the boy with the alternative of either leaving the college quietly for a few months or being subjected to a formal college enquiry. Hardinge chose the former and temporarily removed himself from Balliol.<sup>4</sup> After his return to Oxford, Hardinge, who had been a notoriously lazy student before his dismissal, appears to have been fully reintegrated into the academic life of the University, winning the prestigious Newdigate Poetry Prize in 1876 and later becoming a minor novelist.

There is no precise record of how Jowett dealt with Pater after the episode. Jowett's biographies do not mention the Pater-Hardinge case at all.<sup>5</sup> Pater's early biographers, Edmund Gosse and A. C. Benson, simply report the existence of an estrangement between the two men.<sup>6</sup> Gosse was a close friend of Pater and was himself part of the late-Victorian homosexual subculture in Oxford; he was therefore probably aware of the exact nature of the events but preferred to keep silent in order to preserve Pater's posthumous reputation intact. Benson, as research into his diaries has shown, was probably at least partially ignorant of what exactly had happened.<sup>7</sup> He speaks of 'a misunderstanding of some kind which resulted in a dissidence between [Pater and Jowett] in middle years' and attributes the causes of the 'estrangement' to Jowett's hostility to the types of aestheticism and neo-paganism made popular by Pater's writings. Benson's euphemistic explanation is the more confusing because it is entirely plausible. Jowett, who was an enemy of the aesthetic movement, 'certainly meant to make it plain that he did not desire to see the supposed exponents of the aesthetic philosophy holding office in the University'. Benson suggests that Jowett 'took up a line of definite opposition to Pater', using his influence to prevent Pater from obtaining University work and appointments in future years. According to this interpretation, Jowett's determination to 'subvert [Pater's] influence' appears more as an intellectual feud than a personal hostility based on sexual behaviour. Benson's portrait of a calculating and revengeful Jowett ('an opportunist') is intentionally disturbing: it is set in opposition to the image of a victimized and retiring Pater, the object of covert phobic attacks on his artistic doctrines and sexual preferences.<sup>8</sup>

Jowett's long-term repression of Pater after 1874 stands in strong contrast to his behaviour after the Symonds events of 1862, when the Balliol authorities provided a good character reference for Symonds, adding that such charges as Shorting's would not have been given importance at Balliol, unless substantiated with evidence. Jowett would moreover always remain on good terms with Symonds, even when the latter's homosexuality was revealed fully to him. The explanation for this difference in Jowett's behaviour can be found in a number of circumstances. Firstly, Symonds, unlike Pater, was a Balliol man and so Jowett may have been more inclined to remain loyal to him. In fact, Jowett had probably already developed hostility towards Pater before the time of the scandal, on intellectual grounds, because, as argued by Benson, he was opposed to the vigorous aestheticism espoused by Pater in his early writings. It is also important to consider the fact that Pater was never willing to assume an attitude of discipleship towards the older Jowett, who had briefly tutored Pater when the latter was an undergraduate. Jowett was the object of a veritable cult among his students and ex-students at Oxford. His early biographers, Abbott and Campbell, refer to this phenomenon as 'Jowett-worship', attributing it to his unparalleled 'devotion to his pupils', which was 'rendered more effective by the singular personal charm which made him irresistible to younger men, and the candour of his judgement, in which he always sought to take in the man as a whole, without regarding minor points of position, conduct, or opinion'.<sup>9</sup> 'Jowett-worship' testifies not only to the Master's personal kindness and great devotion to the pastoral aspects of academic life, but also to a pronounced streak of vanity in his character. Symonds and many other men of his generation indulged this tendency, paying devout homage to his authority. In fact, George Rousseau demonstrates how Shorting refused to attend his own tribunal hearing at Corpus Christi because he was engaged 'to walk with Jowett that afternoon' (peripatetic teaching being one of Jowett's favourite pedagogical methods).<sup>10</sup> Contrary to these men, Pater, who was generally independent and disinclined to form friendships with powerful figures, does not appear to have sought Jowett's patronage or even to have shown signs of gratitude to him after his student days.<sup>11</sup> There is a striking lack of any recorded interaction between the two dons, both of whom remained in the University all their lives, apart from a bland letter of recollection provided by Pater to Lewis Campbell after Jowett's death.<sup>12</sup> Benson moreover notes that Jowett and Pater had 'radically opposed' temperaments: Pater did not particularly value the 'administrative energy' that characterized Jowett's work; and Jowett, for his own



part, was indifferent to the power of art insistently extolled by Pater. This is why, according to Benson, Jowett did not for a long time 'recognise the fame of his former pupil'.<sup>13</sup> But Pater would in his own turn become the object of a cult: his critical method and idiosyncratic prose style (though not, it should be noted, his personality or teaching, as in the case of Jowett) would attract disciples from among budding 'aesthetes' at Oxford and all over the country. After Pater's name had gained notoriety through the controversial reception of the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Jowett might well have been stung in his pride by Pater's fame, and his reaction in 1874 may therefore be tinged with an element of jealousy towards his ungrateful pupil. Most importantly perhaps, in 1862 Symonds had been accused of being an 'Arcadian' – a vague and coded concept that was effectively impossible to prove or disprove and that did not imply any physical contact between him and any specific boy; while the accusations against Pater and the 19-year-old Hardinge rested on the concrete evidence of now-lost love letters and were more ambiguous on the physical question. All these factors probably influenced Jowett's behaviour. It is in any case certain that, by 1874, Jowett had developed a much more censorious attitude to cross-generational homoerotic attachments between dons and younger members of the University than he had had in the early 1860s.

In the following pages I provide a context in which to make sense of Jowett's different reactions to the two cases. I want to suggest that those years witnessed the growth of a homosexual subculture in Oxford, to which Symonds and Pater contributed in different ways, and in which Jowett found himself, *malgré soi*, implicated. As Linda Dowling has persuasively argued, the Oxford school of classical studies, to which Jowett, Symonds, and Pater all belonged, became at the end of the nineteenth century the fulcrum of an ambitious attempt to formulate a modern male homosexual identity through a rereading of the ancient Greek canon and especially of the writings of Plato.<sup>14</sup> The open treatment of male love in dialogues such as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* provided homoerotically inclined dons and students with culturally acceptable historical and literary documents that testified not only to the tolerated existence but also to the cultural centrality of male homosexuality in ancient Greek civilization. Socrates, the main character of Plato's philosophical dialogues and Plato's own master, was unashamedly susceptible to the beauty of the young men that he met in gymnasia and in the homes of the fashionable society of his times. Alcibiades and other young men were in love with Socrates and with one another, as has been discussed earlier in this book. In

the *Phaedrus*, Socrates praises those who combine the love of boys with philosophic activity (παιδεραστήσαντος μετὰ φιλοσοφίας).<sup>15</sup> In the *Symposium* homosexual desire is said to be the first step in the journey that leads the individual to the apprehension of ideal beauty and the divine.<sup>16</sup>

But the Platonic dialogues were also, crucially for my purpose, Jowett's own main academic interest. One of the prominent aspects of his work as educational reformer at Oxford was the reintroduction of Plato into the classical curriculum, from which he had traditionally been excluded in favour of Aristotelian philosophy. Jowett was moreover the author of a monumental annotated translation of the complete dialogues of Plato, the first edition of which came out in 1871, followed by two substantially revised and enlarged editions in 1875 and 1892. This diffusion of the Platonic texts accomplished by Jowett was unprecedented: in Oxford they became central to the education of the young men who came up to read Classics and in the rest of the country they were made available to the Greekless reader in unexpurgated form. In the words of his biographers, Jowett made Plato 'an English book'.<sup>17</sup> But the Platonic renaissance aided by Jowett was seized upon by the advocates of what came to be called 'Greek love' to support their liberalizing cause: they used Plato's testimony of the routine existence of homoerotic attachments between men and adolescents in ancient Greece in order to argue for acceptance of same-sex love (be it between age peers or, as in Greek antiquity, between an older and a younger partner) in the present.<sup>18</sup> So, for example, Symonds could quote from Jowett's translations of Plato to substantiate his sympathetic account of 'Greek' love in *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1873, 1883).<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps still more importantly, Jowett had been a strong promoter of the tutorial system, which had become prominent in the University in the wake of the Oxford Movement. The Oxford tutorial effectively replicated the process of intellectual coaching and the emotional intensity of the Platonic dialogues: an educator and a student, whose age difference in the 1860s and 1870s would often not be of many years, stage a conversation about an intellectual issue in which the student is encouraged to consider and discard different views in order to arrive at a fuller knowledge of his topic deductively. But, in the hands of some, the Oxford tutorial was in danger of also replicating the erotic investment between master and pupil described in texts such as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*; or at least of alerting both dons and undergraduates to the networks of homoerotic interests that can infiltrate the quest for knowledge in all-male intellectual environments such as classical

Athens and nineteenth-century Oxford. Events such as the hushed-up affair between Pater and Hardinge, and the coded homosexual apologies contained in the writings of Symonds, Pater, and some of their contemporaries, although not necessarily visible from outside the University, brought Jowett to see this danger. He therefore came to perceive what was becoming the open secret of a homosexual network within dons, students, and sometimes *across* the two communities, as a threat to his own work as translator and educator.<sup>20</sup>

It would, however, be a misrepresentation to think of Jowett as priggishly censorious: he was progressive, broad-minded, and generally tolerant in matters of scholarship as well as religion and sexuality. His relaxed attitude regarding the interpretation of the Scriptures, for instance, caused him severe trouble from the Church authorities. The circle of his friendships comprised such sexual heretics as the poet A.C. Swinburne and Symonds. Jowett was keen to understand the question of male love ancient and modern with the same zeal and integrity that he applied to his classical or religious scholarship. Two circumstances were in his way in this process. One is what we could call a temperamental lack of sympathy with homoeroticism – that is, his failure to conceive of *desire* as an element that is not understood through the laws of philology and of the historical method. So, in an epistolary exchange between his two biographers, Lewis Campbell remarks on what he calls Jowett's ‘“horror naturalis” of sentimental feelings between men (“diabolical” I have heard him call them)’, marvelling, in fact, at Jowett's ‘persistent attachment to J. A. S. [John Addington Symonds], though they differed so profoundly about this’.<sup>21</sup> The other is his great professional and emotional investment in keeping Balliol College and the school of Classics at Oxford free from associations with the Hellenizing homosexual subculture that was growing in those years. It is opportune in this context to remind readers that male homosexuality was a criminal activity throughout the nineteenth century in England, and that the fierceness with which it was policed increased after the enactment of the Labouchère Amendment of 1885. The issue was not principally age: *all* homosexual conduct was adjudged to be illegal, whether consenting or not, and whether or not the partners were minors or majors. The age of consent for females, thought for the most part to be relatively immune from homosexual arrangements, was much lower than for males: 12 compared to 16; but this gender disparity was also ancillary to the juridical matter of illicit attachments punishable by the law. Victorian punishments doled out for sexual relations with children were, however, much more severe than those for consenting adults.

In the following pages I want to suggest that the motivations for Jowett's different reactions to the Symonds and Pater affairs are to be sought not only in the different nature of the events, but in the context of the writings by Symonds and Pater. Before returning to Jowett's involvement in the matter of 'Greek love' at Oxford, it is therefore necessary to examine how the relationship between ancient and modern homosexuality is treated in those writings.

### **Symonds, Pater, and the history of *paiderastia***

In 1862, the year of the Shorting events, Symonds was only 22. He had not yet been the author of any published work. He had, however, already had first-hand experience of how homosexuality could be the cause of professional ruin and public scandal. While at Harrow, the horrified young Symonds had witnessed many instances of degrading forms of sexual interaction among his fellow schoolboys. Adolescent homosexuality for him became connected with secrecy, bullying, and abuse, rather than sympathy and emotion. One of the most shocking events of Symonds's unhappy school life was the discovery of an affair between the headmaster, Charles Vaughan, and one of the boys – an incident that Symonds reported to his father, who caused the headmaster to resign from his post.<sup>22</sup> According to Symonds's own testimony, relief from this sordid world came one night when he stumbled on Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* at the age of 17. 'It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato, as though in some antenatal experience I had lived the life of philosophical Greek lover.' From that time onward Plato would provide Symonds with a narrative to formulate his own homoerotic feelings, to himself and to his readers, in a culture that was largely silent about homosexuality: Plato would give Symonds 'the sanction of the love that had been ruling [him] from childhood'.<sup>23</sup>

The facts of 1861–62, as George Rousseau has explained, convinced Symonds to leave Magdalen and abandon his academic career, feeding at the same time into his chronic ill health, which he believed to be aggravated by the repression of his homosexuality. Symonds would, however, try to break back into Oxford academia in 1877, when he decided to stand for the Oxford Professorship of Poetry, but felt once again compelled to resign before competing when his homoerotic leanings were again publicly exposed, this time to the entire nation. In a phobic article published in *The Contemporary Review*, Richard St John Tyrwhitt criticized Symonds's Greek scholarship for its lack of an

open condemnation of unnatural practices. While Tyrwhitt suggestively admitted that 'Mr Symonds is probably the most innocent of men', he not only called Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1873) 'a rebellion against nature', but accused him of 'phallic ecstasy and palpitations at male beauty'.<sup>24</sup> From that time Symonds would work as an independent scholar, dividing his time between his home in the Swiss Alps, England, and numerous visits to Italy. Symonds's position outside Oxford academia would enable him to explore homoeroticism, physically and in print, in ways that would have been difficult to negotiate by academics like Pater, who were professionally responsible for teaching young men.<sup>25</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century the new historical criticism that had been pioneered in the German universities showed readers in England that, in ancient Greece, homoerotic attachments between men were mostly created within the context of παιδεραστία (*paiderastia*), a bond between a mature man and a boy, in which the older partner would offer protection and social training in exchange for the pleasure of the younger one's company and, sometimes, for sexual favours.<sup>26</sup> In some Doric societies like Sparta and Crete, *paiderastia* appears to have taken the form of a social contract: paederastic relationships there were institutionalized as an important part of a young man's initiation into adulthood. In Symonds's effort to emancipate homosexuality the main question came to be how to bring about a historical reconciliation between ancient *paiderastia* and modern homosexual conduct. Clearly the practice of *paiderastia* could not be recreated in the nineteenth century: modern male homosexuality had to abide in very different social circumstances, not least due to the altered roles of women within the family and in public life, and to the moral pressure of Victorian Christianity. Moreover ancient *paiderastia* strictly involved a man – most typically a married man, in fact – and a boy. The attachment would normally cease when the younger partner had grown a beard and had fully developed his secondary sexual traits.<sup>27</sup> Although some paederastic relationships seem to have endured after the end of the younger partner's adolescence, attachments between two mature men were generally frowned upon in antiquity.<sup>28</sup> Symonds was aware of the fact that modern homosexual relationships did not strictly replicate Greek *paiderastia*: modern homosexuality, for instance, did not necessarily occur across age groups. It is, however, interesting to notice that Symonds followed the Greek model in his own choice of sexual partners, being mostly attracted to men who were younger than himself, or,

alternatively, to working-class men – thereby transferring the asymmetry in age constitutive of *paiderastia* into the terms of social difference.

In his early writings Symonds would claim that an empathic understanding of the sentiment of paederastic eros could help the modern student to come to a more historically accurate understanding of classical Greek culture. So in his *Studies of the Greek Poets*, he visualizes the genius of the Greeks as ‘a young man newly come from the wrestling-ground, anointed, chapleted, and very calm [...]’. The pride and the strength of adolescence are his – audacity and endurance, swift passions and exquisite sensibilities, the alternations of sublime repose and boyish noise, grace, pliancy’.<sup>29</sup> Symonds brings the modern student of Greece to identify with the mature partner of a Greek paederastic relationship, reconfiguring the scholarly desire for the knowledge of the Greek past into the homoerotic desire for the adolescent male body. Further on in the same essay Symonds even daringly tells his readers where to go if they intend to relive such a ‘Greek’ experience in the present: ‘[i]f we in England seek some living echo of this melody of curving lines [he is talking of a statue of wrestling boys at Florence], we must visit the fields where boys bathe in early morning, or the playgrounds of our public schools in summer, or the banks of the Isis when the eights are on the water, or the riding-schools of young soldiers. We cannot reconstitute the elements of Greek life: but here and there we may gain hints for adding breath and pulse and movement to Greek sculpture.’<sup>30</sup> In passages such as this the reader is encouraged to translate the culturally acceptable appreciation for the ideal beauty of ancient sculpture into the illicit gaze on the breathing, pulsating, moving beauty of actual English boys.<sup>31</sup>

Three years later, however, in the second series of *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1876) Symonds unequivocally states that *paiderastia* was, together with slavery and the social degradation of women, one of the ‘three points in which the morality of the Greeks was decidedly inferior to that of the modern races’.<sup>32</sup> Symonds’s words here are written in response to hostile reviews that had followed the first series of his Greek studies, and can therefore be seen to perform a partly disingenuous public voice. But the belief in the existence of an unbridgeable gap between ancient and modern sexual moralities appears even in his less public writings. In the privately printed and circulated pamphlets *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1873, 1883) and *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891) Symonds addresses precisely the question of how to reconcile *paiderastia* with a homosexual conduct that would be acceptable in the nineteenth century. Symonds’s answer is all but straightforward. The ancient Greek example enables

him to divorce male same-sex desire from notions of effeminacy and morbidity, and to refute the current pathologizing of homosexuality: '[i]t would be absurd to maintain that all the boy-lovers of ancient Greece owed their instincts to hereditary neuropathy complicated with onanism'.<sup>33</sup> However, he everywhere insists on the uniqueness of what he calls 'the feature by which Greek social life is most sharply distinguished from that of any other people approaching the Hellenes in moral or mental distinction'.<sup>34</sup> Symonds's intent is to argue for legal reform, but his emphasis on the historical specificity of 'Greek' love effectively renders it difficult to conceive of an ethically acceptable version of it in the present, with the exception, perhaps, of chaste attachments.

In contrast to Symonds's, Pater's involvement in the cause of homosexual emancipation was carried out through allusion and indirect intervention. In 1874, the year of the Hardinge affair, Pater had already attracted attention as the author of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, the book that had become the bible of the fast-growing aesthetic movement. The (in)famous 'Conclusion' to the book exhorted readers to live a life regulated by intensity of experience and sensation, rather than moral teachings. Perhaps still more controversially, Pater's volume included an essay on Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century German historian of classical art, in which Pater talked freely of an ancient Greek homoerotic aesthetic of the young male body, 'where the moulding of the bodily organs is still as if suspended between growth and completion'.<sup>35</sup> Even more provocatively Pater made pointed references to Winckelmann's own relationships with young men during his years of study in Rome. 'Winckelmann' was originally published in 1867, two years after Pater's election at Brasenose. It incorporates ideas and passages from a previous unpublished essay, 'Diaphaneité', which Pater had delivered to the Oxford Old Mortality Society in 1864 and which remained unpublished in his lifetime. 'Diaphaneité', as Dowling has skilfully argued, can be read as 'the first textual exploration' of the potential for a semi-public Hellenizing discourse of male love enabled by the existing academic institutions at Oxford.<sup>36</sup> Like 'Diaphaneité', 'Winckelmann' is full of innuendo and learned eroticism; but its original implied audience is the wide readership of the *Westminster Review*, not the selected elite of an Oxford Society gathering. Pater compares Winckelmann to one of the philosophical lovers of Plato's *Phaedrus* and quotes at length from a letter to a young Lithuanian nobleman with whom Winckelmann had fallen in love after a brief meeting, in which he extols the superior beauty of the naked male body.<sup>37</sup> Winckelmann's homoerotic

experiences with young men in Rome ('his romantic, fervent friendships') provide for Pater the proof of his temperamental 'affinity' with Hellenism: '[t]hese friendships, bringing him into contact with the pride of human form, and staining the thoughts with its bloom, perfected his reconciliation to the spirit of Greek sculpture'.<sup>38</sup> Reproducing the form and ethos of ancient *paiderastia* in the modern world, Winckelmann comes to a privileged understanding of classical art. Crucially, in this act, his intellectual achievement and his homosexuality are shown to be symbiotic.

Pater's essay on Winckelmann has rightly been recognised as an important document in the history of homoeroticism.<sup>39</sup> In 'Winckelmann', Pater not only pleads that an authentic knowledge of ancient Greece has to contain a frank acknowledgement of paederastic *eros*.<sup>40</sup> Through the example of Winckelmann (relatively close in time to his contemporary readers) he argues that this same type of *eros* can be recreated in the present, and goes further still by constructing Greek love as a recognisable signifier of the aesthetic temper – a marker of cultural distinction. In other words Pater tries to make homoeroticism attractive and contemporary by presenting his readers with Winckelmann's modern revival of it and seducing them towards it through the suffused eroticism of his prose. Plato is central to this effort. He was the author that had kindled Winckelmann's enthusiasm for ancient Greece and he was also the author over whom undergraduates poured at Oxford. As had happened in Winckelmann's case, Plato could function in the late nineteenth century as the medium between ancient and modern understandings of a straightforward and essentially ahistorical sentiment of men's desire for other men or boys. Unlike Symonds's, Pater's revival of paederastic *eros* is not cramped by the conundrum of anachronism: while Symonds's conception of *eros* is bound by moral relativism, Pater vindicates the legitimacy of male love in the name of knowledge, connecting homoerotic pleasure with intellectual growth. Pater simply ignores the question of whether and, if so, how homoeroticism can be made to fit contemporary moral codes because he shows it to be part of a higher life of art and knowledge that is, according to him, located outside moral structures. In so doing Pater infuses homoerotic *eros* into the process of learning, eroticizing the bonds between master and pupil, and between pupil and pupil. To Jowett, who was surely familiar with the essay by his Oxford colleague, it must have been clear that Pater was glamorizing paederastic *eros*, and was at the same time promoting an approach to learning that was very far removed from his own belief in competition and success in examinations. In 1874



Jowett, who had always been 'suspicious of aestheticism',<sup>41</sup> must have realized that the type of homoeroticism that Pater was practising with the young Hardinge was part of the aesthetic life theorized by him in 'Winckelmann' and throughout *The Renaissance*.

The events of 1874 checked Pater's career at Oxford and alerted him to the dangers of public exposure. The dominant critical opinion, initiated by his Victorian biographers and seldom challenged in the twentieth century, wants Pater to have become increasingly conservative in his views and retiring in manner after the clamour of his early years. In his diary, for instance, Benson writes that 'Pater's whole nature changed under the strain, after the dreadful interview with Jowett. He became old, crushed, despairing – + this dreadful weight lasted for years'.<sup>42</sup> But in actual fact even a brief glance at Pater's last publications before his death in 1894 shows us that in his later years he went on to engage with the issues of *paiderastia* and male homosexuality with undiminished energy. The last book he published during his lifetime, *Plato and Platonism* (1893), is an open challenge to Jowett's authority in the matter. Here Pater draws from the mythology of *eros* discussed in the *Symposium* and repeatedly emphasizes the erotic texture that everywhere permeates Platonic philosophy: he presents Plato himself as an active lover and as 'ἡπτων τῶν καλῶν – subject to the influence of fair persons'.<sup>43</sup> In the same year Pater published the short story 'Apollo in Picardy', which updates to a medieval setting the paederastic myth of Apollo and Hyacinth. The story takes the form of a complicated homoerotic triangle involving a monk, the reincarnation of Apollo, and a 'very youthful' novice ('he was as neat and serviceable as he was delightful to be with').<sup>44</sup> In another short story, 'Emerald Uthwart' (1892), Pater had depicted a romance between an older and a younger boy that develops in an English public school and is carried on at Oxford and in the army. Here Pater replicates Symonds's practice of presenting boys as the object of the erotic gaze. Pater's 'aesthetic observer' is encouraged to appreciate the 'delightful physiognomic results' of the classical education of modern boys carried out in the medieval surroundings of the public school, the architecture of which is strongly suggestive of an Oxford college: '[i]t is of such diagonal influences, through complication of influence, that expression comes, in life, in our culture, in the very faces of men and boys – of these boys. Nothing could better harmonise present with past than the sight of them just here, as they shout at their games'.<sup>45</sup> The public school described in this story is simultaneously the site of illicit homoeroticism amongst its pupils (revealed to the sympathetic reader through coded references to Plato) and the theatre for a desirable

schooling in authentic classicism, 'physiognomically' embodied by the boys there.

### **Jowett: the fight against corruption**

In the context of such sophisticated and impassioned discussions of *paiderastia* and male love in Plato, in ancient Greek culture, and in modern times, Jowett, the national authority on Platonic scholarship, could not remain silent. Already in his first edition of *The Dialogues of Plato* (1871) he tackles the uncomfortable subject, but his emphasis is on the sense of moral alienation with which modern readers must experience it. In the introduction to the *Symposium* he writes that 'it is impossible to deny that some of the best and greatest of the Greeks indulged in attachments, which Plato in the Laws, no less than the universal opinion of Christendom, has stigmatised as unnatural.'<sup>46</sup>

The starting point for Jowett's analysis of Greek love is the speech of Alcibiades, in which the younger man confesses his love for Socrates and tells of having unsuccessfully attempted to seduce the older man by slipping into his bed at night. In the *Symposium* the passion of Alcibiades works as a practical enactment or dramatization of the theoretical discussion of *eros* that had taken place in the dialogue before he entered the scene. In Jowett's commentary Alcibiades is a symbol of excess, luxury, and depravity. Repeating Plato's attention for dramatic detail, Jowett describes how Alcibiades 'staggers in, and in his drunken state is able to tell of things which he would have been ashamed to mention, if he had been sober'. He calls Alcibiades's love for Socrates 'unintelligible to us and perverted', yet also sees it as a testimony to 'the power ascribed to the love of men' in antiquity. Jowett also notices that many of the other men in the assembled company sympathize with Alcibiades: 'several of them have been in love with Socrates, and, like himself, have been deceived by him. The singular part of this confession is the combination of the most degrading passion with the desire of virtue and improvement'. Jowett criminalizes Alcibiades through a Christian rhetoric of sin, calling him an 'abandoned soul'.<sup>47</sup> He then goes on to generalize, calling male love 'the greatest evil of Greek life' and expressing his surprise at the fact that the Platonic Socrates treats it with irony rather than with abhorrence; and that, more generally, 'the beauty of youth [...] alone seems to have been capable of inspiring the modern feeling of romance in the Greek mind'. Moving the focus away from the sexual desire of Alcibiades, Jowett effectively underplays ancient Greek homosexuality, referring to it as a 'spurious form' of heterosexuality and painting a

bloodless and disembodied picture of it as 'an enthusiasm for the ideal of beauty' and 'a worship as of some godlike image of an Apollo or Antinous'.<sup>48</sup>

But despite these efforts to alienate the modern reader from the actuality of Greek paederastic love, the figure of Alcibiades stands for Jowett and his Victorian contemporaries as a threatening possibility. In fact Plato's Alcibiades is a recognisable type, at home in Victorian England as much as in ancient Greece – the type of the young man who is unable or unwilling to restrain his sexual passion in the face of social conventions.<sup>49</sup> On a basic level, Alcibiades is a devoted student who, under the effect of alcohol, makes a scandalous revelation about the sexual relationship between his teacher Socrates and himself in front of the intellectual community to which they both belong. In the context of ancient Greece, the scandalous element in Alcibiades' tale is, it should be noted, *not* the homoeroticism but rather the *inversion* of roles in the amorous conduct between lover and beloved, and therefore Alcibiades' own forwardness: society would have allowed Socrates (as the elder man) to demand sexual favours, but the younger partner would have been expected to exhibit modesty and restraint. It is easy to see how the Platonic figure of the sex-crazed young man who one day says too much could be replicated in nineteenth-century Oxford, another community that was regulated through discipleship and homosociality. In fact the William Money Hardinge of 1874, with his devoted discipleship to Pater and his unguarded voracious sexual appetite (the 'Balliol bugger'), is a type of Victorian Alcibiades. Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde's younger lover, will be another one. Similarly, Pater and Wilde, with their *erotikoi logoi* – their doctrines of *eros*, art and morality – are sexually ambiguous Socratic figures who fired the enthusiasm of the young and became the object of cult. But the scandalous revelations of these Victorian boys, made through the mediums of gossip, erotic poems, and love letters, are released into a social context which, unlike Plato's Athens, is strongly unsympathetic to homoeroticism, and in which private and public attachments between men are punished with repression, ostracism and, in extreme cases, criminal convictions. In fact the figure of Alcibiades points forwards to the trope of beautiful boy as the *femme fatale* of late-Victorian literature and art.<sup>50</sup> These boys are threatening not only to individual men, but also to entire homosocial communities like Victorian Oxford, because their indiscretions lay bare the hidden erotic networks that connect their adult male members.

Jowett's treatment of male love in 1871 is characterized not so much by a wish to censor as by sheer lack of knowledge about his subject. But

as he went on revising *The Dialogues* for subsequent editions, an almost continuous process for the rest of his life, he felt the need to come to a more precise definition of Greek love. The early 1870s saw the publication of Pater's essays on the Renaissance and of Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets*. It was also at this time that Symonds was writing his treatise on the morality of ancient *paiderastia*, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. The hushed homosexual scandals in Oxford were echoed by more resonant cases in London such as the trial of the transvestites 'Stella' and 'Fanny' (Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park) in 1871, or, in 1873, by the arrest of Simeon Solomon – a pre-Raphaelite painter who was intellectually and personally close to Pater and to the milieu of Oxford aestheticism. Oxford was in the centre of this growing and growingly scandalous homosexual subculture: in 1881, for instance, Jowett recorded a conversation with 'Th Ws' (probably the critic Theodore Watts) during which he was informed that 'Oxford had a bad name in London for encouraging "Greek love"', and that Symonds and Pater were responsible for this reputation.<sup>51</sup>

It would not have pleased Jowett to know that, as early as January 1874, he was being compared by his ex-student A.C. Swinburne to the disgraced Simeon Solomon: in a letter to Theodore Watts, Swinburne refers to Solomon as 'a Platonist of another sort than the translator of Plato [i.e. Jowett] – "translator he too" as Carlyle might say, of Platonic theory into Socratic practice'.<sup>52</sup> By the mid-1870s Platonism had become a not-so-coded word for homoeroticism at a time when the word 'homosexuality' was just entering the language. In fact the terms 'Platonic' and 'Platonism' can be seen to cover the grey area between homosociality and homoeroticism in close male friendships and spontaneous or institutionalized relationships of tutelage such as were prevalent in Oxford in the late nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> As the Jewish aesthete, poet, and sexologist Marc-André Raffalovich put it in 1892, Plato had become the 'guide' for modern male homosexuals in need of ethical and emotional codes in which to conduct their sexual preferences.<sup>54</sup>

In 1877, W.H. Mallock, an ex-Balliol undergraduate and one of the figures that appears to have been involved in the Pater-Hardinge scandal, published the satirical novel *The New Republic*, which brought the Platonic disputes at Oxford to the national stage. Pater (Mr Rose) is mercilessly portrayed as a lover of boys, talking at one point about 'the youth that we love', showing interest in a pretty page boy, and, even more embarrassingly, receiving homoerotic verses written by a boy of 18 'whose education I may myself claim to have had some share in directing'.<sup>55</sup> Jowett (Dr Jenkinson), to whom Mallock is equally

unsympathetic, is shown to engage in an embarrassing conversation with one of the ladies on the subject of Greek erotic poetry. The lady, who cannot read the poems in the original, wonders why translators find it so difficult to render them into English and suggests that the Greek might be 'corrupt': '[t]he word was a simple one: but it sufficed to work a miracle on Dr. Jenkinson. For the first time in his life to a lady who united the two charms of beauty and fashion [...], Dr. Jenkinson was rude'.<sup>56</sup> Mallock's witty exchange captures Jowett's paranoid fear in the 1870s of the 'corruption' of Greek studies – at one time of the notion that the Greek classics might transmit corrupting sentiments to the young men of Oxford, and of the practice of corrupting his own work as translator to fit the cause of the modern homosexual apologists.

In preparing the third edition of *The Dialogues*, so great was Jowett's desire to master the question of ancient *paiderastia* and its relation to modern homosexuality that he went to visit Symonds in Switzerland in order to obtain his expert opinion on the matter. Jowett sought Symonds's scholarly knowledge, but also his emotional and practical experience as a lover of men. In so doing Jowett not only conceded his ignorance about Greek love, but implicitly acknowledged Symonds's and Pater's claim that homoeroticism affords a privileged insight into the Greek mind. The stay with Symonds must have been a turning point in Jowett's experience of Greek love ancient and modern. In one of his notebooks for 1888 he notes how Symonds related to him the history of his homosexuality, describing his encounter with Plato through the same epiphanic narrative used in the *Memoirs*. Their conversation culminated in a moment of great emotional intensity when Symonds kissed the astonished Jowett on the lips and then on his hand. Symonds's intent was probably to instruct and to shock at the same time, re-enacting the erotic folly of Alcibiades on the Socratic Master and demonstrating the physical reality of Greek love. He also gave Jowett 'a very curious account of the state of Oxford in his own day, & of the number of persons who fell under this sort of influence'.<sup>57</sup>

Jowett and Symonds spent ten days going through the *Symposium*, but the final outcome of their collaboration was highly unsatisfactory. Jowett was determined to include an extended commentary on Greek love into his revised introduction to that dialogue, but Symonds, as he wrote to his friend Graham Dakyns the following year, thought that the Master was 'thoroughly off the spot' and objected to his plan, believing that he would only add confusion to a highly problematic issue. Of particular repugnance to Symonds was Jowett's stubbornness in

interpreting *paiderastia* as 'a matter of metaphor'. He writes to Dakyns: 'The fact is that he feels a little uneasy about the propriety of diffusing this literature in English, & wants to persuade himself that there can be no harm in it to the imagination of youth. We went through the whole Symposium last summer word by word; & I must say I thought it very funny to be lending my assistance to a man of his opinions in the effort to catch the subtlest nuances of that "Anachronistic" dialogue.'<sup>58</sup>

In fact Symonds had at that point already written directly to Jowett in order to attack his belief in the 'anachronism' of Greek love and to alert him to the potential harm that could be caused by a misinformed public treatment of this subject. The letter is very strongly worded and reflects the urgency with which Symonds regarded this matter. Symonds's argument is that Greek love is no 'figure of speech', but rather a concrete reality, both in ancient Greece, as the very writings of Plato testify, and in the present, where '[m]any forms of passion between males are matters of fact in English schools, colleges, cities, rural districts'. Clearly building on his own experience as a young man, Symonds claims that the encounter with Plato can, for some, bring about a sexual revelation. He criticizes Jowett's work, directly drawing the Master's attention to 'the anomaly of making Plato a text-book for students and a household-book for readers, in a nation which repudiates Greek love, while the baser forms of Greek love have grown to serious proportions in the seminaries of youth and in the great centres of social life belonging to that nation'. Symonds subtly shifts the argument of anachronism from the area of sexuality to that of law and social customs: it is not the prevalence or the manner of homoerotic attachments that has altered between the Greek past and now: it is the way that these are repressed by society. Given these circumstances Plato must be seen as a corruptor of these 'predisposed souls', encouraging them to enter an irreconcilable rift between their private desires and sexual practices, and acceptable codes of public morality. Plato lures boys towards the temptations that the modern world offers to homosexual men: 'friends of like temper, boys who respond to kindness, reckless creatures abroad upon the common ways of life.' 'We do not know how many English youths have been injured in this way. More, I firmly believe, than is suspected. Educators, when they diagnose the disease, denounce it. [...] Convention rules us so strangely that the educators do all this only because it always has been done – in a blind dull confidence – fancying that the lads in question are as impervious as they themselves are to the magnetism of the books they bid them study and digest.'<sup>59</sup>

Symonds's anxiety about the encouragement to homosexuality in boys' schools was obviously grounded in his own experiences at Harrow and in the events that led to the resignation of the headmaster Charles Vaughan. But, as Symonds knew, this was not an isolated case. In 1872, for instance, William Johnson Cory (1823–92) abruptly resigned from his position of assistant master at Eton under ambiguous circumstances. In 1875 Oscar Browning (1837–1923), master of Eton and friend of Pater and Simeon Solomon, was dismissed from that school on the pretext of administrative inefficiency but actually because of his notorious and notoriously indiscreet sexual infatuations with the boys there.<sup>60</sup> Raffalovich, in the sexological study mentioned above, calls the English public schools 'grandes foyers d'unisexualité', and homosexuality at Oxford and Cambridge a 'danger inevitable, un malheur nécessaire'.<sup>61</sup> In *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, Symonds had already isolated the importance of pedagogical conventions in the creation of a culture of male love. In this work he had attributed the prevalence of *paiderastia* in ancient Greece to the influence of some of the educational institutions that had existed there: gymnastics and *syssitia*, or communal meals. 'Having exercised together in the wrestling-ground, the same young men and boys consorted at common tables. Their talk fell naturally upon feats of strength and training; nor was it unnatural, in the absence of a powerful religious prohibition, that love should spring from such discourse and intercourse.'<sup>62</sup> As Symonds knew, physical exercise and shared meals were also a set feature of the education of young men in English public schools, but the discourse of 'naturalness' that existed in Greece was perverted by the religious, moral, and legal prohibitions of the nineteenth century.

In his letter to Jowett, Symonds provocatively calls for a reform in the education of young men which goes directly against Jowett's work: he proposes to take Plato, together with all other ancient works that deal with *paiderastia*, outside the curriculum of schools and universities in order to preserve boys from his corrupting lure. Symonds's advocacy of censorship is a response to the present state of marginalization and criminalization of male love: in this context descriptions of homoerotic attachments between men such as are found in the *Symposium* are a positive danger to the developing psychology of young adults. Symonds's argument has an *ad hoc* quality that was meant to sting Jowett in his emotional commitment to pedagogy and educational reform. But an identical plea is repeated both in the *Memoirs*, where he transcribes the letter to Jowett, and in *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, where he denounces the paradox of exposing to *paiderastia* in literature 'the best

minds of our youth' in the all-male environments of public schools and universities, without taking trouble 'to correct these adverse influences by psychological instruction in the laws of sex'.<sup>63</sup>

Symonds's words had the desired effect of persuading Jowett to abandon the idea of writing an essay on Greek love. Nevertheless the final, revised introduction to the *Symposium* contains a much more extended discussion of *paiderastia* than the previous two editions, including the controversial claim that the love of boys was used as 'a figure of speech which no one interpreted literally'.<sup>64</sup> Jowett increases the extent of Plato's own moral condemnation of same-sex attachments: he makes the Platonic Socrates regard male love with 'moral reprobation', rather than simply with 'irony' like in the previous editions.<sup>65</sup> The 1892 edition includes a lengthy historicization of male love, inspired, partly, by Symonds's own views in *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. Jowett's overall intent is to preserve the dignity and moral authority of Greek culture in the face of an honest investigation into the nature of *paiderastia*. He observes that paederastic relationships did not necessarily include physical contact and that therefore they could be seen to be morally acceptable as long as they were chaste and predicated on 'virtue and modesty'. He points out that no 'Greek writer of mark' approves of sexual relationships between men and boys. He admits that in some areas of the ancient world *paiderastia* was 'an educational institution', but that no Greek parent was 'likely' to commit his son 'to a lover, any more than we should to a schoolmaster, in the expectation that he would be corrupted by him, but rather in the hope that his morals would be better cared for than was possible in a great household of slaves'.<sup>66</sup> Jowett's analysis ends with a peroration.

A small matter: there appears to be a difference of custom among the Greeks and among ourselves, as between ourselves and continental nations at the present time, in modes of salutation. We must not suspect evil in the hearty kiss or embrace of a male friend 'returning from the army at Potidaea' any more than in a similar salutation when practised by members of the same family. But those who make these admissions, and who regard, not without pity, the victims of such illusions in our own day, whose life has been blasted by them, may be none the less resolved that the natural and healthy instincts of mankind shall alone be tolerated *εν τη ημετέρα πόλει*; and that the lesson of manliness which we have inherited from our fathers shall not degenerate into sentimentalism or effeminacy. The possibility of an honourable connexion of this kind seems to have died out with Greek civilization.<sup>67</sup>



The voice of Jowett, sympathetic to sexual diversity but strict in his repression of its open manifestations among members of the University, rings clearly in this passage. Jowett's intent is to discourage the practice, adopted by Symonds and Pater, of looking in the Greek classics for arguments in favour of the emancipation of homosexuality in the modern world. He stays firm in his theory of anachronism: a morality of male love is unthinkable in the post-Hellenic world. But these lines also contain a public answer to Symonds's letter of 1889, a coded interpretation of Symonds's strange kiss, and a justification of his actions in the Pater–Hardinge events of nearly twenty years earlier. Paraphrasing them, we read that Jowett, although he regards 'not without pity' people like Symonds and Pater – 'victims' of the 'illusion' that male love is still possible in the nineteenth century – must still condemn their behaviour as unnatural and unhealthy. Homoerotic attachments of this sort cannot be tolerated 'εν τη ημετέρα πόλει', 'in our city': the Greek here encodes a double reference to the ideal city of Plato's republic but also to the Oxford of Jowett, Symonds, and Pater – the city of the events of 1862 and 1874. The study of Greek must remain in its place at Oxford, and in order to do so it cannot be open to degenerative revisionist readings that turn its moral lessons into an encouragement to 'sentimentalism or effeminacy', that is, sexual deviance.

## Conclusion

Despite Jowett's efforts, Oxford would be the setting of more cross-generational homosexual scandals in the years to come, most famously of the disastrous romance between the 36-year-old Oscar Wilde and the young Lord Alfred Douglas, an undergraduate of Magdalen College. Like the Oxford cases analysed here, the trials of Oscar Wilde were based on the evidence of an incriminating correspondence between an older and a younger man written in the language of impassioned affection. And like the famous Cleveland Street scandal that had taken place six years earlier, they involved a number of teenage male prostitutes.<sup>68</sup> In April 1895 Wilde was asked by the prosecution to explain the meaning of the poem 'Two Loves', written by Douglas as an undergraduate. In a speech that has since become famous he declared that '[t]he "love that dare not speak its name" in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man [...] such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy', complaining that in the present age these attachments were 'much misunderstood'.<sup>69</sup> Wilde tried to defend himself by portraying his relationship with Douglas in the terms of a chaste paederastic attachment, like the one between Socrates and Alcibiades described in the *Symposium*: 'There

is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope, and glamour of life before him.<sup>70</sup> Wilde's desperate plea to the jury that would sentence him to two years of hard labour is the most glaring instance of how the complexities of understanding *paiderastia* in Plato had become of vital urgency in the private and public lives of male homosexuals in the Victorian *fin de siècle*.

The tragic tale of Wilde's downfall enacts the parable of the degeneration of 'manliness' into 'effeminacy' denounced by Jowett three years earlier. In the crucial years between 1862 and 1895, Jowett, Symonds, and Pater were all engaged in the question of how to understand Greek love and how to historicize it in ancient Greece and in the altered social, moral, and legal contexts of nineteenth-century Britain. They were all, in other words, exploring the continuity between ancient Greek *paiderastia* and the practice and morality of modern homosexuality. In this process Symonds and Jowett can be seen to be roughly on the same side: they both alert contemporary readers to the dangers inherent in recreating *paiderastia* in the present. Jowett's professional interest, as Professor of Greek and as the Master of the most prestigious and academically successful college at Oxford, was in upholding the 'manliness' of Greek studies in general and of the Platonic canon in particular. He was therefore keen to emphasize the anachronism of Greek love in the present and to suppress any attempt to update the institution or sentiments of *paiderastia* to the nineteenth century. Symonds's position is essentially pragmatic: although he was attracted to other men and believed in the cause of homosexual emancipation, he was nonetheless persuaded that, in the current legal climate, the project of transferring ancient models of same-sex love to the modern world was simply unsustainable. Ancient Greek literature in general and Plato's writings in particular contained an encouragement to young men to develop homoerotic feelings, and their study should therefore either occur in the context of an enlightened public attitude to homosexuality or be censored. Pater bypassed the stalemate of anachronism. In the ancient Greek canon Pater read a testimony to the timelessness of the desire of men for other men, and in his writings he diffused a model of homosexuality that is not tied to any specific historical moment. Throughout his works Pater glamorized male love, erasing the historical gap between *paiderastia* and modern homosexuality, and reinscribing Greek love as part of the fashionable aesthetic culture. It is this daring but also enabling forsaking of historicity, as well as the facts of 1874, that alienated Pater from Jowett. Wilde, Pater's

self-styled disciple, homosexual martyr for the nineteenth century and gay icon for the twentieth, was perhaps the most spectacular casualty of Pater's experiments.

## Notes

1. See Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), pp. 58–9; Laurel Brake, 'Judas and the Widow; Thomas Wright and A.C. Benson as Biographers of Walter Pater: The Widow', *Prose Studies*, 4: 1 (1981), 39–54; Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 158–64; and the definitive Billie Andrew Inman, 'Estrangement and Connection: Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett, and William Money Hardinge', in Laurel Brake and Ian Small (eds), *Pater in the 1990s* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1991), pp. 1–20. I would like to thank George Rousseau for his many suggestions and Robin Darwall-Smith for his comments and his generous help in providing me with the material from the Jowett papers housed in Balliol College, Oxford. I thank the Jowett copyright trustees for permission to quote from the Jowett papers.
2. Inman, 'Estrangement and Connection', pp. 7–8.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 6. Inman's source is a letter from Pembroke College undergraduate Arnold Toynbee to Balliol undergraduate Philip Gell, dated 25 February 1874.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
5. Evelyn Abbot and Lewis Campbell, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A.*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1897); Geoffrey Faber, *Jowett: A Portrait with Background* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957). There is a mention of the episode in a more recent biographical sketch, 'Benjamin Jowett and the Balliol Tradition', in Noel Annan, *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), pp. 74–5. The information contained in the latter clearly derives from Inman.
6. Edmund Gosse, 'Pater, Walter Horatio (1839–1894)', in *The Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to 1900* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); A.C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1906).
7. See Laurel Brake, 'Judas and the Widow'.
8. Benson, *Walter Pater*, pp. 54–5.
9. Abbott and Campbell, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. 1, p. 126.
10. See George Rousseau, above, p. 184.
11. See Inman, 'Estrangement and Connection', pp. 15–16. Inman also finds Jowett's behaviour to Pater anomalous in the light of his tolerance of the open homosexual leanings of other Oxford men.
12. Abbott and Campbell, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. 1, pp. 329–30.
13. Benson, *Walter Pater*, p. 57.
14. Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).
15. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249.

16. Plato, *Symposium*, 211.
17. Abbott and Campbell, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. 2, p. 7.
18. On this point see my "'Lovers and Philosophers at Once": Aesthetic Platonism in the Victorian Fin de Siècle', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36:(2) (2006): 230–44.
19. Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (London: [privately printed], 1901). This pamphlet was written in 1873, when Symonds was working on his *Studies of the Greek Poets*, and was originally circulated in only ten copies in 1883.
20. For another account of Jowett's involvement in the homosexual subculture of late-Victorian Oxford see my 'Against Misinterpretation: Benjamin Jowett's Translations of Plato and the Ethics of Modern Homosexuality', *Recherches anglaises et nord-américaines*, 36 (2003), 141–53.
21. Jowett papers, Balliol College archive, I E8/19.
22. For a full account of Symonds's years at Harrow and of the Vaughan affair, see Phyllis Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds: A Biography* (London: Longmans, 1964), pp. 22–41. A recent reassessment of Symonds's testimony of Harrow and of Vaughan's career is contained in Christopher Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School 1324–1991* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 277–83.
23. Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. by Phyllis Grosskurth (London and Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 99.
24. Richard St John Tyrwhitt, 'The Greek Spirit in Modern Literature', *The Contemporary Review*, 29: March 1877, 552–66, respectively pp. 557 and 562. Tyrwhitt (1827–95) was an Oxford-educated art historian. He was vicar of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, between 1858 and 1872 (that is, at the time of the Shorting events) and was the author of *Greek and Gothic: Progress and Decay in the three Arts of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting* (1881). Just like Symonds, Pater entered the competition but withdrew in the last phases of the election, probably for fear of further scandal or public exposure. For a full account of the academic and sexual politics of the events of 1877, see Dellamora, pp. 158–64; and Grosskurth, pp. 168–73.
25. There exist few records of the interaction between Pater and Symonds. They do not appear to have corresponded and their professional relationship seems dominated by mutual scepticism expressed in reviews and letters to third parties.
26. Cf. K. O. Müller, *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1839), originally published in German in 1824.
27. The evidence of erotic vase paintings suggests that the 'passive' or younger partner was mostly a pre-pubescent youth who had attained full height. See Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 16.
28. On the intricate question of age in Greek *paiderastia*, see *ibid.*, pp. 84–7.
29. Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1873), p. 399.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
31. Symonds was also the author of paederastic verse. For a selection of this, see Ian Venables, 'Appendix: Symonds's Peccant Poetry', in John Pemble (ed.), *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 178–85.

32. Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets, Second Series* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1876), p. 384.
33. Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (London: [privately printed], 1896), p. 47. This study was originally printed in fifty copies in 1891 and then reprinted in one hundred copies in 1896. I quote from the latter edition.
34. Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, p. 1.
35. Walter Pater, 'Winckelmann', in *The New Library Edition of the Works of Walter Pater*, 10 vols (London: Macmillan, 1910), vol. 1, p. 174.
36. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, p. 81.
37. In fact Winckelmann's 'friends' were often street urchins. This circumstance is, however, not mentioned by Pater, who, on the contrary, emphasizes the aristocratic origins of one of Winckelmann's young friends. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
38. Pater, 'Winckelmann', p. 191.
39. See, for instance, Dellamora, pp. 102–16; Dowling, pp. 95–8 ('Winckelmann' is the 'crucial text for any account of Pater's tacit recovery of the paiderastic dimension of Western culture', p. 95); Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 238–53.
40. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, pp. 97–8.
41. Abbott and Campbell, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. 2, p. 75.
42. A. C. Benson's Diary, 73 (1 September, 1905), 66r, quoted in Brake, 'Judas and the Widow', p. 48.
43. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, in *The New Library Edition of the Works of Walter Pater*, vol. 6, p. 136.
44. Pater, 'Apollo in Picardy', in *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 147. Dellamora suggestively reads this story as an exploration of the 'destructive career of desire within a male homosocial community' akin to Oxford. *Masculine Desire*, p. 186 and ff.
45. Pater, 'Emerald Uthwart', in *ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 205–6.
46. Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), vol. 1, p. 482.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 486.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 486. Cf. Lesley Higgins, 'Jowett and Pater: Trafficking in Platonic Wares', *Victorian Studies*, 37: 1 (1993), 43–72.
49. Given that the *Symposium* is set in 416 BC, Alcibiades would be 36 at the time. His tale, however, refers to events that took place when he was younger. The difference in age between him and Socrates and Alcibiades' comparative youth are important for an understanding of the erotic–pedagogic relationship described here.
50. This figure has been suggestively identified by Martha Vicinus in 'The Adolescent Boy: Fin-de-Siècle Femme Fatale?', in Richard Dellamora (ed.) *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 83–106.
51. From Jowett's commonplace book, dated July 1881, Jowett papers, I H 45, fol. 1.
52. Letter dated 2 January 1874. *The Swinburne Letters*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1959–62), vol. 2, p. 264.

53. A useful tool for understanding this issue is George Rousseau's concept of 'homoplatonism', discussed in '“Homoplatic, Homodepressed, Homomorbid”: Some Further Genealogies of Same-Sex Attraction in Western Civilization', in Katherine O'Donnell and Michael O'Rourke (eds), *Love, Sex, Intimacy, and Friendship Between Men, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 12–52, pp. 20–26.
54. 'Platon reste toujours le sublime guide des hommes supérieurs, invertis de naissance ou d'occasion'. Marc-André Raffalovich, *Uranisme et Unisexualité: Etude sur Différentes Manifestations de l'Instinct Sexuel* (Lyon: A. Storck; Paris: Masson & C.<sup>ie</sup>, 1896), p. 29.
55. W.H. Mallock, *The New Republic: Culture, Faith and Philosophy in an English Country House* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975), respectively pp. 27, 232, 272.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 80–1.
57. Jowett's commonplace book, started in January 1888. The name of the subject of this episode has been erased from the book but the context clearly points to Symonds. Jowett papers, I H72, fols 47–9. My thanks to Robin Darwall-Smith for providing me with this source.
58. Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, 27 March 1889. *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, ed. by Herbert Schueller and Robert L. Peters, 3 vols (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967–9), vol. 3, p. 365.
59. Letter to Benjamin Jowett, 1 February 1889. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 345–7.
60. See Richard Davenport's entry on Oscar Browning in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Browning went on to become a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. Pater had been involved in an unpleasant episode following one of his visits to Browning, when the two men were alleged to have encouraged a boy at Eton to read Théophile Gautier's sexually explicit novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. For an account of this, see Lawrence Evans (ed.), *Letters of Walter Pater* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 16.
61. Raffalovich, *Uranisme et Unisexualité*, p. 53.
62. Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, pp. 61–2.
63. Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, p. 134.
64. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), vol. 1, p. 534.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 535–6.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 537–8.
68. In 1889 the police had uncovered a network of telegraph messenger boys who prostituted themselves to wealthy patrons in what became known as the Cleveland Street scandal, after the London address at which the brothel was located.
69. *The Trials of Oscar Wilde, 1895* (London: The Stationery Office, 2001), p. 148.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 148–9.

## Richard Dellamora responds

Stefano Evangelista's essay on two sexual scandals at Oxford after 1860 makes clear how different was the social and cultural surround in which boy-love circulated in the mid- to late-Victorian period from its status today. For Victorian males, boy-love could exist either within the limits of conventional middle-class sexuality of the period. Or it could denote a self-conscious attempt to reconstruct the institutions of Athenian and Spartan pederasty in Ancient Greece within the conditions of late-Victorian modern life. While these revisited institutions focus on young males on the cusp of entry into adult citizenship, for the Victorians the love of pre-adolescent males often focused on choristers. The lovers of such boys, who included the adolescent John Addington Symonds, varied in age from youth to late middle age. And the literature of boy-love, especially poetry, continued to increase during the period.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps its greatest efflorescence occurs at the turn of the twentieth century when the medical and legal category of male homosexuality was beginning to replace other ways of denoting male same-sex love. At the end of the nineteenth century, poetic expressions of boy-love tended to be chaste or celibate. In the twentieth century, however, the possibility of such an erotic attitude tended to be foreclosed by an emphasis on sexual practices attached to the term homosexuality.

In the mid-Victorian period, boy-love made sense within male homosocial culture. The culture in which men competed for the hand in marriage of a young woman, defined before the fact as beautiful, fair, and pure in mind and body, was the same culture in which men's desires could be routed through the figure of the pre-pubertal choirboy whose sweet, high, penetratingly pure tones pierced them to the core. This sort of erotic transfer between maiden and boy takes place, for example, in Coventry Patmore's narrative poem, *The Angel in the House* (1854, 1856). In it, Felix Vaughan dreams that in his chivalric pursuit of Honoria Churchill he bests many rivals:

In Navy, Army, Church, and Law;  
Smitten, the warriors somehow turn'd  
To Sarum choristers, whose song,  
Mix'd with celestial sorrow, yearn'd  
With joy no memory can prolong;

And phantasms as absurd and sweet  
 Merged each in each in endless chace,  
 And everywhere I seem'd to meet  
 The haunting fairness of her face.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this love is the sort of love on which Evangelista and late Victorians such as Symonds and Walter Pater focus, namely, 'Greek love', a phrase that David Halperin describes as a 'coded phrase for the unmentionable term *paederasty*'. In these discussions, pederasty, defined as 'the sexual pursuit of adolescent males by adult males', usually means pederasty in the form of the educational, at times philosophic, institution that existed at Athens.<sup>3</sup>

Evangelista argues that the debate over the meaning of pedagogic *eros* in Plato at Oxford after 1860 figured as part of a larger effort to create a modern homosexual culture. He further positions Benjamin Jowett, the leading English translator of Plato at the time, as the foremost antagonist of this undertaking, variously conducted in the lives and writings of Symonds, Pater, and Oscar Wilde. Defending Plato from erotic contamination, Jowett, in translating the *Symposium*, goes so far as to substitute female for male pronouns so as to be able to present the text as a paean to spousal love.<sup>4</sup> This sleight of hand functioned as a late, desperate attempt to sustain the male homosocial culture within which Pater wrote. Likewise, Jowett at times insisted that Platonic pederasty is free of sexual desire. As Evangelista points out, Symonds rejected this position as unethical. At the centre of Athenian pederasty is an emphasis, as we will see, on self-conscious moderation in the exercise of bodily pleasures. By denying the existence of *eros* within pederastic ties, Jowett paradoxically helped ensure that, in Victorian instances, attachments of this sort would function without ethical discrimination. If Jowett thought that the modern thing to do was to translate Platonic *eros* into the terms of Victorian middle-class marriage, to the other men whom I have mentioned, pederasty offered an opportunity of educating an ethical response to the conditions of modern life. Their interest in Athenian and Spartan pederastic models, properly speaking, was neither historicist nor universal.<sup>5</sup> Rather, they were seeking a principle that could guide the contemporary practice of male love.

G.E. Moore's comments on same-sex friendship in *Principia Ethica* continued this effort after the turn of the century.<sup>6</sup> Moore and the others understood these relations to be based in friendship in male homosocial institutions such as the public schools, the Universities, and Parliament.



Although all three were sites of male privilege, the ideological stance of these writers was nonetheless anti-imperial, anti-aristocratic, democratic, and egalitarian.<sup>7</sup> The introduction of a philosophic perspective into male same-sex emotional and at times sexual ties indicated progress beyond the ignorance and brutality of religious fanaticism and popular superstition. Likewise, the ethics of pederasty indicated a step beyond what Pater refers to as 'the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome'.<sup>8</sup> This ethical emphasis also reflected an altered conception of the relations between the sexes. A writer like Wilde was aware that the Victorian model of complementary gender relations in marriage had become outmoded. In Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband*, Lord Goring says as much when he observes that 'it is the growth of the moral sense in women that makes marriage such a hopeless, one-sided institution'.<sup>9</sup> The awareness of individual ethical responsibility ('the moral sense') is the essence of what both Symonds and Michel Foucault have referred to as the practice of *aesthesis* in Athenian pederasty.<sup>10</sup>

In Greek and Roman philosophical and literary tradition, perfect friendship between two men is often taken as paradigmatic of the virtues that are necessary in a just polity.<sup>11</sup> For his part, Foucault has drawn close connections between the formation of ancient Athenian citizens and the practice of friendship. Within the Athenian institution of pederasty, a citizen and an adolescent joined in a mentor-protégé relationship, motivated by erotic attraction, in particular on the part of the older participant, and directed towards the education of the younger partner in the virtues required for participation in the government of the city. Foucault argues that reflection on the 'right use' of *ta aphrodisia*, 'things' or 'pleasures of love', was a focal point in the fashioning of the self, whose objective was the emergence of the younger member as citizen and equal of his older friend.<sup>12</sup>

Foucault distinguishes the practice of ascesis in Athenian pederasty from the military model of friendship between a warrior and an ephebe in the institution of Spartan pederasty. In Foucauldian terms, the idealization of love between soldiers might be described as a 'technology of the self', 'centering on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls'.<sup>13</sup> What is at stake in distinguishing between the two models is that the first creates the conditions for the critique of the state from the vantage point of the citizen; the second model subordinates the citizen-soldier to statist objectives. To say this is not to say that some at Oxford, such as John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and Jowett

himself, did not at times also draw on evocations of Athenian pederasty in attempting to subordinate individual action and subjectivity to the imperatives of nation and empire. However, Pater, Wilde, and other homophiles such as Edward Carpenter worked to counter these efforts.<sup>14</sup>

For Pater, what was at stake in the pederastic relation was the opportunity it afforded to the younger member to become, for the first time, conscious of himself as subject and object of his own thought. Once he did so, he also became responsible for the content of that thought and its relation to his actions. In a recent paper, Evangelista cites a passage from Pater's late study, *Plato and Platonism* (1893), to this effect. In context, Pater is thinking about the degree to which the allegation that Socrates had corrupted the youth of Athens is either correct or incorrect:

Those young Athenians whom he was thought to have corrupted of set purpose, he had not only admired but really loved and understood; and as a consequence had longed to do them real good, chiefly by giving them that interest in themselves which is the first condition of any real power over others. To make Meno, Polus, Charmides, really interested in himself, to help him to the discovery of that wonderful new world here at home – in this effort, even more than in making them interested in other people and things, lay and still lies (it is no sophistical paradox!) the central business of education. Only, the very thoroughness of the sort of self-knowledge he promoted had in it something sacramental, so to speak; if it did not do them good, must do them considerable harm; could not leave them just as they were.<sup>15</sup>

When Pater says that Socratic education is 'sacramental', he is thinking of the belief that the words of the priest in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist qualitatively change the bread and wine they bless into the body and blood of Christ. Pater argues that pedagogic *eros* likewise is transformative. Moreover, he acknowledges that the transformation is morally equivocal: for better or for worse, the change will definitely change the course of the ephebe's life.

Evangelista has suggested that in conceding this point, Pater had in mind one of his own former pupils, Oscar Wilde. By the early 1890s, Wilde was chiding Pater for not being radical enough. By the date of publication of *Plato and Platonism*, however, Pater was likely to have been troubled by what he perceived to be Wilde's vulgar immoralism. Pater is likely also to have been aware that Wilde was recklessly embarked on an unregulated pursuit of waiters, clerks, students, rentboys and young

blackmailers. Pater's emphasis on the ethical character of pederastic relations notwithstanding, we can see how different is the culture in which formal education exists today. The erotic character of relations between men and male adolescents, both inside and outside of schools and universities, can be ignored, denied, deplored, litigated, prosecuted, and/or condemned. What is not possible a hundred years after the death of Queen Victoria is to see it, as Pater or Wilde saw it, as the point of departure of an ethical existence.

## Notes

1. Cf. Timothy d'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1880 to 1910* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).
2. Coventry Patmore, *Poems*, eighth edition (London, 1903), 1: 22. For a classic essay on the angel in the house, see Carol Christ, 'Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House', in Martha Vicinus (ed.), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 146–62.
3. David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. ix.
4. Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 232 n. 17.
5. For Spartan-model pederasty, see Richard Dellamora, 'Dorianism', in *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 43–64.
6. George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
7. For Pater's critique of Spartan pederasty in terms of the subordination of the individual to the state, see 'Dorianism'. For Wilde's socialism, see his essay 'The Soul of Man under Socialism'. Democracy in this context, however, is not populist. And political idealism for these writers was quite compatible with various sorts of snobbery. (Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', in *De Profundis and Other Writings*, introd. Hesketh Pearson (London, 1986), pp. 19–53.
8. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London, 1873), p. 118.
9. Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*, in *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 207.
10. Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, pp. 6–7, 161–2.
11. Derrida considers this connection at length in *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997).
12. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1986), 2: 52, 35.
13. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 1: 139.

14. Dellamora, 'Dorianism'.
15. Cited in Stefano-Maria Evangelista, 'Narcissism and Romantic Reflections in Pater's *Plato and Platonism*', third annual meeting of NAVSA (North American Victorian Studies Association), Charlottesville, Virginia, 2 October 2005, 6.

# 8

## The Nineteenth-Century Photographic Likeness and the Body of the Child

*Lindsay Smith*

Ten minutes past four in the afternoon of 14 July 1873. But the great bell in Tom Quad Christ Church Oxford is sounding six. A little girl of nine years has been allowed by her host to climb the narrow staircase of the tower and strike the huge bell with a hammer. She is one of a string of little girls who over the course of the past three months has filed into that most traditional of Oxford colleges to be photographed. Their destination: the new glass studio above the rooms of the Mathematics lecturer Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, alias Lewis Carroll, celebrated author of the *Alice* books. On this particular Monday Alexandra Kitchin, daughter of the historian and student of Christ Church George William Kitchin, has already enjoyed a picnic of cakes and Bath buns in the Reverend Dodgson's sitting room and a chance to play with all manner of mechanical toys emptied from the cupboard there. But the highlight of the visit was the photographic 'sitting' itself, the opportunity to dress as a Chinaman, to pose in lavish costumes borrowed from the Ashmolean Museum, and then to steal into the mysterious darkroom to be allowed to tilt the developing bath and watch a ghostly form appear upon the glass plate of the negative.

It must have been a strange sight indeed, in the all-male context of Christ Church, and of Oxford colleges more generally, to witness, as on the above occasion, the figures of little girls, Carroll's regular visitors, entering and leaving the buildings. Alexandra Kitchin (known as 'Xie') was the latest (albeit the one Carroll photographed most frequently) of those many girls who had come to college to have their 'likenesses' taken. By the 1880s Carroll would be an old hand at cultivating eccentricity, at drawing attention to his unorthodox predilections, referring to himself as the 'old fogey' don intentionally defiant of convention as personified by Mrs Grundy. But in this earlier decade that arguably

represented his photographic prime he was more sensitive to gossip and fully aware that his photographic antics might be construed with ambivalence. Carroll went to great lengths in letters to the parents of his child 'sitters' to demonstrate the legitimacy of his idiosyncratic relationships with children. Highly aware that there was no respectable precedent in contemporary Victorian culture for his interest in little girls he emphasized his sensitivity to the wishes of individual children, claiming never to have undertaken a photographic sitting without the consent of the child in question.<sup>1</sup> From March 1872 Carroll took photographs in his new purpose-built studio constructed on the roof above his college rooms. Close at hand he enjoyed the convenience of his dedicated darkroom. Writing on 11 May 1872 to Mary MacDonald, daughter of his contemporary the novelist George MacDonald, Carroll notes the completion of his 'photographing studio', adding that he is 'taking pictures almost every day' and that were she to 'bring [to Oxford her] best theatrical "get up"' he would make 'a splendid picture' of her.<sup>2</sup> He carried on so doing at a rapid rate; the glass structure meant that he could take photographs more easily in dull weather and reduce exposure times. Alice, Ida and Carry Mason, Julia and Ethel Arnold, Xie and her brother Herbert Kitchin, Lily Bruce, Miss Ward, Miss Jones, Margaret and Frederica Morell, Isabel Fane, Maud, Isobel and Helen Brewer, Beatrice and Ethel Hatch all came to be photographed between May and July 1873 and six of them appeared on more than one occasion.

Prior to this period, during the late 1850s and early 1860s, Carroll had enjoyed a ready supply of child subjects at the nearby deanery. Henry George Liddell, who became Dean of the College in 1855, had had six children growing up there, four of whom Carroll had regularly photographed in the garden.<sup>3</sup> But those days were long since gone. The most celebrated of those children, Alice Pleasance, was by 1873 a woman of 21. She had last sat for Carroll to take her picture on 25 June 1870 at the age of 18. On 24 April of the present year, on visiting the Dean, the author of the *Alice* books had been invited into the drawing room by Lorina Liddell senior to view new photographs of her daughters and Alice had proudly shown him three of herself by Julia Margaret Cameron: 'Alice as Alethia', 'Alice as Pomona', and 'Alice as St Agnes'.<sup>4</sup> The Alice that Carroll had relished in his own photographic portraits, most famously posed as 'the Beggar Maid' of 1858, was transformed by Cameron's large-format images into a series of mature goddesses. By contrast, those girls chaperoned through the quad to be photographed in 1873 were children still and a third generation of Carroll's childfriends.<sup>5</sup>

Carroll began photography at a time when the medium was still relatively new and held considerable fascination. He bought his first camera in 1856 and is believed to have suddenly and somewhat mysteriously given up photography in 1880.<sup>6</sup> In the interim he took many thousands of photographs, using the wet collodion process which required considerable skill to secure good results. Not all amateurs were able to master with the assurance that Carroll did the new photographic method made available by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851. The negative, a sheet of glass the same size as the eventual print, had first to be coated with collodion made from gun cotton – cotton dissolved in nitric and sulphuric acid – mixed either with ether, or alcohol and potassium iodide. After a few seconds the glass plate was dipped in a bath of nitrate that reacted with the potassium iodide to form silver iodide which was light-sensitive. The plate was then exposed in the camera. At all times during the intricate process the plate had to stay damp, hence the name ‘wet-plate process’. Once exposed the print had to be developed immediately in a solution of pyrogallol and ascorbic acids, fixed and washed. The opportunity for error was considerable throughout; debris such as dust or a hair would be captured as an eternal fault on the eventual print.

On the day in question the results *had* been successful. Xie Kitchin dressed as a tea merchant had posed for companion pieces that would come to be known as ‘China Merchant’, ‘On Duty’ and ‘Off Duty’. In the first, ‘On Duty’, we find her sitting upon tea chests arranged in a comfortable step-like fashion (see Illustration 8.1). She looks out directly at the viewer in her child-size Chinese costume with cap and shoes. Only the fan that she holds, that has moved a little during exposure, blurring its folds, interrupts ever so slightly the stylized image. In the second photograph the child’s gaze remains steady, and she appears, cap and shoes removed, leaning against the tea chests that have been adjusted to a more haphazard configuration (see Illustration 8.2). Carroll clearly shared the considerable interest of the time in photographic images of China. In the spring of this same year the Edinburgh photographer John Thomson had published his lavish book of photographs *Illustrations of China*. However, Carroll’s companion format that here involves a correspondence between the two photographs of Xie Kitchin re-works in some senses the earlier photographs of Alice and her elder sister Lorina as Chinamen taken 13 years before in 1860 (See Illustration 8.3). At the same time there are significant differences between the earlier and the later photographs, owing to the shift from an outdoor to an indoor (studio) context. The costumes are the same, but the children are different and we experience that odd sense present in many



*Illustration 8.1* 'Alexandra Kitchin as a Tea Merchant "On Duty"' 14 July 1873. Morris L. Parrish Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Library.

mid-nineteenth-century photographs caused by attempts to make the outdoors an interior space. In the figures posed against a backdrop we recognise the ruse of the concealed exterior context. Sunlight was required to ensure a tolerable exposure time in which a subject might hold a pose. And here among the signs of that outdoor setting our eye is drawn to the stone wall on the left and to that pot of nasturtiums partially visible in front of it.





*Illustration 8.2* 'Alexandra Kitchin as a Tea Merchant "Off Duty"' 14 July 1873. Morris L. Parrish Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Library.

In addition to recalling this earlier image of Alice and Lorina Liddell, the sequential portraits of Xie as a China merchant also build upon what has become Carroll's most well-known photograph of 'Alice Liddell as a Beggar Maid' of 1858, most probably intended as a companion piece to the little known 'Alice Liddell dressed in her best Outfit' almost certainly taken on the same day.<sup>7</sup> This controversial image in which a child dressed in rags is posed begging for alms enacts Carroll's



*Illustration 8.3* 'Lorina and Alice Liddell in Chinese Dress' Spring 1860. Morris L. Parrish Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Library.

interest in the story of the African King Cophetua and his beggar bride. But its resonance is altered when read against the companion image. Carroll explores the difference between the two states in a process of metamorphosis whereby one may turn into the other. The clean upper-middle-class white child dressed in rags personates the street Arab in a popular conceit of the period. Indeed, the image enters a long fine-art tradition in Britain of picturing the urban poor. Alice is then returned to her best outfit in a 'before and after' oscillation in which the positions of 'before' and 'after' may be switched endlessly. Like Alice before her Xie also posed as the beggar bride from the story of King Cophetua and the beggar maid; she wore the very same costumes, ones in which other children had posed for Carroll in the interim.



*Illustration 8.4* 'Alice Liddell as a Beggar Maid' Summer 1858. Morris L. Parrish Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Library.

Although there existed for Carroll a certain degree of interchangeability between all his child models, critics, however, remain fixated on Carroll's relationship with Alice Liddell and one can see why.<sup>8</sup> He took many photographs of her and her sisters Lorina and Edith and there are four volumes of diaries missing; the first is the volume for 1853–4, three pages are cut from August and the months from September to

December of 1855 are missing along with the second volume. The two other missing volumes relate to the period (April 1858 and May 1862) in which Carroll was most involved with the Liddell family.<sup>9</sup> Speculation about what might be contained in these diaries is to some extent responsible for the continuing fascination. Carroll's first biographer, his nephew Stuart Collingwood, had them in his possession when writing his text but they went missing subsequently. Along with those documents burnt in the grate of his college fireplace following Carroll's death in 1898, we have a host of lost papers that might hold a key to absent truths. Largely, owing to these absent diaries and to the enduring power of the image of 'Alice', a single story has endured: that Carroll had wanted to marry Alice Liddell and had been 'disappointed' in love. When critics venture to refute the dominance of the figure of Alice Liddell in Carroll's photography as a whole they work hard to play down his compulsion to photograph little girls in general and to preserve his heterosexuality. Karoline Leach in *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild*, for example, counters the importance to Carroll of Alice Liddell, providing an unlikely though somewhat compelling argument that it was Lorina Liddell senior rather than her daughter who held fascination for Carroll leading to an affair.<sup>10</sup> In order to construct her argument she requires the absent diaries, together with those pages cut from the extant ones, to contain a level of discursive detail that is not present in the existing volumes. And even such a seemingly radical revisionist account, arguing that Carroll used his friendships with little girls to cover for encounters with their mothers, turns out to be apologist, since it asserts in a new guise Carroll's 'normality'. What is more, it does so at the expense of Henry George Liddell, ridiculed for his extreme love for his male friend Arthur Penrhyn Stanley and for his passionate outpourings of grief on the deaths of his 3-year-old son and his 22-year-old daughter, Edith.<sup>11</sup>

For Leach, as for many earlier commentators, Carroll's interest in photographing little girls is simply the realization of a 'natural' connection between the medium and eminently photographable objects. In her view Carroll remains, following Helmut Gernsheim's influential account of 1949, a consummate photographer of children and Leach is not alone in thus foreclosing debate on the larger implications of Carroll's passion for the medium.<sup>12</sup> However, to assume we should simply take as read such a connection between photography and child subjects neglects both material qualities specific to the new medium whose representational status was not yet clearly established and also the legal status, as minors, of those child subjects. Since during the



period in which Carroll worked photography had not yet been seamlessly accommodated to existing categories of aesthetic response, such an approach dismisses those more hesitant aspects of the new medium as they intersect with equally hesitant definitions of childhood. At the same time, critics who specifically attempt to re-evaluate Carroll's photographic practices remain at pains to forestall a revelation of what might yet be released from within those many hundreds of photographic likenesses of children. Indeed, in spite of the fact that we are old hands at recognising the intentional fallacy, and wouldn't begin to believe in mapping onto literary texts or visual images a straightforward account of desire, critics remind us of the enduring inscrutability of Carroll's intentions. By the same token, not withstanding our widespread acceptance that even the most natural-looking photograph is highly constructed, we are reminded by Carrollians of its ability to lie. Where photography is concerned, unlike language or painting, such an injunction not to believe what we see takes on a singular urgency precisely because the very medium threatens to rail against it. It's as if photography forever harbours the potential to show forth something in excess of those ways in which we might theorize it.

The physical act of taking photographs, those technical and scientific skills it required, fascinated the author of the *Alice* books. Indeed, the process of making a photograph, from the initial sitting to the final print, preoccupied Carroll more than any other activity. The many photographs that Carroll produced between 1856 and 1880 (records show at least 2,700 negatives) and the personal narrative accounts that frame them dramatize the limitations involved in treating in isolation his all-consuming photographic impulse. Theorizing photographic mediation in sophisticated and witty prose, Carroll embraced the potent appeal of a medium that was at once both thoroughly scientific and wonderfully abstruse. In the essay 'Photography Extraordinary' of 1855 Carroll relates a 'mesmeric rapport' between the mind of a photographic subject, or 'patient' as he calls him, and the glass plate of the negative.<sup>13</sup> In a play upon the existence of latent and manifest images as applied to the mental realm, the action of the photographer 'develops' to the highest degree of intensity what is wittily demonstrated to be the 'feeblest' of intellects. 'A Photographer's Day Out' of 1860 by contrast charts in the form of diary entries the perils for the photographer of family portraiture (including 'the inevitable baby'), as contrasted with his intense desire to capture a 'young lady to photograph'.<sup>14</sup> Both of these pieces, together with Carroll's parody of Longfellow's 'The Song of Hiawatha' entitled 'Hiawatha's Photographing' 1857,<sup>15</sup> dramatize those

ways in which the nature of the photograph, and meditations upon its unique referential existence, pervade his lesser-known fictional writings as well as his personal ones. The little girl celebrated in his letters for her exuberance as a speaking subject was his favourite object for photography and his many thousands of letters, especially those to his childfriends (all painstakingly registered just as his photographic negatives and prints were catalogued and cross-referenced), chart, along with his diary entries, the extent and details of his passion for the relatively new technology of reproduction. These letters to multiple children render Carroll somewhat unique in the period. The texts may thus be understood as part of a larger prevailing 'photographic' imperative. Not only do the documents record photographic sittings and elaborate schemes for securing an ongoing supply of child subjects for the lens. They also reveal Carroll's complex psychological stake in representing the child photographically, as inseparable from those larger implications photography held for visual perception and cognition more generally.

Carroll was a complex and fiercely private individual who tried to keep his identity split into the academic and photographic (Dodgson) and the public children's writer (Carroll). He alludes himself to the occasion of returning mail to sender that arrived at Oxford for Lewis Carroll. And in a fragment of a letter of 11 May 1883, for example, he implores Mrs Heurtley, the wife of Charles Abel Heurtley, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford, not to give away any 'specimen of [his] handwriting since [his] constant aim is to remain *personally* unknown to the world'.<sup>16</sup> While Carroll's fiction and its offshoot merchandise, such as the Alice postage-stamp case, occupied the public arena and he worked unashamedly to promote their popularity, his photography remained in the private sphere. He only ever exhibited his photographs once at the beginning of his career in 1858;<sup>17</sup> they otherwise remained preserved as loose prints or in albums compiled both for himself and also as gifts to his 'sitters' and their families. However, both the public form of his writing for children and the private photographic portraits of little girls embody for Carroll a 'compulsion' in the sense of an irresistible urge or obligation to engage a profound sense of the child, a drive to visualize, re-visualize and preserve photographically the figures of little girls. It is a compulsion rooted in a commitment to childhood as a hugely important, but still emerging, and thereby contingent category. But how precisely to understand the nature of that compulsion remains problematical. Carroll was clearly interested in what he believed to be that liberation of little girls from certain strictures of Victorian propriety; he

famously advocated fisherman's jersey, bathing drawers and no gloves for their attire at the beach. Analogously, he couldn't bear what he referred to as 'an unnatural child'. A child who wore her hair up would constitute for him too blatant a symbol of womanhood, of majority. He was thus interested in the ability of the camera to capture visually new realizations of the child's body as physically distinct from that of an adult. He wanted to 'picture' little girls as little girls rather than as women, to fix minors in a visible form prior to their passage into adulthood. Although Carroll also took pictures of adults, including a number of eminent contemporaries, it was undoubtedly the case that he enjoyed photographing little girls more than he did any other subject. His preference for female minors might not have proved so problematical were it not for the fact that within the all-male college environment he was photographing other people's daughters. But it is pointless to try to argue, as some have, that Carroll lacked discrimination and relished just as much photographing objects such as the skeleton of a tunny fish for the new Oxford Museum; an unlikely assumption whichever way one looks at it. It is equally important to resist a crude psychobiography in which Carroll's interest in the company of little girls is read either as a displacement of his feelings as a frustrated bachelor or as a form of perversion. These polarized interpretations oversimplify Carroll's self-conscious creation of personae, or compartmentalized facets of his identity, and fail to historicize his impulse to photograph little girls. By comparison, we need to reinstate those conceptual complexities generated by early photography and resist making assumptions about the medium that could only have been made subsequently when the implications of the new technology were more determinate. For, when Carroll was involved with it, photography had more provisional conceptual implications. Its miraculous capabilities for reproduction were one of its fascinations together with its potential to generate multiple copies of an original.

During the period in which he was working the parameters of girlhood and womanhood were variously defined and legal debates around the age of consent were very much a part of the discourse in which he operated. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, Carroll had to situate his desire to photograph minors in relationship to contemporary debates around age of consent legislation and on two occasions wrote regarding the issue to the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury.<sup>18</sup> He favoured as objects for his lens girls below the age of consent, avidly seeking to preserve them photographically as minors. At the same time, however, were it possible to override acknowledging photographic subjects as consenting

adults, acquiring instead the consent of parents and effectively still treating them as dependents, Carroll would eagerly secure potential 'sitters' above the age of consent. Such a degree of flexibility around concepts of majority and minority suggests that, for Carroll, one lure of the photographic medium was its ability to transform majority back to minority, or to disguise a distinction between the two states, thereby rendering a transitional subject a child once more.

It was in such a context that Carroll was forever aware of the extremity of his desire to photograph girls and young women. Throughout his photographic career in letters and in his private journals he reflected upon the increasing idiosyncrasy of his practice. He recognised too the insistence of the pattern of his procurement of photographic 'victims' as he self-ironizingly called them. A chance meeting in a park or on a train would provide the opportunity to engage girls in puzzles or tricks. On parting, the promise of a copy of his latest book on most occasions would generate the possibility for further contact with such new 'child friends', culminating in a photographic sitting.

In addition to taking his own photographs Carroll was always keen to gain images from friends and acquaintances of children he had met. In a letter to Anne Isabella Thackeray, eldest daughter of the novelist W.M. Thackeray, he writes: 'You would be conferring a great additional favour if you could for love or money get me photographs of those charming little friends of yours, Gaynor and Amy – *especially* (if such a thing exists) one of Amy at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  as a sailor. You will think me very greedy, but as the Americans say, "I'm a whale at" photographs.'<sup>19</sup> Long after he had given up taking photographs himself, he contrived photographic opportunities in which to realize particular characterizations. As late as September 1888 he records taking the actress Isa Bowman, on an extended visit to him in Eastbourne, to the photographer Kent's where he 'got three photos done, two as Willie [the notorious character from *East Lynne*] and one in sailor-frock'.<sup>20</sup> During a photographic sitting, and later developing his results in the darkroom, he was able to realize, without self-consciousness, the extremity of his compulsion to photograph. When on 25 March 1863 Carroll lists in his diary under 'photographed or to be photographed' the names of 107 girls grouped together according to their first names, the very heading elides a difference between those girls already preserved photographically and those he yet desires to capture.<sup>21</sup> In the process of recording past and future child subjects there is a type of equivalence established for him between the thought of photographing and the act of photographing itself. A desire to photograph is in some ways congruent with



the act of photographing such that to think of a child as a photograph is already in a sense to photograph her. Thus, while the generation of images subsequent to the sitting, the collecting, cataloguing, cross-referencing of photographs, is part of the fascination it is not simply the treasured object as end-product in which Carroll is interested. In the experience of the desire to photograph, and in the acts of photographing and processing his images in the darkroom, Carroll realized a profound conjunction of those deeply private and routinely public personae that he so relentlessly aspired to keep discrete. Inhabiting the conceptual realm of photography, and relentlessly courting that particular quality of duration that the medium required, he was able to occupy shifting identifications with those subjects photographed.

While the medium of photography and the developmental category of childhood, as we have come to understand it, are apt to suggest one another, the emerging kinship between the two in Carroll's work occasions a more general questioning of those processes by which in the nineteenth century the child's body (for Carroll, specifically that of the little girl) might seem to offer irrefutably the most appropriate object for a photographic lens. Of course, children provided captive objects, if not always co-operative ones, and with no shortage of them if one frequented the right places – the train, the park, the beach, the pantomime – they constituted a renewable source. Moreover, the child's body was not simply an adult body in miniature. It had for Carroll in its photographic incarnations a different resonance, partly attributable to a lack of self-consciousness or, more precisely, a different type of self-consciousness frequently implicit in the returned look of a child sitter.

The first photographic process, Jacques Louis Mandé Daguerre's daguerreotype, patented in Paris in 1839, and followed in England by William Henry Fox-Talbot's negative/positive or calotype, offered a new means by which to picture children. During its early decades photography held a peculiar cultural status, one unique to its combined mechanical, physical and chemical origins. Unlike those manual methods of reproduction, such as engraving, that preceded it, photography eliminated the trace of a hand; the causal connection to a referent determined the unique materiality of a photographic print. By a seemingly perfect correspondence with the object, together with those negative/positive shadow/light dichotomies that mark a temporal dimension to its presence as burnt into the emulsion, a photograph is always belatedly the thing it represents. Such distinctive physical aspects of a photograph, combined with its metaphysical qualities, offered new conceptual

possibilities for representation. The implicit tendency of early photography to confound disciplinary divisions and unsettle epistemological questions resembled in many ways the status of childhood as a variously demarcated and contested stage of human development. Indeed, difficulties attendant upon the cultural positioning of the photographic medium resemble those accompanying an equally problematical cultural location of the child.

It is in the nineteenth century that a modern western concept of childhood acquires, through photographic representation, a particular form of visual ubiquity. By the 1850s photographic portraits of children had already begun to constitute a popular genre and during the second half of the century, in particular, childhood became the object of systematic scientific investigation as the camera acquired the status of a major instrument of classification more generally. At the same time, fine-art and amateur photography sustained a profound connection with the figures of children. While before the invention of photography images of children abound, it is those representational possibilities offered by the photographic medium that provide new ways in which to figure forth the 'likeness' of a child. There are a number of ways in which to account for the emergence in the nineteenth century of what would increasingly become a special connection between child and photograph: most obviously, perhaps, the relatively instantaneous process of taking a photograph provided a fitting method by which to capture or preserve a transitional state. Childhood, all too soon lost, could be granted a unique permanence by the photographic medium. At the same time a photographic portrait was uniquely able to facilitate identification through its links with death, mortality and loss; the absence or death of a loved one. It is in such a context that one may situate, for example, the popularity in the nineteenth century of post-mortem photographs of children. Photographic portraits elicit a viewer's identification with the subject depicted. However, it is also further the case that a photographic image of a child may evoke, in an overdetermined form, that which all photographic portraits are able to conjure, namely a desire to identify with a photographed subject simultaneously in terms of the restoration of a lost object (the raising of the dead) and in the form of an hallucination or premonition of the future. Both temporal forms, in the sense of that which has been, and that which has yet to be, are implicit in an adult's identification with the figure of a child.

In a very fundamental sense photography, as a medium, makes it impossible to refuse identification with the figure of the child. Photographs of children perhaps more than any others invite us to experience

in a unitary image the simultaneous existence of multiple points of time, invite us to re-fathom photographic simultaneity, that disarmingly simple yet irrefutable quality of the medium that enables a subject to occupy at the same time more than one temporal 'reality'; to experience a sense of that which is yet to come as, in effect, already having been. This is not to deny the possibilities that exist for identification with portraits produced in other media but to realize that photographic ones, through their assault on temporality, re-define those possibilities for such identification. The allusion of a photographic portrait to a future as a place of return, as a realm at some level already known, engenders identification through an implicit relationship of the child to such temporal dislocation. The relationship of the photograph to the past (as a tense as well as an earlier epoch) is also very much about the future (futura) as newly rendered present. In bringing to the fore such temporal disjunction, Carroll's practices amend the assumed naturalness of a connection between an emergent concept of 'childhood' and an emergent medium, highlighting those more complex and provisional ways in which each was and continues to be implicated in the other.

This is not to argue against identification but to re-fashion its temporal trajectory as elicited by nineteenth-century representations of children, to bring to the fore a sense of the future tense in that peculiar nature of prophecy that such photographs articulate; a relationship between child and photograph in terms of growth and immanence in which the temporal disjunction of the medium holds a key. To date a sense of the past as conjured by a photograph has been preferred over an anticipation of the future. Yet temporal flights of fantasy as generated by photographs do not obey simple trajectories but rather more complex conglomerate forms. If in Carroll's work we find a model of introspection, we also find one of anticipation in which he would have been photographing his child friends not simply to re-claim if only fleetingly his lost past, but also in order to figure forth the future. Walter Benjamin refers to the eloquent subsistence of the future in the past (which was at that photographed moment the present) as a characteristic of the medium manifest in early processes.<sup>22</sup> That eloquence dwindles following the commercialization of the medium, can but dwindle, since it inheres in a quality of captured duration, the chemical, physical trace of time passed, yet to pass and passing in the image. As both Benjamin and Roland Barthes<sup>23</sup> have demonstrated, an adult subject's identification of him or herself with a photograph of a child involves a kind of infantilization before the photograph. In the case of Benjamin's description of the studio

portrait of the young Kafka, caught in the 'upholstered tropics of the photographic studio' the viewer identifies with the humiliation he reads in the countenance of the uncomfortable child subject.<sup>24</sup> The picture taken for an adult album compounds not only the lack of agency of the photographed child, but also a new brand of powerlessness inherent in having one's likeness 'taken'. In the case of Barthes' mourning of his mother, he selects as that image that most conjures her for him a photograph of his mother as a child. It is an image of her when she was unknown to him through which he may most forcefully connect. Such possibilities for identification produce a condition resembling that of Barthes' 'amorous subject' who is invariably feminized by the act of waiting for the beloved.<sup>25</sup>

Recent criticism has addressed the middle-class Victorian male fascination with the little girl as a desire to reconnect with a long-lost feminine phase. Following on from more general studies of childhood such as U.C. Knoeflmacher's *Ventures into Childland* that deals largely with literary representations and James Kincaid's *Child Loving* that tends not to demarcate in terms of gender adult-male affiliations with children, Catherine Robson's *Men in Wonderland* specifically takes up the nineteenth-century gentleman's investment in a condition of girlhood.<sup>26</sup> Robson traces Victorian male investment in a fantasy of girlhood as a crucial psychic stage in developing masculinity that signals a pervasive longing among middle-class men for a long-lost feminine self. It is a selfhood associated for a male subject with childhood as a feminine realm inhabited by a boy until he is separated from his sisters in the nursery to enter the masculine world of school. Robson reads the middle-class fascination with the girl as part of a 'pervasive fantasy of male development in which men become masculine only after an initial feminine stage', as offering re-connection with a lost self.<sup>27</sup> Such an interpretation of the importance of girlhood for the middle class is useful in disallowing the application of crude labels of perversion to a nineteenth-century tendency to privilege the child over the adult. However, in situating photography as simply one of many media in the period that allow such a fantasy of loss to take hold it neglects the difference of photography from other earlier forms of visual representation, most notably its location in time, its ability to dislocate temporality, together with the relationship of the child photograph to futurity, to a condition of immanence. Rather than reading nineteenth-century adult investments in the photographed body of the child as either representing a desire to return to an earlier phase of development (as a wish to be the child or as a desire for the child) might we not reverse the

temporal trajectory to focus upon those ways in which in recording the past a photograph also forever manifests the future.

Writing in his diary on 15 May 1879, in a relatively rare discursive passage, Carroll records 'as a curiosity' a dream he had the previous night containing 'the same person [the actress Polly Terry, sister of Ellen Terry] at two different periods of life':

And there was Polly, the child, seated in the room, and looking about 9 or 10 years old: and I was distinctly conscious of the fact, yet without any feeling of surprise at its incongruity, that I was going to take the *child* Polly with me to the theatre, to see the *grown-up* Polly act! Both figures, Polly as a child and Polly as a woman, are I suppose equally clear in my ordinary waking memory: and it seems that in sleep I had contrived to give to the two pictures separate individualities.<sup>28</sup>

This splitting into two of Polly Terry is very interesting in the context of the suggestion of a relative degree of interchangeability among Carroll's childfriends. If there is a sense in which one little girl invariably may substitute for another as a model for his photographs, and in Polly Terry's case one sister for another since Carroll photographed her siblings, we have in this example a different order of substitution. In the dream, the doppelganger Polly impresses that temporal dimension, the simultaneous existence of two stages of development that photographs generate. Here the child/woman is literally split into two different embodiments (present and future Polly and past and present Polly) which are miraculously rolled into one by the temporal action of photography. Rather tellingly, Carroll refers to the two figures of Polly as 'pictures'. His 'curious' dream thus produces a prototype of the workings of the photographic image, for it stages, in the shape of the simultaneous existence of the child and the adult Polly, that which exists invisibly in the photographic form of a single portrait that, by its temporal action, rolls the two into one. Were we to reverse the roles of the child and the adult Polly the conceptual movement would be different. But as it stands, the course of the dream in which the child is to be taken to see the adult act, resembles a premonition, the seeing into the future of the photographic image.

Such magical distinctiveness of photographic representation, its unique referential existence in time and its facility for temporal disjunction pervades Carroll's personal writings. While a photograph, like other visual images, may benefit from artistry, it also possesses that physical and chemical existence that in some senses always overrides it. At the

end of the manuscript version of 'Alice's Adventure's Underground' (the original title of *Alice in Wonderland*) there is a photograph of the young Alice Liddell cropped from a larger portrait format in which she's seated with ferns. Beneath it was discovered Carroll's original sketch of the child. The author's act of pasting a photograph over a drawing has been construed as a sign of Carroll's dissatisfaction with his skills as a draftsman,<sup>29</sup> but it need not signify dissatisfaction in this sense of a lack of artistic dexterity. What is captured so powerfully by the placement of the photograph over the drawing is the marked difference of the photographic medium from other forms of representation. The physical relationship of a photograph to an original, which is not separable from the temporal existence of the object it depicts, is reinstated in the desire to paste a new image over the old. The photograph of Alice can preserve, as demonstrated above, the dreamscape's secret of multiple copies of an original at different stages of development.

But the lure of photographs for Carroll also lies elsewhere. A photographic sitting of the period involves an encounter, albeit brief or standardized, in which 'trust', together with a relative degree of unself-consciousness, are crucial. The very process of uncapping, of exposing and recapping the camera lens to take a likeness impresses a particular sense of duration. At one level it is a residue of a real encounter (as we read it off from photographed place, props, and costume) that persists in the image but that past moment is also inflected by a peculiar quality of duration. Benjamin's 'Small History' dwells upon such a concept of duration in those early photographs of the 1840s prior to the rapid commercialization of photography as heralded by the *carte de visite* in which a photographic subject enduring a long exposure out of doors appeared to 'grow' into the photograph.<sup>30</sup> For Benjamin, the materiality of portrait photographs of this period is distinguished by an 'absence of contact between actuality and photography', which produces a lasting impression. 'The procedure itself', writes Benjamin, 'caused the subject to focus his life in the moment rather than hurrying past it' such that 'the very creases in people's clothes' have 'an air of permanence about them'.<sup>31</sup>

The occasion of a relatively long exposure out of doors was still necessary for an amateur such as Carroll beginning photography in the 1850s. Moreover, part of the quality of duration to which Benjamin refers comes also from a sense of the relative indiscriminate eye of the camera. During the time it takes for a subject to 'grow' into a photograph, for a photographic plate to capture a subject in context in the presence of a photographer, objects insinuate themselves into the frame that

were not consciously realized at the point of taking the photograph. For Barthes such a truism about photography is signified by the seeming randomness of what he calls the 'punctum', which, like Benjamin's earlier concept of the 'optical unconscious', signals a lack of discrimination on the part of the medium which is at the same time its ability to manifest the formerly unseen. Such a quality of arbitrariness does not pertain to painting, engraving or indeed writing, unless it is claimed as automatic, but in photography things get in the way that weren't seen at the point of taking. In its capture of a randomly present object with the same degree of faith as the most consciously staged one a photograph implicitly poses the question of how to visually determine the difference between the two.

One of Carroll's early photographs, 'Alice Liddell Sleeping' of 1860, impresses the incongruity of the child's pose with an outdoor environment that the photographer has done his best to mask (see Illustration 8.5). As in many outdoor photographs of the period, necessary to ensure tolerable exposure times but set up to give the appearance of



*Illustration 8.5* 'Alice Liddell (sleeping)' 1860. Morris L. Parrish Collection. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Library.

interiors, Carroll's portrait taken in the deanery garden achieves discordance. The canvas backdrop fails to accommodate the whole frame and the viewer is left to speculate upon what might lie at the edges and, by extension, beyond the border of the image. A fully dressed child posed as if asleep might look awkward in many outside contexts, but here that awkwardness is exaggerated by those attempts to disguise it. The gravel in the foreground with its relatively high degree of focus, those stray chippings set against the blanket beneath the figure, impresses the height of the photographer's point of view and contributes to the overall disjunction of the piece.

Yet such dissonance generated from the conjunction of a precious object with stray detail does not disappear from Carroll's photographs once he need no longer go outdoors and may enjoy the favourable conditions of his purpose-built studio. Carroll's fascination from the first with dressing up children for photography was realized more intensely in this later period. As he continued to create characters in the studio through photographic masquerade he simultaneously inhabited personae through identification. Such personae also populated his personal writings, especially the letters to childfriends in which he becomes, for example, the wronged lover berating his mistress, the fickle suitor disregarding a forgotten tryst or the avuncular figure offering measured advice. Present in the dressed-up child portrait is an additional order of metamorphosis from that contained in more straightforward portraits of children. For, in addition to their assault on temporality, Carroll's photographs of masquerading children bring to the fore that sense of incipience, what Levinas has referred to in painting as a type of 'presentiment of fate' in the image.<sup>32</sup> While the photographs of 'Xie as a China Man' 'On' and 'Off' duty overtly produce a narrative element across and between the images, other portraits discretely deliver a sense of metamorphosis, as harboured or arrested in the temporal fluctuation of the unitary image. The paradox of the instant petrified by the agency of photography is that it harbours metamorphosis – in the transition from one thing to another – in a temporal form.

Carroll played upon those ways in which photographs inflect a provocative relationship between time, duration and memory. Part of his fascination for the medium remained in that peculiar sense of prophecy that returns photographs to their legacy in magic. I have discussed elsewhere such haunting power of prophecy in Carroll's 'The Tennysons and the Marshalls' of 1857, that shows the poet, Alfred Tennyson, cradling his five-year-old son, Hallam.<sup>33</sup> But such a quality



is not unique to this photograph. Many of Carroll's later images of the 1870s insist upon a similar type of presentiment but they also bring to the fore a differently heightened condition of disjunction.

On this day of 14 July 1873, before taking her to the bell tower, Carroll had shown Xie Kitchin the photograph he had made the month before in which she stands dressed as a Greek.<sup>34</sup> In so doing Carroll shared the child's delight in seeing herself as a different identity; such pleasure represented part of the huge fascination for him of bringing together time and time again the child and the photographic likeness. In looking at that photograph, however, I doubt either of them reflected upon the persistence of those patches of sunlight on the wall to the left of the child figure. After all, the marks of light were extraneous to the event of dressing up and to the identity of the 'Greek' herself. Nonetheless, those three bars of sunlight that indicate the direction of light from the window register a quality of duration in the sense of the medium possessing an indiscriminate agency beyond the control of the photographer. The bars of light (four of them on this occasion) appear in a different position, higher up and more pronounced in the photograph of 'Hugh and Xie' taken on 19 April 1873. Such detail perhaps does not have the same effect as those more overt ones, such as the tatty carpet and its conspicuous absent square, in portraits of Xie Kitchin as 'Penelope Boothby' and 'Playing the Violin', in which it is the apparently insistent disregard for the depicted space surrounding the figure that conveys dissonance. Nevertheless, each of these examples contains a similar sense of 'presentiment of fate'. While appearing to elude the control of the photographer, this quality demands simultaneously that Carroll bring together time and again the figure of the little girl and the camera.

It is almost five o'clock now on that afternoon. But that Christ Church bell is striking nine – there must be some symbolic logic to its sequence. To hear, as in this instance, a bell sounding the wrong hour, is perhaps of no more consequence than finding a dormouse in a teapot or treacle down a well. Except this is real life and not a work of fiction. Xie Kitchin was not the first little girl to strike the great bell, nor would she be the last. And for Carroll it was not only photographic repetition that provided comfort. As she prepares to descend the stairs of the belfry, Xie Kitchin is planning to ask Carroll when she might pose for him as a princess. Little does she know that he has anticipated her in that role, and in a scene from *Saint George and the Dragon* in which all is subordinate to her presence. Not only that, but Carroll has already inhabited a future in which Xie has outgrown the frame. No doubt when,

in six years' time, she receives an affectionate letter about not growing too big to be photographed ('Please don't grow any taller', he writes), she will enjoy Carroll's accompanying sketch displaying the enduring joke about photography's chopping off heads. As a 15-year-old on the cusp of majority the joke about photography and metamorphosis will not be lost upon her. But it is also a joke that Lewis Carroll photographer will never outgrow.

## Notes

1. For a detailed discussion of Carroll's attitude to issues of consent see Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 97–101.
2. Letter to Mary MacDonald, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Morton N. Cohen (London: Macmillan, 1979), vol.1, p. 176.
3. Henry George Liddell succeeded Thomas Gaisford as Dean of Christchurch in June 1855. Previously Head of Westminster School, Liddell was a Liberal who, in partnership with Robert Scott, had published a highly significant Greek lexicon, a standard work for many years. He married Lorina Reeve in 1846 and they had seven children (six surviving infancy) growing up at the deanery. First of all Harry and subsequently Lorina, Alice and Edith were Carroll's principal photographic models.
4. Diary entry for 24 April 1873, *Lewis Carroll's Diaries: The Private Journals of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson*, ed. Edward Wakeling (Lewis Carroll Society, 2001), vol. 6, p. 274.
5. Alice and Ida Mason were aged seven and five respectively, Carry Mason's dates are unknown; Julia Arnold was eleven, her sister Ethel seven; Xie Kitchin was nine and her brother George Herbert was eight; the dates of Lily Bruce, Miss Ward and Miss Jones are all unknown; Margaret and Frederica Morell were five and six respectively; Isobel Fane's dates are unknown; Beatrice Hatch was seven and her sister Ethel four. Maud and Isabel Standen were sixteen and fourteen respectively, while their sister Helen was nine. The photographs that Carroll records having taken of Frederica Morell, Isabel Fane and Miss Ward have not come to light.
6. There exist various theories about Carroll's decision to give up photography, but critical debate falls broadly into two camps: those who believe he gave up the medium owing to mounting gossip about his unorthodox relationships with 'girls' and their visits to his lodgings in 7 Lushington Road Eastbourne; and those of the school of aesthetic reasoning who believe Carroll could not face attempting to learn the new dry-plate photographic practice that had come into fashion. This latter seems both an unlikely and also an unnecessary assumption since there would have been nothing to prevent him from continuing to use the wet collodion process at which he had become so adept. The former interpretation, while perhaps more plausible, does not explain the suddenness of his decision since for a long time Carroll had been

- subject to gossip. It is important to note that there exists no evidence to suggest that he did give up photography entirely at this point but neither are there recorded instances of his taking photographs after 1880. The diary entry for 15 July 1880 is the last reference to his taking a photograph.
7. See Roger Taylor, '“All in the Golden Afternoon”: the Photographs of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson', in *Lewis Carroll Photographer: the Princeton University Library Albums* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 61–4.
  8. I have dealt elsewhere with Carroll's interest in the diminutive size of the child – diminutive, that is, in relationship to adult physical proportions. But he was also fascinated by depictions of little girls in the visual arts (one of Sophie Anderson's paintings hung above his mantel at Christ Church) and by child actors on the stage. However, photography held a special fascination as a medium that he could control and from which he could generate copies.
  9. *Lewis Carroll's Diaries*, ed. Edward Wakeling (Lewis Carroll Society, 2001), 9 vols.
  10. In Karoline Leach, *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: a New Understanding of Lewis Carroll* (London: Peter Owen, 1999), pp. 50–3.
  11. *Ibid.*, chapters 5 and 6, pp. 161–218.
  12. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–3.
  13. 'Photography Extraordinary', *Misch-Masch* No 13, 3 November 1855, reprinted in Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll Photographer* (London: Max Parrish & Co., 1949), pp. 106–8, p. 106.
  14. 'A Photographer's Day Out', *The South Shields Amateur Magazine*, 1860; reprinted in Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll Photographer*, pp. 116–20.
  15. 'Hiawatha's Photographing', first published in *The Train*, December 1857, republished in *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869) and in *Rhyme? And Reason?* (1883). Reprinted in Gernsheim pp. 109–112.
  16. Fragment of a letter, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll* ed. Morton N. Cohen (London: Macmillan, 1979), vol. 1, p. 446 note. For Carroll's reluctance to give to others his photograph, see also letter to F.H. Atkinson December 10 1881, p. 446: 'I so much *hate* the idea of strangers being able to know me by sight that I refuse to give my photo, even for the albums of relations.' As on other occasions he here offers to give his latest book in place of his image.
  17. The first and only time that Carroll exhibited his photographs was at the Fifth Annual Exhibition of the Photographic Society at the South Kensington Museum in 1858. They were his photograph 'Little Red Riding Hood' (exhibit 174), a portrait of Agnes Grace Weld, the daughter of Emily Tennyson's sister, taken on 18 August 1857, and three unidentified portraits. See Roger Taylor and Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll Photographer: the Princeton University Library Albums* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 48.
  18. Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), chapter 5, pp. 95–110.
  19. Letter to Anne Isabella Thackeray, 23 January 1872, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Morton N. Cohen (London: Macmillan, 1979), vol. 1. p. 171.
  20. Entry for 4 September 1888, *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll* ed. Roger Lancelyn Green, 2 vols, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954) vol. 2, p. 464.
  21. *Lewis Carroll's Diaries*, ed. Edward Wakeling, vol. 4, pp. 178–81.

22. Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 240–57, p. 243.
23. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
24. Benjamin, 'A Small History', p. 247.
25. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 14.
26. U.C. Knoeflmacher, *Ventures into Childland: Victorians, Fairy Tales, and Femininity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); James Kincaid, *Child Loving: the Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992); Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: the Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
27. Robson, *Men in Wonderland*.
28. *Lewis Carroll's Diaries*, ed. Edward Wakeling, vol. 7, pp. 175–6.
29. Morten N. Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: a Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1995) p. 151
30. Benjamin, 'A Small History', p. 247.
31. Ibid.
32. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Reality and its Shadow', *Les Temps Modernes*, 38 (1948), 771–89. Reprinted in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, ed. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff), 1987, pp. 1–13.
33. Lindsay Smith, 'Lewis Carroll: Stammering, Photography and the Voice of Infancy', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 3(1): 95–105.
34. Diary entry for 12 June 1873, *Lewis Carroll's Diaries*, vol. 6, p. 279.

## Lawrence Gasquet responds

Lindsay Smith has described with much accuracy the constancy and earnestness which prompted Carroll to photograph his childfriends for a long period in his life, from 1856 to 1880. It seems that his eagerness to take on photography as a serious activity stems in part from his disappointment with himself in matters of sketching abilities; Charles Dodgson admits on several occasions to not being much of a painter, hence the almost natural step of taking up photography as a hobby.<sup>1</sup> However, I would like to follow the path opened up by Lindsay and examine a little further the relationship that bound Carroll to photography and children. The usual insertion of his photographs in the standard biographies to illustrate what then becomes 'the writer's hobby' commonly leads critics to consider Carroll's photography as either accessory, or (because it was kept in the private sphere, aside from his public occupations at least) secret and shameful. I think these two interpretations are probably both erroneous: whoever becomes interested in the history of photography, or in the history of photographic practices, knows that although Dodgson first took up photography as a diversion from his mathematical work, it rapidly evolved into something much more meaningful, both for him and for scholars. His diaries testify to the expense and technical difficulty of the undertaking, and to the sincerity of his ambitions for it.<sup>2</sup> The unexpected success of the *Alices* afforded Dodgson a financial independence that enabled him to return to photography, allowing him to indulge in a more private vision, most often staging children, with less concern than before for market opinion. In a period of 24 years, Dodgson generated about 3,000 negatives, preserving his best images in a set of circulating albums. He became a renowned figure in photographic circles; therefore, Douglas Nickel is certainly right to claim that if we wish to make a case for Dodgson as a visual artist, we first have to engage his images as if they were not known to be the production of a household name, to show, paradoxically enough, that the photographs have artistic merit in spite of the renown of their maker: 'they must not be prejudged as keepsakes, the by-products of a writer's hobby, but as the serious expression of an innovator demonstrably committed to his medium and the world of pictures'.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis Carroll is well known for his rather exclusive passion for photographing children, especially little girls; the nature of his photography indeed seems to lend itself to some theoretical views likening the photographed subject to a prey, and thereby the photographer to a hunter

giving free rein to his intimate and unconscious urges. Here is what Michel Tournier writes as regards the scopical desire of the photographer: 'Photography considerably shortens the distance between the model and the photographer. The creative value of this kind of image also shrinks then, but its erotic efficacy increases. To possess the photograph of the desired being is a great satisfaction, but to take this picture oneself, to be able to "make" it, to "take" this picture as you would "take" the desired body is even better.'<sup>4</sup> Indeed, one might see in Lewis Carroll's pictures some of the first examples ever recorded of the erotic resources of photography, as many critics have endeavoured to point out. Helmut Gernsheim was one of the first critics to acknowledge in the 1970s the possible sexual overtones of his photographs (in fact he was the first to unearth the pictures of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), qualifying his choice of costume for children (costumes of 'Chinamen', 'Turks', 'Greeks', etc.) as 'errors of taste', to be opposed to the 'real gems' obtained with naked children posing for him.<sup>5</sup> From all the details we know from his letters and diaries, there is, however, no question that Dodgson's behaviour was perfectly respectful and appropriate towards his child sitters. For example, a letter to his illustrator Gertrude Thompson bears witness to his delicacy in this matter: 'If I had the loveliest child in the world, to draw or photograph, and found she had a modest shrinking (however slight, and however easily overcome) from being taken nude, I should feel it was a solemn duty owed to God to drop the request altogether'.<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary criticism, however, has focused almost exclusively on the disturbing power of the arrangements of the children's bodies which were placed in front of Dodgson's lens: we encounter studies which range from little girls seen as classical nymphets or sleeping beauties, references to the classical tradition of the *odalisque* as object of the voyeuristic male gaze, or plain accusations of paedophilia, all of these interpretations remaining in the regime of what Michael Wetzel calls 'the connotative iconography'.<sup>7</sup> For Wetzel, the Victorian child-woman turns into the woman-child via the lens, becoming the fair sex which is then miniaturized, but remains a *simulacrum*, a virtual image only. The role of the image is to reveal the woman who can already be guessed at in the child, but just as an allusion, a mere fancy, in this instant of epiphanic beauty where the child is not a child any more but not yet a woman. Brassai wrote that 'it was never such or such little girl whom Carroll loved, but, through her, some fugitive and transient state, this ephemeral moment of dawn which exists only between night and day'.<sup>8</sup> All of Carroll's child-friends can then be regarded as the exclusive

media through which he could retain this transient moment of life, and through which he could keep the freshness and inventiveness of spirit that characterizes him so well. Photography can be seen as giving him literal access to children, while metaphorically allowing his eyes to rest upon the forbidden object of his possible desire. However, if one chooses to view his work merely as the product of a sexual inclination, one forgets that to entertain a special interest in young females was at the time very ordinary indeed, as some Victorian experts have shown in illuminating articles.<sup>9</sup> It seems rather unreasonable that posterity should have focused almost exclusively on the very aspect that appealed to Nabokov, for example, contributing to the building of the myth denouncing Carroll as a vile Humbert Humbert.<sup>10</sup> It is fairly sensible to side with Bram Dijkstra when he remarks that at the end of the nineteenth century, many artists chose to represent children to exorcise their fear of the potentially threatening sexuality of the mature woman; an increasingly anti-feminine concept of women became popular after the introduction of theories of evolution, which may explain the fear of this adult woman-figure, and Carroll's predilection for children.<sup>11</sup> That is why I completely share Lindsay Smith's opinion when she states that we would be guilty of oversimplification if we narrowed the impact of Carroll's photography of children due to a so-called "'natural" connection between artistic medium and eminently photographable objects', and indeed it may seem more promising to focus on the implications entailed by the very nature of the photographic medium, beyond easy conclusions and tempting appearances.

Dodgson was first and foremost a portraitist; he never really indulged in the Victorian craze of serious tableaux-vivants,<sup>12</sup> with the exception of a handful of pictures which are quite remarkable in that they can be considered as *mock* tableaux-vivants, mere sketches of them enacted for fun. These embryonic tableaux do possess an irresistible charm for their very *lack* of perfection, for their *auto-referential dimension*, and they all feature children: thus, Dodgson's little St George hasn't slain much of a dragon, in spite of the impressive dimension of his sword;<sup>13</sup> the ghosts peopling some of his dreams seem indeed congenial,<sup>14</sup> and the rare special effects he uses in his pictures appear so obvious that they become all the more charming. These odd and sketchy pictures are quite remarkable in Carroll's practice because they reveal his differences as regards a majority of his Victorian fellow-photographers: his aim is not to make his spectators guess the intended subject from schematic props and perfect costumes, as was the point of tableaux-vivants, but to approximate theatrical living pictures without ever masking the personality of

his models, be they male or female. The set of popular or allegorical figures that inspire Dodgson is not outstandingly original, being part of the common pool of Victorian imagery. Even perhaps the most famous of all the pictures taken by Dodgson, namely Alice as a beggar-maid, must be considered in this light. In fact, this picture was one of a pair, created in the fashion of Rejlander's photographic diptychs.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the notoriety of the photograph ensures that it is invariably displayed alone, removed from its original context, thus favouring bold sexual hypotheses as regards his relationship to Alice. Like Rejlander's *genre* studies, it is likely that Dodgson conceived the pair to be seen as the two sides of the same subject, to contrast a demure girl of good breeding with a ragged beggar girl whose knowing look and wayward stance were purposely contrived to obtain alms from willing pockets. Beyond the alleged transmutation of Alice Liddell into a temptress, there was simply an attempt at staging allegorical figures in common fashion. The thing is that Alice Liddell's uncommon beauty is enhanced by the provocative posture and her natural photogeny, and this certainly reveals also the mastery of the photographer. What is sometimes slightly odd is his choice of settings and his composition.

Lindsay Smith has underlined how bare Dodgson's settings sometimes were, as if he wanted to emphasize the intrinsic qualities of his subjects. She has noted in her study of women and children in the nineteenth century<sup>16</sup> how several Victorian photographers like Hawarden or Cameron carefully contextualize their figures in order to load them with meaning; by comparison, Dodgson seems to have disregarded any *contextualization* of his pictured subjects. I can only agree with Lindsay Smith that in many pictorial instances Dodgson does not seem to be interested in sustaining any fictional frame, the person (in most cases, a child) captured seeming self-sufficient. Knowing how fussy he was in matters of illustration,<sup>17</sup> I cannot believe that he was blind to these defects, if we must call them so (today, to reveal the corner of a carpet or to underline the artificiality of the décor is delightfully post-modern). I think the terms that Lindsay used to qualify the effect produced by these seemingly accidental details are extremely well chosen: she speaks of 'discordance', 'dissonance', and 'disjunction'. My point is that these elements, disjunctive in the sense that they let us see clearly two disjointed worlds, the world of the photographed on the one hand, the 'real world' so to speak, and the world of the photographer on the other, a fictitious world, are actually quite precious since they reveal that what matters to Dodgson is paradoxically not so much the fictional contextualization of his subjects, but the personality of his child-sitter. In



Dodgson's photography, dissonance very quickly turns into originality, revealing in a postmodernistic fashion what lies behind the stage, and thus paradoxically drawing our attention to the photographed subject, who gains reality in the process. These 'insufficiently hidden' details to which Lindsay Smith alludes (for instance in the picture entitled 'Alice Liddell Feigning Sleep') jar in the picture, but their virtue paradoxically stems from their defects, so to speak. At stake here are the complex relationships between figure and background, *figura* and *locus*, as analysed by Georges Didi-Huberman in *Fra Angelico, Dissemblance et figuration*.<sup>18</sup> Signification precisely stems from the crossing between *figura* and *locus*, both mutually enriching the other in a complex way. Dodgson's discordances often underline the fact that the locus seems inescapable physically, but the very innocence, and usual playfulness of his sitters alleviates the weight of the settings, and reminds the spectator of the formidable power of photography, both as a spatio-temporal merger and also as it appeals powerfully to the experience and sensitivity of the spectator (this is the punctum described by Barthes).<sup>19</sup> The definition given by Didi-Huberman of the term *figura* is particularly enlightening in our perspective: 'the figure always lies between two things, two universes, two temporalities, two modes of signification. It lies between appearances and truth [...] it lies between the sensual perception (*schema*) and its contrary, the ideal form (*eidos*), even perhaps between what is formal and what is formless'.<sup>20</sup> This figure would then correspond to the transient state, both literal and metaphorical, of the child about to become an adult underlined by some critics when trying to explain his passion for children. Didi-Huberman states that the figure produces either *disfigured* truths, or *prefigured* ones; and one of its characteristics is its capacity to bind together present and future, because it only 'looks like what doesn't exist yet, but will exist later'.<sup>21</sup> This capacity to fashion time has been very deftly exposed by Lindsay Smith in her enlightening analysis of the Tennyson family picture; the *figura* then casts the shadow of things to come. The capacity of the *figura* to produce a paradoxically *disfigured* truth – a deformation of reality entailed by fantasy, for instance – or a *prefigured* truth – all the portraits of his childfriends where one cannot but see what they will look like in the future – characterizes Dodgson's photography very well. The *figura* is basically the element that sets signs into motion, that displaces things: just as, in the picture of Alice feigning to sleep, the hung drapery emphasizes the act of feigning, as well as it refers to the natural capacity of the picture to lie; things are displaced because they lie, whereas usually photographic images are said to work primarily with

verisimilitude and resemblance because of their being imprints of light. I think this is exactly why Dodgson's pictures are still so meaningful and appealing: in fact, they never exhaust either our interpretation or the potentialities of their own medium, and their richness lies specifically in the impression of discordance they rarely fail to trigger in the spectator. In some other pictures the discordant elements paradoxically emphasize the harmony of the global picture, as well as the ingenuousness of the children. This *mise-en-scène* appears in full light as a pretext for the photographer to get a perfect picture, and not only to save appearances of decorum, as some critics have interpreted it. Discordance thus becomes the necessary key to harmony, as a valuable and fragmented counterpoint that gets included in the final production, thus revealing the perfect poise of featured elements. The pictures that disclose the true dynamics of his vision, however, are the pictures of his child friends, not those of his acquaintances, and only those are able to trigger the charm that operates as soon as the eye of the beholder perceives them.

## Notes

1. For instance, see Florence Becker Lennon, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Cassel & Co, 1947); Anne Clark, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (London: Dent, 1979); Morton N. Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: Interviews and Recollections* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Morton N. Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1898); Jean Gattegno, *Lewis Carroll, Une Vie* (Paris: Seuil, 1974); or Derek Hudson, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Constable, 1976).
2. As Douglas Nickel emphasized in the exhibition catalogue of the San Francisco MOMA, the camera immediately became a virtual passport for Dodgson, allowing him a particular kind of circulation and an excuse for meeting persons of high station. He exchanged information with the leading practitioners of photography in Victorian England (including Rejlander, Cameron, Peach Robinson), published a review of one photographic exhibition, and by 1860 was distributing his own list of 159 photographs for sale (no doubt to cover the cost of what was still an extremely expensive activity). See Douglas Nickel, *Dreaming in Pictures: The Photography of Lewis Carroll* (San Francisco: San Francisco MOMA, Yale University Press, 2002), p. 12.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Michel Tournier, 'L'image érotique', *Petites proses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 153. Our translation from the French.
5. Helmut Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll Photographer* (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 21.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Michael Wetzel, 'The Photographic Force of Fantasy: Lewis Carroll and Barthes', in Michel Morel (ed.), *Lewis Carroll, jeux et enjeux critiques* (Nancy:

- Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2003). See also by the same author 'De nouvelles madones à inventer: Alice dans la chambre claire', in Jean-Jacques Lecercle (ed.), *Alice* (Paris: Autrement, 1998).
8. Brassai, 'Lewis Carroll photographe ou l'autre côté du miroir', in *Cahiers de l'Herne Lewis Carroll* (Paris: L'Herne, 1987). Our translation.
  9. On this subject, see for instance Hugues Lebaillly, 'Charles Lutwidge Dodgson et la pédolâtrie victorienne: ébauche de contextualisation d'une fascination prétendument idiosyncrasique', in Michel Morel (ed.), *Lewis Carroll, jeux et enjeux critiques* (Nancy, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2003).
  10. 'I have always been very fond of Carroll... He has a pathetic affinity with Humbert Humbert but some odd scruple prevented me from alluding in *Lolita* to his perversion and to those ambiguous photographs he took in dim rooms. He got away with it, as so many other Victorians got away with pederasty or nympholepsy. His were sad scrawny little nymphets, bedraggled and half-dressed, or rather semi-undraped, as if participating in some dusty and dreadful charade.' Vladimir Nabokov interviewed by Alfred Appel, Sept. 1996, in *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, 8(2) (Spring 1967): 143.
  11. For more details, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of the Feminine in Fin-de-Siecle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
  12. On this subject, see Quentin Bageac, *Tableaux vivants: fantaisies photographiques victorienes (1840-1880)* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1999); or Michael Bartram, *The Pre-Raphaelite Camera: Aspects of Victorian Photography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).
  13. Lewis Carroll, 'St. George and the Dragon', 1875; see also 'The Fair Rosamond', 1863. An exhaustive list of Carroll's pictures can be found in the admirable compilation by Roger Taylor and Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll, Photographer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
  14. Lewis Carroll, 'The Dream', ca. 1860.
  15. Taylor and Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll Photographer*. 'Alice Liddell as a Beggar-Maid' and 'Alice Liddell dressed in her Best Outfit', 1858. For more details, see Toshiro Nakajima's article in Lawrence Gasquet, Sophie Marret, Pascale Renaud-Grosbras (eds), *Lewis Carroll et les mythologies de l'enfance* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), pp. 195-203.
  16. Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).
  17. For a historical presentation of the collaboration between Carroll and his literary illustrators, for instance in the biography by Morton Cohen, *op. cit.*
  18. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico, Dissemblance & Figuration* (1990) (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), pp. 31, 49.
  19. Roland Barthes, *La Chambre Claire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980); translated as *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
  20. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico, Dissemblance & Figuration*, p. 96.
  21. Ibid.

# 9

## Victorian Girlhood: Eroticizing the Maternal, Maternalizing the Erotic: Same-Sex Relations between Girls, c. 1880–1920

*Alison Hennegan*

For many of the remarks which I have to make regarding true inversion in women I am not able to bring forward the justificatory individual instances. I possess a considerable amount of information, but [...] this information is more or less fragmentary, and I am not always free to use it.<sup>1</sup>

Havelock Ellis's cautionary statement, which forms the epigraph of this chapter and which appeared in the first 1897 edition of *Sexual Inversion*, will strike a chord with anyone who works on sexuality in the mid-late Victorian period. All of us who work on sexuality and childhood are familiar with certain well-rehearsed difficulties: problems of definition; slipperiness of terms; the absence or scarcity of 'evidence' of desires and deeds. The period's silences and ambiguities contrast sharply with the candour of, say, the early eighteenth century or the explicitness of the late twentieth.

When we turn to 'deviant' sexuality, even more problems arise: either total silence or the instant pathologizing of deeds which come within the remit of the judicial system, available to us only through police court records, trial transcripts, and newspaper reporting. So, for example, the extensive coverage of Oscar Wilde's 1895 trial, for homosexual actions recently criminalized in 1885, caused the supposedly 'unspeakable' to erupt violently into the public domain. As some observed at the time, even if male homosexuals were subject to 'the love that dare not speak its name', much of the world seemed able to speak of little else.

Yet, despite the skewed context of public awareness of male homosexuality, its criminal status did at least ensure that the phenomenon

was to some extent recognized and available for discussion, however biased and ill informed that discussion might be. Girls and women passionately drawn to their own sex inhabited a far more ambiguous position, an ambiguity exacerbated by uncertainties and inconsistencies about when girlhood ended and womanhood began. At 17, for example, one might be a married woman with a child, or still in the schoolroom, wearing the pigtails and calf-length skirts which denoted the girl who had not yet 'come out' to take her place in adult society. Age alone does not dictate one's status as a girl or woman. Experience, responsibility, authority, paid work (or lack of them) may also be decisive factors. I shall be exploring some of these complexities later in this chapter: for the moment, suffice it to say that as a rule of thumb, and for the purposes of this chapter, girlhood is generally deemed to end with schooldays, which, for middle-class girls, happens at roughly 16–17 years of age. (Issues of class, of course, complicate the question even further.) Homosexual relations between females, whatever their age, were not criminalized in the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act (although there is absolutely no basis for the widespread legend that women were exempted from its terms because no one fancied the task of explaining lesbian possibilities to Queen Victoria). So girls and women were safe and free, in the sense that the development of their emotional relationships with other girls and women was not bounded by the fear and threat of criminality. Yet simultaneously they suffered from both a surfeit and a lack of information about some of the possibilities and meanings of love between women.<sup>2</sup>

From the 1830s onwards, European poetry and fiction abounded with portraits of 'lesbians', virtually all of them created by male authors, many of whom regarded their creations with a mixture of desire and loathing, admiration, contempt and fear. From Théophile Gautier's lovingly portrayed *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1833), to Henry James's unaffectionate vision of Olive Chancellor in *The Bostonians* (1886), via Baudelaire's *Femmes damnées* (1857), Sheridan LeFanu's adolescent *Carmilla* (1872), Swinburne's Sappho, and a host of others, literature offered a gallery of 'deviant' women, troublingly compounded of contradictory qualities: the sexually insatiable and virginally cold, the parasitically clinging and formidably Amazonian, the androgynously slender and the languidly voluptuous, the coolly rational 'manly' woman and the neurasthenic.

Those literary 'lesbians' are easier for the reader to identify because they are already sexually mature. More youthful lesbians-in-the-making are harder to find, although Charles Dickens's extraordinary chapter,

'The History of a Self-Tormentor', in *Little Dorrit* (1857), offers us one such in the person of the terrifying but compelling Miss Wade who narrates her emotional development from childhood to maturity. Powerful though many of these literary representations are, they do not make comfortable or comforting reading for the woman or adolescent reader seeking a recognizable portrait of herself, her feelings and those of other girls and women like her.

For readers such as those, their difficulties were compounded by a curious shift that occurred during the nineteenth century whereby the comparative frankness with which earlier periods had acknowledged the possibility of desire between women began to give way to an official silencing of female sexuality itself, whatever its direction. As Emma Donoghue has demonstrated in her *Passions Between Women*, eighteenth-century books, pamphlets, medical writings, and anti-masturbation warnings regularly refer to the possibilities of sexual activity between girls, women and girls, and women.<sup>3</sup> That comparative openness of eighteenth-century writings, however hostile their tone may be, is a world away from the silences and obliquities of the next century.

In this discussion of same-sex relations between girls, c. 1880–1920, I want to consider how earlier, mid-nineteenth-century problems in acknowledging female desire in *any* area other than the maternal opens up an ambiguous emotional and physical 'safe space' in which passionate female same-sex relations can exist 'purely'. But I also want to argue that that very ambiguity, which could offer safety, could also become bewildering or even frightening in its instability. And, moreover, I want to suggest that those anxieties were compounded by uncertainty and constantly shifting boundaries about where girlhood ended and adult womanhood began. Because so many of those anxieties are best revealed through the difficulties that girls and women experienced in describing and interpreting their relations with other girls or women, I shall in the later part of this chapter examine closely a number of passages from memoirs, personal case histories, letters and journals. Many of the passages will be taken from Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (first published in 1897 and frequently revised and expanded thereafter). This work, with its mixture of synthesized secondary material, Ellis's own theories, and a generous proportion of anonymous, numbered first-hand accounts by contemporary 'inverts' (supposedly congenital homosexuals), constitutes a methodological nightmare; how is one to evaluate such a diverse and uneven body of material? The book's contents move between writing by medical 'experts' who nevertheless have recourse to much pseudo-science; individual testimonies, shaped by a variety of

ideological and personal agendas; and Ellis's own remarkably eclectic combination of literary, anthropological, historical, anecdotal, medical and scientific approaches. (He was himself one of that long line of literary physicians: it is to him that we owe the first modern editions of many Renaissance plays.) Despite the methodological problems it poses, *Sexual Inversion* unquestionably provides us with rare insights into the ways in which men and women of the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth understood and articulated the development of their own same-sex desires. These accounts were freely offered by men and women who believed Ellis's work to be part of a general struggle for greater openness, accuracy and tolerance towards those who deviated from an increasingly restricting sense of the normative. In many of them we shall see different linguistic codes developing in an effort to distinguish 'good' feelings and practices from 'bad'. What I hope to do in this chapter is to demonstrate the existence of the phenomenon for which I have coined the description 'eroticizing the maternal, maternalizing the erotic'.

All three of the main named elements of this chapter's title – girlhood, erotic, maternal – are hopelessly unstable within the period itself. 'Girlhood', for example. As I asked earlier, when does that end? Do we know? Two quick examples from the period indicate uncertainty in this area. The first, the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which criminalized male homosexuality almost as an afterthought, changed the age of female consent from 12, where it had been since Shakespeare's day, to 13, then, a little later, to 14, then 15, then, by the early years of the twentieth century, 16. If full heterosexual intercourse, and the capacity to say yes or no to it, marks female adulthood, then there seems to be an awful lot of confusion in this period about when that point is reached.<sup>4</sup>

And, second, in a rather different context, consider the target readership of *The Girl's Own Paper*, launched on 3 January 1880. From the very beginning, the editor worked on the (correct) assumption that regular readers would include young women of 19, and slightly older ones in their twenties and early thirties, as well as the many far younger readers, aged from six or so upwards. And there is no suggestion that those readers, or the editors, feel that those older readers take the magazine because they are engaged in some wistful nostalgia for their own girlhoods, now firmly ended. Moreover, the magazine's contents do not seem to be divided in a way which corrals or sections off parts of them for older (read 'adult') readers. In 1908, the then editor, novelist Flora Klickmann, transformed the magazine into *The Girl's Own Paper and Woman's Magazine*, making even clearer the presumed and

attested fluidity of readership. Clearly, the notion of 'girlhood' extended far beyond the years of adolescence and, conversely, perhaps, in some contexts the notion of womanhood began earlier.

What of the erotic? Is it the same as 'sexual', or not really? Do we always recognize it when we encounter it? Did those nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century girls and women recognize it? Or have words for it? In the heterosexual context in which that legislation of 1885 was framed, there is one very basic definition of 'real' physical sex – heterosexual intercourse. But in the larger world of all-female relations, 'sex' proves harder to define. Female sexuality and sexual response is notoriously – or gloriously, depending on your point of view – diffuse, less genitally fixated and defined and permitting a wide range of sensuous experience which sometimes is, and sometimes is not, deemed erotic or sexual.

Such considerations underpin a now familiar argument which maintains that the late nineteenth-century anxiety to endorse heterosexuality as the only possible mature and healthy form of sexual life did a great disservice to our understanding of female sexuality, which is an altogether more complex entity than can be easily contained within the binaries of healthy heterosexuality and pathological homosexuality.<sup>5</sup> Later in this chapter we shall encounter girls and women responding to the period's anxious efforts to distinguish between 'real permanent abnormality', 'temporary abnormality' and things which look like abnormality, but aren't really. Fertile ground for confusions and ambiguities exist here. And the maternal? It is certainly not confined to women who have borne children. But it is not necessarily confined to women, either: girls, it transpires, may be maternal.

There is also an implicit fourth, and equally unstable, category to consider: autobiography. My concern in this chapter is with 'real' girls, not fictional ones. When I was beginning to prepare this piece I found myself rejecting work after work because it was 'literary' – a poem or a piece of prose fiction. But the bulk of the works I had wanted to use, and have rejected, were heavily autobiographical. 'Real' adolescent girls, I suggest, may prove to be just one more category that can be seen to be more apparent than real. Those autobiographical, literary works are very often the fruit of years of reflection and mulling over by the authors; the earlier feelings and events recalled have been subjected to narrative shaping, to selection, emphases, foregroundings and careful omissions – all those things we mean by 'fiction'. But, as those who work on autobiography and biography proper have often suggested and



demonstrated, accounts of 'real' lives are also subjected to such shapings; they are 'fictive', if not fiction.

Finally, there is an additional difficulty – sexuality itself: sexuality, it might be argued, is a cradle-to-grave matter; adolescence is just one stage in an emerging story. Later in this chapter we shall encounter women who are describing their own youthful experiences. But when they wrote they already knew how that story had gone on to develop; they had the wisdom or burden of hindsight – and hindsight can both illuminate and distort. Historians of sexuality, especially of homosexuality, have suggested that when we tell the story of our own sexual lives we often make the events fit a narrative model, in accordance with the template that prevails in our own time.<sup>6</sup> Some of what were to become the most familiar templates for lesbian lives were being 'fixed' in the period this chapter addresses, and we shall see some of them emerging in some of the extracts we'll be considering. As we shall also see, the 'fit' between these templates and earlier ideas and models of female love was not always comfortable or convenient.

First, however, let us begin with a not very anxious or uncomfortable recollection from a woman well known to Victorianists not only for her pioneering trades union activism but also for an autobiography remarkable for its psychological detail and insight: Edith Simcox, who was born in 1844 and died in 1901. Here she recalls her earliest female affections. 'I was passionately and *spoonily* fond of my mother, and easily attached myself to older girls or women, if, as at school[,] intimacy was achieved in spite of my shyness' (My emphasis).<sup>7</sup> Note here the use of the slang, 'spoonily', a notion we would now associate with heterosexual courtship, being used here in an all-female, and mother–daughter, context. And note, too, how easily we slide from that 'spooniness' for her mother to 'older girls or women'. See also how the two categories of 'older girls' and 'women' seem to mark a distinction without much difference. Simcox seems to have no trouble with the implicit Mother as Lover trope, and in that she might be deemed typical of her mid-Victorian generation. I give you here the most celebrated – or notorious – formulation, made in 1862 by William Acton, one of the most famous and influential of Victorian medical men, and physician to Victoria herself: 'Love of home, children, and domestic duties are the only passions [the best wives and mothers] feel. As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved of his attention.'<sup>8</sup>

In Acton's dictum we see maternity as the only acceptable site of true female 'passion' for 'modest women', a 'safe domain', free from

the 'taint' and 'impurity' of sexual feeling. Maternity is, of course, very physical – pregnancy, birth itself, breastfeeding (and we are in a period when, once more, breastfeeding is a duty which responsible mothers of whatever class should be willing, if physically able, to undertake), bathing, dandling. Here, officially sanctioned by Acton and others, is a 'passionate maternity' which is supposedly capable of providing every emotional satisfaction and intensity any 'modest' or 'decent', 'healthy', ('normal') woman might desire or need. And, conversely, for the growing girl, approaching healthy womanhood, it often seems that the bonds between mother and daughter become the permitted site of the most desired and rewarding emotions: 'passions', indeed, in Acton's word.

Here, in Acton's formulation, we see just that confusion – or fusion – of the maternal and the erotic, the sensuous and the pure, which I'm trying to explore in the context of the same-sex relations of adolescent girls and women. This 'official' version of maternity as sexless, *à la* Acton, creates a 'safe space' in which the language of maternity may be used as a language of love between girls and women; it allows the most fervent expressions of love – whether verbal or physical – of the sort perfectly permitted, indeed almost required, in one version of the 'ideal' mother-daughter relationship.

'Motherhood' and 'daughterhood' need not, however, be confined to the literal blood ties of biological parent and child. As we shall see later, they prove eminently transferable to situations where a woman's relationship to a girl is one of responsibility, guardianship, nurture or education. In Edith Simcox's case the model also carried over into her adult life, providing (almost) a frame for her intense feelings for other women, and one in particular. We know how Edith felt about her mother, schoolmates, and some women because she tells us about it in her *Autobiography of a Shirt-Maker* which she said was to be 'A Monument to the Memory of George Eliot'.<sup>9</sup> Simcox passionately admired Eliot and was part of that circle of adoring women (most of them very much younger than the 36-year-old Edith) who worshipped at the feet of Eliot, and who constantly showered her with caresses and kisses, often calling her 'mother' the while. (They did, by the way, literally worship at her feet. There is much caressing and kissing of them.) They included unmarried women and young wives. The – unchilded – Eliot, it seems, tolerated, rather than enjoyed their attentions, but found Edith's intensity worrying, detecting, perhaps, that in Edith's feelings for her there was a tension between the acceptable face of the quasi-maternal and something which, for Eliot, was more disquieting.

A passage from Simcox's diary, written on 9 March 1880 but recalling an earlier event, reveals something of this. Just before the events described in this passage, Eliot had requested Edith to stay one afternoon after other guests had departed. Eliot had expressed, cautiously, some anxieties about Edith's intensities. The capital letter always used for 'She' when Simcox refers to Eliot is indicative of the God-like status she conferred upon the older woman.

She said – expressly what She has often before implied to my distress – that the love of man and woman must always be more and better than any other and bade me not wish to be wiser than 'God who made me' – in pious phrase ... Then she said perhaps it would shock me – she had never all her life cared very much for women – it must seem *monstrous* to me, – I said I had always known it ... I kissed her again and said I did not mind – if she did not mind having holes kissed in her cheek. – She said I gave her a very beautiful affection. – and then again, *She called me a silly child*, and I [original emphasis] asked if She would never say anything kind to me. I asked her to kiss me – *let a trembling lover tell of the intense consciousness of the first deliberate touch of the dear one's lips*. I returned the kiss to the lips that gave it and started to go – she waved me a farewell. (My emphasis)<sup>10</sup>

There is a struggle going on in this passage between two models of female love and affection. Eliot is seeking to contain Simcox's emotions verbally – 'beautiful affection' and 'silly child' – even though earlier discussion indicates that she knows full well that they're actually dealing with something which is threatening to break those boundaries, or to make too clear how they are anyway, not really fully containable.

Note, too, that Eliot is also perhaps able to have a form of joke with Simcox about this; she applies the word 'monstrous' to herself, when talking about her inability to enter into Simcox's own passionate feelings for women; those feelings so often described as 'monstrous' in some anti-lesbian writings, including nineteenth-century Continental ones. And note the word 'lover', as in 'let a trembling lover tell', used here, of course, in accordance with the period's conventions to mean 'one who loves' (rather than implying the fully sexual relationship we would expect the word to signify now), but still appropriating it from the language of heterosexual courtship. And see how that phrase, 'intense consciousness', conveys the intensity of the consciousness but not the nature of it – we do not know whether Simcox is referring to mind or body or both.

Those 'daughterly' manifestations of affection which Eliot found acceptable from other younger women took their assumed 'purity' from their apparently familial associations. They, like Acton's dictum quoted earlier, feed from and feed into that much documented Victorian sanctification of the Family, the Home, and Woman's place within both. (Eliot herself, of course, was, technically, not really a very good example of any of it, given that she was neither Wife nor Mother.)

Figuring the relations between Eliot and her admirers as those of Mother and Daughters makes possible Simcox's use of 'heterosexual' love language: it has been, so to speak, stripped of its 'impure' heterosexual connotations, but with no sacrifice of passion or intensity; because the quasi-mother-daughter bond not only permits but demands it (good daughters love their mother more than anybody else).

Just as the language of the mother-daughter bond is constantly used to describe other passionate bonds between women who do not share that biological connexion, so too the language of sisters is similarly used. (It might be argued that the rise of nineteenth-century feminism, with its insistence on 'sisterhood', is one of the factors helping, once again, to blur boundaries between literal family, domestic affections and something altogether more fluid.) Certainly, within the sanctioned and sanctified confines of familial relations, literal and metaphorical, a wide range of physical exchanges are permitted to girls and young women as an expression of their affection or even devotion: walking hand in hand; arm in arm; with arms entwined round waists; lots of hair brushing and other aspects of shared 'grooming'; many kisses, including mouth to mouth. Images of these things abound in drawings in magazines (especially those directed to girls and young women) but we also find them in photographs – and not only in fine art photographs such as those by Clementina Lady Hawarden, but also in family and friendship portrait photographs, 'real' photographs, so to speak, of groups and pairs of girls and women.<sup>11</sup> Verbal displays of intense affection are also commonplace, and sometimes, it seems, virtually required. The passionate language which the 36-year-old Edith Simcox used in description of, and in correspondence to, George Eliot finds many echoes in exchanges between girls, girls and women, and women. Girls regularly talk of 'falling in love' with other girls, feeling 'romantic sentiments' for each other, 'being enamoured' of other girls, feeling 'passionate' about them, experiencing 'ecstasy' in their presence, or 'delicious sensations' when touched by them; they describe 'idealizing and etherealizing [other girls] to an extravagant extent', 'gazing ardently' at them, and being 'strongly infatuated' with them. They speak of being 'a couple'.

Occasionally, they use the language of the marriage service in describing the nature of their commitment to each other. Some of these usages we shall encounter later in passages from memoirs or personal histories.

This superabundance of the language and manifestations of same-sex love is so frequently encountered in writings of the period as to seem part of what constitutes the period's norms for girlhood and young womanhood. Indeed, those of us who work on sexuality and manners in this period tend to spend a lot of time, when we're setting out in our studies, explaining to ourselves, or having it explained to us, that we mustn't 'read things into all this', 'it doesn't mean what we might think now' – and sometimes we even congratulate ourselves eventually on having become properly sophisticated in our refusal to bat an eyelid at some of the more extravagant instances of passionate female devotion. But we may often also see in the period itself an uneasy tension between approval and disquiet in other people's responses to such displays, whether physical or verbal. And, indeed, we find ambiguities and tensions expressed by the girls and young women themselves.

Consider the following passage in which a woman for whom other women were always the emotional centre of her life, looks back on the years from 13 to 19. It's written in the third person because she has given this account to Havelock Ellis. In it we shall constantly encounter language and events which to us may seem clearly erotic but did not necessarily seem so to the writer at the time.

Her earliest affection, at the age of 13, was for a schoolfellow, a graceful, coquettish girl with long golden hair and blue eyes. Her affection displayed itself in performing all sorts of small services for this girl, in constantly thinking about her, and in feeling *deliciously grateful* for the smallest return. At the age of 14 she had a similar *passion* for a girl cousin; she used to look forward with *ecstasy* to her visits, and especially to the rare occasions when the cousin slept with her; *her excitement was so great that she could not sleep, but there was no conscious sexual excitement*. At the age of 15 or 16 she fell in love with another cousin; her experiences with this girl were full of *delicious sensations*; if the cousin only touched her neck, *a thrill went through her body which she now regards as sexual*. Again, at 17, she had *an overwhelming, passionate fascination for a schoolfellow, a pretty, commonplace girl, whom she idealized and etherealized to an extravagant extent*. *This passion was so violent that her health was, to some extent, impaired; but it was purely unselfish, and there was nothing sexual in it*. On leaving school at the age of 19 she met a girl of about the same

age as herself, very womanly, but not much attracted to men. This girl became very much attached to her, and sought to gain her love. *After some time Miss H. was attracted by this love, partly from the sense of power it gave her, and an intimate relation grew up. This relation became vaguely physical. Miss H. taking the initiative, but her friend desiring such relations and taking great pleasure in them.* (My emphasis)<sup>12</sup>

If we pay this passage the same close attention that we might take to our reading of a poem or a piece of prose fiction, we shall see an array of ambiguities, slides in meanings, defensive protestations, apparent frankness but actual obscurity, and quite a lot of sheer confusion. So, for example, the use of the period's 'female' slang language of '*deliciously* grateful' and '*delicious* sensations', like other language we've already encountered, conveys intensity but no detail; the same is true of 'look[ing] forward with *ecstasy*'. The '*earliest affection*' of the first two sentences has moved effortlessly into '*a similar passion*' in the third, although one might question whether affection and passion are usually synonymous. At the close of the third sentence, the sexual is determinedly kept separate from an excitement great enough to keep her awake at night, because of her cousin's physical proximity to her in bed, '*Deliciously*' first appears in the second sentence, describing emotions felt during the period of the – supposedly – 'absolutely not sexual phase' of the girl's life: but a little later, in the fourth sentence, we have '*delicious sensations*' mentioned in conjunction with a '*thrill*' which the respondent '*now*' (at the time of writing) recognises as sexual.

With the phrase '*an overwhelming, passionate fascination*' we encounter a formulation very familiar to those who work in this area. '*Fascination*', often used to describe the power which one girl or woman attributes to another, usefully deflects responsibility for one's own emotional response: it was the fascinator who caused it, not the person who felt it. Interestingly, the girl for whom she felt the '*passionate fascination*' was '*pretty*' but '*commonplace*' (rather damning) – so it clearly wasn't great powers of intellect, outstanding personality or moral excellence which drew her. So what *was* the nature of the attraction? (A genuinely open question, rather than a cheap aside.)

We learn that the current female passion was '*so violent that her health was, to some extent, impaired*', although we are assured that '*it was purely unselfish, and there was nothing sexual in it*'. This is rather like the earlier disclaimer – '*her excitement was so great that she could not sleep, but there was no conscious sexual excitement*'. But that second disclaimer comes *after* the point at which some element of

sexuality had been recognized in the earlier exchanges with the cousin, when that 'thrill went through her body'. So was it the adolescent girl who judged that 'it was purely unselfish, and there was nothing sexual in it', or the older, sexually experienced woman recalling her younger, more unaware self? There is perhaps a tension between the firm assertion of the asexual nature of those early feelings and the determined vagueness with which the 'vaguely physical' later relationship is described.

Throughout this passage we have ambiguities about agency, about who is leading whom, who is initiating and who responding, who wants what from whom. So, for example, it was, apparently, the *other* woman who made the emotional running earlier (Miss H. calls her a 'girl', thereby underlining the instability of these categories); but it was Miss H. who wanted the 'vague' physicalities, although her friend seems to have enjoyed them more.

For the woman whose girlhood we have described here, other women were to remain the focus of her emotional life, and to be her partners in physical exchanges. But here is an account from another woman of which Ellis says he 'may quote as fairly typical [of those who will go on to be 'normal'] the following observation supplied by a lady who cannot be called inverted'.<sup>13</sup> It appears in both the 1897 and 1915 editions of *Sexual Inversion*.

Like so many other children and girls [this seems to be a distinction of age rather than gender] I was first taught self-indulgence by a girl at school, and I *passed on my knowledge to one or two others*, with one of whom I remember once, when we were just 16, *spending the night sensually*. We were horribly ashamed after, and that was the only time. When I was only 8 there was a girl of 13 who liked to play with my body, *and taught me to play with hers, though I rather disliked doing so*. We slept together, and this went on at intervals for six months. These things, *for the sake of getting enjoyment, and not with any passion, are not uncommon with children, but less common, I think than people sometimes imagine*. I believe I could recall without much difficulty, the number of times such things happened with me. In the case I mentioned when I did for one night feel – or try to excite in myself and girl-companion of 16 – sensual passion, *we had as little children slept together* a few times, *and done these things*, and after meeting after an absence, just at that age, *recalled our childish memories, and were carried away by sexual impulse. But I never felt any particular affection for her even at the time, nor she for me*. We only felt that our sensual nature

was strong at the time, and had betrayed us into something we were ashamed of, and, therefore, we avoided letting ourselves sleep too close after that day. *I think we disliked each other* and were revolted whenever we thought of that night, feeling that *each had degraded the other*.<sup>14</sup>

What a plethora of confusions, nonsequiturs and bewilderments there is here, all of them fascinating. The chronology of the narrative is confused and confusing. At first it seems that she was 16 or thereabouts when she first learnt and taught 'self-indulgence'. In fact, as we learn a little later, she was only eight, and, despite the fact that she 'rather' (but not 'greatly') disliked 'playing with' the other girl's body, she did it just the same – and kept on doing it for the next six months. Impelled by what? Curiosity? Inertia? Courtesy?

Throughout the passage we see sets of curious oppositions. Thus, sexual exploration is 'not uncommon with children, but less common, I think, than people sometimes imagine'. On the other hand, her experiences were like those of 'so many other children and girls'. So, were they common or weren't they? The word 'sensually' emerges as a scare word and seems to be set against 'enjoyment' which is itself apparently divorced from 'passion'. Does the distinction denote the contrast between a form of calm, 'rational' and undisquieting activity ('enjoyment') and a more troubling combination of physical activity and unwelcome emotional engagement ('passion')? Or is it a way of distinguishing between inorgasmic and orgasmic acts? And there is a battle going on over whether it's better or worse to like the person with whom you exchange physical enjoyment. Nor is it clear whether the two girls had always disliked each other and found it difficult to accept that liking or disliking need have little to do with the capacity to give and receive pleasure; or whether vague but pervasive guilt caused them to reconfigure their feelings after the event. There's a curious muddle going on in her description of her 'one night' of 'sensual passion' which causes such distress and happens because she and her partner remember their childhood physical exchanges (which were supposedly *not* about 'passion'), seek to repeat them, and are 'carried away by sexual impulse'. Does this mean that for reasons of physical maturation, the activities of childhood now have different outcomes, or does it blur the earlier insistence that 'real sex' played no part in the earlier childhood exchanges? Either way, there remains the same insistence that there was no emotional engagement between them, whether as children or as adolescents. Is it indeed the lack of 'passion' (feeling) which makes these activities so shameful



in recollection? Questions such as these recur constantly when we read these accounts and others like them. Whatever the truth of the matter, each girl, it seems, has decided that the other was responsible for it all ('feeling that each had degraded the other').

The authors of the previous two accounts found their partners amongst those of their own age. Others in this period found in the setting of school opportunities for relationships with both their peers and with those older – sometimes considerably older – than themselves. Part of the initial resistance to girls' secondary schools came from the belief that they would weaken the influence of home, and would expose girls from good homes to girls from bad ones. Where boarding schools, rather than day schools, were concerned, the anxieties were even greater and the risk of moral contamination or corruption much enhanced. This might remind us of the many late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century diatribes against the specifically lesbian immorality supposedly rampant in girls' schools – I think of the 'nastiness' against which Mary Wollstonecraft, herself briefly the proprietor of a girls school, inveighs;<sup>15</sup> or of the material made available to us, via court records, of the alleged goings-on in a rather celebrated school just outside Edinburgh in the first years of the nineteenth century, and on which Lillian Hellman based her updated version, *The Children's Hour*.<sup>16</sup>

Headteachers and teachers in girls' schools, particularly, became concerned; they sought to tread a difficult line between encouraging 'appropriately female' sympathies and tenderesses, whilst policing unwelcome manifestations. Many headteachers and mistresses developed what we might call a 'counter vocabulary' of the female affections, and sought to use the language of mockery or pathology to shame, humiliate or frighten girls out of degrees of emotion or emotional display deemed excessive. Such displays were called 'silliness', 'childish' or 'hysteria'. They were dubbed 'unwholesome', 'unhealthy' and we hear often of staff trying to 'stamp' it out. Although something of the power of these intense attachments seems to be recognised in the name given to them during the early years of the twentieth century – a G.P, or 'grand passion' – it's a mocking phrase: passionate love has been demoted to 'a crush', a passing phase, and the sooner passed, the better.

I said earlier that models of affection based on the mother–daughter dyad prove eminently transferable to situations where a woman's relationship to a girl is one of responsibility, guardianship, nurture or education: and the teacher–pupil bond is a prime example. The anxiety expressed by some teachers about schoolgirl friendships eventually becomes an anxiety expressed by others about teachers themselves. And

we see the emergence of something resembling a moral panic about this, with writers such as Clemence Dane and Marie Stopes, the High Priestess of Birth Control, expending much ink and emotion on the subject.<sup>17</sup> What we have in many of these accounts, I suggest, is the battle of the Mothers – the ‘biological’ mothers, who may not be so clever as the Girtonians and Newnhamites who teach their daughters, but who are Good; and the New Women graduates, who may be clever but who are also dangerous, dangerous, in part, *because* clever. Versions of this battle abound in early-twentieth-century fiction, whether we look to sensationalistic bestsellers, such as Clemence Dane’s *Regiment of Women* (1917), or to the classics of high Modernism: consider, for example, Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) in which war is waged between Clarissa Dalloway and the governess, Miss Kilman, as they battle for the affections of Clarissa’s daughter.<sup>18</sup>

We see also the emergence of the ‘teacher as lesbian vampire’, a trope which draws upon elements of the *fin-de-siècle* fascination with the more demonic aspects of the *femme fatale*.<sup>19</sup> One of the most memorably vampiric lesbian teachers is depicted in Clemence Dane’s *Regiment of Women*, a bestselling novel published during the First World War, and one which clearly resonated strongly for many people already distressed by changing attitudes to sexuality prompted, in part, by the challenges of the Women’s Movement and accelerated by the upheavals of the war. In Dane’s novel, her charismatic anti-heroine teacher, Clare Hartill, exerts enormous power over ‘her’ girls. One of them, a 13-year-old who has recently lost her mother and who is breezily ignored by her new stepmother, forms a passionate attachment to Clare and kills herself, by jumping from an upper window, when Clare rejects her. Here Clare is, in effect, a ‘bad mother’ twice over: firstly by displacing the anyway indifferent but legitimate stepmother; secondly by betraying and abandoning ‘her’ child.

Dane, anxious to establish that her fears were rooted in current realities, repeated her Terrible Warnings in newspaper articles and essays. Here, for example, in 1926, she inveighs against one particular danger:

‘Vampire’ women teachers. Such women do exist. It is to be hoped that they are rare; but they do exist. I have myself come across such types and I have been told, not by hysterical school-girls but by sober head-mistresses of many years’ experience, stories of such women. I quote one of them:

'I have known at least four of these vampire women in my own experience, and have heard of many others. Two belong to my school and college days, the other two to my days as head-mistress, and both have been sent packing. I am responsible for over eighty boarders, so you may imagine I feel pretty strongly about this sort of love-making.'

This is the attitude, I think, of nearly all of our head-mistresses: in fact, they so drastically disapprove that they often defeat their own excellent intentions. A principal of a school once told me that she considered the outcry upon this subject exaggerated, and that in all her experience she had never seen anything really disturbing. 'But, of course,' she said, 'when I see the beginning of any such silliness I suppress it at once. I don't give it chance. I stamp it out ruthlessly.'

I know she does. Yet I could have told her that one of the worst cases I ever came across did happen at her own school. There was one of those charming young women there, with nothing at all of the vampire in her nature, but who, nevertheless, had a disastrous effect upon her pupils. She over-excited them. There was at one time a 'craze' for her: that was a fashion, harmless enough on the whole. But with several girls, though few guessed it, it was more than a fashion. Long after the craze was over, in fact for nearly three years, they lived in an almost inconceivable state of tension and excitement and jealousy. One, certainly, was naturally hysterical, but the others were perfectly normal, pleasant girls: and I shall not easily forget the extreme resentment and bitterness with which one of them, some years later, spoke, not of the mistress concerned, but of the fact that she had been allowed to get into such a state, that it had been possible for her to be subjected to such an experience. She seemed to feel that her whole capacity for happiness and suffering had been blunted by it. She said – 'It was torment, and I only pray that I may never have to go through such a hell again.' This, let us remember, in a school where the head-mistress ruthlessly suppressed anything of the kind.<sup>20</sup>

Luridly overwrought though Dane's writings may seem to be, the fear and rage which inform them find echoes in contemporary paedagogic writing about and autobiographical writing by 'victims'. Here, for example, is another case history from the 1915 edition of Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*. This account was written by a woman who, as a child, had been sent to an extremely harsh girls' boarding school as a punishment for her 'boyish' ways, her lack of interest in 'feminine' pursuits, her desire for

'inappropriate' knowledge, such as Latin, and her general rebelliousness. She was 40 at the time of giving this account, a successful professional woman – profession unspecified. This would-be measured and objective account of turbulent events which occurred a quarter of a century earlier is, however, such a troubling mixture of pain, bewilderment, anger, and slightly queasy self-justification that I quote it in full.

*It is difficult to estimate sexual influences of which as a child I was practically unaware. I certainly admired the liveliest and cleverest girls and made friends with them and disliked the common, lumpy, uneducated type that made two-thirds of my companions. The lively girls liked me, and I made several nice friends whom I have kept ever since. One girl of about 15 took a violent liking for me and figuratively speaking licked the dust from my shoes. I would never take any notice of her. When I was nearly 16 one of my teachers began to notice me and be very kind to me. She was twenty years older than I was. She seemed to pity my loneliness and took me out for walks and sketching, and encouraged me to talk and think. It was the first time in my life that anyone had ever sympathized with me or tried to understand me and it was a beautiful thing to me. I felt like an orphan child who had suddenly acquired a mother, and through her I began to feel less antagonistic to grown people and to feel the first respect I had ever felt for what they said. She petted me into a state of comparative docility and made the other teachers like and trust me. My love for her was perfectly pure and I thought of hers as simply maternal. She never roused the least feeling in me that I can think of as sexual. I liked her to touch me and she sometimes held me in her arms or let me sit on her lap. At bedtime she used to come and say good-night and kiss me on the mouth. I think now that what she did was injudicious to a degree, and I wish I could believe it was as purely unselfish and kind as it seemed to me then. After I had left school I wrote to her and visited her during a few years. Once she wrote to me that if I could give her employment she would come and live with me. Once when she was ill with neurasthenia her friends asked me to go to the seaside with her. Here she behaved in an extraordinary way, becoming violently jealous over me with another elderly friend of mine who was there. I could hardly believe my senses and was so astonished and disgusted that I never went near her again. She also accused me of not being 'loyal' to her; to this day I have no idea what she meant. She then wrote and asked what was wrong between us, and I replied that after the words she had had with me my confidence in her was at an end. It gave me no particular pang as I had by this time outgrown the simple*

*gratitude of my childish days and not replaced it by any stronger feeling. All my life I have had the profoundest repugnance to having any 'words' with other women. (My emphases)*<sup>21</sup>

In this account we see, particularly clearly, versions of the maternal gone badly wrong. And, again, we can see confusions and misunderstandings on both sides; some passages are particularly slippery. So, for example, the teacher 'sometimes held me in her arms [teacher as the instigator] or let me sit on her lap' [pupil as instigator]. It is, perhaps, in this passage that we see especially clearly how difficult girls and women often find it to distinguish between the sexual and the 'purely' affectionate – 'She never roused the least feeling in me that I can think of as sexual. I liked her to touch me ...' And although at the time of writing this account, some 25 years later, the writer finds the teacher's actions 'injudicious to a degree', at the time of performing them they did not in any way transgress conduct the pupil would have expected from a mother. It may have been 'bad mothering' that this particular teacher offered 'an orphan child who had suddenly acquired a mother', but there is also something very chilling about the adult woman's account of her wholesale rejection of the older woman. This, after all, was the first person who had encouraged her 'to talk and think', the first 'who had ever sympathized with me or tried to understand me', and who had enabled her to engage with other adults. There is a strain of a child's ruthless egotism in the assertion that dismissing the older woman 'gave me no particular pang as I had by this time outgrown the simple gratitude of my childish days', and there is an element of a lady protesting too much in her claim that 'to this day I have no idea what [the older woman] meant' in accusing her of disloyalty.

And now, one last account. Not, this time, one written in the words of the main actor, but rare inasmuch as the events recorded were in the process of happening, albeit recorded later. It comes from an often-contested source – the 'sexual autobiography' of 'Walter', the still anonymous Victorian man who left a voluminous account of his 'Secret Life', and his innumerable dealings with prostitutes over several decades and three continents.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the incident recounted here is not one in which Walter's own often-questioned sexual prowess is in question; and the reporting of this vivid and unexpected incident in a Parisian brothel, probably at some point in the 1860s, is surprisingly neutral.

One night I went to see a woman and arrived just as she was having a row with a woman who was about forty-five years old. My girl came

into the room with me, but unable to contain herself, left me; and I opening the door, heard her and another lodger bullying the woman for getting quite a young girl into her bed. 'You old cat, you dirty slimy cunt-ed old bitch. – I'll tell them all.' She came back into the room with me and slammed the door. She was slightly screwed [i.e. drunk] and noisy. 'The old bitch gets Mary who's not fourteen years old into bed with her. – It's the little servant here – and pulls her about – Polly \*\*\*\*\* caught her at it, and the girl said she did.' 'Why does the girl let her?' 'Oh she's a dirty little bitch too.' 'Well, I pull *you* about and you *me*.' 'Oh that's quite different.' I told her I saw no harm in in two women doing what they liked to do.<sup>23</sup>

Here, in a possibly unexpected context, we seem to be being made privy to an unwanted exercise of quasi-maternal solicitude. A younger woman is being 'protected' by an older one from a still older woman, but is not, it seems, very grateful for it. Walter's prostitute may see herself as a righteous avenger coming to the rescue of youthful virtue in danger, but to the girl herself the intervention is interfering and unwelcome – something her would-be saviour belatedly realizes, and her attitude changes accordingly. The 'little servant' rapidly becomes 'a dirty little bitch'; Walter's mild suggestion that two women have as much right as a heterosexual couple to share sexual pleasure is rejected. It's true that this incident occurred in France, but had we been in England at that time, before 1885, the young 'girl' would have been legally a woman. Walter both refers to her as a 'girl' and includes her amongst the 'women' who, in his view, did 'no harm' in 'doing what they liked to do'.

As that last extract, like all the others addressed in this chapter, makes abundantly clear, the period I have been considering was a sometimes frighteningly confused and confusing one for young girls struggling to make sense of themselves and their world. In this chapter I have tried to identify and define my notion of 'eroticizing the maternal and maternalizing the erotic'. That exchange between the erotic and the maternal affects, as we have seen, the categorical boundaries within which we more orthodoxly discuss and define sex, sexuality, sexual identity and their various meanings. Those categorical boundaries, such as 'mother or lover', 'pure or sensuous', 'girl or woman', 'pre-sexual child or sexual adult' become blurred, or disappear, in a way which is simultaneously confusing and convenient for the girls and women struggling to identify their feelings, and to find appropriate language for them. Like Havelock Ellis more than a century ago, those of us who struggle now to make

sense of it wrestle, as he did, with gaps, reticences and suppressions, 'information . . . more or less fragmentary'.

## Notes

1. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume I: Sexual Inversion* (Watford: London University Press, 1897), pp. 86–7.
2. My own early efforts to disentangle some of these complexities may be found in Alison Hennegan, 'Here, Who Are You Calling A Lesbian?', in GayLeft Collective (ed.), *Homosexuality, Power and Politics* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980). The standard work on this general area is Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Junction Books, 1985). A book published after this piece was completed is Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women who Loved Women 1778–1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Useful essays are to be found in Lesbian History Group, *Not A Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History, 1840–1985* (London: The Women's Press, 1989).

An interesting exchange between two key figures in the period's sexual battles suggests just how hazy the definitions and significance of physical exchanges between women might be. W.T. Stead, the editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, was the man who in 1885 notoriously 'purchased' a 12-year-old girl from her parents, ostensibly for prostitution; he then wrote and published an article about it, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', to demonstrate how easily it could be done. Edward Carpenter was a highly influential writer, socialist activist, poet, and proto-Gay Rights apologist and campaigner. In a letter of 1895, written by Stead to Carpenter during the Wilde trials, Stead maintained that '[because] the law is utterly indifferent to any amount of indecent familiarity taking place between two women . . . many women give themselves up to this kind of thing without any consciousness of it being wrong.' Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 284, n. 47, quoting Joseph O. Baylen, 'Oscar Wilde Redivivus', *The University of Mississippi Studies in English* 6 (1965): 84.

3. Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture, 1668–1801* (London: Scarlet Press, 1993).
4. Standard accounts of this legislation usually state that the age of consent was raised from 12 to 16, but the truth is more complicated. Distinctions between rape and indecent assault prove less than transparent; and the 'lesser' offences of 'defilement', 'having carnal knowledge' and 'seeking carnal knowledge' are deemed offences only if committed against girls who are under 14 (just one year older than the pre-1885 age of consent). Elsewhere in the Act, the age of 16 is specified. For a useful digest of the law, its provisions and early implementation see Jennifer Payne, 'The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 and Sexual Assault on Minors' ([http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/7023/Consent.html#N\\_33\\_](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/7023/Consent.html#N_33_)). See also Ann Stafford, *The Age of Consent* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964).

For further discussion of the law's difficulties in determining the boundaries of girlhood and womanhood see Judith R. Walkowitz, chapter 4, '“The Maiden Tribute”: Cultural Consequences', *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992; London: Virago Press, 1992) and p. 284, n. 49. Walkowitz writes 'For reformers, “girlhood” was a stage in life marked by dependency but not by any specific psychosexual development. Accordingly, debates over the age of (heterosexual) consent rarely included reference to the actual sexual development of the girls to be protected. The age of consent was arbitrary; indeed many reformers wanted to raise it to eighteen, some to twenty-one.' Walkowitz also explores ways in which issues of class further complicated such debates.

5. One of the best-known pieces about the distorting effects of using male models of sexuality to discuss female, and specifically lesbian, sexuality is Sheila Jeffreys, 'Does it Matter If They Did it?', in Lesbian History Group, *Not A Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History, 1840–1985* (London: The Women's Press, 1989). See also Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies* (London: Pandora Press, 1985).
6. The personal case histories in the successive editions of *Sexual Inversion* (the first volume of Havelock Ellis's multi-volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*) are revealing here. In them, I would argue, men and women can be seen shaping their life stories in harmony with the period's emerging orthodoxies about 'inversion'.

'Sexual inversion', a period category which comes close to homosexuality but which is not entirely synonymous, was predicated on the assumption that those who desired their own sex had the soul of one sex trapped in the body of the other. Lesbians had the souls and intellects of men, uncomfortably housed in a female form. In this model of sexuality all desire is 'really' heterosexual (the lesbian, who is 'really' a man, 'naturally' desires women). The theory is most familiar to the West in Plato's playful but serious version of it, as articulated by the comic dramatist, Aristophanes, in the Socratic dialogue, *The Symposium*. During the nineteenth century, Plato's version, part metaphor, part cosmogony, reappears in new 'scientific' guise; doctors and the newly emerging sexologists work towards ever more prescriptive definitions of 'real' men and 'real' women. So, for example, they establish the 'correct' distribution of body fat, presence or absence of facial and body hair, length of leg, breadth of shoulders, size of buttocks which denote the 'real' man or woman. They are equally concerned to provide a sexual map of 'male' and 'female' temperament, intellect, and artistic creativity. Ellis's work, and that of other sexologists, was often a co-operative venture between the researchers and their human subjects. In Ellis's case studies, revised and expanded over decades, we can see the two-way traffic at work: subjects provide data, sexologists discern patterns, subjects begin to shape data in the patterns which are the joint creations of subjects and scientists. Modern homosexuals, too, it has been argued, often cast their life stories in what has come to be recognised as the 'proper' narrative shape for a gay life (an early sense of being 'different', the first experience of same-sex love, usually well before puberty, early rejection of 'gender-appropriate' play, etc.).



- See Kenneth Plummer (ed.), *The Making of the Modern Homosexual* (London: Hutchinson, 1981).
7. Edith Simcox, *The Autobiography of a Shirt-Maker*, ed. Constance M. Falmer and Margaret E. Barfield (New York and London: Garland, 1998), p. 234.
  8. William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, in Youth, in Adult Age, and in Advanced Life. Considered in their Physiological, Social and Psychological Relations*, 3rd edn (London, 1862), pp. 101–2.
  9. Simcox, *The Autobiography of a Shirt-Maker*.
  10. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
  11. For examples, see Graham Ovenden, ed., *Clementina Lady Hawarden* (London: Academy Editions; New York: St Martin's Press, 1974).
  12. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume I: Sexual Inversion*, p. 92
  13. *Ibid.*, pp. 85–6.
  14. *Ibid.*
  15. Mary Wollstonecraft's strictures against the nasty habits of girls in boarding-schools appear in her seventh chapter, 'Modesty. – Comprehensively Considered, and Not as a Sexual Virtue', *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Ed. Miriam Brody Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 234.
  16. For an account of the original case, see Lillian Faderman, *Scotch Verdict: Miss Pirie and Miss Woods v. Dame Cumming Gordon* (New York: Morrow, 1983). For a modern dramatic reworking see Lillian Hellman, *The Children's Hour* (1934), updated and filmed by William Wyler as *The Loudest Whisper* (1961), starring Audrey Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine.
  17. See, for example, Marie Stopes, *Sex and the Young: A Book for Parents and Teachers* (London: Putnam and Company, 1926), pp. 48–56 and Clemence Dane, *The Women's Side* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1926).
  18. Fictional examples of such anxieties at work, not always hostilely depicted, might include the following: Gertrude Stein, *Fernhurst, Q.E.D. and Other Early Writings* (London: Peter Owen, 1972); Radclyffe Hall, *The Unlit Lamp* (London: Cassell, 1924) and *The Well of Loneliness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928). For more detailed discussion of this area, see chapter IX of Jeanette H. Foster, *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (London: Frederick Muller, 1958). This work, one of the earliest on its subject, remains one of the best.
  19. See, for example, Patrick Bade, *Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women* (London: Ash and Grant, 1979) and Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
  20. See the chapter called 'A Problem in Education', which addresses 'vampire women teachers', in Clemence Dane, *The Women's Side*.
  21. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume I: Sexual Inversion*. Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1920), pp. 238–9.
  22. 'Walter', *My Secret Life* (Amsterdam, eleven volumes, 1888–94). Scholars continue to argue about the authorship, reliability, and genre of this work (genuine autobiography, wish-fulfillment fantasy, pornographic fiction?). One of the first and most important discussions of 'Walter' is to be found in Stephen Marcus, *The Other Victorians* (London, 1966). Marcus contested the traditional identification of the pseudonymous 'Walter' as

Henry Spencer Ashbee (1834–1900). Ashbee was, amongst other things, a dedicated and learned collector of erotica and pornography, some of which he discussed and catalogued, under the name 'Pisanus Fraxi', in *Index Librorum Prohibitorum: being Notes Bio-Biblio-Icono-graphical and Critical, on Curious and Uncommon Books* (London, privately printed, 1877). A recent work which accepts and discusses Ashbee as 'Walter' is Ian Gibson, *The Erotomaniac: The Secret Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).

23. 'Walter', *My Secret Life* Vol. 4 (1888–94; Ware: Wordsworth 1996), pp. 1630–1. In the original edition this passage appears in Volume Eight, Chapter VIII.

## Josephine McDonagh responds

At the end of 'Blanch and Rosalinda', a story of two sisters in the popular illustrated *The Child's Own Book* (13th edition, 1863), the narrative dwells on an amorous reunion between the two women. Their warm embrace provides the denouement to a very short story about gift-giving and desire. When they were girls, Blanch, the elder sister, had begrudged a gift to an elderly stranger, while Rosalinda, the younger, gave generously and spontaneously. To punish Blanch, a good fairy turns her into a queen, destined for a luxurious yet loveless life; but to Rosalinda the fairy gives a farm. After years of suffering, Blanch is finally reunited with her agricultural sister, who having married a poor but affectionate farmer, has lived contentedly the whole time. Reunited, the two sisters live happily ever after, singing and dancing in bucolic bliss in their native land. The moral of the story is clearly stated, but it does not concern giving, as we might expect (as in, perhaps, 'give freely, not begrudgingly'). Rather it is about wanting – or more precisely *not* wanting: to 'be content and happy', we are told by the narrative voice, 'possess . . . only what is necessary and wish for nothing else'.<sup>1</sup>

Occurring in *The Child's Own Book*, 'Blanch and Rosalinda' can be seen as part of a larger process of the schooling of desires in which Victorian children's literature participated. In this story, as in others in the collection, the longing for things is set over and against the love of people: happy marriages and reunited families are frequently the reward for restraining acquisitive desires for possessions. This is such a familiar story that it seems hardly worth noting. Even in the realist novel, the genre of economic individualism, in which happy marriage and economic success are regularly presented as the double reward for moral virtue, the remnants of these fairy tales often persist. For instance, a repeated motif in the novels of George Eliot is that of an inheritance declined.<sup>2</sup> Eppie in *Silas Marner* (1861), Esther in *Felix Holt* (1866), Dorothea in *Middlemarch* (1871–2): all these heroines turn down lavish financial bequests in order to enjoy the more substantial and lasting pleasures of romantic or family love. In Eliot's examples, the realm of affect tends to be organized heterosexually around romantic attachments and eventual marriages to men, but there are many examples of texts in which this better kind of longing is characterized through the expression of intense family feeling between women or girls – mothers and daughters, or sisters, like Blanch and Rosalinda. Christina Rossetti's fairy-tale poem, 'Goblin Market' (1862) tells one such tale of extreme sisterly love. Here, when one sister, Laura, succumbs to the pleasures of shopping, and eats

the forbidden fruit pedalled by evil goblin men, the other sister, Lizzie, saves her by refusing to taste the fruit, but by conveying its juices on her face, which she invites Laura to ingest through hugging, kissing and 'suck[ing] my juices', as though to inoculate her against her miscreant desires: an act of redemption that is expressed in terms that are so erotic that many readers see in it an expression of female homosexual desire.<sup>3</sup> Here, as in 'Blanch and Rosalinda', love between female family-members is a corrective to, and reward for not wanting things.

In the strange dynamics of Victorian childhood, therefore, fairytales had much to teach about social and economic values, as well as morals and emotions, and bodily pleasures. Stories such as 'Blanch and Rosalinda' and 'Goblin Market' give moral purpose to affective relations and sometimes sensual feelings, but these undoubtedly held other, less controllable, pleasures too. Primary among the relationships embedded in the narratives of fairytales was that between mother and child – the first and most powerful of family relations, combining physical and emotional intimacies with moral instruction.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between child and mother was crucial, as Alison Hennegan points out, to a child's libidinal training, so much so that it provided both a body map of polymorphous pleasures, and a model of intimacy that could serve as the foundation for passionate friendships and even sexual relationships between adult women. In an environment in which the shadow of perversion haunted literary culture in the figure of the sinister lesbian, and in which the ideologies of home and hearth made any female figure except the wife and mother almost unthinkable in respectable contexts, the mother provided, as Hennegan puts it, a kind of 'safe space' for imagining relationships between women that combined physical intimacies and emotional gratification. Images of mothers abound in erotic expressions of love between women, especially in the later part of the period. Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, the aunt-niece and lesbian-lover poets who wrote collaboratively under the pseudonym 'Michael Field', frequently call on the figure of the mother as the basis for imagining love between women: 'There is love/Of woman unto woman', they write in 1911, taking up, and intensifying the maternal model, 'in its fibre/Stronger than knits a mother to her child'.<sup>5</sup>

Hennegan, in her fascinating chapter, attempts to reconstruct something of the actuality of the sex lives of Victorian girls, through reading the personal reminiscences of lesbian women about their schoolgirl experiences. As she rightly points out, however, this enterprise is beset with problems. Sexual love between women and girls in the Victorian period was unspeakable in more ways than one. Not only was it subject

to the strict repressions of a highly regulated sexual culture, but it was also in a paradoxical sense unspeakable for being too easily spoken of. The segregated and closeted lives of middle-class women encouraged the expression of effusive affections between women, in terms that are hard for a reader to distinguish from those of lesbian love. Moreover, as she also points out, personal accounts were also embedded within more widely held mythologies about women that speak to cultural beliefs and anxieties that extend far beyond the intimate lives of individual girls. In this response I will trace some of the cultural associations of the figures that Hennegan identifies as key to Victorian conceptualizations of the sex lives of girls. My response will not take us any closer to the secret experiences of Victorian girls, but it will, I hope, help us to understand the ways in which very private aspects of children's lives were framed by their broader cultural contexts.

Edith Simcox, on whose secret diary Hennegan draws, was, like so many sapphic women of her time, drawn to the figure of the mother. The passionate admirer of Marian Evans, aka George Eliot, Simcox saw her idol as a mother, and as Hennegan records, the pages of her diary repeatedly demonstrate that allusions to maternity provided a way of expressing erotic love. The role was a particularly appropriate one in this case as George Eliot often styled herself as the 'great mother' – even though childless herself – and in her novels, the mother figure frequently presents an ideal combination of physical and emotional nurture and moral authority. That the mother figure is a social possibility rather than a biological reality for Eliot is clear, as maternal roles are often played by men characters, such as Silas Marner, who nurtures the little girl, Eppie, as though he were her mother; and Adam Bede, whose moral epiphany arrives when he acts as a mother to the deviant Hetty.<sup>6</sup> Eliot's ideas about motherhood owed something to her reading of J.J. Bachofen and other anthropological writers of the time who considered the matriarchal origins of human societies.<sup>7</sup> These ideas held yet more radical potential for the committed socialist Simcox. Her work, *Primitive Civilizations: Outlines of the History of Ownership in Archaic Communities* (1894), finds that the advantages of ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Chinese societies lay in the dominance of the domestic household economy in the organisation of the public sphere. These ancient societies thus provide her with the basis of a critique of property on matriarchal principles, and the foundations of a utopian social vision. For Simcox, therefore, the mother serves as more than a figure of erotic life, but also is the core of a hard-hitting economic and political critique.<sup>8</sup>

While Simcox confesses to her 'spoon' fondness for mother (and biographers have noted her excessive love of her own mother that continued throughout her life; she lived with her mother, who did not die until 1897 when Edith was 53), there are other kinds of women that figure as erotic agents and objects in Hennegan's essay aside the mother. From the evidence that she presents, especially the case histories from the late nineteenth-century sexologists, Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, it is the schoolteacher and the school pupil that dominate. In the closeted environment of the single-sex boarding school, and especially the dormitory, they exert a seductive aura that is more potent and more dangerously enticing than any to be found in the innocent embrace of the mother. Girlhood friendships developed in school become not only the real basis of adult liaisons, but also an equally powerful model for passionate friendships between women.

*Jane Eyre*, the 1847 novel by Charlotte Brontë, a woman whose intense relationships from her schooldays continued into adult life,<sup>9</sup> provides the *locus classicus* of passionate friendships between girls in the intimacy that is struck between ten-year-old Jane and 14-year-old Helen Burns at Lowood School, an austere charitable institution for orphan girls. Against the privations of the school, the pleasures of friendship are felt more keenly. Even the ascetic Helen, who warns Jane against thinking 'too much of the love of human beings',<sup>10</sup> consents to physical intimacies with Jane, and the teacher Miss Temple. Indeed this is a triangulated relationship between the three, in which Miss Temple educates – perhaps today, in tabloid-ese, we might say 'grooms'? – the school-girls into forms of affection that include kissing, stroking, and hugging. Physical intimacy is established from the beginning: Jane's first night at Lowood is spent in a shared bed with the kind Miss Temple. For the orphan girls, Miss Temple plays the role of mother (Jane says: 'I derived a child's pleasure from the contemplation of her face, her dress, her one or two ornaments, her white forehead, her clustered and shining curls, and beaming dark eyes' [p. 103]). An evening spent by the two girls alone with her, sharing cake and fireside conversation, has the aura of a delicious family *soirée*. Yet there is also a suppressed erotic undertone that is never far away, whereby the teacher transmogrifies into a pander; under Miss Temple's tutelage, Jane's 'ardent, . . . excited, . . . eager' feelings for the older woman are diverted to the (also older) schoolgirl Helen ('but as to Helen Burns', she exclaims, 'I was struck with wonder'). As if to underline the erotic potential of this evening meeting, when the girls return to their dormitory, they find the hostile teacher Miss Scatcherd

examining Helen's 'drawers', and finding 'a shameful disorder' therein, for which Helen is punished by having the word 'Slattern' attached to her forehead. Nevertheless, in the larger scheme of the novel, this period of eroticized relations between girls and women seems to be a transitional phase. After the death of Helen (while in bed with Jane), both Miss Temple and Jane transfer their affections to men: Miss Temple leaves the school to marry, while Jane's initiations into the ways of heterosexual passion (with Rochester) have become the stuff of myth.

Feelings of shame, however, are frequently evoked in the Lowood episodes of the novel. The punishments inflicted on the girls are designed specifically to take away their dignity: 'it seems disgraceful to be sent to stand in the middle of a room full of people' says Jane to Helen after one such episode; 'and you are such a great girl. I am far younger than you and I could not bear it' (p. 8). Yet while the acts of punishment are frequently the pretext for stolen moments of affection between the girls, the girls themselves are held in an unspecified way to be associated with other kinds of illicit acts. Many of the orphans in Lowood School would have been illegitimate children, and as such they stand as the literal embodiment of the sexual misdemeanours of their parents. Thus Helen's sins which are (to our eyes) venial sins of untidiness ('I am . . . slatternly; I seldom put, and never keep, things in order; I am careless; I forget the rules; I read when I should learn my lessons; I have no method . . . '[p. 88]) take on a symbolic meaning as the disorder of illegitimate desire. It is sexual shame that hangs over Lowood. In a society in which Malthusian ideas about population shaped social policies, and in which people were held to be in competition for scarce resources, acts of sexual transgression that led to illegitimate birth were considered to have enormous impact. This helps to explain the particular poignancy of Helen's response to Jane's punishment. When Jane asks, 'Why do you stay with a girl whom everyone believes to be a liar?', Helen responds by querying Jane's mathematical computations: 'Everybody, Jane? Why, there are only eighty people who have heard you called so, and the world contains hundreds of millions' (p. 100). It is as though the prolific population of the world stands in higher judgement over the false morality of a society restricted by the injunctions of sexual restraint. Lowood, with its strict regime of rules and regulations, including subsistence-level food, sexual segregation, and the banning of any small sign of luxury or pleasure (the cutting of a girl's red hair, for instance), evokes the ethos of the Victorian workhouse after the New Poor Law, set up on Malthusian principles to limit population and punish sexual incontinence. In the novel, therefore, erotic feelings between girls are just part of

a fabric of illicit sexual expression that disrupts the sexual and political economy of Victorian Britain. In this context, proto-lesbian feelings are absorbed into an undifferentiated or heterodox arena of unauthorised sexuality.

The sexual economy of Lowood does not distinguish between different types of dissident desires, yet elsewhere in Victorian culture these are sharply divided. The two kinds of women that Hennegan identifies – the mother and the schoolteacher – often play a decisive role in relation to this. While Hennegan is right to identify some areas of overlap between these two figures – both nurture and inspire children, for instance – they are also distinct, and have separate histories and meanings, and it is important not to overlook this. The first woman, the mother, is usually married, and always reproductive; the second, the schoolteacher, by definition, is neither. Even Malthus, the economist, discussed these versions of womanhood in his population theory, holding the two to be the twin poles of acceptable adult femininity. For him, the good mother (as opposed to the unmarried mother, whom he represents as a horrible monster) is the ideal woman, the fecund source of human life. But the schoolteacher, the professional woman, is equally important in his thinking, as the regulator of population, and hence of social order. She finds vivid representation in his figure of Dame Nature, or the Great Mistress of the Feast, in the 1803 edition of his *Essay on Population*. In a very controversial passage which he soon afterwards withdrew, Dame Nature is said to regulate the participants in nature's feast, by evicting the un-entitled – that is, the illegitimate – children. This is to ensure that there is adequate food for the legitimate guests at the feast; but for the illegitimate – the inhabitants of Lowood, for instance – a much worse fate is due. In the terrifying deathly logic of Malthusian theory, Dame Nature turns into a kind of executioner, sending unwanted children to certain death.

For Malthus, this un-reproductive, single, professional woman – the agent of population control – has a surprisingly positive social function. For critics of Malthus, however, antagonistic to the social and moral implications of his theories of population control, she epitomized its sinister, even murderous implications.<sup>11</sup> And, moreover, she crystalized widely held anxieties about women and social power.<sup>12</sup> Versions of this figure are to be found across nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and popular culture: in, for instance, numerous representations of bad nurses from Blake's *Songs of Experience*, to Beverley Allitt (the nurse suffering from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, who killed her patients); in countless film and popular literature representations



of female abortionists; in nineteenth-century broadsheet ballads about violent school mistresses who beat and kill their pupils; in the figures of the over-sexed, vampiric New Woman who titillated the reading public at the end of the nineteenth century; and in a host of other dangerous, powerful women, from Myra Hindley to Margaret Thatcher. It is this professional woman – not the mother-figure – who later transposes into the schoolmistress as seductress lesbian. Clemence Dane's marvelously sinister 'vampiric lesbian teachers' that Hennegan discusses, and Miss Kilman, the reviled lesbian tutor of Mrs Dalloway's daughter in Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, are among the manifestations of this repeated stereotype in literary terms. These teacher women are not exactly 'bad mothers', as Hennegan suggests; rather they have a different genealogy. And it is this figure – the sinister professional woman – that is reworked in the autobiographical narratives in Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1897), some of which are cited by Hennegan.

Edith Simcox was not a schoolmistress, although she was a member of the London School Board and was an advocate of secondary education for all children, and in many ways her life as an unmarried working woman resembled that of Miss Kilman. But in her diary entry for 16 January 1878, she records a request from her idol Marian Evans to procure for her a book. 'Then it appeared', Simcox writes, 'she wanted our old friend: *The Child's Own Book*. That I was delightedly able to promise anyway to lend her'.<sup>13</sup> *The Child's Own Book* was the very same as mentioned at the beginning of this response. That two intellectual, mature (Simcox was 34, Marian Evans 58), and childless women should both be enamoured of this book, and that it should figure in the highly charged gift-giving of Edith to Marian gives pause, for it suggests the extent to which literature designed specifically for children, and the affective regime it evoked, resonated within Victorian society, even for adults. But recalling the moral of 'Blanch and Rosalinda', however, we should note that it is not so important that Edith, like Rosalinda, gives (to Marian) 'delightedly'; rather it is the repressive injunction *not* to desire that destines Edith to the role of unrequited lover: as the story has it, 'to be content and happy... possess only what is necessary and wish for nothing else'. As the basis of her utopian social vision, this moral has much to offer; but as a programme for sexual satisfaction, it is, to say the least, disappointing. While the affective regime of childhood had interesting potential for subversion at the political level, for Simcox – at least at the level of personal feeling – it taught self-denial and conformity.

## Notes

1. *The Child's Own Book*, 13th edn (London: William Tegg, 1869), p. 32.
2. Bernard Semmel, *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
3. On sexuality in 'Goblin Market', see Cora Kaplan, 'The Indefinite Disclosed: Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson', in Mary Jacobus (ed.), *Women Writing and Writing about Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 61–79, and Joseph Bristow, '"No Friend Like a Sister"? Christina Rossetti's Female Kin', *Victorian Poetry* 33 no. 2 (1995), 257–81.
4. On mothers and storytelling, see Marina Warner, *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998).
5. *The Tragedy of Pardon* (1911), Act 3, scene 3, reprinted in Chris White (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Source Book* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 264.
6. McDonagh, *George Eliot* (Plymouth: Northote House Press, 1997), pp. 41–8.
7. On patriarchy and critiques of Victorian society derived from anthropology, see Elizabeth Fee, 'The Sexual Politics of Victorian Anthropology', in Mary S. Hartman (ed.), *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974), pp. 86–102.
8. See Suzanne Stark's entry on Simcox in the new Oxford *DNB*; also Gillian Beer, 'Passion, Politics, Philosophy: the Work of Edith Simcox', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 6 no. 2 (1995), 168–79, and Norma Vince, 'The Fiddler, the Angel and the Defiance of Antigone: A Reading of Edith Simcox's *Autobiography of a Shirtmaker*', *ibid.*, pp. 143–65.
9. On the suggestion that Charlotte Brontë may have had lesbian relations with her school friend, see Elaine Miller, 'Through all Changes and Through all Chances: The Relationship of Ellen Nussey and Charlotte Brontë', in Lesbian History Group, *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History, 1840–1985* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 29–54.
10. *Jane Eyre*, ed. Q.D. Leavis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 101. Further references will be in the main body by page number.
11. Some of the controversy this provoked is reprinted in Andrew Pyle (ed.), *Population: Contemporary Responses to Malthus* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994).
12. I discuss these figures at greater length in my *Child Murder and British Culture 1720–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), see especially chapter 3.
13. Edith J. Simcox, *Autobiography of a Shirtmaker*, in Constance M. Fulmer and Margaret E. Barfield (eds), *A Monument to the Memory of George Eliot* (New York: Garland, 1998).

# 10

## At Once A-sexual and Anal: Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts

Elleke Boehmer

This chapter explores aspects of Robert Baden-Powell's loving invention in the years 1905 to 1907 of the Scout Movement and in particular of its definitive target audience and icon: the impossibly good and a-sexual Boy Scout. As Eric Hobsbawm noted some time back, Scouting constitutes an exemplary invented tradition, authored and authorized by a single initiator in response to political expediency, specifically, the widely shared perception of military and imperial crisis following the 1899–1902 Boer War.<sup>1</sup> It was an invention that was brewed in the crucible of Robert Baden-Powell's experiences during the Siege of Mafeking, South Africa, in that same war, and then manufactured virtually overnight, almost as an inadvertent function of his writing of the primer *Scouting for Boys* (1908). Yet Scouting characteristically claimed age-old provenance, in the form of the 'scouts of the nation' and the 'scouts of history', who included the pioneers of American colonization, Australian bushmen, Rhodesian frontiersmen, and Zulu warriors and Native American trackers, all of them clean-limbed, youthful and brave.<sup>2</sup>

As this might begin to suggest, Scouting and its foundational *Scouting for Boys* engage centrally with the representation of (a-sexual, yet potentially sexual) children by adults at a time of efflorescence for children's literature in general. Moreover, both movement and primer do so in ways that critically play into and comment on this book's chief subject, the sexualization of adult-child relations. As Jacqueline Rose notes in her astute study *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Literature* (1992), writing for children, broadly speaking, pictures the world of the child as the adult *would want* it to be; in other words, as a form of wish-fulfilment.<sup>3</sup> *Scouting for Boys* duly casts the generic boy-child as a fantastical figure, at once Peter Pan and robust pioneer,

as sexually uncommitted and yet brimming with dangerous energies – energies that require channeling in ways that will be pleasing and yet manageable for adults.

Baden-Powell's remarkable Edwardian invention of the Boy Scout ideal plots a conjuncture that in this chapter I want to open out and examine more closely: a conjuncture between a boyish a-sexuality, colonial relations, and what I will term an ethics of anality. My aim is to suggest that the first Chief Scout posited an idealized a-sexuality as one of the more beneficial products of colonial frontier-life, which life, however, he uniformly depicted in 'anal' terms of exemplary cleanliness, of the efficient and expedient voiding of boys' bodily waste. The Scout image became itself in effect a kind of cleansing 'device', in so far as the colonies, whether Bengal or the Pacific islands, were elsewhere often regarded as cesspits of disease – infection and contagion having been exacerbated worldwide by the contact between peoples brought by colonialism.<sup>4</sup> Yet, having established his ideal, with the boy's body as it were cleansed and etherealized in interaction with the fresh, open air and sunshine of the colonies, Baden-Powell's next move was to re-import this ideal into Britain, impossibly disembodied, as a model for its morally and physically weakened youth.

It is important to observe, however, that Baden-Powell (or B.-P., as he was often called, and will on occasion be named below) was not, as a nostalgic late Victorian and conservative Edwardian, alone in conjoining the pre-pubescent boy and imperial space. In any number of 'Boy's Own' adventure tales, such as by the prolific, much-copied G. A. Henty, the empire is a zone *both* of prolonged virginity *and* of (often-codified) sexual rites of passage, from which the grown-up boy returns to an adulthood of sexual and social probity in Britain.<sup>5</sup> At the same time as Freud in Vienna was exploring his theories of the unconscious as the site of the retrojection of desire, therefore, for British colonialists, novelists and educationalists alike the a-sexual, imperial boy constituted an imaginative place where desire might be processed and sublimated to ensure moral health at home.

## **The a-sexual Peter Pan**

What will be immediately clear to those who know anything about long-standing biographical speculations concerning Robert Baden-Powell's sexuality, is that the notion of the a-sexual Scout questions or at least qualifies interpretations of the 'Founder's' interest in the health of young boys' bodies and 'Peter Panism', his life-long enthusiasm for

remaining a 'boy-man', as signs of a repressed homosexuality.<sup>6</sup> Such interpretations, which usually proceed from biographical evidence, are admittedly fairly persuasive, pointing to the fact for example of B.-P.'s near obsession with J.M. Barrie's 1904 play *Peter Pan* and with the figure of its eponymous, evergreen boy-hero, and his seemingly concomitant discomfort regarding physical intimacy with women. It is true that Baden-Powell generally seemed to prefer men to the general company of women: across his military career, up to 1906, he actively sought out as often as he could the men-only havens and replicas of the public school that the empire so generously provided (the club, the hill station, the DC's office, etc.).<sup>7</sup>

In a nutshell, Baden-Powell's biography up to 1908 bears something of a storybook, even 'Boy's Own' aspect. His relatively humdrum yet fun-filled life in the British Army effectively operated as an ideal preparation for his second 'life', as he called it, as father and chief author of Scouting. Born in 1857, Robert Stephenson Smyth Powell was the eighth child of Reverend Baden Powell, Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford, and his third wife, Henrietta. Following Professor Powell's death, when Robert was three, Henrietta Powell proceeded to direct her formidable energies towards consolidating her family's precarious upper-middle-class social position, as emblemized in the extension of the family name to Baden-Powell in 1869. All possible strings were pulled to open the doors of the right colleges and public schools to her children – in Robert's case Charterhouse, where, as an arch-prankster, he thrived.

Having failed to follow his elder brothers to Oxford, in 1876 Baden-Powell secured a commission straight into the 13th Hussars, stationed at Lucknow in India. To his considerable annoyance and disappointment, however, Lieutenant Robert Baden-Powell's early decades in the Army coincided with a long period of 'small' imperial wars, in which it was difficult to shine and to win promotion. In Afghanistan in 1878, in Zululand in 1888, in Ashantiland in 1895 and Matabeleland in 1896, he was hard-pressed not so much to excel in battle as to find any rip-roaring battles at all in which to triumph. The skills of tracking and scouting were therefore mostly acquired, developed, and written up (as in his first instructional handbook *Reconnaissance and Scouting* (1884)) during his spare time; in other words, during the many hours of relaxed, male-male bonhomie that made up most of his time in the Army.

The onset of the Anglo-Boer War (or South African War) in October 1899 found Baden-Powell in command of the town of Mafeking just weeks before its investment by the Boers. The town's success at surviving

the longest siege of that conflict without significant loss of life, and B.-P.'s unshakeable *sang-froid* in directing the entire operation, turned the general into an imperial hero overnight, a symbol of British pluck. In the aftermath of the war, in a new post as Inspector-General of Cavalry, Baden-Powell began to find ways of adapting his military handbook *Aids to Scouting* (1899) for the training and recreation of young middle- and lower-middle-class boys. This was in order as to address the fatal weakening of British manhood which the 1904 National Commission on the South African War had exposed. The outcome of B.-P.'s exercise in adaptation was *Scouting for Boys*.

This much about Baden-Powell is relatively well known. Yet throughout, the primary biographical emphasis is on his delight in male companionship, not on his possible desire for those companions, not even for his best friend and military confrère across forty years of army life, Kenneth McLaren. Most research into the history of Scouting and B.-P.'s involvement in it has repeatedly come up against the difficulty of ascribing a present-day sexual category or sexual preference such as homosexuality to a historical figure many of whose behaviours and self-representations resist such categorization and defy such terminology. Admittedly, the concept of a-sexuality, too, when ascribed to an earlier historical time period such as the 1900s has a 'presentist' quality to it, though I would want to suggest it is perhaps more helpfully indeterminate or unfixed than the concepts of homosexuality or heterosexuality. Then again, as cultural historians of sexuality such as Jeffrey Weeks and Greg Woods have commented, from the time that attempts were first made in the public sphere to categorize sexual object-choices and desires, these have consistently exhibited, across the board, a noticeable slipperiness.<sup>8</sup>

Another difficulty of categorization in the case of B.-P. springs from the extreme covertness, even the waywardness, of most of his references to sexuality, such as they are. Indeed, it was not for nothing that he enlisted the figure of Peter Pan, eternally young, eternally virgin, as a personal emblem or mascot. Not for nothing did his representation of Scouting place a primary emphasis on boyish play, as in good clean fun, and encourage grown men, the Scout masters, to play as boys again.

At the end of the day, regardless even of his long-standing, close friendship with McLaren, whom he always called 'Boy', B.-P. seems to a considerable degree unconcerned about adult sexuality in any form. Sexual activity had no real place on his planet of interests. The category 'repressed homosexual' or 'homosexuality in crisis' does not therefore seem adequate to describe these interests and inclinations, even despite

the teasing double meaning of 'Scouting for boys'. (It remains an always-open question whether B.-P. himself ever noticed the double entendre.) In this respect I agree with the theorist Christopher Lane who, in his work on 'the homosexual allegory' in the imperial writing of Kipling, Forster and others, suggests that the actual sexual orientations of earlier periods of history must ultimately remain 'undecidable'.<sup>9</sup>

That said, with respect to Baden-Powell's figuration of the *Boy Scout*, it is noticeable how little attention this self-styled educationalist paid to girls or anything to do with girls, including female sexuality – or not until the runaway popularity of Scouting, and demands from girl children themselves, prompted him in 1910 to organize an equivalent movement, the Girl Guides. The youngest son in a family primarily of boys, a product of Charterhouse and the British Army, Baden-Powell saw women as representing another realm of experience and sentiment entirely. Many of the camping exercises and practices of Scouting were explicitly structured in such a way as to replace and/or masculinize mothering roles and tasks. Throughout, boy children represented Baden-Powell's primary focus; their purity and the prolongation of their childhood were his chief concerns. For B.-P. such prolongation pertained in particular to lower-middle-class and (ideally) working-class boys, whose lives of labour and related dissipations represented to him an unfair curtailment of their youth.

B.-P. is, in his many writings on Scouting, often highly exercised therefore about the forms that these boys' sexuality should take, or, more precisely, not take. For example, in those sentences on masturbation excised from the first edition of *Scouting for Boys*, which may be found as the Appendix in the new 2004 edition, he is remarkably open, at least at first, when talking of the pleasure of the erotogenous zones of the body (pp. 351–2). However, he rarely ascribes a particular *direction* to those desires, other than, at times, as I will show, a (necessarily?) covert, anal direction. The question which my chapter ultimately poses, therefore, is whether the contemporary fixation on homosexuality or homoeroticism in Baden-Powell's life and work, has, ironically, prevented our seeing other such non-specific, perhaps more 'perverse' and diversified drives in operation in his writing about Scouts.<sup>10</sup>

I want to submit that different kinds of questions need to be asked of the sexuality of Baden-Powell's ideal Scout figure, and, relatedly, of the at-once-clean-yet-potentially-soiled imperial context which moulded and drew it out. Could there be significance in the fact that B.-P. was most successfully able to conceive of the figure of the Scout, fresh-faced, fine-limbed, laden with sexual latency and supremely continent,

in the distant spaces of the empire? Did the empire, much more than the domestic context, provide the opportunities (openness laden with challenge) where a 'third way' sexuality might be explored?<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, do the colonial contexts of Scouting instead signify something of the massive imaginative effort required to conceptualize the Boy Scout as clean-fleshed yet, paradoxically, bodiless? This last question is posed in the awareness that, as mentioned earlier, around the same time that Baden-Powell was narrating Scouting into being, Freud was developing a vocabulary for talking about the relationship of sexuality to, as he termed it, 'civilization'. Yet if Freud, writing from deep inside *Mitteleuropa*, was interested in an observable spectrum of sexual inclinations, B.-P., whose imagination is located on the imperial margins, instead gave coded expression to impulses that exist at the very limits of that spectrum. With this acknowledged, it is also true of course that Freud's identification of sexuality in the child, in particular of its pre-pubescent latency, offers useful ways of understanding how a-sexuality, too, might operate, that is, polymorphously, in highly deflected ways.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Scouting idea in formation**

It was in response to the establishment-wide crisis in Edwardian imperial confidence that Baden-Powell came up with the concept of Scouting, of manly exercises and entertainments 'in the wild' directed at young boys and proposed as an effective cure for the nation's social ills and failing masculinity. It was a good idea, he suggested, to teach boys and young men to 'be prepared' for every eventuality, in peace or in war. 'It's just like taking a header into cold water; a fellow who is accustomed to bathing thinks nothing of it; he has practised it over and over again. But ask a fellow to do it who has never practised it and he will funk it' (p. 20). As B.-P. writes in the openly ideological Part VI of *Scouting for Boys*, Scouting is especially designed to serve those boys in British society who lack 'guiding hands': it will 'take [them] in hand in a practical way ... without expense in time or money' (p. 299). Yet Scouting is not to be military in emphasis. This is the keynote of much that Baden-Powell writes from 1906 onwards. It is to inculcate obedience to authority and impose self-discipline, yes, but it is to teach through games and play. It is not to repress boys' energies, but to transform and redirect them. It is in this respect that the British Empire begins to figure prominently as at once the playground and the training ground of Scouts.

Throughout *Scouting for Boys*, as much or more emphasis is placed on the *performative* as on the principles to be taught, as much on games and



the power of example, as on the Scout law and promise. B.-P. repeatedly advises boys to indulge in invention and make-believe in order to rescue themselves from weakness and indolence, from such evils as smoking, 'girlitis', and a sway-back. And what better space was there for exercising make-believe than the colonies, especially the 'white' colonies with their apparently wide, open spaces, far removed from disease-infested cities, whether domestic or foreign? Here, on *Peter Pan*-esque, *Treasure Island* terrain occupied by people who resembled nothing so much as dress-up savages and/or noble scouts, it was possible to give free rein to the (of course already highly fictionalized) spirit of adventure. The colonies were places where it was possible for a white man, and perhaps also a Zulu warrior or an 'Indian brave', to re-invent himself over and over again. Therefore, although, as in the Victorian precepts of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859), often cited in *Scouting for Boys*, self-advancement rests on the planks of hard work and self-discipline, for B.-P. it will not do to have boys too serious, too studious. They are energetically to entertain their delight in romance and hero-worship – the latter is itself an interesting mode of sexual displacement.

But is there something more specific about the empire than its playful openness to invention that appears effortlessly to produce prototype Scouts? A partial answer lies in the abundant and very real outlets for a variety of types of play and play-acting that the empire offered young men. So much of the display and the military show of empire – the marches and tattoos, gymkhanas and durbars, camouflage and spy work, tribal meetings and general posing – depended on play-acting and performance. (Indeed, Baden-Powell himself excelled at all of these activities, and continued to play the 'past master' well into old age, to the extent that in his appearances as Chief Scout at jamborees and other Scout meetings he remained wildly popular with boy audiences around the world.) Indeed, it could be convincingly argued that the Victorian and Edwardian nursery, like the public-school playground, *actively* developed subjects for such play-acting. In other words, the nurseries were themselves also encouraged as sites of production of the play-makers of the empire, of those who would be free to generate and regenerate their identities through sport, games, horse-play and other forms of recreation, what Baden-Powell in his autobiography calls 'ragging and gagging'.<sup>13</sup>

However, a second, stronger answer to my question, I would submit, attaches to what I have called a-sexuality, or, more precisely, to the way in which the playful and fun-filled freedoms of being in the Empire (and white, unless Zulu or Native American) paradoxically encouraged sexual

and anal continence. (Urban spaces, by contrast, promoted incontinence and bad anal habits of various kinds.) Interestingly for my purposes, in/continence for Baden-Powell, about which he is often exercised, is at one and the same time disassociated from the genital areas of the body, and disconnected from particular sexual objects.

For B.-P. low-ebb sexuality, such as it is, or a-sexuality, is usually realized in an extremely random and erratic way. And the colonies above all other spaces allowed this preferred mode of (a-)sexuality to flourish – that is, to remain freely amorphous, detached from specific object-choices. Here we might remember that the empire, as is well documented, presented significantly widened sexual opportunities (both heterosexual and homosexual) for white men. Hence its association in imperial fiction with sexual rites of passage. Yet this should not obscure the fact that other modes of sexuality, too, including that seeming non-mode, a-sexuality, may have been able to flourish, or, alternatively, would have posed less of a problem, appeared less of an anomaly, in playful colonial spaces far from the censures of home. Moreover, a-sexuality in the empire presented the decided advantage of safeguarding boys and young men from the diseases presumed to stem from sexual and cross-racial contact.

By setting the idealized activity of Scouting on the imperial frontier, therefore, B.-P. in *Scouting for Boys* is not so much collapsing the problem of sexuality into the Empire's distance and unfamiliarity, or not so much displacing boys' sexual preoccupations, as finding different ways of expressing, redirecting, processing and cordoning them. Here it is relevant to be reminded that the scout and tracker figure itself signifies someone on the edge of a group, one who goes ahead and keeps look-out. The scout is a lone ranger, who does not readily pair up. Kipling's Kim is a child who walks by himself and seeks recreation by himself. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, another of B.-P.'s heroes and an icon of Scouting, famously has no wife and lives on his own.

A further interesting aspect of the question of (a-)sexuality in *Scouting for Boys*, and in early-twentieth-century Scouting more generally, is that B.-P.'s shift of the Scout figure from home to colony, from the centre of society to its periphery, allows him, seemingly contradictorily, to place a central emphasis on *masculinity*. In other words, he transfers and transmutes the problem of sexuality into the process of formulating a robust if defensive 'manliness'. 'Manliness', he writes, 'can only be taught by men, and not by those who are half men, half old women' (p. 301). Manliness in relation to Scouting is held to exhibit the qualities of self-reliance, endurance, leadership, as well as an occasional delight

in horseplay and practical jokes. It does not, however, relate to any specific sexuality. To put it bluntly, B.-P.'s manly man could equally be homosexual as heterosexual: there is no preferred object-choice. Manliness for him equates with a particular set of ethics, which prominently includes a prophylactic anal cleanliness. Object-directed sexuality is, if anything, something of a distraction from true masculinity, or even an encumbrance to it. It is also an encumbrance to the adult-man-boy-child relations upon which the activities of Scouting and the structure of the scout group itself rest. To encourage the colonial a-sexuality of the Boy Scout, therefore, is to facilitate adult-child relations within Scouting; it is, in effect, to de-complicate them.

### **'Going to the rear': Baden-Powell's anal ethics**

This final section examines more closely the connection that Baden-Powell assumes to exist between the a-sexual Scout and the ethics of keeping the young male body fit and clean, which in *Scouting for Boys* he refers to euphemistically as the importance of 'going to the rear'. This connection is not as paradoxical as it might first appear. As I have already suggested, B.-P.'s strenuous a-sexual commitment, his attempt to reformulate British boys' sexuality as a homoerotic, but physically chaste masculinity, deflected sexual energy away from the genitals, and, as if by default, towards the anus. Analogy should here be read therefore *both* in the sense of an excessive concern with cleanliness due to displaced preoccupations with voiding the body's waste, *and* in the sense of a focus on the anus *per se* as the bodily channel or orifice used to perform that function.<sup>14</sup>

Across *Scouting for Boys* there is an unmistakable and unashamed concern with the physical processes of getting rid of the body's waste, keeping one's rectum healthy, and so on. It is a concern that importantly *exceeds* the moral overtones implied by references to purging and cleanliness and would thus seem to be directed at an underlying anxiety about the potential pollution arising from contact with natives and 'the wild'. It is true of course that exhortations to good personal hygiene were widespread in imperial advice manuals and army handbooks at this time – literature from which Baden-Powell borrowed freely when writing *Scouting for Boys*. Parts of the text were in fact constructed very much like a collage, as a texture of cutouts and tear-outs from other texts – from Fenimore Cooper and Conan Doyle, as well as B.-P.'s own early advice booklets for cadets on scouting technique. What is interesting about the anal references in the Scouting primer, therefore, is not

so much their content as their context: where they occur in the text; how they are illustrated; and, most of all, how they repeat. (To track the story of the anus through the text, see, for example, pp. 25, 144, 188–9, 206, 209–10.)

The repeated – indeed repetitive – advice to make sure to ‘go to the rear’ is in evidence both in the MS and in the published text, although the references are significantly more frequent in the MS, which has come down to us in incomplete form (about 60 per cent of it is extant). As with B.-P.’s pointers regarding masturbation, there are in the typescript of the manuscript two or three instances where his advice to boys to have a bowel movement, even or especially in the bush, at least once a day, has been scored through in red pencil, as having been deemed unsuitable by Baden-Powell’s publisher C. Arthur Pearson, as was the sexual advice. The relatively frequent references to the rear, etc., this would suggest, are not simply innocent reflections of the commonplaces of imperial army instruction – much as B.-P. vociferously admired the cleanliness of the victorious Japanese Army in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. There are other key elements of this instruction that he did not see fit to cite, such as the advice against intercourse with natives. The concern to drive his message home is brought out in particular in the repetition-energy that governs the anal references even in the cleaned-up published text.

To give an instance of the relative prominence of the anus, in the first 1908 edition of *Scouting for Boys* the importance of the ‘regular daily rear’ is first openly encouraged on p. 188, in a chapter called ‘Endurance for Scouts’, or ‘how to keep the body strong’. Yet a piece of related advice on the topic has cropped up earlier, in Part III, where B.-P. gives guidelines on setting up camp and keeping one’s camp ground tidy. Digging a camp latrine, he notes under a special subheading, is an important part of camp education, which he links to camp tidiness. His advice is reasonably detailed, covering the depth and width of the latrine trench, the squatting position to be taken up, and the screens to be erected for privacy (p. 144). B.-P. even provides an illustration for the purpose.

We are thus prepared for the unmistakably tautological section called ‘A Scout’s Endurance’ which begins the ‘Endurance’ chapter and which ends with a list of recommended exercises aimed at keeping strong and healthy. The specific aims include (d) ‘making the stomach work’ and, (c) (tautologically) ‘making the bowels active’. Derived from the famous Swedish Army exercises, the recommended exercises are, for example, ‘Cone’, ‘Body Bending’ (repeated) and ‘Twisting’, and ‘Kneading the

Abdomen' (p. 188). The exercise for making the bowels active, however, also includes having the 'regular daily rear'. These involuted repetitions are intriguing. For example, to make the bowels work, you are instructed to do exercises to make the bowels work. It is as if B.-P. wants to say more, wants to recommend this kind of specific cleansing as opposed to a focus on the anus as the place of pollution, yet cannot find the words, other than these borrowed and repeated terminologies. Elsewhere, he often advises that exercises be done with a partner, in a push-pull kind of way, yet it is noteworthy that the bowel-stimulating exercises are exclusively lone exercises (pp. 209–10). He distributes advice on diet, too, recommending a fair amount of fruit, pulses and grains, and little meat, as in his admired Japanese culture, the suggestion being that meat encourages the formation of impure blood because it produces constipation (p. 206). The health of the fit Japanese body is due to the consumption of 'plain, light food'.

So in *Scouting for Boys* it seems that of all of a boy's body parts it is the penis not the anus that positively refuses articulation, is denied or lacks terminology, whereas the rectum, by contrast, features with noticeable, even if still censored impunity. The rectum is to be kept clean, certainly, but it is also quite openly to be named and used. It may be a foul orifice, but it is not the foulest. If anything, the open mouth or 'black mouth' – that is, lips left slackly hanging open – condemned by the Native American cultures B.-P. admired as leading to snoring, are the more frowned upon (no doubt for being vagina-like). Moreover, the rectum is functional, natural: it has its place in a boy's life and body. Onanism is therefore, implicitly, a more serious 'vice' than sodomy. It is, by association, an urban vice, and therefore the more dirty, whereas going to the rear, and keeping the body clean, especially when in reciprocal relationship, are enhanced in the context of the right sort of nature (open, 'white', colonized). Considering that in those paragraphs excised from the published *Scouting for Boys* against his will B.-P. advises boys against pleasant feelings in their 'private parts', it is tempting to speculate that the male anus is the more boldly in evidence in the book *because* the penis is absent.

Throughout *Scouting for Boys* the physical health of the young male (including the young boy) citizen of any country is a marker of, or correlative with, the state of the nation. It is this equation of the body of the state and the boy's body that subtends and reinforces my references to a-sexuality in Baden-Powell. Keep the physical body clean, fit, strong, and chaste and the health of the nation and hence of the empire will be guaranteed. An ethics of anality applies in both cases.

In sum, there is in *Scouting for Boys* something noticeably fatherly and/or paternal, rather than brotherly, over-familiar, or prurient, about the advice given by B.-P., especially in those sections where national health and physical health are related. As a way of further accounting for the rear's relative prominence in the book, I will consider by way of closing this caring, even tender approach, lightened by the emphasis on play and practical jokes, for which references to the anus, latrines and bodily functions of course served well.

Although B.-P. wanted boys to think about the rear, their own rear and others', and to look after its health, it is worth noting at the same time that he pays considerable attention to the other body parts too. Indeed, his prose enumerates them, dwells over them, warns as to their good function, which in all cases means respecting their health, cleanliness and continence. Make the skin perspire, he writes, as well as 'make the stomach work'. Work the muscles in each part of the body, and 'make the heart strong, and make the bowels active' (p. 188). As attentive fatherly Chief Scout-to-be he dispenses a kind of educative personal log that includes sleeping in the open and looking after one's cleanliness in every respect (again derived from the health manuals of the time). References to the rear, therefore, both the lighthearted and the serious, because partly taboo, were the test and the medium of this same fatherliness. It was in anality that B.-P.'s a-sexuality found the ultimate expression of continence, and that B.-P., the inventor of Scouting, found the fullest realization of his care for the great, growing and parthenogenetically-generated 'family' of Boy Scouts worldwide, whether located in 'wide, open' colonial spaces or in disease-ridden cities.

## Notes

1. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
2. Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, ed. Elleke Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 13–14. Page references will henceforth be quoted in the text. As regards the references in this essay to the Native American influences on Scouting, Baden-Powell modelled many of his tracking and camping exercises on the work of the Canadian naturalist, writer and educationalist Ernest Thompson Seton, whose knowledge of Native American culture profoundly informed his woodcraft training for young people.
3. Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Literature*, rev. ed., first published 1984 (London: Macmillan, 1992). In respect of the efflorescence of children's writing in this period, the Edwardian decade, which opened with the publication of Kipling's *Kim*, also represented the

- heyday of E. Nesbit and of J.M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan*, and saw the publication of Frances Hodgson Burnett's later classics for children, *A Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden*.
4. See, for example, Philip Curtin, *Death by Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
5. See Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995; Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 58–93; Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: HarperCollins, 1991); Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Don Randall, *Kipling's Imperial Boy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001).
6. See the definitive biography, Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell: Founder of the Boy Scouts*, first published 1989 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).
7. See Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 2003); Lisa Chaney, *Hide-and-Seek with Angels: A Life of J.M. Barrie* (London: Hutchinson, 2005); Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*.
8. See, amongst others, Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings, Myth and Modern Sexualities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); Greg Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).
9. Christopher Lane, *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).
10. On the significations of perversity, see Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
11. See again Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* and Lane, *The Ruling Passion* for their suggestions, at times unfounded, that a freer play of sexuality was possible in the empire than at home.
12. See Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey, Penguin Freud Library 7 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986); and also [www.aven.com](http://www.aven.com), the website of the A-sexuality Society, for whom a-sexuality is defined as sexuality turned down 'almost to zero', as in a radio.
13. Lord Baden-Powell, *Lessons from the 'Varsity of Life'* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1933).
14. In public expressions of concern about hygiene and cleanliness in this period, broad reference was made both to the rectum and to bodily waste, already believed to be transmitters of cholera, typhoid and other diseases. For the links between these seemingly disparate areas, and their relation to empire, see George Rousseau, 'Bums in the Time of Cholera: Sex, Sodomy, and Representations of the Fundament', in C.E. Forth and Ivan Crozier (eds), *Body Parts: Critical Explorations in Corporeality* (New York: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 44–64.

## Mark Harrison responds

Historical scholarship on Baden-Powell has delineated five main strands in his writings on Scouting: his emphasis upon national and imperial unity (a common theme in conservative politics), his enthusiasm for social and personal health, his desire for racial and social harmony, his personal approach to the training of young people, and his ruralism, which reflected contemporary concerns about urban degeneration and 'over-civilization'.<sup>1</sup> We see echoes of several of these themes in Elleke Boehmer's chapter, although its main focus is upon the closely related issues of health and sexuality in the context of British imperialism.

Through the work of Ronald Hyam and others, we have become accustomed to the sexual opportunities which empire presented to European males,<sup>2</sup> not to mention the fears of disease and degeneracy which this fostered in the British imagination around the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Boehmer is correct, I think, in suggesting that Baden-Powell described a 'third way' sexuality that evolved from the dutiful solitude of imperial administrators and soldiers, in remote corners of the British Empire. A-sexuality evoked images of the frontier rather than the teeming and lascivious cities of Britain's colonies; it was a form of masculinity compatible with the ethic of service and had the additional merit, in Baden-Powell's view, of being conducive to health.

The a-sexual ideal of masculinity and what Boehmer terms 'anal cleanliness' were certainly prominent features of *Scouting for Boys*. However, the fact that exhortations to good personal hygiene – internal and external – were commonplace leads me to doubt that Baden-Powell's 'ethics of anality' was developed in quite the way suggested by Boehmer – that is, as a displacement of other forms of sexuality, on which Baden-Powell dwells but little. Towards the end of her chapter, Boehmer writes that 'it is tempting to speculate that the male anus is the more boldly in evidence in the book *because* the penis is absent'; however, I would argue that Baden-Powell's advice for Scouts merely distilled a wide range of health-advice literature that was already well known in Britain for at least half a century. I suspect that Boehmer is reading too much into Baden-Powell's text and that his advice to Scouts on matters of health can be much better understood as an extension of the hygienic literature that Baden-Powell would have encountered during his time in the British Army, as well as by ideas of dietary health that were already in common circulation.

First, I should like to discuss the long tradition of advice literature on hygiene that was available to those entering the military and imperial



services. The middle of the nineteenth century saw a marked increase in the number of texts produced on this topic,<sup>4</sup> and from the 1860s, military hygiene was taught as a distinct subject at the Army Medical College.<sup>5</sup> There had been earlier attempts to inculcate the principles of hygiene – including the importance of keeping military camps free from faecal matter – but after the army was severely criticized for its heavy casualties from disease during the Crimean War of 1854–6, the subject assumed central importance. Efforts were made to improve sanitation in stationary camps and these had some success in reducing levels of infectious disease by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Sanitary measures – including the use of portable water filters, incinerators for faeces and refuse and, above all, strictures against fouling camps and water supplies – were also beginning to bear fruit in terms of lower mortality on military campaigns, although thousands of deaths from typhoid during the Anglo-Boer War (in which Baden-Powell fought) meant that it was still considered vital to hammer the message home.<sup>7</sup> As Baden-Powell put pen to paper, such concerns were very much in the public arena, as the Royal Commission on the South African War exposed the failure of combatant officers to insist that their men maintained a good standard of hygiene. In other words, there was nothing remarkable about Baden-Powell's insistence on anal hygiene (quite the reverse) and therefore there is less reason to believe that his strictures on this subject derived from a displacement of sexual energy.

Secondly, the emphasis that Baden-Powell placed upon regular bowel movements, and the exercises which were intended to promote them, can be explained more easily by placing them in the context of health fads in Britain and America over the previous fifty years. Over this period a range of exercises which purported to assist physiological processes, such as the Swedish exercises that Baden-Powell called upon Scouts to emulate in order to improve digestion, were widely discussed.<sup>8</sup> There was nothing unusual in Baden-Powell's espousal of such exercises, especially as they were then being introduced into the British Army with the aim of improving physiological health, rather than simply developing musculature, as before.<sup>9</sup>

In the medical literature of the day, we can also see a growing emphasis on the lower bowel as a source of disease, illustrated in its most extreme form by the writings and practices of the surgeon Sir William Arbuthnot Lane. Lane initiated programmes of health education that bear a strong resemblance to those today, emphasizing the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables to health. He also performed total colectomies as a cure for what he termed 'auto-intoxication'; an operation which proved

surprisingly popular amongst the worried well of Edwardian Britain.<sup>10</sup> Baden-Powell's solution to bowel disease was less extreme, but wholly in keeping with late-Victorian and Edwardian preoccupations with dietary health.

When placed in the broader context of military training and social concerns about diet and health, Baden-Powell's a-sexual idealism and his advocacy of exercises to assist physiological processes seem less eccentric than they might at first appear to the modern reader. By contemporary standards, there was nothing 'excessive' about Baden-Powell's preoccupation with the voiding of bodily waste, nor his advice on diet and exercise. All had plenty of parallels in the military and civilian cultures of late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain. It therefore seems unnecessary to explain the prominence of these themes in Baden-Powell's writings as an attempt to 'deflect sexual energy away from the genitals', as Boehmer suggests. The value of her piece is rather that it explores a hitherto neglected aspect of imperial culture – the asexual ethic – in relation to contemporary concerns over health and empire.

## Notes

1. Allen Warren, 'Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides, and an Imperial Ideal', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 232–56.
2. Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).
3. See, for example, Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
4. For example, E.A. Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene: Prepared Especially for Use in the Medical Service of the British Army* (London, 1864); C.A. Gordon, *Army Hygiene* (London, 1866).
5. Neil Cantlie, *A History of the Army Medical Department*, vol. ii (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1974).
6. Alan R. Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular* (London: Croom Helm, 1977).
7. Philip D. Curtin, *Death By Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); idem, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
8. Roberta Park, 'Biological Thought, Athletics and the formation of the "Man of Character": 1830–1900', in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 7–34; Allen Warren,

- 'Popular Manliness: Baden-Powell, Scouting and the Development of Manly Character', *ibid.*, pp. 199–220.
9. 'Report on the Physical Training of Recruits', *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, 11 (1908): pp. 1–3.
  10. William Arbuthnot Lane, *The Operative Treatment of Chronic Constipation* (London, 1909); *idem*, *Blazing the Health Trail* (London: Nisbet 1929); Ann Dally, *Fantasy Surgery, 1880–1930: With Special Reference to Sir William Arbuthnot Lane* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996).

## **Part III**

# **The Anthropological View**

# 11

## Child Sexual Abuse – an Anthropological Perspective

*Heather Montgomery*

### **Introduction: anthropology and child sexual abuse**

The previous chapters of this book have clearly demonstrated that contemporary western definitions of child sexual abuse cannot be easily or unproblematically applied to past societies. They have shown the dangers of looking at abuse through the lens of early twenty-first-century understandings of this issue which imply a teleology in which contemporary ideas about appropriate adult–child relationships are imposed as ‘correct’ or ‘more enlightened’ on people in the past and which have a tendency to misinterpret, and even to demonize, their attitudes to children. One needs to go no further than the opening paragraph of Lloyd deMause’s *A History of Childhood*<sup>1</sup> to argue for the importance of examining historical case studies which call into question such universalist and essentialist attempts to understand what is now commonly known as child sexual abuse. In a parallel way, social anthropology has recently begun to engage with issues of child sexual abuse, looking at how it is defined, and by whom, and how, as anthropologists, it is possible for us to distinguish between indigenous cultural practices, which may appear abusive to outsiders, but are not considered so internally to a community, and those which are acknowledged as aberrant.<sup>2</sup> The most important lesson for an anthropologist looking at the previously discussed historical case studies in this book, is the necessity of analysing and understanding child sexual abuse within its specific local or historical contexts, as well as in the broader sense of the social values and hierarchical structures prevailing in the wider society at particular times.

Both anthropological and historical approaches to child sexual abuse must refrain from projecting contemporary social concerns and anxieties onto others, whether or not they are separated by time or geography.

The study of other cultures necessarily asks both historians and anthropologists to understand and analyse practices which appear to them strange and sometimes repugnant. Contemporary writers are particularly sensitized to issues of child sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual relationships between adults and children and it would be possible to read several of the previous chapters through the lens of abusive sexual practices, as no doubt deMause would do. Yet trawling through history looking for ways in which children were sexually abused is ultimately extremely limiting, telling us much more about contemporary attitudes and anxieties than it does about the sexual cultures of the past, thereby exposing a dangerous lack of dialectic between past experience and contemporary expectation.

However, such an understanding must come with the proviso that cultural or historical relativism should not be used as a cover for condoning abusive practices, which would have been generally condemned *within* their own time and context. All societies have ideas about what constitutes abuse and maltreatment of children and such practices are usually roundly condemned.<sup>3</sup> The role of anthropology in such a discussion is to look more broadly at the issue of sexual cultures, the beliefs surrounding sex, its dangers and pleasures, and the acts and practices that deviate from accepted norms. As Gilbert Herdt has argued, it is the job of anthropologists interested in sexuality to study: 'the classification of sexual beliefs and behaviors, the range and extent of people's desires and the subjectivities that express them in action, and their ideologies of sexual nature and gender difference, reproduction, and pleasure in human development'.<sup>4</sup> It is only by understanding all these aspects of sexual cultures that questions of deviancy and abuse can be properly discussed. It would be naïve to assume that child sexual abuse does not occur in most societies, but it is extremely important to distinguish between what might appear to a westerner as an 'exotic' sexual practice and one that is truly abusive to the child.

Jill Korbin has a useful typology here to distinguish between abusive and non-abusive child-rearing practices. Firstly, she identifies those that may be painful or unpleasant (such as initiation rites or physical punishment) which are carried out in accordance with, and with the full knowledge of, the community; secondly, there are structural forms of abuse against children (such as poverty or armed conflict); finally there is the idiosyncratic form of abuse, carried out in secrecy, and involving fear and disgust for the child.<sup>5</sup> Child sexual abuse would fall into the third category and it is the issue of secrecy and shame which differentiates sexual abuse from accepted sexual practice. Studying child

sexual abuse inevitably means placing it within the context of what is considered acceptable by any particular society at any given time. It means analysing and understanding the particular sexual cultures within which the practice occurs and asking questions about shame and secrecy, whether there are understandings that children may be damaged by what is happening to them, and whether the sexual acts taking place are acknowledged and allowed within that culture, or whether they are secret, shameful or taboo.<sup>6</sup>

Social anthropologists have long been concerned with issues of incest, marriage prohibitions and the control of sexuality. However, until recently, they have tended to assume that taboos against, for example, father-daughter incest meant that such incest did not exist and, therefore, that child sexual abuse did not occur. By focusing on the taboos against a certain practice, they did not feel the need to look at any actual instances of it occurring or, as Jean La Fontaine has argued: 'during most of anthropology's history the problem of explaining the incest taboo has taken priority over understanding incest'.<sup>7</sup> The 'discovery' of child sexual abuse, especially within the family, and the change in terminology from incest to child sexual abuse, is a phenomenon of the last 30 years, and it is not surprising that anthropologists were blind to sexual abuse occurring within their fieldwork sites, when they were equally blind to it in their home societies. The discovery of all forms of child abuse has very recent history; it was only in 1962, that Professor Henry Kempe first used the phrase 'battered child syndrome', to explain the non-accidental injuries in children seen by doctors and the idea that child sexual abuse was not only rife, but occurred most frequently within the home, was equally problematic and took a long time to gain acceptance.<sup>8</sup> It was only in the early 1970s when feminist writers began to challenge the silence over rape and sexual abuse and adult 'survivors' of abuse began to publish their memoirs that child sexual abuse began to be acknowledged as a serious social problem, with profound consequences for the individuals involved. Despite this, however, most people, and the media in particular, remain much more comfortable focusing on 'stranger danger' and the relatively rare cases of abuse by strangers than they do on the children abused in their own homes, by those supposed to be caring for them. Given that anthropologists embraced much of the early feminist agenda so enthusiastically, challenging why the focus on studying societies always meant studying men, it is perhaps surprising that they did not focus on male violence against women or children or show any interest in questions of abuse. However, anthropologists have rarely wished to explore the darker side of the societies they study. Colin

Turnbull, for instance, wrote a book of populist anthropology called *The Forest People*,<sup>9</sup> describing the peaceful and idyllic world of the Mbuti pygmies of the Congo. Many years later he followed it up with *The Mountain People*,<sup>10</sup> again a popular narrative but this time of a people who, in the face of starvation and scarcity, had become inhuman, neglecting the young, the elderly and the vulnerable and leaving them to die. The book caused outrage, not only because it was seen to be exaggerated but also because it broke the unspoken anthropological code that anthropologists should like, or at least respect, the people with whom they work.

There has always been a reluctance to discuss any abuse against children that occurred during fieldwork, and on occasions anthropologists have proved themselves almost wilfully blind to abusive practices in the societies they are studying and have trivialized the harsh treatment of children. Although concerned with beatings rather than sexual abuse, Helen Kavapulu gives the example of the work of Pearl and Ernest Beagleholes who carried out studies of child rearing in Tonga in the 1930s and who wrote in their fieldnotes of the sadism of the beatings carried out by parents and the agony of the children. In their diaries, they give an account of a mother 'beating her child with thwarted fury that seems nine parts pure sadism and one-quarter part altruistic-disciplinary. To us, as we watch the scene, these child beatings seem to exceed all that is reasonable and just.' In their published work, however, this shock at the severity of the beatings and their view that this was abusive is transformed into the bland statement: 'The child who disobeys or who is thought to be lazy in carrying out a command is generally severely beaten by the mother. The beatings... appear to be village-practice in enforcing discipline.'<sup>11</sup> It was not until 1981 that the first book on abuse appeared within anthropology and in it, while anthropologists acknowledged that abuse did occur, they stressed that it was often idiosyncratic and heavily condemned within the culture.<sup>12</sup> The prevailing assumption remained that child abuse was largely unknown in other societies, whose small-scale nature, more communal attitude towards child rearing and different cultural attitudes towards children make it much more unlikely.<sup>13</sup> Graburn, for example, discusses child abuse among the Inuit but is at great pains to state that it is extremely rare, very idiosyncratic and generally condemned.<sup>14</sup> In these instances, ideas about abuse tended to focus on beatings and physical abuse rather than child sexual abuse. It was a subject that anthropologists were reluctant to tackle and it was not until the mid-1980s that it began to be discussed within anthropology, albeit in terms of the sexual abuse of children



in western countries rather than those overseas. It was not until the 1980s that social anthropologists began to look at why sexual abuse occurred even when there were strong taboos against it, and at the links between incest, sexual abuse and wider socioeconomic and political issues.<sup>15</sup>

The different and sometimes 'exotic' sexual practices of others have also been a long-discussed theme in anthropology. From the earliest work of Margaret Mead, through to Malinowski's provocatively entitled *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*<sup>16</sup> and to more recent reflective anthropological fieldwork that looks at anthropologists' own sexuality in relation to informants, sexual behaviour and sexual practices have informed understandings of kinship, identity, community relations and methodology.<sup>17</sup> Anthropologists, along with historians, have also reclaimed sexuality from psychology and biology, rejecting the idea of sexuality being a universal and physiological impulse. The more anthropologists have examined sexual practices and ideas about sexualities, the more it has become clear that sexual acts and behaviour do not carry the same meanings cross culturally, that the idea of a universal 'sex drive' is false and that rather than culture being the 'added extra' which might explain the odd variation in sexual practice, in fact it lies at the heart of understanding the different forms and types of sexualities. In Carol Vance's analysis, 'a sexual act does not carry with it a universal social meaning, [therefore] it follows that the relationship between sexual acts and sexual meanings is not fixed, and it is projected from the observer's time and place at great peril'.<sup>18</sup>

Despite several ethnographies that have celebrated different sexual cultures and talked in explicit terms about sexual practices,<sup>19</sup> the issue of sexual abuse has, until recently, been largely absent from ethnographic accounts. Studying sexuality in general is still seen as problematic for anthropologists and there is still a certain squeamishness about prying too intimately into matters often viewed as private. Furthermore, anthropologists must rely solely on what they observe and what they are told, while knowing that there is usually a big difference between what people do, and what they say they do, or between what they think they should do and their actual behaviour, a situation succinctly summed up by Parker et al.:

The description of sexual culture, in turn, involves a set of basic distinctions between cultural ideals vs. actual practice, public vs. private conduct, and prescribed vs. voluntary behavior. While the stated norms of a society may ideally require one mode of behavior,

in reality a wide range of different behaviors may actually be found in any given community. What people say and do in public with regard to sexuality may differ greatly from and even contradict their private sexual behavior. The forms of sexual behavior that are prescribed in different situations may contrast sharply with the ways in which individuals may behave voluntarily.<sup>20</sup>

Sexual abuse amplifies this as it is, by its very nature, secretive, transgressive, and usually unspoken and few anthropologists wish to accuse the people who have hosted them, and who they wish to understand, of abusing their children.

Sexual behaviour in general, therefore, is a particularly difficult and intimate area to explore because of the instability and uncertainties surrounding sexuality itself, the various definitions of the concept and the multiple meanings around the same acts. In terms of children's sexuality, these problems cause particular unease. As attitudes in the West towards homosexuality, or extra-marital sex, have become more tolerant and such acts carry less stigma, those towards child sex have hardened, a point made by Jean La Fontaine who notes that while the term incest tends to provoke sniggers or stories of remote and isolated parts of the UK where it is said to be rife, child sexual abuse can never be laughed at.<sup>21</sup> Although children in Europe and North America are having sex earlier than before, and their knowledge of sex may be greater than children in previous generations, children's sexual behaviour, especially if it involves any sort of coercion, power or age imbalance between partners, remains very difficult to discuss, without accusations of prurience or of condoning abuse. The issue of child sexual abuse is particularly fraught in contemporary western society and the idea that the worst, and most inappropriate, form of sex for teenagers and children is with someone significantly older is widespread. This is, by some definitions, inherently abusive, as the power differentials between an adult and child are so great that it can never be sanctioned as an appropriate form of sexuality. Yet this is not universally understood or applicable and there are both ethnographic and historical cases in which children and teenagers are encouraged, and expected, to have sex with those very much older than themselves. Given the acute sensitivities around the subject, it is not surprising that little work done by social scientists concerns children's enjoyment of sex or their own sexual cultures. The unease that many feel about talking to children about their sexual behaviour has meant that even anthropologists who specialize in children have largely shied away from discussions of children and sex and what little work that has

been done has been interpreted by adults through adult perspectives. The only acceptable way of discussing children and sex has been by discussing child sexual abuse.

Jean La Fontaine, one of the first anthropologists to look at the actual incidences of child sexual abuse (rather than the taboos against it), cautions against seeing children's sexuality through adult eyes, and assuming that sexuality is innate in all children. She writes: 'Before puberty children may engage in what it usually termed "sexual play" with one another. This is how adults interpret it, in the same way that adults understand much childish behaviour: by reference to their own understandings'.<sup>22</sup> She further makes the point that much of what we know about children's sexuality is based on supposition. There is little evidence about how much young brothers and sisters actually do play sexually with each other (although it is frequently assumed that they do). While this is usually dismissed as natural curiosity, there are no studies as to whether both parties enjoy it, whether it is coercive or even whether it is sexualized rather than simply an exploration of gender and bodily difference. Sexuality is thus an important area for both anthropologists and historians, but it would be naïve to see the study of it as anything other than intensely problematic, because of the acute anxieties it raises and also because it raises such important questions, for academics, about methods, sources and ethics.

This chapter will now look briefly at some of the ethnographic evidence that we have about children and sex before turning to the specific case study of child prostitutes in contemporary Thailand and the problematic nature of their understandings of sexual abuse. The examples in this book all come from Western Europe, while those in the rest of the chapter will come from non-western societies. The idea here is not to exoticize (or eroticize) the 'other', implying that sexual cultures elsewhere are freer or less repressed than in the West. Neither is it to argue that societies less technologically advanced are also primitive in terms of sexual behaviour, or in regards to their relationships to their children. Rather, it is to give examples, separated from our own society in space, instead of time, that show that sexual cultures relating to children are varied, flexible and changing, incorporating practices that modern western readers might find distasteful, but which are accepted and celebrated within the local context in which they occur. Understanding contemporary western views on child sexual abuse means understanding the historical trajectory of these views, but it should also include non-western understandings. Only by examining some of these is it possible

to see how complicated the issue of child sexual abuse really is and to understand that child sexual abuse is defined not by act but by context.

### **Ethnographies of children, sexuality and abuse**

Anthropology is a relatively new discipline in British and North American universities, establishing itself alongside, and at approximately the same time, as subjects such as psychology. Although British social anthropology has tended to shy away from psychology, in the US there has been a much closer relationship between the two subject areas and a much greater concentration on areas of common interest. Given this, it is not surprising that American anthropologists have tackled children's sexuality much more directly than their British counterparts and that some of the pioneers of American anthropology were so obviously influenced by Freud. One of the most famous example of this is Margaret Mead and her studies of children and adolescents in Samoa. In *Coming of Age in Samoa*, she analysed the daily lives of Samoan girls from infancy through early childhood until adolescence.<sup>23</sup> The aim of her research was to make explicit comparisons between the USA and Samoa, looking at how adolescence, and in particular the effects of puberty and sexuality, were managed differently in the two societies. Her fieldwork, in the 1920s, was undertaken at a time when Freud's ideas had disseminated into the wider population and where understandings that young people's sexuality was dangerous and needed to be repressed were widespread. Incest, and the repression of certain sexual feelings, was central to Freud's work, as were his analyses of his patients' descriptions of sexual abuse as wish-fulfilment and fantasy.<sup>24</sup> Mead's project was thus explicitly based on Freudian ideas that sexual repression lay at the heart of US society and that a society without sexual repression would also be without conflict. Her findings supported this hypothesis, showing that the stresses of adolescent life for American teenagers focused in part on the denial and disapproval surrounding adolescent sexuality, pressures that were unknown in Samoan society. According to Mead, the girls whose lives she studied had several lovers, beginning just after puberty. Usually a girl's lover would be a boy some years older than herself or a much older man and, before her marriage, she would expect to have many lovers or casual sexual partners. Sexuality was identified as a source of pleasure, rather than tension, as it was in the US.<sup>25</sup> Without repression, there could be no abuse.

The tendency to see sexuality among 'primitive' people as more straightforward, guilt free, and characterized by having more partners,

is, of course, deeply questionable. Unfortunately, Mead's work also illustrates all too clearly the pitfalls of undertaking research on children's sexuality and her interpretation of the data she collected has been much questioned recently. By going to Samoa with such an explicit agenda, Mead interpreted all she saw in the light of her hypothesis that sexuality, and sexual repression, was at the heart of adolescent conflict in the USA. Without the battle between adolescents and adults over the control of their sexuality, she argued that the resulting 'crisis and stress' of adolescence was unknown in Samoan society. Whether or not this is true is highly debatable. Derek Freeman claims that not only did she overlook many of the sources of tension and play down the strict control elders had over girls' sexuality, but that Mead's informants hoaxed her, telling her what she wanted to hear rather than giving her accounts of their actual behaviour and beliefs.<sup>26</sup> She also failed to locate her own prejudices or recognise the intellectual and cultural heritage she brought with her. As her own society was incorporating Freudian views on sexuality and the centrality of sex to both individual and social identity, she projected these onto Samoa, believing that sexuality was the key to understanding other cultures. In her own society, the sexual abuse of children was barely acknowledged, and it is unsurprising that she failed to address the issue with her informants. It is difficult to read her work now and to see whether what she is describing is in fact child sexual abuse. Certainly one reading of her work would suggest that pre-pubertal girls having sex with much older, and more powerful, men must leave them vulnerable to abuse or coercive sex. Another would take the view that as long as no one within that community believed that they were committing sexual abuse, then they were not. Yet it is hard to read Mead's work without making certain assumptions about child sexual abuse and without questioning whether what she describes as pleasant and joyful for the girls is, in fact, distasteful or objectionable to them. However, this view of sexual abuse is as culture-bound as Mead's own; it is impossible to rely solely on either interpretation.

Mead's work does still retain some valuable insights; most importantly that we cannot understand children's sexuality without first deconstructing the notion of childhood and what is appropriate sexual experience for a child. Child sex has become, for the vast majority of westerners, the final taboo. Despite the apparent paradox that children are becoming sexualized much earlier than before and encouraged to dress, and behave, as sexual beings at a considerably younger age, and indeed that the average age of first intercourse is falling, the ideal of a sexually innocent childhood is key to contemporary constructions of childhood. These constructions

are based, not only on ideology, but also on economic and social factors. A contemporary child has a separate room from his or her parents and is largely shielded from direct knowledge of sexual matters by the space and isolation seen as necessary for modern children. Slum children of previous centuries had no such luxury and looking ethnographically, in many societies, young children are very knowledgeable about sex and it is part of their daily lives. In communities where privacy is not valued, children are likely to grow up hearing adults talking about sex, seeing their parents and other adults having sex and the mechanics of sex are no great mystery to them. Thomas Gregor has written extensively about the sexual behaviour and sexuality of an Amerindian group living in Central Brazil called the Mehinaku. He writes of parents openly attributing sexual motivation to very young children, joking about it and viewing it with amusement. He gives the following example: 'As toddlers play and tussle in a promiscuous huddle on the floor, parents make broad jokes about their sexual relations: "Look! Glike is having sex with Pairuma's daughter."' <sup>27</sup> A parent in the UK who made such a comment would be severely criticized and punished for allowing such sexualized behaviour, but in this particular context, it is seen as appropriate and unproblematic.

In this environment, described by Gregor, an eight-year-old boy told the anthropologist, 'I haven't had sex yet, but in a few years I will.' <sup>28</sup> Sexual knowledge, and the open acknowledgement of sexuality by children, is not uncommon. However, this does not mean that children's sexuality is always viewed as unproblematic or that Mehinaku society does not distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, or between what is abusive and what is not. While little attention is paid to children's sexual experimentation, children are expected to do this discreetly and away from the community. If children are caught, they are teased by their parents and the rest of the community and taught that public displays of sexuality are not welcomed. The situation also changes as children get older and boys in particular are subject to strictures once they reach the age of 12 or 13. The Mehinaku believe that boys do not mature and grow into men naturally and that this process must be brought on through medicine and through sexual abstinence. Around the age of 12, therefore, boys are secluded at one end of the communal house, behind a palm wood barrier. Here a boy must take medicine, follow certain dietary rules, speak softly and, above all, avoid any sexual contact with women. Appropriate sexual behaviour changes as children get older. Once a girl reaches puberty, she becomes dangerous to boys, her menstrual blood and vaginal secretions can cause sickness in boys who must be protected from her. <sup>29</sup>



*Illustration 11.1* The Shrine of the Penis. A small shrine in the tourist resort where the boys of Baan Nua would meet clients. Reproduced by kind permission of Heather Montgomery.

The important point here is not that these are primitive people with a 'freer' or less repressed attitude to sexuality than westerners, or that without these strictures, sexual abuse is unknown, but that appropriate sexual contact is differently defined depending on cultural context. While contemporary westerners may feel such overt sexual conversation



and contact is distasteful and possibly harmful to these children and will therefore condemn and even legislate against it, the Mehinaku have very different understandings; there are strict rules about appropriateness and acceptability and different ideas about abuse. It is also noticeable that in this case, sexual contact is limited to young people of roughly comparable ages and while there might be a debate about how far children see this as sexual, it is harder to argue that it is abusive. Evidence from other ethnographic sources, however, stretch these understandings of cultural relativity even further. The Canela, another Amerindian group living in Brazil, also have no taboos on pre-marital sex and children are encouraged to have frequent and early sexual experience. Amongst the Canela, it is considered necessary and desirable for both boys and girls to begin experimenting sexually from a young age (around six) both before their marriage, which takes place for girls between the ages of 11 and 13, and after.<sup>30</sup> Sexual generosity is important in this community and is viewed as an ancestral custom. Girls are expected to take part in 'sequential sex' where they take on multiple partners, one after the other, over the course of several hours in full view of others. Girls who show any reluctance to do this are described as 'stingy' and scolded by their female relatives.

Children up to 6 or 7 grow up watching and hearing adults being open about extramarital trysts and sequential sex and learn how their role models enjoy these activities. Extramarital sex thus becomes a valued expectation of these young people. Experiences continue to enhance this expectation for both sexes into adolescence, when young people become thoroughly involved in extramarital sex themselves. The general atmosphere of joy and fun surrounding extramarital sex may be the principal factor which influences young people to accept and enjoy sequential sex.<sup>31</sup>

However, this is not simply a society where girls experience great sexual freedom or where they are able to control their sexuality, but is a society with very different ideas about the body and the nature of sex. The Canela, like other Amerindian groups such as the Huaorani,<sup>32</sup> believe that once a woman becomes pregnant, any further semen she receives from other men becomes a biological part of the growing baby. Therefore children have several fathers, known as co-fathers or contributing fathers. To outsiders, these practices may seem bizarre repugnant and abusive, yet Crocker and Crocker point out that there are strictly



observed rules about who can have sex with whom and that child abuse, as it is understood in the West, is very infrequent in this society.

Our concept of child abuse includes the destruction of the child's trust in kin and others who are supposed to be her or his protectors. We also think of such abuse as involving pain and physical damage to the sexually immature child... The experience of pain in first sex is not a part of Canela sexual lore. Although some girls had some anxiety before their first sequential sex, I never heard any discussion of painful experiences. Here again, cultural expectations heavily influence the physical experience.<sup>33</sup>

This paragraph is key to understanding child sexual abuse from both a cross-cultural perspective and historical perspective. Whatever contemporary western views of child sex, it is clear that from this description, no Canela feels that sequential sex is abusive; there is no secrecy and fear associated with this sexual practice, and however it might be interpreted by outsiders, it is condoned within the community. What is missing, of course, is the children's own accounts of it, and whether they do consider it in the same way as adults. It is an unfortunate gap in much anthropological writing on the subject, that children's own perspectives are rarely canvassed, and it is only in relatively recent studies, such as the one which concludes this chapter, that children's own opinions are asked.

These examples point to the complexities of studying child sexual abuse in a non-western context. It is impossible to understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate expressions of children's sexuality without looking at the worldviews of their culture and without tying discussions to much wider issues of gender roles, reproduction, marriage rules, and even cosmology. In other instances, this becomes even more complicated when sexual acts carry very different meanings in different cultural and geographical contexts. The clearest example here is from Papua New Guinea, where certain communities practise a form of 'ritualized homosexuality'. In his work with the Sambia (a pseudonym), Gilbert Herdt studied this form of homosexuality, showing how, from the age of seven, boys are gradually initiated into manhood by a series of rituals in six stages that involve fellating or being fellated by other men of the tribe. Herdt explains:

Sambia practice secret homosexual fellation, which is taught and instituted in first-stage initiation. Boys learn to ingest semen from

older youths through oral sexual contacts. First- and second-stage initiates may only serve as fellators; they are forbidden to reverse erotic roles with older partners. Third stage pubescent bachelors and older youths thus act as fellateds, inseminating prepubescent boys. All males pass through both erotic stages, being first fellators, then fellateds: there are no exceptions since all *Sambia* males are initiated and pressured to engage in homosexual fellatio.<sup>34</sup>

On reading this passage, it is difficult to see anything other than sexual activity, and indeed, sexual abuse going on. To most westerners, *Sambian* fellation rituals not only suggest culturally sanctioned homosexuality, but homosexual child abuse of the type now often identified with organized paedophiles. Yet it is arguable whether these initiations and ritual have anything to do with sex at all. To understand what is happening here involves looking at gender roles in *Sambian* culture and the cultural meanings placed on semen. *Sambian* society is rigidly split into male and female, with women being seen as inferior. In order to turn boys into men, they must be taken away from their mothers, whose milk they have drunk in their early years, and turned into men through the ingestion of semen. Semen is the essence of manhood and it cannot be produced by boys alone. Younger boys therefore have to take semen into their bodies from older partners and once they have reached a certain stage of maturity, they will then pass semen on to others in turn. Herdt claims that boys are initially reluctant to take part in these rituals, but come to enjoy them later on. As they become older, boys become betrothed to a pre-adolescent girl and enter what western psychological theory would call a bisexual phase. When the girl is mature, her husband will give up the homosexual rituals of his youth and become exclusively heterosexual.<sup>35</sup>

The case of the *Sambia* is an important one because it focuses attention away from the sexual abuse of girls, which is often given much greater prominence than boys, and also because it calls into question the very nature of sexual abuse. In this instance, what might be seen as an abusive sexual practice in western terms, becomes something very different when looked at in *Sambian* terms. The expectations on boys to perform fellatio and the cultural meanings given to semen mean that boys cannot become men without being initiated and initiating others in turn. Therefore, it is debatable whether these initiation practices have anything to do with sexuality or even if they are sexual acts. Yet, Herdt writes that there is an initial reluctance to perform these acts, and that boys are pressured into them, which does seem to imply some sort of

coercion, but that later on, the boys come to enjoy these activities. Separating out the pleasurable from the abusive, and even the sexual, becomes profoundly difficult in this instance, thereby considerably complicating understandings about what is, or is not, abusive.

These three examples are from very small, relatively isolated groups in traditional societies and the sexual behaviour that occurs among children in them may seem an extreme example of human sexual behaviour. It is hard to know the extent to which ideas about children and sexuality within these communities have changed, or are changing, with globalization and greater exposure to western ideas. Certainly, countries such as Japan appear to have 'discovered' child sexual abuse in recent years and it has become a social concern in the way that it was not previously.<sup>36</sup> Yet they are not unique, and ethnographic case studies such as these can help historians understand the wide variety of ideas about sexuality amongst other peoples, and the dangers of automatically labelling them as abusive. For both anthropologists and historians, interpreting child sexual abuse in the past, or in contemporary non-western societies, involves understanding profoundly different world-views about the nature of sex, the body and indeed childhood itself. It also involves understanding the inherent instability of ideas about what constitutes a sexual act and how these can change over time and place.<sup>37</sup> What is noticeable in all three examples discussed previously, however, is the difficulty of reading them while disregarding the suggestion of abuse. Whatever our understandings of different world views and notions of the body, to a western reader, these passages can be deeply disturbing.

### **A case study: child prostitution in Thailand**

The previous examples have been based on fieldwork carried out in the 1960s and 1970s. The children referred to within these books are now long grown up and possibly no longer alive. The next generation of anthropologists are unable to go back to these cases and re-interview children about their experiences and how they understood them, or whether they experienced these practices as abusive, or came to understand them as such, with the benefit of hindsight. The case from Thailand which follows exemplifies many of the strengths and insights that an anthropologist can bring to a discussion of child sexual abuse, but it also points to some of the disadvantages. The example given is merely a snap shot in the life of one particular community; it is harder

to generalize more widely from it and it is also difficult, without follow-up studies, to see, or understand, the processes of change going on within the community. However, it does show very clearly that attitudes about child sexual abuse are not universally shared and that despite globalization, ideas about abuse are still contested and what may be considered as abhorrent and abusive in one society may be seen in a very different way elsewhere. The western cases presented in this book, from the Ancient world to the twentieth century, would have met altogether other receptions in different, non-western cultures, and perhaps even in several western cultures where the values and norms of sexuality differed from those found in a developing Britain, where the greatest number of cases originated. It is in this clash of ideologies that cultural relativism comes under scrutiny.

The rest of this chapter therefore will look at the specific case of child prostitutes in Thailand. Picking up on some of the previously discussed themes, it will discuss how children understood selling sex, how they differentiated what they did with their bodies from their own private morality, and the extent to which they located paid sexual activity as a form of child sexual abuse. It will also look at the clash of ideologies between children operating under one system of beliefs who come into conflict with the spread of global ideals of the importance of



*Illustration 11.2* The tourist resort during the day in the part of town catering to gay male sex tourists. Reproduced by kind permission of Heather Montgomery.



*Illustration 11.3* The houses in the first picture have been rebuilt with income from prostitution. They are more substantial and better made than those in the second image that belong to families without working children. Reproduced by kind permission of Heather Montgomery.



*Illustration 11.4* Houses built without income from prostitution. Reproduced by kind permission of Heather Montgomery.

preserving sexual innocence in children. It is based on fifteen months of fieldwork carried out with a small slum community called Baan Nua (North Village, in Thai) on the edge of a tourist resort in Thailand. There were 65 children in this community who worked in prostitution, almost exclusively with foreign tourists and these children included both boys and girls between the ages of six and 12.

The stereotypical story of child prostitution in Thailand claims that young girls are tricked into leaving home, or sold by impoverished parents into a brothel where they are repeatedly raped and terrorized into servicing up to twenty clients a night. There is certainly good evidence for some of this. Children have been kidnapped from neighbouring countries, especially China and Burma, and kept in appalling conditions.<sup>38</sup> Others have been sold or debt-bonded by their parents.<sup>39</sup> There have also been horrific cases of young girls and women imprisoned in brothels and unable to escape when the brothel has caught fire. It is undeniable that child prostitution is risky and dangerous in Thailand and many children are caught in situations which present a great threat to their physical and emotional well-being. There is little question that these children are being abused and exploited physically, emotionally, financially, as well as sexually.<sup>40</sup> The children in Baan Nua were not in any of these categories, however, and they present a different, but rarely acknowledged, model of prostitution. They were technically 'free' in that they were not debt-bonded or kept in brothels and they lived instead with their parents. They were certainly not typical of all child prostitutes in Thailand but they are an important group whose lives and identities challenge many of the expected stereotypes of child prostitution.<sup>41</sup>

The people of Baan Nua were migrants to the area, attracted to the resort in the belief that where there were foreigners, there was money. Originally from farming communities in the North and North East, they migrated to this resort approximately 15 years earlier looking for work in the informal economy. Linked by friendship and, in some cases, kinship connections, they arrived in the resort, and put up makeshift houses made out of corrugated iron and scrap wood. Over the years, some of these houses had been rebuilt out of simple concrete breeze blocks and had a more permanent feel to them, while others were patched together by whatever material came to hand. The land was barren and desolate and there was no room for even subsistence farming. It was a poor community without running water and only intermittent electricity. The numbers of households fluctuated throughout the year, ranging from sixteen to twenty as households changed, children moved out and built their own houses or other houses finally collapsed. In the rainy



season the inadequacies of the shelters were most apparent and during this time, some people moved away, leaving fewer than eighty people in the community. In some of the longer-established families, women had first come down during the final stages of the Vietnam War to work as bar girls for American GIs on leave and had stayed on, working as prostitutes in Thailand's newly formed tourist industry. Their daughters had followed them into sex work, and their granddaughters were now doing the same.

The community was very dependent on the income generated by the children. Given the grinding poverty of the community, their wages were often the difference between survival and going under and were the means by which the community remained intact. The children had tried a variety of jobs: selling sweets to tourists, begging, scavenging for rubbish at nearby dumps or occasionally working in unregulated garment factories making fake designer goods to sell to tourists. All these options were badly paid and exposed the children to further exploitation. Begging and selling sweets often resulted in theft or intimidation from older streetchildren or the police. Working in a factory or on the rubbish dump was extremely hard in the heat and the conditions were unsanitary and few children lasted long in either job. In these circumstances prostitution, especially with foreign clients, was a job which brought in relatively large amounts of money – usually five times as much as begging – and which, furthermore, brought with it the chance to stay in luxurious hotels and eat well.

Poverty was thus a powerful factor in propelling children into prostitution. However, there was no straightforward correlation and it is important not to claim a causal link between poverty and child sexual abuse, either in Thailand or in the West. Much more important to the children themselves, in terms of their own understandings of what they did, was the great emphasis their community placed on filial duty. The majority of the children had been born in Baan Nua, referred to it as home and knew of no other way of life. They had almost no contact with relatives outside Baan Nua and communication with the world outside was limited to a few children from neighbouring slums and the workers from a small charity who provided them with food and a certain amount of help. Kinship relations and community obligations therefore took on a special significance within the slum and it was only through an understanding of the importance of these that it was possible to understand the children's justifications for working as prostitutes, and their understandings of abuse. It was because of the duties that kin felt towards one another that the children were able to rationalize and condone

what they did. In contrast to understandings of childhood in Western Europe and America, children were seen as a parental investment with an anticipated return and were expected to work for the family as soon as they were able.<sup>42</sup> The concepts of gratitude and obedience towards parents were taken seriously and the obligations towards parents were viewed as a child's primary responsibility. Within Baan Nua, respect for parents equalled respect for mothers. There were very few men inside this community. The young men left early, often for seasonal construction jobs, and showed little interest in marrying or settling down in Baan Nua. The younger boys stayed with their mothers and often worked as prostitutes themselves before drifting off in their late teens. It was, therefore, the women of the community that held Baan Nua together. All the households, with one exception, were headed by women who controlled the labour and the income of everyone in the household. The duties that a child had to his or her mother were paramount and the mother-child relationship was viewed as the most important one of the child's life and the one which carried the heaviest burden of obligation and reciprocity. Despite the known stigma against prostitution, a powerful mitigating circumstance for many of them was the financial support they provided for their mothers.

There was no formal organization of the prostitution in Baan Nua. Entrance into prostitution was done through friends or older siblings who moved onto pimping whenever they could. The clients of these children were from a variety of European countries with three men in particular having the most contact with the children. These three men had been visiting Baan Nua for many years and had formed relationships with many of the families. The children expressed no hatred for these men and over time some form of relationship had been built up. They often sent money when they were not in the country, or paid for large one-off projects like rebuilding houses or paying off debts. One client, an Italian in his mid-thirties, was a regular visitor to the slum and both a client and a pimp of the children. He came to Thailand twice a year and stayed for a couple of months during which time he videoed the children playing and took the tapes back to Italy to show friends and other men interested in having sex with them. For the children, the length of time that the men had been coming to them and the help they had given them meant that they could be classified as friends rather than as clients. All the children steadfastly refused to characterize the relationships with long-term clients as prostitution, abuse or exploitation. Another long-term client gave money to a couple of the girls if they asked for it and his most favoured partner always denied that he



abused her. She said: 'He is so good to me, he gives me and my family money whenever we need it, how can he be bad?'

Within the community it was relatively easy to find out who had sex for money and who did not, but the children's perceptions of what they did were much more complex. It quickly became obvious that categories and labels were fundamentally important to the children's images of themselves and were consciously rejected or modified by the children. I realized early on that prostitution was not something that children *were*, it is what they did. I soon discovered that 'prostitute' was not a definition that the children ever used about themselves and that it had nothing to do with their sense of identity. While it was common for children or their parents to say they 'went out for fun with foreigners', 'caught foreigners' or even 'had guests', I never heard anyone refer to themselves as a child prostitute. Again, the term prostitute was a fundamentally western one, imposed by outsiders, based on western understandings of identity and sexual acts as being synonymous. The children themselves would rather use words which suggested an ambiguity and a conceptual distance between prostitution and what they did in their own lives. While some clients were customers who simply bought sex, these sorts of relationships were disliked and rarely talked about. What they preferred to discuss were the men who were 'friends' and who consequently had reciprocal obligations with the children and their families. They consciously downplayed the importance of the money to them. They never set a price for sexual acts; money that was given to them after sex was referred to as a gift or as a token of appreciation. Money was not the end-point of the exchange but a way of expressing affection. Sometimes a client would not leave cash for the children but would pay in kind, such as through the rebuilding or refurbishing of a girl's house. Given this, it was easy for the children to deny prostitution. For both children and their mothers, the length of time that the men had been coming to them and the financial help they had given them meant that they were relied on, and spoken of, as friends.

The effects of sex on the children were never discussed in the community. When asked about whether or not she was worried because her eight-year-old son was a prostitute, one mother replied: 'It's just for one hour. What harm can happen to him in one hour?' Even though a child's body is too small for penetration by an adult and some of the harm done by these men was evident in the bleeding and tearing that occurred during these encounters, this aspect tended to be ignored. It would be easy to condemn the mothers of the children – such physical

evidence of abuse must surely have suggested that these encounters were unbearably exploitative and abusive – yet even this must be interpreted with caution. Mothers would condemn such acts and do whatever they could to help their children overcome the pain of such encounters. But the understanding of the effects of such abuse was very different. Mothers did not see it as fundamentally harmful to their children or as damaging to their psyche. Such occurrences were viewed entirely in a physical, rather than psychological, terms and there was no belief that long-term damage could be inflicted on a child in ‘just one hour’. For a western anthropologist, however, such viewpoints challenge the limits of how far cultural relativism can be pushed and whether because prostitution seemed such an accepted and open part of the lifestyle, it should be seen in its own terms and context and explained (if not condoned) as a rational economic choice within a particular cultural setting.

To outsiders the lifestyle of the Baan Nua looked extremely unpleasant and squalid and certainly the inhabitants themselves never romanticized it. However, there was an internal dynamic to the life of the community that enabled the people there to continue with their own logic and set of ethics. Rightly or wrongly, the children did have strategies for rationalizing prostitution and for coming to terms with it. They had found an ethical system whereby the public selling of their bodies did not affect their private sense of humanity and identity. When one 13-year-old was asked about selling her body, she replied ‘It’s only my body’, but when asked about the difference between adultery and prostitution, she told me that adultery was very wrong. In her eyes, adultery was a betrayal of a private relationship whereas prostitution was simply done for money. She could make a clear conceptual difference between her body and what happened to it and what she perceived to be her innermost ‘self’. These children could delineate clear boundaries between what happened to their bodies and what affected their personal sense of identity and morality. Selling sex was not immoral because it violated no ethical codes. Betraying family members, failing to provide for parents or cheating on spouses or boyfriends was roundly condemned, but exchanging sex for money, especially when that money was used for moral ends, was not blameworthy. Ideas about sexual abuse, especially those based on western ideas of inevitable psychological damage, played limited parts in their understandings of what they did.

There is no doubt that western men who use their structural, economic and political power to exploit the poverty of these children must not be seen as allowing them to fulfil cultural obligations; they were quite clearly abusing and exploiting them. However, the children consistently

gave different explanations for what they did and refused to view selling sex as inherently exploitative. To highlight this is not to offer a defence of child prostitution or to argue that children should not be protected because they have rationalized prostitution to themselves and to others, but it is to acknowledge the difficulties of discussing children's experiences of sexual abuse when children and adults do not share the same viewpoint. The children certainly expressed no enthusiasm for prostitution, although several did admit that they liked the lifestyle of what was to them, upmarket apartments and the opportunity to eat well. However, there was little of the secrecy and shame identified by other anthropologists as classic symptoms of child sexual abuse.

It is easy to claim that these children were misguided or that they suffered from a form of false consciousness. Simply because a child did not recognise sexual exploitation, it does not necessarily mean that it did not occur or that selling sex did not in some ways damage their sense of identity and self. However, the children explicitly rejected such ideas and denied the status of victim. They tried to form reciprocal arrangements with their clients and their rejection of labels such as prostitute was not simply a denial of reality, but also a way of manipulating that reality. They recognised the structural power their clients had over them and did their best to direct it to their benefit. From the interviews carried out and the observations made of these children, it was clear that they had a profoundly different understanding of sex from those understood as fundamental and non-negotiable to most westerners. For them, neither prostitution nor sexuality were the focus of their identity. What was considered as sexual abuse by outsiders did not affect their own sense of identity which was based on being a dutiful son or daughter, belonging to a community, and fulfilling obligations to one's family and to the community. The children might acknowledge pain or unpleasantness during sex, but they did not necessarily equate it with abuse. For a westerner, with western ideas and understandings of child sexual abuse, it is extremely difficult to accept that a child would not inevitably be damaged in some ways by this abuse, but as an anthropologist, it is possible to see this abuse in its wider context, both globally in terms of imbalances in structural economic and political power and locally in terms of very different sexual cultures. It is also possible to acknowledge that the children retained radically different understandings of sexuality and their bodies. It is not necessary to accept their understandings any more than they might accept those of an anthropologist but it is important to acknowledge the different discourses and definitions around abuse.

Over time, there were observable changes in Baan Nua and there were signs that government and social pressure was changing the way in which people behaved, even if there was less evidence that it changed the way they believed. Children stopped talking so openly about prostitution, and sometimes referred to it as an 'ugly' thing. Both children and their parents became aware of the penalties that allowing prostitution would incur, such as the children being placed in a rehabilitation home and the parents put in prison, with the loss of all parental rights. More importantly, HIV/AIDS started to take its toll on the community and people left Baan Nua to build new lives elsewhere, leaving few traces behind them and no way of finding out where they had gone. Thus Baan Nua and its children are now part of history. Another anthropologist returning to the community would find something very different; either that the houses in the community have been abandoned or that new people have moved in with a very different way of life, and it would be impossible to replicate or even substantiate the above findings. However, the study of Baan Nua does illuminate that even those issues that to modern western sensibilities are most important – the inviolable body of the child, the sexual innocence that is seen as the right of all children – are not natural, unshakable, universal facts, or even unquestionable human rights. They are challenged and contested in other places by peoples who have very different understandings of children, their bodies, their sexualities and indeed their families and societies.

## Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together several disparate threads, showing some of the challenges that anthropologists have found in trying to tackle issues of child sexual abuse. It is a deeply uncomfortable and problematic issue, and, certainly, those people who do write on the subject have opened themselves up to the charge of, in the words of Jean La Fontaine, 'academic voyeurism [which is] no substitute for more action on behalf of the victims [of child sexual abuse]'.<sup>43</sup> Writing about child prostitution always means inserting clauses denying accusations of justifying child prostitution or the early sexual experience of children. However, looking at different ideas about sexuality and abuse need not mean condoning western men going to Thailand to buy sex from children, any more than saying that the practice of adult men having sex with younger boys in Ancient Greece makes such behaviour acceptable in modern Britain. However, having to say this, and justify a concern in the subject, is, in itself, interesting. The control of children's sexuality, and the anxieties that discussing it raises, are a feature of modern life. Looking at the subject

from a historical or anthropological perspective does not necessarily give any answers, or lay down any moral codes. What it does do, is to show that ideas about child sexual abuse cannot be taken out of the cultural, or temporal, place under discussion and that while gathering evidence on the issue may be difficult, its importance to understanding childhoods, both ancient and modern, is central.

## Notes

1. The book opens with the line: 'The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused.' Lloyd deMause, 'The Evolution of Childhood', in L. deMause (ed.), *The History of Childhood* (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), p. 1.
2. Such a judgement is never easy, of course, as was shown in the 2004 case when seven men in the remote Pitcairn Islands were convicted of child sexual abuse. The islands in the South Pacific have only 47 inhabitants, largely descended from the Bounty mutineers. Evidence was presented to the court that the age of consent was 12 on the islands, and furthermore, following the work of some anthropologists, that early sexual experience and promiscuity were features of Polynesian society (which the Pitcairn islanders claimed to be). However, they were tried under British law, and convicted, and later lost their appeal. The claims split the community, with some members arguing for respect of indigenous cultural practice, and others that sexual abuse could never be condoned.
3. As Jill Korbin has pointed out, many western child-rearing practices appear abusive to non-westerners. She writes: 'It is equally sobering to look at Western child-rearing techniques and practices through the eyes of these same non-Western cultures. Non-Western people often conclude that anthropologists, missionaries, or other Europeans with whom they come into contact do not love their children or simply do not know how to care for them properly. Practices such as isolating infants and small children in rooms or beds of their own at night, making them wait for readily available food until a schedule dictates that they can satisfy their hunger, or allowing them to cry without immediately attending to their needs or desires would be at odds with the child-rearing philosophies of most... cultures'. Jill Korbin, *Child Abuse and Neglect: Cross Cultural Perspectives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 4.
4. Gilbert Herdt, *Sambia Sexual Culture: Essays from the Field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1999) p. 9.
5. Korbin, *Child Abuse and Neglect*.
6. Most anthropologists are cultural relativists, arguing against the idea of universal value judgements and indeed against any explanations *based on biological or physical explanations of human behaviour*. In the area of sexuality, they have argued against the Freudian idea of sexual instinct or sex drive, and reject binary categorizations between both natural and unnatural

acts and those of preference classifications, so that labels such as homosexuality or heterosexuality have been shown to be meaningless outside the contemporary West. See, for example, Pat Caplan, *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality* (London: Tavistock, 1987); Carole Vance, 'Anthropology Rediscovered Sexuality: a Theoretical Comment', *Social Science and Medicine* 33 (1991): 875–84; Gayle Rubin, 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality', in Carole Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (New York: Pandora, 1992), pp. 267–319. Furthermore, modern anthropologists reject any notion of hierarchy in relation to sexuality or anything else, so that while some nineteenth-century anthropologists labelled 'promiscuity' and multiple partners in traditional societies as a sign of backwardness and primitiveness, those who work on sexuality today generally do not make value judgements about the sexual practices of others but place them in much wider discussions of ideas about the body, about procreation, gender, kinship and cosmology. Herdt has argued:

The creation of a sexual culture is an epistemology, a system of knowledge about the world, and about things in the world. Sexual culture provides for a culture its received theory of what human nature is. What is a man? What is a woman? What is manliness? What is womanliness? What is a boy? What is a girl? What is heterosexuality? What is homosexuality? What is sex for? What is good about sex? What is bad about sex? Those questions are all being iterated as a set of distinctions from the locally created theory of human sexual nature. This theory is then being promoted and taught to children, becomes part of their individual ontologies, and then feeds back into what we might call the collective pool of the sexual culture and its public representations for the culture as a whole.

'Examining Secrecy and Sexuality' *Semiannual Newsletter of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities*, 6: 2 (1998). Taken from [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw\\_center/examine.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center/examine.htm)

7. Jean La Fontaine, 'Child Sexual Abuse and the Incest Taboo: Practical Problems and Theoretical Issues', *Man* (N. S.) 23 (1986): 1–18 (p. 2).
8. Freud famously could not accept that the accounts of father–daughter incest he heard in his consulting rooms were descriptions of abuse or coercive sex and interpreted them instead as fantasy. For further details on this, see Jeffrey Masson, *Freud, the Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (London: Faber, 1984).
9. Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1961).
10. Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (London: Pimlico, 1994).
11. Helen Kavapalu, 'Dealing with the Dark Side in the Ethnography of Childhood: Child Punishment in Tonga', *Oceania* 63:4 (1993) pp. 313–29.
12. Korbin, *Child Abuse and Neglect*; Jill Korbin 'Child Sexual Abuse: Implications from the Cross-Cultural Record', *Anthropological Perspectives on the Treatment and Maltreatment of Children*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987).

13. Gertrude Fraser and Philip Kilbride, 'Child Abuse and Neglect – Rare, but Perhaps Increasing, Phenomenon among the Samia of Kenya', *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal*, 4(4) (1980): 227–32.
14. Nelson Graburn, 'Severe Child Abuse Among the Canadian Inuit', in *Anthropological Perspectives on the Treatment and Maltreatment of Children*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Dordrecht: D. Reidel).
15. Judith Ennew, *Sexual Exploitation of Children* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986); Jill Korbin, 'Child Sexual Abuse: Implications from the Cross-Cultural Record', in *Anthropological Perspectives on the Treatment and Maltreatment of Children*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987); Jean La Fontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).
16. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1927).
17. Don Kulick and Margaret Willson, *Taboo: Sex, Identity and Erotic Subjectivity in Anthropological Fieldwork* (London: Routledge, 1995); Fran Markowitz and Michael Ashkenazi, *Sex, Sexuality and the Anthropologist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
18. Vance 1991 op. cit. p. 878.
19. See, for example, William Crocker and Jean Crocker, *The Canela: Bonding through Kinship, Ritual and Sex* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994); Thomas Gregor, *Anxious Pleasures* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985); Richard Parker, *Bodies, Pleasures and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); Graham Fordham, 'Whisky, Women and Song: Alcohol and AIDS in Northern Thailand', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1995): 154–77; Graham Fordham, 'Northern Thai Male Culture and the Assessment of HIV Risk: Towards a New Approach', *Cross-roads* 12 (1998): 77–164.
20. Richard Parker, Gilbert Herdt and Manuel Carballo, 'Sexual Culture, HIV Transmission, and AIDS Research', *The Journal of Sex Research* 28 (1991): 77–98 (p. 80).
21. La Fontaine 1986 op. cit.
22. La Fontaine 1990 op. cit. p. 159. Jean La Fontaine was one of the first anthropologists to place child sexual abuse under serious study. Young people's sexuality has been of greater concern to sociology and cultural studies, and anthropologists have been largely uninterested in children, sexuality or abuse until her book was published. Her initial work focused on ritualised sexual abuse or the so-called 'Satanic panics' of the 1980s. On the basis of her work on initiation and witchcraft in Africa, La Fontaine was asked by the Department of Health to undertake research on the existence of ritual sexual abuse, which was thought to be a widespread problem in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. Social workers believed they had uncovered evidence of Satanic abuse in the Orkneys, Rochdale and Nottingham (among other places) and removed children, who they feared were being abused by groups of adults in a ritualised and diabolic way, from their homes. Social workers told tales of rape, cannibalism, enforced pregnancy and termination and other very lurid stories. Despite the media hype however, La Fontaine's careful reach clearly showed that while serious abuse had gone on in some cases, there was no evidence that children were being systematically ritually abused. This work



- was published as Jean La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1998).
23. Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (London: Penguin, 1972).
  24. Masson 1984 op. cit.
  25. Mead wrote: 'Adolescence represented no period of crisis or stress, but was instead an orderly developing of a set of slowly maturing interests and activities. The girls' minds were perplexed by no conflicts, troubled by no philosophical queries, beset by no remote ambitions. To live as a girl with as many lovers as long as possible and then to marry in one's own village, near one's own relatives, and to have many children, these were uniform and satisfying ambitions.' Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, p. 129.
  26. Derek Freeman, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999).
  27. Gregor 1985 op. cit. p. 29.
  28. Ibid.
  29. Ibid. These beliefs are not restricted to the Mehinaku. For comparative material on beliefs about the polluting nature of vaginal or menstrual secretions in other societies, see Elvira Belaunde, 'Menstruation, Birth Observances and the Couple's Love Among the Airo-Pai of Amazonian Peru', in *Managing Reproductive Life: Cross-Cultural Themes in Fertility and Sexuality* ed. Soraya Tremayne (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), and Alma Gottlieb and Thomas Buckley, *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
  30. Crocker and Crocker, *The Canela*.
  31. Ibid., p. 166.
  32. Laura Rival, 'Androgynous Parents and Guest Children: the Huaorani Couvade', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* 4 (1998): 619–42.
  33. Crocker and Crocker, *The Canela*, pp. 166–7.
  34. Gilbert Herdt, 'Semen Transactions in Sambia Culture', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 173.
  35. Herdt has modified his position on this over the years, arguing, along with others, that modernization, globalization and the advent of Christianity (among other things) have led to a rapid decline in ritualized homosexuality and that as a custom it is now rare. Bruce Knauff, who worked on ritualized homosexuality in another part of Papua New Guinea, recalled the shocked and horrified reactions of contemporary young men when he described it to them; they voiced disbelief that their fathers had ever done such a thing. However, that such practices did occur in the past is not disputed even though there is some unease about the fact that they were labelled ritualised homosexuality, when perhaps the term 'boy insemination' would have proved more useful and less open to accusations of imposing false, western labels. See Bruce Knauff, 'What Ever Happened to Ritualized Homosexuality? Modern Sexual Subjects in Melanesia and Elsewhere', *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 14 (2003): 137–59.
  36. Roger Goodman, *Children of the Japanese State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
  37. There is contemporary anecdotal evidence from the USA, for example, that suggests that while the message of abstinence before marriage has had an



- impact on the numbers of young people having full intercourse before marriage, many are still continuing to have oral sex, believing that this does not constitute sex. See, for example, Anna Mulrine, 'Risky Business', *U.S. News* 132 (2002): 42–9.
38. Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights, *The Trafficking of Children for Prostitution in Thailand* (Bangkok: Unpublished manuscript, 1991); Asia Watch, *A Modern Form of Slavery: Trafficking of Burmese Women and Girls into Brothels in Thailand* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993).
39. Noleen Heyzer, *Working Women of Southeast Asia – Development, Subordination and Emancipation* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); Peter Lee-Wright, *Child Slaves* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1990); Marjorie Muecke, 'Mother Sold Food, Daughter Sells Her Body – The Cultural Continuity of Prostitution', *Social Science and Medicine* 35 (1992): 891–901.
40. Several commentators dislike the term child prostitution, and prefer the term 'the commercial sexual exploitation of children', arguing that this better reflects the reality of the lives of young people working in the sex industry. See Kevin Ireland, *Wish You Weren't Here* (London: Save the Children Fund, 1993). He argues that the term child prostitution implies 'a sense of decision and control on behalf of the child. All children under the age of 18 who are in prostitution are considered, *de facto*, to be sexually exploited' (p. 3). The political implications of this are clear, and quite understandable. However, ignoring the agency and control that children do have, imposes a particular view of sexual abuse on children, which many of them explicitly reject.
41. Heather Montgomery, *Modern Babylon? Prostituting Children in Thailand* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001).
42. For an account of the changing economic value of children in the West, see Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: the Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). In it she shows how the western child changed from being economically profitable at the end of the nineteenth century to sentimentally priceless at the end of the twentieth.
43. La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil*, p. 17.

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